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ARTICLE II.

PYTHAGORAS.

Greece, lying midway between Asia Minor and Italy, transmitted, about 800 years before the birth of our Saviour, a hardy and enterprising population to Sicily and the neighboring continent; and at the same time, as though mindful of the sunny shores to the East, from which their ancestors had adventurously launched their barks, Greeks, with restless energy, glided through the thousand emerald Isles of the Ægean, to lay the foundations of Samos, Ephesus, and Miletus, and the nine other noted cities on the coast of Asia Minor.

The excursion westward, in those days, was full of peril. Though the distance between the nearest points of Epirus and Italy, was not more than fifty miles, but few Islands intervened; and abroad on the blue sea, with no land in sight, was a position which early sailors dreaded, and for which their diminutive craft were but poorly adapted.

Overcoming all difficulties, however, just at the close of the eighth century, B. C., active Greeks spread over the modern Calabria, and encouraged by the success which attended their efforts, Tarentum, Locri, and Rhegium, with the two great cities, Sybaris and Croton, speedily started into existence. The walls of Sybaris had a circuit of six miles, whilst those of Croton are believed to have extended over at least twelve miles.

We enter into the midst of one of these places with Pythagoras, about five hundred and thirty years before Christ. Sybaris and Croton were then the greatest Hellenic cities; and the region of Italy of which they

were the principal masters, was called *Magna Græcia*. Sybaris was notorious for her luxurious indolence. The host of vices which spring from self-indulgence, found a home there. Her wealthy citizens were steeped to the lips in effeminacy, drunkenness, debauchery. Some conception of the number of her inhabitants may be formed from the statement which is given, that the army she despatched against Croton, consisted of three hundred thousand men. For generations after her overthrow, "Sybaritic stories" held much the same place among the Greeks, that the Arabian Nights hold in Christendom.

Croton was renowned for the skill of her physicians. Unlike the Sybarites, her citizens were of vigorous bodily habit, and frequently carried away the prize at the Olympic games. In size, in riches, and in population, the city was inferior to Sybaris. After a political revolution at the latter place, Croton had given shelter to a body of her exiles. The demand for them having been refused, the Sybarites marched toward Croton, and suffered a fatal defeat from the army of that city, consisting of only one third their numbers. The Crotoniates were exasperated to such a degree, that after destroying the city, they altered the course of the neighboring river so that it should flow over and obliterate its site.

It was twenty or twenty-five years before this event, that Pythagoras arrived at Croton. He had been born in the Island of Samos, about 580, B. C. With an ardent thirst for knowledge, he had spent many years in travelling into foreign countries. It is certain that he had visited Egypt. It is alleged without any evidence, that he journeyed as far as India; that he conferred in their own cities with the Persian and Chaldean Magi; that he attended upon the instructions of Zoroaster; that he conversed with Jewish prophets then

captives in Babylon; and that he found his way into western Europe, to become familiar with the religion of the Druids. Jamblichus, with some probability, asserts that on his way to Egypt, he visited Phœnicia, and became acquainted with the prophets and philosophers, who were the successors of Mochus, the physiologist. This Mochus, Selden and others believe to have been Moses.

After his return, the flourishing Grecian cities in Italy attracted his notice; and Croton received his preference by the superior character of its population. The city was ruled by an aristocracy. The public mind, 533 or 535, B. C., was weighed down by a defeat which their army had just suffered from the united Locrians and Rhegians. Pythagoras had observed closely, and carefully compared and sifted the knowledge which he had acquired abroad. He had gathered up the golden grains for philosophy that time was bearing down in Grecian channels from the past. Thales, Anaximander and Xenophanes, had loosened from the sand and strenuously labored at elemental principles of thought. Mingling with these, Egyptian mysticism and ascetic observance, the Samian sage was prepared to offer to the people of Croton a new scheme of philosophy with which religion and politics were strangely blended.

His success must have been beyond his own brightest expectations; for, respected by the people at large, he attached to himself great numbers of the rich and influential, out of whom three hundred formed a select society, with peculiarities of dress, of diet, and of religious rites. With the heartiest contempt for all others, the members of this fraternity cherished the warmest friendship for each other; and through the establishment of similar clubs, dependent upon their head at Croton, and working for the same political ends, the secret society

of the Pythagoreans became a mighty political engine among all the cities of Magna Græcia.

The Pythagoreans, however, excited opposition through their arrogant manners; through their aristocratical affiliations; through the great power they were able to wield; and through the political opinions embraced from their leader. A popular tumult was at length excited against them, and the building in which they were convened having been set on fire, most of them, Pythagoras himself being among the number, according to some early writers, perished. By 420 B. C., the brotherhood had been dispersed through Greece. By 300 B. C., it had nearly died out. But reviving again, and absorbed by new Platonism, it is found contemporaneous and in antagonism with Christianity. It was revived, too, with little or none of its scientific tendencies, but with more than its primitive and imaginative fanaticism.

