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693RD ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, JANUARY 3RD, 1927, AT 4.30 P.M.

LIEUT.-COLONEL F. A. MOLONY, O.B.E., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY announced the following elections:—As a Member: Captain T. W. E. Higgens (our present lecturer) from Associate; and as Associates: Lieut.-Colonel A. H. C. Kenney-Herbert and Professor J. Mueller, Ph.D.

The CHAIRMAN then introduced the lecturer, Captain T. W. E. Higgens, to read his paper on "Man and his God: the Origin of Religion among Primitive Peoples."

MAN AND HIS GOD:

THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION AMONG PRIMITIVE PEOPLES.

By CAPTAIN T. W. E. HIGGENS.

I.

CURRENT theories of the origin and development of Religion follow, as a rule, on one or other of two broad lines.

According to the *first*, man, created in "the image of God," received his religion by a Divine revelation, and when he fell from this first state of blessedness, this knowledge of divine things became obscured, so that only in a few instances have his descendants retained any traces of the primeval revelation, except in the case of one nation, the Hebrews. Thus, speaking generally, this theory sets forth the History of Religion as a

continual falling away from the ideal implanted in man's nature by his God, until "in the fulness of time" Christ came to found a Church, which was to proclaim a higher type of religion and spread it throughout the world.

According to the *second* theory, man, originally half-bestial, has raised himself gradually from degraded savagery, and has in his slow upward journey been fashioning his gods after his own image, and as he emerged from barbarism his notion of God has been refined, until at length he arrived at the idea of a Being all good and all powerful, such as we mean when we speak of "God."

Although the first of these theories is popularly supposed to be that of the Bible, there are a very large number of Christians who are persuaded that some modification of the second is not contrary to the faith; and to these I would suggest that arguments in favour of a theory to some extent combining the two may be drawn from the writings of St. Paul as set forth more particularly in Rom. i, 18–23, Acts xvii, 26–31, and xiv, 16–17.

St. Paul's statement of the origin and development of Religion in the Gentile world, as there set forth, is as follows:—God suffered nations in times past to gain a knowledge of Him, not directly, but through the evidence afforded by His works; but having by this means gained a knowledge of His existence, it did not lead to worship and a spirit of true thankfulness towards the Giver of all; for man disregarded Nature's witness to this good and loving God, and, misled by vain and senseless reasoning from what he observed, betook himself to idolatry and lower forms of worship; yet, in spite of all, there was still a seeking after God, the unknown God, whose offspring he felt himself to be.

If we are correct in our supposition that St. Paul believed that the knowledge of God outside Israel came to man very largely from the evidence he saw around him of His handiwork, this is only saying that such knowledge was gained from the argument from Design in Nature. It is true that a certain school maintains that this argument is not a valid one by which to prove the existence of God to a modern scientist, yet without discussing this side issue, it may at any rate be pointed out that the argument would be quite valid enough for our prehistoric ancestors: and the fact that the knowledge of God's existence was in some cases arrived at through an invalid argument—if the argument from Design be invalid—no more proves that belief to be false than it would be justifiable to pronounce many of the well-established conclusions of modern science untrustworthy, because they have

been arrived at by a series of (now) untenable hypotheses. Sir James Frazer says in the introduction to his Gifford Lectures, 1911–12: "It is perfectly possible that a belief may be true, though the reasons alleged in favour of it are false and absurd."

To many savage peoples the argument from Design would appeal with very great force, as the inventive faculty is strong in them. The Australians, for instance, seem to have invented the boomerang, which appears to be unknown in principle to any other race. If, then, a race which has remained so low in the scale of humanity can show such ingenuity, what of other and more progressive nations? Surely to them the wonder of Creation, the handiwork of the great Maker of all, must have appealed with great force as evidence of power and wisdom, and led them on to a belief in a Great Cause behind the phenomena.

It is not denied that God may have revealed Himself more directly to individuals, men of good-will, seekers after truth, in any age and at any time, the same as He did to Abraham and the prophets, but such revelation was the exception and can hardly now be supported by evidence.

II.

God known through His Creation.

We may, I think, summarize what I have ventured to call St. Paul's statement of the origin of Religion in the Gentile world as follows:—

(*a*) The knowledge of God was gained from the evidence of His works.
(*b*) The great God was known, but not worshipped, idolatry and other forms of worship being practised.
(*c*) There has always been a seeking after God in man's religion.

(*a*) *The knowledge of God gained from His Works.*

It can be said, no doubt, that the first division of our subject is a Philosophical one. There can be no direct evidence, apart from a Divine revelation, of how men gained their first knowledge of God; but, as we know, men have speculated on such matters, and by many it is considered highly probable that man gained his knowledge of God from the evidence of His works, or, as Boedder puts it, "Man can come to a certain knowledge of God

by means of his natural understanding, not however by way of immediate intuition, nor by reasoning *a priori*, but by arguments *a posteriori* based on the essence and properties of the things comprised under the term ' world ' " (*Natural Theology*, p. 12).

Dr. Morris Jastrow says : " The origin of Religion, so far as historical study can solve the problem, is to be sought in the bringing into play of man's power to obtain a perception of the Infinite through the impression which the multitudinous phenomena of the universe as a whole makes upon him. The strength and quality of this impression unite in suggesting to him at first, in a vague and dim way, that there is more in the universe than he can possibly take in with the help of his senses ; that beyond what is visible and known to him lies the vast field of the invisible and the unknown ; that the power of which he can become conscious in the world outside of him represents only a portion of the power that really exists—in short, that the finite stretches out into the unbounded field of the Infinite " (*The Study of Religion*, p. 196).

