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PROF. MAX MÜLLER ON THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF RELIGION.

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It was early in 1878 that the first course of The Hibbert Lectures was delivered by Professor Max Müller in the chapter-house of Westminster Abbey. He chose as his subject, The Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religions of India. So great was the interest awakened both by the topic and the high qualifications of the lecturer for its discussion, that each lecture of the course had to be repeated in order to accommodate the many who desired to hear them. All who have read these lectures since their publication will agree that they are indeed of quite unusual interest, and present us with much most valuable information touching the nature and history of the religious beliefs of the early Aryans of India,— a subject on which, indeed, few should be more competent to speak than the accomplished Professor of Sanskrit in Oxford University. Few books, certainly, which have dealt with this question of the origin and growth of religion have been honored with so appreciative a reception and wide-spread publication as this first volume of the Hibbert Lectures. Not to speak of their circulation in Europe and America, it is very remarkable that they should be reproduced even in the vernacular languages of India. The first of such translations was into the Gujeráti language in 1881. This has just been followed by a Maráthi version, the work of one Vasudev Kanitkar, a native pleader in the High Court of Bombay, of which the "Academy" tells us that it is dedicated to his highness the Gaikwar of Baroda, and was liberally supported both by the government of Bom-

bay and by various Hindu princes and noblemen. The same authority informs us that a translation in Sanskrit and another in Bengá.i will also shortly follow, and that a native gentleman, Behramji M. Malabari, has undertaken to secure the publication of these lectures in all the vernaculars of India.

A book on such a subject and with such a history certainly has much more than an ephemeral interest. And especially when such lectures as these on such a topic from so distinguished a scholar, are offered to the pantheists and idolaters of India in their own languages, and that under the auspices of a professedly Christian government, and are also commended, as in the "Academy," as "particularly useful as a text-book for schools and colleges in India," then, indeed, the whole Christian world may well feel a special concern and interest in the teachings of the Oxford Professor on this living and vital question of the origin of religion.

None who are familiar with the writings of Professor Max Müller would anticipate that he ever would speak of the religion of Christ in any terms but those of the highest respect. We cheerfully accord to him the credit of a sincere belief in Christianity, as he understands it. We can easily believe that he has not intended in these lectures to undermine the foundations of Christian faith, but rather to place their defence upon what he conceives to be the only secure position. Especially may all Christian men be thankful to him for his thorough refutation, in Lecture II., of the anti-Christian theory that all religion began in the worship of fetishes. But while acknowledging all this and more, none the less are we compelled, after repeated reading of these lectures, to express the conviction that his own theory of the origin of religion is intrinsically no better, and has been no more proved than the "fetish theory," which he so ably refutes. We believe his own theory to be opposed alike to a sound philosophy and to the direct and implied teachings of the Holy Scriptures; and that the arguments, even of a historical sort, by which he would support it, are not valid for the conclusion which he professes to establish.

While differing alike with those who hold to the "fetish theory," and with those who accept the "ghost theory" of the origin of religion as argued by Mr. Herbert Spencer, Professor Müller is quite at one with them as to the most vital point at issue in the current controversy on this subject. The question whether man began his existence on earth with the knowledge of God as one and personal, he, with the rest of the naturalistic and purely evolutionist school, answers in the negative. With them he assumes that the history of man has been a gradual progress from an original state in which he had no religion up to the highest form of religion which as yet has come into existence. It is the object of these lectures to show how man, in a way purely and exclusively natural, by slow, successive stages, rose, in India at least, from the mere perceptions of the senses, through what he calls "henotheism," then polytheism, at last to monotheism. This theory he elaborates after the following manner.

He begins by laying down his definition of religion, which reads: "Religion, in the subjective sense, is a mental faculty, which, independently, nay, in spite of sense and reason, enables man to apprehend the infinite under different names and under varying disguises."[1] The infinite, as used in this definition, he defines to be all "that transcends our senses and our reason."[2] None the less, however, for this latter definition, does he lay down the postulate, and strenuously insist upon it, that all human knowledge is ultimately derived from the perceptions of the senses. He frankly admits the necessary inference that the idea of the infinite has been also gained in this same manner. His words are: "With every finite perception there is a concomitant perception, or, if that word should seem too strong, a concomitant sentiment or presentiment of the infinite."[3] These words he again explains as meaning that "from the very first act of touch or hearing or sight we are brought in contact not only with a visible, but also at the same time with an invisible uni-

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 21. [2] Ibid, p. 26. [3] Ibid., p. 43.

verse."[1] In that perception of the infinite thus given he declares that we have the root of "the whole historical development of human faith."

