

Paper 85 — The Origins of Worship

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This chart is a revision of the December 29, 2011 and January 28, 2015 versions.
Most endnotes and Urantia Book cross-references have been deleted to enhance readability.

Sources for Paper 85, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) E. Washburn Hopkins, Ph.D., LL.D., *Origin and Evolution of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923)
- (2) William Graham Sumner and Albert Galloway Keller, *The Science of Society, Volume II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927)
- (3) William Graham Sumner, Albert Galloway Keller, and Maurice Rea Davie, *The Science of Society, Volume IV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927)
- (4) Ernest William Barnes, *Scientific Theory and Religion: The World described by Science and its Spiritual interpretation* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933)

Key

- (a) Green indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) Yellow highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) Tan highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the UB writer pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) Blue indicates original (or “revealed”) information, or UB-specific terminology and concepts. (What to highlight in this regard is debatable; the highlights are tentative.)
- (f) Light green indicates Bible passages or fragments thereof, which are not paralleled in the source text.

Work-in-progress Version 27 Jan. 2011
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 Revised 28 Jan. 2015 and 20 July 2020

PAPER 85 — THE ORIGINS OF WORSHIP

85:0.1 Primitive religion had a biologic origin, a natural evolutionary development, aside from moral associations and apart from all spiritual influences. The higher animals have fears but no illusions, hence no religion.¹ Man creates his primitive religions out of his fears and by means of his illusions.

85:0.2 In the evolution of the human species, worship in its primitive manifestations appears long before the mind of man is capable of formulating the more complex concepts of life now and in the hereafter which deserve to be called religion. Early religion was wholly intellectual in nature and was entirely predicated on associational circumstances. The objects of worship were altogether suggestive; they consisted of the things of nature which were close at hand, or which loomed large in the commonplace experience of the simple-minded primitive Urantians.

I: INTRODUCTION (Hopkins 1)

85:0.3 When religion once evolved beyond nature worship, it acquired roots of spirit origin but was nevertheless

[contd] Every religion is a product of human evolution and has been conditioned by social environment (H 1).

always conditioned by the social environment.

As nature worship developed, man's concepts envisioned a division of labor in the supermortal world; there were nature spirits for lakes, trees, waterfalls, rain, and hundreds of other ordinary terrestrial phenomena.

II: THE WORSHIP OF STONES, HILLS, TREES, AND PLANTS (Hopkins 13)

[contd] Man has worshipped everything on earth, including himself, stones, hills, flowers, trees, streams, wells, ocean, and animals.

He has worshipped everything he could think of beneath the earth, metals, caves, serpents, and under-world ghosts. Finally, he has worshipped everything between earth and heaven and everything in the heavens above, mist, wind, cloud, rainbow, stars, moon, sun, the sky itself, though only in part has he worshipped the spirits of all these objects.

Yet with all this bewildering jumble to his discredit, man to his credit has never really worshipped anything save what he imagined behind these phenomena, the things sought and feared, power (H 13).

XXII: THE SPIRIT-ENVIRONMENT (Sumner & Keller 771)

§201. Ghost-Fear. (Sumner & Keller 771)

[I]nexplicable or unforeseeable calamities are still generalized as “acts of God” or “acts of Providence.” What men can understand and provide against they do not so designate (S&K 771).

85:0.4 At one time or another

mortal man has worshiped everything on the face of the earth, including himself.

He has also worshiped about everything imaginable in the sky and beneath the surface of the earth.

Primitive man feared all manifestations of power;

he worshiped every natural phenomenon he could not comprehend. The observation of powerful natural forces, such as storms, floods, earthquakes, landslides, volcanoes, fire, heat, and cold, greatly impressed the expanding mind of man.

The inexplicable things of life are still termed “acts of God” and “mysterious dispensations of Providence.”²

1. WORSHIP OF STONES AND HILLS

II: THE WORSHIP OF STONES, HILLS, TREES, AND PLANTS (Hopkins 13)

[See footnote for Hopkins's contrasting view.]

At the present day the inhabitants of Kateri in South India worship a stone, which if neglected will turn into a wild ox,

and in Northern India not only the wild tribes but recognized castes of civilized society worship stones which they believe to be alive and possessed of volition (H 14).

Among the Semites, the Canaanites especially, and, among the Aryans, the Kelts worshipped and anointed stones. Similarly, Jacob after using a stone as a pillow anointed it

and Rachel concealed stones in the tent, probably "witness stones" (Gen. 28:11-22; 31:34) (H 14-15).

If one ask a Yankee farmer why his fields every year have a fresh crop of stones (they do indeed annually come to the surface), he will say that they climb up from below and he almost believes that they work up of their own volition (H 14).

85:1.1 The first object to be worshiped by evolving man was a stone.³

Today the Kateri people of southern India still worship a stone,

as do numerous tribes in northern India.