Mr. Farrer, in his study of *Primitive Manners and Customs*, says (p. 4) : " Few results of Ethnology are more interesting than the widespread belief among savages, arrived at purely by their own reasoning faculties, in a creator of things. The recorded instances of such a belief are indeed so numerous as to make it doubtful whether instances to the contrary may not have been based on too scanty information."

Capt. R. S. Rattray says : " I can see no reason why the idea of one great God, who is the Firmament, upon whom ultimately all life depends, should not have been the conception of a people living under the conditions of the Ashanti of old, and I can see no just cause for attributing what we have come to regard as one of the noblest conceptions of man's mind, to dwellers in, and builders of, cities, and to writers and readers of parchments and books " (*Ashanti*, p. 141).

Ratzel considers that religion is connected with men's craving for causality, which makes him incarnate all the higher phenomena of Nature (*Nat. Hist. Mankind*, vol. i, p. 41) ; and Sir James Frazer thinks that Primitive Man instinctively, in obedience to an impulse of his nature, attributed a personality akin to his own to the most striking natural objects, and this personification was the principal source of the Worship of Nature (Frazer, *Worship of Nature*, p. 17).

Max Müller : " Man could never have framed a name for God

unless Nature had taken him by her hand and made him see something beyond what he saw in the fire, in the wind, in the sun, and in the sky. He spoke of the fire that warmed him, of the wind that refreshed him, of the sun that gave him light, and of the sky that was above all things ; and thus, simply speaking of what they all *did* for him, he spoke of agents behind them all, and, at last, of an Agent behind and above all the agencies of Nature " (*Anthropological Religion*, p. 188).

The views of many other thinkers could be adduced to support the above, but I think enough has been said to justify an opinion that St. Paul's statement that the knowledge of God was gained from His works is accepted by many modern students of Religion.

Perhaps some idea of how the savage philosophers worked out for themselves the problem of Religion may be gained from a conversation a Moravian missionary had with a Greenlander. He told the missionary that he had often reflected that a *kyak* (fishing canoe) with all its tackle and implements does not grow of itself into existence, but must be made with labour and contrivance. But a bird, he added, is constructed with greater skill than the best *kyak*, and no man can make a bird. " I bethought me," said the Greenlander, " that he proceeds from his parents, and they from their parents : but there must have been some first parents—whence did they come ? Certainly, I concluded, there must be a Being able to make them, and all other things, a Being infinitely more mighty and knowing than the wisest man ! " (Pritchard : *Hist. Man.*, vol. i, p. 189).

III.

Belief in High Gods.

In considering beliefs among primitive peoples we not only meet with beings who are creators and powerful rulers, to be approached with awe, but we find supreme beings existing eternally in the heavens, the embodiment of knowledge, wisdom and goodness—the class of beings which Mr. Andrew Lang described as " High Gods." We ask, Whence came the idea of such beings ?

Dr. Menzies suggests that such a belief may not be primitive. It may, for instance, be a fading away of the idea of a Nature-

god; or some god has been advanced to this supreme position "in obedience to that native instinct of man's mind which causes him, even when he believes in many gods, to make one of them supreme" (*Hist. Religion*, p. 35).

But is this so? Has man such a natural instinct? Has not the trouble with Monotheism been to avoid Pantheism on the one hand and creature worship on the other? Look at Mohammedanism or Christianity. Does their history show a natural instinct in favour of one supreme God? Far from it. Saint worship, relic worship, and image worship in both these religions have constantly overthrown the monotheistic idea among the masses. This, I suppose, is admitted by most people.

As regards the fading Nature-god, Miss Kingsley has given us a very good illustration of what the process is. Among the West African Mpongwe tribes, Ombuiri, a great Nature-spirit, is worshipped without a priesthood attached to him. He is, amongst the parent tribes, a distinct entity; amongst neighbouring tribes he becomes a class—that is to say, there is an Ombuiri for every remarkable place or thing; whilst amongst the scattered branches of the tribe, and where much outside influence has been at work, the great Nature-spirit has sunk into a sort of demon who is employed by a priest in trivial affairs concerning thefts of tools, cooking-pots, and such like. The very opposite of fading away into a great spirit too exalted to be troubled with the affairs of men (*Travels in West Africa*, p. 168, and *Folk Lore of the Fiort*, p. xix).

It is suggested by others that these superior gods among low races were borrowed by them from some neighbouring race of higher culture. That seems unlikely. Where did such a borrowing take place?

The Kyoungtha of South-East India (20) seem to show the contrary. They have, apparently, no knowledge of the Divine Power which made all things. They are Buddhists, but, contrary to the tenets of that faith, they sacrifice to hills, forests and streams. Can it be doubted that these sacrifices are the remains of their old religion, which they held in common with the surrounding tribes, and which Buddhism has partially supplanted? Their neighbours, the Toungtha, worship the powers of Nature, and they have not yet adopted the higher culture of Buddhism. Yet they believe in the Divine Power that overshadows all. But they do not worship Him. He is fading out of their minds, and when they get more civilized they

will call themselves Buddhists, and the belief in the Great Power will fade away.

The Lepchas, when in Buddhist surroundings, will pay respect to the lamas and mutter the sacred words of the Buddhists; but they worship some ill-defined spiritual being who may plague them with sickness or famine. The book of Buddhist prayers which could be found in their simply furnished house was a sign of the new religion; the old was represented by the leopards' teeth and brass beads hung as charms round the children's necks (72) (75).

Many instances of tribes living in bitter antagonism and culturally opposed might be given who yet had a vague belief in a supreme Being, but such a belief is about the last thing they would have borrowed from their enemies. In fact, the evidence for borrowing should be of the clearest before being accepted, whereas the theory that a belief in a supreme Being, which had sprung from a contemplation of the wonders of Nature, seems more likely to agree with the facts.

