

GOD KNOWETH BEST.

Some time, when all life's lessons have been learned,
And sun and stars forever more have set,
The things which our weak judgments here have spurned,
The things o'er which we grieved with lashes wet
Will flash before us, out of life's dark night,
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue;
And we shall see how all God's plans were true,
And how what seemed reproof was love most true.
And we shall see how while we frown and sigh,
God's plans go on as best for you and me.
How, when we called he heeded not our cry,
Because His wisdom to the end could see.
And even as prudent parents disallow
Too much of sweet to craving babyhood,
So God, perhaps, is keeping from us now
Life's sweetest things because it seemeth good.
And if, sometimes, commingled with life's wine,
We find the wormwood and rebel and shrink,
Be sure a wiser hand than yours or mine
Pours out this potion for our lips to drink.
And if some friend we love is lying low,
Where human kisses cannot reach his face,
Oh, do not blame the loving Father so,
But wear your sorrow with obedient grace.
And you shall shortly know that lengthened breath
Is not the sweetest gift God sends his friend,
And that, sometimes, the sable pall of death
Conceals the fairest boon his love can send.
If we could push ajar the gates of life,
And stand within and all God's workings see,
We could interpret all this doubt and strife
And for each mystery could find a key.
But not to-day. Then be content poor heart,
God's plans, like lilies, pure and white unfold.
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart,
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.
And if, through patient toll we reach the land
Where tired feet, with sandals loose may rest,
When we shall clearly know and understand,
I think that we will say, "God knew the best."

THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM.

Its Genuineness Established.

BY ELDER GEORGE REYNOLDS.

CHAP. VI. — *Traces of Gospel Ideas in Persian, Greek and Roman Mythologies. The Ancient Pagan Mysteries. The Circular Cut in the Book of Abraham, its import, etc.*

From the Egyptians we will turn to the Persians, the people next most likely to show traces in their religion of the influence left by the preaching of the gospel in patriarchal days. Mr. Hyde, in his "Religion of the Ancient Persians," points out how that Magianism, as set forth in its sacred books, taught that the human race sprang from a single pair; that it bore testimony to the occurrence of the flood; that it mentions Noah and his sons; that as far as Abraham is concerned, it declares him to have been its own author; and that it makes mention also of Moses. Moreover, it contains predictions respecting the appearance on earth of a Savior, who would ultimately overthrow the kingdom of darkness and make supreme and universal the kingdom of light and of God. It also taught the existence of good and of bad angels, also a resurrection of the dead.

The religions of ancient Greece and Rome were, to a very great extent, originally drawn from those of Egypt, Persia and Phoenicia. Many traces of gospel principles can be found in them, hidden concealed under the mass of filth and abomination that in later ages disgraced the religions of the kingdom of brass and iron. Still, in all these nations it is admitted that "so far from atheism and godless irreligion being the rule, belief in the Divine, however mistaken, and worship of the Divine, however superstitious, everywhere prevailed." With regard to special gospel ideas pre-

vailing in all these nations, it has been remarked that "baptism was as completely a portion of the primeval ceremonial worship as was the tenet of immortality and resurrection a portion of the primeval creed." It is also noticeable that all the Greek schools of philosophy taught the doctrine of the eternity of matter, and not only had these races a knowledge of things that occurred in antediluvian days, but in their different, absurd ways they recounted the history of the war in heaven when Lucifer was cast out. Those curious on this point can read their accounts of the war between the Titans and Heaven, and of the giants against Jupiter.

We now turn to another interesting feature of this phase of the subject.

In the explanation given by the Prophet Joseph of the disc or circular cut accompanying the Book of Abraham, he states "Fig. 3 is made to represent God sitting upon his throne, clothed with power and authority, with a crown of eternal light upon his head, representing also the grand key words of the holy priesthood, as revealed to Adam in the Garden of Eden, as also to Seth, Noah, Melchisedeck, Abraham, and all to whom the priesthood was revealed." Fig. 7 also contains "the grand key words of the priesthood." God having delivered these powers of the heavenly kingdom to "all to whom the priesthood was revealed," until Abraham's day, it would be but natural to suppose that as men gradually departed from the truth they would still endeavor to retain these sacred trusts in their midst; and however much they might depart from the purity of the faith proclaimed and practiced by the ancient patriarchs they would still strive to perpetuate the knowledge these "keys" conveyed, that they might have a claim on the blessings of the world to come. It is so natural to humanity to claim the blessings of God's word long after they have ceased to regard its obligations.