Jacob slept on a stone because he venerated it; he even anointed it.

Rachel concealed a number of sacred stones in her tent.

85:1.2 Stones first impressed early man as being out of the ordinary because of

the manner in which they would so suddenly appear on the surface of a cultivated field or pasture.

Men failed to take into account either erosion or the results of the overturning of soil.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

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[Stones that look like deformed animals are also holy (Sumner & Keller 988).]

Stones also greatly impressed early peoples because of their frequent resemblance to animals.

The attention of civilized man is arrested by

A stone may be half human and yet divine enough to excite religious awe and veneration. Of this sort are first the stones like those of the Profile Rock in the White Mountains.

numerous stone formations in the mountains

No Indian could see this apparent face of rock without imagining it the face of a more than human yet manlike being (H 17).

which so much resemble the faces of animals and even men.

But the most profound influence was exerted by

Different in origin are the betyls or heavenly stones, whose divinity derived from their origin.

meteoric stones

which primitive humans beheld hurtling through the atmosphere in flaming grandeur.

[See 88:1.1.]

The shooting star was awesome to early man, and he easily believed that such blazing streaks marked the passage of a spirit on its way to earth.

No wonder men were led to worship such phenomena,

A blazing stone striking the earth would always inspire fear and subsequent religious regard or worship, as in the case of many known betyls (probably the Kaaba stone at Mecca is of this sort) (H 15).

especially when they subsequently discovered the meteors.

And this led to greater reverence for all other stones.

At this hour is worshipped in Bengal a stone which fell in 1880; it is at present “the miraculous god” (H 16).

[See H 14.]

[See S&K IV 456.]

A group of five stones in India

(thirty in Greece) is sometimes found as a religious unit similar to the stone circles of Europe

and to the groups of stones set by the Amerinds, though not always numbered or placed precisely in a circle (H 16).

The ceremony of throwing a stone among the Romans involved the invocation of Jupiter and it has thence been supposed that Jupiter himself was originally a stone, as for other reasons scholars have interpreted Jupiter as an oak (H 17).

Here may be mentioned the common practice in India of taking up a stone as a witness.

If one wishes to hale an offender to court one seizes a stone and calls it an officer.

In Bengal many worship a meteor which fell to earth in A.D. 1880.

85:1.3 All ancient clans and tribes had their sacred stones,

and most modern peoples manifest a degree of veneration for certain types of stones—their jewels.

A group of five stones was revered in India;

in Greece it was a cluster of thirty;

among the red men it was usually a circle of stones.

The Romans always threw a stone into the air when invoking Jupiter.

In India even to this day a stone can be used as a witness.

In some regions a stone may be employed as a talisman of the law, and by its prestige an offender can be haled into court.

[contd from four rows up] But nothing is more fallacious than to identify a deity with an object of ceremony (H 17).

The stone mounted in the Hindu marriage ceremony was originally a millstone and seems to be merely a symbol of constancy and endurance, though modern practice identifies the stone with the wife of Shiva or with the divine protector of the field and family (H 17).

A millstone is magically efficacious not because of the stone but because of the hole in it.

In the Rig-Veda we read that a god cured a girl by drawing her through the hole in the middle of his chariot-wheel (H 18).

Noses and ears were not perforated at first to carry rings, but the rings were carried to keep open the hole.

Coins with a hole in them are prophylactic like jewels (H 18).

The African fetish-stone also in its original form is not a material thing containing a spirit but an animate being and is treated as such, being cajoled or beaten to be helpful ... (H 18-19).

But simple mortals do not always

identify Deity with an object of reverent ceremony.

Such fetishes are many times mere symbols of the real object of worship.

85:1.4 The ancients had a peculiar regard for holes in stones.

Such porous rocks were supposed to be unusually efficacious

in curing diseases.

Ears were not perforated to carry stones, but the stones were put in to keep the ear holes open.

Even in modern times superstitious persons make holes in coins.

In Africa the natives make much ado over their fetish stones.

In fact, among all backward tribes and peoples stones are still held in superstitious veneration. Stone worship is even now widespread over the world.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

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[Compare: [T]ombstones become sacred through association with the dead, though tombs were really worshipped, as in the case of Norwegian cairns. Carved images, idols, are later than natural idols but are worshipped as readily ... (H 20-21).]

The tombstone is a surviving symbol of images and idols which were carved in stone in connection with beliefs in ghosts and the spirits of departed fellow beings.

The lone stone to the villager is a guardian god. And what the rock is to the villager the hill is to the larger community (H 19).

85:1.5 Hill worship

followed stone worship, and the first hills to be venerated were large stone formations.

