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Art. 6.—THE GROWTH OF MYTHOLOGICAL STUDY.

THE object of this lecture * is to offer a general view—or rather my own view, whether it be true to nature or not—of a particular province of historical criticism as applied to the facts of mythology and religion. I intend to deal here with ideas rather than with individuals. Many scholars who have a right to figure even in a short history of mythological exegesis must perforce remain unmentioned. I shall endeavour to make my way through the wood without numbering the trees; the reader will excuse me if he does not hear from me about all the books and all the men who have contributed to our knowledge of religions and elevated it to its actual standard as a recognised province of scholarship.

Mythological exegesis became a necessity, not a scientific but an ethical necessity, the day when the more highly-developed Greeks began to perceive the conflict between some of their inherited myths—the puerile ones—and the higher moral idea which they had gradually evolved concerning the Godhead. At that period, about 600 B.C., myths were already old and had been sung by a host of poets, epic and lyric. Some philosophers were what we should call radicals; they upbraided Homer and Hesiod for having invented or recited falsehoods, and simply discarded the myths as rubbish. But such a course could not find many followers, owing to the high authority of the poets and the perpetual commemoration of the myths in religious ritual. So their successors—I mean the Pagan philosophers during ten centuries or more—resorted to two conciliatory systems, one of which treated myths as allegorical, while the other gave them an historical basis. Allegory, as the word shows, is nothing but a distorted and indirect manner of stating truths, whether moral or physical. Using allegory to explain a myth means transforming that myth into an apologue—ὁ μῦθος δῆλοι ὅτι κ.τ.λ.—which is always supposed to prove something. The historical or pragmatic method starts from the assumption that a myth is a real story adorned with adventitious embellishments. It is generally called Euhemerism, from the name of Euhe-

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merus, the writer of a semi-historical and semi-fantastical novel in the first part of the third century B.C. But this designation is no less unjust than the name given to America, which ought to be Columbia. Many thinkers before Euhemerus, among others Euripides and Plato, sought to explain myths in the same way.

Both these methods are radically wrong, because they completely ignore the conditions under which myths originate and develope, and because the worst way of explaining a myth is to put aside its mythical character. Let me give an example to make myself fully understood. According to an old Greek legend, King Akrisios, of Argos, had been warned by an oracle that his grandson would kill him. As he had an only daughter, Danaé, he shut her up in a tower with a small opening at the top, and decided that she should never be married. But Zeus fell in love with the girl, entered the tower in the shape of a shower of gold, and begot the famous hero Perseus.

Now a Greek, perceiving that the conduct of Jove was unworthy of a respectable god, could find two principal ways of overcoming the moral difficulty. First, using the allegorical system, he might say that the golden rain of Jupiter typified the sun's rays, and go on to dilate on the fertilising power of the radiant king of day. He might also explain the myth as an allegory of the power of gold, to which men's hearts and even stone walls are not impervious. Drawing a lesson from a myth and explaining a myth are two quite different things; but the ancients, and also many moderns, have overlooked this.

The other method, the historical or euhemeristic, was still easier to handle. What the poets recited about Zeus and Danaé had really occurred; but the hero of the adventure had been a man, not a god, and he had not taken the form of a golden shower. It was simply the story of some hero of old who had entered the dwelling of princess Danaé by dint of munificence; freely using a purse full of gold, he had tipped the porter, the housekeeper and the maids. Resorting to such a method, you not only destroy the poetry, but substitute for it a wretched platitude; you suppress the myth, and do not create history in its stead. It is perfectly true that legends develope about historical persons, even nowa-

days; Napoleon and Garibaldi have their legends. But such legends, added to or substituted for history, are always imitations of earlier legends; and these you can never hope to elucidate by disentangling and brushing away the supposed mythical elements which they contain.