Working from these fundamental definitions and postulates he proceeds to develop his theory in detail after the following manner. Man, having thus received this notion of the infinite in his earliest sense-perceptions, began to look for the infinite in various objects, such as mountains, trees, and rivers, the sun, moon, and stars, and slowly rising higher at last came to call that unseen infinite, maker, preserver, God![2] This theory of the origin of religion, the Professor then illustrates by the religion of the ancient Hindus, as we have it set forth in the Vedas. As a preliminary to the examination of the testimony of the Vedas to his theory, he distinguishes the objects of sense-perception under three classes; namely, "tangible," "semi-tangible," and "intangible." To the first class he assigns such small material objects as stones, shells, and such like things, which can be taken in the hand, and their whole extent thereby measured. In the second class he places such objects as mountains, trees, and rivers, which although they can be touched, yet cannot be comprehended by us in their full extent. These therefore, he argues, in the very act by which they are touched and apprehended, suggest something beyond and more than that which is touched and apprehended, and thus give man his first ideas of the invisible and the infinite. To these objects correspond those which in the sphere of religion he proposes to call "semi-deities." To his third class he assigns those objects of sense-perception, which although they can be seen or heard, yet cannot be touched or handled. Such, for example, are the sun, the moon, the sky, the wind, the tempest, and the thunder. These, much more powerfully than the previous class, suggest to the observer the idea of the infinite, by reason of their inaccessibility and vastness. To these objects correspond what he proposes to call "deities."[3]

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 43. [2] See Ibid., 46, et passim.
[3] Ibid., pp. 168–174.

Applying this classification, now, to the development of religion as illustrated in ancient India, he tells us that in the earliest Vedic days the idea of God as we have it did not exist among those Aryan peoples, — not, indeed, because they had had it and lost it, but because "the concept and name of Deity was passing through the first stages of its evolution."[1] As to how it came to be evolved, he affirms that "the ancient Aryans of India ..... first faced the invisible, the unknown, or the infinite in trees, mountains, and rivers; in the dawn and in the sun; in the fire, the storm-wind, and the thunder. ..... They ascribed to all of them a self, a substance, a divine support, or whatever else we like to call it; ..... in doing so, they always felt the presence of something which they could not see behind what they could see, of something supernatural behind the natural, of something super-finite or infinite behind or within the finite. The names which they gave, the *nomina*, may have been wrong, but the search itself after the *numina* was legitimate. That search led the ancient Aryans as far as it led most among ourselves, viz. to the recognition of a Father which is in heaven. Nay, it led them farther still. ..... They learned, and we all of us have to learn it, that we must take out of that word 'father' one predicate after another, — all, in fact, that is conceivable in it, — if we wish to apply it still to God."[2]

When we ask, then, what was the primitive form of faith among the early Aryans of India, we are told, "Neither monotheism nor polytheism, but only henotheism, that is, a belief and worship of those single objects, whether semi-tangible or intangible, in which men first suspected the presence of the invisible and the infinite, each of which ..... was raised into something more than finite, more than natural, more than conceivable; and thus grew to be an Asura, or "living thing"; a Deva, or "a bright being"; an Amartya, that is, "not a mortal"; and at last an immortal and eternal being, — in fact, a God, endowed with the highest qualities which the

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 190. [2] Ibid., pp. 213–215.

human intellect could conceive at the various stages of its own growth."[1] All this he attempts to prove, e.g. as regards the worship of the sun. He says: "We can follow in the Vedic hymns, step by step, the development which changes the sun from a mere luminary into a creator, preserver, ruler, and rewarder of the world, — in fact, into a divine or supreme being." And yet all the divine attributes that are ascribed to the sun are in like manner ascribed to the sky, to fire, and to other objects of worship, each of which, for the time being, is regarded and addressed by the worshipper as if it, and it alone, were the sole divinity. The so-called semi-deities, he tells us, never rise "to the rank of supreme deity." This state of belief is what he intends by "henotheism," and this, he argues, led on to polytheism, and thence to monotheism. For while it is true that some, as in the case of the Buddhists, proceeded from polytheism to atheism, yet as regards the larger part, we read, "the Vedic Aryans ..... did not rest till they found what was higher than the gods, the true Self of the world, and, at the same time, their own self."[2]

After this exposition, we may give Professor Müller's own summation of his argument: "Our senses, while they supply us with a knowledge of finite things, are constantly brought in contact with what is not finite, or, at least, not finite yet. ..... Their chief object is, in fact, to elaborate the finite out of the infinite. ..... From this permanent contact of the senses with the infinite sprang the first impulse to religion — the first suspicion of something existing beyond what the senses could apprehend, beyond what our reason and language could comprehend. Here was the deepest foundation of all religion, and the explanation of that which before everything — before fetishism, and figurism, and animism, and anthropomorphism — needs explanation: why man should not have been satisfied with a knowledge of finite, sensuous objects; why the idea should ever have entered his mind that there is or can be anything in the world besides what he can touch or hear or see — call it powers, spirits, or gods. ..... After

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, pp. 250, 251. [2] Ibid., p. 207.

the idea had once laid hold on man that there was something beyond the finite, the Hindu looked for it everywhere in nature, trying to grasp and to name it; at first among semi-tangible, then among intangible, and at last among invisible objects. ..... A new world thus grew up, peopled by semi-tangible, intangible, and invisible objects, all manifesting certain activities such as could be compared with the activities of human beings, and named with names that belonged to those human activities. Of such names ..... some became general epithets [the word "Deva," e.g. among them]. Other ideas, which are truly religious, ... were derived from sensuous impressions, even the ideas of law, virtue, infinitude, and immortality. ..... Lastly, ... by a perfectly natural and intelligible process, a belief in single supreme beings, or Devas, ... henotheism tended to become a belief in one God, presiding over the others, no longer supreme gods — polytheism; or a belief in one God, excluding the very possibility of other gods — monotheism. Still further, ... all the old Devas or gods were found out to be but names; but that discovery, though in some cases it led to atheism and some kind of Buddhism, led on in others to a new start and to a new belief in one Being which is the Self of everything, which is not only beyond and beneath all finite things as apprehended by the senses, but also beneath our own finite ego, the Self of all selfs."[1] This form of belief the Professor does not in this place name, though elsewhere he calls it monotheism; but the most of intelligent persons will recognize it as pantheism.