It presently became the custom to believe that

Hills as abodes of heavenly gods are of course doubly holy

the gods inhabited the mountains, so that high elevations of land were worshiped for this additional reason.

and when, as in the case of the Himalayas, they merge with the sky, they are regarded not as parts of earth but of heaven (H 19).

As time passed, certain mountains were associated with certain gods and therefore became holy.

[The savage] reveres rather the hills and chasms (leading to the underworld)

The ignorant and superstitious aborigines believed that caves led to the underworld,

as homes of ghosts and spirits (H 20).

with its evil spirits and demons,

in contrast with the mountains, which were identified with the later evolving concepts of good spirits and deities.

2. WORSHIP OF PLANTS AND TREES

Plants or grains yielding an **intoxicant** have generally been deified, as in India, Persia, and Mexico (H 27).

To drink the deified **liquor** is to **become divine**; one absorbs divinity much in the same way as a totem-worshiper renews power (H 28).

XXIX: FETISHISM: TOTEMISM
(**Sumner & Keller** 1017)

§256.* **The Animal-Fetish.** (Sumner & Keller 1026)

To the savage, things which produce extraordinary effects must have a spirit in them. **Are not certain alcoholic drinks still called "spirits"?** (S&K 1027)

II: THE WORSHIP OF STONES, HILLS, TREES, AND PLANTS (**Hopkins** 13)

To our religious sense the idea of resurrection is associated with St. Paul's appeal to the analogous resurrection of **grain**. All around the Mediterranean and far north in Central Europe this resurrection of plant life had been made the centre of religious ritual long before **Paul's** day (H 30).

85:2.1 Plants were first feared and then worshiped because of the **intoxicating liquors** which were derived therefrom.

Primitive man believed that intoxication **rendered one divine**.

There was supposed to be something unusual and sacred about such an experience.

Even in modern times **alcohol is known as "spirits."**

85:2.2 Early man looked upon sprouting grain with dread and superstitious awe.

The Apostle **Paul** was not the first to draw profound spiritual lessons from, and predicate religious beliefs on, the sprouting **grain**.

The cult of trees is one of the oldest, as it is one of the most widely extended forms of worship (H 22).

[*Compare:* In India, tree-marriages are common. The wife who otherwise would get the evil result of a third marriage on the part of her husband thus casts the evil on the tree substitute, she herself becoming the fourth wife (H 23).]

Thus, in the Hindu epic, a woman who wants children embraces a tree (H 23).

Probably the veneration of many trees and plants arises from their medicinal (magical) power, as is the case with the *tulsi* plant sacred to Vishnu (H 24).

Whether wood-spirits are kind or not depends on circumstances.

The Finns regard them as gentle; they call the forest-spirit “gentle god of the wood” and give him the “honey goddess” as wife.

The Amerinds’ spirit was ferocious like themselves, a cruel demon, and the Russian forest deity was brutal and misleading, though this type appears also in Sweden and Japan, while in Switzerland the wood-spirits are tricky rather than cruel, stealing milk and children, yet recovering for man the cow he has lost (H 25).

85:2.3 The cults of tree worship are among the oldest religious groups.

All early marriages were held under the trees,

and when women desired children, they would sometimes be found out in the forest affectionately embracing a sturdy oak.

Many plants and trees were venerated because of their real or fancied medicinal powers.

The savage believed that all chemical effects were due to the direct activity of supernatural forces.

85:2.4 Ideas about tree spirits varied greatly among different tribes and races.

Some trees were indwelt by kindly spirits; others harbored the deceptive and cruel.

The Finns believed that most trees were occupied by kind spirits.

The Swiss long mistrusted the trees, believing they contained tricky spirits.

The inhabitants of India and eastern Russia regard the tree spirits as being cruel.

The Patagonian, who has no notion of a spirit of vegetation, worships the tree alone.

The Patagonians still worship trees,

The more advanced Mexican recognizes the same spirit which was worshipped by the Egyptians and Semites, the vegetation-spirit, as a great power of nature, probably the Mother (H 25-26).

as did the early Semites.

[*And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves” (Judg. 3:7).]

Long after the Hebrews ceased tree worship,

they continued to venerate their various deities in the groves.

The cult of trees, however, is not universal. China is without it even in the attenuated form of cultivating deities living beside trees. It has only the borrowed myth of the tree of life (H 26).

Except in China, there once existed a universal cult of the tree of life.

The “talking (oracular) tree” of Grecian and Persian myth is reflected in the tree of soothsayers (Judges 9:37; see the revised version); we may compare the divining rod, *virgula divina* (H 26).

85:2.5 The belief that water or precious metals beneath the earth’s surface can be detected by a wooden divining rod is a relic of the ancient tree cults.