Now you may ask: But what would be your explanation of the legend? Well, I can tell you, having already published it. In many parts of the Balkan peninsula, and also in Germany, when peasants are afflicted by a long period of drought, they take a girl, strip her naked, and pour water upon her head; it is a ceremony of sympathetic magic, wherewith they hope to obtain good rain by giving a forcible example to the reluctant sky. Danaé, in Greek, means dry; so I believe that the girl was treated as *the* Danaé, the dry earth, and that the water shed upon her was called the golden rain, on account of the fertilising powers ascribed to it. The ritual in due time gave rise to a myth, a process common enough, but one of which nobody had a clear notion before the last century. Again, Why a tower? you will ask. Well, because a literary myth like that of Perseus is a concoction of many different myths strung together by some ingenious poet, not necessarily by the people taken as a whole. There is an old and widely circulated story about 'the fair one in the tower,' 'la belle dans la tour'; there are also many stories, collected by Mr Sidney Hartland, about supernatural births; there are others about kings or other prominent men who forbid their daughters to marry, etc. Many elements of that venerable folk-lore, which is even older than the oldest literature, appear together in a myth like that of the birth of Perseus. So you see my explanation is by no means a simple one; but, whether true or not, it explains something and does justice to the mythical character of the legend. Nowadays nobody would consent even to discuss the allegorical or historical explanations offered of this myth; scholars would rather say that they can find no good explanation, which is another manner of proving that mythological exegesis has definitely outgrown its childish stage.

When the Christians began to upbraid the Pagans for the moral looseness of their myths, the pseudo-historical system was in full sway. The Fathers said to the

Pagans, 'Your gods were rascals and your goddesses something worse.' In answer to this, many Pagans renounced Euhemerism, and had recourse to allegory, though with small success, because Christian writers justly objected that allegory may help you out of any difficulty. All through the Middle Ages Euhemerism prevailed, together with another idea which already occurs among Alexandrine Jewish writers, to the effect that the Pagans had borrowed their legends from Holy Scripture, but had disfigured and distorted their borrowings by reason of the malicious influence of the demons. So it seemed perfectly clear that the legend of Herakles was nothing but a silly plagiarism of the story of Samson. The men of the Renaissance adopted with great enthusiasm the allegorical method, which had prevailed among the neo-platonic philosophers in the later centuries of paganism. Indeed, allegory, under different names, such as symbolism, has continued to the present day, not precisely as a system, but as a tendency or a make-shift.

Who was the first to teach common sense? This is very difficult to answer. Almost all sensible ideas have been put forward a great many times before finding an audience; the same may be said of many practical ideas, that is to say, inventions which have contributed to better the condition of mankind. But beneficent ideas do not produce good results before they have been taken up and systematically developed by a man of science, patience and literary ability. We know, for instance, that the idea of totemism, which has played such an important part in modern mythological exegesis, was familiar to Garcilasso della Vega at the end of the sixteenth century, and also to the French missionary Lafitau in the early years of the eighteenth. It is, indeed, very interesting to observe that Lafitau even conceived the idea that totemism might explain some things in Greek mythology. But who revealed the importance of totemism before MacLennan? Discovering a nugget is one thing, and working a gold-mine is another. Many travellers have discovered nuggets before they thought of exploiting a mine.

I believe one of the first to sink shafts and dig trenches in the rich strata of myths and religions was a somewhat versatile Frenchman, Fontenelle, the nephew of the great

Corneille, who wrote tragedies, poetry, excellent biographies of *savants*, etc., and, among other short essays, a very remarkable one on the origin of myths. The more important passages of that memoir have been translated by Mr Andrew Lang in an appendix to his well-known work, 'Myth, Ritual and Religion.' Why, asks Fontenelle, are so many Greek myths absurd? Because they are inherited from people in the same state of savagery as the Kaffirs and Iroquois, among whom similar myths prevail. That answer, a real flash of genius, laid the foundation of the whole anthropological school of mythology. Not only did Fontenelle recognise that myths are survivals of a more ancient and barbarous state of things, but he divined the real comparative method, which consists in seeking for information and parallels among savages when you wish to explain something that looks savage in civilised societies or literature. He perceived, though his knowledge of ethnology was but slight, the world-wide similarity of myths, and ascribed this to the similarity of human beings at a certain stage of their intellectual development. Fontenelle went so far as to compare the myths of America with those of Greece, concluding that the American Indians might have become as sensible as the Greeks if they had only been allowed sufficient time. He also mentions the borrowing of myths; in short, he fully justifies Mr Lang's saying: 'The followers of E. B. Tylor, Mannhardt, Gaidoz and the rest, do not seem to be aware that they are only repeating the notions of the nephew of Corneille.' Please mark that Mr Lang spoke of the 'followers' of the scholars whose names he quotes; at least one of these, M. Gaidoz, was fully aware, so early as 1877, that his opinion had been anticipated by his great countryman.*

* An important point is the date of Fontenelle's essay. Mr Lang quotes it from the edition of the 'Œuvres Complètes,' published in 1758; Fontenelle, born in 1657, died in 1757, at the ripe age of 99 years. Now I have reason to believe that Fontenelle wrote his epoch-making essay between 1687 and 1691, almost the very year when Bossuet celebrated in his high-flown biblical language the virtues of the Prince de Condé. The essay was published later, but it is really interesting to note that it belongs not to the eighteenth century, as has been generally believed, but to the seventeenth. This enhances the merit of the writer and the historical importance of his short memoir.

