

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

## ARTICLE V.

## THE THEOLOGY OF ÆSCHYLUS.

BY PROF. WILLIAM S. TYLER, D. D., AMHERST COLLEGE.

THERE could be no greater misapprehension of the ancient Greek drama, than to judge of it by the modern theatre. They have little in common but the name. The points of contrast are more numerous and more striking than the points of resemblance. The modern drama is exhibited within doors, in the night, and by gas light or candle light. The ancient was by day, in the open air, and beneath the broad, pure light of heaven. The modern theatre is a common building; and though of extraordinary size and splendor, yet enclosed by walls and roof, and capable at most of containing only two or three thousand people. The Greek theatre was hewn out of the solid rock in the side of the Acropolis, or built up with quarried stone on a scale of similar magnificence; and it counted its audience by tens of thousands. The spectators in a Parisian theatre can see nothing but the theatre, with its temporary and insignificant adornings. The Acropolis, the Agora, the porticoes, the temples and altars of the gods, all the architectural splendors of Athens, clustered around those who gathered in the theatre of Dionysos; all the natural and historical glories of Attica were spread before them. As they had no covering but the blue sky, and no light but the bright sun, the singularly *deep, liquid*, blue sky, and the wonderfully *bright* sun of *Greece*, so the horizon was the only limit to their field of vision.

The modern theatre is a private speculation, patronized it may be by royalty, and sometimes attended by the aristocracy, where monarchy and aristocracy exist, but for the most part filled and supported by the lowest and the worst of the population. At Athens, the theatre was a public institution, the expenses were paid, directly or indirectly, out

of the public treasury ; the government was the proprietor and manager, and the audience was the enlightened, the refined, the sovereign people of Athens, together with the *elite* from all the principal cities of Greece. The theatre, as it now exists in the cities of Europe and America, is generally, if not universally, a school of vice and crime, in which bad men and women teach other men and women, not quite so bad as themselves, to gratify their appetites and passions, and to become the pests of society. The theatre, as it was in its palmy days in the Grecian cities, was a school of good morals and religion, taught by the wisest and best men of their times ; for such were the tragic poets in the age of the immortal triumvirate of Greek tragedy ; and the poets themselves were not only the authors but the actors, or at least the *trainers* of the actors, of their own dramas ; and as tragedy was the consummate flower of Greek poetry, the epic and the lyric, the objective and the subjective, united in one perfect blossom, so was it also the opening bud of ethical philosophy and theology. As it was taught in the school of Homer and Pindar, so was it the teacher of Socrates and Plato, and of the great Athenian orator, in whom the ethics as well as the eloquence, the practical philosophy as well as the elegant literature of Greece culminated. Such is the rank which Milton assigns the tragedians in his splendid description of Athens in the *Paradise Lost* :

“ What the lofty, grave tragedians taught  
In chorus or Iambic, teachers best  
Of moral prudence, with delight received,  
In high sententious maxims, while they treat  
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life,  
High actions and high passions best describing.”

The modern drama aspires only to amuse the theatre-going multitude. The ancient was designed, not more for entertainment than for instruction. Modern theatrical entertainments, if not in open hostility to religion, are habitually irreligious. Greek tragedy grew up in connection with religious worship, and constituted not only a popular but a sacred

element in the festivals of the gods.<sup>1</sup> "The theatre was invented," says an old Roman writer, "for the worship of the gods, and for the delight of men."<sup>2</sup>

In short, strange as it may sound in modern ears, the Greek stage was, more nearly than anything else, the Greek pulpit. With a priesthood that sacrificed but did not preach, with few books of any kind and no Bible, the people were, in a great measure, dependent on oral instruction for knowledge; and, as they learned their rights and duties as citizens from their orators, so they hung on the lips of the "lofty, grave tragedians," for instruction touching their origin, duty, and destiny as moral and immortal beings. As the Pnyx was their legislative hall, and the Bema the source of their deliberative eloquence, so their demonstrative eloquence, the eloquence of the pulpit, proceeded from the stage and resounded through the theatre. Greek tragedy is essentially didactic, ethical, mythological, religious. It was the express office of the chorus, which held the most prominent place in the ancient drama, to interpret the mysteries of Providence, to justify the ways of God to men, to plead the cause of truth, virtue, and piety. Hence it was composed usually of aged men, whose wisdom was fitted to instruct in the true and the right, or of young women, whose virgin purity would instinctively shrink from falsehood and wrong. The chief end of tragedy, according to Aristotle, is to purify the heart and regulate the passions; to which end, the rhythm of the choral dance, the harmony of the music, and the metre of the verse conspired with the moral lessons more directly taught by the characters, the chorus, and the plot. Tragedy, in its very nature, as conceived by the Greeks, transported the hearer out of himself and away from the present. It carried him back towards the origin of our race, up nearer to the providence and presence

<sup>1</sup> It may be said, that the modern drama had a similar *origin* in the Mediæval "Mysteries." But it has quite forgotten its original.

<sup>2</sup> *Theatra excogitata cultus deorum et hominum delectationis causa.* Valerius Maximus, as quoted by Blackie, who places the passage on the title-page of his translation of Æschylus into English verse.

of the gods, and on toward the retributions of another world. With few exceptions, the subjects are mythological. The characters are heroes and demigods, monsters, it may be, in crime, but their punishment is equally prodigious: sin and suffering always go together. They illustrate, by their lips and in their lives, the providence and the retributive justice of God. The plot turns on some great principle of the divine government, which is further explained and enforced in the sublime strains of the chorus. The myth, out of Homer or Hesiod — no myth, but a sacred reality, to the audience — is the text; the corypheus is the preacher; and the choir repeat the doctrine, investing it with all the sanctity and majesty of their sacred lyrics. Nor is prayer wanting in these ancient *liturgies* (*λειτουργίαι*), since the choruses consist, in no small part, of direct addresses to the deity.

While this is more or less true of all the great masters of Greek tragedy, Æschylus is preëminently the theological poet of Greece. The gods themselves, the *inferior* gods, are not unfrequently the actors as well as the subjects of his dramas; and they handle the grand themes of theology very much as they are handled by the good and evil angels in the *Paradise Lost*. His human characters, even though stained with blood, breathe sentiments of piety; or if they dare utter proud or rebellious words, it is but a prelude to their certain and dreadful overthrow. The great problems which lie at the foundation of religious faith and practice — the same problems which are discussed by Job and his three friends — are the main staple of nearly all his tragedies. With him, these were not idle speculations. They were practical questions, with which his own mind had manifestly struggled, on which his own destiny was suspended, and into the solution of which he enters with not a little of the earnestness of a personal religious experience. The earlier poets, Homer, Hesiod, the sacred poets, and the authors of the so-called Homeric hymns, had looked at them in their more purely poetical aspects, had believed the myths, perhaps, with a more literal and implicit faith. The

subsequent philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, developed them more fully in a system of doctrines. Æschylus stands on the dividing line between them, no less poetical than the former, scarcely less philosophical than the latter, but more intensely practical, personal, and theological than either. The poet, who most resembles him in modern times, is the Puritan poet of Old England. A believer in metempsychosis might well maintain that the same soul dwelt in them both. To say nothing of the obvious resemblance between the Prometheus of the former and the Satan of the latter, which was in part, doubtless, the result of intentional imitation; and not to speak of a similar license in coining or rather forging ponderous poetical epithets; both were characterized by the same matchless sublimity, both possessed by the same strong political and patriotic sympathies, and both fired with the same intense earnestness of religious feeling. Dante was another kindred spirit. The *Inferno*, the *Paradise Lost*, and the *Prometheus Bound*, should be read and studied together. The *Agamemnon* is often and justly compared with *Macbeth*. But the English tragedy illustrates more the workings of the human soul, while the Greek leads us to think almost entirely of the providence of God. In this respect, perhaps, the tragedies of Æschylus find their nearest counterpart in the *Book of Job*. On the whole, there is no other book, of which the reader of Æschylus will be more frequently reminded. The form of both is dramatic. The scene in both is primitive. The characters are the patriarchs and princes of an early age. The interlocutors discuss the same subjects. The same sublime and awful mystery casts its dark shadow over them. They grapple with themes too vast for their comprehension. They wrestle with beings too mighty to be resisted. They are overwhelmed with the contrast between the littleness and vileness of man, and the majesty and glory of God. And they cry out: "What is man, that he should be pure? How shall man be just with his Maker? Who, by searching, can find out God? Lo! these are parts of his ways; but the thunder of his power, who can understand?" It is

not, then, a misnomer, to speak of the *theology* of *Æschylus*; nor can it fail to be a question of deep interest: What were the theological opinions of such a mind, so far removed from the light of revelation?

### I. *Sources of Religious Knowledge.*

One of the first questions which naturally arise in considering such a subject, is the source or sources from which the thoughtful and devout, who lived before the dawn of revelation, derived their religious faith, and what the authority on which it rested.

The most fruitful of all these sources is *tradition*; tradition, however, having its origin, according to the common opinion, in a primeval revelation or direct communication from God. They received their religious opinions and observances, — the religion of the family and the religion of the state — as an inheritance from their fathers, who, in like manner, had received the same bequest from theirs; and thus it had come down, like the heir-looms in their families, like the blood in their veins, from their earliest progenitors. Nor did they deem this mere blind credulity, trusting in a long line of ancestors each as ignorant as themselves, and therefore the entire chain hanging without any support. They claimed not to rest on human authority as their ultimate reliance. The higher and better classes, the aristocracy of wisdom and goodness as well as of birth traced their religion, as they did their race, back ultimately to the gods, or to men who walked with the gods and talked with them face to face, like our first parents and the patriarchs of the Old Testament. The universality of this persuasion would, of itself, entitle it to no small credit as an instinctive belief, if it were not expressly sanctioned by revelation; and corrupt and erroneous as many of the *superstitions* (that is, *surviving relics* of the earliest times) are, which the different heathen nations thus hold in common, yet there is enough of general resemblance, both in the form and substance of these traditions, to justify the belief that they did originally

proceed from the same source, and that a primeval revelation or direct communication from heaven. On the subject of future punishment especially, the Greek poets and philosophers are in the habit of appealing to tradition. Thus Plato habitually throws his descriptions of a future state into the form of a *myth*, as he sometimes calls them, though at others he is careful to declare, that they are not *μῦθοι*, but *λόγοι* (cf. *Gorgias*, 523), whose truth he does not indeed know, but he believes them to be true, and insists that they are entitled to universal belief.<sup>1</sup> In reference to the gods, also, he says (*Timæus*, 40, D.), that "the subject is too great for us, but we must believe those who have spoken of it aforetime, who, being, as they said, the offspring of the gods, doubtless knew their own sires, and must not be disbelieved when they tell us, as it were, things pertaining to their own household." And so Æschylus, when he speaks of a great truth in reference to the unseen world, or a great law of the divine providence and existence, very often refers to it as a *λόγος* (*Suppliants*, 230; *Eumenides*, 4, etc.),<sup>2</sup> or a *μῦθος* (*Choephoræ*, 312, etc.), and often applies to it an epithet, such as *γέρον, τρυγέρον, παλαιφάτος* (*Ibid.*; *Ag.* 750), expressive of its antiquity and sacredness.

