

ANDROGYNOUS MAN IN MYTH AND TRADITION.

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IT has been the teaching of the rarer mystics through the centuries that man not only, but Deity as well, is two-sexed,—the Fount and Source of all life combining within Himself the masculine and feminine. As an outflowing of this thought was the belief that man,—the image of his Divine Parent,—was, likewise, in the pristine beauty and purity of his nature, male and female blended together. This thought runs like a thread of light through no few of the faiths and philosophies of time, and a remembrance of it enriches and makes luminous many a dark and doubtful passage in our lay and sacred literature.

It is well, perhaps, to observe before aught more is said that the androgynous or bi-sexual man whose existence upon the planet, in the shadowy ages before recorded time, the mystics teach, was a being wholly other than the hermaphrodite as known to medical science, nor is the latter term used with the meaning given it by physicians in the passages we shall quote, for the existence of true hermaphrodites in the human family is not admitted by physiologists, as is clearly explained in the article "Medical Jurisprudence" in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. This prefaced, we may proceed to examine our subject with some detail.

Referring to the Aryan traditions as to the birth of the race, the writer of the article "Mythology" in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* observes: "The Aryans accounted for the origin of the species in the following barbarous style: A being named Pairusha was alone in the world and differentiated himself into two beings, husband and wife." From the same source must have sprung the myth found in the opening chapters of the Bible, that in the dawn-tide of creation man was alone and the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon

him and from his side took woman. Both myths are in essence the same, but, strained for centuries through the minds of differing peoples, each took on a form peculiar to itself.

The same idea was taught by the Hebrew sages of old and in the time of Jesus was known to the more learned of the Pharisees. In the writings of their scholars it was said, "Adam was created as a man-woman, androgynous, explaining Gen. 1:27 as 'male and female' instead of 'man and woman', and that the separation of the sexes arose from the subsequent operation on Adam's body as related in the Scripture." (Funk & Wagnall's *Jewish Encyclopedia*, article "Adam Kadmon.") So, too, in the article entitled "Androgynos" in the same work it is observed, "Jeremiah, son of Eleazar, says, God created Adam androgynous * * * * The opinion of Jeremiah is very old and wide-spread, for we find the fathers of the Christian Church at pains to refute these 'Jewish fables.'" The Jewish philosopher Philo taught that "heavenly man,"—by which he meant the angels as understood in Jewish thought,—“are neither man nor woman,” an expression made clear by what has been said regarding the teachings of the Hebrew sages. (See *Jewish Encyclopedia*, article "Adam Kadmon.")

This conception, however, is not confined to the ancient Aryans and Hebrews, for we find it given expression by Plato, who, in the *Symposium*, as the writer of his life in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* states, "explains the sexual and amative inclinations of man and woman by the fact that they were at first androgynous beings whom Zeus separated into men and women." The passage mentioned occurs in that part of the *Symposium* where Aristophanes, after referring to the grotesque and fanciful traditions respecting the bisexual nature of original man, says in explanation of the affection between the sexes: "For the intense yearning which each of them has towards the other does not appear to be the desire of intercourse but of something else which the soul desires but can not tell and of which she has only a dark and doubtful presentiment. Suppose Hephaestus with his instruments to come to the pair who are lying side by side and say to them, 'What do you people want of one another?' They would be unable to explain. And suppose further that when he saw their perplexity he said, 'Do you desire to be wholly one: always, day and night, to be in one another's company? For if this is what you desire I am ready to melt you into one and let you grow together, so that, being two, you shall become one and, while you live, live as if you were a single man, and after your death in the world below still be one departed soul instead of

two,—I ask whether this is what you lovingly desire, and whether you are satisfied to attain this. There is not a man among them when he heard this who would deny or who would not acknowledge that this meeting and melting into one another's arms, this becoming one instead of two, was the very expression of his ancient need. And the reason is that human nature was originally one and we were a whole and the desire and pursuit of the whole was called love. There was a time, I say, when the two were one, but now, because of this wickedness of man, God has dispersed us." (Jowett's *Dialogues of Plato*, Scribner's, Vol. 1, p. 483.)

So, too, our own Milton, treating of marriage-love between the beings loftier than man, chants:

"To whom the angel, with a smile that glowed
 Celestial rosy red, love's proper hue,
 Answered, 'Let it suffice that thou knowest
 Us happy, and without love no happiness.
 Whatever pure thou in the body enjoyest
 (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
 In eminence, and obstacle find none
 Of membrane, joint or limb, exclusive bars;
 Easier than air with air, if spirits embrace,
 Total they mix, union of pure with pure
 Desiring; nor restrained conveyance need
 As flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul.'"

In the light of what has gone before, a celebrated utterance of Jesus gains a newer and richer meaning. The Sadducee asks whose wife, a woman married more than once, would be in the resurrection, and Jesus, replying, says: "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven." From this passage, perhaps, has sprung the idea that the angels are asexual, and such, probably, is the meaning to be gathered from the saying as it has come down to us through the gospel writer. In view, however, of the belief held by the more learned Pharisees and the opinion expressed by Philo,—who, be it remembered, was a contemporary of Jesus,—and especially in view of the apocryphal utterance shortly to be quoted, we may well believe that the saying, as it fell from the lips of the great Galilean, bore the meaning, not that spiritual man is without sex, but that he is bi-sexual or androgyne. If such be true, the answer of Jesus may be taken as implying that in the grander realms of spirit the ties of earth are sundered, and men and women, risen to nobler planes of being, are united, not by a spoken ritual, but, like the angels of heaven, by the highest and holiest laws of the soul.

