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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE VI.

THE PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN MEANING OF SOME
RELIGIOUS WORDS.

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THE Prophet of Nazareth and the Jewish theologians did not get on harmoniously in their discussions. He employed, in the delivery of his message, the religious terms in common use. That these familiar words were used to establish positions new and revolutionary filled them with astonishment. For a while they restrained their emotions, and then plotted to hasten the end of their antagonism as it culminated before Pilate and on the *Cross*.

All literature is replete with evidence that the same words as used by different peoples do not express the same meaning. Much confusion and injury to things political and social have come from the obscuration of this fact. Under the idealizing charm of Grote, Greek political institutions were made to appear as the embodiment of true democracy and realized freedom. As a matter of fact, the government of the Athenians was the close corporation of a few pure bloods and the entire exclusion of the common man and stranger. Democracy and representative government were realized in the ancient Hebrew commonwealth. There was one law and one court of justice for the home-born and the stranger within the gate. As a matter of historic truth, the vital parts of modern free institutions are first found embedded in the Mosaic code. Because the Greeks made two enduring

contributions to human progress, it has been an easy matter to conclude, as has often been done, that all of the essentials of modern life have come from this source. People can get on fairly well without sculpture, painting, and plays; they cannot get on at all without law; and Hannis Taylor has shown conclusively that "the Greeks left behind no complete or imposing legal monuments; they produced nothing which in any proper sense could be called a philosophy of law." This sufficiently explains the fact that the Greeks have succeeded better under the government of the outsider than when left to themselves. The instinct of law and its social order has never been in them.

Again, the Hebrew meaning of government is a thing entirely inharmonious with the Roman. In a very literal sense the noble Roman considered himself the lord of the whole world. All rights originated in him and consequently belonged to him; the other man was not the subject of obligation. When compelled by brute force to make concessions, he made them after a manner of the political trickery of to-day. His sense of brotherhood was synonymous with the realization of his selfishness. Accordingly, he conquered the savage tribes of the West to fleece them. These notions of government are not those of Anglo-Saxons. The people of our blood, by force of racial instinct and education, have become the colonizers and administrators of the world, and wherever they have gone, there the rights of men have been defined and established.

Religious definitions, however, are the most important, because from them come theological systems and corresponding social conditions. The simple asking of the question "What does it mean to be a Christian?" brings up the Puritan and Anglican answers, and the person is very much in error who

supposes that these agree in one. A great Puritan term of all generations has been, "A state of Christian feeling." Its content has varied, but has always affirmed that certain emotional disturbances and states are unmistakable evidence that the soul has been Christianized. Hence the revival system. On the other hand, the Anglican, both in doctrine and by ritual, rests character on obedience. As a matter of fact, all genuine and permanent character springs out of decision; and decision is obedience. Consequently, as the laws of the soul have time to assert themselves in an enlarged psychological science the revival system passes and never can be reanimated.

THE WORD GOD.

The first great religious word is God. One of the native furnishings of the human intelligence is the consciousness of Deity. What is its content and practical meaning? The Zeus of the Greeks, as presented in the Homeric poem, was a big, rollicking, and sensuous creature, liable at any time to burst forth in fits of friendliness for those he liked and to hurl his bolts of wrath and revenge against those he did not like. All mortals were obliged to contribute to his pleasure, but he was in no way obligated to them. He had knowledge but no controlling power, since back of him was the superior and dread power of *Fate*. He laments that he was unable to rescue his son Sarpedon from being slain by Patroclus, because *Fate* had so determined, and *Fate* could not be resisted by either gods or men. He could do strange antics when the notion took him and stoop to mean and wicked things. Every now and then his fellow-gods put their heads together to thwart his plans; when their schemes developed, he raved around like a mad but impotent lion. They would smart some day, never fear. All that was valuable in this conception of Deity was refined and preserved in the intellectual conception expressed

by Athena. In the course of time it grew into Stoicism, as a philosophy of life.