Nearly allied to these sacred traditions are those world-old and world-wide maxims of wisdom, virtue, and piety, which being the voice of mankind, are also the voice of God: *vox populi, vox Dei*; which Æschylus delights to honor, like the old English poet,<sup>3</sup>

"The people's voice the voice of God we call,  
And what are proverbs but the people's voice,  
Coined first, and current made by public choice?  
Then sure they must have weight and truth withal."

<sup>1</sup> Compare the Seventh Epistle, where it is said: "We ought always to believe those ancient and sacred words, which declare the soul to be immortal," *πειθεσθαι δὲ οὕτως αἰεὶ χρὴ τοῖς παλαιοῖς τε καὶ ἱεροῖς λόγοις, οἳ δὴ μηνύουσιν ἡμῖν ἀθάνατον ψυχὴν εἶναι.*

<sup>2</sup> The citations are made according to the Leipsic edition of Tauchnitz. The arrangement differs much in different editions.

<sup>3</sup> Cited by Trench in his *Lessons on Proverbs*.

Oracles are another source of religious knowledge, and especially of guidance in religious duty, to which Æschylus often alludes, and generally in terms of profound respect. Thus Inachus, father of Io, sends frequent messengers to Pytho (Delphi), and to Dodona, to learn what he must do or say to please the gods, and receives in return "ambiguous answers, obscurely worded and hard to be understood." (Prometheus Vincetus, 660, seq.). But at last there came a clear and distinct response, commanding the father to banish his daughter from home and country, and let her wander an exile to distant lands, under penalties so frightful as to enforce an instant though reluctant obedience. Jupiter is the original source of oracles. They are communicated, however, for the most part, through Apollo, Jupiter's son and prophet (Eumenides, 18), who derives his surname *Loxias* from his prophetic office, being as it were the *λόγος*, word of Jove,<sup>1</sup> and who, from his prophetic seat, never gives forth a response which his father, and the father of the Olympian gods, has not commanded him to give (Eumen. 616).<sup>2</sup> Apollo, of course, ordinarily speaks through the lips of his inspired priestess, who is *his* voice, as he is Jove's; though in the Eumenides, Apollo is represented as appearing in his own person as one of the characters of the drama, and pleading with his own lips the cause of Orestes. Æschylus never intimates a doubt of the inspiration of the priestess. He is manifestly a sincere believer in the divine authority of oracles. So were all the wise and good in the wisest and best ages of Grecian history. And ambiguous as they often were, perverted as they sometimes were to partisan and selfish purposes, their influence was, on the whole, on the side of truth and justice. Greece, and the ancient world, were the better for their existence. What forbids us to suppose that they were in some sense directed and overruled by Providence, and instead of being under the control of evil spirits, which was the prevailing theory among the Christian

<sup>1</sup> According to another interpretation, this surname denotes the *ambiguity* of the oracles. See Liddell and Scott, *sub voce*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John 7: 16. 8: 28.

Fathers, were intended to be the forerunners among the heathen, as the prophets were among the Jews, of the Christian revelation? With this supposition accords the fact, observed and explained by Plutarch, as best he could, that the heathen oracles died away as that revelation was dawning upon the world.<sup>1</sup>

Lots (*Septem contra Thebas*, 55); auguries (*oracular birds with unerring art*, *Ibid.* 26), and other omens; dreams and visions (*Prom.* 646: *Persæ* 176, et al.);

For the mind's eye looks clearly out from sleep,  
But mortals have no foresight in the day: (*Eumen.* 104.)

these are all so many different means by which the gods reveal the future, or make known their will to men.

There are also prophets — Calchas (*Agamemnon*, 248), Cassandra (*Ibid.* 1073), Amphiaraus (*Theb.* 568), whom Apollo inspires directly, without the intervention of omens, oracles, or sacrifices, breathing into them his own prophetic spirit, which, like a tempest, tosses their agitated minds, or burns like a fire, in their bones.

Ah, what a sudden flame comes rushing on me!  
I burn, I burn. Apollo, O Apollo! (*Agamem.* 1256.)

Woe, woe is me! Again the furious power  
Swells in my laboring breast; again commands  
My bursting voice, and what I speak is fate. (*Ibid.* 1215.)

Such are the cries of Cassandra, as she comes again and again under the frenzy of inspiration, and sees, as if they were before her eyes, all the past and future calamities and crimes of the house of Atreus.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Plutarch, *de Defectu Oraculorum*. As this may be a point of some interest to some of our readers, the writer may perhaps be excused for referring to an Article on Plutarch's Theology in the *Methodist Quarterly* for July 1852. In this prince of Grecian moralists, we see the Ultima Thule of heathen morality and theology.

<sup>2</sup> I have used the metrical versions of Potter, Blackie, and Chapman (in *Blackwood's*) at pleasure, as they seemed most faithfully to represent the original.

## II. *Existence, Nature, and Attributes of the Gods.*

Æschylus is not always consistent with himself in his representations of the gods, especially of the Supreme Divinity. In his *Prometheus Bound* he seems to fall in with those anthropomorphous conceptions of the Deity, which so disfigure the poems of Homer and Hesiod. The Jupiter of this tragedy is an arbitrary despot, who has usurped the throne of his father, and is destined in turn to be dethroned by one of his descendants, who is ignorant of the future, which is known only to Prometheus, oppresses the inferior deities, and is intent on the destruction of miserable mortals, — lustful, tyrannical, unjust, and cruel alike to the victims of his appetite and the objects of his displeasure, and lording it over the universe with the morals and the manners of a lawless usurper. But it is not quite fair or safe to take these as the sentiments of the poet himself. We do not gather the theology of Milton from the rebellious ravings of Satan in the *Paradise Lost*, nor the doctrines of the Bible from the mouth of the Adversary in the *Pentateuch* and the book of Job.<sup>1</sup>

The character of the Supreme Deity, as it is generally represented in the other tragedies, and as it appears especially in the epithets by which he is addressed by the chorus, corresponds much more nearly with our ideas of the true God. He is the universal father — father of gods and men — the universal cause (*παναίτιος*, Ag. 1485); the all-seer and all-doer (*παντόπτης*, *πανεργέτης*, Ibid. and *Supplices*, 139); the all-wise and all-controlling (*παγκρατής*, Sup. 813); the just and the executor of justice (*δικηφόρος*, Ag. 525); true and incapable of falsehood,

Ψευδγορεῖν γὰρ οὐκ ἐπίσταται στόμα  
τὸ δῖον, ἀλλὰ πᾶν ἔπος τελεῖ. (*Prom.* 1031)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This one-sided view was doubtless balanced and corrected in the concluding piece of the trilogy, the *Prometheus Unbound*, which was exhibited at the same time with the *Prometheus Bound*, and served to complete it, but which is now lost.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Tit. 1 : 2, which God, that cannot lie, promised.

holy (*άγρός*, Sup. 650), merciful (*πρηνένης*, Ibid. 139); the god especially of the suppliant and the stranger (Supplices, *passim*); the most high and perfect one (*τέλειον ύψιστον*, Eumen. 28); "king of kings, of the happy most happy, of the perfect most perfect power, blessed Zeus:"

*ήναξ άνάκτων, μακάρων  
μακάρτατε, καί τελείων  
τελειότατον κράτος, έλβιε Ζεϋ·* (Sup. 522.)

Such are some of the titles by which Jupiter is most frequently addressed; such the attributes which are most commonly ascribed to him. How unlike the *acts* of lust and violence which are imputed to the same divinity by the Greek mythology, and which are alluded to by Æschylus, and that not merely in the Prometheus, but in the very same chorus which commences with the above sublime invocation! Does not this palpable inconsistency lend confirmation to the idea of a primitive revelation? Must not these truly divine epithets have proceeded originally from a higher and purer source, than the corrupt and corrupting fables which have attached themselves like barnacles to the wrecks of primitive truth that have floated to our shores across the sea of ages?

The general resemblance, suggested by these attributes, between the Supreme God of the Greek tragedies and of the Hebrew scriptures, derives additional force from the frequency with which, as we shall see, he is spoken of as a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; one who will by no means clear the guilty; whose mysterious providence is an unfathomable abyss, and before whose irresistible power the heavens and the earth are shaken, and gods and men are as nothing.

As Moses inquires the name of the Being who commissions him to deliver Israel, so the chorus of Argive senators in the Agamemnon (160) hesitates by what name to invoke the Supreme Deity:

*Ζεϋς, όστις ποτ' έστιν, ει τόδ' αυ-  
τώ φίλον κεκλημένω  
τούτό νυν προσενέπω.*

And in accordance with these early tendencies of the Hebrew and the Greek, or, if you please, the Shemitic and Japhetic mind, Paul finds at Athens an altar inscribed "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD," and substantially justifies our mode of interpreting these resemblances by saying to the Athenians: "Whom therefore ye worship unknowing, him declare I unto you" (Acts 17: 23).

We are, however, effectually prevented from placing the notions and traditions of Æschylus on the same level with Revelation, by the low and unworthy, the degrading and demoralizing conceptions of the Deity, which intermingle, even in the best tragedies, with these just ascriptions of truly divine honor and majesty; such for instance as his dethronement of his father (Eumen. 641), his quarrels with his own wife, and amours with the wives and daughters of men (Sup. 162—174, et al.), and the fraud and treachery with which he flatters poor mortals, and lures them on to their own destruction (Pers. 93):

δολόμετιν δ' ἀπάταν θεοῦ  
 τίς ἀνὴρ θνατοῦ ἀλόξει; κ. τ. λ.

But when the gods deceive,  
 Wiles which immortals weave,  
 Who shall beware?  
 Who, when *their* nets surround,  
 Breaks with a nimble bound  
 Out of the snare?  
 First they approach with smiles,  
 Wreathing their hidden wiles:  
 Then with surprise  
 Seize they their prey; and lo!  
 Writhing in toils of woe  
 Tangled he lies.

Jupiter is the invisible deity of the Æschylean pantheon. The other gods — Apollo, Athena, Hermes, Hephæstus, etc. — appear as personages of the drama, and take part in the dialogue; Jupiter never. In accordance with the popular ideas of the good old times in which the scene is laid, *they* walk the earth in human form, and participate directly

in the affairs of men; he sits on his throne and rules over all; or, if he comes down to earth, it is in a more disguised form, as in some myth which we *hear* from the lips of the actors, or in the display of his mighty power, as we *see* it in the storm and the earthquake with which he overwhelms Prometheus. Indeed, as Müller has well remarked in his learned and profound dissertations on the *Eumenides*:<sup>1</sup> "With Æschylus, as with all men of profound feeling among the Greeks, from the earliest times, Jupiter is the only real God in the higher sense of the word. Although he is in the spirit of ancient theology a generated God, arisen out of an imperfect state of things, and not produced till the *third*<sup>2</sup> stage of the development of nature, still he is, at the time we are speaking of, the spirit that pervades and governs the Universe." As in the epithets applied to him we seem to see the relics of a primeval revelation, so in his immense superiority to the other gods, we see the primitive monotheism often breaking through the clouds of polytheistic error and superstition.

