

AN ESSAY
ON THAT
EARLIEST SPECIES OF IDOLATRY,
THE
WORSHIP of the ELEMENTS.

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BY J. CHRISTIE.  
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Βασις δ' ἐν μακροῖς—PINDAR.



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INTRODUCTION.

ST. Paul, in one of his reproofs to the Gentiles, has discovered a knowledge of their idolatrous system, and declared the principles of it in very significant terms.

"But now, (says he) after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to *the weak and beggarly Elements*, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" *Galat. 4. v. 9.* He had drawn a comparison between the Jews and the Galatian Gentiles, and represented the former, as heretofore pupils under the bondage of tutors, who taught them the elements of the world, or the rudiments of worldly wisdom, or of the law and its ceremonies;* the latter, as in bondage to "*them, which by nature are no Gods.*" The Jews had been admitted sons by adoption, the Gentiles became sons by the gift of the spirit of God. He fears that his Galatian converts would relapse into a state of bondage, and it must be observed, that these Galatians were originally Pagans, and not Jewish Prose-

* *στοιχεῖς* implies ornament and order, and in a secondary sense the world, accordingly *ταῦτα τὰ στοιχεῖα* affirmed of the Jews, may be no more than those principles of conduct divinely ordained, which were sufficient for a seemly and becoming behaviour.

lytes. For Locke observes, that *παλιν* "*again*," cannot here refer to *στοιχεῖα*, "*Elements*," (understood, I presume, as Jewish Ceremonies), "*which the Galatians had never been under hitherto, but a bondage which he tells them, v. 8, they had been in to false gods.*"

If therefore, *στοιχεῖα* Elements, affirmed of the Jews, denoted the Mosaic Ceremonies, the *same* word affirmed of the Gentiles, must denote their Pagan worship. It was evidently to excite in his Galatian Converts an aversion from the Ceremonies of the Law, that the Apostle placed these on a level with their previous Idolatry, and branded them with the same title. Locke seems to have pursued the comparison no further, than as St. Paul considered each to have been a state of bondage; but Whitby has observed, that the Mosaic and Pagan rituals were, *for matter*, the same,* and if it be shewn, that an adoration of the Elements constituted the ground of the Heathen worship, which these converts doubtless by this time held in abhorrence, the propriety of St. Paul's comparison will further appear, and his argument will be seen to have fallen with double force on the Galatians, when he declared that their adopting the Ceremonies of the Law, were as reprehensible as the reverting to those Elements, which had formed the base and spirit of their Idolatry.

Now, that their Idolatrous worship had been originally addressed to the Elements is literally true;† and however their

* See the Note of Whitby on Gal. 3. v. 19.

† This is asserted of the Persians by Herodotus, and of the Egyptians by Diodorus. From the last of these the Greeks received their Theology, which their Poets disguised and altered; while the Romans derived their religious opinions from Asia Minor, of which Galatia was a province.

polytheism, in later times, might have been designed to personify the attributes of their supreme Jupiter, yet the Elements were even then referred to, to represent those attributes. Thus of the Roman Great Gods (*Dii Consentes*), ten out of twelve were Elements: Vesta, Vulcan and Apollo, Fire and Light; Neptune and Jupiter, Water and Rain; Juno, Mercury and Minerva, Air; Diana and Ceres, Earth; Diana representing that element by its animal productions,* as Ceres, by the vegetable. The remaining two Consentes, Venus and Mars, implied separately, Generation and Destruction, and jointly Nature, or the mutual operation of the other ten. For Nature, is no more than the growth and procession of perishable bodies, or that Rule of the Deity, according to which all things proceed, under his immediate impulse and the incessant inspection of his providence.

But to omit any further instances, from people whose mythologies are familiar to every one, and not to anticipate in this place, what I shall have to submit respecting those of other more remote, I here content myself with declaring the purport of this Essay, which is to shew: wherefore the Elements were referred to by early nations, and likewise to explain what was understood of the Deity by the means of them, and by what misconception they became objects of worship. From which exposition, I trust it will appear, that as the Elements, or principles of good order formerly established among the Jews, were types or shadows of good things to come;† in the same way

* Hence those strangely accounted figures of the Ephesian Diana, engraved in Montfaucon, and elsewhere.

† Thus much is implied by St. Paul in his use of the word *εργα*, in the 25th

also, the Mundane Elements worshipped by the Pagans, were adopted as shadows of good things, either experienced or promised; and that the true record of the one, and the completion, or full assurance of the performance of the other, are to be found in the Holy Scriptures.

verse of the chapter above cited; when he says, that Sinai is a mountain of Arabia, and answereth (*עֲרֵבְיָהּ*) to Jerusalem, which now is.