While this conception was forming in Greece, another was hardening in India. Probably the best English statement is by Edwin Arnold:—

“ I am the good sweet smell
Of the moistened earth, I am the fire's red light,
The vital air moving in all which moves,
The holiness of hallowed souls, the root
 ' Undying, whence hath sprung whatever is;
The wisdom of the wise, the intellect
Of the informed, the greatness of the great,
The splendor of the splendid. Kuntl's Son:
These am I, free from passion and desire;
Yet am I right desire in all who yearn,
Chief of the Bharataa.”

This is naturalism in the pure state. The divine personality is obliterated. The god Pan is all and in all.

In neither one of these conceptions of Deity is there ultimate authority, and consequently there is no final source of responsibility. The moral sense and logical faculty of man are never at rest till these are placed. The first sentence of the Christian Scriptures, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,*” places and defines both. And so it has come about that this sentence has had a vastly greater compelling and constructive influence on all religion and philosophical thought than all pagan definitions and arguments combined. The divine Personality is the root and source of all reality. Of his own volition he made all things, visible and invisible. In bringing the universe into existence, knowledge, power, and will are involved. What was the intent of doing it and assuming the stupendous responsibility involved? The content of his motive is defined as “*merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and who will by no*

means clear the guilty." This fundamental characteristic of the Divine Spirit is repeated and expounded and illuminated over and over again in the record of its progress in permeating human thought and emotion and in purifying them of their selfishness and weakness. Of recent years many things have been brought to light relating to the wisdom of the Egyptians and Babylonians; but this redemptive truth has not been in any of these finds, nor will it be in any future ones. It is equally absent from the well-rounded and self-centered system of Marcus Aurelius and from every secret order claiming to be as good as the church. By its stupendous problems are solved. Because of his very nature and property, "the Judge of all the earth will do right." He is the helping and healing God. He is self obligated to do the best for those who appreciate his mercy and all others as well. In other words, they have rights which obligate him to them as well as they to him. Both reach the highest condition of betterment in fellowship and communion. To make these truths clear, direct statement and figure of speech are used up to their full capacity.

These three definitions of Deity are the chief ones in religious literature. The lowest and most useless is the Hindu. There is power in intellectual knowledge, and that is the measure of the Greek. The Hebrew and Christian has all the good in the Greek, with elements of freedom and love and forgiveness of sins of which the best Athenian teacher never knew anything at all.

The God of Moses and of the prophets and of Paul is not the god of the Greek culture. The elements of boundless beauty, strength, and life in the one are totally lacking in the other. They make character-building worth while, as without them life is an idle tale and goes out in blackness. The

Athenians keenly realized this truth, and, as expressive of their soul dissatisfaction, erected an altar with this inscription, "*To the Unknown God.*"

THE WORD MAN.

In obedience to a law just as exact in its operation as gravitation, men have conceived and defined themselves according to their notions of the divine nature. The God of the Christian Scriptures has intelligence, power, love, will, and freedom. And such is man. He is above *Fate* and beyond it. His destiny is fixed by his decisions. He is urged to choose whom he will serve, because he is capable of choosing. This affirms the kingly freedom of the human soul. The Greek, and the Pagan generally, never had the remotest idea that he was free. This fact is all the time cropping out in Homer and the dramatists. Penelope tells the suitors that she will wed the one "who would bring the most gifts and who should be according to *Fate.*" Hector on going to his last fight for the defense of Troy consoles Andromache with words of tenderest affection, and concludes with the thought that his death cannot happen unless *fated* by the gods. Old Hecuba (Hector's mother), on hearing of his death, said: "To him mighty *Fate* spun this lot at his birth." By the Greek and his present-day successor, man is made the creature of nature, its slave and tool. The Hebrew ranked him above physical nature and all that it contained. Why, then, bow down to the beasts of Egypt, since they were beneath him? Why worship the frogs and leeks of the Nile, since he feasted upon them? Why prostrate himself before the stocks and stones of the Caananite, since they neither hear, nor feel, nor speak? Why adore the stars in their courses, since

"The heavens declare [symbolize] the glory of God;
And the firmament showeth his handiwork"?