Besides the Most High and Universal Father, the Greek mythology recognizes an indefinite number of inferior deities, subordinate to his supreme authority, the messengers of his will, and the agents of his universal providence. These appear, in the tragedies of Æschylus, in the most real and practical light, now as direct actors in the drama, now as objects of fear or trust, supplication or deprecation to mortals, and now as the acting deities of this lower world; and we seem to see the process still going on before our eyes, by which they came into so real an existence.

The analogy of human life is the fruitful source from which many of them sprang. They wear the human form. They exhibit human appetites, desires, and passions, at the same time that they are invested with more or less of the attributes of divinity. They stand in the ordinary relations of human life to each other and to the Supreme. It is not

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge edition, 1835, p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> The reigns of Uranus and Cronus have preceded; Jupiter's is the *third*. Cf. Ag. 168 seqq.

good for man or god to be alone ; so Jupiter must have his wife and children — daughters as well as sons — who, of course, partake of his nature ; and they, in turn, have their children, who are at a still greater remove from the perfection of their first father. He is a sovereign, and must have his court, his messengers, and his ministers, though this is represented much less *pro more humano*, in Æschylus than in Homer. Among the “scraps from the banquet of Homer,” to which the father of Greek tragedy modestly likens his plays, he gives us none of those tragi-comic, those almost burlesque scenes on Mount Olympus, at which the readers of the Iliad and Odyssey scarcely know whether to laugh or weep. When the gods are the actors, the scene is laid on earth ; and they appear chiefly as the direct agents and visible representatives of the invisible government of Zeus. As his realm is vast, he must not be burdened with the immediate administration. His brothers may preside over the sea and the under world, and his children and children’s children may have each their particular province among men ; while he exercises a general superintendence from his throne on high. The characters of the several subordinate deities must, of course, correspond with their offices, and so be as various as the departments of the divine government. There must be gods of the sea and gods of the land, gods of the forest and gods of the field, gods of war and gods of the several peaceful occupations. There must be a god of commerce, a goddess of agriculture, a goddess of science and the arts, a god of music, poetry, and prophetic inspiration. There must especially be a god of war, a god of wine, a goddess of love, and gods or goddesses of the sensual, selfish, and malign passions ; since to refer these directly to the Supreme, were scarcely compatible with his goodness, and yet to exempt them from all control by him, or connection with him, were inconsistent with his universal sovereignty. By a still more natural and obvious process, those human *virtues* and all those moral elements in the soul of man, which are but the offspring and image of the divine attributes, assume a concrete form, and put on a more than human au-

(thority and power. Dike, Themis, Nemesis, the Eumenides, and the Mœræ — Justice, Law, Retribution, the Furies, and the Fates — are not mere abstractions, not mere personifications, but truly divine beings and dread realities to the ancestors and the contemporaries of Æschylus. Even Kratos and Bia — Strength and Force — are brought upon the stage in the Prometheus, and are seen in the process of deification; and this process, passing so visibly, as it were, before our eyes, helps us to understand how the fertile imagination of the Greeks, which not only clothed and adorned, but animated, whatever it touched, gradually peopled heaven, earth, and hell with the innumerable deities of the Athenian Pantheon.<sup>1</sup>

These last are preëminently the divinities of Greek tragedy. With the exception of the sea-nymphs, who constitute the chorus in the Prometheus, we see nothing in the extant pieces of Æschylus, of the gods of the outer, material world. But these gods of the moral universe, whose seat is by the throne of Jupiter or in the world of spirits, whose sceptre is the conscience, and whose province is the soul of man, — these are the ruling powers in the realm of tragedy. Themis (Law), daughter of heaven and earth, and goddess of law and order in both worlds, companion of Jupiter and sharer in his counsels, primeval prophetess and voice of God to man, gives right counsels, protects the needy and the defenceless, and maintains the harmony of the moral universe (cf. Prom. 18; 209; Eum. 2; Sup. 358, et al.).<sup>2</sup> Dike (Justice), the renowned and triumphant (*νικηφόρος*) daughter of

<sup>1</sup> Petronius says, it was easier to find a god at Athens, than a man. Hence the *κατεβωλον* and the *δαιδαμονεστέρους* of Paul in his address to the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts xvii.). The Greeks regarded different countries as having different gods; and as Pharaoh refuses to obey Jehovah, because he is the God of the Hebrews and not of the Egyptians, saying: "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice? I know not Jehovah;" so the herald of the sons of Ægyptus does not fear the gods of Argos (Sup. 890, 919), though he reverences the gods of the Nile. Cf. Ex. 5: 2. Also 1 Kings 20: 23, where the servants of the king of Syria say to him: "Their gods are gods of the hills, therefore they were stronger than we," etc.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Hooker's magnificent and oft-cited personification of Law, her voice the voice of God, her seat the throne of the universe, etc.

Jupiter and Themis, stands on a lofty and immovable foundation, holding in one hand a balance, wherein she weighs, impartially, the character and conduct of men, and in the other a sword, wherewith, sooner or later, she strikes through the heart of the wicked; while Fate (*Αἶσα, Μοῖρα*) and Wrath or Vengeance (*Ἐρινός*) stand on either side of her, the former to forge and whet her sword, and the latter to insure the infliction of deserved punishment (cf. Choephoroe, 59; 146; 644—50; Ag. 1535). Nemesis, kindred in name and nature to *Νόμος*, is the goddess of retribution, or more literally of distributive justice,<sup>1</sup> who visits upon mankind their just deserts, and since there is no escape from the penalties which she visits upon the guilty, she bears the name of *Ἀδράστεια* (the Inevitable, the Unescapable); they, therefore, are wise who do her reverence (Prom. 935). The Furies and the Fates (*Ἐρινύες, Μοῖραι*) are sisters (Eum. 962) and joint rulers (gubernatores, *οἰακοστροφοί*, Prom. 515) of the moral universe. They are daughters of Night (Eum. 416), and have their abode in the dark world below (*κατὰ χθόνος θεαί*, Eum. 115, et al.); yet have they great power in heaven and on earth, as well as under the earth (Ibid. 950). They are represented as old, black, like Gorgons and Harpies (though without wings), hags, hateful to gods and men (Eum. passim). Yet, like their mother Night (*Νύξ φιλία*, Ag. 355), they have their bright and cheerful side towards the good and those who propitiate their favor; hence the name Eumenides, and the epithets *σεμναί* and *εὐφρονες*, by which the Furies were known, especially at Athens (Eum. 373; 992, et al.), as not only *euphemistically*, but when appeased, *truly* the kind and gracious as well as the venerable and awful deities. By a conception as just as it is profound, the Fates and the Furies are habitually associated with Justice, as her companions, ministers, and executioners.<sup>2</sup> The Fates are *δαίμονες ὀρθονόμοι* (Eum. 963), justice-dispensing deities; they personify and preside over the unchangeable *moral* laws and necessities of the universe, and unite with

<sup>1</sup> *Νόμος* distributes, or allots to men their *duties*; *Νέμεσις*, their *dues*.

<sup>2</sup> See passages cited in reference to Dike above, and very many others.

the Furies and with Justice herself in securing the certain inevitable punishment of transgressors. There is, however, this difference, that while Dike weighs character and discriminates motives, the Fates and the Furies are blind powers, capable of discerning only overt acts, and demanding the punishment of the perpetrators, without regard to justifying motives or palliating circumstances. The Fates are *triform*, though Æschylus does not, like Hesiod, distinguish them by their several names. The Furies are indefinite in number. Each distinct relation, if not each individual person, who is wronged, has his separate Erinny; there is the Erinny of the father and the Erinny of the mother, the Erinny of the son and the Erinny of the daughter, the Erinny of the fellow-citizen and the Erinny of the stranger, who pursues the wrong doer to the death and into the eternal world; the *Alastor*,<sup>1</sup> who drives the guilty person, like Cain, a fugitive and a vagabond on the face of the earth, and even follows him into the dark realm of Hades (cf. Ag. 1433; 1501; Theb. 70; 720, et passim). In their subterranean abode, the Erinnyes are called *Aræ* (Eum. 417), since just indignation at sin often vents itself in imprecations, and the curse of an injured father, mother, or other friend, is often the bitterest ingredient in the punishment of the injurer.

*Ate*, in the tragedies, is essentially another name for *Ara* and *Erinnyes*. This name, however, denotes especially the bewitching and bewildering power of sin, and that judicial blindness, that almost supernatural frenzy, which sometimes impels individuals, and sometimes whole families, generation after generation, as if by an irresistible and fatal necessity, to the perpetration of enormous crimes, and thus involves them irretrievable and overwhelming calamities. In this point of view, the blinding and avenging deity is often conceived of as an evil demon (*ἀλάστωρ ἢ κακὸς δαίμων*,<sup>2</sup> Pers. 354), hate-

<sup>1</sup> *Ἀλάστωρ* (from *ἀλόμαι*, to wander). The Avenging Deity, that causes to wander, and the wretched Cain-like wanderer himself, are both called by the same name. Cf. Ag. 1501, and Eum. 236.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also *στοννὲ δαίμων*, 472; *δυσπύργη δαίμων*, 515; *δολίαν ἔτην*, Ag. 1523, etc.

ful and powerful, falling upon guilty individuals, families, and nations, taking possession of them, depriving them of their senses, and preying upon them like a blood-thirsty tiger upon his victim, or an odious raven upon a carcass, till there is nothing left to prey upon (*Pers.* 472 et passim ; *Ag.* 1468, etc.), till the ill-starred, or rather *evil demoned* (*κακοδαίμων*) family or race is extinct. It was by the association of such ideas as these with the word *δαίμων*, which was originally almost synonymous with *θεός*, that the way was gradually prepared for its appropriation, by the sacred writers in the New Testament, to express those *demons* which possessed the bodies as well as the minds of men at the opening of the New Dispensation, and for its use by Christians generally as nearly a synonym with devils. The *κακὸς δαίμων* of Æschylus and the Greek tragedians, however, is never the *διάβολος* of the scriptures, the accuser of the saints, the universal tempter, and the prince of a kingdom of darkness hostile to the kingdom of light ; but always an avenging, cursing, and bewildering *deity*.

There is, however, a class of gods, who are represented as hostile to Zeus : the gods of the old regime, who were dethroned by Jupiter, when he first came into possession of supreme power, or who conspired against his government when it was already established, or who resisted his will though he was acknowledged sovereign. But all, alike, are now overthrown and suffer the vengeance of the conqueror. Prometheus is chained to a cliff or chasm in the Scythian desert, while a vulture preys perpetually on his vitals (*Prom.* 1020). His brother Atlas, bound in adamant, is doomed to sustain the heavens on his shoulders, while the ocean boils around him, and the dark vault of Hades groans beneath his feet (*Prom.* 425). The hundred-headed and impetuous Typhon, stricken with the thunder-bolt of Jove, lies scorched and crushed beneath the roots of Ætna (*Ibid.* 353). And the ancient Saturn, with all his Titan allies, is sunk in the deep and dark abyss of gloomy Tartarus (*Ibid.* 220). So, we are told in the epistles of Peter and of Jude, " God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus

(*ταρταρώσας*, 2 Pet. 2: 4), in everlasting chains under darkness."

