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ORDINARY MEETING, DECEMBER 6, 1886.

PROFESSOR G. G. STOKES, D.C.L., P.R.S., PRESIDENT,
IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed.

The following paper was then read by the Rev. R. Thornton, D.D., V.P.
the author being unavoidably absent in the United States.

*THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND TRADITIONS OF THE
ABORIGINES OF NORTH AMERICA.* By the Rev
S. D. PEET, Editor of the *American Antiquarian*.

THE traces of Bible ideas in the aboriginal religions of America is the subject of a recent paper by the Rev. M. Eells.* It is an interesting subject, and one on which he is well qualified to speak. His acquaintance with the languages and traditions of the North-west is quite complete; at the same time his reading has extended over the wide field of American archæology and ethnology. In this article he does not confine himself to personal observation, but quotes largely from other authors. In these quotations he throws himself upon authorities which are well known, and supplements his own information and investigations by those which have been conducted by others, and gathered into permanent shape by various publications. There is a double advantage in this course. In the first place, it permits him to announce his own discoveries in a modest and unassuming form. In the second place, it enables him to buttress his own positions by the opinions of others, and through this means to exhibit the analogies which exist between the religious beliefs of all the native tribes of America. It should be said that the

* *Transactions of Victoria Institute*, vol. xix.

missionaries among the Indian tribes have great advantages, and frequently find opportunities for learning the peculiar beliefs of the aborigines. It is true that many have failed to improve their opportunities, and have very strangely remained in ignorance of the very systems of thought and of ethical religion which are so prevalent around them. Mr. Eells has, however, taken the pains to investigate the traditions and customs, and has brought out from time to time a considerable amount of valuable material. This is fortunate, for the opinion is held quite extensively in this country that the missionaries are poor authorities on ethnological subjects. It is not an opinion which is justifiable, for there are very many scholars among these Christian laborers, and some of the very best contributions to the science have come from them. The many translations of the Bible into Indian are monuments of industry. These translations were many of them made at a time when there were no ethnologists in this country, and had it not been for their self-denying and scholarly labour there would be no record of the state of the native languages at the time.

It is a remarkable fact that the Indian Bible which was prepared by Rev. John Eliot in 1661 is now, not only very scarce, bringing fabulous prices, but the persons who are able to read it are still more scarce. The Dakotah dictionary of Rev. S. L. Riggs is an extremely valuable work, and the only one which has ever been prepared on that stock of languages. In this department, the labors of the missionaries are appreciated, but in the line of mythology and comparative religion there seems to be a strange lack of confidence. (1) It is said that they do not discriminate between the native traditions and those which have been borrowed. (2) The attitude of the missionaries toward their superstitions have the effect to make the Indians reticent in reference to their belief. (3) The missionaries are never allowed to enter into the sacred feasts or religious ceremonies of the pagan Indians. (4) The questions which are presented to the Indians are very likely to bring back a response which is deceiving, and on this account the missionaries are likely to confound the native ideas with those which reflect their own thought. (5) The teaching of preceding missionaries has had a tendency to confuse the natives themselves, and they are quite likely to mingle the Bible stories with their own traditions. On these accounts, ethnologists are inclined to reject the testimony of missionaries in reference to traditions. It is a question, however, whether there are any better authorities. The following

are the sources of information concerning especially the traditions of the uncivilised races:—(1) Indian interpreters, camp retainers, and private adventurers; (2) there are many persons who have occasionally come in contact with the Indians, as travellers or explorers, or as newspaper correspondents, who have furnished a small amount of information concerning these native traditions; (3) a few military officers, especially surgeons, have made a specialty of the subject, and these are generally very reliable: among the number we are happy to give the name of Dr. W. Matthews, U.S.A.; (4) the Ethnological Bureau and the Peabody Museum have employed certain parties who have made their home among the aborigines, and have taken pains to learn all their traditions, and to become acquainted with their customs and tribal organisms: among those who have succeeded in penetrating the mysteries two persons should be especially mentioned, Mr. Frank Cushing, of Washington, and Miss Alice M. Fletcher, of New York; (5) another source of information is represented by a class of educated gentlemen who have, by their circumstances, been thrown into contact with the natives, and who have taken up the study of tradition and have written monographs: among these should be mentioned Stephen Powers, of Ohio, and Judge Rose, of California; (6) the papal missionaries, who were formerly located among the Indians, have furnished many reports which are now very valuable; (7) the Protestant missionaries who are now labouring among the various tribes.

These authorities are remarkably agreed in their evidence, so that we are quite sure that we are getting the traditions into a reliable shape, and can speak intelligently as to the religious beliefs of the Aborigines.