It is often said that the idea of a supreme God is borrowed from Christian missionaries. But very strong evidence to the contrary can be produced. As regards the Gold Coast natives, both Sir A. B. Ellis and Capt. Rattray agree that this was not the case. Mr. Weeks maintains this also of the Congo tribes and Miss Kingsley of the Fiorts. In many cases observers have taken the greatest care to ascertain from natives who have had no intercourse with Christians whether the idea of such a god was known to them. The Rev. Dr. Schön, who visited the Ibo tribes of the Niger country in 1841 with Mr. (afterwards Bishop) Crowther, writes: "The Ibos are in their way a religious people . . . . Their notions of some of the attributes of the supreme Being are, in many respects, correct and their manner of expressing them striking. 'God made everything. He made both white and black,' is continually on their lips. . . . That they have an idea of God's omniscience and omnipresence cannot be disputed. On the death of a person who has in their estimation been good, they will say 'He will see God,' while of a wicked person they say 'He will go into fire.' I had frequent opportunity of hearing these expressions at Sierra Leone; but though I was assured that they had not learned them from the Christians, I would not state them before I had satisfied myself, by inquiring of such as had never had any intercourse with Christians, that they possessed correct ideas of a future state of reward and

punishment. Truly God has not left Himself without witness!" (76).

Professor Leuba, in *Folk Lore* of June, 1912, suggests that the belief in the existence of "High Gods" or "Great Makers" might have been conceived by some "gifted individuals" who thought upon the problem of Creation; and Dr. Paul Radin, in his *Arthur Davis Memorial Lecture* (p. 57) maintains that in every randomly selected group of individuals there will be one or more "idealists" who postulate some First Cause; and these persons give utterance to the Monotheistic beliefs found almost everywhere.

But these conceptions of the "gifted individual" and the "idealist" do not seem to sufficiently account for the embodiment of wisdom and goodness, unless we go a step further with Mgr. Le Roy, who maintains, in *La Religion des Primitifs*, that humanity was placed in possession of a fund of religious and moral truths together with the elements of worship, which having their roots in man's nature itself have perpetuated themselves in the family and developed themselves along with the society, influenced by the mentality of each race.

Without perhaps going quite so far as Mgr. Le Roy in the amount of man's original endowment, we may agree that these lofty conceptions were that manifestation of God mentioned in Rom. i, 19, a manifestation in the heart of man, which springing from a root in his very nature, so long as he was true to it, kept him at a higher level than that of the brutal and degraded savage some would have us believe him to have been.

But, it may be asked, does not the book of Genesis say that there was originally a Divine revelation? How then can it be maintained that man was left to discover God by his reason?

In reply, it may be said that the Bible does not say there was an original revelation—though probably it implies it. But, granting the literal truth of the first few chapters of Genesis, the primeval revelation was to man in a state of innocence, and that revelation, after the third or fourth generation, when men had sinned and become separated from each other, might as well not have been made as far as most of them were concerned.

It seems, therefore, quite in accordance with the facts to say that for the majority of heathen nations God's revelation became a revelation through His works. Not, indeed, through His works

alone, for there was in man himself that witness, God-implanted, that true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

IV.

(*b*) *The great God known but not worshipped. Idolatry and other forms of worship practised.*

The knowledge of God's existence did not, in too many cases, lead to a true worship of Him. Every student of the history of Religion knows only too well the result of the " vain and senseless reasonings " in the repulsive and cruel rites of the heathen. But behind them all we find such a widespread prevalence of Monotheistic beliefs that evidence of them from various sources makes, as it were, a chain of observations as far as possible encircling the world. Much of the evidence is taken from the records of various missionary societies, as their valuable testimony is too often overlooked.

The evidence can only be touched upon very lightly. To avoid repetition and, at the same time, maintain the geographical continuity of the evidence, the name of the people or locality where such belief exists will merely be mentioned, preceded by the letter " S " ; but where, in addition to this belief, worship is offered to inferior gods or " spirits," the letters " SI " will be used.

Where special attention is desired, the beliefs will be more fully set out.

The numerals refer to the authorities consulted, which are given in an Appendix.

SI Yakuts of Siberia (1). Japanese (2). Ainu (3).

SI The writer of the Chinese commentary to the Chow-le says that the supreme Ruler of the glorious heavens controls Nature and its elements, and to him honours are to be paid ; but he is not to be confounded with heaven, nor with the deities presiding over the fire elements. But the ordinary Chinaman worships spirits and deified ancestry (4).

SI In Corea the popular religion is similar to that of China, but alongside it there is the conception, more or less vague, of a great deity whom most people identify with the sky, but others believe that this is the supreme Being, the Creator and preserver of the world (5).

SI In Annam the sky is personified as " a wise, good, just and omniscient being ; in short, as a high god " (6). The everyday religion of the Annamese is of a much lower type.

S Melanesia, New Hebrides, Banks Islands, Vate, Hawaii and Samoa (7).

SI The Maori speak of Io. Io the supreme Being, Io the permanent, Io the parent, Io the parentless, Io the hidden face, Io the soul of all things and in whom all things are one. Io, of whom no images could be made, and to whom no offerings were made. Whose very name was not revealed to the vulgar. But the daily life of the people was governed by a religion of a much lower type (8).

SI Tribes of New South Wales (9). Australians (10).

S Muruts of North Borneo (11). Natives of Barito River (12).

SI Kenyahs of Sarawak (13).
The Dyaks speak of Petara—the Deity—but they have many Petaras or lesser gods. When a Dyak is dying, it is Petara alone (Petara being regarded as a saving power) who can save him. The Dyak may have groped about in a life-long Polytheism, but something like a feeling after the One True Unknown seems to return at the close of the mortal pilgrimage (14).