Not unlike these Titanic sons of heaven and earth, and sometimes classed with them, though of less prodigious power, and not so dreadful a doom, are the heroes and demigods, offspring of gods and men, some of whom, indeed, are the good angels of their age and race and the benefactors of mankind, but others are demons, monsters at once in crime and in calamity. Such are not a few of the Theban heroes (*Theb. passim*), the descendants of Tantalus (*Ag. 1468*), and the other mythical characters, who form the favorite subjects of tragic verse. They remind the reader of the Jewish scriptures, very forcibly, of the description given of the world before the flood in the book of Genesis: "There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bear children unto them, the same were mighty men which were of old, men of renown. And God saw the wickedness of man, that it was very great upon the earth." Many of the heathen fables are, doubtless, the facts of revelation and of primeval history in disguise. The Pantheon of the Greeks takes the place of the angelic hierarchy. The Titans are the fallen angels. The inferior deities of Olympus perform not a few of the offices of the good angels, though they partake much more largely of human passions and frailties; and yet—a fact, which indicates how much the scriptures have done to elevate our ideas of deity—the occupants of Olympic seats were *gods*, while those who stand and serve around the Most High in heaven, are his creatures; and, though they rise rank above rank, angels and archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, still the highest archangel, who stands nearest the eternal throne, presumes not to accept the worship of men, but says: "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow servant; worship God."

This parallel between the fables of heathen mythology and the facts of the Christian revelation, might perhaps be carried still further; though here, we are conscious, we tread

on holy ground. The Athena of the Greeks cannot but suggest to the classical scholar the personified and almost embodied Wisdom of the Old Testament. The Loxias of the Greek tragedies is a somewhat remarkable foreshadowing of the name and some of the offices of the Logos of the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> Even those myths that narrate the intercourse between gods and men, carnal and corrupt though they be, dimly project a great truth, namely, the love which the Most High bears to men, and preserve, while they pervert, the memory of that intimate converse, which he held with the patriarchs and first parents of our race. May they not also be regarded, like the avatars of the Hindoos, as “fleshly anticipations,”<sup>2</sup> or “unconscious prophecies,”<sup>3</sup> of Christian truths?

### III. *The Character and Condition of men.*

The Prometheus of Æschylus represents mankind as having been in the condition of helpless infants and degraded savages (443 seq.), without fire and without houses, dwelling in caves of the earth, ignorant of the arts and destitute of the comforts of life, with reason, speech, and the senses themselves so imperfectly developed, that seeing, they saw in vain, and hearing they heard not:

βλέποντες ἔβλεπον μᾶτην,  
κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον. (447, cf. Mat. 13 : 13.)

And in this sad condition they continued, till Prometheus stole for them fire from heaven, taught them the useful arts, inspired them with hopes, delusive hopes, however, as he himself confesses, and revealed to them the way of divining the future and propitiating the favor of the gods (Ibid. 460—507). Whether this was their original state, the state in which they were created, Æschylus does not expressly say. But he implies, and doubtless held, the doctrine of Hesiod and other poets, that under the reign of Saturn, the

<sup>1</sup> See these offices in a subsequent page.

<sup>2</sup> Schaff.

<sup>3</sup> Trench.

golden age of the world, a better race inhabited the earth, the companions of the gods and the favorites of heaven; and the present race of men were fallen, degenerate, depraved, and hence obnoxious to the displeasure of the deity. Accordingly Jupiter was, for a time, bent on their extirpation,<sup>1</sup> and the creation of a better race in their stead (232). Hence, too, he punishes Prometheus for imparting to them knowledge, and strikes with thunder Æsculapius, for having restored mortal man to life (Ag. 1022); even as our first parents were forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and, when they had sinned, were driven out of the garden, and cherubim were placed at the entrance, and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). "Alas! the fates of men!" exclaims the prophetess (Ag. 1327):

Alas! the fates of men! their brightest bloom  
A shadow blights; and in their evil day,  
An oozy sponge blots out their fleeting prints,  
And they are seen no more. From bad to worse  
Our changes run, and with the worst we end.

Such, not unfrequently, are the strains in which the chorus laments the deeds and the sufferings (*ἔργα καὶ πᾶθος*, Choeph. 1014 seq.) of men, and the whole series of tragic plots is but an illustration and expansion of this melancholy idea; as the history of the Bible is but a running commentary on the sad strains, in which the prophets and singers of Israel deplore the brevity, sinfulness, and wretchedness of human life.

#### IV. *The Providence and Government of God.*

We have already seen, that Jove is conceived of as the original cause and author of all. All events proceed from his will, and are brought to pass by his agency. "Wo! wo! 't is by the will of Jove, cause of all, worker of all. For what is accomplished among mortals without Jove?"

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gen. 6:6.

What of these things (the crimes and calamities of the house of Atreus) is not wrought of God?"

ἰὼ ἢ διατ Διὸς  
 παναιτίου, πανεργέτα·  
 τί γὰρ βροτοῖς ἔνευ Διὸς τελεῖται;  
 τί τῶνδ' οὐ δεόκρατον ἔστω. (Ag. 1485.)

Nay, his word is deed; he speaks, and it is done: *πάρεστι δ' ἔργον ὡς ἔπος* (Sup. 595):

No force he wields; his simple will,  
 His quiet sentence blasteth. (Sup. 97—100.)

He is sole monarch, and irresponsible, and gives no account of his matters; to resist his will is only to kick against the pricks (Prom. 323). Men strive in vain to disturb the execution of his purposes:

Their counsels never can transgress  
 The settled harmony of things,  
 The wisdom of the King of kings. (Prom. 852.)

At the same time, everything is declared to be subject to the control of an invincible destiny (Prom. 105). "Things are as they are, and are surely brought to their destined issue" (Ag. 67). In answer to the question, who is the guide (gubernator, *οἰακοστρόφος*) of necessity, Prometheus says, "the triform Fates and the vengeful Furies." When further asked, if Jove is less powerful than these, he answers, that Jove cannot escape destiny (Prom. 515). According to the prevailing doctrine of the other tragedies, however, the will of Jove is superior to or identical with fate, and that with justice;<sup>1</sup> and this is made a reason for worshipping him: "Let us worship the God of strangers, the great, the supreme Jove, who by hoary law directs fate:" *ὃς πολλῶν νόμφ αἴσαν ὀρδοῖ* (Sup. 679). Hence, while the Fates are invoked as justice-dispensing deities (Eum. 963), Jupiter also is represented as having justice with himself (Prom. 187). So, not unfrequently, justice and fate are used inter-

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 363.

changeably, as almost synonymes (Ag. 1535), and both are spoken of as the appointment of the gods, *τεταγμένα ἐκ θεῶν* (Ag. 1025), or *τὸ μέλλον ἐκ θεῶν* (Pers. 373). And Jupiter is invoked with Might and Right, as a three-fold power, of which Jupiter is the greatest (Choeph. 242), whose will, guided by justice and clothed with power, will infallibly bring out the right issue. "Whatever is fated, that will take place; the great unbounded mind of Jove cannot be overpassed."

Comes fated good or ill,  
 Wait we in patience still  
 No power may thwart his will,  
 Jove, mighty Jove. (Sup. 1045.)

Such is the juxtaposition into which the three ideas of fate, justice, and providence, are constantly brought to each other. ♀

As to the relation of the divine purposes, or the decrees of destiny, to the freedom of human actions, Jupiter alone is, in the highest sense, free (Prom. 50). Still the divine purposes are not altogether irrespective of human agency. Sooner or later, in some way and by some person, they are certain to be fulfilled. But the time and manner of their accomplishment, and if they relate to families, races, and nations, the individual by whom they are accomplished, may depend on the wisdom or the folly, the piety or the impiety of men. "Ah!" mourns the shade of Darius, as he sees how soon after his death his son Xerxes brought destruction on the armies, and almost on the empire of Persia :

Ah! on wings how swift, the issue of the ancient doom hath sped!  
*Thee*, my son, great Jove hath smitten. Long-drawn years I hoped would  
 roll,

Ere fulfilment of the dread prophetic burden should be known.

But when man to run is eager, swift is the god to add a spur.

(Pers. 739, seq.)

The spirit of this last line is, as Blackie well suggests, essentially the same with the old Latin proverb, *Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat*; and it is the prevailing senti-

ment of the Greek tragedies: Men go to destruction under the impulse of their own folly and madness, and an angry Deity has only to "add the spur."

No prayers or tears can avail to break the chain that links suffering to sin.

But things are as they are: the chain  
Of fate doth bind them; sighs are vain.  
Tears, libations fruitless flow,  
To divert from purposed ire  
The powers whose altars know no fire. (Ag. 67, seq.)

Yet the very thing which is fated may come in answer to prayer; and this belief is urged as an encouragement to pray (Choeph. 462):

The tremulous fear creeps o'er my frame to hear  
Thy words; for though long-dated,  
The thing divinely fated  
Shall surely come at last, our cloudy prayers to clear.

Or more literally rendered, "that which is fated abides from of old, and may come to you praying;" that is, on condition of, or in answer to, your prayers. The dramas of Æschylus are, in their whole structure and contents, a standing witness to a belief in the efficacy of prayer, as a general thing, notwithstanding the fixed decrees of fate or providence. No Calvinist was ever a more strenuous assessor of the "doctrine of decrees," than the chorus in these dramas. At the same time, no Methodist ever offered more frequent or more fervent prayers. Prayer, however, does not supersede the necessity of exertion, or the use of suitable means. "Pray," — such is the spirit of the reproof which Eteocles administers to the chorus, as they pray for the safety of beleaguered Thebes (Theb. 216), "pray indeed, but look well to the fortifications;" or, in the language of a modern proverb, first addressed by Cromwell to his Ironsides, "trust providence, but keep your powder dry."

The mystery of divine providence is a frequent subject of remark. The ways of the Deity are dark, thickly shaded, difficult to trace, past finding out (Sup. 92):

Oh! would that Jove might show to men  
 His counsel, as he planned it;  
 But ah! he darkly weaves the scheme,  
 No mortal eye hath scanned it.

His purposes are an unfathomable abyss (Ibid. 1055). Clouds and darkness are round about him. But the poet, like the Psalmist, connects with this the assurance that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne (Ibid. 86—99). He sits upon his holy seat (*ἔδρανων ἐφ' ἀγνῶν*, 103), and thence executes all his righteous and steadfast purposes. He holds in his hands the scales of equal and universal justice (Ibid. 819), and causing the balance to preponderate according to his righteous will, distributes evil to the evil and good to the good (Ibid. 401).

Where kindred with kindred contendeth in war,  
 Jove looks on the strife and decides from afar,  
 Where he holdeth the scales even-handed;  
 Oh, why wilt thou doubt to declare for the right?  
 He blesseth the good, but in anger will smite,  
 Where the sons of the wicked are banded.

He awards to every man that which is due (*τοῦφειλόμενον*) for his deeds, measure for measure, speech for speech, blow for blow, according to that thrice hallowed and venerable saying, *he that has done evil must suffer for it* (Choeph. 304—13).<sup>1</sup> It is from Jove that this great law of moral necessity proceeds; and it is for him to provide that things *end* in accordance with this rule of exact distributive justice (Ibid. 304—6). And so long as Jove remains, it remains an eternal law, that the doer shall receive according to what he has done (Ag. 1563). The choral song, or rather prayer, above referred to (Choeph. 304 seq.), brings together so many of the ideas respecting fate, justice, providence, and prayer, which we have been endeavoring to illustrate, that we quote it entire, in the spirited and substantially correct translation of Blackie:

---

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Matt. 7 : 2, "With what measure ye mete," etc.

