

At last the world seems sick of centenaries. The Mayor of Litchfield meets with no response when he sends out proposals for a celebration of the Centenary of Johnson. It may be doubted whether Johnson himself would have responded to a proposal for a centenary. He would perhaps have asked, in his rough way, why he should be expected to feel more enthusiasm about a man in the hundredth year after his death than in the ninety-ninth or in the hundred-and-first? However, we might all celebrate Johnson's Centenary well by reading over again Boswell's life of him and his own "Lives of the Poets," and by "attending" once more to "the Story of Rasselas Prince of Abyssinia." The *Rambler*, though there are good things in it, is laid in its long sleep. Few can fail to improve in sense and self-knowledge by intercourse with this great moral nature. With searching insight into character, ruthlessness in tearing the mask from hypocrisy, and a somewhat obdurate contempt for fanciful woes, Johnson combined genuine sympathy with the weaknesses as well as with the real sorrows of humanity. His sad and solemn view of life presents the most marked contrast to the monkeyish levity of Voltaire. In religious philosophy, his orthodoxy may seem narrow and rigid, but like Butler, with whom he has not a little in common, he was asserting the claims of religion to serious attention in an age of careless and sensual scepticism—scepticism not of the scientific inquirer, but of the scoffer and the libertine—when shallow minds, fancying that Christianity was utterly exploded, were punishing it with insult and derision "for having so interfered with the pleasures of the world." Certainly he had experienced religious doubt, and perhaps he had rather fled from it to faith, as Pascal did, than vanquished it. His superstition has been grossly over-painted by the antithetical rhetoric of Macaulay. His Toryism was redeemed by an attachment to legal liberty, and it may be partly forgiven when we remember that liberalism presented itself to him in the person of Wilkes, and popular agitation in the form of the Gordon riots. As a talker, in which character he has happily been most perfectly preserved to us; he is the giant of an extinct race; for conversation is no longer an art, and nobody now prepares himself even "to meet Thurlow." His style has a worse reputation than it deserves; he uses too many Latin words; but his sentences are seldom involved; his meaning is never doubtful, and he is always nervous and strong. As a critic he is not deep, nor was it deep poetry, for the most part, that he was called upon to criticize. But he is always sensible, and his object is always the elucidation and appreciation of his author, not self-display. It is sometimes refreshing to turn to him from critics whose object is self-display, not the elucidation and appreciation of their authors, and who, together with their intellectual kinsmen, the composers of sensational but semi-mythical biography, may, perhaps, hereafter be discarded, while Johnson's criticism, being genuine, preserves its humble place.

RÉVILLE'S Hibbert Lectures on the Native Religions of Peru and Mexico, translated by Mr. Wicksteed, are a valuable addition to our means of forming an opinion as to the origin and growth of religion. Nor is the direction in which they point doubtful. The theory confidently advanced by Mr. Herbert Spencer, that all religion is traceable to a belief in ghosts, especially the ghosts of dead chieftains, and that with the belief in ghosts it declines and departs, finds in this volume no support whatever. The mythologies of Mexico and Peru were evidently like other mythologies, physical. The greatest of Gods to the Mexican, as to other primitive races, was the Sun, which was worshipped under the two-fold aspect of Huitzilopochtli, or the Sun of the fair season and Tezcatlipoca, or the Sun of the cold and sterile season. Wind, Rain, Fire, Cloud, the Fertilizing Power were also divinities. In the Peruvian Pantheon the Sun was still more supreme than in that of Mexico. The religious sentiment was first excited by the great objects of nature; but it must have been there, in however low and rudimentary a form, or the impression could not have been made. That man projected his own mind and feelings into the Sun and the other objects of his worship is of course true; but this is a widely different thing from a worship either of ghosts in general or of those of dead chiefs. Animism it appears existed in Peru, especially among the lower orders of the people, as a belief in ghosts, fairies, and sprites existed in the Dark Ages; but it occupied quite a subordinate place, nor does there seem to be a shadow of reason for believing that, in its origin, it preceded the worship of the Sun, or that the worship of the Sun was in any respect its offspring. Ancestor-worship appears to have its root not so much in dreams or in ghost-seeing as in that intense veneration for the father of the family which is characteristic of the primæval period, when, the commonwealth not having been developed, the family is all in all, and which in certain conservative races, such as the Roman, has lingered into more civilized times. The practice prevails especially among the Chinese, whose deference for paternal authority is extreme, and who regard their Emperor as their father, while they are extremely unimaginative,