On this subject there is much to say, but we shall be obliged to condense what we have to say into the smallest compass.

I. There are some very remarkable coincidences. It is but a few weeks since I had the opportunity of listening to a gentleman who had spent forty years as a teacher and Indian agent among the Chippewas. He held exactly the same views that Rev. Mr. Eells does. He said that he had been surprised to find so much correspondence between the teachings of conscience, as exhibited by the rude savages before they had been trained or even affected by missionary labour, and the teachings of the Bible. He had noticed this among the pagans as often as among the Christian Indians.

The Chippewas hold the opinion that the "ancient people," the ancestors of the ancient tribe, were far advanced

in their information, and a decline had taken place. It is a common custom with the chiefs to refer to the "ancient people." The common response to the preaching and teaching of missionaries is, "This was the belief of our ancestors," and it is represented that they taught exactly the same doctrine and truths. This gentleman made the same division of the subject that Rev. Mr. Eells does. There are four or five points on which both missionaries seem to be agreed. These are:—(1) The idea of the Great Spirit is a proof of the knowledge of the existence of God; (2) the view of the Indians concerning the future state is a proof of the belief in immortality; (3) the various superstitions of the Indians show that they all have the sense of sin; (4) the prevalence of sacrifice shows that the same doctrine of atonement or expiation for sin by sacrifice was common among these tribes. These four doctrines—the existence of God; immortality of the soul; the sinfulness of man; and the necessity of sacrifice;—seem to be held in various modified forms by all the tribes in North America. The researches of Rev. Mr. Eells have been among the Nez Percés, those of Rev. S. L. Riggs among the Dakotahs, and those of Mr. Williams, the gentleman referred to above, among the Chippewas. These embrace three of the great aboriginal families of the North, mainly hunters. The testimony of these gentlemen shows what was common among the hunter races.

Other authorities might be cited to show that the same opinions were held by the agricultural races; and still others to show that similar opinions were held by the civilised tribes. The testimony which comes to us from so many different sources proves to a certainty that these ideas were prevalent with the native mind. It has been disputed whether the Indians really hold to the doctrine of a "Great Spirit," but the quotations by Mr. Eells are very numerous and from many different authors, and show that this was common. The term Great Spirit is not one which comes from "accommodation" to the whites, but is used by them to express a common belief. This idea seems to have been fundamental, and is a result of the teachings of nature. The clear apprehension of the character of God we should not expect, but the conviction that there was one great being whom the Bible calls God seems to have been universal with the American tribes. It is sometimes said that monotheism is a late product of thought, but here is another case where monotheism proves to be a primitive belief. It has also been doubted whether immortality was a primary doctrine. Some have said that it does not appear even in the Old Testament.

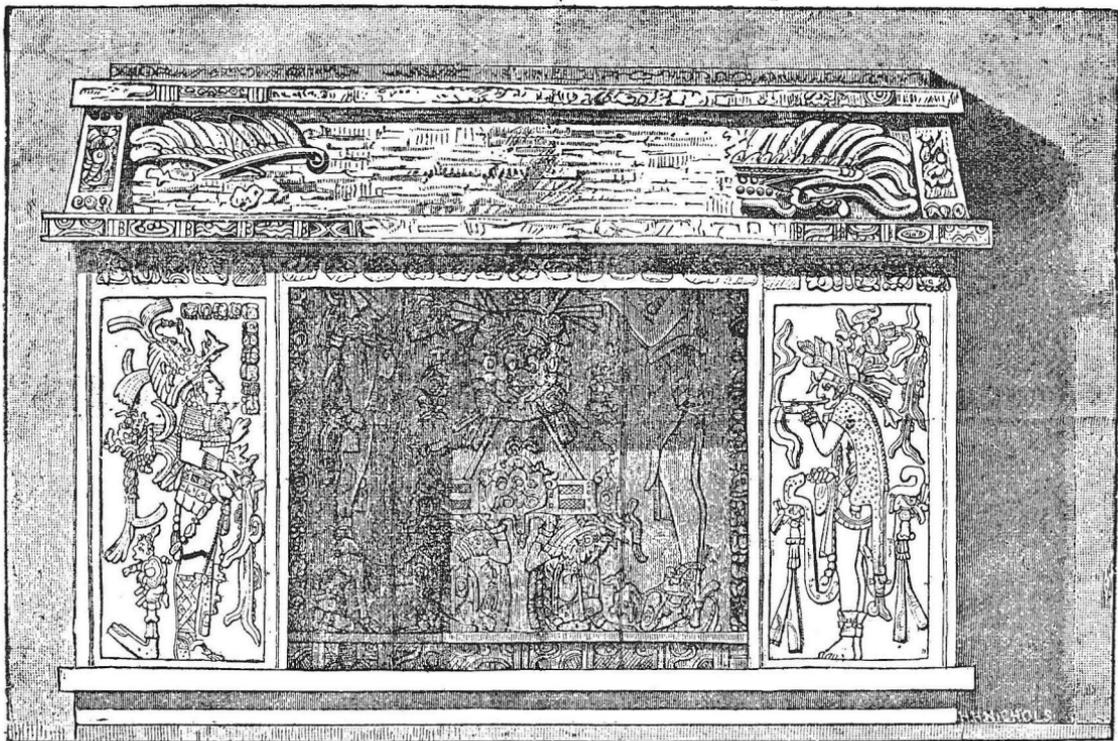
But a modified belief of immortality is very general among these rude tribes. So with the sense of sin and the doctrine of sacrifice. These are taught by nature. They are not the last products of Christian civilisation, but are found in the low stages of savagery. The ethnic conscience seems to point to the same beliefs and doctrines as fundamental in the Bible, and in the natural constitution.