Mighty Fates, divinely guiding  
 Human fortunes to their end,  
 Send this man, with *Jove presiding*,  
 Whither *Justice* points the way.  
 Words of bitter hatred duly  
 Pay with bitter words: for thus  
 With loud cry triumphant shouting,  
 Justice pays the sinner's debt.  
 BLOOD FOR BLOOD, AND BLOW FOR BLOW,  
 THOU SHALT REAP AS THOU DIDST SOW;  
 Age to age with hoary wisdom,  
 Speaketh thus to man.

Jupiter is especially jealous for his own honors and prerogatives. Wo to the man, or the god, who invades or encroaches on them. Prometheus, chained to the rocks and torn by vultures, pays the penalty not only of assuming too much to himself, but of lavishing undue knowledge and power on mortals (Prom. 29). Xerxes, though a mortal, thought to surpass Poseidon and all the gods, and soon met with a dreadful overthrow (Pers. 749). Agamemnon has been fortunate quite beyond the ordinary lot of men. The choir therefore fear for him the envy of the gods. "To have an exceedingly high reputation is exceedingly hazardous. For the thunderbolt from Jove smites such in the face." Hence *they* prefer only that degree of happiness which does not excite envy, and pray never to be sackers of cities (Ag. 468-72). Agamemnon himself is conscious of the danger, and strives to avert it by humility and moderation. He refuses at first to tread on the purple which Clytemnestra has spread before his feet, and bids the obsequious attendants to honor him as a man and not as a god (*κατ' ἄνδρα μὴ θεόν*). But his treacherous and crafty wife, who seeks in this very way to provoke the jealousy of the gods against him, lures him on through pomp and pride to destruction. The Theban heroes, undaunted by the omens and prohibitions of the gods, go against the city boasting that they will destroy it with or without the consent of Jove; and with a single exception, they all perish before the gates (Theb. 440, 529, etc.). This *envy* of the gods (for such is the ordinary mean-

ing of the word (τὸν θεῶν φθόνον, Pers. 362, et passim), is one of the most tragic elements in the tragic drama of the Greeks, often remarked upon by the characters and the chorus, and often the pivot on which the catastrophe turns. Hence it became a proverb among the Greeks, τὸ θεῖον φθονερόν (Herod. III. 40) — God is *envious*. As it is expressed by a word of lower moral significance, so is it a less pure and elevated characteristic, having more reference to mere outward prosperity, and less to the feelings of the heart, than that jealousy which Jehovah asserts for himself in the Decalogue. Still it is manifestly a kindred attribute to that which guards the incommunicable prerogatives of the Most High, and which says: "I will not give my glory to another."

Another attribute, which is asserted with great frequency of Jupiter, and which is also a special characteristic of the God of Israel, is his regard for the poor and needy, the suppliant and the stranger. Not a few of the epithets most frequently applied to Jupiter, express this character. He is *Zeus ἀφίκτηρ, ἰκέτης, ἰκεσίος, ἰκτήρ*; and "dreadful is the anger of Zeus, the protector of suppliants" (Sup. 344). "It is necessary to dread the anger of Zeus, the protector of suppliants, for it is the highest fear among mortals" (Ibid. 566). He is also *Zeus ξένιος* (Ag. 362), *ξυνέστιος* (Ag. 703), the guardian of the stranger and the rites of hospitality; and they who do violence to the stranger on the one hand, or to the host who renders hospitality on the other, shall see his bow and feel his thunder-stroke (Ag. 364). The whole drama of the Suppliants is an intentional illustration of this principle in the divine government. The daughters of Danaus, fleeing from the abhorred nuptials which were to be enforced upon them at home, land on the shores of Argos, and cast themselves on the altars of the country for protection; and their prayer is: "Behold me a suppliant, a fugitive, a wanderer (347). Spurn not my petition, lest you rouse the anger of the gods." For not Jupiter alone, but the other gods befriend the suppliant stranger. Themis is the goddess of suppliants (358). Apollo, an exile once him-

self, will pity exiles (215). The land will be defiled and cursed of all the gods, if it refuse shelter to those who have fled to it for safety in the hour of need. And though the Argive king foresees a war with Egypt as the consequence of harboring the fugitives, yet a war with the *gods* is more to be dreaded (437); though the enemy plunder the house, yet the god of the hearth and the household (*Zeὺς κτησίος*) can more than make up the loss; and he resolves to be their protector.<sup>1</sup>

The delay of the Deity in punishing the wicked — a subject which occasioned not a little perplexity to the Sacred writers — was also the subject of one of the most instructive and profound theological treatises that have come down to us from pagan antiquity. “The mills of the gods grind late, but grind to powder” — ὄψε θεῶν ἀλέουσι μύλοι, ἀλέουσι δὲ λεπτά — is a proverb which is often repeated by the moralists of Greece. And the subject is one of frequent recurrence in the tragedies of Æschylus. There is in the *Choephoroe* (58—60), a striking passage illustrative of the different times and ways in which punishment comes upon transgressors; “some in the light of day, others in the dark twilight of life, a lingering but overflowing flood of pains; while for others is reserved the endless night of future retribution.” Paul, in his *Epistle to Timothy*, draws a similar distinction. “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some they follow after.” But in time (*χρόνῳ; ἐν χρόνῳ; ἐν χρόνοις*).<sup>2</sup> Justice steals upon the wicked, and exacts of them the full penalty of their crimes (*Choeph.* 650, 954):

Her from his shrine sent the rock-throned Apollo,  
The will of her high-purposed sire to obey,  
The track of the blood-stained remorseless to follow,  
Winged with sure death, though she lag by the way.

---

<sup>1</sup> So according to the *Odyssey* (XIV. 57), all strangers and poor beggars are from Zeus.

<sup>2</sup> These words are the standing limitations of the rule of retribution; well rendered by Blackie: “though she lag by the way.”

At the set time, yes, on the appointed day (*χρόνω τοι κυρίῳ τ' ἐν ἡμέρῳ*, Sup. 729), whoever dishonors the gods shall pay the penalty to divine justice.

Prosperity, whether individual or national, is the gift of God (*θεοῦ δῶρον*, Theb. 625). Prayer is not without efficacy in procuring it (Ibid. 626). It is also the reward of justice and piety (Eum. 550):

The man without compulsion just,  
Who by these rules preserves his trust,  
Unprosperous shall never be;  
At least, ne'er ruined utterly.<sup>1</sup>

Who fears the gods is fearful to oppose (*δεινὸς δὲ θεοῖς σέβει*, Theb. 596). The city which *they* preserve is impregnable (Pers. 247). It is taken only when the gods forsake it (Theb. 218). *They* send forth the conqueror, and *they* bring him back again victorious (Ag. 1853); and in the conquest and destruction of empires, he is but the agent of divine justice (Ibid. 812). But when success becomes a god, and more than a god, to mortals, then divine justice watches its opportunity to descend upon them (Choeph. 57). Jupiter is ever at hand, as the severe judge and punisher of proud thoughts (Pers. 827). It is an old saying, uttered in ancient times, that great and entire prosperity does not die childless, but begets as its legitimate offspring insatiate calamity (Ag. 750). Hence the chorus are led to offer a prayer kindred to that of Agur, that neither poverty nor riches, neither conquest nor captivity, may be their lot (Ibid. 472, cf. 1341):

Who of mortals will not pray,  
From high-perched Fortune's favor far,  
A blameless life to spend.<sup>2</sup>

As prosperity has its dangers, so the idea is not unknown, though less familiar, that adversity has, or may have, its blessings. It, too, is of divine appointment. It must be

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. 37 : 24, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also Eum. 529: "By God's decree the mean is best," etc.

borne with patience, when the gods give it (*θεῶν διδόντων*, Pers. 294). It teaches wisdom to the wise, and sometimes purifies even the polluted (Eum. 276). "It is good to grow wise under sorrow" (*ξυμφέρει σωφρονεῖν ἰπὸ στένει*, Eum. 520). It is the prerogative of God, who has attached instruction to suffering (*τὸν πάθει μάθος δέντα*), thus to guide them, though against their wills (*ἄκοντας*), to wisdom (Ag. 176 seq.).

For Jove doth teach men wisdom, sternly wins  
 To virtue by tutoring of their sins ;  
 Yea, drops of torturing recollection chill  
 The sleepers ; 'gainst man's rebellious will  
     Jove works the wise remorse :  
 Dread Powers, on awful seats enthroned, compel  
     Our hearts with gracious force.<sup>1</sup>

There are not wanting, in Æschylus, indications of a belief in special providences, reaching even to the elements and the changes of the weather. The messenger who announces, to the queen mother at Susæ, the overthrow of Xerxes' forces, in describing the return of the shattered remnant, says that, on the very night when they reached the banks of the sacred Strymon, the deity raised a wintry storm, *out of season*, and froze the whole stream, so that as many as availed themselves of the providence before the rising sun, passed over safely on a bridge of ice ; but when the sun rose, it soon melted the ice, and "man upon man, in crowded ruin, fell ;" thus men, who had never before believed in the existence and providence of the gods, believed and worshipped (Pers. 498 seq.).<sup>2</sup>

#### V. *Sin, its Penalty, and Expiation.*

The sins, with which the tragic poets have to do, are chiefly, as might be expected, such violations of the law of

<sup>1</sup> *Χάρις* is the Greek word, and it is used in a sense strikingly similar to the usage of the New Testament.

<sup>2</sup> As to the credibility of this miracle, as a matter of fact, compare Thirlwall and Grote, Vol. V. p. 191.

nature as murder, incest, undutifulness to parents,<sup>1</sup> inhospitality to strangers, sacrilege, superhuman pride and arrogating divine prerogatives. These are, emphatically, the crimes that characterize the Greek drama; these, and such as these, the sins which stain with their guilt, or involve in their consequences, the individuals and families set apart, as the favorite themes of the tragic muse; these the very atmosphere and element, darkened with clouds and agitated by storms, in which tragedy lives and moves and has its being. The drama, called the Suppliants, starts from that aversion to intermarriage with near blood relations (cousins in this instance), which is so nearly universal that it may be called an instinct, an intuition, and turns for its *peripeteia* on the sacredness of the domestic and the public altar, and the inviolability of those who have fled for refuge to these sanctuaries of the gods. Murder, incest, violation of filial and fraternal duty, and other unnatural crimes, are fundamental ideas in the Seven against Thebes. The divine displeasure at those who arrogate to themselves that which belongs to God only, which is also prominent in the Seven against Thebes, is the main subject, or at least the chief tragic element, in Prometheus, and the Persians. And in the remaining three of the seven extant tragedies of Æschylus, the Agamemnon, the Choephoroe, and the Eumenides which together constitute a magnificent trilogy, the only trilogy that has come down to us entire — hands red with blood, with *kindred* blood, are ever before the spectator's mind; and the great question, which agitates spectators and actors is: How can that stain be washed away? If there were any room to doubt the genuineness and authenticity of the Pentateuch, the doubter might find an antidote to his scepticism in the bare fact, that the same subjects which constitute the staple of the epic and tragic mythology of the Greeks, are also among the earliest and most prominent subjects of Mosaic history and legislation. The histories of

---

<sup>1</sup> "Honor thy parents," is the *third*, or as we should say the *first*, the *prime* commandment (Sup. 70+), and is often accompanied with a *promise*.