The fact of these things appearing in the Book of Abraham, written in hieroglyphics, renders it very supposable that at one time the import of these revelations was comprehended by those, among the Egyptians, who received the teachings of Abraham; and so far as Jewish tradition is concerned it is full of references to these matters, though these latter, perhaps, more directly centre in the rites of the temples at Jerusalem. It is our province to show that the recollection of these things was sought to be perpetuated amongst the heathen—originating, as usual, in Egypt, long after the greater portion of that which was pure and holy in the principles with which these things had been associated, by the ministers of the word of Jehovah, was lost sight of in the teachings and practices of these Gentile nations. To do this we must call attention to the so-called secret "mysteries" of the ancients, which to us, seem clearly in their origin, to have been attempts to imitate the administrations of the holy priesthood, in the sacred rites appertaining to the fulness of the gospel. In the investigation of this point we are greatly indebted to M. Faber's researches into the "Mysteries of the Cabiri," and to other authors who have enlarged upon his researches.

According to one of the gentlemen above referred to, "some of these mysteries were expressly instituted, as there is good reason to believe, to preserve in remembrance the remains of pure primeval faith and worship." Another states, "Every ancient people possessed its mysteries, which had for their object to uphold the religious truths that animate the hope of immortality, or in which were observed rites intended to explain and enforce the conduct suitable to those who cherished and wished to realize that hope." What took place in the administration of these mysteries is very difficult for the enquirer to discover for they were "conducted in secret, and those who were permitted to take part in them were solemnly obliged not to divulge what they had seen and learned," the word mystery itself being derived from a Greek word signifying to "shut the lips." However from what can be learned it is believed that the initiated were "powerfully appealed to by scenic or other modes of representing the condition of the good and bad." According to a writer in the *American Cyclopaedia*, "they consisted, in general, of rites of purification

and expiation, of sacrifices and processions, of ecstatic or orgiastic songs and dances, of nocturnal festivals fit to impress the imagination, and of spectacles designed to excite the most diverse emotions, terror and trust, and sorrow and joy, hope and despair. The celebration was chiefly by symbolical acts and spectacles, yet sacred mystical words, formulas, fragments of liturgies or hymns were also employed. There were likewise certain objects with which occult meanings, that were imparted to the initiated, were associated, or which were used in the various ceremonies in the ascending scale of initiation. The sacred phrases, concerning which silence was imposed, were themselves symbolical legends, and probably not statements of speculative truths." Ste Croix on this subject writes, "The germ of the mysteries is 'lustration,' (or purification by water) and expiation. The doctrines taught were the necessity of repentance and confession, the immortality of the soul and a future state of rewards and punishments." The Sr. De Sacy adds, "Certain rites and symbols were secret and these it was sacrilege to reveal." Baur states, "The fundamental idea of the mysteries is that of a god who suffers and dies and afterwards triumphs over death and has a glorious resurrection." Regarding the Persian mysteries of Mythras, it has been written, "The initiation was protracted and severe. The neophyte was baptized, anointed on the forehead and received bread and wine; a crown was placed on his head."

With regard to the preparation needed from those who asked admission to these rites the very remarkable statement is made, "It is quite undoubted respecting them, that as a necessary condition to admission, and as an important part of initiation, two things were imperatively necessary, namely a confession of sins, a promise of amendment of life, followed by baptism in some form more or less complete." Faber states "baptism continued to be handed down in all the mysteries," whilst another writer affirms that "continence, fasting and lustrations" were necessary pre-requisites before the applicant could enter the sacred doors. It is also a fact worthy of consideration that in a list of forty-five sacred Greek words gathered by M. Faber, there is scarcely one which does not resemble the Hebrew term for the same or a similar object.

As the ages rolled round these mysteries degenerated into the most licentious orgies, where excesses of a disgraceful character were so shamelessly practiced that in some cases they fell under the ban of the law, though presumed a portion of the worship of the gods. As an example of this we will take the mysteries of Dionysus. These were originally celebrated by women alone, in the temple of Dionysus. They were presided over by the wife of the Archon king (Basilissa), assisted by fourteen priestesses, to whom she took an oath that she was pure and unpolluted, and with whom she offered mystic sacrifices for the welfare of the city. When these mysteries were introduced into Rome, they speedily degenerated into shameful immoralities; men, as well as women were initiated; and such were the crimes and excesses committed that they were at length suppressed by a *senatus consult*, B. C. 186 (Liv. xxxix 8-18.)