Three years after Fontenelle's death, another essay, of equal importance, was published anonymously by a French magistrate, De Brosses, who was a member of the Academy of Inscriptions. He first read his paper before the Academy, but it met with a very cold reception, and was not printed in the 'Mémoires' of that learned society. Fearing it might be considered as unorthodox, the author published it in Geneva in 1760, without prefixing his own name, or that of the printer or the town. The subject treated by De Brosses was that of the fetish gods, or fetishism. This term had been coined by travellers, from a Portuguese word applied to amulets and trinkets sold by them to the natives of Western Africa. The essence of fetishism, which is an important feature in African religion, though by no means the whole religion of the fetishists, can be briefly defined as the reverence shown to inanimate things supposed to be animated. In studying the reports of travellers about African fetishism, De Brosses had not only evolved the notion of animism, as it was to be generalised a century later by Mr Tylor, but he clearly recognised that fetishism underlay idolatry, and tried to explain the Egyptian idols as a survival and development of fetishism.

De Brosses's book is very short and touches upon few questions; he, very naturally, had a tendency to exaggerate the importance of the fetish, but he has been unjustly reproached with ignoring the fact that the fetish, as such, was not adored by the African negroes. De Brosses understood that the savage located a spirit in the fetish; and that his cult, though materialistic in appearance, was, in its essence, a spiritual one, akin to that of the most civilised people of his time. But on this, from motives of prudence, he did not venture to insist, just as Fontenelle had refrained from extending his comparisons to the Jewish or to the Christian creeds. We have seen that, in spite of these precautions, De Brosses had aroused some hostility in the Academy, where the Catholic clergy and the intolerant Jansenists then formed a majority.

David Hume, too, conceived a true idea of the prevalence of animism; and Voltaire, especially in the article on Religion in his 'Dictionnaire philosophique,' seems to have foreshadowed both Kuhn and Mannhardt, by attaching importance to the fear awakened by storms

and thunder, as also to the large number of local demons supposed to dwell in the environment of man. The sky-god, in his opinion, was developed from inferior gods; and polytheism—we should call it polydemonism—led in course of time to monotheism. This was distinctly contrary to the theory prevailing at that time, and existing even now in religious circles, of a primitive revelation of God to man. But Voltaire had no system of his own, and he mistrusted all systems, comparing them to rats burrowing their way along galleries, but always stopped by some insurmountable obstacle; moreover, he was too busy in striving to destroy the religion of his day to give much time to the analysis of older religions. The great truths discovered by Fontenelle and De Brosses do not seem to have been appreciated by him, nor by any writer of his school. Indeed, Fontenelle was soon quite forgotten; and De Brosses, though finding readers, met with scanty recognition.

The end of the eighteenth century witnessed the first appearance of romanticism, which owed much to the success of Macpherson's 'Ossian,' and to a renewal of the astronomical speculations of the later Greeks. Let us begin with the latter. The prophet of the astronomical system was Charles-François Dupuis, a French professor of literature, who was a friend of the great astronomer Lalande. Well read in classical mythology, he came to the conclusion, so early as 1777, that the pagan gods were nothing but constellations; that the very names of the gods were those of stars; and that their history was the allegorical expression of the various phenomena of astronomy. In 1795 he published his large work on the origin of all religions, which met with an extraordinary success. Most scholars now think it absurd, though German Assyriologists have lately revived it; but it was indeed a system, the first to be given to the world with many details; and Dupuis's work has contributed more than any other to kindle the curiosity of the reading public concerning mythological subjects, not as an element of art or literature, but of scientific investigation.

One of the results of nascent romanticism under the sway of Macpherson's fraud was to distract attention from the classics, from Italy and Greece, in favour of Celtic countries, especially Wales, Scotland, and Brittany.

