

INTRODUCTION.

In an article, entitled "Then and Now," published in the December number, 1890, of "The Arena," its author, a distinguished Unitarian D.D. of Boston, Mass., says. "Astronomy has shattered the fallacies of Astrology;" and people have found out that the stars are minding their own business instead of meddling with theirs." Now, while it is true that modern Astronomy has superseded the ancient system, and people have ceased to believe that the stars are intervening in mundane affairs, nothing could be further from the truth than the assertion that "Astronomy has shattered the fallacies of Astrology; and those of our readers who will accord to this work an unprejudiced perusal can hardly fail to be convinced that a large majority of the people of Christendom are dominated as much by these fallacies as were our Pagan ancestry—the only difference being a change of name. The dogmatic element of religion, which was anciently designated as Astrology, is now known as Theology.

All the evidences bearing upon the subject indicate that the founders of the primary form of religion were a sect of philosophers, known as Magi, or wise men, of the Aryan race of Central Asia, who, having lived ages before any conceptions of the supernatural had obtained in the world, and speculating relative to the "beginnings of things," were necessarily confined to the contemplation and study of nature, the elements of which they believed to be self-existent and endless in duration; but, being wholly without knowledge of her inherent forces, they explained her manifold processes by conceiving the idea that she was animated by a great and inherent soul or spirit, emanations from which impressed all her parts with life and motion. Thus, endowing man, and other animals, with souls emanating alike from the imaginary great soul of nature, they believed, and taught, that immediately after death all souls were absorbed into their source, where, as "the dewdrop slips into the shining sea," all personal identity was forever lost. Hence we see that although recognizing the soul as immortal, considering it, not as an entity existing independent of matter, but as the spirit of matter itself, the primary religion was the exponent of the purest form of Materialism.

Being the Astronomers of their day, and mistaking the apparent for the real, the ancient Magi constructed that erroneous system of nature known as the Geocentric, and, in conformity thereto, composed a collection of Astronomical Allegories, in which the emanations from the imaginary great soul of nature, by which they believed all materialities were impressed with life and motion, were personified and made to play their respective parts. Basing the religion they instituted upon their system of Allegorical Astronomy, and making its personifications the objects of worship, they thus originated the anthropomorphic or man-like Gods, and, claiming to have composed them under the inspiration of these self same divinities, they designated them as sacred records, or Scriptures, and taught the ignorant masses that they were literal histories, and their personifications real personages, who, having once lived upon earth, and; for the good of mankind, performed the wondrous works imputed to them, were then in heaven whence they came.

Thus we see that the primary religion, which is popularly known as Paganism, was founded in the worship of personified nature; that, according special homage to the imaginary genii of the stars, and inculcating supreme adoration to the divinity supposed to

reside in the sun, it was anciently known by the general name of Astrolatry, and by the more specific one of solar worship; and that its founders, arrogating to themselves the title of Astrologers, gave to its dogmatic element the name of Astrology.

In studying the primitive forms of religion it will be found that none of them taught anything relative to a future life, for the simple reason that their founders had no conceptions of such a state. Hence it follows that the laws they enacted were intended solely for the regulation of their social relations, and, to secure their observance, they were embodied into their sacred records and made part of their religion. One form of that most ancient worship was known as Sabaism, or Sabism. Another form of the same religion was the Ancient Judaism, as portrayed in the Old Testament, and more especially in the Pentateuch, or first five books; in the Decalogue of which the only promise made for the observance of one of the Commandments is length of days on earth; and, in a general summing up of the blessings and curses to be enjoyed or suffered, for the observance or violation of the laws, as recorded in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, it will be seen they are all of a temporal character only. At the beginning of the Christian era there were still in existence a sect of Jews known as Sadducees, who were strict adherents to the primitive form of worship, and their belief relative to the state of the dead we find recorded in Ecclesiastes xii., 7, which reads: "Then shall the dust return to earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."

For ages the doctrine of soul absorption, immediately after death, constituted the belief of mankind; but ultimately recognizing the fact that the temporal punishments of the existing laws were wholly inadequate to the prevention of crime, and conceiving the idea that the ignorant and vicious masses could be governed with a surer hand by appealing to the sentiments of hope and fear in relation to the rewards and punishments of an imaginary future life, the ancient Astrologers resolved to remodel the dogmatic elements of religion so as to include that doctrine. But realizing the necessity, of suppressing the belief in the absorption of all souls, immediately after death, they ceased to teach it, and ultimately it was embodied in that secret and unwritten system known as the Esoteric philosophy, in which the Astrologers formulated their own private belief, and which for many centuries was kept from the knowledge of the uninitiated by their successors in the priestly office. As they were the sole custodians of the Scriptures, they made do change in their verbiage, but, adding the doctrine of future rewards and punishments to that written and openly taught system of faith known as the Exoteric creed, they made it the more impressive by instituting a system of imposing rites and ceremonies, which they designated as Mysteries, into which they initiated the neophytes, and in which were portrayed, in the most vivid manner, the rewards and punishments of the imaginary future life, which they taught were the awards of the Gods for the observance or violation of the laws. These teachings were inculcated in the lesser degrees only, but those who were found worthy of so great a distinction were also inducted into the higher degrees, in which was imparted the knowledge of the Esoteric philosophy. In both the lesser and higher degrees the initiates received instruction in an oral manner only; and all were bound by the most fearful oaths not to reveal the secrets imparted to them.