Whilst Pythagoras imparted political maxims to his disciples, politics held but a subordinate place, we have reason to suppose, as well in his estimation as in his teachings. His philosophy assumed the character chiefly of scientific speculation and religious instruction. Much of it was borrowed from the Egyptians, to whom he was also indebted for several peculiarities in his mode of teaching, especially that of conveying knowledge through symbols. But even when this is granted, there remains more of originality in the positive system and achievements of Pythagoras than belongs probably to even the later sages of Greece.

Much that is fabulous mingles with the accounts that reach us of the scientific attainments of this philosopher. As none of his instructions were committed to writing, until the generation in which he lived had passed away, there was ample opportunity for mistakes and misrepresentations. Jamblichus, Gaudentius, and Macrobius,

relate that he was once meditating on the arrangement of some settled rule to guide the ear in music. Passing a blacksmith shop, he heard four hammers striking the anvil in succession. The blows produced a pleasant concord. Seeing the hammers to be of different sizes, he had them carefully weighed, and discovered that they were to each other in the proportion of six, eight, nine, and twelve. He now suspended four strings, equal in length and thickness, and fastening to them weights, in this proportion, he ascertained, upon striking them, that they gave the same sound as the hammers. Upon this he founded his theory of musical intervals.

The frontispiece to Marpurg's History of Music, represents the philosopher weighing the hammers. But no such concord of sounds will be produced by different hammers on the same anvil; and no such proportion of weights will give the required musical intervals. Singularly enough, though, as Galileo determined by actual experiment, the squares of the given numbers will yield these intervals. Pythagoras was acquainted, we may believe, with musical ratios, but arrived at his knowledge of them rather through meditation and design. Discoveries in all parts of the science of music are attributed to him; and we know that he employed it with his disciples to sooth disorderly passions.

The key to the doctrines of Pythagoras is supposed to be found in the idea of unity in multiplicity; multiplicity being unity unfolded, and always capable of reduction again into unity. The Deity, the principle pervading all things, is the great unit, and all things again can be resolved back into the Deity. The one expanded into the many, or the many bound up in the one, constitute harmony. To discover by what principle numerous kindred things are joined together or to educe the idea of order, was a leading object kept in

view. This led him into politics, through the consideration of order in society or government. From this he very naturally turned to discover how order was to be established in the individual mind. Virtue he made to result from a perfect proportion of all the active principles of the soul. Truth was eminently a Pythagorean virtue, and justice the glory of man.*

Number is associated with every part of his philosophy; so prominent is this that his followers have been denominated a mathematical sect. He took his disciples at once into the study of geometry and arithmetic, laying far the greater stress upon the latter. He carried his numbers over both into the science of mind and of morals; "he went," as has been said, "from the arithmetic of virtue to the virtue of arithmetic." The universe was arranged according to mathematical proportions. The heavens moved according to their own eternal harmony. Lines and numbers possessed a symbolic meaning; and through them, he supposed he had access to the deepest secrets of nature. He defined justice to be a square number; and identified the virtues with numerical relations. Nature was "an imitation of numbers." The soul was a moving number, a self-moving monad, its physical constitution, fire. It was both intellectual and passionate; its intellect being immortal. Moral good was essential unity; moral evil essential plurality or division. Pythagoras strove to be practical, and considered music as founded upon proportion, to be the link between the practical and the ideal. To him belongs the credit of the *χόσμος*; and he is reputed to have been the author of the multiplication table, and to have discovered that the square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides. Numbers led him over into astro-

* Butler.

nomny. And here, it would seem, he embraced or discovered the truth of what we are now wont to call the Copernican system, which makes suns the centres of planetary motions, and gives the earth, as by no means the largest of these planets, only its own relative place. "The ten fundamental numbers contain the whole system of the world; hence the decadal astronomic system; and as the number ten has its root in unity, these ten great bodies turn around a centre which represents unity. The centre of the system of the world, according to appearance, the senses, and the school of Ionia, is the earth; the centre of the system of the universe, according to reason and the Italian school, is the sun. Now, as the sun represents unity, and as unity, although the active principle, is immobile, the sun is immobile. The laws of the movement of the ten great bodies around the sun, constitute the music of the spheres; the entire world is a whole harmoniously arranged, *χόσμος*, and it has preserved this beautiful name."*

These mathematical principles set to music, produced that exquisite poetical conception which Shakspeare has so happily expressed:

Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
There's not the smallest orb, which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings.

