

CHAPTER II.

RELIGION AND MYTHOLOGY.

AT the very outset of the profound enquiry on which we are now about to embark, we are met by a difficulty of considerable magnitude. In the opinion of most modern mythologists mythology is the result of "a disease of language." We are assured by many eminent men that the origin of religion is to be sought, not in savage ideas about ghosts and spirits, the Dead Man and his body or his surviving double, but in primitive misconceptions of the meaning of words which had reference to the appearance of the Sun and the Clouds, the Wind and the Rain, the Dawn and the Dusk, the various phenomena of meteorology in general. If this be so, then our attempt to derive the evolution of gods from the crude ideas of early men about their dead is clearly incorrect ; the analogy of Christianity which we have already alleged is a mere will o' the wisp ; and the historical Jesus himself may prove in the last resort to be an alias of the sun-god or an embodiment of the vine-spirit.

I do not believe these suggestions are correct. It seems to me that the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, instead of being an element in primitive religion, is really a late and derivative type of adoration ; and that mythology is mistaken in the claims it makes for its own importance in the genesis of the idea of a God or gods. In order, however, to clear the ground for a fair start in this direction, we ought, I think, to begin by enquiring into the relative positions of mythology and religion. I shall there-