S Karens and Chins of Burmah (15). Binouas of the Malay Peninsula (16). Mincopies of the Andamans (17). Kacharees of Assam (18).
India.—As regards India generally, "Men worship Civa, the destroyer, because they fear him; Vishnu, the preserver, because they hope from him; but who worships Brahman the Creator? His work is done." In these words one of the poets of the Mahabharata accounts for the discontinuance of worship of the great god of India (19).

SI The Toungtha of South-East India (20). The Lushais (21). The Angamis (22). The Santals (23).

SI The Mundas look upon the sun, Sing Bonga, as God. He is a beneficent but inactive deity, who leaves the government of the world to gods in charge of various departments; but in times of sickness or calamity sacrifice may be made to Sing Bonga (24). The Oraons of Bengal have a very similar belief (25), as have also the Peharis (26), the Chamars of the Punjab, and the Singphos of the East Himalayas (27).

S Africa.—The evidence is very convincing concerning Africa generally. Mungo Park, who visited Africa in 1805, says: "I can pronounce, without the smallest shadow of doubt, that the belief in one God and in a future state of reward and punishment is entire and universal among them" (28).

S Negroes.—Waitz wrote in 1860: "Several of the Negro races . . . in the embodying of their religious conceptions, are further advanced than almost all other savages, so far that, even if we do not call them Monotheists, we may still think of them as standing on the boundary of Monotheism" (29). The missionary Olendorp says very much the same thing about the Negro tribes (30), and Mgr. Le Roy has recently added his testimony (31).

S The Pagan tribes of the East African Protectorate (32).

S Kaffirs.—M. le Vaillant, who travelled in Africa in 1785, says that the Kaffirs have elevated ideas of a supreme power, but they never pray, nor have they any religious ceremonies, though they have

faith in sorcery (34). Bishop Gray (34) and Mr. Theal also bear witness to this Kaffir belief (33).

S The Zulus have a belief in a Being very remote from men. "When we were children," said an old Zulu, "they used to point to the Lord on high; we did not hear his name" (35). A woman of the Ba-ronga said to a missionary: "Before you came to teach that there was a Good Being, a Father in Heaven, we already knew that heaven existed; but we knew not that anyone was in the sky" (36).

SI The Makalanga of Mashonaland (37). Dinkas of Upper Nile (38). Thonga (39).

S The Kondé who live in Tanganyika Territory and Nyasaland (40), and the Wa Kikuyu (41).

SI The Lugwari have a general name for ancestral spirits, *Ori*, who kill people and bring evils, and they have a god *Andronga* or *Adro*, the creator. They fear the former more than the latter, whom a missionary stated differed little from the Christian idea of Jehovah (42).

S The Bantu (43), (44), (45), (46).

S The Bakongo of Equatorial Africa (47). Southern Nigeria (48), (76).

S Suras, and other tribes of Northern Nigeria (49). Kagoro (50). Yoruba (51). Tshi-speaking peoples of the Gold Coast (52).

SI Tribes in the northern territory of the Gold Coast (52).
The Felups of the Portuguese Gambia Territory have a dim notion of a supreme Being, but he is confused by them with heaven, the rain, wind and thunder-storm (53).

S AMERICA.—The Indians of the Issa-Japura district (Brazil and Columbia) of South America believe that above the sky is a Great Good Spirit who once visited the earth but has returned to his abode. He is entirely passive. The Bad spirit is very active, but no prayer is offered to either, and sacrifice is quite unknown (54).

SI The Lengua Indians of the Paraguan Chaco (55).

S The Uitoto of Columbia, South America, have a mysterious creator to whom no worship is paid, and the Kagaba tribe have a female creator who also is not worshipped (56).

SI The Caribs (57). The Natives of British Guiana (58). The Natchez (59). The Wichita of Texas (60).

S The chief divinity of the Wintu is Olebis, who from above the sky watches all they do (61).

S The Red Indians of the United States (62). The Comanches (63). The Pueblo (64).
The Indians East of the Rocky Mountains (65), and those of Virginia (66). The Aleuts (67). The Eskimo (68).
The earliest missionaries to Greenland could not, at first, discover a belief in a divine Being, but when they became better acquainted with the language they found that a supreme Being was believed in, and had formerly been worshipped (69).

Evidence of the existence of beliefs in supreme gods might be very largely extended. Mr. Andrew Lang, in his book on *The Making of Religion*, devotes three or four chapters to the subject, and quotes instances from among the Fuegians, Australians, Natives of North and South Guinea; also the Dinkas, Wayaos, Fiorts and Gold Coast tribes, and various races in America. Sir James Frazer's latest work on *The Worship of Nature* contains very many instances, more particularly from Africa, collected very largely from modern observers; and whereas the existence of such beliefs was greeted with incredulity and derision some thirty years ago, the latest investigators seem to find them in most peoples of whose religion a careful study is made.

We may at any rate be certain that the opinions of Mr. Herbert Spencer, Sir John Lubbock, and others of that school, have been proved to be utterly unfounded, and the savage without a religion of some sort is a figment of the imagination. The facts have conquered the theories.

V.

(*c*) *Seeking after God.*

Having glanced at the various phases of the belief in a supreme God, we must look at what, after all, is the real test of a Religion, its effect upon the lives of the people who profess it; and I think that we will have to admit that in many cases the worship of some primitive and apparently savage tribes has a moral effect, and is really a seeking after God. Let us look at some instances:—

"Among the Pankhos and Lhoosai crime is rare, there are no blood feuds, they reverence parents and honour old age" (*Wild Races, S.E. India*, p. 254).

"The Ainu are a religious race. Mr. Batchelor, who lived among them for years, says that a more kind, gentle and sympathetic people it would be impossible to find. More than a hundred years ago Krusenstern says of them, 'The women are sufficiently ugly. However, I must do them the justice to say that they are modest in the highest degree.' The characteristic quality of an Aino is goodness of heart, which is expressed in the strongest manner in his countenance; and so far as we were able to observe, their actions fully answered this expression" (*Monthly Review*, 1816, vol. 80, p. 284).