Thus were the votaries of the ancient Astral worship divided into two distinct classes, the Esoterics, or Gnostics; and the Exoterics, or Agnostics; the former comprising those who knew that the Gods were mythical and the scriptures allegorical; and the latter, those who were taught that the Gods were real, and the scriptures historical; or, in other words, it

was philosophy for the cultured few, and religion for the ignorant multitude. The initiates into the secrets of these two systems recognized them as the two Gospels; and Paul must have had reference to them in his Epistle to the Galatians ii., 2, where he distinguishes the Gospel which he preached on ordinary occasions from that Gospel which he preached "privately to them which were of reputation."

Such was the system of Astrolatry, which, originating in the Orient, and becoming, after being remodelled in Egypt, the prototype of all Occidental forms of worship, was recognized, successively, as the state religion of the Grecian and Roman Empires; and we propose to describe the erroneous system of nature upon which it was based, and to develop the origins of its cycles, dogmas, ordinances, anniversaries, personifications and symbols, with the view to proving that it was the very same system which was ultimately perpetuated under the name of Christianity. We also propose to present the origins and abridged histories of its two forms, the Jewish, or ancient, and the Roman, or modern; and to give an account of the conflict between the votaries of the latter, and the adherents to the established form of worship, which culminated in the fourth century in the substitution of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire. We furthermore propose to show the changes to which the creed and scriptures were subjected during the Middle Ages, and at the Reformation in the sixteenth century, through which they assumed the phases as now taught in the theologies, respectively of Catholicism and Orthodox Protestantism. We also present an article relative to Freemasonry and Druidism, for the purpose of showing that, primarily, they were but different forms of the ancient Astrolatry. We also devote a few pages to the subjects of the Sabbath, and to that of "Pious Frauds."

Note.—For the matter published in this work, we are principally indebted to the writings of Robert Taylor, an erudite but recusant minister of the church of England, who flourished about seventy years ago, and who, being too honest to continue to preach what, after thorough investigation, he did not believe, began to give expression to his doubts by writing and lecturing. Not being able to cope with his arguments, the clergy, under the charge of the impossible crime of blasphemy, had him imprisoned for more than two years, during which time he wrote his great work entitled "The Diegesis," which should be read by all persons who are investigating the claim of the Christian religion to Divine authenticity.

THE GEOCENTRIC SYSTEM OF NATURE.

In constructing their system of nature, the ancient Astronomers constituted it of the Earth, the Firmament, the Planets, the Constellations and the Zodiac, and we will refer to them in the order named.

The Earth.

Believing that the earth was the only world, that it was a vast circular plane, and that it was the fixed and immovable center around which revolved the celestial luminaries, the ancient Astronomers, in conformity to the requirement of the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, as inculcated in the Egyptian Version of the Exoteric Creed, divided it into an upper and an under, or nether world, which they connected by a sinuous and tenebrious passage.

The Firmament.

The azure dome, called the firmament in the book of Genesis, was believed to be a solid transparency, which we find described, in the fourth chapter and sixth verse, of that collection of Astronomical Allegories, called the Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation, "as a sea of glass like unto crystal." It was represented as being supported by four pillars, resting

upon the earth, one at each of the cardinal points, which were designated as "the pillars of heaven." Conceiving the idea that there were windows in the firmament, the ancient Astronomers called them "the windows of heaven" and taught that they were opened when it rained, and closed when it ceased to rain. Hence it is evident that the ancient Astronomers did not refer to these pillars and windows in a figurative sense, but as real appurtenances to a solid firmament, as will be seen by reference to Gen. vii. 11, and viii. 2, Job xxvi. 11, and Malachi iii. 10.