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**W**HEN that Bond of Duty which originally connected Man with his Creator was broken, and Man became obnoxious to Sin, expiatory Sacrifices were instituted by Divine Command, prefigurative of a more complete atonement. They were afterwards disfigured by many human additions, which, however gross and vain, must nevertheless be considered as attempts, on the part of man, to approach to God, expressing a sense of alienation, the deterioration of man's nature, and a hope of restitution. To this sense of exclusion from the presence and favor of the Deity, was added the fear of excision, as due to sin, and as was actually experienced in the Flood, with a partial exception. This fallen state and merited punishment have been implied, if not directly acknowledged, in every sacred rite of the Gentile world, in their Sacrifices and Ceremonies, in the fables of their Poets, and the devices of their Sculptors, which also had their origin in Religion. It is a very striking proof of the first of these notions entertained by the Greeks, to omit for the present any other idolatrous people, that the Symbol of Restoration placed in the hand of their Hercules,

was the triple fruit, the fruit vainly supposed to have been capable of conferring life, by which man fell. This, as the Greeks reported, was to be gathered in the Garden of the Hesperides, the Eden of those Pagans. It was by the means of such Sculptures as these, that early nations expressed their Religious hope. In developing the meaning of them, we can trace with tolerable clearness, the view they took of the first history of mankind, and with it the progress of error.

This history in the immediate Postdiluvian ages, was preserved by traditions, which it was afterwards designed should be perpetuated by symbols. The story of the Pillars of Seth, though a mere fiction, shews at least, that oral tradition could not wholly be depended upon, and that something more lasting became very soon desirable. The first histories, therefore, would be handed down more or less faithfully, in proportion as the means of commemorating them were perspicuous or ill conceived. The early use of Alphabetick Characters can by no means be inferred from this fiction. That the use of symbols preceded that of letters, and that the former were devised not earlier than the dispersion at Babel, may be concluded from several considerations. The longevity of man before the flood, rendered written records less necessary in those times. The use of a written character would have led to the forming a standard for language, which might have interfered with the merciful dispensation of the Almighty in the dispersion. And the observations of learned men have shewn, that the primitive forms of letters were but the abridged representations of things. So that the precise period at which Symbols were invented, seems to be



more truly expressed, than actually intended by Diodorus, when he thus affirmed of inarticulate speech: "At the time when speech was indistinct and confused (*confounded*), they by degrees expressed themselves in a more articulate manner, and appointed symbols to represent the objects under consideration, by which means they were able to explain themselves intelligibly."<sup>a</sup>

The use of symbols therefore, gave rise to letters; the abuse of them produced Idolatry. In tracing the latter, we must consider the principal objects at that time to be recorded, which doubtless, were, the nature of the Deity and his commands, the revelations of his presence, his judgements, and his promises: because, the happiness of man depended on a correct knowledge of these, and on regulating his conduct accordingly. In the second place we may presume, that the selection of symbols would be made from natural objects, as the most evident and intelligible. Thus the nature of the Deity as a spirit, might have been symbolised by wind, his presence by fire, his judgements and mercies by water, and his promises by earth and its fruits. The original tradition, of the spirit of God moving on the waters of chaos, and of all things being created by his word, when he said—"Let there be, and it was," would have furnished probable occasion for the adoption of the first mentioned symbol. It is allowed by the best commentators, that the loss of the Schechinah, that visible sign of the presence of the

<sup>a</sup> "Τὸς πρώτοις ὁ ἄριστος καὶ ἑΥΚΕΧΥΜΕΝΗ ἦν, ἐν τῷ κατ' ὁλόγον διαφθῆναι τὰς λέξεις, καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλας τὰ ἴδιαις ἐμφανὲς καὶ ἰσχυρὰ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ νόμον, γινώσκοντες ἐπὶ αὐτοῖς ταῦτα τὸν κατὰ αἰθέρα ἱεροῦτον." Vol. i. p. 11, 12. : *Ed. Wesseling*.

Deity, induced an early respect for solar light, as its supposed substitute. Hence the origin of the worship paid to the sun and the heavenly luminaries. The catastrophe of the flood renders the next supposition credible, and the recollection of the state of bliss in Eden, and of the virtue attributed to its fruits, would have supplied the last.

Next in order after these important topics, the dependance of man upon his Creator, and the particular history of those who had experienced his wrath or his mercy, were subjects too interesting to be forgotten. The escape of a few from the general destruction by water, those few the renewers of the human race, the depositaries of early revelations, sciences and arts, was deemed necessary to be recorded. Upon referring again to natural objects, it may be conceived, that if the Elements were adopted to commemorate the powers of the Deity, their physical effects combined with those primary symbols, would also represent his dealings with mankind. Hence the Elements and their properties, assumed in a secondary sense to record the number of Males and Females preserved in the Flood, would perpetuate both the memory of the renewers of the human race, and the Great First Cause to whom their safety was to be ascribed. The very symbols, therefore, which recorded the attributes of the Deity, furnished the means also of commemorating the existence of Founders and Benefactors. Hence when the former were revered, the latter partook of the honours paid them, and a very imperfect remedy was provided for this confusion, by the creation of an inferior order of deities under the title of Heroes. In proof of this we find, that in the fabulous history of *Ægypt*,