Survivals of the religious importance of trees are mainly confined in Europe to petty or pretty superstitions in regard to the use of amulets, the **May-tree**, etc. **Rapping on wood** three times implies taking protection in the Cross with invocation of the Trinity. The **Christmas tree** first symbolized the second blossoming of trees in mild winters between the days of St. Martin (our Indian summer) and St. Andrew, November 11 to 30 (H 28-29).

Many of the beliefs of this early stage linger late into modern times (H 23).

The **Maypole**, the **Christmas tree**, and the superstitious practice of **rapping on wood** perpetuate certain of the ancient customs of tree worship and the later-day tree cults.

85:2.6 Many of these earliest forms of nature veneration became blended with the later evolving techniques of worship,

but the earliest mind-adjutant-activated types of worship were functioning long before the newly awakening religious nature of mankind became fully responsive to the stimulus of spiritual influences.

3. THE WORSHIP OF ANIMALS

III: **THE WORSHIP OF ANIMALS**
(Hopkins 32)

[contd] Between man and beast there is, to a savage, only a linguistic difference; in other respects the beast is man's "younger brother," as the Hindu calls him, ... because he recognizes in the animal a being **akin to himself**, having the same feelings, desires, and needs, but gifted with other speech and other occult powers ... (H 32).

85:3.1 Primitive man had a peculiar and **fellow feeling** for the higher animals.

His ancestors had lived with them

The first nature-fakir too is the savage, who publishes accounts of animal intelligence, of beasts consorting with men, of animals as progenitors and creators, of sapient serpents, and of frog-maidens **marrying humans.**

The **soul of a man** when he is alive and when he is dead is liable to pass into the **body of an animal,** and a god in the same way may inhabit a beast (H 32).

Animals are worshipped as great living powers and as ghosts, just as men are worshipped, while in addition there is something more mysterious in an animal, **powers of strength and cunning** to which men cannot attain (H 32).

[See H 32-33.]

Of beast and bird form are the human-faced gods of beastly shape and human-shaped gods of beastly face,

centaurs, Assyrian lions, the pantheon of Egypt, Babylonian demons of similar character, the Holy Turtle and Grandfather Snake of the Amerinds, etc. (H 34-35).

and even **mated with them.**

In southern Asia it was early believed that

the **souls of men** came back to earth in **animal form.**

This belief was a survival of the still earlier practice of worshipping animals.

85:3.2 Early men revered the animals for their **power and their cunning.**

They thought the keen scent and the farseeing eyes of certain creatures betokened spirit guidance.

The animals have all been worshiped by one race or another at one time or another.

Among such objects of worship were

creatures that were regarded as half human and half animal,

such as **centaurs** and mermaids.

The Hebrews worshipped serpents down to the days of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:4) (H 37).

The Hindu today gives his house-snake its daily meal of milk, believing it may be his ancestor in new form (H 37).

Chinese dragon-worship is a survival of serpent-worship.

The wisdom of the snake makes it the protecting genius of the physician in Greece and the pre-Apollo oracle, as it is a prophetic genius elsewhere (H 37).

There is an extravagance in India called "snake-love," which has been given a mystic religious interpretation still more extravagant. But the matter is perfectly simple.

A snake-charmer must endure the bite of a poisonous snake. He does not extract the poison but accustoms himself to it by taking larger doses from time to time till the bite ceases to affect him.

He even learns to depend on his daily "dope" like an opium or hashish victim and his love for the poison explains "snake-love" (H 38).

85:3.3 The Hebrews worshiped serpents down to the days of King Hezekiah,

and the Hindus still maintain friendly relations with their house snakes.

The Chinese worship of the dragon is a survival of the snake cults.

The wisdom of the serpent was a symbol of Greek medicine

and is still employed as an emblem by modern physicians.

The art of snake charming has been handed down from the days of the female shamans of

the *snake love cult*,

who, as the result of daily snake bites, became immune,

in fact, became genuine venom addicts and could not get along without this poison.

Insects and vermin [in India] derive at times a respect rather than worship

from being imagined as reëmbodied souls of human beings. But in Buddhistic and Jain circles, what prevents a man from killing vermin is only his **interpretation of the rule “do as you would be done by,”** not the fear of killing his relatives (H 39).

There is another kind of symbolism which is a real factor in religion. As in Arabia clouds are “camels,” so in India they are the “red cows” of dawn; the sun is a red horse, also an eagle, the “swift bird” of the sky, as the Zulus call the lightning, which in India is a snake; while in India and America **wind** is a bird or **caused by a bird’s wings** (H 41).

[?]

Eclipse to the ancient Germans **was a wolf devouring sun and moon;**

in India, the original “seizer” (eclipse-demon) has today become the evil soul of a dead man whose chariot is drawn by eight steeds.... In all these cases a fancied resemblance associates god and symbol (H 41-42).