"Among the Mincopies the children are tenderly loved; husband and wife, as as a rule, live together in mutual affection, and the women are remarkable for their modesty" (*The Pygmies*, p. 101).

The Santals, even as heathen, are a generous, simple, honest people (70).

It has been said of the Todas that every act of their life bears the stamp of devotion (74). In 1834 they were described as a laughter-loving race, living peaceably, in families, a pastoral life of rural simplicity. The women modest and retiring, though self-possessed as Europeans (71).

The Lepchas who, at the entrance to their settlements, placed offerings to some invisible Being, partly votive and partly as thank-offerings for an abundant harvest, are described by Capt. Sherwill, who visited them in 1852, as happy as schoolboys, enduring days of drenching rain without a murmur. No hardships appeared to ruffle this free, happy, laughing, playful, modest, social, joyous, and honest people (72). Capt. Higgens, who was there in 1851, bears the same testimony, except he adds that on one occasion he found some milkmen (like those of London of that date) adding water to their commodity; but they appeared to be very much ashamed at being discovered (73).

There is also found amongst so-called savages the idea of a good God whose commands must be obeyed, though the reason for them is not apparent and their fulfilment causes pain and grief. Ifa is one of the chief gods of the Yoruba-speaking people of West Africa, and human sacrifices are offered to him. The rulers declare that sacrifice is offered for the whole of the human race, the white man not excepted, and that if the sacrifices were discontinued the white man's superior knowledge would depart from him. Even the priests regards human sacrifice as something to be deplored, but sometimes necessary (*Yoruba-speaking People*, p. 106).

Summarizing his impressions of the religion of the Hottentots, Hahn says: "If the word religion corresponds to a faith in a Heavenly Father, who is near His children in their sufferings; if it expresses a belief in an all-powerful Master, who sends the rain and good weather; if it includes the idea of a Father of lights from whom cometh every good thing; if this Father is at the same time a rewarder, who sees all things and who punishes the wrong and rewards the right; if Religion translates the longing of the heart after the invisible, with the hope of seeing it face

to face in a better world; if it implies at once the feeling of human feebleness and the acceptance of a divine government, we ought not to hesitate about placing the Khoi-Khoi on our own level" (*The Pygmies*, pp. 236, 208).

A traveller at the end of the 18th century says: "In Africa, as everywhere else, the impression of His (God's) greatness, power and goodness, is evident . . . . I have seen modesty, benevolence, probity, and amiable hospitality among the number of native virtues. I have found the idea of a just and bountiful God engraved in the heart and soul of the upright man, and even ignorant and savage hordes believe in one god alone, and implore his favour and protection" (*Monthly Review*, 1805, vol. 47, p. 273; *Review of Travels in Africa during* 1785–7 *and* 1787, by S. M. Golberry).

Mr. Eliot, more than 130 years ago, in speaking of the wild tribes of the Garo Hills, says their mode of swearing is very impressive. "They call on Mahadeva in the most solemn manner, telling him to witness what they declare, and that he knows whether they speak true or false. When the first person swore before me, the awe and reverence with which the men swore forcibly struck me. My *moherrir* could hardly write, so much was he affected by the solemnity. These people appear to stand in the utmost awe of their deity, from their fear of his punishing them for any misconduct in their frequent excursions to the hills" (*Monthly Review*, 1794, vol. 13, p. 565).

These extracts speak for themselves and show that in the religion of uncultured peoples there has been a seeking after God, and the earnest seeker has been vouchsafed a vision, though dimly seen, of a loving Parent quick to reward and bless his faithful children.

VI.

Before concluding, the author feels that it may not be out of place to suggest a parallel between the revealed Religion of the Jewish Church and the Nature Religions of the Gentile world to show the divers portions and divers manners in which of old time God spake to His children.

Parallel between the Religion Revealed to the Jewish Church and the Natural Religion of the Gentile World.

1	Man in a state of innocence, and in possession of Knowledge of the Divine Being and His attributes.	
2	This Knowledge of the Divine lost or obscured through the "Fall" of Man.	
3	*The Jewish Church.* Promises to the Patriarchs called forth a response in hearts attentive to the Divine voice.	*The Gentile World.* The Witness of Nature enables "men of good-will" to gain a belief in a good and loving God.
4	The Law given. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law."	This simple Natural Religion dispersed among the peoples of the world, but, "knowing God, they glorified Him not as God."
5	Jewish idolatry and backsliding. But there remained a "remnant."	"Vain reasoning and senseless hearts" produced idolatry and neglect of the good God. But in every nation he that feared God, and worked righteousness was accepted.
6	The Gospel offered alike to Jew and Gentile.	

VII.

Conclusion.

As a result of our inquiry, I submit that, as regards the Gentile World :—

(*a*) Man gained a knowledge of God, the Great Creator, through contemplating His works ; and there was in man's nature that manifestation of God in his heart which enabled him to formulate these lofty conceptions of the Divine nature.

(*b*) The belief in this great God, though known among most peoples, did not generally lead to true worship ; but natural objects or imaginary powers received man's adoration or were propitiated by Him.

(*c*) In the religion of primitive peoples there is sometimes a real moral influence at work, as it were the Spirit of God striving with man, who is groping in the dark, waiting for the full revelation which God has given in His Son, in whose name and by whose authority the Christian Church proclaims to the world the message of Eternal Salvation.

And that these conclusions are in accord with the teachings of St. Paul.

APPENDIX.

AUTHORITIES QUOTED ON PAGES 49 TO 53.