as reported by Diodorus, the same deified Elements were used to denote two different sets of objects. After enumerating the first causes of Creation, according to the opinion of the Egyptians, namely, the Sun and Moon, operating by their eight parts, which were five Elements and three Seasons; that author describes the personification of the chief of these principles under the titles of Osiris and Isis, and the Elements under those of Jupiter, Hephæstus, Ceres, Oceanus and Athene, which he terms the principal deities. But some of these, he adds, were only mortals deified; and are accordingly included in the number of their eight Heroes, which were the Sun, Saturn, Rhea, Jupiter, Juno, Hephæstus, Vesta and Hermes. Some of these, though personified Elements, were reported to have been Kings of Egypt, where it appears, that an occasional reference of the same emblem to two distinct objects recorded by it, produced a very absurd confusion. To many well thinking persons the examination of these intricate fables may appear useless and unprofitable. But in proportion to the confusion apparent in every early Pagan tradition, the clearness and consistency of the Pentateuch become subject of admiration. The more evident also must it be, that the author of the Pentateuch did not borrow from those traditions, and the greater the necessity for his being divinely assisted.

It is remarkable, that in the enumeration of these Elements by Diodorus, as acknowledged by the Egyptians, Spirit holds the first place, equally reputed an Element, with Fire, Earth, Water and Air. I apprehend that the adoration of Spirit, identified indeed with the Element Air or Wind, formerly prevailed

throughout the greater part of Asia. The Divine Spirit brooding over the chaotic fluid, is doubtless the occult meaning of that figure worshipped in the East in a sitting posture, on the Lotus, and termed Boudh. In what part of Asia this representation first obtained, or at what time, I will not presume to affirm. In India, certainly before the dispossession of the Aborigines by the Brahmins, who superinduced their later rival worship of the elements Earth, Water and Fire, which constitute their celebrated Triad. The earlier worship I refer to, prevailed at a remote period in Ceylon, of which Viscount Valentia has presented a very curious tradition in the first volume of his travels:—"Two only remained, the world of Brachina in the highest region, and the world of Winds in the lowest." Vol. I. p. 488. Appendix. Doubtless, with allusion to the Peninsula of India northward, and the Island of Ceylon in the south, and to the distinct worship prevailing in each of them. I leave it to the orientalist to consider, whether the Persian word *Baudh*, denoting wind, may have any connection with the Indian Deity *Boudh*, but the coincidence of that word with the Phœnician *Baau*, *Báau*, which was said to be the wife of the wind *καλπία*, is very striking, and the word *καλπία* has been well explained by Bochart, to be *Kul-pi-Jah* (*spiritus ventus oris Dei*), or that wind which was the Spirit of the mouth of God.

The common opinion that Budh upon the Lotus, merely denotes a combination of fire acting upon water, I presume to reject, trusting to this etymology of the Indian Idol, and I thence infer, that a notion of Spirit must also be included. In this I

shall be supported by a reference to the opinions of other contemporary nations. The Egyptians, more ingenious in their devices than the Aborigines of India, expressed the Eternal Spirit on the front of their temples, by wings extended across the tympanum, by which they conveyed an idea of air or wind, as the nearest sensible illustration of a spiritual object. The pillars that supported the architrave, were composed of bundles of reeds and other aquatic plants, to denote the primeval waters over which that Spirit brooded: accordingly the Greeks, who borrowed from the Egyptians, gave the name of *ἀετός*, Eagle, to the tympanum of their temples, that bird being the winged emblem of their supreme Jupiter: but I shall presently have to observe, that the Deity had condescended to make his presence known by a luminous appearance. If the pyramidal figure therefore of Budh had reference to flame, yet jointly considered with the name of that Idol, it would have implied the luminous appearance of spirit. For this reason the Egyptians added a circular disk, as an emblem of the sun or light,\* which they inserted between the expanded wings above their sacred porticos. The Phœnicians, a rude and early people, from a want of proper means to express their ideas graphically, consecrated *two* obeliscal stones for the purpose above alluded to, and they dedicated one of them to Fire, and the other to Spirit: *ὁὗ σέλας πῦρ τε καὶ πνεῦμα*, says Eusebius, *de Præp. Evang.* p. 23, thus symbolising the Presence and the Essence of the

\* This seems to be a proper explanation of the words of Eusebius: "*αἷονος ἀποφάνη* καὶ πνεύματος χαράσσειν." *De Præp. Evang.* p. 27.