Count Caylus and others in the course of the eighteenth century had prepared the movement; a school of so-called 'Celtomaniac' scholars had arisen, who devoutly studied the megalithic monuments and the remains of Celtic literature. As the great bulk of Irish literature was still unknown, and the other sources of information were late and scanty, men began to investigate Celtic folk-lore; the word did not yet exist, but the study commenced. A learned society in Paris, called the 'Académie celtique,' founded in the early years of the First Empire, was the centre of these investigations conducted on a new line. The 'Académie celtique,' which became in time the still existing 'Société des Antiquaires de France,' is now very little known, because the volumes containing its publications are rare and full of wild theories. But Grimm and Mannhardt were quite familiar with them; and there originated in 1804 the modern science of folk-lore. Fontenelle had insisted on the importance of savage-lore as furnishing matter for comparison; but there exist savages, or at least men of inferior culture, elsewhere than in remote countries beyond the seas. The legends, beliefs, and ritual of these half-civilised countrymen of ours may likewise be aptly compared with early rituals and mythologies. In seeking for information about the primitive Celts and Druids, the Celtomaniacs of the 'Académie celtique' hit upon the popular legends and customs of Brittany; a new field was thus opened to research.

Meanwhile, two great events had occurred—the discovery of Sanscrit literature by Jones and Colebrooke, and the reaction of mysticism against the dry philosophy of theists and atheists. The natural outcome of mysticism was symbolism, as taught by Creuzer in Heidelberg, a most uncritical revival of the old Greek system of allegory, with more learning, but no more common sense. At some very remote period, according to Creuzer, the Pelasgic priests of Greece and Asia had been in possession of superior truths, metaphysical, moral, and physical; they had taught them in an allegorical form, because humanity in those early days was not fitted to receive truth undisguised. But the meaning of their sublime teaching had been misunderstood; their allegories were supposed to contain historical facts; and thus a childish

mythology arose, while the true doctrine, untainted with absurd tales, had continued to be transmitted to the elect in the Grecian mysteries. In addition to the old exegesis by means of allegory, we may recognise in Creuzer's system the influence of an idea very familiar to the eighteenth century, namely, that of the predominating power and cunning of the priestcraft. Though reacting against Voltairianism, Creuzer was nearer to Voltaire than he thought himself to be; he simply transferred to the prehistoric East a state of things then existing in his country, where clever theologians taught morals to the ignorant masses under the disguise of religion.

The literature of India was approached from the wrong side; and the more modern works were read and translated before the older ones. But, when the knowledge of the Vedic hymns began to spread, an almost unanimous verdict of the learned tended to consider them as the representatives *par excellence* of primitive religion and mythology. This error was responsible for a craze which lasted more than half a century and met with unparalleled success in the scientific world. The discovery of old Persian and of old Indian literature gave rise to the theory of Aryan languages, which is a fact, and to that of Aryan races, which is an unproved hypothesis. After having compared the languages of the Persians, Indians, Greeks, Italians, Germans, and Celts, the scholars took to comparing their ideas, especially their religious ideas, and evolved the fallacy of an Aryan religion, of an Aryan mythology, common to all the tribes before their dispersion and still traceable in the literature of their descendants. In fact, such literature as they considered was chiefly Indian, Persian, and Greek, the other monuments of early poetry not having been preserved; so the new school, though occasionally introducing parallels from Germanic and other sources, did nothing but compare the Vedas, the Zendavesta, and Homer. The name of 'comparative school,' which it assumed, is almost an irony, because these scholars compared very little indeed, and even objected to more comprehensive research. While Fontenelle and De Brosses had adduced American and African parallels, they shut themselves up in the circle of Aryan literature, with the idea, more or less openly expressed, that the primitive Vedic Aryan was

not far from being identical with primitive man. We now know that the Vedic and Zoroastric literatures are the outcome of an over-refined priestcraft; that thousands of years of religion and mythology lie behind them; and that they have no title to be considered as in any sense primitive. Thus we may measure the extent of the fallacy which weighed like a nightmare on science during a large part of the last century.

