

different from his own, he cannot possibly conceive. He may imagine, on some distant star, beings higher than himself or different in their external appearance, yet the positive and final predicates which he gives to these beings are necessarily drawn from his own nature. An analysis of all such conceptions will show that, although we can extend our thoughts quantitatively, yet the quality of our thoughts is determined by our nature and surroundings. We can have ideals superior to ourselves as individuals, but no ideals the elements of which do not exist in the species to which we belong.

Keeping in view this obvious principle, a rigid analysis of religion will enable us to see that, as a system of thought in which phenomena are ascribed to a being or to beings believed to be proper objects of worship, it is an indirect form of self-knowledge. As Feuerbach has shown with much fulness and variety of illustration, man unconsciously studies his own nature in the contemplation of gods long before his intellectual and moral nature becomes a direct object of study.

In every age man discovers and recognizes that what was in a preceding age regarded as the true god was the subjective nature of man viewed objectively. When a nation or a race has outgrown a religion, the old god comes to be regarded as only a conceptional being corresponding with the mental condition of the times in which it prevailed. The portrait taken in childhood cannot be looked upon as a correct likeness of the same individual grown to manhood. No more can man be pleased with the mental image of himself that was formed during his intellectual childhood. As between the likeness of the youth and that of the man there is more or less resemblance, so between the gods of two periods, separated by ages and widely different in their intellectual conditions, there will be much in common.

The profoundly religious man of to-day never recognizes the identity between himself and the object of his worship; but he sees the applicability of this principle in times and among peoples having conceptions of God that are gross and low. The enlightened Christian readily admits this to be true of the ignorant savage. The well-informed Christian and the enlightened Hebrew of to-day admit that many of the Old Testament representations of deity are very imperfect, and they apologize for their grossness by saying that God in those days accommodated himself to the rude, ignorant condition of the people, since they were unable to comprehend any conceptions of God unless they were of a being like themselves. But it is just as certain that the conception of God by the