In reviewing this theory, we have to object, first of all, to the definition of religion with which Professor Müller begins. We must, indeed, do him the justice to remark that he himself confesses that he does not feel wholly satisfied with his definition, though he thinks that "the kernel of it is sound."[2] Nor should one judge a failure in definition in this case too severely. It is truly no very easy thing to give a definition of religion which shall comprehend all that

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, pp. 360, 361, 362. [2] Ibid., p. 22.

goes under that name. We have to remember, for example, that the most of Buddhists follow Sâkya Muni in denying, or at least ignoring, the existence of a God, and yet we should not therefore say that there was of necessity nothing which we could call religion in a Buddhist. But, while admitting that the definition of religion in the subjective sense must be made exceeding broad if it shall include all that goes among men under that name, still we are compelled to reject the definition of religion as given in these lectures by Professor Müller.

In the first place, we fully agree with the critics to whom he refers, who have urged against his definition that in no sense can religion be rightly termed "a mental faculty." Indeed, the Professor tells us that he himself shares, "to some extent," the doubts of his critics in this matter. There is good reason that he should. For the word "faculty" has a well-known meaning. We understand by the term, power or capacity. Professor Müller, however, in his reply to his critics, defines faculty as "a mode of action"[1] — a meaning which, according to the lexicographers, it never has. It is better than this when, a little later, he suggests that for the word "faculty" in his definition should be substituted the phrase "potential energy." And yet all makes very little difference; for, define faculty as we will, in no sense is it true that religion is a faculty. It is not a power or capacity, although it implies a power or capacity; it is not a mode of action or a potential energy. However hard it may be to say precisely what it is, we regard it as absolutely certain that never when men speak of religion in a subjective sense do they mean thereby to name a mental faculty.

Neither is it true, in the second place, that religion consists merely in the apprehension of the infinite. To make religion consist essentially in this is vague and inaccurate in the last degree. Even though the word "infinite" should be taken in the highest sense possible, to denote the God of the theist, — a sense in which Professor Müller does not use the word,

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 22.

— still, the definition would be fatally defective. For assuredly in religion we have in every case much more than the mere apprehension of the infinite. The Infinite, whom we as theists name God, is always conceived of as standing in certain moral relations with the human soul — relations of such a sort that we express them, in a word, by saying that the soul always conceives of itself as being under moral law to a superior power. It is truly remarkable, and not a little suggestive, that Professor Müller in constructing a definition of religion, should not have included so much as an allusion to this most patent and momentous fact, that man as a religious being always, whether right or wrong therein, regards himself as being under moral law. No element is more characteristic of religion under all its forms than just this. Even the belief in a God may be absent, as in the case of the Buddhists, and yet even Buddhism holds fast with singular tenacity to this conception of a moral law, and declares that man as judged by that law is wrong. The omission of all recognition of this universal phenomenon in Professor Müller's definition is of itself enough to condemn it.

But if the definition be thus defective even when we take the word "infinite" in its best and highest sense, it is far worse if in the definition we give that word the sense in which Professor Müller defines and uses it. His definition of the infinite, it will be remembered, reads thus: "All that transcends our senses and reason." On this definition we remark that it is certain that this is not what men generally mean by the infinite. The true sense of the word, as commonly employed, is boundless, illimitable. But Professor Müller uses it constantly, in accordance with his novel definition, as an equivalent for invisible, or supernatural, or indefinite.[1] As was not unnatural for a philologist, he seems to have been led astray by an etymology. The finite is that which is apprehended as having definite and precise limits; the infinite is the not-finite, that which is *not* apprehended as having definite limitations. Hence, if we looked only at the

[1] See, e.g. pp. 217, 218, et passim.

etymology of the word, we might infer that it was not of necessity that which absolutely has no bounds, but only that of which bound or limit could not be affirmed. And so the Professor explains his own definition of the word: "Infinite is not only that which has no limits, but it is to us, and it certainly was to our early ancestors, that also of which we cannot perceive the limits."[1] Thus, according to this definition, while space and time would be infinite, so would many other things be also infinite to which no man who knew the right use of words would think of applying that term. Thus, assuming his definition, the human soul transcends the senses; is it therefore infinite? And so, while the definition of religion would have been bad enough if the word "infinite" had been taken in its ordinary meaning, the new meaning that the Professor has attached to it makes the bad much worse. Let us substitute in his definition of religion for the term "infinite" his definition of that term, and see how it will read: "Religion is a mental faculty which enables man to apprehend all that transcends the senses and reason"; or, again, to use other terms which he uses as alternates to infinite: "Religion is a mental faculty which enables man to apprehend the indefinite or the invisible"! How many are there in the world who would recognize this definition of religion, as expounded by the aid of the Professor's own definition of the infinite, as expressing what they meant when they spoke in any sense of a religion?