II, The classification of the native religions is very suggestive. These religions may be divided by geographical districts into several classes. (1) Shamanism. This is the religion of the Eskimos, Aleutians, and many of the hyperborean tribes. It is peculiar to the fishermen of the north, and is seldom found among other tribes. (2) Next to this is Animism. This is more common among the hunters than any other class. It is found in its highest stage of development in the tribes which formerly inhabited the whole region which lies between Hudson Bay and the chain of the Great Lakes. It is a system which makes its abode in forests and amid rocks, and is a powerful superstition. (3) Animal-worship is another system. This prevailed among the people which were given to the mingled hunting and agricultural life. It was most powerful among the tribes which formerly had their habitat between the chain of the Great Lakes and the Ohio River, and in the same belt of latitude as one goes farther west, (4) Sun-worship of an inferior kind was prevalent among the tribes south of this belt, including the Mobilian tribes on the Gulf Coast, and the Pueblo tribes of Colorado, Arizona, and Utah; also in Peru. It was also prevalent among the Mound Builders. (5) The Elemental worship, which included the rain, lightning, the god of death and of war. This was common in Mexico and NewMexico. (6) Anthropomorphism, a religion which gave human attributes to the divinities, but assigned to them supernatural powers. This prevailed in Central America.

These were the different religions which existed among the civilised and uncivilised tribes. Is it not surprising that, under such elaborate and well-organised systems, there should have been so much of the natural effect of conscience? most authorities agree on the point. Notwithstanding the superstitions which prevailed, and which resulted in so intricate ceremonies and mysteries, the individual conscience maintained its force, and often asserted itself in expressions which are quite marvellous in their resemblance to the thoughts contained in revelation. These are not the results of education, nor are they taught by a priesthood, but they come from "primitive beliefs,"

III. The symbolism of America points to the same truth. This symbolism is worthy of study, because it reveals beliefs which prevailed among the prehistoric races. A remarkable and complicated system of symbolism was spread over the continent corresponding to the traditions of the later races, showing that there were many religious ideas among the prehistoric races which have survived to historic times. We trace in the symbols the various forms of religion which existed before America was discovered, but in the customs and tradition of the natives we recognise the very ideas embodied in the monuments. The symbols of Central America (and the Ohio valley and Mexico also) are most elaborate, and these are especially worthy of study. Here animal forms, elemental powers, human attributes are all combined in the idols, showing that the divinities had a very complicated character. We see sculptured tigers covering human faces; we see also sun-symbols attending serpent figures, and in the midst of both are human faces; we see also crosses wreathed with serpents, surmounted by birds, and before the crosses human forms offering sacrifices; we see human figures with animal skins and serpents twisted about them, but their faces are distorted, and every part full of a strange and mystic significance; we see columns or pillars elaborately decorated and sculptured, altars highly ornamented, temples with façades wrought into strange symbolic shapes, and many other forms of art and architecture all expressive of the religious thought of the people. The anthropomorphic character of the worship is seen in the human face, as every part of the face was made to express a thought and to symbolise a divinity. The tongue symbolises the sun, the eye symbolises the rain, the cheek symbolises the drought and famine, the hair and ornamentations on the head symbolise the lightning. A wonderful system of nature-worship, which combined personal attributes, animal figures, and elemental powers all in one, appears to have embodied itself in these symbolic shapes.

