

fell into grievous crimes. They were truly divine for they knew no age and were never to die. They could foretell what would befall a person; but much must have been hidden from them, for even Jupiter could be deceived. They were powerless before the decrees of fate. They at times moved among men in any form they chose. Messages and signs could be sent by them such as were announced by the oracle of Delphi, or by the cries, chirping, eating or flight of birds, or by the peculiar formation of the entrails of certain animals. It would seem then that the religious belief of the Greeks though firm was ill-defined and to a certain extent contradictory. That the gods were not impeccable excites the surprise of the modern mythological student. It should be borne in mind, however, that the ancient classic nations had no distinct knowledge of the spirituality of the soul. Cicero wrote as follows: "There is, I know not how, in the minds of men, a certain presage, as it were, of a future existence, and this takes the deepest root and is most discoverable in the greatest geniuses and most exalted souls." From these words we must infer that the Pagans had but a feeble notion of spirituality. They had no well defined knowledge as to what the shades of the dead were. In a word they were too sensuous to have a conception of things absolutely and essentially spiritual. Hence their gods for them were beings not altogether supernatural but rather deified men, and as such were subject to a certain extent to human frailties.

That the majority of the ancient Greeks believed in the actual existence of the gods may be proven from the enthusiasm displayed by them in repelling the attacks directed against their religious belief. He was doomed to death who openly preached atheism or monotheism. It has been asserted by some that this protection was extended to the deities by the rulers who wished to make use of the popular credulity in the supernatural to disguise their acts of tyranny and oppression. True it is that not a few unscrupulous potentates by attributing the injustice of which they were guilty to inspiration from the realms above shielded themselves from the wrath of their subjects. But the very fact that the mythological religion continued to

thrive even under such adverse circumstances is a proof in itself that faith in it was deeply rooted in the hearts of its adherents. That faith for centuries withstood opposition—opposition the most difficult to battle against, viz., insinuating underhanded. This opposition was carried on by those who entertained a purer, a higher notion of divinity than that embodied by the gods. And what shall we say of these attacks made against the national religion. It is undeniable that such opposition was right and just so far as it was directed against the above mentioned abuses and against the arbitrary fictions or grossly sensual features of mythology. These objectors, however, had but a faint idea of the strength of the fortress against which they directed their attacks. As they had not truth wherewith to replace the national religion by attempting to perfect the latter they ran the risk of destroying it altogether and of laying open the way to atheism.

The chain which bound the Greek nation so firmly together was common faith in the gods. This was the life blood of Greece's strength and superiority. The death of this faith meant the nation's downfall. A certain relation ever exists between the worship of a nation and the display of energy which it puts forth, so that its worship is in some way the source of a nation's physical, moral and intellectual strength. All the great ages have been ages of belief. History will bear us out in the assertion that when there was any extraordinary manifestation of power, when great national movements began, when arts flourished, when heroic deeds were accomplished, when great poems were written, the human soul was in a ferment of religious exultation. Art to reach anything like perfection requires a certain amount of the supernatural element. Bulwer Lytton tells us that art is the effort of man to express the ideas which nature suggests to him of a power above nature. The masterpieces of pagan architecture were the temples erected in honour of the gods. It is not too much to say that the architect of these magnificent structures acted under the inspiration—if it may be so named—of the notion he had of the honour due to the power above nature. Thus, the masterpiece of Phidias, the great Grecian sculptor, was