Almost every god in India has an animal representative which typifies him more or less clearly.... So when Brahman rides a swan it is unnecessary to imagine that Brahman was originally a bird-totem, or that, because **Vishnu has a horse’s head,** he was at first a horse, rather than that his horse-form reflects his sun-horse character ... (H 42).

85:3.4 The worship of **insects** and other animals

was promoted by a later **misinterpretation of the golden rule—doing to others** (every form of life) **as you would be done by.**

The ancients once **believed** that all **winds** were **produced by the wings of birds**

and therefore both feared and worshiped all winged creatures.

The early Nordics thought that eclipses were **caused** by a **wolf that devoured a portion of the sun or moon.**

The Hindus often show **Vishnu with a horse’s head.**

There was a time when symbolism ran mad and much nonsense was said in defense thereof. Now the tide has turned and scholars hesitate to see symbolism anywhere. Every symbol is the relic of a lost cult or god. But really there is such a thing as religious symbolism and we do not have to wait for the sick fancy of civilization to find it (H 44-45).

The lamb was the sacrificial animal, but as applied to Christ it merely symbolized him as the sacrifice.

So the dove of peace became a mere symbol of peace and love, though originally a goddess of maternity (H 45).

In religion, symbolism is a help and a hindrance.

It provides a sign for an idea and is useful in recalling the idea. But when, instead of recalling, it replaces the idea, it becomes a menace (H 45).

IV: THE WORSHIP OF ELEMENTS AND HEAVENLY PHENOMENA (Hopkins 47)

Water is worshipped in springs and streams by the savages of Africa

Many times an animal symbol stands for a forgotten god or a vanished cult.

Early in evolutionary religion the lamb became the typical sacrificial animal

and the dove the symbol of peace and love.

85:3.5 In religion, symbolism may be either good or bad

just to the extent that the symbol does or does not displace the original worshipful idea.

And symbolism must not be confused with direct idolatry wherein the material object is directly and actually worshiped.

4. WORSHIP OF THE ELEMENTS

85:4.1 Mankind has worshiped earth, air, water, and fire.

The primitive races venerated springs and worshiped rivers.

and a river-cult is known to the Mongolians (H 47).

Baptism was practiced in Babylon.

Religious use of water is prominent in the cult of the Amerinds. The Creeks bathed annually, after purging and fasting, to “wash out the sins of the year” (H 47).

Now, ... advanced savage types, like the Mongolians, imagine that the stream has a spirit in it, and this interpretation is of course common in the modern fancy of maids in springs, nymphs, mermaids, and the sea-god ... (H 48).

[See H 90.]

If a man is drowning, to help him would be to affront the river; wise men let him drown to avoid a similar fate. This attitude is found both in cases where the river is an intelligent being and where there is a river-spirit (H 49).

[See five rows down.]

Among the Hill Tribes of India are found the personification and worship of Rainbow, who to Homer is a divine messenger but to classical Hindu mythology is Indra’s bow (it is a god’s bow to the Polynesians also) or a swing (H 51).

Even now in Mongolia there flourishes an influential river cult.

Baptism became a religious ceremonial in Babylon,

and the Greeks practiced the annual ritual bath.

It was easy for the ancients to imagine that the spirits dwelt in the bubbling springs,

gushing fountains, flowing rivers, and raging torrents.

Moving waters vividly impressed these simple minds with beliefs of spirit animation and supernatural power.

Sometimes a drowning man would be refused succor for fear of offending some river god.

85:4.2 Many things and numerous events have functioned as religious stimuli to different peoples in different ages.

A rainbow is yet worshiped by many of the hill tribes of India.

But in modern **India** and in **Africa** (Dahomey), the rainbow is a **celestial snake**, which has led to the suggestion that treasure found at the foot of the rainbow may be a serpent's hoard (H 51).

[[The Lord said:] **I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth** (Gen. 9:13).]

VIII: **RELIGIOUS STIMULI** (Hopkins 88)

["It was natural enough that the winds should be divided into demons **beneficent** and **maleficent**, as it depends where you live whether a wind from a particular quarter will do you good or ill" (Sumner & Keller IV 424).]

[T]he reason why **East-Wind** was a god in **South America**

and is today a **devil in India**

is that this wind regularly **brought long-desired rain** to the American coast and as regularly in **Central India** **brings a parching dust**, which shows demoniac maliciousness (H 88).

XXVII: **DAIMONISM** (Sumner & Keller 951)

§241.* **Types of Daimon.** (Sumner & Keller 953)

The **mediæval** Arabs associate a definite class of daimons with **sand-whirls** and apply the same term indifferently to them and to the *jinn* that accompany or cause them (S&K 957).

In both **India** and **Africa** the rainbow is thought to be a gigantic **celestial snake**;

Hebrews and Christians regard it as "the **bow** of promise."

Likewise, influences regarded as **beneficent** in one part of the world may be looked upon as **malignant** in other regions.