Take, for instance, the bas-reliefs of the Temple of the Cross at Palenque, and see how nature-worship expresses itself there. Here is the cross with its four points of the compass, or the four winds, with its arrow signifying the lightning; the thunder-bird surmounting it, and, before the cross, a priest offering a child, or the figure of a child, in sacrifice. Before the cross, on the façade of the temple, is the statue of a human figure finished in the round, but covered with symbols which are peculiarly significant and expressive. Take the Temple of



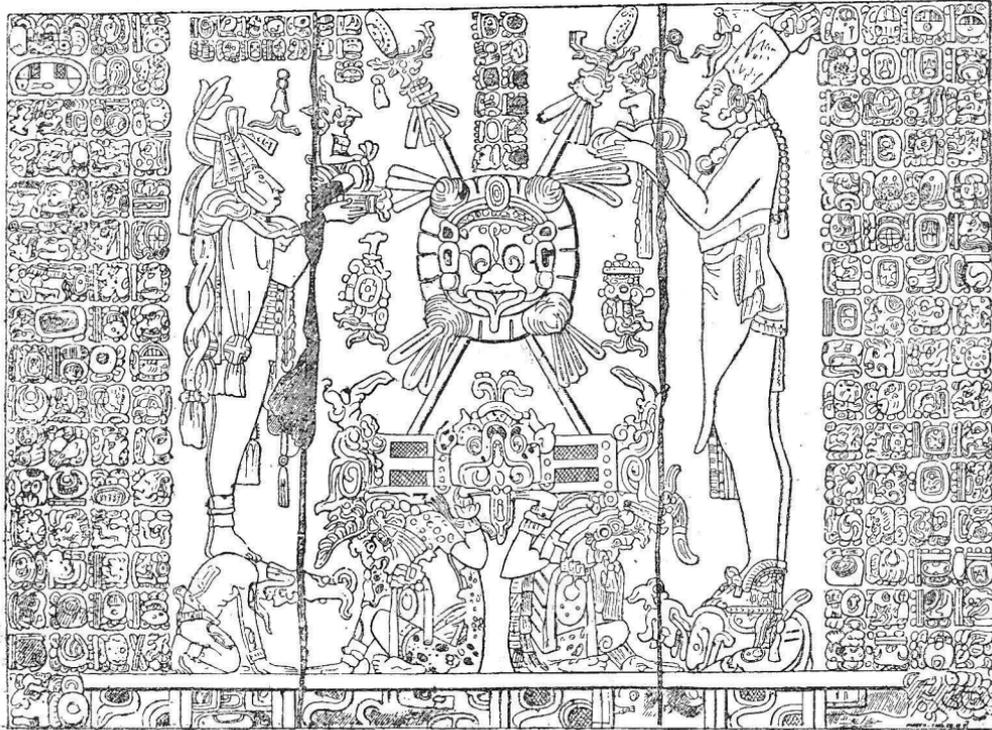
THE AUDITORIO, OR SHRINE TO THE SUN, IN THE SUN TEMPLE.



THE WAR GOD OF THE TOLTECS.



THE RAIN GOD OF THE TOLTECS.



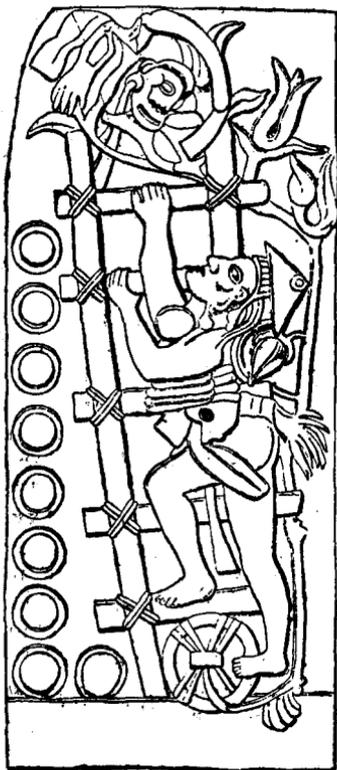
THE SUN GOD SUPPORTED BY RAIN GODS.



THE SACRIFICIAL STONE FROM MEXICO.—THE FACE OF THE
SUN IN THE CENTRE.