Deity, which they could not separate;\* and such were probably the Termini set up in Greece by the Pelasgi.†

The similarity of the conical heaps formerly respected in different parts of the world, to this pyramidal figure of Boudh, may lead us to a new explanation of the worship of Hermes or Mercury. He was variously termed, *the leading God* (αἰνός, and ἡγούμενος), the terminal Deity, the God of Speech and Eloquence, and Commerce among men, the winged Messenger of Heaven. As the polished obelisk (*lavis aggyicus*) was dedicated to Apollo, so was the Cippus to Hermes; the boundary Stone, the Bætulian or animated Stone, λίθος ἱμψυχος, the pensile or rocking Stones, termed Ζωνί or *living*, by Pindar,‡ were, I apprehend, equally sacred to him. They were designed for nearly the same memorial as the Indian *Boudh* seated on the Lotus, and probably the use of all of them arose from an ancient tradition imperfectly understood: That God was a Spirit, that the Spirit of God acting upon the waters, effected the creation of the visible world, that that same Spirit governed the world, and assigned to all men their limits, and divided their speech. Since, to use the language of St Paul, *Acts* 17, v. 24,

\* So the Psalmist, Ps. 139. 7. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

† Thus on a well known Colonial Coio of Tyre, two upright Stones are represented, with an inscription, terming them *ambrosial* or immortal. By the side of one of them is a Vase of Fire, by the other a Tree, perhaps the symbol of Air, and therefore sacred to Boudh or Mercury. Beneath the whole is a Marine Shell the Murex, the emblem of Water, and specifically of Tyre. By which is implied, that the eternal and ever present Creating Spirit was the Deity originally acknowledged by the more enlightened of the Tyrians.

‡ Διόκτου τῶν Ἰων Ζωνί. Pyth. od. 4. v. 371.

26, "God that made the world and all things therein—hath made of one blood all nations of men; for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the *bounds of their habitation*."

These divine honours then, paid to Terminal Stones, might have been as early as the first generations after Peleg, in whose time the earth was divided; the boundaries of nations being then set out by divine appointment, and enforced in the case of disobedience by a multiplication of languages.

Thus much respecting the first objects of Hieroglyphical records. The second, abstractedly considered, were preserved by Astronomical allusions. It has been supposed that the *Shechinah*, that luminous token of the presence of the Deity, was withdrawn from men after the time of Noah. To his descendants, the disappearance of the sun in the winter months would have enforced a melancholy recollection of this loss, and the return of that luminary in the spring would have been greeted as the pledge of restoration to divine favour. Accordingly, various solstitial rites were invented in different countries, to celebrate the elevation of the sun after his return from the winter portion of the sphere. Hence the use of the olive bough in the Litanies of the Greeks, if it be true what Porphyry asserts\* of the upper and under surfaces of its leaves, alternately reflected according to the change of the seasons. The wild olive was for this reason said to have been brought by Hercules to the neighbourhood of Pisa, where the chariot races were instituted in honour of the sun. But the approach to and communion with the

\* De Antro Nympharum, c. 33. p. 29. Ed. Van Goens, 1765.

Deity, so much longed for by the Pagans, were expressed in a very evident manner by the Greeks, at their Olympic Games, in a banquet which they termed *Theoxenia*, because a familiar intercourse between the Gods and mortals was implied by it.\*

Pindar has merely hinted, that the Olympick Games recommended the scheme of the Metempsychosis, but in the later institution of the Circensian Games by Romulus, the doctrine was very distinctly enforced. It is probable that a contemplation of the different degrees of splendor in the heavenly bodies, compared with the sun, might have led the Chaldean founders of idolatry to expect a gradual approach to the fountain of light, and to imagine a series of stages of existence, previous to

\* *κατὰ τὸ θεῶν, τότε ἐκίβητο τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.*

Scholast. in Pindarum. Olymp. od. 5.

Similar Feasts at Rome were termed *Lectisternia*, from couches set in order, on which the Gods were supposed, or were invited, to recline. Horace alludes to them, Carm. lib. 1. od. 37.

— nunc Saliaribus  
Ornare pulvinar Deorum  
Tempus erit dapibus, Sodales.

Hence, the common representation of a Banquet on Greek and Roman Sepulchral Marbles, implies a final state of beatitude and rest, and communion with the Deity.\*

The most solemn rite of the Christian Church is properly termed Communion, and the Author and Finisher of the Christian Faith eminently asserted his Divinity in the original institution of it. It is one of the many instances, in which the Christian Dispensation appealed to the understandings and feelings of the Gentiles, and the ready and vast influx of Pagan Converts, on the first promulgation of the Gospel, is thereby accounted for. The solemn Supper here noticed, was acknowledged by them as the spiritualising and perfecting a rite they were well acquainted with. It offered them an intimate union with God, which they had in vain expected in their *Theoxenia* and *Lectisternia*.