The Vedic school—we will not say the comparative school—split into two sects; the leader of the former was Kuhn, and of the latter Max Müller. They have several principles in common—that the Vedic hymns were the expressions of primitive human thought in presence of the great manifestations of natural forces; that those expressions, taken literally—an echo of Creuzer's symbolism—had given rise to mythology, which was to be considered, in fact, as a disease of language; and that polyonymy and homonymy, confusions of words and puns, had acted as potent factors in the formation of myths. But, whereas Kuhn and his brother-in-law Schwartz insisted more on the exceptional and alarming phenomena of nature, such as storms, thunder and lightning, Max Müller and his numerous following reverted to the solar system, and attributed the greatest influence to the phenomena connected with the daily course of the sun, the dawn and the twilight. Dupuis had founded mythology on astronomy; Max Müller founded it on meteorology. He was one of the greatest Sanscrit scholars of all times, an admirable and thorough linguist and a charming writer. All these qualities Dupuis did not possess; and Max Müller often took occasion to deride Dupuis. But now their systems lie side by side in the vast tomb of speculative errors and may be indulgent to each other;

'Pariterque jacentes Ignovere diis,'

as the poet says. Yet, even more than Dupuis, Max Müller had the merit of arousing public interest; and the splendid work he did in Indian philology will be gratefully remembered as long as there lives a scholar to take up a Sanscrit book.

Dealing as I do with systems, I cannot follow a close chronological order, and must here revert to the first classical school of German philology, which reacted

against Creuzer with the great sceptic Lobeck, and entered a new path with the illustrious Otfried Müller. In his 'Prolegomena to a Scientific Mythology,' published in 1825, Müller insisted on the realistic character of myths, as unconscious acts by which the human mind, still incapable of abstractions, expresses ideas in a concrete and poetic form. He recommended that the myths should be studied not only in their origin and development, but in their local varieties; and also that they should be carefully compared with the myths of other nations, not excluding those of so-called savages. Many hints in that direction, which could be collected from his work, are strikingly in advance of his time, though the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as we have seen, had divined not only comparative mythology, but the anthropological method of dealing with it.

The great impulse now came from Jacob Grimm, the founder of modern German philology (born in 1785), who worked in close intercourse with his younger brother Wilhelm. By collecting and comparing the German popular tales, they became the first scientific apostles of folk-lore, which they considered as the source and origin of the literary epic. Moreover, they explored with heroic patience the immense domain of German popular thought, custom, and ritual, at a period when the building of railways and the development of mechanics had not yet obscured or contaminated the inheritance of a long past. The idea that dominates their work is no more that of a ruling priestcraft, but that of an active and creative people. Religions and mythology are the outcome of the rural classes, which have more or less faithfully preserved their pristine elements, while accepting, at least in appearance, the modern creeds of Christianity. The real Germanic mythology is not that of the written epics, but that of the unwritten tales, superstitions, and customs. Democratic ideas, which had been disseminated through Germany by the French conquests, substituted, even in the realm of religious enquiry, the solicitous study of the toiling millions for that of the nobility and the priesthood. But we can attribute an even more definite origin to the revolution brought about by Grimm. We know that he worked in Paris in 1805, and that he was in close inter-

course there with the members of the Celtic Academy, to which he was elected, in 1811, a corresponding member. His works reveal an intimate acquaintance with the publications of this academy; and M. Gaidoz was perfectly right in claiming for this half-forgotten French society a decisive impulse on Grimm's career.

We know from Wilhelm Mannhardt himself that the reading of Jacob Grimm's German mythology was the starting-point of his studies, which, though the fruit of genius, met with little recognition in his own country. Influenced also by Kuhn (who had begun as a pupil of Grimm), he enlisted for a while in the so-called comparative school; but he soon found his own way, in a quite different direction, towards a systematic enquiry into the *Wald- und Feldculte*, the peasant superstitions and rituals relating to the forests, the fields, and the demons supposed to inhabit them. He was the first to gather the rich material relating to harvest rituals and the sacrifices (or mock-sacrifices) of men and animals which those survivals involve. Mannhardt is the connecting-link between Grimm and Dr Frazer; before Dr Frazer he applied his knowledge of folk-lore to the elucidation of ritual problems set before us by Greek and Roman literature. On the other hand, his knowledge of French folk-lore was almost entirely due to his perusal of the publications of the 'Académie celtique'; so that here again the Celtomaniac school, with all its wildness, has proved effective in fostering sound work. But in France the study of folk-lore had not yet conquered the sympathy of the public. The seed had been sown by French hands, but the harvest was ripening on the borders of the Rhine. This has often been the case: 'sic vos non vobis!'