the Sun (*see plates*), and see the mask, or human face, which hangs suspended on the wall, back of the shrine or altar. Here is the round face which symbolised the sun, the projecting tongue to symbolise the power of the sun. In front of the Oratorio, or chapel, on the piers, are the bas-reliefs which represent the nature-divinities. Here is the rain-god on one side and the war-god upon the other. Notice, however, that the rain-god is marked by a peculiar form and face, the chief feature being the open, bulging eye. Here we have a specimen of nature-divinity, but there is ascribed to it all the personality that it is possible to express by the human face or by the human eye. The tiger-skin on the back of the rain-god represents the animal attributes, but the human face represents the personal attributes. The same eye will be recognised in the face of the sun and in the faces of the figures below the sun, showing that all the powers of nature were personified. The rain-god has in his mouth the pipe or tube through which he blows the winds, and in front of his person may be seen the feathered serpent which symbolises the lightnings which obey his will. Above the piers on the façade is the winged circle which signifies the cloud, and the rain the overshadowing divinity of the sky. The Temple of the Sun is full of the emblems of personal power, and illustrates how intensely the artists struggled to express the attributes of the personal divinity which ruled the powers of nature. I cannot look upon these figures without being impressed with this thought, that there was a personal divinity which looked out from the faces and the forms, and that the people were impressed with the power of this divinity. Here, then, we have *the first doctrine embodied in Scripture, the existence of a personal God*. It is a principle of henotheism that one divinity rules at a time, the conception of that divinity absorbing all thought and feeling. If henotheism existed in Central America, it was henotheism which reached the anthropomorphic stage, and was as expressive of personality as was ever the same system in the classic regions of the East. We do not maintain that monotheism existed among the Toltecs, but we think that all this imagery, which is so elaborate, was only the expression of the feeling which is very strong in every human heart, that there is a God above us to whom we are accountable, and on whom we depend; and though the mind was beclouded and the religious consciousness overshadowed, yet, amid the symbols and ceremonies of this strange nature-worship, the conscience struggled to express itself, and to make known the true divinity. The doctrine of

immortality is not without its witness also. In the sculptures of Santa Lucia Cosumal-whuapa, in Guatemala, there are figures which express this thought. Take this one. Here is a



ladder reaching upwards toward the sky. On the ladder is a human figure climbing; above the ladder is a death's head with human arms attached; the head seems to smile upon the human figure; the human face looks up with a mild and placid expression. Here there is no fear of death, but a climbing to immortality. Here is another tablet. On one side is a face which smiles out from the sky above; it is surrounded by flames, symbolic of the sun; serpents form its head-dress symbolising the lightnings; many other figures symbolise the nature-powers; below this face is a human form, one hand lifted as if in supplication, another hand outstretched as if to betoken some offering. The upturned face has the symbol of speech protruding from the mouth. There are many symbols on the person, but the expression of the form and face is

that of a suppliant addressing a gracious God. Nothing could better express the hope of immortality. Take next the doctrine of sacrifice, and you will see it embodied in the sacrificial stones and the many other provisions which were made. The temples and altars and pyramids are full of them. Take next the doctrine of sin, and you will find that there are baptisms and lustrations, as well as sacrifices (even circumcision was common),—a marvellous resemblance to the Jewish ritual. All of these are the concomitants of nature-worship, and whatever their source, they show that the same ideas of the need of a sacrifice and the importance of a cleansing prevailed among the religions of the Toltecs, Aztecs, and other civilised American races. The symbols in Central America remind us of the symbols of Egypt, Assyria, and

India; but the ceremonials remind us of the ritual of the temple in Jerusalem, and the circumcision, baptism, and other rites impress us with a very strange sense of recognition. We are greatly amazed as we think of the resemblance, and do not wonder that the superstitious Spaniards went to work to destroy these symbols of worship, thinking that the devil had counterfeited the Bible and presented it to these barbaric races. The Orientalists look upon the hieroglyphics of the East and study for words, but they do not often find in mythology, archæology, or philology, such striking resemblances to the Jewish ritual as we in America do in these very barbaric ornaments, symbols, and ceremonies of the American Aborigines. Many of the Orientalists reduce the religious symbols, myths, and expressions of the eastern races to an allegory, and recognise in them a primitive sun-worship. In this way they interpret Egyptian, Hindoo, and Scandinavian mythology, but in America the sun-worship is on the face of things, and the moral or personal conceptions are in the background. The sacrifices are in their details appalling and full of cruelties; but the superstitions at the back of them point to a fearful sense of sin. The personifications which are common among all the tribes of America and the mythologies which are full of personal exploits, show that the divinity in America was always regarded as a person. We have no "bright heavens," no All-father, no "shining sky," no "thundering Jupiter," no "mighty celestial power"; but the divinity is a hero with divine attributes and supernatural powers, or an animal with human attributes. It seems sometimes as if the "culture-heroes" were all of them of the same general character, full of remarkable exploits, possessing natural traits, but endowed with supernatural powers. We cannot dwell now upon the culture-heroes who introduced civilisation, but will only refer to them briefly. The White-God of the Aztecs, Quetzalcoatl, the bearded god of the Toltecs, the Manco-Capac of Peru, Virococha of Quito, the Montezuma of the Zunis were all personal divinities. Below these, among the wild tribes, are divinities with human attributes and with human history. The Mano-bozho of the Mandans, the Hiawatha Atotarho of the Iroquois, the Glooskap of the Abenakis, the Michabo of the Algonquins, the Ioskeha of the Hurons,—all had human attributes. Other divinities were prevalent among these tribes, but the chief Law-giver and controller of the tribes was a culture-hero. Still lower than these was the animal divinity who was the creator or restorer, but who was represented as the great "master of life." The conception of