\* A great deal may be seen on this subject, and upon others that will be mentioned in this Essay, in the curious Tract of Windet de Vita Functorum Statu, ex Hebræorum et Græcorum seorsim sententiis. Lond. 1677.



a final admission to the Divine Presence. Nevertheless, the limitation of such a series to the number seven, must be rather attributed to ancient traditions preserved by them, than to particular speculations on the planetary system. The Creation in seven days, and the supposed continuance of this earth as many thousand years, the last thousand of which, it was reported, would be a Sabbatical Millenium, might have occasioned their adapting the solar system to the scheme of their Metempsychosis, and I am inclined to suspect, that a notion of this Sabbatical rest may be traced in the *polydus aqurra*\* of Pindar, which was declared to be the reward of Victors in the Grecian Games. The doctrine of an ascent to a state of rest through seven previous stages, was exemplified by that tower at Babylon dedicated to Jupiter Belus, in the temple described by Herodotus, lib. 2,† which seems to have furnished a model for the Pagodas in several eastern countries, where the worship of Boudh prevails. Thus, however, the presence of a beneficent Deity, the Author of all Good, was hailed under the symbol of Light, but of the Punisher of Evil, it was dreaded under the emblem of Fire. Such was the Brahminical Deity in his destroying capacity, and yet, as in wrath remembering mercy, the same *Nisa* was entitled Regenerator as well as Destroyer.‡

\* Olymp. od. 8, v. 9.

† The table, the couch and other furniture of this upper chamber, denoted bestitude and rest. See before note, p. 10. See also the account of the Tomb of Cyrus and its contents, in Strabo. V. 2, lib. 15, p. 1061. Ed. Cossab.

‡ So the Psalmist speaks of the presence of the Deity to the wicked :—"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence : a fire shall devour before him. Ps. 50, 3. And elsewhere :—"Thou turnest man to destruction ; and sayest, return, ye children of men. Ps. 90, 3.

the personages with which they are sometimes represented in connection, were also devised by him.

The information we collect from Diodorus Siculus, respecting the eight parts of the two first creating principles of the Ægyptians, may perhaps be further illustrated by the following extract from the celebrated book of the Chinese, the *I-king*, as it is cited in the very interesting Essay of Mr. Remusat, on the language and literature of the Chinese.\* "The first principle generated two examples, these two examples generated four images, which four images generated eight lots" (or *Koua*). Mr. Remusat expresses himself little satisfied with the various explanations given of these *Koua*. The definition of them in the *I-king* is condemned by him as of too abstract a nature, and another delivered in the book termed *Toung-kao*, is rejected by him as too arbitrary. Confucius, he observes, considered them to be symbolical, and in general, he adds, a moral and metaphysical sense has been sought in the *Koua*, whereas they should only be viewed under a grammatical reference; since the Chinese are in some sort agreed to consider them as the primitive type of their written characters. pp. 7, 8.

To controvert the written opinions of the Chinese themselves, and of Confucius, on such a subject, may be rather hazardous, even to a sinologist of Mr. Remusat's ability and application. But it is far from improbable, that all these assertions may be in the main correct, and no one contradict another. It is very true, that in an authentic collection of Chinese coloured draw-

\* Essai sur la langue et la Littérature Chinoises—par J. P. Abel-Rémusat.  
à Paris, 1811. 8vo.

ings illustrative of the ancient history of China, the origin of letters is shewn, by Fohi pencilling these trigrams or *Koua*, disposed in an octagonal diagram.\* But to omit any discussion on the first formation of the characters of this very ancient people, as far beyond my reach, I will submit to my reader the following names and significations, and the supposed position of the *Koua*, as I have collected them from the Essay of Mr. Remusat:—The first of them termed *Kien* or Heaven, is placed by the Chinese in the southern region; while *Kouen* or Earth is referred by them to the north; *Li*, denoting Fire, they place in the east; *Kan* or Water in the west; *Touï* or Heat in the south-east; *Ken* or Cold in the north-west; *Tchin* or Dryness is allotted to the north-east; and *Siouen* or Humidity to the south-west quarter. pp. 74—79. Hence these lots appear to be no more than the four Elements, and the properties of each of them. Their influence on mankind seems to be acknowledged in a moral and metaphysical sense, by the Chinese referring to Heaven the dispensation of virtues, to earth of affairs, to fire felicities, to dryness directions, to humidity generations. *Ibid.* p. 110.

In the accompanying Etching, from a piece of Porcelain in my own possession, the *Tchin*, classed in pairs, represent the Elements and their properties. I propose them as examples of the ancient use of natural objects for Hieroglyphicks, as well as to shew their connection with the *Koua*; where the element

\* This Collection, in three volumes, was brought from China by Mr. Van Braam, on the return from his embassy. They are now in the splendid library of Mrs. Bliss, of Kensington.

The following extract from a periodical work, the *Athenæum*\* of Dr. Aikin, will better explain this contest, and the characters of the combatants.

"In the beginning of the world," reports the learned Editor, on the authority of a correspondent from China, "there lived *Tsing-quas*, monsters with men's faces and fishes' bodies, who desolated the face of the waters, so that ships could not sail: Those eight persons who escaped their rapacity, by the charms of music, which they invented, attracted the savages from the seas, and killed them all. They are now Gods, and live in *Ti-shan*, an island in the interior of China, very high, and very large, from whence those Divinities can mount to the sky, or, as they are very light, can live in the clouds.

"1. Hong-chong-li, by the flirt of his fan could blow you to the end of the world, without killing you; unless he pleased.