Cain and Lamech,<sup>1</sup> the laws of murder and incest, the altars and the cities of refuge, the sacrifices and rites of purification, the ideas of expiation and reconciliation, which make up so large a portion of the Old Testament, reappear on the tragic stage, and constitute the very warp of the Greek drama.

And the first great law which the tragedians recognize — a law written in the hearts of men and sanctioned by divine authority — is, that the sinner must suffer for his sin :

δράσαντι παθεῖν  
τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ. (Choeph. 311.)

“For him that hath done the deed to suffer for it — thus cries a proverb (or tradition) thrice-hallowed by age.”

Moreover, the great primary law of retribution is expressly the *lex talionis* : like for like, and measure for measure. “Ye have heard that it hath been said *by them of old time*, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” We have this *ancient saying*, standing out with great prominence and repeated again and again on the pages of Æschylus :

’Tis robber robbed, and slayer slain ; for, though  
Oft-times it lag, with measured blow for blow,  
Vengeance prevaieth,  
While great Jove lives. Who breaks the close-linked woe  
Which heaven entaileth ? (Ag. 1562.)

The Greek of this passage reads as follows :

φέρει φέροντ’, ἐκτίνει δ’ ὁ καίνων.  
μίμνει δὲ μίμνοντος ἐν χρόνῳ Διός,  
παθεῖν τὸν ἐρῶντα· δέσμον γάρ, κ. τ. λ.

And it may be literally rendered thus : “He spoils the spoiler, and the slayer pays the full penalty. It remains so

<sup>1</sup> Ixion, the first murderer (Eum. 718), was purified by Jove himself, but proving ungrateful, was doomed to endless punishment. Cf. Gen. 4 : 15, 16. The lament of Lamech (Ibid. 23, 24) is the lament of Orestes and of many an unwilling homicide in the Greek poets. He had slain a man in *self-defence* ; and if Cain was protected by divine interposition from the avenger of blood, much more Lamech ; “if Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech seventy and seven fold.”

long as Jove remains, that he must suffer who has done the deed ; for it is an established law." Who can read this, and the many kindred passages of our poet, without being reminded of that primeval law of the divine government, which was promulgated to the second universal ancestor of the human race, as he went forth from the ark to repeople a depopulated world : " Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." And the principle is not repealed, but repeated and recognized as a general law of Providence, in that saying of our Lord : " They that take the sword, shall perish by the sword."

This law is recognized as a law of nature, and therefore (so far as any of the laws of nature may be said to execute themselves) self-executing. The connection between sin and suffering is constantly represented as a natural and necessary connection, like that between sowing and reaping, parent and offspring :

Blood for blood, and blow for blow,  
Thou shalt reap as thou didst sow. (Choeph. 310.)

A haughty spirit,<sup>1</sup> blossoming, bears a crop  
Of woe, and reaps a harvest of despair. (Pers. 821.)

Lust and violence beget lust and violence, and vengeance too at the appointed time (Ag. 763).<sup>1</sup> Impiety multiplies and perpetuates itself (Ibid. 788). The sinner pays the debt he contracted, ends the career that he began (*τίσας ἀπερ ἠρξεν*, Ibid. 1529), and drinks to the dregs the cup of cursing which he himself had filled (Ibid. 1397). But so far from the atheistic idea, that these laws are in such a sense self-executing as to dispense with a personal God, a divine governor and judge, the laws themselves become real, living, divine persons, the agents and executioners of the Most High ; so far from the conscience being the sole power of judgment and retribution, the conscience itself is only an in-

<sup>1</sup> In one of these passages, *ὑβρις* is the root or the seed, and *ἀρη* the fruit or the harvest. In the other, *ὑβρις* is the parent, and *ὑβρις* the immediate, and *ἀρη* the remote offspring. See a similar genealogy of Lust, Sin and Death, in James 1 : 15.

strument in the hands of Justice and Vengeance, and the Most High directs and controls all these inferior agents and instrumentalities. It is in reference to this very matter of punishment for sin, that the question already cited is asked: "What is accomplished without Jupiter? What of *these* things is not wrought of God?"

With the general doctrine: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," the scriptures connect another, which seems at first view to conflict with it, namely, that God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation. These same apparently inconsistent doctrines lie, side by side, at the very foundation of Greek tragedy. Æschylus repeats, again and again, with all the earnestness of the prophet Ezekiel (ch. xviii.), the law, *δράσαντι παθεῖν*. But he is equally explicit in declaring that an old transgression sometimes abides till the third generation, as illustrated in the unhappy family of Laius:

παλαιγενῆ γὰρ λέγω  
 παραβασίαν ὑπέκρινον·  
 αἰῶνα δ' ἐς τρίτον μένει.

(Theb. 742.)

With urgent force the Fury treadeth,  
 To generations three,  
 Avenging Laius' sin on Laius' race.

In all cases, however, in which the children suffer for the sins of the parents, they are themselves not innocent. The sin is hereditary as well as the suffering. The guilt and the punishment are propagated together, from generation to generation. It runs in the blood. Like begets like.

One base deed, with prolific power,  
 Like its cursed stock, engenders more;  
 But to the just, with blooming grace,  
 Still flourishes a beauteous race. (Ag. 758—62.)

Thus by the laws of nature son succeeds  
 To sire; and who shall drive him from the house?  
 (Ibid. 1564—5.)

Or, to render this passage more literally, as it is amended by Hermann and Bloomfield: "Who can expel the brood of

curses from the family ! The race is wedded (glued) to Ate." A kind of judicial blindness and madness not only comes over the heinous transgressor himself, but cleaves to the accursed race. They are given over to the power of an avenging demon, the demon, the Ate, the Asa, the Erinnyes of the race, who involves them, one after another, by their own acts, and yet almost in spite of themselves, in guilt and ruin. To illustrate this were simply to unfold the plot of the several dramas, and to repeat the history of blood and crime familiar to every one who knows anything of classical mythology, of the house of Pelops, and (to carry it back to its root) of Tantalus himself (Ag. 1469). The Agamemnon is a *locus classicus* on this subject. It paints the power and sway of the avenging deity, in the same dark and fearful colors in which the retributive power of conscience is drawn in Macbeth; and while the resemblance between the two plays is thus striking, a careful comparison would also illustrate most clearly the difference between the theology of Æschylus and the theology, or more strictly the anthropology, of Shakespeare. Under Jove, Ate or Erinnyes, two names for one and the same power, is the divinity of the Agamemnon; and the characters of the play are but her ministers. "Say not," cries Clytemnestra, with a grandeur and steadfastness in wickedness surpassing even that of Lady Macbeth, and with an element of justice to which that Lady had no claim :

Say not that I, that Agamemnon's wife,  
Did it. The Fury fatal to this house,  
In vengeance for Thyestes' horrid feast,  
Assumed this form, and, with her ancient rage,  
Hath for the children sacrificed the man. (1498.)

By that revenge  
Which for my daughter I have greatly taken ;  
By the dread powers of Ate and Erinnyes,  
To whom my hand devoted him a victim,  
Without a thought of fear I range these rooms.  
etc. (1432.)

Ægisthus, too, puts on a moral dignity foreign to his nature, claims to be but the avenger of his father's wrongs,

and heaven's executioner of justice, and welcomes the doom which in turn awaits him :

Now I know that the just gods  
Look from their skies, and punish impious mortals,  
Seeing this man rolled in the blood-wove woof,  
The tissue of the Furies, grateful sight !  
And suffering for his father's fearful crimes .     (1578.)

And then he goes on to describe the horrid banquet of Thyestes, spread by the sacrilegious Atreus beneath his own roof, for his own brother (the father of Ægisthus), and the curse which Thyestes, when he discovered that he had been feasting upon the flesh of his own children, pronounced upon Atreus (father of Agamemnon) and all his race : " Thus perish all the race of Pleisthenes " (1602). And the chorus, possessed with the same thought of a race doomed to calamity and crime, and hunted by an avenging deity, exclaims :

O God, that o'er the doomed Atridan halls  
With might prevailest,  
Weak woman's breast to do thy headlong will  
With murder mailest !  
O'er his dead body, like a boding raven  
Thou tak'st thy station,  
Piercing my marrow with thy savage hymn  
Of exultation.     (1468.)

To which Clytemnestra responds :

There's sense in this ; now hast thou touched the key  
Rousing the Fury, that from sire to son  
Hath bid the stream of blood, first poured by her,  
Descend. One sanguine tide scarce rolled away,  
Another flows in terrible succession.

And the chorus in reply, while acknowledging the agency of Erinnys, recognizes also the hand and will of the Highest :

Ah, 'tis a higher power  
That thus ordains ; we see the hand of Jove,  
Whose will directs the fate of mortal man.

The consequences of great crimes, especially in high places, extend to every person and every thing that has any connection with them. The country and country's gods are polluted (Ag. 1645 : *χώρας μίασμα καὶ θεῶν ἐγχωρίων*). The army and the people share in the curse (Pers. passim). The earth itself is defiled by pollutions of ancient blood (Sup. 265). Even the innocent and the virtuous who share in the enterprises of the wicked, may be involved in their ruin, as the pious man must sink with the ungodly, when he embarks in the same ship with them (Theb. 602). This doctrine of *social liability* is illustrated by this striking simile in the case of Amphiaraus, of whom a character is drawn, than which nothing more beautiful has come down to us from ancient times — "a discreet, upright, good and pious man, who wished not to *seem* but to *be* good," and "a great prophet," who foresaw the disastrous issue of the Theban expedition, and forewarned the leaders; but, led on by a high sense of honor, he went with them and fell like them.

Death's unblest fruit is reaped  
By him who sows in Ate's fields. The man  
Who, being godly, with ungodly men  
And hot-brained sailors, mounts the brittle bark,  
He, when the god-detested crew goes down,  
Shall with the guilty, guiltless perish. (Theb. 601.)

The pollution and curse of sin (*μίασμα, μύσος, ἄγος*), when once contracted by an individual, or entailed upon a family, will rest upon them and pursue them, till the polluted individual or the hated and accursed race (*στυγηθέν, δύσποτμον γένος*, Theb. 691, 813) is extinct, unless in some way the sin can be expiated,<sup>1</sup> or some god interpose to arrest the penalty. Some sins are inexpiable. Prayers, tears, sacrifices, are all in vain. The criminal must die by the hand of justice, and even in Hades, vengeance will still pursue him (Sup. 227). Others may in time be washed away by ablutions, worn away by exile and pilgrimage, and expiated by offerings

<sup>1</sup> The *expiation* requires the intervention of some friend, a god or a prince, who is clothed with more or less of divine authority.

of blood (Eum. 445 seq. et al.). "It is enough," pleads the chorus in the Seven against Thebes, "for Thebans to come to blows with Argives, for such blood admits of expiation (*καθάριστον*), but the death of own brothers thus mutually wrought by their own hands, this pollution never grows old" (Theb. 678). Indeed, the presumption in regard to great crimes is, that they cannot be expiated. The blood cannot be washed away (*αἷμ' ἀνιπτον*, 1459).