It is another fatal objection to his theory, that not only are his fundamental definitions erroneous, but he rests his whole theory as to the origin of religion upon the postulate, assumed without attempt at proof, that all religious knowledge, as well as every other, comes to man through the senses, and the senses only. Of any intuitive perception of right and wrong, or of anything, he will hear nothing. Still less will he hear of any primeval revelation as a possible source of at least a part of man's religious knowledge. Such a suggestion he rejects as not even worthy of discussion,

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 173.

even though such a revelation should have been given through the senses. Everything which any religion whatever may contain, all that goes under the name of religion, had its origin, in the first instance, in man's sense-perceptions of external nature. On this subject he is most emphatic, and as dogmatic as theologians are commonly supposed to be. He says: "All knowledge, in order to be knowledge, must pass through two gates, and two gates only — the gate of the senses and the gate of reason. Religious knowledge also, whether true or false, must have passed through these two gates. At these two gates, therefore, we take our stand. Whatever claims to have entered in by any other gate, whether that gate be called primeval revelation or religious instinct, must be rejected as contraband of thought; and whatever claims to have entered in by the gate of reason, without having first passed through the gate of the senses, must equally be rejected as without sufficient warrant, or ordered at least to go back to the first gate, in order to produce there its full credentials."[1] To prove these startling statements we find nothing stronger than this: "We know not *what* it [the infinite] is, but we know *that* it is, and we know it because we actually feel it and are brought in contact with it."[2] What is the purport of these words their context clearly shows, namely, that since we know there is an infinite, therefore that knowledge, this concept of the infinite, must have come to us by means of sense-perception, or we could not have had it. But this is surely to assume as proof what needed itself to be proved and most rigidly argued out as being the foundation of his theory. For the doctrine of sensationalism is not at least by any means so like axiomatic truth that any man has a right to assume it without proof, especially when he would make it the basis of anything of so much consequence as a theory concerning the origin of religion.

Without going into the whole argument against sensationalism, it will suffice for our present purpose to make on this

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 212. [2] Ibid., p. 35.

part of Professor Müller's discussion, the following remarks. If the word "infinite" be taken in the sense in which men usually employ the word, then it is utterly impossible that the idea of the infinite should have come into the mind through the senses. For the clear dictum of the mind as regards, for example, infinite space or infinite duration is not merely, as Professor Müller puts it, that there is an infinite. How even that idea were to be got in through the senses, when they neither have nor can have any experience of infinite space or infinite duration, is quite impossible to see. But the percept or concept of the infinite in fact involves much more than the mere affirmation of its being. It is included therein not only that the infinite is, but that the infinite *must* be. Against sensationalism this has often been urged, and the objection, we may safely say, has never been answered, nor can be. How can the conception of *necessary* being, as regards anything, be reached through sense-perception? Experience can undoubtedly give a "has been" or "it is"; but by no possibility can it give a "must be." Thus while the senses inform us of the existence of a beyond, an immense beyond, or an indefinite beyond, assuredly they cannot give us the idea of an infinite beyond.

But even if we assume Professor Müller's own definition of the infinite, it is not clear how, according to his own definitions and statements, the conception of the infinite, even in that sense, could have come in through the senses. For how shall we reconcile these two statements (both in his own words)? "The infinite is that which transcends the senses," and again and again afterwards, "Our senses give us the first impression of infinite things." Surely if that definition of the infinite be correct, then this last statement cannot be correct. If the infinite in its essential nature be "that which *transcends* the senses," then how can it possibly be true that we perceive the infinite *through* the senses? No less is this last statement in conflict with his definition of religion, wherein we are told that religion is a mental faculty which enables us, "*independent of* and *in spite of* the senses,

to apprehend the infinite."[1] Even according to Professor Müller himself, then, it is plain that the infinite is perceived by us *independent* of the senses," and surely, therefore, one would say, not *through* the senses. If, however, he only mean, as we suspect, that the idea of the infinite, howsoever defined, is in the first instance, called out into consciousness by our sense-perceptions, then that ends the controversy, and should logically compel him to reject every sensationalist theory as to the origin of religion. For it is clear that the two propositions,—"The senses *perceive* the infinite," and "Our sense-perceptions are the *occasion* of the *suggestion* of the idea of the infinite,"—are totally distinct in their meaning. The former is certainly false, as the latter is certainly true. But if the idea of the infinite is *not* directly given in sense-perception, but is only thus first brought out into consciousness, then it must be derived in some other way than through the senses, and sensationalism is not the whole of philosophy, much less the whole of religion.

It cannot be too much emphasized that Professor Müller distinctly stakes the truth of his theory of the origin of religion on the truth of this dictum, that the senses are the primal source of all our knowledge. If this be true, then it were possible, though not yet certain, that his theory might be true; but if sensationalism be not a true philosophy, then it is certain that his theory is false also. A very uncertain foundation this for so lofty and imposing a structure! None the less fearlessly, however, he rests all his argument upon it. There is, according to him, no intuitional truth, moral and religious as little as any other. He says that he does "not blame those who may decline to discuss the problem of the origin of religion with those who assume that man has a religious faculty which distinguishes man from the animal."[2] Not to the conscience, then, not even to the reason primarily, but to the mere perceptions of our physical senses, which we have in common with the brutes, do we owe everything that under the sun is called by men religion, from

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 21. [2] Ibid., p. 121.

the lowest type of fetish worship, to the Sermon on the Mount and the sublime prayer of our Lord in the seventeenth of John!