The east wind is a god in **South America**, for it **brings rain**;

in India it is a **devil**

because it **brings dust** and causes drought.

The **ancient** Bedouins believed that a nature spirit produced the **sand whirls**,

and even in the times of Moses belief in nature spirits was strong enough to insure their perpetuation in Hebrew theology as

There is no uniform [biblical] conception of angels, whose number is legion: some are **angels** over natural phenomena, as **winds, fire, and waters**; they form God's court, his ministers and reporters of what goes on on earth (S&K IV 425).

IV: THE WORSHIP OF ELEMENTS AND HEAVENLY PHENOMENA
(Hopkins 47)

We have already seen how savages treat **rain** and **hail**, which have been discussed too logically as forms of water (H 52).

Water and air (wind) go together in the worship of **storm-winds** (H 49).

Thunder is always taken as the voice of a god who is the storm ("Who doubteth Indra when he hears him thunder?") (H 49).

[S]un and **fire** are recognized as one even by savages, while **lightning** soon becomes, as in ancient India, a third in this early triad (H 49).

Magic has much to do with fire, but like water, fire is purificatory and remains in religion as well as in magic (H 50).

angels of fire, water, and air.

85:4.3 Clouds, **rain**, and **hail** have all been feared and worshiped by numerous primitive tribes and by many of the early nature cults.

Windstorms with thunder and lightning overawed early man.

He was so impressed with these elemental disturbances that

thunder was regarded as the voice of an angry god.

The worship of **fire** and the fear of **lightning** were linked together

and were widespread among many early groups.

85:4.4 **Fire was mixed up with magic** in the minds of primitive fear-ridden mortals.

XVI: MAN'S ORIGIN AND PAST
(Barnes 525)

§427. *The relation between magic and primitive religion.* (Barnes 547)

The magic is believed: why? Often enough it must fail. But it is a curious characteristic of the human mind that **one positive, or supposedly positive fact**, is remembered

as against **a score of negative disappointments** (B 548).

IV: THE WORSHIP OF ELEMENTS AND HEAVENLY PHENOMENA
(Hopkins 47)

Fire-worship, which reached its highest point in ancient Persia ... (H 49).

Fire is an excellent example of a phenomenon worshipped *per se* without implication of a spirit in it. Even the civilized Vedic Aryans regard the actual leaping fire as a living thing swallowing oblations, while acting also as messenger to the heavenly gods (H 50).

[See 95:6.4 and 141:6.1.]

In at least three ancient communities were instituted **vestal virgins** whose primary care was to tend the fire. Formal vestals were known to Romans, Peruvians, and Kelts; but also among the Damaras, a tribe so low as to be unable to count above three, the chief's daughters are set to **watch the sacred fire**, to which, as to rain, they offer sacrifice (H 50).

A devotee of magic will vividly remember **one positive chance result** in the practice of his magic formulas,

while he nonchalantly forgets **a score of negative results**, out-and-out failures.

Fire reverence reached its height in Persia,

where it long persisted.

Some tribes worshiped fire as a deity **itself**;

others revered it as the flaming symbol of the purifying and purging spirit of their venerated deities.

Vestal virgins were charged with the duty of **watching sacred fires**,

and in the twentieth century candles still burn as a part of the ritual of many religious services.

5. WORSHIP OF THE HEAVENLY BODIES

85:5.1 The worship of rocks, hills, trees, and animals naturally developed up through fearful veneration of the elements to the deification of the sun, moon, and stars.

In **India**, the peasants generally believe that **stars are the souls of people**,

In **India** and elsewhere the **stars were regarded as the glorified souls of great men** who had departed from the life in the flesh.

though in ancient times they serve also as soul-worlds, that is, each soul receives a star as its home; but the prevailing belief even then was that stars are souls, and groups of stars are beasts (H 54).

The **“Chaldeans” and their star-cult** are not important historically till the eighth century, B.C., and in Babylon divination by the liver came before that by the stars (H 54).

The **Chaldean star cultists**

considered themselves to be the children of

When a savage begins to imagine his past history he is usually logical enough to derive his tribe from some substance or creature that by evolution or propagation eventually produced the thinker and speculator. Sometimes he speculates even on the origin of the world and gets far enough to imagine a sky and earth pair, later refined into **Sky Father and Earth Mother**, but such beings in so far as they do not affect him are negligible (H 53).

the **sky father and the earth mother**.

Moon-worship is a trait of African religion and is well known in the oldest religious literature of Egypt, Babylon, and India. In some cases it is probably older than sun-worship

for it belongs more to the hunting stage than to the agricultural, though the moon's influence on plant-life is also recognized (H 55).