If we may take the verses which Ovid attributes to Pythagoras, as containing the scientific tenets of the Pythagoreans of the Augustan age, and consider them as an amplification only of principles, delivered by the Samian philosopher, then the wonder that Pythagoreans anticipated the inductions of modern science, relative to the movements of the heavenly bodies, is multiplied, for Ovid's verses show that he had anticipated some of

* Cousin.

the leading principles of the most recent of the sciences—geology.

And that is solid earth that once was sea:
Seas in their turn retreating from the shore,
Make solid land, what ocean was before;
And far from strands are shells of fishes found,
And rusty anchors fixed on mountain ground.
And what were fields before, now washed and worn
By falling floods from high, to valleys turn.*

This whole passage upon the Pythagorean Philosophy, in the 15th Book of the *Metamorphoses*, is exceedingly curious. He taught that "nothing perishes in this world; but things merely vary and change their form. Being born is only that anything begins to be that which it was not before; death is only ceasing to be the same thing. Whilst nothing keeps the same visage long, the sum of the whole continues constant."

A rare skill in physiognomy enabled him to reject from the inner circle of the brotherhood, those who would prove to be unworthy. His early studies had made him well acquainted with the regimen best to be pursued, to render the body most vigorous; and the training for the athletes of Croton had many things in common with the mode of living which he adopted for himself and enforced upon his disciples.

A passing glance is all that it comports with our present purpose to give of Pythagoras as the man of science. It is Pythagoras the mystic, the religious teacher, with whom we are concerned, likened by some to St. Benedict or St. Francis, and by others so depicted in his character and life, that from the mists of remote Paganism, he is made to confront and surpass Him who spake as never man spake.

Skepticism has been accustomed to offer Socrates as a character worthy of being compared with Jesus

* Dryden's Trans.

of Nazareth. Doubtless the zeal with which he combated error, the unwearied patience with which he set himself to educe a more satisfactory ethical code, and above all, the calmness with which he took the cup from the hand of the executioner, the victim of popular misunderstanding and hate, are traits which elevate him to the highest pinnacle of philosophical greatness.

But Socrates lived in an age as historic as that of the Saviour. The facts in the life of each can be ascertained, and if doubt be suggested of an action or a doctrine, the records of Plato and Xenophon, and of the four evangelists, are at hand for a ready solution. But pass back a few generations, and the clouds come down from the land of myths; and the fancy that can make of a hero, a Hercules or a Jupiter, can as easily make a god of a philosopher.

The state of the case seems to be this. New Platonism, from the beginning of the third century after Christ, down to the fall of heathenism, absorbed what was left of Pythagorean philosophy, and became the jealous rival of Christianity. This was an eclectic system far in advance of any of its predecessors, which did not even deny the inspiration of Jesus Christ. It was an early naturalism, mainly evolved from the writings of Plato, which owed much of its interest and comprehensiveness to the silent influence of Christianity upon those ages.

Of the New-Platonists, none were more able or active than Porphyry and Jamblichus. The former lived in the closing half of the third century, and was among the most determined opponents of the Christian Church. The other was the disciple of Porphyry. The life of Pythagoras, as written by each of these, eight hundred years after the time of the philosopher, is but a collection of the apocryphal stories relating to him, which were current in their age.

How little these writers and the materials which they used, are to be relied upon, Mosheim, Lardner and other authorities, will enable us to determine. Of Porphyry, Mosheim says: B. I. part 1, chap. 5, § 8: "But those very works, and the history of his life, show us at the same time, that he was a much more virulent than formidable enemy to the Christians; for by them it appears, that he was much more attentive to the suggestions of a superstitious spirit, and the visions of a lively fancy, than to the sober dictates of right reason, and a sound judgment; and it may be more especially observed of the remaining fragments of his work against the Christians, that they are equally destitute of judgment and equity, and are utterly unworthy of a wise and good man." Dr. Lardner concludes that "most of the things related by these two authors, concerning the wonderful works ascribed to Pythagoras, are so trifling and so manifestly fabulous," that he cannot believe they intended to oppose them to the miracles of Jesus Christ.

"Many," writes Mosheim, B. I. part 1, chap. v. § 9: "were the deceitful and perfidious stratagems by which this sect (the New-Platonists,) endeavored to obscure the lustre, and diminish the authority of the Christian doctrine. None of these seemed to be more dangerous than the seducing artifice with which they formed a comparison between the life, actions, and miracles of Christ, and the history of the ancient philosophers, and placed the contending parties in such fallacious points of view, as to make the pretended sages of antiquity appear in nothing inferior to the divine Saviour. With this view, Archytas of Tarentum, Pythagoras, of whom Porphyry wrote the life, Apollonius Tyanæus, a Pythagorean philosopher, whose miracles and peregrinations were highly celebrated by the vulgar, were brought upon the scene, and exhibited as divine teachers, and rivals of the Son of God."