Because these things are fundamentally and forever true, in the evolution of the science of man, it was only the Hebrew prophet who could have written Ezekiel xviii. 18-32 and xxxiii. 8-20. It was only the repentant Christian who could have given to the world that history of the victorious soul found in the Fifty-first Psalm. It was the heart of Saul of Tarsus, as reconstructed and made glorious with the conquering love made known only by the *Cross*, that could have given the world the thirteenth of First Corinthians, or have stated (as in Rom. viii. 1) the liberty and joy of the soul having experienced the forgiveness of sins. One's sense of proper gravity is rudely shaken in thinking of old Cato (the censor) confessing that he had ever done wrong. The climax of comical absurdity is reached in picturing this sturdy old pagan in contrition of heart appealing to Zeus to be cleansed from his wickedness. And, on the other hand, what would Zeus have done by way of response? Fancy! On these fundamental matters, too often confused or suppressed, the words of Lotze are well worth repeating: "The Greeks did not share this high [Christian] estimation of human personality. They regarded man chiefly as the product of nature, and character as dependent upon degrees of intelligence: it was not in all their thoughts that there is in us a third power, the *will*, which in good and in evil can fight against insight or natural inclination."

THE WORD SACRIFICE.

Two conceptions of sacrifice are clearly traceable in religious history. One is that of the house of Japhet, and by the family of Javan was given fullest expression. According to it a sacrifice is a gift to the gods, and implies the expectation of some return. Plato's statement is that men give in sacrifice that which it is supposed the gods want, in order to receive in re-

turn the thing desired. In other words, sacrifice is a kind of traffic and implies a bargain. At the time of the pestilence in the Achæan camp, Achilles seeks to learn the cause of Apollo's anger, "If haply he may please to receive the savor of lambs and goats, and ward off calamity." The lambs and goats were considered an equivalent for the wrong done. The old priest, berated by Agamemnon and turned away from the council of war, thus addressed Apollo:—

"O Smintheus, if ever I helped to deck
Thy glorious Altar, if ever I burned
Upon thy Altar the fat thighs of goats
And bullocks, grant my prayer, and let thy shafts
Avenge upon the Greeks the tears I feel."

There are many indications in the Bible of the presence and operation of this pagan idea of sacrifice. Balaam and Balak entertained it to the full limit. Both took for granted that because they kept their end of what they wanted to be a bargain, therefore the God of Israel would be compelled to do as they desired. When the Hebrews were drifting into the degradation of this pagan notion, Isaiah asks with scorn and rejection: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." To the same effect is the inquiry of Micah, "Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" St. Paul was always true to the spiritual traditions and teachings of his fathers. Speaking of this matter, he says: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." And so as to effectually exclude the bargain idea of sacrifice, he goes on to say by way of explana-

tion: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Whenever the bargain idea of sacrifice became prominent (as it did), the voice of the prophet was heard in rejection and clear warning of its poison. Jeremiah distinctly states that the entire sacrificial system was an addition to the original mode of worship of the Hebrews. It was employed to secure the same end as the implements of the kindergarten; it used the science of symbolism to educate the people into a state of enlarging appreciation of the eternal principles of the divine communion.

The Hebrew and Christian definition of sacrifice is communion with God. Whenever Abraham erected an altar it was for worship or communion with God. In the prayer of dedication of his temple, Solomon makes use of this truth many times. The devout Jew went to Jerusalem because of his conviction that the God of his fathers manifested himself there as in no other place on earth. The Divine Life sacrificed itself in Incarnation to uncover forever, and to establish world without end, the privilege of men to live in communion with the forgiving and redeeming God. Because in the nature and character of God there "is no variableness neither shadow of turning," the principle of sacrifice is ever active, and is neither restricted nor changed by any conditions of race development or pagan theologies. It is over and above these, and is ever the living God seeking to have men believe that he loves them, and can make them victorious over their enemies. From this supreme fact of the moral universe have come, and will come in this and every other world, the power and glory of the *Cross*. This makes it tower "over all the wrecks of time." And what is more, because this Christian doctrine of sacrifice is the expression of the highest and controlling psychological laws of personality, it will sustain and make precious the supreme act

of Christian worship in the Eucharistic Sacrifice after the rock-ribbed hills have been resolved into primeval dust.