It is another fatal defect in Professor Müller's argument that even if we should grant all that he says about a perception of the unlimited, or infinite, or indefinite, or supernatural, as concomitant with every act of sense-perception, yet he entirely omits to show us *how*, out of this idea thus gained, man could, after never so long, get the idea of a personal God and moral ruler of the universe. For his elaborate argument based on his distinction of all the objects of perception as "tangible," "semi-tangible," and intangible" wholly fails to answer this vital question. For though we grant that in the perception of, e.g. such intangible objec s as the sky, a storm, we do get the idea of a power or a vastness far beyond what the senses can take in or accurately measure, yet what is the reason that men in all lands and in all ages have had such a tendency to attribute that power or immensity not to the object perceived, but to an unseen Spirit or God? Here is an absolute break in the alleged development, a missing link in the argument, a fact which the Professor seems never to have noticed. The difficulty is the greater that, as has been often observed, even beasts frequently appear to have with their sense-perceptions a vague apprehension of an unknown or indefinite something, more than is actually seen or heard, as really as Professor Müller's primitive Aryans. What can it be but something like this that makes the horse sometimes start and tremble at the sudden sight of an unfamiliar object! Why is it then, that the horse never goes on, but man always does go on, till he has developed out of this undefined something the idea of a god? Is it not the natural conclusion that the idea of a God is *not* given in that notion of the indefinite which sense-perception supplies? that in that "sentiment or presentiment" of something more than can be seen or heard, the idea of a God, even in the most germinal form, is *not* really given? and that man, therefore, unlike the brute, for some reason

puts into the concept suggested by the senses something in addition which was *not* gained from the senses? Evidently here is something which, on Professor Müller's theory, greatly needs an explanation.

It is another defect in Professor Müller's argument that he has quite failed to show how, out of the perception of the senses, man could ever get the idea of moral law, of sin, and of guilt to be expiated or forgiven. In the religious consciousness of all nations ever stands revealed a moral law, with its inexorable "must" and "must not," "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not"! How is it possible that this idea of moral law and the imperious obligation to obey it should have been derived from the mere perceptions of our senses? Professor Müller, indeed, tells us that it was evolved from the perception of physical law and order as revealed to the senses in the kosmos.[1] To this we can only reply that the supposed evolution is impossible. For, even if we should allow that the observation of the order of the visible universe first *awakened* the notion of an analogous moral order, and a system of moral law; still that were not enough to account for the facts. There is *more* in the idea of the moral law than a mere conception of *order*. Inseparable from this is the conception of that order as being in its very nature, unlike the physical, a *necessary* and obligatory order. How then could the observation of the order of the visible universe,—the daily path of the sun, as Professor Müller suggests,[2]—never conceived of as a necessary order, have given rise to the sense of moral obligation? The cause assigned is totally inadequate to the effect.

We find a similar defect in the Professor's argument as to the phenomena of conscious sin and guilt. How can this be traced back to certain perceptions of the senses? Even if we grant that the ancient Hindus received their first dim ideas of God from their observation of the powers of nature and that this, in fact, was the case with all the nations of

[1] See Lecture v. for his argument to this effect.

[2] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 243.

the world; yet why should all men everywhere have conceived of this unseen Power as hostile to them? Was it because they noticed that the powers of nature were often destructive and injurious to them? But then they were oftener beneficent. The sun, it is true, sometimes strikes with death; but far more commonly its warmth is genial and life-giving. The storm sometimes brings ruin, but more often it is a messenger of mercy. Whence, then, this strangely persistent, universal sense of *sin*? What were those universal sense-perceptions which everywhere and always suggested the sense of guilt? Patent as this difficulty is, and necessary as it clearly is that any theory of the origin of religion should account for this universal fact, yet we cannot find that Professor Müller ever betrays any consciousness that there was in this anything that needed explanation. Indeed this whole argument of his, like those of Mr. Herbert Spencer and others of the naturalistic school upon the origin of religion, is marked by an astonishing oblivion as to this most conspicuous fact of the universal consciousness of sin and guilt. The circumstance is most suggestive.

But it is time that we examined Professor Müller's historical argument. He affirms, and in Lectures III.–VII. professes to prove, that his theory of the origin and growth of religion is evidenced as true by the history of religious thought in India. He claims that history makes it plain that in India, at least, men began their religious life with mere sense-perception, which gave them the idea, in his sense, of the infinite; that the Hindus then looked for that infinite everywhere in nature in the following order; namely, "at first among semi-tangible, then among intangible, and at last among invisible objects";[1] that so they were led on through henotheism, polytheism, at last to monotheism. Having proved this to his own satisfaction, he concludes that something like this must have marked the beginning and development of religion for the whole race of man. For the establishment of this argument he relies chiefly upon the testimony of the Vedas,

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 361.

with the Brahmanas and Upanishads appended to them, together with such aid as philology may furnish.

There are few men who are competent to criticise the Sanskrit Professor of Oxford University in his interpretation of the Vedas, and of such the present writer is not one. We are quite willing to rely implicitly upon the strict accuracy of the numerous translations of the Vedic *sutras* which enrich his lectures. But the question before us is happily not one of Vedic *interpretation*; it is of what may be rightly *inferred* from the testimony of the Vedas as interpreted for us by Professor Müller. We admit, then, all his interpretations and translations without qualification, and claim that the facts which he brings out, instead of establishing, are fatal to his theory, so far at least as India is concerned. He has himself convinced us that if we are to have historical proof of the correctness of his view as to the origin of religion, we shall have to look for it elsewhere than in the records of ancient India.