(1) Keane. *The World's Peoples*, p. 178.
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 171.
(3) *Ainu of Japan*, pp. 62, 247.
(4) Medhurst's *Dissertation on the Theology of the Chinese* (1847).
(5) Frazer. *Worship of Nature*, p. 82.
(6) *Ibid.*, p. 86.
(7) James. *Primitive Ritual and Belief*, p. 204.
(8) Eldon Best. "The Maori" (*Times Lit. Suppl.*, 1926, p. 471).
(9) *J.A.I.* (1884), p. 364.
(10) *Ibid.*, p. 321; *Primitive Ritual and Belief*, chap. xii; E. Carpenter. *Comparative Religion*, p. 114.
(11) 200 *Years S.P.G.*, p. 694.
(12) Ling Roth. *Sarawak*, p. 170.
(13) *Nature*, 1900, p. 635.
(14) Ling Roth. *Sarawak*, p. 179; Ratzel, I., pp. 473, 476.
(15) *Mission Field*, 1903, pp. 199, 318.
(16) Quatrefages. *The Pygmies*, p. 137.
(17) *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 128.
(18) 200 *Years S.P.G.*, p. 609.
(19) Hopkins. *India, Old and New*, p. 113.
(20) Lewin. *Wild Races, S.E. India*, pp. 192, 242.
(21) *Ibid.*, p. 275; *The* 1901 *Census of India*, Appendix, p. 225.
(22) *Ibid.*, p. 210.
(23) *Ibid.*, p. 146; *Missionary Conference*, 1894, p. 117.
(24) *Census, India*, p. 156.
(25) Dalton's *Ethnology of Bengal* (quoted, *Golden Bough*, iii, p. 52).
(26) C.M.S. *Hill Tribes, India*, p. 13.
(27) *Vict. Inst. Trans.*, xix, p. 5.
(28) *Making of Religion*, p. 241.
(29) *Ibid.*, p. 239.
(30) Pritchard. *Physical Hist. Man*, i, p. 199.
(31) *La Religion des Primitifs* (quoted, *East and West*, p. 368).

(32) *Report on E. Africa*, 1897, p. 40.
(33) Theal. *Kaffir Folk Lore*, p. 19.
(34) 200 *Years S.P.G.*, p. 329 ; *Monthly Review*, 1790, i, p. 487.
(35) *Making of Religion*, p. 228.
(36) *Folk Lore*, 1899, p. 227.
(37) *Ruined Cities, Mashonaland*, p. 58.
(38) Lang. *Making of Religion*, p. 230.
(39) Junod. *Life of a South African Tribe.*
(40) *The Spirit-ridden Kondé* (reviewed, *East and West*, 1926, p. 187).
(41) *C.M.S. Report*, 1900, p. 119.
(42) *J.R.A.I.*, vol. lv, p. 461.
(43) Kingsley. *Travels, West Africa*, pp. 298, 361 ; *Folk Lore*, viii, p. 142.
(44) Junod. *Life of a South African Tribe* (reviewed, *East and West*, p. 351).
(45) *East and West*, 1917, p. 192.
(46) *Primitive Ritual and Belief*, p. 199.
(47) Weeks. *Primitive Bakongo* (reviewed, *East and West*, 1914, p. 232) ; *Brit. Medical Journal*, 1925, p. 166 (review of Mackie Ethnological Expedition).
(48) *C.M.S. Intelligencer*, 1904, p. 10.
(49) *C.M.S. Story*, 1908, p. 26 ; *Nature*, Aug., 1926, p. 220 (review of Meek's *Northern Tribes of Nigeria*).
(50) *Tailed Hunters of Nigeria*, p. 166.
(51) Bishop Crowther's *Yoruba Vocabulary*, p. 36.
(52) *Tshi-speaking Peoples*, pp. 17–29 ; Cardinall. " Natives of Northern Territory of Gold Coast " (*Times Lit. Suppl.*, 1920, p. 768).
(53) Keane. *Peoples of the World*, p. 80.
(54) *Folk Lore*, 1913, p. 56.
(55) Grubb. *Unknown People*, pp. 115, 126.
(56) Preuss. *Religion und Mythologie des Uitoto*, p. 166 ; *Physiologische Forschung*, vol. ii, p. 176 (quoted by Radin).
(57) *Comparative Theology*, p. 30.
(58) *Making of Religion*, p. 222.
(59) *Pygmies*, p. 140.
(60) *Mythology of the Wichita* (quoted Radin, p. 31).
(61) Curtin. *Creation Myths, America*, pp. xxx, 285.
(62) Bancroft's *Colonization of the U.S.*, vol. iii, p. 285.
(63) *Comparative Theology*, p. 28.
(64) *Ibid.*
(65) *Primitive Manners and Customs*, p. 52.
(66) *Comparative Theology*, p. 29.
(67) *Ibid.*, p. 27 (quoting Bancroft, i, 44).
(68) Pritchard. *History of Man*, i, p. 190 ; Keane. *World's People*, p. 30.
(69) *Making of Religion*, p. 199.
(70) *Missionary Conference*, 1894, p. 120.
(71) *The Neilgherries*, 1857, p. lxvi.
(72) *Tour in Sikkim Mountains*, pp. 10, 20, 30.
(73) Capt. J. Higgens. *MS. Diary.*
(74) Reclus. *Primitive Folk*, p. 229.
(75) *Census of India*, 1901, p. 202.
(76) Schön and Crowther's *Journal*, 1842, p. 50.

Discussion.