It has been urged as an argument against the veracity of the translation by the Prophet Joseph Smith, of the circular cut or disc, but why we cannot comprehend, that numerous copies of it exist, scattered amongst the museums of Europe. These copies have been found buried with mummies in the same way as the one that fell into the Prophet's hands. Instead of being an argument against the truthfulness of the translation given by Joseph Smith, we consider it a very strong one in its favor. For this reason, Egyptologists acknowledge that some peculiar potency was ascribed to it by the ancient Egyptians, but their ideas are very vague as to in what that power consisted. It was customary with the ancient inhabitants of the Nile, to enshroud their dead in hieroglyphic wrappings, on which various facts relating to the life of the deceased were narrated. This writing was addressed to Osiris, the chief lord of Amentis, the land of the departed, and amongst other things, it stated that the acts of the Osir, the deceased, had been scruti-

nized by the seven inquisitors appointed to investigate the lives of men, and that he was found worthy to pass by those who guarded the gates of the eternal worlds, and partake of the blessings of the saved. Accompanying the mummy is also often found this sacred disc or hypociphas as the learned term it, which, if we mistake not, was usually placed under or near the head of the mummy. The translations given by the professedly learned convey no idea why this was so placed, but the revelation through our martyred prophet, that it contains the key words of the holy priesthood, at once makes the reason plain. The Egyptians buried this disc containing these sacred words with their dead, for very much the same reason that the Saints bury their dead in the robes of the holy priesthood. No doubt the true meaning of these key words was soon lost from amongst the Egyptians, but they knew enough to understand something of their value, and as ages rolled on, their apostate priesthood doubtless invented some myth to take their place. That these priests did claim to hold such keys, is clearly shown in a photograph in the Deseret Museum, of the walls of the Temple at Karnac, on which the gods are represented, each holding a key in his hand.

Decay in the Belief of Witchcraft.

A doctrine, the denial of which, two centuries ago, in New England, would have been considered proof positive of infidel tendencies and a long stride towards atheism; a doctrine which the most eminent divines identified with a standing or falling Bible; which was commended to favor by the almost concurrent voices of the learned of preceding Christian ages; which bishops and councils had stamped with a solid approval; on the ground of which death had been inflicted on thousands upon thousands of men and women, especially from the thirteenth century onwards—this doctrine has now disappeared. It is alien to our consciousness. It is no longer included in the stock of religious beliefs. The first skepticism respecting it was resented and repudiated by good men as an evidence of the degeneracy "of the present age,"—that had "present age" which good men in every generation have pronounced worse than any other before it. The first signs of the obsolescence of this ancient belief were observed with dismay by sincerely pious men, who rallied for the defence of the faith, and grasped the ark more tenaciously the more they saw it to be in danger. They hurled their proof-texts—"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live;" they spurned the novel interpretations which made the "witch" to be a mere juggler; they shouted "Sadducee;" they scattered their sarcasms on the effrontery of the new lights who fancied themselves on a loftier pinnacle than the generations before them. All was in vain. The obsolescent belief soon became obsolete. The eighteenth century smiled at the credulity of the seventeenth; and the nineteenth century does the same. Witchcraft, along with faith in it, has vanished. The devils who helped their human allies to pinch and prick sleeping children, sometimes to poison cattle, and upset milk-pails, have taken their flight. Salem is quiet from the incursions out of Tartarus; it is actually, as well as nominally, a city of peace. Gradually, and yet rapidly, men came to disbelieve what they had before believed. Emancipated from the old tenet, they began to deride it as a weak superstition. Spasmodic efforts to save the decaying doctrine proved useless. Even the potent voice of Wesley fell on listless ears. — Prof. George P. Fisher in *Sunday Afternoon* for January.

A certain little girl up town lived with two aunts, one married, with a whole lot of children, and lots of worry and bother, and the other single and having quite a comfortable time teaching school. The child one day threw her doll aside, and assumed an attitude of profound thought, which was interrupted at last by the question: "Well, Julia, what are you thinking about?" When the child let loose a ten-acre lot full of crude philosophy by answering: "I was finkin whever, when I growed up, I'd teat stool or have a baby."

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