

**RELIGION IN THE  
LIGHT OF  
PHILOSOPHY**

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Religion in the Light of Philosophy by Anonymous

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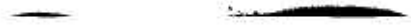
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## RELIGION IN THE LIGHT OF PHILOSOPHY.

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### Discourse the First.

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DR. KUHN upon the "Descent of Fire and the Beverage of the Gods," Dr. Schwartz upon the "Origin of Mythology," Professor Max Duncker's "Ancient History," and Citizen Dupuis upon the "Origin of all Worships," furnish us with the material upon which we shall make some observations.

ALL SCIENCE is virtually a *supersession* of religion, RELIGION being a FANCY, a pretence of poets that they know something, when in reality they know nothing. Every special science is a form comprehending of necessity some subject-matter which is inconsistent with religious belief, though without being conscious of or advertent to the inconsistency. It is left to PHILOSOPHY to *supersede* religion, *knowing* that it supersedes it. The astronomy of our own day, for instance, abolishes the distinction of



"the world above" and "the world below," of *heaven* and *hell*, of heaven *above* and hell *below* the earth, and removes the earth itself into heaven and places it among the other stars. None of the fancies of religion about heaven and hell, the gods above and the gods below (*superi et inferi*), agree with astronomical science. And yet Newton, the great astronomer, was at the same time a superstitious man. We shall, hereafter, witness something similar in one of our mythologists.\* Their explanations are not, however, any the less welcome; neither is the information, which we may derive from every modern astronomer, that *above* and *below* make no difference, and that our antipodes will not tumble down to our nadir.

All religions are alike in this: they have *tales*, or *myths*, for their foundation. The first point of interest with all of them is, therefore, the *origin and formation* of such tales; the next, the *development* of these mythological narratives. We desire, firstly, to understand the different stages of the mythological movement. When we have thus become acquainted with the gods, and with their authors, the poets, we shall necessarily encounter their antagonists, the phi-

\* No mythologists who compare religious fables can be styled orthodox; yet there are two kinds of them, the one seeking to restore theology, the other ignoring it, while both equally subvert creeds of every description by causing both the origin and the meaning of the creeds to be understood.

losophers. The nursery rhymes of the poets, sung by them when mankind was in the cradle, can no longer satisfy men who have attained full age. Instead of fairy tales, they expect truth. Truth and "the consolation of religion" are consequently irreconcilable, and we shall hereafter examine the attempt of one of our mythologists to reconcile them. We shall then, after having given an authentic account of the God of the Jews, our "God the Father," explain, after Dupuis, the mythology of the Christians.

#### I. STAGES OF MYTHOLOGY.

The domain of *fairy tales* and *myths*, upon which all religions are based, is one well worthy of research; it is the REGION OF SUPERSTITION. This is the *belief of the people*, or, the primitive wisdom of mankind, a *premature birth of science*, which only *fancies* what it teaches, and delivers its *doctrines* in the shape of *stories*, or *myths*, but is, nevertheless, a *theory*, which even to this day fills and dominates the minds of men with primitive impressions and ideas, and constitutes their RELIGION.

What thousands of years ago was a *clever thought*, we now justly term *superstition*, belief in fables which run counter to nature and reason; an assertion *superseded by science*, so far at least as it makes preten-

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sions to truth. But science does not further interfere with such poetry; it even renders the fable only the more interesting, when we learn that it had a meaning, and what that meaning really was. *The revelation of its meaning* is the problem of *mythology* and of the *philosophy of religion*; and it is only by this revelation whereby not only the present, but also the most primitive religious traditions become clear to us, and the origin and essence of all gods is explained. As all philosophies are but one and the same philosophy, so all religions are one and the same religion; not simply a belief in poetry, but in one and the same poetry, as we shall see.

We find three forms of superstition in existence:

1. The first form is the belief in the rude, primitive intuition of nature, in the *fable*, or *myth*, as a raw material.

2. A later formation is produced by the *artificial* and *poetical elaboration* of this material.

3. And the latest shape whereof superstition is capable, is imparted by *priestly speculation* upon the two former.

*Speculation upon superstition* is THEOLOGY, as *speculation upon science* is PHILOSOPHY. THEOLOGY is the most recent form of *superstition*.

The natural, or rude and primitive, superstition, such as the *wild hunt*, or the *storm* conceived as