"2. Taat-qua-la keeps eternal fire in his calabash; he must keep it in the inside, or he will burn up the world.

"3. Cham-cu-lo plays on a small drum or Tom-tom.

"4. Li-tong-pan, first inventor of Swords; he carries a two-edged one in his hand, with which he killed the *Tsing-quas*.

"5. Ho-sing-co, a virgin, who made an iron basket, which she could enlarge or contract at pleasure: by the extreme beauty of her person, the charms of her conversation, and the powers of music, she attracted the *Tsing-quas*, who came into the basket, and were destroyed.

"6. Hong-chong-tsee invented a flute, the sound of which brought beautiful pheasants, and all other kinds of birds, from the extremities of the earth.

\* For June, 1808.

water, as the scene of their action, is designed to record in a general way the great event of a punishment inflicted, and the repetition of a set of Elements' combined with their physical effects, denotes more particularly, the powers of the Deity, and his dealings with mankind; while they also convey some idea of the confusion that induced a deification of mere mortals in an early age.

They are thus combined :—*Ho-sing-co* and *Lum-tsoi-wo*, Nos. 5 and 7, in the list of Dr. Aikin's correspondent, are exhibited, the one bearing fruit, the other scattering flowers, the productions of Earth, of which I do not hesitate to term them representatives. Of *Hong-chong-tsee* and *Chum-cu-lo*, Nos. 6 and 3 in the same list, the former *blows* a flute, the latter bears on his back a *tom-tom*, to denote pulsation, which together, will not inaptly imply the element Wind. Respecting *Taat-quaj-a*, 2, the lame Vulcan of the Chinese resting on his crutch, and discharging fire from his gourd, there can be no occasion for mistake. He probably represents Lightning, and his companion Thunder; for that *Tsou-quaj-cow*, No. 8, has also reference to Fire, is certain from the classification of the figures; he is in the clouds, and as his clappers imply noise, a more appropriate effect in nature could not be chosen to be personated by him.

Of Nos. 1 and 4, I venture to surmise, that they imply Life and Death. They certainly allude to Water, because the three other Elements have been decyphered. For this a very natural account might be suggested. The very general tradition that all things were created from Water, might have induced the

Chinese Mythologists to make the figure No. 1, the President of Life; the destruction of all things by water at the time of the deluge, may have as rationally induced them to refer destruction to the figure No. 4.\* The sword is the evident symbol of the latter. But it may be enquired, on what ground the fan can be supposed to represent the former. For this, Windet, in his very curious tract before cited, furnishes me a very probable conjecture.† The "*Mystica vannus Iacchi*," was that winnowing fan, which separated the corn from the chaff, by dispersing and bringing it back alternately, by which process the chaff would be blown to a greater distance, and the grains of corn being heavier, would remain in the centre of the thrashing floor. This was conceived according to the notions of the Egyptians and Greeks, as the probable vicissitude that every created being underwent, an alternate state of life and death, to which some may have doubted, whether they assigned any determinate period.‡ He adduces some other inge-

\* Hence the Bacchus of the Greeks was the God of Humid Nature, the President over Life and Death, and himself subject both to generation and destruction. He was also ἀνδρῶν of two sexes, because both sexes were preserved among the patriarchal eight.

† P. 29.

‡ In the time of Pindar, we find the period to these vicissitudes actually defined. Olymp. od. 2 v. 123.

ἔνα δ' ἐνὶ βωτοῖσιν ἐν τῇσι  
 ἰαυτοῖσιν μέλεισιν,  
 ἀπὸ νηυσὶν ἄλλαν ἔχον  
 φρενῶν,

"But as many as had the fortitude to persist in keeping their souls blameless, to the extent of three vicissitudes above, and three beneath the earth (in the invisible state, in Hades), were then forwarded to the islands of the blessed, &c." An idea borrowed from the Jewish notion of a Sabbatical period of rest and beatitude, which doubtless, Pythagoras, who travelled to the east, learnt from the Hebrews,

nious references to the same effect, and he notices a base application of a passage in Scripture by the degenerate Rabbinical Philosophers. "*Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, return, ye children of men.*" Whereas the history of their own nation would have furnished the true solution of the passage. For how often by the judgments of the Almighty upon them, was their state all but annihilated by invasions and captivities, on the occasion of their repeated idolatries? And a similar visitation on the great empires that have successively risen and been destroyed, to make way for that which is to be a lasting kingdom, has been a powerful illustration in later days.

There are many passages indeed in Scripture, the force of which is in part lost to us, from our not fully comprehending the vices of ancient nations, which had commerce with, and furnished proselytes to, the Jews. Such, I presume, is the following, which Windet has noticed, containing a terrible warning to Christians, and equally alarming to the Gentiles of old, whose false speculations it lashes. They are the words of John Baptist—"whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." *Matth. 3, 12.* Containing a true and complete refutation of the above erroneous supposition. According, however, to the Pagan notion,

and brought with him into Magna Græcia. "*Sibi quam inspicicam—fecerat,*" says Apuleius, apolog p. 457, Ed. Delph. and thence, doubtless, Pindar, and probably all the Mystagogues in the Colleges at Agrigentum, Capua and Nola, derived their metempsychic notions.