All ocean poured in offering  
For the warm life-drops of one innocent man,  
Is labor lost: Old truth thus speaks to all.<sup>1</sup> (Choeph. 518.)

"For what expiation is there for blood, when once it hath fallen upon the ground?" (*τί γὰρ λύτρον πεσόντος αἵματος πέδῳ*, Choeph. 47.)

What hath been, and shall be ever,  
That when purple gouts bedash  
The guilty ground, then BLOOD DOTH BLOOD  
DEMAND, AND BLOOD FOR BLOOD SHALL FLOW.  
Fury to Havoc cries; and Havoc,  
The tainted track of blood pursuing,  
From age to age works woe. (Choeph. 398.)

Thus the law (*νόμος*), for so it is expressly called, rolls on reverberating its thunders and threatening vengeance, from act to act, and chorus to chorus of that grand trilogy of which we have spoken, through the Agamemnon, through the Choephoroe, and far into the Eumenides. And the history of blood and crime follows close upon the law, like the rain-storm after the boding thunder. In the Agamemnon — the first of the trilogy — the crimes of former generations, of Tantalus, of Pelops, and of Atreus, gathering blackness as they descend, are often alluded to by the chorus, as ground of fearful foreboding. Then Cassandra sees them in frightful visions, and sings them in prophetic frenzy as a bloody

<sup>1</sup> Compare Shakspeare's Macbeth :

Will all Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand ?

prelude to the vengeance which is just ready to fall upon the proud Achæan king. Moreover, that monarch's own crime in the sacrifice of his weeping, pleading daughter, though committed under the heavy yoke of necessity, and the hardening influence of frenzy (218), still haunts the memory of the people as the sure precursor of coming evil, while it goads on the bereaved and outraged mother to her long cherished and now soon to be accomplished vengeance. She lures him on over purple tapestries to the luxurious bath, where she throws a net over him, and slays him with repeated strokes of her own hand; and this play ends with threats of vengeance on the murderess at the hand of his and her son, the absent Orestes.

In the *Choephoroe* those threats receive their accomplishment. Orestes returns, under the guise of a messenger sent to announce his death, unites with his sister Electra in tears, prayers, and vows at the tomb of their father, and then slays Clytemnestra and Ægisthus, who perish by treachery, just as they had treacherously slain Agamemnon (886). But no sooner has he imbrued his hands in his mother's blood — though he did it by command of the oracle, under threats of dire calamity if he disobeyed — than his thoughts begin to wander, like horses without a charioteer; doubt, fear, and frenzy seize upon him; and he sees the Furies — the angry hell-hounds of his mother (*μητρὸς ἔγκοτοι κύνες*, 1052) — in Gorgon form, in sable vestments, and entwined with snakes, who pursue him as he flees to find a refuge at the altar of Apollo.

But after the law comes the gospel. First the controversy, then the reconciliation. Such is the natural order of the ideas; such the actual sequence of events: and a dim consciousness of the former as a fact, and of the latter as a want, if not also as an object of faith and hope, seems to have revealed itself to the human mind, even in the darkest period of its existence. Something like this seems to underlie not a few of the Greek trilogies. The *Prometheus Bound* was followed by the *Prometheus Unbound*, reconciled and restored to the favor of Jove through the interven-

tion of Jove's son (Prom. 767-9).<sup>1</sup> The Œdipus Tyrannus of Sophocles was completed by the Œdipus at Colonus, where he dies in peace amid visible tokens of divine favor. And so the Agamemnon and Choephoroe reach their consummation only in the Eumenides, where the Erinnyes themselves are appeased, and the Furies become the Gracious Ones. This is not, however, without a special divine interposition, and then only after a severe struggle between the powers that cry for justice and those that plead for mercy. The law still thunders its dreadful sentence; the avenging goddesses come into the very sanctuary, and threaten vengeance in the very presence of "great Loxias," Orestes' advocate, "the healing prophet and the seer," and "the cleanser (*καθάριστος*, 63) of the house."

The scene opens at Delphi. Orestes is seen sitting on the Omphalos:

His hands with gore are dripping, and he holds  
A sword drawn newly, and an olive branch  
Chastely enwrapt with wool of whitest fleece. (40.)

Apollo stands by his side, and Hermes, messenger of Jove, in the background. The Furies sit all around him, sleeping and snoring under the power of the suppliant-protecting god. Their form is the same in which they first appeared to Orestes, immediately after the murder of his mother. Hideously grim and black, from their eyes they distil a deadly dew. Hags, antique maids, they are fit only to dwell in subterranean Tartarus. Apollo encourages Orestes, sends him under the conduct of Hermes to the feet of Athena at Athens, and there promises to find out means for his deliv-

---

<sup>1</sup> Hermes declares to Prometheus, that he shall not be released, till some god appear a successor (*διδδοχος*) to his sufferings, and willing to go down to Hades and Tartarus for him (Prom. 1026); Apollodorus says, that Hercules, after freeing Prometheus, delivered up the Centaur Chiron to Jove, willing though immortal to die in his room (*θνήσκειν ἅντ' αὐτοῦ*, Apol. II. 5, 11, 12). See Blackie's note in loc., where also see the extent to which the idea of vicarious sacrifice has prevailed among the heathen nations. The Druids, according to Cesar, held the doctrine: *Pro vita hominis, nisi hominis vita reddatur, non posse aliter deorum immortalium numen placari arbitrantur* (Bell. Gall. VI. 16).

erance. No sooner has he gone out, than the ghost of Clytemnestra rises and rebukes the Furies for their inertness. Thus awakened to their duty, and quickened by the scent of blood, they pursue after him, muttering as they leave the temple of Apollo :

Such things our young gods do, by might  
Prevailing ever over right :  
Apollo, stern to me, shall never save him,  
Nor under earth shall he be free ;  
Another blood-avenger there shall have him,  
And cling unto him after me. (160, 177.)

The scene is now shifted from Delphi to the temple of Athena Polias at Athens. Scarcely has Orestes arrived at the house and image of the goddess, and offered his prayer for reception and protection, as a suppliant polluted indeed, but whose pollution has been worn away by long and weary wanderings, when the Furies overtake him, and renew their threats of vengeance in language and imagery most frightful :

But thou must give thy living limbs to me  
To suck the marrow out — may I from thee  
The odious draught as food receive ;  
Thee, while alive, I will bereave  
Of all thy pith, and take thee downward hence ;  
This the tributary recompense,  
Thou art in thy person paying  
For thy impious mother-slaying.  
And thou shalt see if any other,  
To god or stranger, sire or mother,  
Hath done despiteous wrong, how he  
Must pay the penalty, like thee.  
For Hades, underneath the ground,  
A strict examiner is found ;  
And all the deeds of mortal kind  
He sees, and writes them in his mind. (264-75.)

To which Orestes replies :

My mother's blood, that was upon my hand —  
'Tis there no more — the stain, washed out, is gone.  
While fresh, it was removed at Phœbus' hearth,  
By purifying blood of slaughtered swine. (280 seq.)

The Furies, to whom Æschylus with characteristic boldness has assigned the sacred and venerable office of the chorus in this piece, now close in, as it were, around their victim, and join in singing a hymn of curses, in which they magnify their own powers and functions as the avenging deities appointed by the eternal law of Fate, and imprecate the direst woes on all offenders, and especially on those who shed kindred blood :

When Mars, grown tame to touch and sight,  
 In social life shall slay a friend,  
 Then we pursue him to the end,  
 And hunt him down, though he be stout,  
 Nor leave him till we blot him out. (354 seq.)

For we are skilful to devise  
 And can effect whate'er we plan ;  
 Of ill deeds, awful memories,  
 And hard to be appeased by man. (381 seq.)

Athena soon appears in person, and the two parties plead their cause before her, Apollo appearing openly as the advocate of Orestes. The Furies urge the overthrow of ancient laws as the inevitable consequence of acquittal. Orestes, in person and through his advocate, pleads duty to his father, the sanction of Apollo, and the expiation, which, under Apollo's teaching, he has made. Athena summons about her a council of the oldest and wisest of the citizens, — the original of the famous council and court of Areopagus — and takes their votes ; and when, so difficult and doubtful is the question, they are equally divided, she throws her casting vote in favor of Orestes. For a season, the Furies are frantic at the indignity, and threaten dire revenge on the people and the very soil of Athens :

Ye younger gods have trampled down  
 Old laws, and wrested them from me ;  
 Amerced of office and renown,  
 I will, for this indignity,  
 Drop, from my heart's wrath-bleeding wound,  
 A blight — a plague-drop on the ground.

A lichen fatal to the trees,  
 To children, shall invade the soil,  
 (Hear Justice!) and inflict disease  
 On men — the blotch and deadly boil. (778 seq.)

But Athena finds means to appease and reconcile them, and gives them a sanctuary at the very base of Mars' Hill, hard by the court of Areopagus. The Dreadful Goddesses, having now become the Venerable and the Gracious-minded, invoke their sister Fates to join them in blessing, instead of cursing, the land; and as they are conducted with great pomp to their new seats of just but benignant power, all the people unite in a general song and shout of rejoicing.

Such is an imperfect outline of this most interesting and instructive drama. It is not denied that much of all this is earthly, civil, and political, in its primary intention. But the presence of the gods, and the constant references to a future state of just and inevitable retribution, forbid any restricted application. The ideas are founded deep in the religious nature of man. They set forth the *theology* of Æschylus and the better part of his contemporaries. And it must be confessed, that that theology is surprisingly healthy, sound, and truthful, in its essential elements. The great doctrines of hereditary depravity, retribution, and atonement, are there in their *elements*, as palpably as they are in the Sacred scriptures. Would that much of modern poetry were equally true to the soul of man, to the law of God, and to the gospel of Christ!

The offices and work here ascribed to Apollo, taken in connection with what has been said of the same god under a former head, must strike every Christian reader, whatever may be his explanation of them, as remarkable resemblances, not to say foreshadowings, of the Christian doctrine of reconciliation. This resemblance or analogy becomes yet more striking, when we bring into view the relation in which this reconciling work stands to *Ζεὺς Σωτήρ*, Jupiter the Saviour — *Ζεὺς τρίτος*, Jupiter the Third, who in connection with Apollo and Minerva, consummates the reconciliation. Not only is Apollo a *Σωτήρ* (Ag. 512), who, having himself

been an exile from heaven among men, will pity the poor and needy (Sup. 214). Not only does Athena sympathize with the defendant at her tribunal, and, uniting the office of advocate with that of judge, persuade the avenging deities to be appeased (Eum. 970) ; but Zeus is the beginning and end of the whole process. Apollo appears as the advocate of Orestes, only at his bidding (Eum. 616). Athena inclines to the side of the accused, as the offspring of the brain of Zeus, and of like mind with him (664, 737). Orestes, after his acquittal, says that he obtained it :

By means of Pallas, and of Loxias,  
And the third Saviour, who doth sway all things.<sup>1</sup>

And when the Furies are fully appeased by the persuasion of Athena, she ascribes it to the power of Zeus *ἀγοραῖος*, Zeus the master of assemblies :

Jove, that rules the forum, nobly  
In the high debate hath conquered.  
In the strife of blessing now,  
You with me shall vie for ever.<sup>2</sup>

In short, "throughout the *Oresteia*, Æschylus exhibits dimly and mysteriously in the background, but with all the more poetical effect on that very account, the idea of Zeus Soter, the *Third*, as the power that pervades the universe, and conducts the course of things, gently (slowly ?) indeed, but eventually to the best possible issue."<sup>3</sup>

## VI. *A Future State of Rewards and Punishments.*

The immortality of the soul is nowhere taught by Æschylus, as an abstract and general truth. Still less does he

<sup>1</sup> Τοῦ πάντα κραίνοντος τρίτου σωτήρος (975.)