As to his historical argument, then, we make three affirmations:

In the first place, it does not prove his assertion as to the origin of religion, even among the ancient Aryans. It is even impossible that this should be proved from the Vedas, for the simple reason that they do not give us the beginning of Aryan religious development. Where their record begins, that development has already long ago begun. Granting, then, that we do find nature-worship prominent in the oldest Veda, who shall prove that there was nothing among the Aryans earlier than that? Who shall venture to say that this worship of nature may not very possibly have been a secondary development? Who can prove that it may not even have been a degraded form of religion, preceded by a purer creed? These are questions which he should have met and answered; but they are passed by in silence. To avoid them, it was necessary for him to prove that the form of religion which appears in the Vedas was not only the earliest of which among the Aryans we have any written

record, but exhibits the absolute beginning of their religious history. This he nowhere attempts to prove, as, indeed, no one could pretend that this was a fact. Professor Müller does, indeed, in one place make the surprising assertion that "in the ancient religion of India ..... we can watch the development of religious thought *from its very beginning to its very end.*"[1] But then again, and with much more reason, he repeatedly makes statements in various parts of his lectures, which directly contradict these careless words. Thus he rightly says: "There are indeed vast distances beyond the hymns of the Veda, and many things even in the earliest hymns become intelligible only if we look at them not as just arising, but as having already passed through many a metamorphosis."[2] To the same effect, again, we read: "No doubt between the first daybreak of human thought and the first hymns of praise ..... there may be, nay there must be, a gap that can only be measured by hundreds, aye by thousands, of years."[3] Here, then, we have the most explicit admissions that we do not have by any means in the oldest Veda anything approaching to the first beginning even of Aryan religion. If this be true, — and no one will dispute it, — then of what possible force is this whole historical argument as bearing on the question as to the origin of religion? What we want to know is how man came to have a religion. This is the question which it is the main object of these Hibbert Lectures to answer. Professor Müller tells us in answer that it was through the perception by the senses of the infinite; and he brings forward the history of the Vedic religion as evidence that this actually was the origin of religion, at least as regards the Indian Aryans. And then he turns around and tells us, with unquestionable truth, that the Vedas do not give us the beginning of religion, even as regards that branch of the human race. This being so, is it not plain that his elaborate argument from the Vedas on this point proves nothing as to the origin of religion among the

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 33. The italics are ours.
[2] Ibid., p. 80. [3] Ibid., p. 216.

Indian Aryans, much less as to its absolute beginning among men?

In the second place, not only does Professor Müller's historical argument prove nothing as to the origin of religion, but it proves as little as regards the asserted order of development. According to his theory, and in *order* to make good his position, it was necessary for him to show that the oldest hymns of the Veda were those addressed to what he calls semi-tangible or tangible objects, such as the soma juice, the mountains, rivers, and trees; and that the next in order as we descend the course of time were those addressed to intangible objects, such as, for example, the sky, the sun, the storm; and that latest of all come hymns apparently addressed to one personal God. The fact of such an order among the Vedic hymns he has not proved. He does indeed show, what no one had ever disputed, that the Vedas are full of hymns to the mountains, the storms, the heavens, the sun, and the moon, with now and then one which has in it a monotheistic ring; but this is not enough. What we ask, and what he promised to give, is proof of the asserted *order* of development, and that we search for in vain in all these lectures. The theory, if to be proved in this way, must be proved by the demonstration of a certain chronological order among all these various hymns, in which it shall appear that as a class the hymns addressed to semi-tangible objects preceded those addressed to intangible objects, and so on. But such a demonstration is wanting. He himself says, with good reason, that it seems to him "almost useless to apply a chronological measurement to these phases of thought."[1] Not only is the required proof wanting, but we may say even more, Professor Müller once and again makes statements which show that the theoretical order was not the strict order of history. For while, according to his theory, the worship of semi-tangible objects should come first, and then that of the intangible, the fact, according to his own expressed judgment, was the reverse. His words are, "We

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 327.

have a right to say that, generally speaking, hymns celebrating the dawn and the sun [intangible objects, be it noted] were earlier than those addressed to Aditi."[1] But was there perhaps a worship of semi-tangible objects, such as mountains, trees, etc., preceding the worship of the sun and dawn? Apparently not; for again he tells us that the oldest deity of which we have any trace in the Vedic religion was Dyaus, commonly said to mean the sky, but which he proposes to render "the bright, the shining one." This deity is constantly called Dyaus-pitá, "the Heaven-father."[2] Of this worship of Dyaus-pitá, "the heaven," "the sky," or "the Heaven-father," he tells us that it was so ancient that it was current so long ago as when the ancient Teutons and the Greeks and Romans were as yet all living together on the plateau of Iran; for the word is preserved in the old Teutonic Tio, the Greek Zeus, and the Latin Ju-piter.[3] Again, we have a few hymns in the Rig Veda which seem to express belief in God as one and personal. A notable example is found in the sublime hymn to Prajàpati,[4] the Lord of creatures, described therein, in verse 8, as "he who alone is God above all gods." To make out his theory as to the order of religious development it was necessary to prove that such utterances as a whole belonged to a late, or even final, period of Indian religious history. On the contrary, as he himself admits, this hymn, for example, to Prajàpati belongs to the first period of the sacred history of India, anterior to the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. The actual truth seems to be that the Vedic literature, so far from proving such an order as the Professor in his theory had laid down, exhibits, side by side, the grossest nature worship and now and then a theism, as in the hymn above referred to, which reminds one of the Hebrew Psalms. There could not be a better comment on Professor Müller's argument than we find on page 226 of the Lectures, where, with equal truth and consistency, he remarks: "I do not mean to make the Veda more ancient