the divinity varied according to the cultus of the people. The culture-hero was the divinity of the more advanced tribes, but an animal divinity was the master of life with the more degraded tribes. Dr. D. G. Brinton, of Philadelphia, a great authority, thinks that all culture-heroes were personifications of the sun-divinity; but he has taken some examples from tribes which had not reached sun-worship, and therefore is mistaken in his interpretation. They were divinities which possessed human attributes, and it is gratuitous to identify them with nature-powers, for some did not even symbolise these powers. The animal divinities, also, had personal attributes, and many of them had a history which was almost as human as the culture-heroes. The Coyote, the Wolf and Dog of the Chinooks, the Serpent of the Pecos, the Raccoon of the Navajoes, the Eagle of the Pimas, the Hawk of the Californians, the Grizzly Bear of the Mount Shastas, the Raven of the Thlinkets, the Dog of the Tinnehs were all supernatural beings whose work was to create or to restore, and who assumed control over other animals by their supernatural powers as well as by their human intelligence. This element of personal character which is so frequently ascribed to animal divinities must have come from the *religious consciousness*, and not from any elaborate philosophy. It takes a great deal of study to trace any analogy between the animal divinities and the sun or nature-powers; but a very primitive fancy was enough to personify an animal, and make it represent a divinity with human attributes. The attempt to *naturalise* the human divinities and culture-heroes breaks down, but the work of humanising animal divinities is done for us by the natives already. Take the adventures of any one of these "culture-heroes" or "masters of life" which bears an animal name and semblance, and see how much of the human element there is, and how little of the natural. The imagery is always expressive of the habits of the people: bows and arrows, canoes, caves, trees, lodges, medicine-bags, villages, islands, lakes, mountains, forests, fire-brands, waves, salt water, river banks, and a thousand things which are familiar to the savage and hunter tribes are mentioned when telling the story of their animal divinities. There is a different framework for the culture-heroes, which bear personal names. Here there are council-houses, conversations, hours of meditation, and many other scenes which indicate a contemplative and purely human condition.

Personality was ascribed to all the divinities. Even the fetiches, which were mere stones or sticks of trees, had personal qualities, and were supposed to be possessed by

spirits resembling human souls. The animals were also personified, and were regarded as human personalities. The myths and poetic stories always represent the animals as if they were human beings. There are myths in which the animal divinities and human divinities are associated. Sometimes the animal is supreme and sometimes the human deity is supreme. But in the narratives the adventures of the one are quite similar to those of the other, and transformation frequently takes place. This idea of personality is as common in America as in Africa. It is a prominent feature in American mythology.

IV. The religion of the aborigines of America had one quality which we must consider. The far-off, the mysterious, the incomprehensible, the wonderful, the unknown are always suggestive of divinity. It would seem that all the divine attributes were condensed into this. Whatever had this was divine. It might be a stick or a snake, a tree or a stone. If it was strange and *outré*, it was regarded as "a Manitou." This was the nature of superstition. It magnified the shadowy; it deified the wonderful. If an object was mysterious, it was sure to be worshipped. The dark rock, the rapid stream, the shadowy cave, the over-hanging forest, the swift lightnings were worshipped for no other reason than that they were mysterious. The animals which were wild and weird were always exalted to the level of supreme deities. If they were subtle and stealthy, and held themselves aloof from men, they were feared. They were the greatest deities because they were mysterious. It was on this account that the Coyote, the Eagle, and the Hare were chosen to represent the supreme divinity. These creatures were wary and wild, and far off from man. They roamed the forest, cleaved the air, hid among the rocks, and were full of mystery, and so were regarded as superior. These were the chief divinities of the hunter races. It was on this account that the nature-powers were worshipped. These were the divinities of the civilised races. Every element that was mysterious, incomprehensible, or full of power was exalted to the level of a supreme divinity. Even the human personalities which figured so conspicuously in the systems of the Toltecs and Aztecs were worshipped as supreme because of the mystery which surrounded them. The White-God was mysterious. He came from a far-off country, and went away again. His advent and his departure were enveloped in mystery. He was a Melchizedek in disguise. His character was different from every other person. He suffered for his people, and secured good for them, but

was overcome by his enemies, and retired. His return was hourly expected. He was the Christ of the American races. He was not Hercules, nor Dyonysus, nor Apollo, nor Mercury. He was more like Christ than any of these, but he was very mysterious. Some say that he was an historic personage, a Buddhist priest; others that he was a personification of the sun; others that he was a pure creation of the fancy;—but, whatever he was, he bore a remarkable character. His moral attributes were, unlike those ascribed to the other divinities, certainly in contrast to those possessed by the other nature-divinities. Strangely enough this culture-hero was driven away, and the nature-gods took his place. Where did this idea which is so much like the Christ come from? Was it brought in from another continent, or was it the product of the native thought and conscience? The Bible idea was not totally unknown, for the Toltec divinity, in his life and character, has a wonderful resemblance to the promised Messiah.