Mannhardt, as I said, was not appreciated by his countrymen, nor indeed, till quite late in his life, in other countries, where Max-Müllerism, dominating from its centre in Oxford, had risen to a kind of scientific orthodoxy. Three things were necessary now for the progress of religious studies: (1) to enlarge the scope of Grimm's and Mannhardt's researches, which remained confined to European peasantry, by bringing in the evidence of non-European savages; (2) to widen the conception of religions so as to include the social pheno-

mena, especially family relations, which are intimately connected with primitive religion; (3) to confute Max-Müllerism and persuade the public that sun, twilight, and dawn, combined with Aryan grammar and Vedic studies, do not afford a key to the study of religion, not even that of the so-called Aryan races.

Roughly speaking, this constructive and destructive work went on *crescendo* from 1865 to 1885. It has been almost entirely in the hands of English scholars. The constructive work was chiefly due to MacLennan, Lubbock, Tylor, and Herbert Spencer; the leader of the destructive work was that wittiest of scholars and most scholarly of wits, Mr Andrew Lang. He found an early admirer and *commilito* in a French wit, who is also a Celtic scholar, Prof. Gaidoz, the founder of that charming periodical, 'Mélusine,' which, I regret to say, lapsed several times for lack of subscribers, and finally expired after having fulfilled its destructive task.

Why did England, in spite of Max Müller's authority, play so great a part in the decisive struggle which ended in the triumph of the anthropological school? I find several reasons for this. There is a great deal of common sense and of matter-of-fact judgment in England. Max Müller's Germanism, though clothed in brilliant English, could not satisfy the craving of the British public for clear ideas. A more weighty reason is England's colonial policy, the existence of a vast Empire of which Aryan India is only a part. A German could limit his horizon to Aryan religions, to Aryan or European peasant-lore; an Englishman could not. He heard about too many absolutely different races, too many non-Aryan savages, with ideas quite different from his own. Thirdly, I would attribute some influence to Bible-reading. The society which the Bible describes is Semitic, not Aryan, and was generally more familiar in the sixties—I do not know how things stand now—to a parish clerk in England than to a University professor in Germany or in France.

Definite dates must be given here, for they are very important. The Swiss Bachofen's 'Mutterrecht,' published in 1861, partly anticipated MacLennan, whose work on primitive marriage appeared in 1865. That same year Mr Tylor, who, because he was thought to be con-

sumptive, had travelled in America with the English anthropologist Christy, published his 'Researches into the Early History of Mankind.' In 1867 and 1869 MacLennan all but discovered totemism. This great religious and social fact was known to travellers, but no one had yet thought of drawing up a system of totemism, of using it to explain survivals in Egyptian and Greek mythology, or of combining the notion of totemism with that of exogamy (a word due to MacLennan, who first applied it in building up his theory of primitive marriage by capture). MacLennan was a Scottish barrister who attached much importance to legal symbols, and had a keen eye for detecting their meaning. Though he was a man of wide learning, he was not a great scholar, and much of his work has failed to stand the test of criticism; but he was really one of those thinkers of genius who seek untrodden paths, and, while benefiting science by their work as pioneers, have to remain content with the hope of posthumous recognition. Some of MacLennan's ideas were popularised and others disputed, five years later, in Lord Avebury's celebrated work, 'The Origin of Civilisation'; but his real successors, though by no means his disciples, are Robertson Smith, Lang, and Frazer.

Mr Tylor's 'Primitive Culture,' published in 1871, was a great event. Not only did he give to the world, at the early age of 39, the first comprehensive handbook of anthropology, but he created, in the face of Max-Müllerism, the method of anthropological research in matters concerning early religions and creeds. We do not owe to him the word *animism*, which had been put forward by Stahl, though with a quite different meaning, in the eighteenth century; nor was he the first to observe that primitive man tends to explain all the reactions of things by the action of a conscious will similar to his own—a truth anticipated by Fontenelle, Hume, and some others. But what early writers had observed superficially he systematised with unusual knowledge, and he pushed the principle to its fullest logical conclusions. One of these was the explaining of the wide-spread belief in souls as spirits separated from the body by death, trance, or dream. Tylor's spiritualism is the immediate ancestor of the ghost theory—the doctrine that the souls of departed chiefs become the object of a cult, which explains some of

the most important phenomena in religion. The ghost theory found many followers in Germany; it had been anticipated in France by Fustel de Coulanges' admirable book, 'La Cité antique.' Herbert Spencer took it up in his 'Principles of Sociology,' together with a new system of Euhemerism and a theory of totemism which betrays a tardy influence both of Creuzer and of Max Müller, and which had occurred quite independently to Lord Avebury. A savage is nicknamed or surnamed the Bull or the Sun; he dies and becomes a worshipped hero; then the worshippers forget that 'Bull' or 'Sun' is only a nickname, and begin to adore the Sun or the Bull. I have no time, and this is not the place, to discuss these views; but it is always interesting to detect the re-appearance of the old rationalist idea of a misunderstanding, put forward to explain the irrational elements in religion.

