

## AMBROSIA AND NECTAR.

BY PETER J. POPOFF.

A COMPARATIVE study of eating and drinking makes a new chapter in the science of religions. Men eat and drink to live. Yet they die, because they have not nourishment that would give them immortality. Only gods have such food and drink, ambrosia and nectar, as the Greek mythology teaches. Eating and drinking, however, are considered as an absolutely necessary condition of life of all beings, be they gods or men. It is necessary to notice that this *anthropomorphic idea* is found in all religions. As creation of human imagination, all gods are endowed with human qualities: they eat and drink, enjoy sweet meats and perfumes, singing and dancing; they love and beget children, make peace and war. Evidently, workmanship clearly indicates the workman.

Here is a picture of life of the Olympian immortals:

“On the topmost peak of Olympus there was a great hall where gods and goddesses gathered for deliberations and *feasting*. *Ambrosia* was the food served at these banquets, and nectar, poured into the cups by Hebe, the goddess of youth, nourished the inhor flowing in the gods’ veins instead of blood. The nostrils of the feasters were filled with rich *odor* of sacrifices offered on earth, and their ears were charmed by the songs the Muses sung to the accompaniment of Apollo’s lyre. The Graces, adorned with spring flowers, presided over the feats and the dances, conducted by Terpsichore herself, the Muse of the choral lyric and the dance.” (*Greek and Roman Mythology*. Jess M. Tatlock).

We read in the Iliad how once Vulcan, the god artist, treated the gods and goddesses to *nectar*:

“He said, and to her (Juno’s) hands the goblet heaved  
Which, with a smile, the white armed queen received.  
Then, to the rest he filled; and in his turn,  
Each to his lips applied the *nectared urn*.  
Vulcan with awkward grace his office plies,  
Thus the blest gods the genial day prolong,  
In *feast ambrosial*, and celestial *song*.”

(Book 1, p. 68).

*Ambrosia* means a thing giving immortality, hence the food of gods. It corresponds exactly to *the fruit of the tree of life*, spoken of in the Bible, for those eating of it shall live forever:

“And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as *one of us*, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and takes also of *the tree of life*, and eat, and live forever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden *cherubim*, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of *the tree of life*.” (Genesis, iii., 22-24). Here the author conveys the idea that “we”, who know good and evil, take of *the tree of life*, eat and live forever.

We read in the Iliad how Jove sent his daughter Minerva to strengthen Achilles who was refusing to take any food as long as Patroclus' body remained unburied.

“Ere *thirst* and want his forces have oppressed,  
Haste and infuse *ambrosia* in his breast” . . .  
To great Achilles she her flight addressed,  
And poured *divine ambrosia* in his breast,  
With *nectar sweet*, (*refection of the gods!*)  
Then, swift ascending, sought the bright abodes.”

(Book xix., p. 401).

It appears then that “refection of the gods”, ambrosia and nectar, may be offered to mortals, too, of course with special permission of the “Father of gods and men”.

And the fruit of the tree of life giving immortality can be offered to men also: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of *the tree of life*, which is in the midst of the paradise of God”. (Revel. ii, 7).

In the new Jerusalem there will be *water of life* and *the tree of life*, both giving immortality to the righteous, as ambrosia and nectar to the Olympian gods and goddesses.

“And he (Angel) showed me a pure river of *water of life*, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the *tree of life*, which bare *twelve* manner of fruits, and yielding her fruit every month. . . . Blessed are they that do His (God's) commandment, that they may have right to the *tree of life*, and may enter in through the gates into the city. . . . And let him that is

*athirst* come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of *life* freely". (Revel. xxii. 1-17).

There are in the Bible other significant passages regarding celestial nourishment.

"Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my *wine, which cheereth God* and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" (Judges ix. 12-13).

Thus the *wine cheereth God* and man.

And here is a mention of "angels' food":

"He (God) had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down *manna* upon them (the children of Israel) to eat, and had given them of the *corn of heaven*. Man did eat *angels' food*; he sent them meat to the full". (Psalm lxxvii. 23-25).

"And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium". (Numbers xi. 7).

The Lord appeared to Abraham in the shape of three men, and Abraham offered them meat and bread, butter and milk," "and they did *eat*". (Genesis ch. xviii). And whenever angels appeared to men, for instance to Manoah (Judg. ch. xiii), to Gideon (Judg. ch. vi) they were offered food and drink.

When Jesus "had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward a hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" . . . Jesus sent him away: "Get thee hence," he ordered. "And, behold, *angels* came and *ministered* unto him." (St. Math. ch. iv). But how did angels minister? Ancient engravings represent angels around Jesus with *banquets of celestial fruits*. "Angels ministered to him a repast of celestial food,—a heavenly feast". (Milton, Book IV).

All ancient nations sacrificed to their gods, offering them meat and drink, and the gods expressed their satisfaction in receiving such offerings, as is stated in all sacred scriptures.

Thus "Noah builded an altar unto the Lord . . . and offered burnt offerings. . . . "And the *Lord smelled a sweet savour*". (Genesis viii. 20-21).

When the Jews returned from Babylon to their country, they were supplied with "both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil

... that they may offer *sacrifices of sweet savours* unto the God of Heaven". (Ezra vi. 9-10). So the God of Heaven smelled sweet savours of meats and wine.

The Bible says that, besides meat and bread, the children of Israel offered to God wine, oil, water and incense.