Dr. Aikin's correspondent observes, that the Tchin, No. 1, "by the flirt of his fan could blow you to the end of the world, without killing you; unless he pleased." These speculations might be further extended, to the memorial of the Deluge preserved in the Incarnation of the Indian Vishnu, and to the Arkite Rites illustrated by the great Bryant; but I content myself with this instance, from a people whose religious monuments are as yet but little understood.

I have now to shew, that the promises of the Deity respecting man's final reinstatement, were symbolised by earth and its fruits. This will be best understood in the first instance, by the reader's recalling to mind, that the *Γημήτριάς*, or Mother Earth of the Greeks, and the corresponding Ceres of the Romans, representing corn and the fruits of the earth, were that Pagan Goddess, in honour of whom mysteries were instituted at Eleusis, in which were held out to the initiated an obscure promise of a future state. But this matter must be taken up from a higher source.

In the preceding division of my subject, I took occasion to notice, that the eight Heroes of the Chinese mythology were occasionally represented, invoking a superior personage. This is no other than Tong-fong-sok, their God of Immortality,\*

\* This personage, in combination with other symbols, furnishes the following Hieroglyphicks on Chinese Porcelain:—When on foot, with a bough on his shoulder bearing three of these fruits, and in company with a Female riding on the Fung Houng (a bird so termed by the Chinese), he denotes Eternity, and the Female Spirit; and these figures jointly, Eternal Spirit: which I conjecture to be the two examples produced by the First Principle, mentioned in the I-king. The Eternal Spirit is otherwise expressed, by the compound symbol of Tong-fong-sok holding this fruit, and riding on a stork as an emblem of Wind, or Spirit.



whose characteristic symbol is a fruit peculiar to China, which he bears in one hand; either singly, or in a triple cluster. I venture to term this personage the Hercules of China, and to compare him with a well-known bronze figure in the Towneley Collection of Antiquities, now in our National Museum, of Hercules holding the three Hesperian apples, while behind him, to shew where he gathered them, appears a tree with a serpent entwined round it. But I have in my own possession an article perhaps not less ancient than the Towneley Bronze, that is equally illustrative of this subject. It is a Terra Cotta of that earliest ware termed, perhaps not improperly, Carthaginian. It consists of a cluster of three Pomégranates bound together by a serpent, which is coloured with a black and purple varnish, and the scales faintly and delicately tooled. This valuable relic, presented to me by my very intelligent friend H. Tresham, Esq. R. A. was from a tomb in Magna Græcia. The works of D'Hancarville and others on vases, will furnish several interesting compositions, which represent the gathering of such fruit in the garden of the Hesperides. In all these cases, the fruit must be supposed to convey the gift of immortality, and in this sense it is presented on many religious works of Greek art.

The origin of Serpent worship may be here distinctly traced. As the supposed guardian of the fruit of life, this reptile is cherished and fed in the pagodas of Hindustan to this day,\* and

\* A military friend, Major S. informed me, that having once retired to rest under the Portico of a Brahminical Temple, he was disturbed by a *Cobra capella*, and was about to destroy it, but he desisted on the entreaty of the Brahmin. The latter offered

representations of this ceremony very frequently occur on Greek and Roman marbles.\* Minerva, who was also termed Hygia, being the Goddess of Health as well as Wisdom, was accompanied by the serpent, as the symbol both of life and knowledge,† and the staff of Æsculapius, the God of Medicine, or Preserver of Life, was accordingly entwined with the serpent.

It is needless to enlarge on so well known a subject as the Atlantic Islands, extolled by Plato, and almost every Pagan Poet. In these were the Hesperian Gardens famed for their fruits. These Islands of the Blessed (for they were so termed), were reported to have been suddenly submerged‡ in the sea.—The loss of Paradise is evidently implied by this story, which gave rise to many others. From such materials, the Greeks devised their fable of Atalanta, who *stooping* to pick up the three

to the serpent a compound of sugar and butter in a tazza. The *Cobre capella*, when fed, glided up the pillars of the portico, and again sheltered itself beneath the cornice.

\* See plate 28, No. 54, of the Terra Cottas in the British Museum, published by Taylor Combe, Esq.

† See a description of the Collection of Ancient Marbles in the British Museum, by Taylor Combe, Esq. part 1, plate 1. The Towneley Bust of Minerva.

‡ The Rev. Dr. S. Henley, in a very interesting note communicated by him to the translator of Dr. Lowth's *Lectures*,\* vol. 1, p. 215, observes, that the place where the wicked after death were supposed to be confined—from the destruction of the old world by the deluge, the covering of the Asphaltic vale with the Dead Sea, &c. was believed to be situated under the waters; whence he notices the expression *τὸ ἄβυσσος ὡς ἁβύσσος*, Job, 41, 23—"the *Tartarus of the Abyss*." This accounts both for the *submersion* above noticed, and for the popular Gentile notions respecting future punishments, which the Philosophers privately disbelieved, while the chief of them nevertheless acknowledged, they were referrible to early traditions.