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 327. [2] Ibid., pp. 265, 266. [3] Ibid.
[4] Rig Veda, x. 21. See Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 284.

than it is. I know full well the interminable vista of its antecedents. ..... By the side of much that sounds recent there is much that sounds ancient and primitive. And here we ought, I think, to learn a lesson from archaeology, and not try to lay down from the beginning a succession of sharply divided periods of thought. ..... There are in the Veda thoughts as rude and crude as any paleolithic weapons; but by the side of them we find thoughts with all the sharpness of iron and all the brilliancy of bronze. Are we to say that the bright and brilliant thoughts must be more modern than the rudely chipped flints that lie by their side?"[1] All which is very well and truly said. But what then becomes of the promised argument from the Vedas as to the order of religious development?

Finally, we deny that, according to history and his own showing, the progress of religious thought in India led up at last to faith in the one God who is the Father of us all. Concerning this he asserts plainly that this was the terminus to which the Indian development of religious thought conducted them. He tells us that "the search of the ancient Aryans after the infinite in every part of nature," and their attempts at naming it began "with trees and rivers and mountains, ending with their Heaven-father." So also at the conclusion of his argument, recapitulating, he says: "We found how, by a perfectly natural and intelligible process, a belief in single supreme beings, or Devas — henotheism tended to become a belief in *one* God, presiding over the others, no longer supreme gods — polytheism, or a belief in one god, excluding the very possibility of other gods — monotheism."[2] In reply to all this, we are compelled to say that, taking words in their ordinary and accepted meaning, this is a great mistake. It is not true that the terminal point of Indian religious speculation was monotheism, or that the concept of a Heaven-father was reached as the *end* and final result of their search for the infinite.

While Professor Müller is quite correct in indicating the

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, pp. 265, 266. [2] Ibid., p. 362.

course of religious thought in India as tending to the conception of *one* only Supreme Being, as opposed to the doctrine of many gods, he strangely misconceives facts, or misunderstands the meaning of words, when he assumes what he calls the "monotheism" at which the Hindus arrived is essentially identical with what Christians, or even deists, understand by monotheism. This "monotheism" at which the Hindus arrived, as he calls it, was and is, *not* monotheism, but *pantheism*. To call the Hindu doctrine as to the essential unity of the Divine Being "monotheism," however it might be justified by the mere etymology of the word, is, in fact, to set established usage at defiance. There have been, indeed, individuals all along the course of Indian history who have recognized with more or less distinctness the existence of one God who is personal, the Maker and the moral Ruler of us all. But it is one of the most notorious facts in the religious history of mankind, that the Hindus, as a people, have never come up through polytheism to *theism*. In so far as any may be said to have progressed beyond polytheism, they are not theists, but pantheists. If we seek in the religious writings of the Hindus for expressions embodying the purest theism, we shall find them, according to Professor Müller's own testimony, *not* in the latest, but, on the contrary, in their *oldest* literature. So far then, from having been led up from nature-worship, as the Professor affirms, to the conception of a Father in heaven, they have *sunken from* that earliest conception of the Dyaus-pita to the most thorough and consistent pantheism that the world has ever seen. Professor Müller himself tells in so many words that "even in the Veda," the conception of the Heaven-father had become "a fading star."[1] And while the Hindus of to-day do constantly assert that God is one and only, they mean by this, as they constantly affirm, that he is one and only, simply because he is *all* that is. But this is not monotheism, but pantheism. So notorious are the facts, that we are greatly puzzled by the statements which we find in these lectures on

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 266.

these matters. One can hardly suppose it possible; but if the lectures had been delivered by any less eminent scholar, we should have been compelled to conclude that the author was not enough of a theologian to know the real difference between theism and pantheism.[1]

And this leads us to remark, as to the general drift of these lectures, that if one is to take words in their usually accepted sense, the tendency, to say the least, of the whole argument, is to represent pantheism as "the highest form" in which the human mind has expressed its conception of the nature of the Supreme Being. It is true that once or twice Professor Müller uses language which, if we could take it by itself, might well be held to support the theistic view of the divine nature. Thus, in one place he speaks of the idea of "one personal God" as "the highest form ..... which man feels inclined to give to the infinite."[2] So also, now and then, he speaks beautifully and truly of God as our Father in heaven in words which must find an echo in every Christian heart. But, unfortunately, thoughts and expressions of such a character do not stand alone. They are repeatedly qualified in such a way that we can scarcely avoid the conclusion that these phrases have to him a meaning wholly different from what they have to Christians generally. Thus, if he speaks of God as our Father in heaven, he yet elsewhere denies that this is the highest idea we can form of God, or that in fact it is a true conception of God at all. For he tells us that the search of the ancient Aryans after "the *numina*" "led them as far as it has led most among ourselves, viz. to the recognition of a Father which is in heaven," and then adds: "It led them farther still."[3] And what he means by this last expression he explains on the next page, where we read:

[1] In one passage Professor Müller himself seems to intimate what we believe to be the actual truth. He says (p. 286), speaking of the Vedic notions of God, "With such ideas as these springing up, ... we should have thought that the natural development of their old religion could only have been toward monotheism, toward the worship of one personal god. .... But it was not so." Or does he here only mean to speak of the *immediate* development, as we have it exhibited in the Brahmanas?