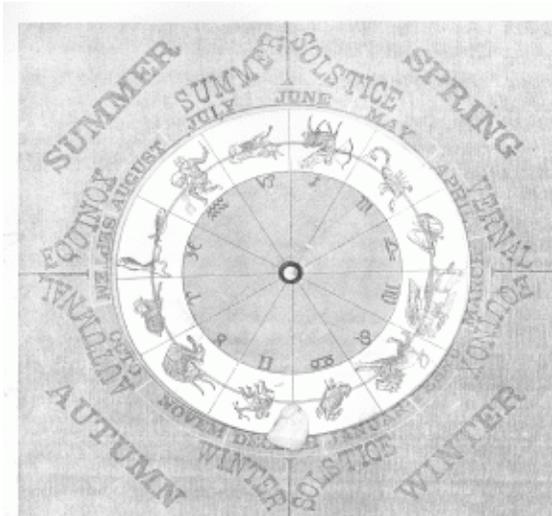
The Planets.

Believing that the stars were but mere flambeaux, suspended beneath the firmament, and revolving round the earth, for the sole purpose of giving it light and heat; and observing that seven of these, answering to the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, had perceptible movements, in relation to the other luminaries, the ancient astronomers designated them as planets or wandering stars.

The Constellations.

Perceiving that the other celestial luminaries maintained the same relation to each other, and designating them as fixed stars, the ancient astronomers grouped those visible to them into forty-eight Constellations; and giving names to these, they also attached names to the stars of larger magnitude, which was done for the purpose of locating and distinguishing them with greater ease.

The Zodiac.



Through twelve of these Constellations, mostly contained within a belt of 16 degrees in width, and within which the planets appeared to revolve, the ancient astronomers inscribed a central line representing the Ecliptic, or apparent orbit of the sun, which they divided into 360 degrees; and quartering these to denote the seasons, they named the cardinal points the Summer and Winter Solstices, and the Vernal and Autumnal Equinoxes; the former referring to the longest and shortest days of the year; and the latter to the two periods when the days and nights are equal. An abbreviatory sign having been attached to each of these constellations, the great celestial belt containing them was called "the wheel of the signs," or "a wheel in the middle of a wheel," as designated by that old Astrologer, Ezekiel the Prophet, in chap. i. and 16th verse. But for the reason that, with only one exception, the forms of living things, either real or mythical, were given to them, this belt, ultimately, was designated as the Zodiac; or

Circle of living Creatures, see Ezekiel, chap. i. Constituting the essential feature of the ancient Astronomy, we present, in our frontispiece, a diagram of the Zodiac, as anciently represented, to which, as well as to Burritts' Celestial Atlas, our readers will be necessitated to make frequent reference.

Recent researches among the ruins of ancient cities have developed the fact that several centuries before the beginning of our era the astronomers had invented the telescope, and discovered the true or heliocentric system of nature; but for the reason that religion had been based upon the false, or geocentric system, it was deemed prudent not to teach it to the masses. Hence, hiding it away among the other secrets of the Esoteric philosophy, the knowledge of it was lost during the Middle Ages; and when rediscovered, the hierarchy of the Church of Rome, upon the plea that it was contrary to the teachings of Scripture, resorted to inquisitorial tortures to suppress its promulgation; but, in spite of all their efforts, it has been universally accepted; and, in this otherwise enlightened age, we have presented to us the anomaly of a religion based upon a false system of Astronomy, while its votaries believe in the true system.

THE SACRED NUMBERS 7 AND 12.

In reference to the planets, and the signs of the Zodiac, the numbers seven and twelve were recognized as sacred by the ancient Astrologers, and dedications were made to them in all kinds and sorts of forms. In the allegories, the genii of the planets were designated as spirits or messengers to the Supreme Deity, imaginarily enthroned above the firmament, which we find described in Revelations iv. 5, as "Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God;" and which were represented by lights burning in seven branched candlesticks set before the altars in the temples; the central light for the Sun; the Moon, Mercury and Venus on one side; and Mars, Jupiter and Saturn on the other. The seven branched candlesticks seen in all Catholic churches, and in some Protestant ones, are intended to represent the same planetary system.

Among the numerous dedications to the genii of the planets we mention the seven days of the week, the seven stories of the tower of Babylon, the seven gates of Thebes, the seven piped flute of Pan, the seven stringed lyre of Apollo, the seven books of fate, the book of seven seals, the seven castes into which the Egyptians and East Indians were divided, and the jubilee of seven times seven years. Among the dedications to the twelve signs we mention the twelve months of the year, the grand cycle of 12,000 years, the twelve altars of James, the twelve labors of Hercules, the twelve divisions of the Egyptian Labyrinth, the twelve shields of Mars, the twelve precious stones, ranged in threes to denote the seasons, in the breastplate of High Priest, the twelve foundations of the Sacred City, referred to in the Book of Revelation, the twelve sons of Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve Disciples. In the Book of Revelation alone the number 7 is repeated twenty-four times, and the number 12 fourteen times.