\* *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, translated by G. Gregory, F. A. S.

golden apples, was thrown out of the chase, and accordingly resigned her virgin state. The hope of regaining this state of bliss, and the divine promise that man should be eventually reinstated, were fondly cherished by the Pagans, and recorded though misrepresented\* by numerous fables and devices.

But it is remarkable, that while the Hercules of Tyre and Greece brought the fruit of life from the garden of the Hesperides,† the Hercules of the Celts, drew crowds to him by the charms of eloquence, instructing them in the use of letters; and he was termed Ogmios,‡ as conveying by these letters the mysterious traditions of ancient times. The coincidence of this name with that of Ogma, who devised the Tree Alphabets of the Irish, is very remarkable. Respecting these a great deal is said in that treasure of curious learning, the fifth volume of the *Collectanea* of General Vallancey. He is there termed Ogma, Ogam or Som, the last of which is expressed in three Ogham Characters, with the following hieroglyphick subjoined, .•. which General Vallancey has compared with the Segol of the Jews and Chaldeans, who reversed the stop .•. and termed it Sacal, the bunch of Grapes;§ but it

\* That singular prediction of a deliverer in the person of Hercules, in the Promethæus of Æschylus, is a very particular instance. Confident of this, Prometheus exclaims:—*τί δ' ἄν φοβέσθαι, ὃ δαίτις ἔμπερος*. v. 933. "What should I fear, whose fate forbids to die?"

† *ἡσπερίδης ἡσπερίων* in Oenomaeritis, may perhaps be better rendered:—*Eloquent Hesperides, than sweet-voiced*.

‡ See the Dissertations of Schmidt and the Rev. Stephen Weston, in the *Archæologia*, on the Hercules Ogmios of Lucian.

§ *Collectanea*, vol. 5, p. 86.

may be compared with the Symbol of the Chinese, Greek and Tyrian Hercules. General Vallancey has remarked, that the Chinese word *Si*, a tree, is the root of many others of learned import, and he has also derived nearly the whole of the names of the Hebrew Letters from Trees.

It is here that I may venture to submit an etching from an extremely curious Chinese Tazza, formerly in the cabinet of Mr. Newton,\* that exhibits the Trigrams of Fohi, impressed on the very fruit to which are ascribed such peculiar virtues. Within the dish the characters are expressed by the original cyphers: without, they are more picturesquely displayed on triple clusters of the fruit. The former are the primitive characters of the Chinese, the latter may be considered as the first approach to a cursive character.† Hence, that which in the hand of the Idol Tong-fong-sok is the Fruit of Immortality, on the Tazza of Mr. Newton, is the Fruit of Knowledge. It is triple, with reference to the three male branches from which the earth was re-peopled, and repeated eight times with a different trigram, with reference to the eight, who were altogether the depositaries of Antediluvian learning and traditions. All these memorials of the regret and hope of the early Pagans, shew a deep sense of their loss of communion with the Deity, as enjoyed in Paradise, and of the bodily

\* The same who bequeathed his property to the Literary Fund.

† The circular device in the centre of the Tazza is the Fung-Hoang, or Bird of Paradise, coiled up in that form. It is, I believe, the Chinese symbol of Wind or the Primæval Spirit.

decay and debasement of intellect that resulted from the Fall. They explain also what the Poet expected, when he hailed the advent of a Restorer of things, and a new paradisiacal state — "*redeunt Saturnia regna.*"

The Gentiles who had lost the genuine account of the Fall, supplied an imperfect story. Dr. Kennicott has shewn, that one Tree only standing in Eden was forbidden, and that, not endowed with any particular virtue. That the term "*Trees of Life,*" implied merely "*good for food,*" and that with regard to the particular tree forbidden, the knowledge derived, and the life lost, resulted from the transgression, and not from the fruit.

While I presume to recommend the beautiful dissertation of Dr. Kennicott to all who desire to understand the first chapters of Holy Writ; I also trust, that these traditions and conceits of the early Pagans may not be deemed unimportant, especially by those who feel interested in the calling in of the Gentiles. They are at present fast bound by prejudices, which are only strong, because the grounds of them have been hitherto unexplained. But a knowledge of the causes of these errors, and a clue given to the path which a considerable part of mankind have trodden, in their departure from the worship of the true God, may be one secondary mean of clearing their sight, and enlarging their understandings, and of teaching them to retrace their steps. Since most of their traditions, allegories, and symbols, are but mistaken memoranda of pro-

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mises long ago made, of the actual performance of which in these later times, it is the devout object of our Missionaries to assure them.

FINIS.

### ERRATUM.

Page 10, line 7, dele—"by *Romulus*."

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