[2] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 286. [3] Ibid., p. 21.

"The ancients learnt, and we all of us have to learn it, that we must take out of that word 'father' one predicate after another, — all in fact, that is conceivable in it, — if we wish to apply it still to God." These words, it is true, taken by themselves, might be understood as the expression of such a view of the divine nature as that held by Christian men like Sir William Hamilton and Dean Mansell, — the view since logically developed by Mr. Herbert Spencer into a complete agnosticism. But that these expressions in the present instance really indicate a *pantheistic* tendency of thought seems to us quite clear from other expressions concerning God which Professor Müller elsewhere employs. When, for example, he tells us that God is "the true Self of the world" and "the true Self of our selfs," we can easily imagine ourselves transported to the banks of the Ganges, where in other days we have labored, and to be again hearing the Brahman plausibly expounding the mysteries of his theology. "The voice is Jacob's voice, though the hands are the hands of Esau." The speech is verily that of the Brahman, though the guise is the guise of a Christian. Surely, if such phrases as these — identical with what one may hear any day from the pantheists of modern India — have any meaning, they absolutely nullify the distinction between the human soul and the Supreme Spirit, and identify man as to his innermost nature with God.

In perfect accord with this same pantheistic view of the world is the conception which Professor Müller seems to have of the mutual relations of the various religions of mankind, and of them all to Christianity. It is a conception in as perfect logical harmony with pantheism as it is in absolute contrast with the whole teaching of the Christian Scriptures on this subject. Thus, for instance, he tells us with approval how the Hindus when they learned that all the *devas* "were merely names of the one, the highest Self" did not therefore "curse their names or break the altars of the gods they had formerly adored;" [1] as if idolatry were not sin, and all

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 351.

altars had an equal moral right to stand. And so again, a little further on, he formally argues that as God is like a father, therefore all forms of worship, so they are sincere, must be alike acceptable to him, whether they happen to be Christian or not. "Does a father mind by what strange .... name his child may call him, when he is for the first time trying to call him by any name? .... And if one child calls us by one name and another by another, do we blame him? Do we insist on uniformity?"[1] In this most plausible use of a false analogy in pleading for a charitable judgment upon the Hindu religion, with its pantheism and idolatry, we are again reminded how often when talking with the Brahmans we have heard from them the self-same argument, urged by like false analogies, in behalf of their ancestral faith; the same specious pleading for the essential truth of *all* religions, even of those which might seem to be most opposed. *Sabhì mat sach hain*, "all religions are true"; *Wahì ek hai; nàmhi men bhed hai*, "He is One; the difference is only in the name." We listen and wonder, and are perplexed: Can this be a *Brahman* who is speaking in Westminster Abbey?

In quite another way these pleadings of Professor Müller in tones so full of universal love and charity in behalf of the religion of India, remind us also of other words learned long ago in childhood, words which declare a very different judgment of idolatry and pantheism. They too are ancient, and go back at least to Vedic days. For it is written in the law of Moses that "God spake all these words, saying, ... Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."[2]

What in fact the personal beliefs of Professor Müller may

[1] The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 355. [2] Ex. xx. 1–6.

be, whether or not he believes the law of Moses and the words of our blessed Lord to be final and infallible truth, we know not. We well know, and rejoice in the knowledge, that the heart is often far nearer right than the head; that many a man has been at heart true in supreme love and loyalty to Jesus Christ when yet his philosophy, although he could not see it, directly contradicted Christ's teachings. We do not therefore take it upon ourselves to judge the author of these lectures. That were wholly wrong. But we cannot help forming and expressing a judgment on these lectures, as indeed every intelligent man who reads them may be expected to do. And passing that judgment, we are compelled to say that, if we have not wholly misunderstood the views which they expound, they stand in irreconcilable contradiction to the teaching of our Lord and his apostles, both in their teaching as to the origin and growth of religion, and as to the nature of the Supreme Being. If we have misunderstood them, and this is really a mistaken judgment, yet still we have to complain of the use of a phraseology which is, in that case, so utterly misleading. Whatever Professor Müller may have intended, there can, as it seems to us, be no doubt that the whole tenor of these lectures is in favor of the pantheistic view of God and of the world. This is most significantly witnessed by the popularity of the work among the natives of India referred to at the beginning of this article. That Hindus, wedded to their pantheism and idolatry, utterly averse to Christianity, should labor and contribute so heartily to have them made accessible to their own people in their vernaculars, is a fact which speaks very little for them as an exposition of doctrine consistent with the Christian religion. We more than suspect that although the language was foreign, yet Professor Müller's expressions, and many even of his arguments, have sounded most natural and familiar to his Hindu interpreters; and that, whatever the actual intention of these lectures may have been, they have seemed to these intellectual and discerning Hindus to be a learned and most gratifying apology for their ancestral faith.