V: THE WORSHIP OF THE SUN (Hopkins 58)

In India, on the other hand, the sun was worshipped from the earliest period under one form or another

and as late as the tenth century of our era there were six flourishing sects of sun-worshippers, though the native cult had been developed partly under Persian influence.

In Persia itself, the cult of the sun eventually gave rise to that mystic religion known as Mithraism, which at one time threatened the success of Christianity (H 58-59).

The sun is distinctly a royal god and besides his power as fertilizer and sustainer he receives added glory as patron or ancestor of the king. So in Egypt the king is identified with Ra, in Babylon the king represents Shamash, and in Rome the emperor becomes an incorporation of *Sol invictus*.

85:5.2 Moon worship preceded sun worship.

Veneration of the moon was at its height during the hunting era,

while sun worship became the chief religious ceremony of the subsequent agricultural ages.

Solar worship first took extensive root in India,

and there it persisted the longest.

In Persia sun veneration gave rise to the later Mithraic cult.

Among many peoples the sun was regarded as the ancestor of their kings.

In the Chaldean system the sun occupied the central position among the seven circles of the universe; the other planets revolved about it; it was the King Sun, the heart of the world, the ruler of elements and seasons, the regulator of the stars, the chief divinity in nature, hence intelligent, not as a spirit in the sun but as being itself the *mens mundi*.

Philosophy finally separated the sun from reason and Christianity in the fourth century turned the day of the new sun into the birthday of Christ, while Sunday, as first day, still represents the importance given to the sun in the astrological week (H 60).

When this sun-god [in the Mahābhārata] desires to have human progeny he mystically touches the pure daughter of royal race chosen for this honor and she conceives in purity unblemished, so that she still remains a virgin, and bears a son.

But the babe is put into a box and floats away upon the river till in good time he is rescued by a deserving man

and grows up a demi-god yet earthly hero (H 64-65).

The Chaldeans put the sun in the center of “the seven circles of the universe.”

Later civilizations honored the sun by giving its name to the first day of the week.

85:5.3 The sun god was supposed to be the mystic father of the virgin-born sons

of destiny who ever and anon were thought to be bestowed as saviors upon favored races.

These supernatural infants were always put adrift upon some sacred river to be rescued in an extraordinary manner,

after which they would grow up to become miraculous personalities and the deliverers of their peoples.

6. WORSHIP OF MAN

VI: THE WORSHIP OF MAN (Hopkins 67)

[A savage] makes no very clear categories of beast, man, and god and in consequence his worship of one is that of the others; it is not worship in the sense of implied recognition of unhuman divinity, but rather the profound respect suitable in the presence of a spiritual power vastly superior to that of the worshipper, yet equally appropriate to beast, man, and god (H 67).

In some savage tribes, twins, extraordinary and mysterious, are regarded as unlucky, in some as lucky, and they are either exposed to die or receive unusual honor in consequence, an observance approaching worship, but not identical.

But albinos and poets and crazy people, being still more remarkable, are apt to be revered as quite unhuman, quasi divine beings, spiritually as well as physically superhuman.

85:6.1 Having worshiped everything else on the face of the earth and in the heavens above, man has not hesitated to honor himself with such adoration.

The simple-minded savage makes no clear distinction between beasts, men, and gods.

85:6.2 Early man regarded all unusual persons as superhuman, and he so feared such beings as to hold them in reverential awe; to some degree he literally worshiped them.

Even having twins was regarded as being either very lucky or very unlucky.

Lunatics, epileptics, and the feeble-minded were often worshiped by their normal-minded fellows,

who believed that such abnormal beings were indwelt by the gods.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

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Especially **priests**, being in touch with the spiritual world, and **kings**, having super-human power, are objects of a respectful regard that is not differentiated from that paid to gods; they are really worshipped (H 67-68).

Priests, kings, and prophets were worshiped;

the holy men of old were looked upon as inspired by the deities.

85:6.3 Tribal chiefs died and were *deified*. Later, distinguished souls passed on and were *sainted*.

[The early gods were simply **glorified departed humans** (87:3.1).]

Unaided evolution never originated gods higher than the **glorified, exalted,** and evolved spirits of **deceased humans.**

In early evolution religion creates its own gods. **In the course of revelation the Gods formulate religion.**

[In evolutionary religion, the gods are conceived to exist **in the likeness of man's image;**

Evolutionary religion creates its gods **in the image and likeness of mortal man;**

in revelatory religion, men are taught that they are God's sons—even fashioned in the finite image of divinity ... (92:5.1).]

revelatory religion seeks to evolve and transform mortal man into the image and likeness of God.

XXVII: DAIMONISM (Sumner & Keller 931)

§241.* **Types of Daimon.** (Sumner & Keller 953)

[contd] Not all daimons are ghost-derived, at least in the opinions of their worshippers.... [In the New Hebrides] are distinguished spirits of two kinds: those of the deceased and those of unknown origin, and in West Africa there appear nature-gods which are the animating principles or indwelling spirits of natural features and objects and whose cult exists side by side with that of the ghost-gods,

so that “it is often difficult to decide where the one worship begins and the other ends” (S&K 953-54).

