

Then Chaldaea, the mother of all the myths of Southern Europe and Western Asia; think how often her religions varied from the first model and changed.

How many floods have swept the religious shores of nations we cannot tell, but we know there were many. Some of them threw up "sand hills" that lasted through many centuries, and others tore them down. What a grand and awful wreck of opinions and dreams and ambitions of men lie stranded down the long stretch of the past! Each one, in its hour of necessity, was the outburst of the very soul or intellect of those who believed in it.

In his progress from savagery toward civilization, man's history, all he ever was, is written in his religions. These contained the best thoughts of the ages in which they were born. But religion is only aggregated public opinion, the accumulation of many generations of traditions, evolved amid superstitious surroundings. So, as a nation lost some tradition or added a new one, or as its science disproved some old rotten theory, its religion changed. So all the old creeds passed and new ones have taken their place, only in time to share the same fate.

The religion of the Hebrews has changed till about all that is left of its rites and forms are those dead teachings contained in the "Old Testament." Unprejudiced history tells us that the original worship of Jehovah had almost passed from existence when Jesus of Nazareth gave his "Sermon on the Mount" and his "parables" to his small band of followers. To these were added the writings of his disciples; and these teachings finally gained strength, continually changing and moulding themselves with public opinion till they became strong enough to control it. Even after the time of the Nazarine we find many changes going on in the Christian religion, till in the Middle Ages the Christian church had but little in common with its first teachings. Its Monasticism was entirely opposite to the missionary instructions to the "Seventy." And now public opinion has split the church body into almost innumerable divisions. Besides, the Christian religion never received such a sanction as some other religions, and today is losing its hold upon the intellectual world and gaining but little in other directions. Surely the flood is sweeping in and a brighter faith, a humanitarian religion is taking its place.

There are reasons why the flood swept over the Jewish people in their earlier stages of development and left the Hebrew religion. For a people of their nomadic habits and barbaric customs, something like the Arabian of a later day, no other religion could have been so

well adapted to them; for if it could have, in the natural order of evolution, it would. But as they grew in their contact and relations with other people they outgrew their religion and finally separated from it. Then the Christian religion, a kind of admixture of most of the philosophic tenets of the east with many of the superstitions of the ancient Hebrews came to take its place. This new creed was a different one from the old, and, though originating from the same race, was suited to different conditions and peoples.

The Christian religion never fully satisfied the needs of the people to whom it was applied. It is a religion without progression, and the tendency of all western people is progressive. As a consequence Christianity failed.

Furthermore, had Christianity been a "god given" institution why was it not given to the world long before it was? If it is a perfect religion it must be suited to all times, and surely man had need for it, if it is a good thing. The evidence is that it is not the perfection and culmination of all truth, but rather one of the "sand hills" raised in course of progressive ideas; and, like all others, must be swept away and be supplanted by grander and nobler ideas.

Pierce City, Mo.,  
October 26, E. M. 300.

**The Ingersoll Lectureship On Immortality.\***

The Ingersoll Lectureship on Immortality of Man was established at Harvard University in 1893 by a bequest of the late Caroline Haskell Ingersoll. Every year, some person, clergyman or layman, irrespective of denomination or profession, is appointed to give the expression of his personal views regarding this subject. Prof. William James, the brilliant Harvard psychologist, was made lecturer for 1898, and his lecture constitutes a book bearing the title "Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine." (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Pages 70. Price, cloth, \$1.00.)

Professor James has treated the problem in his usual apt and delightful manner; he is always graphic and trenchant; and the delicate tinge of emotional mysticism which colors his philosophy lends to his expositions a charm which few can resist. The two objections Professor James considers are: (1) The inference from physiology that since thought is a function of the brain, when the brain perishes so also must the thought perish; and (2) The inference from biology and history that since countless numbers of indif-

\* See editorial comment and reply on page 5 of this issue: "Post Mortem Lectures on Post Mortem Immortality."

ferent individuals have perished in times gone by, Heaven must be not only disagreeably crowded but insufferably tiresome. Prof. James disposes of the first objection by analysing the concept of function and showing that the physiological doctrine may be interpreted as referring to transmissive function, and not necessarily to productive function. Thought is not a function of the brain as steam is of the tea-kettle, but as the color-fan of the spectrum is of the refracting prism. Our brains are the prisms, as it were, through which the thought of eternity is transmitted; each has different degrees of transmissibility, each different degrees of effectiveness; when one stops, "that special stream of consciousness which it subserved vanishes entirely from this natural world. But the sphere of being that supplied the consciousness will still be intact; and in that more real world with which, even whilst here, it was continuous, the consciousness may, in ways unknown to us, continue still."

It is difficult to see how this prismatic and transcendental eschatology can be reconciled in any way with the doctrine of individual immortality. The only logical conclusion from it would seem to be this, that immortality is an attribute of the universal ocean of consciousness only, and not of transient and perishable individual streams that flow from it; in a word, that the individual is immortal only in so far as he is not an individual,—a conclusion which, if not accepted itself as an ultimate solution, simply leaves the question where it was originally taken up. The transmission-theory of Professor James, furthermore, "puts itself in touch" with the phenomena now being investigated by the Psychical Research Society, and this in itself is no mean recommendation to the author.

As to the second objection, the crowdedness of Heaven, Professor James advances the theory of the infinite compassion and love of the Supreme Spirit, or God, and affirms the gospel of the paramount significance of the individual life. "God," he says, "has no inexhaustible a capacity for love that his call and need is for a literally endless accumulation of created lives. He can never faint or grow weary, as we should, under the increasing supply. His scale is infinite in all things. His sympathy can never know satiety or glut." And again: "The tiresomeness of an over-peopled Heaven is a purely subjective and illusory notion, a sign of human incapacity, a remnant of the old narrow-hearted aristocratic creed." The individuals of the past, the present and the future who appear so obnoxious to us in their mediocrity and sameness and as unfit for perpetuation, throb with a life and significance quite

equal to our own and beyond our sphere to judge. "Was your taste consulted in the peopling of this globe? How then should it be consulted as to the peopling of the vast City of God? Let us put our hand over our mouth, like Job, and be thankful that in our personal littleness we ourselves are here at all. The Deity that suffers us, we may be sure, can suffer many an other queer and wonderful and only half-delightful thing."

Such is the character of Professor James's refutations of the current objections to the doctrine of immortality. They are broad and elastic, and admit of varied interpretations; and these features—not their definiteness—will recommend them to all persons who seek support for the immortality that they individually have most at heart.—  
[Open Court.]

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