Grote himself says: "A large proportion of the false statements concerning Pythagoras, comes from these New-Pythagoreans, who were not deterred by the want of memorials from illustrating, with ample latitude of fancy, the ideal character of the master." History of Greece, vol. iv. page 398. They evidently used him as an analogue to the great Christian Teacher. For every claim that was urged for Christ, they were ready with a similar claim for Pythagoras.

We cannot believe that these romancers contented themselves with the stories which had floated down from previous generations. Embellished as the wonderful relations had been by every successive age, the Nazarene as he stood distinctly delineated a pure and exalted personage, such as the world had never seen, afforded embellishments still newer, and not less easily borrowed. The Pythagoras of the New-Platonists owed as much to the gospel narratives of the life of the Saviour, as their philosophy owed to his doctrines.

Our wonder is, that whilst perfectly aware that the fables which assume the name of lives of Pythagoras at the hands of Porphyry and Jamblichus, have just as much of the real biography within them as the story of St. George and the Dragon, the most able English historian since the days of Gibbon,* can deem it proper to crowd his page with references to these romances. When the narrative will not allow of their introduction in the main type, as though some object would be damaged by their omission, they are crowded into foot notes. And our wonder is not lessened at this unusual mode of treating his subject, when we remember, that these fables were heaped together to form a magazine against Christianity, and that with an unsuspecting mind, they tend to remove every thing like novelty from the life, labors,

* Grote.

miracles and purposes of Christ. In furnishing an exact parallel to the person and mission of the Son of God, they bring down the claims of Jesus of Nazareth as possessing supernatural power, to the level of old woman's tales, of myths, and suspicious legends of by-gone ages.

Reminding us strongly of Gibbon's skilful use of the note to convey skeptical ideas, and at the same time guarding against the charge of employing this kind of loose legend as of equal value with authentic facts, our historian offers a critical and distinctive judgment upon the legends themselves, dissecting Porphyry and Jamblichus most effectually.

"The compilations of Porphyry and Jamblichus on the life of Pythagoras, copied from a great variety of authors, will doubtless contain some truth amidst their confused heap of statements, many incredible, and nearly all unauthenticated. But it is very difficult to single out what these portions of truth really are. Even Aristoxenus and Dikæarchus, the best authors from whom these biographers quote, lived near two centuries after the death of Pythagoras, and do not appear to have had any early memorials to consult, nor any better informants than the contemporary Pythagoreans." Grote, vol. 4, page 402. The greediness with which these later Pythagoreans received any stories with the slightest element in them of the supernatural, is another reason he assigns for rejecting their authority as "selectors and discriminators" of accounts respecting Pythagoras.

We more than doubt the propriety of introducing this tissue of myths, principally contained in the notes, in a grave historical work. Arranging and presenting these stories as the author does, a weight is given to them as similar in their pretensions to the narratives of the Christian gospels, which they so little deserve. They are stories that would not have been originated, had

not the Christian histories then been in existence; and had it not been deemed a necessity by Porphyry and Jamblichus, and kindred spirits, that some philosopher should be an exact counterpart for the public mind, to Jesus of Nazareth.

That we are not forcing our facts to sustain the opinion, that the manner in which the historian of Greece presents Pythagoras, unduly protrudes him as Porphyry and Jamblichus did of old, and as Blount did, Apollonius of Tyana, as a character in every important respect as elevated as that of Jesus of Nazareth, will be easily perceived when we gather together, from the face of the work, the points of resemblance. In the pages of the fourth volume of Grote, devoted to Pythagoras, he is presented as an "important teacher, prophet and worker of miracles, approaching to and sometimes even confounded with the gods." He believed in "divine inspirations coming on men," and concluded that he "was inspired by the gods to reveal a new mode of life—the Pythagorean life—and to promise divine favor to a select and docile few." "He was not an impostor, he was delivered from that by believing in his inspiration." He was esteemed "godlike by succeeding generations of Pythagoreans." "Meiners established it as probable, that the stories respecting the miraculous powers and properties of Pythagoras, got into circulation either during his life-time or at least not long after his death." He was "a person favored by the gods, and patentee of divine secrets." He was a religious missionary. "He was an ethical teacher." On his first appearance at Croton "his preaching and his conduct produced an effect almost electric upon the minds of the people." "No less than two thousand persons were converted at his first preaching."