V. We now turn to the main question, and shall, by quoting the opinions of others, suggest an explanation. There are many writers who have given opinions upon this question which are worthy of regard. Some of these writers are mere speculative thinkers, but others have based their opinions upon facts, rather than upon theories. The ethnic religions of the earth have been studied attentively, and among them those of the native races of America have gained prominence. Perhaps they have not been treated as fully as they should have been, but they are at least taken into the account.

The religious sentiment is the first object of thought. This is a mysterious power in nature. The question is, in what way this sentiment first expresses itself.

On this point there seems to be a great diversity of opinion. Caspari says that "Parents, chieftains, and sages were the first objects of religious reverence and homage." Jules Baissac, on the other hand, concludes that the generative principle was the beginning. Motherhood was deified. Next to this the male principle, and after that the phallic worship was the form which the religious sentiment took. Comte takes the ground that the earliest attitude assumed by the mind in interpreting nature was a fetichistic one. Spencer, however, thinks that the very fact that the first man could easily distinguish animate from inanimate objects would refute this, and takes the position that animistic and fetichistic beliefs were not primary beliefs. De Brosses and Tiele assert

but Quatrefages and Tylor deny the primitiveness of fetichism or animism.

Darwin conceives the *first men* to be capable of rising in thought above the knowledge furnished by the senses. He says that the same *high mental faculties* which first led men to believe in unseen spiritual agencies, then in fetichism, then in polytheism, and ultimately in monotheism, would infallibly lead him, so long as his powers remained poorly developed, to various strange superstitions and customs. These are aberrations of the human intellect, but they show the *loftiness of man's powers*. Lubbock also ascribes to the *earliest men* a like ability to *conceive* of the *super-sensual*; and Tylor says, that "high above all the doctrines of souls, of divine manes, of local nature, spirits, of the great deities, of the elements, there are to be discerned in savage theology *shadows quaint or majestic of the conception of a supreme deity.*" He says also that the races of North and South America, of Africa, of Polynesia, recognising a number of great deities, are usually considered polytheists, yet their acknowledgment of a supreme creator would entitle them to the name of monotheists. Max Müller takes the ground that fetichism itself points to *antecedent ideas* which give force to the fetich.

The great objection to these views is found in the low morality of the native religions; but it should be added that the character of the deity partakes of the character of the worshippers. The ideas of morality among the natives of America are quite low, but their divinities compare favourably with others. There were many deceptions practised by the gods, and occasionally a deed of lust appears in the record. Yet they never equal the amours of the classical divinities, and the deceptions, if compared with those of the Scandinavian, are harmless and without malice. The sacrifices which were introduced by Montezuma, the King of Mexico, were cruel and bloodthirsty; but so were the sacrifices of the Phœnicians. Cannibalism existed in America, but there was a peculiar superstition about it. It was to secure the bravery or the virtue of the victim that the people ate his flesh. Phallic worship prevailed to some extent on this continent, but never reached the base degradation which was common in the East. The worship of Bacchus never prevailed to any extent here. We do not claim for the divinities of America any quality of holiness; but there was often a benevolent disposition in them which was quite remarkable amongst such a race. The White-Gods and the culture-heroes were the embodiments of lofty and majestic purity, of self-denial for the good of others, and

of benevolence, so that we may say that an approach to the high standard of character which appears in the Bible is here found. We do not say where this standard came from, but only state that it was here.

The two sides of the aboriginal religion are in great contrast. The Divine side is always advancing towards a better moral standing, and is full of good. But the human side is always retrograding into a very inhuman and gross superstition.

VI. The closing thought of this paper is the most important. Was there any historic connexion between the aboriginal religions of America and the teaching of the Bible? On this point we will not give a decisive answer. There are evidences for and against the position. The common opinion or train of thought of American ethnologists is in favour of the autochthonous origin of everything which is native American. Yet there are many things which go to prove the contrary:—

1. There are many symbols in America which are analogous to those in the East; symbols which remind one at once of those mentioned in the Bible. (a) The cross or sacred Tau of Egypt is found in America. It assumed not one form, but many. (b) The serpent is a very common symbol. (c) The tree; this with the serpent reminds us of the Garden of Eden, and of the serpent and tree-worship so widely spread over the world. (d) The symbol of the ark. (e) The symbol of the cloven tongue reminds one of the confusion of tongues. (f) There are towers or pyramids around which traditions hang reminding one of the Tower of Babel.