Neither Tylor nor Spencer waged open war against Max-Müllerism; that chivalrous feat has been performed by Andrew Lang (since 1884). But it would be unjust to disregard the positive work of that able controversialist by dwelling exclusively on his activity as a critic. Tylor had familiarised us with the notion of survivals, a word which, like many useful terms, found a scientific legitimation in Darwinism. Lang attributed to irrational savage survivals the irrational elements in myths; he laid great stress on totemism; and, being a first-class scholar, he used folk-lore and savage-lore with unprecedented *maestria* to explain Greek and Roman mythology. His most famous book, 'Myth, Ritual and Religion,' appeared in 1887. Immediately after having read it, Gaidoz wrote in 'Mélusine' that it was conclusive; that the cause of anthropology against comparative philology was won; and that all future developments of science on those lines would have to start from Lang's book. Indeed, the fall of Max-Müllerism, announced by Barth, Bergaigne and Darmesteter in France some years before, was as rapid as had been its rise. In 1888 the German scholar Gruppe, in a review of exegetical systems, treated it almost as a delusion of the past. The field lay wide open to anthropology and psychology; the reign of philology was at an end.

A brilliant period began about 1885, the great initiator of which was the Scotsman, William Robertson Smith

(1846–1894), who since 1883 had been Professor of Arabic at Cambridge. Robertson Smith was the first oriental scholar, the first scholar well versed in German work on theology, who contributed to the advancement of anthropological studies on religion; but the chief influence which we detect in his work is that of his contryman and personal friend MacLennan. Following, with far wider knowledge, MacLennan's example, and also that of the American scholar Morgan, he conducted his investigations from the standpoint of sociology, not from that of mere individual psychology. The problems relative to kinships, to the formation of families, clans, and tribes, absorbed him more fully than the explanation of myths and gods. His theory of sacrifice,* in which something very like Catholic communion was considered as one of the primitive forms of worship, and was brought into close connexion with totemism, is, in my opinion, though I know that many scholars disagree, to be ranked with the most brilliant discoveries of modern science. But Smith, in his too short life, did more than the magnificent work to which his name is attached, more still than his illuminative teaching and lecturing in Scotland and in England: 'genuit Frazerum.'

Editor-in-chief of the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' (ninth edition), Robertson Smith invited his young friend Frazer to write the articles on Taboo and Totemism. Never did two articles in an encyclopædia produce such a lasting effect on science. The doctrines therein condensed, put forward in that admirable style which others besides Englishmen can appreciate, are chiefly derived from Smith, MacLennan, Lang, and Tylor; but, though not entirely new to the learned, they were revelations to the reading public. Moreover, in a few lines or even words, Frazer had expressed some absolutely original ideas—the beneficent influence of taboos, and the domestication of animals as possibly due to totemism. Though Frazer's article on totemism found a French translator, Van Gennep, England then became and remained for years in advance of France and of Germany. When I began, in 1900, under Smith's and Frazer's influence, to lecture in France on taboos and

* Set forth in the article 'Sacrifice' ('Encycl. Brit.' ed. viii), and developed in 'The Religion of the Semites.'

totemism, I had to explain these terms, which nobody understood at that time. A year earlier, when I mentioned them to the great Mommsen, he confessed to having never heard them previously. I shall never forget a long conversation which I had with Furtwaengler on the banks of the Seine, one fine summer evening. He knew nothing about these 'English' theories, which I explained to him at length in my broken German, but, I may say, with that tendency to clear expression which we are taught in French public schools. When my speech was at an end, 'Das lässt sich sehr gut hören,' replied Furtwaengler; and it was as if, issuing from some dark room, he had suddenly been flooded by light.