The object which Pythagoras had in view was to

"found a new special order of brethren, bound together by religious rites and observances peculiar to themselves." He "appears as the revealer of a mode of life, calculated to raise his disciples above the level of mankind and to recommend them to the favor of the gods." He promised "divine favor to a select and docile few, as the recompense of a strict ritual obedience, of austere self-control, and of laborious training, bodily as well as mental."

There was probably "a certain measure of self-denial embodied in the Pythagorean life." It obtained the peculiar attachment and obedience of many devoted adherents. It exacted "entire mental devotion to the master," or faith. Pythagoras died after "forty days of voluntary abstinence from food." The banding together of the Pythagoreans "was without any thing like community of property which some have ascribed to them." An early author is quoted who pronounced Pythagoras to have been "engaged in fishing for men."

What is there that is distinctive about Jesus of Nazareth, that we have not here? Pythagoras, according to this representation, is as wise; he foretells the future as well; he as well performs miracles. He is a good man, believing himself to be inspired, and requiring his disciples to have implicit faith in him. He is the founder of a brotherhood, which endures nearly a thousand years, and in which self-denial and exact religious observances are made obligatory. Nay, there is that very element here, that many a scientific man, overestimating the dignity of his pursuit, and yet, not ready to reject the claims of the Christian religion, would be but too glad to recognise in its founder, a love for scientific research, and the injunction of it upon his followers as a direct duty.

But nothing makes the worth of the historic evidence

for Christianity more evident than just such a bold claim for an ancient philosopher. Porphyry and Jamblichus, even in their own day, could make nothing of Pythagoras, to those who were accustomed to weigh historic evidence. And to produce the Samian sage, in this late day, as a counterpoise to the meek man of Nazareth, is only to show what unsanctified philosophy would do if it were able.

The facts about Christ's character and works are all derived from eye-witnesses. Nothing is taken for granted, but every arrangement is made for substantiating the truth of every occurrence, by the testimony of those who are present. Every miracle He performs is in public. He heals the blind upon the way side, when the multitude are passing; He restores Lazarus to life at a great funeral. The evidence that is offered for each of His wonderful works, is such as would be admitted as complete in any court of justice.

It is the best of contemporaneous testimony. They who offer it, do it under the urgency of duty; and they are plain, honest men, who can be suspected of no sinister motives for attaching themselves to the cause of a new leader. They do not affirm that they have heard from others that Jesus of Nazareth raised the son of the widow of Nain, or turned the water into wine at Cana of Galilee; but these, and all similar miracles they allege, we saw. It is not that some one suspected that he had beheld the Saviour after his crucifixion, in some upper room, or standing upon the shore of the sea of Tiberias, but it is that he appeared in the very midst of his disciples, showing them his hands and his side. It is present before the eyes of Thomas, as palpable to the senses as ever he was, saying, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but be-

lieving." It is eating with seven disciples, who clustered around him and looking up into his eyes with wonder and love, saw that it is no other than their Lord. Seen forty days after the resurrection, not by one or two merely, but always by several, the facts of the gospel history, with those who are able to weigh testimony, must be regarded as beyond dispute.

But where is there a solitary miracle wrought by Pythagoras, either distinctly described, or set before the student of history with a shadow of evidence. The first memorials of him were not made public until about one hundred years after his death, by Philolaus, and these are mostly accounts of his scientific discoveries. Before that, neither he nor his disciples committed anything to writing. Meiners, it is stated, in a note, "established it as probable that the stories respecting the miraculous powers and properties of Pythagoras, got into circulation either during his life-time, or at least not long after his death." This probability we deem to be exceedingly slight. If admitted at all, the sage is degraded into a shameless impostor, and his miracles sink to a level with the slight-of-hand performance of pretenders to magic. They are like the miracles of the apocryphal Gospels, discriminated from those of the real at the first glance, as unnecessary to be performed, and *belonging to occasions that had no claims upon supernatural interference*. As examples of what are called the miracles of Pythagoras, we may take these two: At the Olympic Games, he is said to have exhibited a golden thigh to convince Abaris that he was Apollo. It is claimed that he wrote in letters of blood whatever he pleased on a looking-glass, and setting it opposite the full moon, caused the writing on the glass to be read on the disc of the moon. It cannot be shown, so as to satisfy a candid mind, that the wonderful deeds attributed

to Pythagoras, were ascribed to him antecedent to the time of the Saviour, and before the Saviour's miracles were generally known through the world.

We might be willing to rest the case on the lowest degree of probability; and merely ask from the whole round of record, of whatever kind, that it be made probable that Pythagoras uttered one distinct prophecy, like our Saviour's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, or brought one dead man to life like Lazarus. If this can be done, we acknowledge that the bulwarks of Christianity fall, and the external evidences of Christianity are overthrown.