2. There are customs in America which resemble the common customs recorded in the Bible. (a) Circumcision was practised. (b) There were baptisms and lustrations which remind us of the Scripture rites. (c) There were vestal virgins, and the custom of burying alive those who had violated the vow, reminding one of the custom which was common in Rome.

3. There are many traditions which remind us of those found in the Bible. (a) The tradition of the Creation. (b) The tradition of the Flood. (c) The tradition of the Dispersion of the race. (d) The tradition of the incest of Lot and his daughters, with the reproach upon the origin of the Moabites. These have their correlatives in the mythologies of America. We do not say that they are the same traditions, or that the American tribes derived their ideas from the Bible, or even from any one who was familiar with

the Bible. We only say that these events are recorded in the native traditions of America and in Bible history. The cosmogonies in America are generally local, or associated with local surroundings. The imagery is local, the deluge is also local. There are mountains which have traditions of the Deluge connected with them—American Ararats. But the persons saved were the ancestors of particular tribes. There are also “arks,” but they are the “big canoes” in which the “medicine-man” came over during the flood. There are traditions of the world being re-peopled, but it is re-peopled by the ancestors of particular tribes.

The truths which are embodied in the native traditions are very similar to those found in Bible history, proving, perhaps, some common origin long ago, but the imagery is in great contrast. One of the most remarkable coincidences which we have noticed is found in the Tale of Incest, which has just come to light as a tradition of the Navajoes. This story has been published in the *American Antiquarian*. The story is adapted to the Indian customs in its details, but the general purport of it and the reproach which was brought upon the Utes as the fruits of the incest remind us of the reproach which the Jews brought upon the Moabites because of the incest of Lot. Dr. Washington Matthews, who has furnished me with a copy of the myth, says there is no doubt of its pre-Columbian or prehistoric character, and has referred to the remarkable resemblance which exists between it and the story in the Bible. The fashion is to explain away all these resemblances to Bible stories, but they seem to be accumulating more and more; and it is among the possibilities that by-and-by the evidence will be so overwhelming that it will convince the most sceptical. For the present we only refer to the general resemblances and the correlation between the facts and truths found in the traditions of America, and those which are so marked in the Bible record, and leave others to decide whether these coincidences could be produced by any law of ethnic development, or by any other cause than that of an historic connexion.

THE PRESIDENT (Professor G. G. Stokes, M.A., D.C.L., P.R.S.).—I have to ask you to accord your thanks to the Author of the paper and also to Dr. Thornton, for having delighted us all by the manner in which he has kindly read it.

REV. R. THORNTON, D.D., V.P.—I have read Mr. Peet's paper with very great satisfaction, because it is one which asserts most definitely, and proves most convincingly, the great truth that there was a primeval revelation given to our first parents and handed down more or less authoritatively—

generally less—to all the races of the earth. We hold that that revelation was given, in its perfect and written form, by Moses to the chosen people of God ; but we are not, therefore, necessarily to suppose that other peoples and nations were entirely unaware of the existence or the attributes of God. On the contrary, the Great Father of all did not leave them without all knowledge ; there was a tradition of some kind, and it is apparent that the remarkable traditions of these North American Indians were simply corruptions of that original revelation. I have said here before that I hold very firmly the doctrine that the primeval tradition was known to the ancestors of that race, and I hold this doctrine none the less firmly because the other day I saw, in a sceptical book which I looked into, the notion of the primeval tradition scouted as one which a sensible man would not entertain : now, when a sceptic, dealing with a proposition he is unable to refute, says “ none but an idiot would hold it,” that seems to me a very strong argument in favour of its not being capable of refutation. We have, I think, often had pointed out to us here, the wonderful coincidence there is between the recorded tradition, as we have it in the Scriptures, and the form in which the original tradition has been handed down to different peoples in different parts of the world. These are very important facts, and I cannot see how any person before whom they are put can resist the conclusion that there must have been a real reason for the similarity found to exist between superstitions and traditions, such as the author of this paper has dealt with, and our own record. In point of fact I think that with regard to these, and not only these but a number of coincident traditions, one can scarcely resist the conclusion that all the races of man sprang from one family, and from one pair, as recorded in the Mosaic Scriptures, and that they have all retained, in some form or other, that Revelation which the Creator of All originally delivered to them. (Applause.)

The Meeting was then adjourned.