or, to use the philosophic term, "positivist" people, and by no means given to seeing ghosts or apparitions of any kind. It is not with the scythe of the dream-and-ghost theory, then, that the Agnostic is likely to succeed in mowing down religion. That theory, as has been said before, is borrowed from Dr. Tylor, by whom it is applied only to the savage races. Transition from the worship of the Sun and of nature to a rational religion is curiously marked by the theory of the sceptical Inca, who observed that the motion of the Sun was too mechanical and too unresting to be voluntary, so that evidently there must be another Power beyond, by which the motion was commanded. It is long before religion and morality became one, before man learns that the true worship of his Maker is virtue; and, in the meantime, the religious sentiment is liable to frightful perversions, as is shown by the human sacrifices which were practised by the Aztecs, on a scale so hideous that we but half deplore the triumph of the Spanish conqueror, though it brought the Inquisition in its train. Sacrifices, M. Réville explains as offerings to the Deity of the viands and other things which the votary himself likes best, and he extends the explanation to human sacrifices by supposing the primæval votary to have been a cannibal, to whom human flesh seemed the choicest food. This is not the whole account of the matter; other ideas, connected with the suffering of the victim, gather round the rite, as M. Réville sees, though it is difficult to formulate precisely, with reference to gross and barbarous natures, the idea designated by us as atonement. M. Réville remarks with truth, that the close similarity of the Mexican and Peruvian religions to those of the other continents, not only in the main features but in details, such as the regulations respecting the Vestal Virgins, the hypothesis of derivation or imitation being out of the question, is a striking proof of the unity of human nature, whatever theory may be held respecting the unity or plurality of stock.

INCIDENTALLY M. Réville has offered us solutions of a twofold historical enigma. How came it to pass that the powers of the Aztecs and the Incas fell like a house of cards before the onset of a mere handful of Spanish invaders? Due allowance being made for the effect of firearms and of horses, the Spanish victory still seems miraculous, especially in the case of Pizarro, a common soldier, with a band of less than two hundred men. The Aztecs were a conquering race, and the army of the Incas had just triumphed in war. The explanation in the case of Mexico M. Réville finds in the pressure upon Montezuma's soul of a superstitious dread which prevented him from putting forth his force and crushing the invaders as soon as they had landed. The belief prevailed that Quetzalcoatl, the special deity of the conquered race of Toltecs, would some day return from the ocean and from the East to resume his ancient power; and when Montezuma's couriers announced to him the appearance in the fatal quarter of strange and terrible beings with six legs and wielding thunderbolts, the king concluded that Quetzalcoatl had returned, and descended to negotiation instead of arming himself for war. In the case of Peru the solution is found in the excessive centralization of the theocratic government, which, when Pizarro with perfidious daring had seized the Inca, there being no initiative anywhere else, collapsed at once and left nothing but confusion and helplessness. The same consequence, though in a less degree, may be said to have followed the seizure of Montezuma by Cortes. The political moral is not confined to Peru or Mexico. Such is the inherent weakness of all highly centralized governments. If the Russian despotism were struck down by the hand of the Nihilist, total confusion would ensue through that vast empire, and society would be at the mercy of a small but organized and determined band of assassins. Almost a parallel to the fall of the Incas is the catastrophe of the Bourbon monarchy in France, which left no political force in the country capable of making head against the domination of so despicable a crew as the Jacobins, with no following but the mob of Paris. This accounts for the abject submission of a people not wanting in spirit to Carrier, Couthon, and the other vile and murderous emissaries of the Convention. It accounts for the stupor of Paris while the September massacres were going on. It accounts also for the ease with which absolute power was afterwards grasped by Napoleon. If the central government of England or the United States were struck down, every part of the body politic, being instinct with local life, would at once be a government to itself. The flight of James II., though he threw the Great Seal into the Thames and destroyed the writs for the calling of a Parliament, caused one night's alarm in London and nothing more. Nor is it only theocratic or despotic centralization that would produce this feebleness of character political and general in the community at large. Socialistic centralization would do the same. Under any regime substituting universal regulation by authority for free industry and open competition the result would be a flock of human sheep like that which was produced by the ultra-paternal government of the Incas. A BYSTANDER.