<sup>2</sup> Chapman's version is more striking, but less true to the original :

But Zeus prevails ; the power of mercy still  
Predominates — good doth o'er-master ill.

<sup>3</sup> C. O. Müller on the *Eumenides*, p. 219, where see also his remarks on the wide diffusion through Greece of the conception and cultus of Jupiter Soter, as the *Third*.

know anything of the doctrine of the resurrection. That struck the philosophers at Athens as a novelty and an absurdity, when Paul preached it, five or six centuries later, on Mars' Hill. But a future state of existence is everywhere taken for granted, as it is in the Old Testament. It is implied in prayers and offerings to the dead. Thus Electra invokes Agamemnon to send blessings on herself and Orestes, and to appear as an avenger of his murderers (Choeph. 140; 480, et al.). And Atossa, by advice of the Chorus, makes her prayer to her departed husband Darius, whom she had seen in vision the previous night, that he would avert all evil omens and bring to pass all that was good (Pers. 220, etc.). It is implied also in the evocation of departed spirits, who even make their appearance on the stage, in the tragedies of Æschylus. Thus Clytemnestra comes up from the abodes of the dead to goad on the Furies to avenge her murder, and declares that she wanders in disgrace, not only unavenged, but perpetually dishonored and reproached among the dead for the murder of her husband (Eum. 95). Darius, evoked from the under world by the queen-mother and the Persian nobles, appears to counsel them, after the overthrow of Xerxes (Pers. 680). And the living Clytemnestra, with hands yet dripping with her husband's blood, with biting sarcasm avers, that Iphigenia, the victim of her father's unnatural cruelty, shall meet him, as is fit, at "the Ferry of Sighs," greet him *lovingly*, throw her arms about him, and kiss him (Ag. 1555).

The place of the departed is called Hades, or the unseen world. It is *ὁ νεκροδέγμων*, the receiver of the dead (Prom. 153); *ὁ πάνδοκος*, the all-receiver (Theb. 860); it is the realm of the most hospitable Zeus (*τὸν πολυξενώτατον Ζῆνα*, Sup. 157), the entertainer of most numerous guests. It is situated under the earth (Prom. 152, et al.). It is a dark and gloomy abode (*ἀναύγητος*, Prom. 1027), untrodden by Apollo, uncheered by the light of the sun (Theb. 859). Men are conveyed to this sunless, all-receiving, invisible shore, across Acheron, by an ill-omened boat with sable sails, filled by a breeze of sighs (Ibid. 854-60). It seems to be conceived of

often as one vast *sepulchre*, where are gathered all the dead of all ages; often as a subterranean *world*, the image of this, only excluded from the light of day; an *empire* with its infernal sovereignties (*νεπτέρων τυραννίδες*, Choeph. 403); a *city*, with its counsellors sitting at the gates (Ag. 1291), and its inhabitants with characters and pursuits not unlike those in the present life.

Tartarus is a part of Hades, or rather a dark, deep dungeon (*μελαμβυδῆς κευθμών*, Prom. 219); sunk far beneath it (*νέρθεν Αΐδου*, Ibid. 152), in whose dismal depths (*κνεφαία βάθη*, 1028) the enemies of Zeus are kept in indissoluble chains (*δεσμοῖς ἀλύτοις*, 154), and from which there is no way of escape (*ἀπέραντον*, 153, cf. 1077).

The character and condition of the departed corresponds, in a great measure, with their character and condition here. The same distinctions of rank hold there as here. Darius rules in Hades; nay, ranks among the gods of the lower world (Pers. 691), even as the Persians honored their kings as gods on earth (Pers. 156). And Agamemnon, not less distinguished below than above, is honored and revered as a king and a minister of the greatest subterranean powers (Choeph. 253, seq.); *for* (such is the argument of *Electra*) thou wast a king, when thou wast living. Yet wealth is of no avail to the dead, and earthly pleasures are not there to be enjoyed; and on this ground Darius exhorts the Persian nobles, even in their defeat, to make the most of the pleasures of the present life (Pers. 840).

Still more certainly will the distinctions of character, which exist on earth, continue also in another world. The good and happy here will be good and happy hereafter, though comparatively little is said in Æschylus of the blessedness of the righteous. It is the punishment of the wicked, on which the tragedians chiefly insist, for the obvious reason that this falls in more with the plan and idea of tragedy. Death is no escape, to the wicked, from their sins or the consequences of them. Their crimes will follow them into another world. The same Furies that pursue them on earth, unless appeased and reconciled, will follow them in Hades

ney, in Tartarus, which is their fit and favorite abode (Eum. 72). In Hades also there is a tribunal, which the wicked cannot escape, and a faithful record of their lives, and a just judge, who will certainly bring them to judgment and punish them according to their deeds. For example, Danaus encourages his frightened and desponding daughters with the assurance, that the wretch who would fain force upon them an incestuous marriage, without their own or their father's consent, cannot be pure in the sight of God. Not even in Hades can he, who does such things, escape guiltless and unpunished. For there, as the saying or tradition is (*ὡς λόγος*), another Zeus judges crimes and awards to the departed their final sentence (Sup. 227):

Who does these deeds  
Will find no refuge from lewd guilt in Hades ;  
For there, as we have heard, another Jove  
Holds final judgment on the guilty shades.

And the Argive king fears to deliver up the fugitive suppliants, lest he bring upon himself, as an avenger, the all-destroying god, who does not even let go free the dead in Hades (Ibid. 414):

*ὅς οὐδ' ἐν Αἴθου τὸν θανάτ' ἐλευθεροῖ.*

In the Eumenides, as we have seen on a former page, the Furies declare to Orestes that they will not only waste his body and suck his blood here ; but, after having hunted him through life, they will drag him away to the lower world, there to pay the full penalty for his mother-slaying. And like certain and condign punishment awaits every other sinner, whether against God or man :

For Hades underneath the ground  
A strict examiner is found ;  
And all the deeds of mortal kind  
He sees and writes them in his mind.

*μέγας γὰρ Αἴθης ἐστὶν εὐδυνος βρυτῶν,  
ἐνερθε χθονός,  
δελτογράφος δὲ πάντ' ἐπωπῆ φρενί.*

(273-5.)

And this punishment is not only certain, but remediless and endless. Though he flee beneath the earth, he shall never be set free from the demands of justice (175). "And where shall be the end of the murderer's punishment?" "Where joy is never known" (422). Such are the ideas of future punishment, which are perpetually recurring in the *Eumenides*. From the beginning almost to the end of this magnificent drama, eternal retribution hangs like a gloomy cloud in the distance; and it is on this dark background, that the poet has painted, in bright and beautiful contrast, the bow of reconciliation.

In conclusion, should we attempt to express our views of the Greek Drama, and the Old Paganism generally, in its relation to Christianity, we could hardly sum them up better than in the words of the learned and devout American historian of the church, Dr. Schaff: "Its polytheism rested on a dim monotheistic back ground, subjected all the gods to Jupiter, and Jupiter himself to a mysterious fate. It had at bottom the feeling of dependence on higher powers and reverence for divine things. It preserved the memory of a golden age and of a fall. It had the voice of conscience and a sense, obscure though it was, of guilt. It felt the need of reconciliation with deity, and sought that reconciliation by prayer, penance, and sacrifice. Many of its religious traditions and usages were faint echoes of the primal religion; and its mythological dreams of the mingling of the gods with men, of Prometheus delivered by Hercules from his helpless sufferings, were unconscious prophecies and fleshly anticipations of Christian truths."

Is not the summary we have given, of the theology of Æschylus, sufficient to demonstrate the above conclusions, as a matter of fact? And why should we fear or reluctantly to receive them; as a matter of doctrine? Paul, while he censured the idolatry of the Athenians, did not hesitate to recognize an element of truth in their ideas, of devoutness in their spirit, and even of authority in their poets, and to build upon this foundation his masterly discourse on the Areopagus. So likewise in his *Epistles*, whenever he can seize upon any-

thing truthful, which the heathen "prophets" have said, he presses it into the service of Christianity. There certainly is, in the poets and philosophers of ancient Greece, not a little of truth and of resemblance to the great central facts of Christianity, mixed up with gross superstitions and hurtful errors; and why should not this, like all other truth, be referred to God as its source? Does not God rule in history? Has he not always had his witnesses in the world and in human hearts? Does God, in his word, contradict his works; or are his works of creation and providence the scaffolding wherewith he built — the mould wherein he cast — his word? Is Christianity at variance with history, or is it rather the consummate flower and fruit of all God's dealings with mankind? And if it is, must there not be some type and promise of its coming in all his previous dealings with men, even as in every tree which he has made, the type of the flower and fruit is found in every leaf and twig and branch, and the whole stock even to the root? He who made the pre-Adamite earth an "unconscious prophecy" of man, and formed the lower orders of animals types of the higher, and planted the seeds of each succeeding age of human history in that which preceded it, and filled the outward world and the soul of man with types and shadows of coming events, even as he filled the Old Testament with types and shadows of the New — has he planted no seeds of Christianity in human hearts; caused no types of the highest truth and life to grow in the literature and religion of the ages; cast no shadow of the greatest event, that is ever to transpire in our world, on the previous history of that world; created no unconscious prophecies of his last and best dispensation in the brightest and best minds of antiquity? If we believed this of Christianity, we could not believe it came from God, because it would want the stamp of all his other works. But when we see all literature, and history, as well as external nature and the soul of man full of prophecies and preparations for its coming, then we cannot resist the evidence, that he who made and governs the world is the author of Christianity.

There are two extreme views of the theology of the old Greek poets and philosophers. The one, held without due consideration by too many mere theologians, who regard every ray of truth and excellence discovered in classical literature, as so much subtracted from the brightness of Christianity. As if the Logos were not the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world! As if, in order to add to the glory of the sun, the stars must be extinguished!

The other, assumed without proper examination by too many mere scholars and free thinkers, denies, like Buckle in his *History of Civilization*, that Christianity has added anything to the sum of moral and religious truth known to the ancients. As if our very children did not understand the chief end of man and the way of salvation better than the wisest of pagan philosophers! As if there were, in pagan literature and biography, any near approximation to the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth! As if unbelievers themselves could really know him, without exclaiming: "Never man spake like this man;" "his life was more than human" — "his death was the death of a god!"

Between these extremes, there is a middle ground, taken after the fullest and freest investigation by such Christian philosophers and scholars as Schaff, Trench, Neander, and Cudworth, not to say such sacred writers as Paul, who see in Christ "the desire of all nations," and in Christianity that towards which human history has been tending, and for which human hearts have been longing in all ages. *In medio tutissimus ibis.*