[Thor, the victorious commander of the armies of the north in the final battle of the Somme, became the hero of the northern white tribes and later on was revered as a god by some of them (80:5.4).]

85:6.4 The ghost gods, who are of supposed human origin, should be distinguished from the nature gods,

for nature worship did evolve a pantheon—nature spirits elevated to the position of gods.

The nature cults continued to develop along with the later appearing ghost cults, and each exerted an influence upon the other.

Many religious systems embraced a dual concept of deity, nature gods and ghost gods;

in some theologies these concepts are confusingly intertwined,

as is illustrated by Thor, a ghost hero who was also master of the lightning.

VI: THE WORSHIP OF MAN (Hopkins 67)

[contd from 85:6.2] The Roman emperor, called divine, was only the successor of a series of kings and priests who were gods to their Eastern subjects, as after his day lived the king-gods of Mexico and Peru and even today the masses of India recognize the emperor of India as a divinity (H 68).

In Egypt the king was identified with the sun-god or was the son of the sun. [Etc.] (H 68)

85:6.5 But the worship of man by man reached its height when

temporal rulers commanded such veneration from their subjects

and, in substantiation of such demands, claimed to

have descended from deity.

7. THE ADJUTANTS OF WORSHIP AND WISDOM

85:7.1 Nature worship may seem to have arisen naturally and spontaneously in the minds of primitive men and women, and so it did; but there was operating all this time in these same primitive minds the sixth adjutant spirit, which had been bestowed upon these peoples as a directing influence of this phase of human evolution. And this spirit was constantly stimulating the worship urge of the human species, no matter how primitive its first manifestations might be. The spirit of worship gave definite origin to the human impulse to worship, notwithstanding that animal fear motivated the expression of worshipfulness, and that its early practice became centered upon objects of nature.

85:7.2 You must remember that feeling, not thinking, was the guiding and controlling influence in all evolutionary development.

To the primitive mind there is little difference between

All extraordinary creatures are mysterious, and what is mysterious is to be feared, and what is feared is either shunned or honored, worshipped (H 67).

fearing, shunning, honoring, and worshipping.

85:7.3 When the worship urge is admonished and directed by wisdom—meditative and experiential thinking—it then begins to develop into the phenomenon of real religion.

[*Compare:* It is only when imagination and logic have worked for ages in conjunction with an ever developing moral sense that man arrives at the supreme imagination of a moral creator and governor of the universe usurping the functions of previous deities (H 92).]

When the seventh adjutant spirit, the spirit of wisdom, achieves effective ministration, then in worship man begins to turn away from nature and natural objects to the God of nature and to the eternal Creator of all things natural.

85:7.4 [Presented by a Brilliant Evening Star of Nebadon.]

1. This situation is not paralleled in the **animal** world; it is with the entrance of the human mind, with its outfit of **illusions**—about ghosts, magic, the evil eye, the supernatural in general—into the field that “the errorless course of nature” is replaced by one in which errors multiply on errors (Sumner & Keller 766-67).

2. If the reader can be convinced that health and disease are not matters of chance; that they are regulated by the universal laws of sowing and reaping; that health once lost is ordinarily regained **only** by faithful cultivation; that disease is due neither to the anger of the gods nor to a **mysterious dispensation of Providence**; that sickness is a consequence, directly or indirectly, of a violation of Nature’s laws: if these fundamental principles of health and disease are made plainer to the reader, and if the pathway to health can be more clearly opened up, then this book will have accomplished its mission and fulfilled the design of its author (William S. Sadler, M.D., *The Science of Living, or The Art of Keeping Well* [1910], p. viii).

Modern medical research concerning the cause of disease has resulted in the production of such a vast array of scientific evidence respecting the specific character of various diseases, as almost to destroy the old superstition which taught that human affliction resulted from the distemper of the gods, the juxtaposition of the stars, the phases of the moon, or some **“mysterious dispensation of Providence”** (William S. Sadler, M.D., *The Essentials of Healthful Living* [1925], p. 31-32).

3. Categories, such as those of Saussaye, who divides religious objects of worship into heavenly and earthly, or those of Max Müller, whose divisions are objects “seizable, half-seizable, and non-seizable,” as illustrated by a stone, a hill, and a star, are not useful and may be worse than useless in suggesting a false chronological series, for some of the lowest savages worship stars and half-civilized men today worship stones. There is no ascending scale followed by all men. But for convenience we shall have to examine these objects in order and we may as well begin with the worship of **stones** and hills, things apparently most lifeless (H 13).