The Chairman (Lieut.-Colonel F. Molony) said: The thanks of the Victoria Institute are due to Captain Higgens for this learned paper, which must have involved much research. Some may object that the beliefs of savages in the 19th century do not necessarily coincide with the conclusions to which heathen philosophers had come in St. Paul's day, but such an objection is not supported by the facts. Captain Higgens has doubtless done well to confine himself to one line of evidence, namely, the beliefs of savages before our missionaries went amongst them; but the subject may, and should, be also studied from the historical standpoint. A very useful book on this is Dr. S. Angus's *Environment of Early Christianity*. He points out that Zenophanes said, "The best can only be one. . . . There is one God, among gods and men the greatest, unlike mortals in outer shape, unlike in mind and thought." Æschylus said, "Zeus is the ether, Zeus the earth, Zeus the heaven, Zeus is the universe and what is beyond the universe." Maximus of Tyre said that "all worshipped the same God, his name merely being different in different languages." With this agrees the book of Jonah. Jonah's shipmates demanded that every man, whatever his nationality, should call upon his God. The idea being that the different names of God all stood for a being who had power to make the storm to cease.

Some of the Church Fathers—Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian—admitted that some pagans believed in the unity of God. Plato and Seneca held that God can be only the author of good. Socrates argues for the existence of the Deity from the evidences of design in Nature, and especially in man himself; he believed in the Providence of God, holding that God sees, hears and cares for all. Cicero and Aurelius held the same. Men were exhorted to act as if God sees all, and to practise forgiveness, kindness, purity and self-examination. The circumstances under which Abram left Mesopotamia point to a primeval monotheism, which the people of that land had abandoned. And we read of Melchizedek, priest of God most high, possessor of heaven and earth.

We have very clear evidence as regards heathen belief in the conditional immortality of the soul. The Egyptian Book of the Dead

was certainly in existence as far back as 1500 B.C. It has pictures representing the soul as being accurately weighed against a feather, the symbol of perfection, while close by stands the scribe of the gods waiting to write down the all-important verdict. There squats near an animal, half lion and half crocodile, whose business it was to devour the soul if found to be too heavily weighted with sin. But if the verdict was favourable, the soul was led into the presence of Osiris, prior to entering upon a life of happiness. There is, of course, much other evidence that the Egyptians believed in the immortality of the soul. Plato represents Socrates as saying (Com.) ". . . . the soul, which is invisible, and which departs into another place of this kind, a place noble, pure and invisible, viz. into Hades, to a beneficent and prudent God. Thou shouldest say, If God wills it, and if it please Him."

In St. Paul's day, just as in Jerusalem, the Pharisees and the Sadducees held opposite beliefs about a future life; so in Rome and Athens, the Stoics believed in it and the Epicureans rejected it, which is doubtless why those two cults are mentioned in Acts xvii. But even the Stoics wanted further proof, and probably it was they who said to St. Paul, "We will hear thee concerning this yet again." As regards the Epicureans, to mock was practically the only thing they could do, for it was most damaging to their party to have an outside witness bringing forward precisely the sort of positive evidence of resurrection which was the one thing their opponents needed to claim a complete victory. But the stress usually put upon this mocking has obscured an important fact, namely this, that in St. Paul's day the heathen world had been brought in the providence of God to feel its need of a motive and dynamic powerful enough to forward social reforms. And we Christians maintain that this motive and dynamic was fully provided by Jesus Christ.

Our lecturer's second contention is, that belief in this great God, though known among most peoples, did not generally lead to true worship; but natural objects or imaginary powers received man's adoration, or were propitiated by Him. This also, of course, is fully borne out by history. We have only to think of the animal gods of Egypt and the false gods the Israelites were so often led away to worship. We know that the populace of Rome and Athens

worshipped many gods, though their thinkers knew better. Even their thinkers were sadly deficient in their sense of sin and many other matters with which Hebrew and Christian theology adequately dealt.

And our lecturer's third contention, that "in the religion of primitive peoples there is sometimes a real moral influence at work," is also true of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans.

(The lecturer having been cordially thanked for his paper, the discussion proceeded.)

Mr. THEODORE ROBERTS was sorry to strike a discordant note, but considered that, in stating three times over (pp. 42, 43 and 55) that St. Paul attributed the origin and development of religion in the Gentile world to men gaining the knowledge of God through contemplating His works, the lecturer had misinterpreted the Apostle, and therefore unintentionally misrepresented his teaching. So far from speaking of man gaining the knowledge of God, Romans i states that, although what might be known of God was manifested unto them (v. 19), they refused to have God in their knowledge (v. 28), which was quite in agreement with the wise man's discovery: "This only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccles. vii, 29). The earliest records agree with this, for they reveal to us man already civilized, although not yet possessed of many of the arts of civilization, and it was an accepted conclusion of science that no instance had ever occurred of any barbarian tribe or nation becoming civilized except through contact with men already civilized. Whatever evolution there might be in the lower creation, he believed the record in Genesis ii showed that man was constituted a living soul by the breath of God, and so was responsible to Him. He called attention to the opening words of St. Peter's first sermon to the Gentiles: "In every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him" (Acts x, 35). He believed that this was true where any heathen followed the example of the tax-gatherer in admitting he had no righteousness, and saying, "God be merciful unto me, a sinner" (Luke xviii, 13); for such a one, whether in the Jewish temple or elsewhere, was, according to the declaration of our Lord, "justified." He did not believe the Genesis account of man's creation and fall could be

reconciled with the gradual evolution of man from apehood and barbarism to gain a knowledge of God, as the lecturer appeared to imply.