THE WORDS BELIEF OR FAITH.

These words are not entirely synonymous as used in the New Testament, but are sufficiently so to be used here. When the Greek desired to arrive at certainty in religious belief, he began and carried forward a process of moral and mental criticism. He could do no other way, since the religious traditions of his Homeric fathers were unworthy of serious consideration. He was compelled to fall back on his moral consciousness. The Hebrew, on the other hand, appealed to his divinely revealed law. He understood this in much the same sense as Blackstone when he says: "Revealed law, or divine law, is a part of the law of nature as divinely expounded by God." The doctrine of God and of man, as embodied in this law, and which came through Moses and the prophets, was the source and base of all his religious reasonings. A prophet never confused his opinion with this divine standard. Through a long and varied history, the Hebrew expressed through his spiritual experience and social articulations his enlarged understandings of this law. Through it all, the one constant thing was this revealed doctrine of man and of God. *This was his belief or faith.*

The Prophet of Galilee affirmed this position over and again. His mission was to fulfil Moses and the prophets. He said to the two discouraged brethren of Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself." He rested on the old foundation. His wonderful words of love were in explanation an extension of the spiritual truth which had come first hand to holy men of old as they

were moved by the Divine Spirit. He told the caviling Jewish theologians to search the Scriptures, since in them were embodied his message of redemption.

Because the Apostles were Hebrew in blood, education, sympathy, and intellectual movement, it was normal that they appealed to an external source and standard of authority. Repeatedly St. Paul came in sharp contact and clash with the pagan and Greek position. He said to the Galatians: "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." St. Jude had to deal with the advocates of the Greek and pagan position, for he says: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend *for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*" In present-day terms, this revelation was "the faith once delivered to the saints." This revelation, in the process of being made known, touched human thought and life at the necessary and essential points, and these have been recorded in the creed of the Apostolic and Catholic Church.

This is the Christian belief or faith. The poet Swinburne prided himself that he understood and had fully absorbed the religious movement of the Greek mind; here is a stanza from his "Hertha," which states the upshot of its logic:—

"I am that which began;
 Out of me the years roll;
 Out of me God and man;
 I am equal and whole:
 God changes, and man, and the form
 Of them bodily; I am the soul."

On this last position, a word of apology would seem to be called for, since opinion is made synonymous with belief. Be-

cause of this, all sorts of conflicting and strange conditions arise. One prominent theologian says that "uniformity of belief is neither desirable nor possible." He uses opinion and belief as synonyms. Of course, it is not possible for all people to have the same opinions, but the Christian belief or faith is not opinion. Opinion in religion is no more the truth, nor the source of the truth, than are the strange chemical opinions of the alchemists the source of the potencies of the chemical world. *This confounding of opinion with belief or faith, and making the social and moral consciousness the source of religious truth, would have exactly suited the philosophical Greek. It is where he stood and his successor stands to-day.* Were it true, one man's opinion in religious thought is as good as another: which one prevails depends upon intellectual alertness and argumentative dexterity. This has been the position of all the great infidels in all the Christian generations.

And perhaps in this connection, it may not be amiss to recall an incident in Greek exegesis at Oberlin under Doctor John Morgan (blessed be his memory, and may his soul rest in peace in the light of Paradise). Some one asked him why it might not be true that opinion and Christian belief or faith were equivalent. Quick as a flash, the good doctor was on his feet; with hands resting on the table and his eyes flashing fire, he cried out: "A man who would say that is unworthy of any further consideration." Then he sat down, rubbed his eyes, adjusted his glasses, and remarked: "I think, brethren, that a man who would say that in teaching theology is nothing but a gump, and had better let theology alone."

The sad part of the situation is that, while the great systems of theological opinion of recent centuries are cracking, and tumbling, and being shoveled into the junk heap of rejected things, and the scorner is having great satisfaction, devout

people are trembling for the future. The rock-anchored assurance is, however, that the facts of Redemption — the belief of the Apostolic and Catholic Church — are the source of Christian truth, and, like all other creative and originating facts, can neither be removed nor covered.