

GOD AND THE WORLD

of Aschera (or Keturah), the fertile mother-earth, and Elion (Moloch or Sethos), the stern heavenly father. In the Zend religion of the ancient Persians, founded by Zoroaster two thousand years before Christ, there is a perpetual struggle between Ormuzd, the good god of light, and Ahriman, the wicked god of darkness.

In Christian mythology the Devil is scarcely less conspicuous as the adversary of the good deity, the tempter and seducer, the prince of hell, and lord of darkness. A personal devil was still an important element in the belief of most Christians at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Towards the middle of the century he was gradually eliminated by being progressively explained away, or he was restricted to the subordinate *rôle* he plays as Mephistopheles in Goethe's great drama. To-day the majority of educated people look upon "belief in a personal devil" as a mediæval superstition, while "belief in God" (that is, the personal, good, and loving God) is retained as an indispensable element of religion. Yet the one belief is just as much (or as little) justified as the other. In any case, the much-lamented "imperfection of our earthly life," the "struggle for existence," and all that pertains to it, are explained much more simply and naturally by this struggle of a good and an evil god than by any other form of theism.

The dogma of the unity of God may in some respects be regarded as the simplest and most natural type of theism; it is popularly supposed to be the most widely accepted element of religion, and to predominate in the ecclesiastical systems of civilized countries. In reality, that is not the case, because this alleged "monotheism" usually turns out on closer inquiry to be one of the other forms of theism we have