There is one feature in the character of Christ, that this contrast, as it becomes, brings out most beautifully. It is the simplicity of the aim of his life. With all the treasures of knowledge, such as Pythagoras was striving after, ready to be expressed; perfectly competent to proclaim all about the stars, and the rocks, Christ complicates his doctrine with no such scientific instruction. With all the treasures of wisdom, such as Solon and Montesquieu longed and labored for, about the best civil organizations for human society, Christ never confounded what he had to teach with political disquisitions or apophthegms. He was simply the moral teacher, the unblemished man, the man suspected of no weakness, announcing to others the most elemental and self-commending moral truths. He speaks it forth plainly; he wishes the whole world to understand him. He has no concealed doctrines; he assumes no peculiar dress nor manner of speech. He withdraws himself from no class of men; he has a word for all, for his heart is full of tenderness for all. He is a character clear as crystal; transparent as the water from the mountain-side, which he so aptly made the emblem of his truth.

A contrast may be drawn between Pythagoras and

the founder of Christianity in other respects. The entire originality of the Saviour's character is a noticeable point. Pythagoras travels for twenty or thirty years. He secures the confidence of the Egyptian priests, and is initiated into their mysteries, and becomes familiar with the methods by which they keep the multitudes in awe. He visits Phœnicia, and probably other countries of the East, and returns home with much gathered lore, ready to impart what he has learned to disciples, who shall be willing to submit themselves to religious observances that his temperament and reflection have induced him to borrow.

But Jesus of Nazareth springs up among an agricultural, exclusive, and comparatively unlettered people. He is born in the bosom of an humble family, and soon learns to bear the burden of a widowed mother's support. His companions are poor, and no philosophy handed down from preceding generations, expands his mind, or excites his ambition. Amiable, industrious, prudent and dignified, he is chiefly known for the regularity of his life, and for the unwonted ripeness of his judgment. All at once his friends and countrymen are startled to hear that he is abroad teaching the people. They listen to him and concur in the general opinion, that never man spake as this man.

Moral truth was made to flash like a sunbeam on the eye of his listeners. Knotty questions were disentangled by the elucidation of a single principle. Acute scribes attempted to answer him in his speech, but stood monuments of rebuked vanity before the people, when he opened his lips and taught which was the great commandment of the law. And then his sublime enunciations of doctrine! Plodding through the volumes of the masters of human literature in sunny Greece, and the sitting down to the teachings of Jesus Christ, as record-

ed in the Gospels, is like coming out of Aristotle's imagined cave, and looking upon the broad, beautiful, sun-illuminated world. One sentence to the woman of Samaria, gives more instruction about the nature of God, and the worship that is acceptable to him, than can be derived from all the writings of Socrates, or Plato, or Cicero. One single sermon delivered on a mountain in the early part of his ministry, in maxims of exquisite morality, in compactness and completeness of exhibition of the simple religious duties, is unlike any other discourse ever delivered to men. Whence came that unborrowed wisdom? Whence did this humble Jew obtain that comprehensive knowledge of religious doctrine? With what deep ocean of inexhaustible truth did the human mind of Jesus of Nazareth communicate?

Read over the beatitudes of Christ, that delineation of exalted dispositions of mind which, prevailing in human society, would at once bring back the golden age, and then from Jamblichus and others, read some of the best precepts of Pythagoras, like the following: "Receive not a swallow into your house." "Adore the sound of the whispering wind." "Stir not the fire with a sword." "Look not into a mirror by the light of a candle." "Turn aside from an edged tool." "Eat not the heart or brain." "Taste not that which hath fallen from the table." "Break not bread." "Sleep not at noon." "When it thunders, touch the earth." "Roast not that which has been boiled." "Abstain from beans." "Discourse not of Pythagorean doctrines without light." "Above all things govern your tongue." "Engrave not the image of God in a ring." "Remember that the paths of virtue and of vice resemble the letter Y." Persius, Satire 3rd, line 56th, refers to this last saying:

Et tibi quæ Samios diduxit littera rames.

—And the mystery of the beans and flesh is thus explained: "He forbade his disciples to eat flesh, as also beans, because he supposed them to have been produced from the same putrified matter from which, at the creation of the world, man was formed."