When replying to the Sadducee, Jesus prefaced the observation quoted, with the statement, "Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God." Do the Old Testament writings really countenance this belief? Strangely enough, we find upon careful reading that the meek and lowly Nazarene had studied the Bible stories more earnestly than those who pay homage to His name, for the teaching is verily found in the opening chapters of Genesis.

In the twenty-sixth verse of the first chapter, it is said: "And God said, Let *us* make man in our image; after our likeness; and let *them* have dominion," etc. "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." Man, male and female, being created in the image of God, the implication is plainly that God (or, as expressed in more recent translations, the "gods" or "strong ones") is likewise male and female. Moreover, it may be inferred that the angels too are male and female. The expression, "Let *us* make man in our image" makes clear that more than a single being participated in the act of creation, and assuming that, as implied in the Scriptural statement, the Creator was a composite male-female being, it is manifest that the term "us" refers not to the male and female essences of the Divine Existence but to the spiritual creatures mentioned later as "Cherubim," who, in Semitic thought, belonged to a superior order of angels. This is apparent when it is considered that in connection with the fall of man from Edenic bliss and innocence the Creator is represented as saying, "Behold the man is become *as one of us*," implying more than two. As it is said, therefore, "Let us create man in our image,"—that is, male and female,—it follows that the cherubim or angels, no less than the Creator Himself, were, according to the ancient Hebrew conception, of dual nature.

A strikingly suggestive passage illustrating the fact that, as understood in ancient Semitic thought, man was originally a two-fold being, blending within himself the male and female, and that Deity and the angels, in whose image man was made, partake of the same nature, is found in the fifth chapter of Genesis, which begins a fresh account of creation. There it is said, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God created he him, male and female created He them, and blessed them *and called their name Adam* in the day that they were created." The name Adam is applied to both as if they were one being. In this account the name of Eve does not appear, and it is clear that the separation of the two-fold being into man and woman is dealt with in the myth of the rib. The removal of the rib from Adam is evidently a grafting upon the original myth,

which probably taught merely that the two beings before their separation were wholly interblended, for the man exclaims when he awakes from his sleep and beholds woman, "This is now bone of my bone *and flesh of my flesh*: she shall be called woman *because she was taken out of me.*"

By those schools of mystic thought which asserted that man is in origin bi-sexual, it was likewise taught that in the fulness of time at some stage of their spiritual progress, the male and female souls which sprang from the hand of the Eternal as one two-fold being were destined to reunite. Perhaps this thought, in a far and distant way, is contained in these words placed in the mouth of Adam: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife: *and they shall be one flesh.*" It is conveyed beyond question, however, in the apocryphal saying of Jesus quoted from Clement of Alexandria in Schaff's *History of Christianity*, Vol. 1, p. 165: "Our Lord, being asked by Salome when His kingdom should come, and the things which He had spoken be accomplished, answered, 'When the two shall be one, and the outward as the inward, and the male with the female, neither male nor female.'" And in this connection it is well to remember the words of Gibbon, "The first Christians were acquainted with a number of sayings of Jesus which are not related in our Gospels, and, indeed, have never been written." (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. 1, Ch. 15.)

What word science speaks regarding the belief which is the burden of the myths we have mentioned it is unnecessary to inquire, but we may observe in passing that, curiously as it may seem, science does in no faint or feeble way lend countenance to the idea. "The androgynous condition,"—we quote, for the sake of brevity, from the *Century Dictionary* under the word "androgynous,"—"is a very common one in invertebrate animals. The two sexes co-exist at the same time in one individual." More pointedly, Dr. Ridpath, in his *Great Races of Mankind*, Vol. 1, p. 116, observes: "We have in human anatomy certain parts, such as the rudimentary breasts of the male which seem to point to a condition still more primitive in the development of our race,—to a time when even the sexes had not been differentiated the one from the other." Haeckel, however, in his great work, *The Evolution of Man*, Appleton & Co., Vol. 2, p. 69, expresses the thought in its broadest phase: "Comparative anatomy shows that hermaphroditism, that is the union of both kinds of sexual cells in one individual, is the oldest and original condition of sexual differentiation: the separation of the sexes did not originate till a later period." So, too, "Just as the lowest plant animals

exhibit this most simple origin of the complex phenomena of reproduction, so, in the second place, they reveal the highly important fact that the earliest and most primitive sexual relation was hermaphroditism, and that the separation of the sexes originated from this only secondarily (by division of labor). Hermaphroditism is prevalent in lower animals of the most different groups; in these each single individual, when sexually mature, each person, contains male and female sexual cells and is even capable of self-fertilization and self-reproduction. Thus not only in the lowest plant animals just mentioned do we find egg-cells and sperm-cells united in one and the same person, but many worms, many snails and many other invertebrate animals are also hermaphrodite. All the early invertebrate ancestors of man, from *Gastræada* to *Chardonia*, must also have been hermaphrodite. So probably were also the earliest skulled animals. One extremely weighty piece of evidence of this is afforded by the remarkable fact that even in vertebrates, in man as well as other vertebrates, the original rudiment of the sexual organs is hermaphrodite. The separation of the sexes, the assignment of the two kinds of sexual cells to different individuals, differentiated from hermaphroditism only in the farther course of tribal history. And these male and female individuals differed only in the possession of the two kind of cells but in other respects were exactly alike." *Id.*, p.396.

The last paragraph, however, is merely a digression, for a discussion of the question from the view-point of the scientist is wholly beside the aim of this article. We have sought merely to deal with the traditions for their historic interest, and to show that the belief is veiled within the creation stories of Genesis. And Genesis, let us observe, is a fossil-bed of myths. There lie urned away the remains of faiths and philosophies which kindled the imaginations and shaped the deeds of men in the dim and distant ages before the first glimmer of history! Whilst in the light of riper knowledge the halo of divinity has faded from the Bible, who shall say what wealth of lore is buried within its pages!