Mr. W. HOSTE said: The subject of the paper is of course not the ground of redemption, which is prospectively or retrospectively one and the same from Abel downward, the atonement of Christ, nor yet the *knowledge* of salvation, much less the blessings of Christianity, as now revealed. So far as my experience of Central Africa goes, it would support the lecturer's thesis as to the universality of belief in God, and that this is emphatically not due solely to the presence of Christian missionaries, for I have met it where there were none. It is unfortunate that Dr. Burrows did not give names or places in asserting that there are some peoples without any religious idea. This is contrary to every witness I ever came into touch with. I have heard it said on excellent authority that there is not an atheist among the natives between the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, when uncontaminated by godless whites. The natives think of the whole sky as the face of God. "What terrible things that face does!" said a chief to a missionary, referring to some catastrophe of Nature. This is something quite above and distinct from their fetishism. This belief might be a remnant of the primal revelation. Perhaps we do not attach sufficient value to oral tradition among peoples who have no written records. But more likely still a belief in God is innate in man. This is distinct from a *knowledge* of God. But Paul on Mars' Hill seems to teach that a certain knowledge of God was attainable: "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us" (Acts xvii, 27). Even a heathen poet like Aratus shows in his "Prolegomena," as quoted (v. 28), that he had light to perceive that man could only have sprung from God as his origin. Apart from the revelation of Christ in Incarnation, etc., a full knowledge of God is impossible, but God "has not left Himself without a witness" (Acts xiv, 17), even among the heathen. Here the Apostle refers to God's Providential gifts; and in this connection it is important to remember that when God chose Israel to be His peculiar people, it was only *above* all other peoples (Exod. xix, 5; Deut. x, 15), but not to their exclusion. Captain Higgens seems perfectly correct in his use (p. 42) of Romans i, 19–21.

It is through His visible works that God's invisible things are clearly seen, even His eternal power and Godhead, " so that the heathen nations are without excuse." But when they did thus know God they failed, as he has pointed out quite scripturally, to glorify God, and so were given over to their own imaginations, so that now, alas! it is true that " the things the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God " (1 Cor. x, 20). No doubt it was the Spirit of God who originally used the works of Creation to reveal God, and ultimately that revelation came through Christ, for " all things were made by Him." It is striking that in Romans x, even where the apostle is speaking of the preaching of the Gospel, he does not omit to justify God by a reference to the witness of Creation : " But I say, Have they not heard ? Yes, verily " (*see* v. 18), and then quotes Psalm xix, 2," their sound went into all the world, and their words unto the ends of the world." This could only apply to the subject of the verse quoted, for it could not be said then, at any rate, that Gospel preachers had visited every land, a thing they have scarcely done even to-day in the 20th century of the Christian era.

Mr. SIDNEY COLLETT said : I confess I do not like the general tone of this lecture. One impression it leaves on the mind is that there is something in the natural man which enables him to grow into the knowledge of God—(*see* on p. 42 : " God, whose offspring he (man) *felt himself* to be " ; *also* on p. 44 : " bringing into play *man's power to obtain a perception of the Infinite* "). But surely the Bible teaches that man is so hopelessly " dead in trespasses and sins " (Eph. ii, 1) that the only hope for man was that *God should seek him* in the Person of His Son (Luke xix, 10). Another impression dangerously conveyed in the " conclusion " (on p. 55, sec. (*a*)) is that man could find God by contemplating His works in Nature, such as the sun, moon and stars. I wish the lecturer had made it quite clear that, while Nature may teach man that there is a God, nothing short of God's Revelation in the Bible can teach man who that God is. This is strikingly shown in Romans x, 14–17, where St. Paul, speaking of mankind in general, all of whom already possessed what our " Nature " could teach them, was deeply concerned that *Preachers should be sent to tell them of God's written revelation in His Word*, whereby alone they might be saved.

Written Communications.

Dr. A. T. Schofield wrote: The Institute is to be congratulated on beginning the year with such a valuable and scholarly paper. So far from inviting criticism, it calls for the hearty thanks of the Victoria Institute. One remark alone would I make. On p. 49, I suggest that John i, 9, may equally read, "True *Light* (which lighteth every man) *coming* into the world" (*erchomenon*). I suggest that the true Light is Christ, and not the conscience, which is not ever a *true light* (*see* Acts xxiii, 1, where Paul had persecuted the Church of God "with a good conscience").

The Bishop of Chichester, writing to Captain Higgens, said: "I have read your paper with interest. My anthropology is so much out of date that I dare not criticize details; but you will let me say that I believe tribes have been found without any religion whatever; just as practically all men wear clothes, but there are tribes that go absolutely naked. I also believe that in many cases there is no connection at all between the tribal religion and morality, except, possibly, in regard to the virtue of hospitality. I think you would find much of Illingworth's teaching to move along your lines, especially *see* his "Personality, Human and Divine," Lecture 7, "Religion in Pre-Christian History": "There can be no greater mistake . . . than to depreciate the ethnic religions in the supposed interests of an exclusive revelation."

Author's Reply.

The Chairman's store of classical knowledge has illuminated the subject with light from the Old World. The historical aspect and the teaching of heathen philosophers, to which he draws attention, might easily form the subject-matter of a separate paper.

Dr. Schofield's remarks on John i, 9, I read with great respect. It perhaps would have been better to have written "that True Light which," etc., to show that the God-implanted witness was the indwelling Christ.

As regards the criticism of Mr. Theodore Roberts, I fail to see where I have stated that man evolved from "apehood." On p. 55 I state that the knowledge of the Divine which man originally

possessed was lost through the " Fall " of man, but God left him not without witness, namely, the witness of His works. This seems to me to be the natural interpretation of St. Paul's words.

Mr. Hoste deals with the questions raised by Mr. Roberts in a much fuller and more lucid manner than I am capable of. I am much gratified to read the appreciative remarks of one who has first-hand knowledge of the religious beliefs of Central Africa.

As regards Mr. Collett's remarks, it seems to me that God did not leave man without a witness, otherwise how can one account for the good in numberless heathen who have never had the " Good tidings " preached to them ? But this can be admitted without in any way denying the necessity of sending forth men to proclaim Salvation through Christ alone, which it is our bounden duty to do.