There is a contrast, too, in the entire absence in the Gospel, of any such eastern absurdities as metempsychosis, or doctrines that may lead to it. This singular freedom of the Saviour's teachings from any opinion that after ages have shown to be false; the simple and unmixed truth which he delivered, never overthrown by all the subtleties of men or schools—standing apart from glosses that speculative philosophy has ever attempted to lay upon it, to reassume its native proportion and genuine colors, at the first earnest contemplation of man—is a marked attribute of the doctrines of the Nazarene. Pythagoras seeing a dog beaten, and hearing him howl, desired the striker to desist, saying, "It is the soul of a friend of mine, whom I recognize by his voice." He is said to have affirmed that he had seen not only Euphorbus in the Grecian army before Troy, but also a tradesman, a courtesan, and various other characters, before his actual existence.

*Iipse ego (nam meminì) Trojani tempore belli
Panthoides Euphorbus eram: cui pectore quondam
Sedit in adverso gravis hasta minoris Atridæ.*

Pythagoras does not appear to have intended his philosophy to have become the property of the common people. They who were initiated into his brotherhood, were generally the wealthy and the influential. These found that in his society, which contributed to the selfish desire after something exclusive. The nearer they approached the master, the more remote they were from the masses. They held something worth holding, which was the property of but few; and

the fewer, the more they deemed themselves distinguished.

That adaptation to the common people, which is the glory of the Gospel, is one of its most prominent peculiarities; it shares it neither with philosophy nor with false religion. How great a conception it was; how divine! Not to bring nectar to lips accustomed to drink from jewelled cups, but to carry down draughts of comfort to the hearts of the overburdened many; to bear the bread of life, and the water of life to the famished and the thirsty, teeming in all the plains, and on all the hill-sides of the world. To soothe all asperities; to hush all differences, and to make blend in the music of good will to man, all the dialects of all climes. To make one happy family of those whom God has made of one blood of all nations, children of one Father, and worshipping in the grandeur of one universal religion.

But it was after a long probation, and through initiatory ceremonies that the favored applicant was received into the brotherhood. When admitted, the candidate was obliged to subject himself to severe abstinence, and to rigorous exercise. He took a vow of voluntary poverty. For three years he was exposed to contradiction, ridicule and contempt, to teach him humility and industry. A long term of silence, lasting from two to five years, was imposed upon him. There was a gradation of orders, each higher one possessing secrets not revealed out of its own circle. There was the esoteric school, the members of which were called the "genuine disciples." These were the true Pythagoreans—the mathematicians—to whom the master entrusted his entire doctrine, who were permitted to take minutes of his observations, to ask questions, and offer remarks. Then there was the exoteric school, whose members were taught only by symbol and image, who were bound

to secrecy, and allowed to commit nothing that they heard to writing. Modern fraternities only imitate these ancient devices, which even at so early a period, were common among the societies of the Grecian cities.

Not more distinct in their arrangements for perpetuating themselves, from the beginning, were the Pythagorean brotherhoods and the Christian Church, than is the Church now from all similar associations. With no esoteric doctrines, with no protracted periods of probation, with no gradations of order, the Christian society, from the first, has been the simplest social organization, perfectly open to public view, and courting public inspection in every purpose and movement. Once admitted to the body of believers, the disciple held his position as a Christian unchallenged, participated in every rite, and listened to every doctrine.

A society like this, however, was most remote from the ideal of Pythagoras. He had witnessed the power which mystery held over the minds of the Egyptians. He well understood the influence of the dim religious light, the deep religious tone, the breath of the supernatural from the wreathing incense and the smoking altar. With truths half told and half concealed, with rites half pictured and half left in the folds of the impenetrable curtain, the imagination of the enthusiast was excited to the highest pitch. Along winding and gloomy avenues, he heard no sound but the echo of his own footstep, and felt only the directing touch of his unknown guide. Whither he had gone he knew not, when the solemn strains of musical instruments inspired him with terrors. The voice that addressed him, the removing of the bandage from his eyes, the flashing of torches, the administration of oaths, the processions hither and thither of masked men in ashly robes—there was nothing wanting in the procedure, which gave to

the brotherhoods of the middle ages their impressive mystery, or lends to the innumerable secret societies of modern times their charm and terror.

Wherever the human mind has invented itself a religion, it has gathered around it in profusion these scenic appendages to strike the senses; and none ever knew better how to employ them to effect than the Egyptian priests. There never was a better imitator in all such matters than Pythagoras. At Samos, we are told he withdrew to a cave, and taught his disciples with a great show of mystery. His precepts were delivered as though they were responses from a divine oracle. With a long, flowing beard, clothed in a white linen robe, with a golden crown upon his head, as some represent, he was never seen to express in his countenance, joy, or grief, or anger, or any other emotion.