In 1890 Frazer brought out the first edition of his *magnum opus*, 'The Golden Bough.'* He started from the sanguinary ritual of the sacred wood at Nemi to take his course through the whole realm of folk- and savage-lore, guided by three dominant ideas—that of sympathetic magic, which nobody had hitherto developed with such fullness and accuracy of information; that of the killing of the priest-king, not uninfluenced by Smith's theory of sacrifice, but quite free from the interference of totemism; and that of the all-pervading similarity of agricultural rites, directly taken from Mannhardt. Frazer, whose early study on totemism had created a host of followers, seemed himself somewhat reluctant to pursue the same line; in fact, he soon turned from the guidance of Smith to that of Mannhardt, and, while giving the keenest attention to taboos, avoided the subject of totemism. He returned to this difficult problem when the publication of Spencer and Gillen's works on the Australian tribes yielded new and unexpected light; and he has recently produced, as we all know, four bulky volumes on totemism and exogamy.† Unlike Andrew Lang, who destroys the delusions of others, Frazer excels in destroying his own. What now remains of his article on totemism published in 1887? Next to nothing, answers M. van Gennep, except the fact, clearly stated long ago by travellers, that the totemistic relation affects not individuals, but groups. I

* Two vols (Macmillan), 1890; 2nd ed. three vols, 1900; 3rd ed. in progress.

† 'Totemism and Exogamy,' four vols (Macmillan, 1910). See notice in the 'Quarterly Review' for April 1911, art. 5.

have no intention of discussing this point; I only state what I think cannot be denied; but this affords me the opportunity for characterising the last phase, which may have originated about 1898, when the French school of M. Durkheim took the field and began issuing the 'Année sociologique.'

The general public is always late in accepting knowledge. While the ideas of Robertson Smith and Frazer were rapidly spreading—in Germany thanks to the able advocacy of the late Albert Dieterich, who was inspired by the English school no less than by his father-in-law Usener—a reaction against the anthropological method commenced in purely scientific circles. Sociology, as opposed to psychology, now asserted its claims. One after the other, the tenets of the English school were discussed and questioned. Universal totemism was held to be a fallacy. The survivals of totemism among Jews, Greeks, and Romans were said to be unproved. Smith's theory of sacrifice was nothing but a delusive hypothesis, in spite of all the facts which I have adduced * in confirmation of it. Tylor's animism was only an approximation to truth, since we must distinguish animism from animatism and admit a pre-animistic stage of thought. The logical inferences attributed to primitives and savages were misleading or arbitrary, for primitive folk discarded our logic and lived in a pre-logical state of mind. The theory that polydemonism preceded monotheism was rejected, since, according to Lang, who made many disciples, some sort of monotheism, and even the notion of a God All-father preceded polydemonism and so on. Not one of the more important theories of the near past has been exploded, but they have all been shaken; and, while I speak, the shaking goes on. The wider public begins to hear about it. A member of the French Institute, not a specialist, said to me only the other day: 'Who now believes in taboos and totems, except yourself?' This is naturally an *obiter dictum*, not to be taken too seriously; but it is a symptom. The scientific and perfectly legitimate craving for greater accuracy, and the desire to test the older hypothesis by the light of new facts—sometimes also the human, only

* In 'Cultes, Mythes et Religions,' three vols, Paris, 1905–8.

too human, tendency to make room for new theories, which may be old theories in verbal disguise—all these causes have contributed to create a state of uncertainty which may lead to a period of scepticism, before the constructive work is resumed.

While the struggle goes on, some people have a suspicious manner of applauding. Who are they? I will be discreet. They are gentlemen who still profess to explain the origin of religions, of morals, and even of society by and through a revelation made by God to man before the Fall. 'A little more of this,' wrote Gaidoz in 1898, 'and Mr. Lang will become a Father of the Church.' There are many Fathers in the Church, and many more outside it. Underlying and stimulating the work of criticism, as applied to the chief results of the anthropological school, I see, at all events in my own country, the ever-active upholders of tradition and established creeds. Of course, wherever truth lies, it is sure to prevail in the long run; and the encouragement given by a traditionalist should never deter a sincere critic from his work. But, as it was my duty to bring this long story to its conclusion, or, let us say, the year 1911, I could not avoid pointing out some symptoms which cannot be conscientiously overlooked. Free-thinking critics are engaged against each other in a process of destruction; when that has had its full effect, what will remain but tradition, and the old unscientific answer to the problem relating to the origin of religion? Such a reaction could not possibly be permanent, but we may yet live to witness it, and have to do much up-hill work before it is defeated again. Let me conclude by expressing the hope that some clever English scholar will give us two volumes on the great theme which I have insufficiently sketched in sixty minutes. The well-told history of this chapter of science should not merely afford a satisfaction to curiosity, but should be a most salutary stimulus to further enquiry and research.

SALOMON REINACH.