"And the three mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines, and drew *water* out of the well of Bethelhem, and took it, and brought to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but *poured it out unto the Lord*". (II Sam. xxiii. 16).

In the Iliad we read about many sacrifices. Jupiter said to Juno:

"But mine, and every god's peculiar grace  
Hector deserves, of all the Trojan race:  
Still on our shrines his grateful *offerings* lay,  
(The only honors men to gods can pay),  
Nor even from our smoking altar ceased  
The pure *libation*, and the holy *feast*".

(Book XXIV, p. 478).

There is a close analogy between sacrifices of the Hebrews and the Greeks.

In Hindu mythology *soma* corresponds to ambrosia and nectar of the Greeks. It is an intoxicating milk juice squeezed from the soma plant (*Asclepias acida*), and is *drunk by gods as well as men*, though the celestial soma is distinguished from the terrestrial one. The plant's true home is heaven, and it was stolen from the guardian demon by Indra's eagle, just as Zeus' eagle had brought the nectar, and Odin's eagle carried off the *mead*. Soma is considered as the king of plants, for it gives health, long life and *immortality*. The preparation of the soma juice was a very sacred ceremony, performed by the Brahman's according to the sacred Scriptures, the Rig Veda. Later on soma was personified and became the Indian Dionysos or Bacchus.

*Homa* in the Zend Avesta of the ancient Persians became what soma was in the Rig Veda of the Hindus. In this case Indian mythology was repeated in the Iranian myths.

In Scandinavian myths *mead* plays the same role as nectar, soma or wine elsewhere. The god Odin receives in his heavenly abode, Valhalla, the souls of those who had fallen in battle and whom had selected Valkyries, the divine maidens. Clad in full armour, they ride through the air, direct the battles and select the bravest war-

riors for Valhalla. There the warriors spend their time in constant fighting and *feasting*, in which participate gods and men. Evidently, in heaven the warriors continue their earthly life, only it lasts forever.

Mead is a drink made by the fermentation of honey mixed with water. Alcoholic drinks prepared from honey were common in ancient times, and during the middle ages throughout Europe. The Greeks and Romans knew of such liquor under the name of *hydromel*. Nectar too is said to be made of honey of the heath (*Erica Vulgaris*).

In the ancient China, where the ancestors were particularly worshipped, they regularly offered sacrifices, consisting of food, drink and perfumes. If the material parts of these offerings apparently remained unconsumed, then the odorous particles were believed to reach and satisfy the blessed souls of their ancestors.

In Egypt they deposited with the mummies some food: and on the walls of the tombs they made pictures representing food and drink, which by magic power could be converted into real things. They had also prayers inscribed or engraved on the tombs, which when read by the living friends or relatives, had the power to supply the souls with a thousand loaves of bread and as many measures of beer or wine.

The Babylonians held that all men shall die, but that in a secret place of the kingdom of the dead there is the tree whose fruits give youth and life, and also the spring of water which, sprinkled on the dead, restore them to life lasting for ever. It is from the Babylonians that the Hebrews adopted the story of the tree of life and the water of life.

Mahomet reserved to the righteous the use of wine in his paradise.

Man's longing for immortality made him imagine the existence of the tree of life, and the water of life, of ambrosia and nectar, two things which in some countries were reduced to one: soma, homa, mead or wine.

The angel Raphael declared to Tobit and Tobias: "All these days (about three weeks) I did appear unto you; but *I did neither eat nor drink*, but ye did see a *vision*." (Tobit xii. 15-21). This assertion contradicts the statement found in Genesis and elsewhere that when visiting men, *angels did eat and drink* (Gen. ch. xviii. and xix). This assertion in the Book of Tobit loses its weight and

significance in view of the firmly and generally established doctrine to the effect that both gods and men use food and drink, the tree of life and the water of life, ambrosia and nectar, soma, homa, mead or wine. What meaning has this doctrine—that is another question. It is an anthropomorphic conception.

Eating and drinking are believed to be essential for life of all beings, be they gods or men. And there is a covenant between the gods of heaven and the men on earth that the latter should furnish the former meat offerings and drink offerings, the sweet savours and the sweet incense, as if in return for the protection rendered by the immortals to the mortals. Hence there is a constant *union* between gods and men, a union constituting *religion*. Thus we come to the divine order illustrated in sacred Scriptures of all nations.

Evidently, in *anthropomorphism* we find the key solving all religious enigmas and mysteries.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

### MEDITATION.

BY GUY BOGART.

There are no cares in the world that are real. They are but the imaginings of fear in some guise or other.

Know! Know! Know!

The pathway of unfoldment is so simple and so difficult. The difficulty lies mainly in the attempt of the uninitiated mind to figure out *how* the divine law can operate. Suppose the seed began to think when planted, "how can such simple agencies as earth, water and sunshine develop me into a flowering bower of beauty?"

The simple path lies thru definite, regular and systematic meditation. There will be action, bless you, in plenty. It will be guided, however, and intelligent activity, proceeding from a calm center. The compass of the drawing student would make strange and erratic figures if some stable point were not selected as a center. Meditation is the centering of the compass point, that the periphic action may be measured equi-distant from one common point of divine contact.

Fast and pray. Meditation is prayer within the soul. Right action is prayer within the physical sphere. Right thinking is a prayer of the mental body. Thus you may pray without ceasing and yet function in a normal world.

Fasting and meditation may be likened to the developing of the photographer's plate. Your body, sensitized by the father-mother con-