There were, probably, external badges which distinguished the various orders of his fraternity from each other; some difference in costume, or difference in color or kind of ornament. As the initiated drew nearer to the circle within which the master stood alone, he was required to practise more severity, and felt himself rewarded for his diet of beans, with secret doctrines, which none less devoted could share. Milo, who was a Pythagorean, had been content with the honor of the brotherhood in some lower grade, where, upon something better than simple vegetables, he strengthened the muscle that carried the bullock, the fist that felled it, and the stomach that digested it in a single day. Perhaps he had known the glory of promotion to a higher circle, when he failed in rending the tree, and caught in the ineffectual cleft by his brawny hands, was devoured, all helpless, by the wild beasts.

So complicated an object as Pythagoras pursued, was not consistent with the character of an inspired

teacher. With all the urgency that is applied to drive through a parallel with the one great Prophet of humanity, the Samian sage cannot be shown to have cared principally for the religious necessities of his followers. His position among the notables, is as a philosopher, and earnest only for morals as they contributed to make his disciples indifferent to common wants, and to render them susceptible of a lofty mental improvement. His thirst for power, which lay at the foundation of his character, led him to mingle in the politics of Magna Græcia, and at length excited against him the popular rage, and proved the immediate cause of his death.

What a contrast with Christ and his religion! As the springlet gushes from the rock, clear as the crystal, and meanders on to the sea, ever revealing to the eye its treasures of pebbles and sands, the life of Christ is transparent. To raise a mortal to the skies by making him fit for them, was the end of his ministrations. Out into the village, along to the well-side, through the streets of Jerusalem, into its synagogues and its temple, he went, to seek the people, not waiting to be sought. He hid himself behind no artfully chosen speech; he kept back for no favored few, more distinguished doctrines. He was the man of the people, arising from among them, anxious for their welfare; sending down his consolation, and administering his help to the poor, the sick, the blind, and the lame. He called upon none to betake themselves to other diet than that to which they were accustomed; he made no requisition of garb or speech, to render them peculiar among the brethren. All that he insisted upon was, that they should show that they were his followers, by being more forgiving, more compassionate, more kind than others. He wedded no prayers, no praise to sunrise or sunset

to midday or midnight hours. Bringing out the principles of religious worship and morality, as God brings out the flowers over the field,—in that apparent disregard of order which adapts them so much the better to the variety-loving mind of man,—each truth is a study in itself, each truth is a completed whole from whatever point contemplated. The shepherd under the mountain cliff, meditating, though he may not mine as deep into the hidden treasures of heavenly wisdom, may find the shining gold on the surface, abundant enough to make him passing rich; and the student, with his microscopic eye, and diligent comparison of utterance with utterance, though he may trace along the yellow vein, and mark the net-work of other intermingling veins, will only find the same gold, though he will find it more plentifully than his ignorant brother in Christ.

How beautiful that life of Jesus Christ! The best human representations of him are what the Parian marble is to human flesh. The words in which men form and express their conceptions, are too coarse, too rigid, to exhibit the Saviour of men.

As we go back from all the countenances on which the most skilful painters have exhausted their art, as wanting elements that we feel, rather than know, ought to be upon the canvass; so we step aside from every word-picture of the Saviour as imperfect, as unworthy of the sublime original. We ask anew of Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John, what the Prophet said, and what the Prophet did; and passively suffer his features to mirror themselves on the clear waters of his doctrines and doings, as meek and melancholy, earnest, dignified, masculinely strong.

But Pythagoras!—practising upon the superstitious fear of his disciples; condescending to clumsy masque-

rade, and mendacious pretence; founding a lodge, which, though rude as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, some misty-eyed skeptics would exalt to share the glory of the Christian Church; at best securing from his followers the abstinence of anchorites, but lighting up to them no golden visions of streets of celestial cities which they were to win; retailing borrowed learning, and reproducing Eastern mystic observances with sepulchral voice from behind the sombre veil; like a Carmelite or a Franciscan, challenging attention by a pretentious plainness of garb and austerity of tone; a politician, a philosopher, a physiologist, an astronomer, a mathematician; but with no finger wreathed with power from heaven to raise the dead; with no tongue touched with a live coal to disclose the secrets of the future. Pythagoras is but a phantasmagorial spectre, starting forward as the lenses are adjusted by the skeptical hand, to rattle his bones, and threaten with his skeleton arm; but, in the very nature of the case, the moment when he towers the most like a giant, about to diminish in his proportions, and recede in the distance, the merest shadow of a shade.

Skepticism must go elsewhere to gather materials for an onset upon Christianity. The philosophers of Greece have never been of service, when called from their own sphere to witness against Christ. The edge of their weapons has ever been turned, in the end, against those who so ignorantly, and with so great presumption, have called them into the field to do battle for untruth.

(MILLS, C. D. B.)