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THE
SPONTANEOUS DISSOLUTION
OF
ANCIENT CREEDS.

A Lecture

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S Y L L A B U S.

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Intellect and Morals. Emotions and Convictions.

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THE
SPONTANEOUS DISSOLUTION
OF
ANCIENT CREEDS.

ALL philosophers of ancient and modern times agree that words are the principal instruments of thoughts. A correct knowledge and use of these instruments alone can secure for us profitable results of reasoning as the principal aim of philosophy. I intend to discuss the Spontaneous Dissolution of Ancient Creeds from an entirely objective point of view. In this sentence there are two words which I must beg you to accept in the sense in which I intend to use them. I do not mean to apply the word "spontaneous" colloquially as something "sudden," but scientifically as something "acting, by its own inherent energy, according to a natural law." A spontaneous dissolution will, therefore, be a dissolution to be traced to the inherent constituent elements of the different creeds, as the result of a natural law, according to which antagonistic particles must dissolve in time so soon as they lose the cause or force of cohesion. By the word "creed," I do not signify "a summary of the articles of the Christian faith," but "any system of dogmas which is prescribed as necessary to be believed, or, at least, to be professed." In a former Lecture I endeavoured to trace the influence of natural phenomena on the formation of the different

religious systems or creeds. Nature in its *infinity*, and man in his *finiteness*, are then the two principal elements from which the different creeds of all times have sprung; that is, from the very beginning of man's consciousness, his notions concerning the world, its Creator, and himself, spring from two utterly antagonistic sources.

Man is formed of matter and endowed with mind. This must be also the case with the whole universe. Matter is acted upon by an inherent spirit, manifesting itself as law—the law of causation, which pervades *space*, wherever matter is existent, which assumes in *time* different shapes and forms. The further constituent elements in humanity are man's utter helplessness as a single individual, and the necessity that he should enter into a social bond with his fellow-creatures, to render his existence as an individual a possibility.

To make the existence of a collective social state possible, man must submit to laws equally binding on all. Exercising his in-born intellectual power, man will frame such laws to facilitate the existence both of the detached individual and of a collection of individuals, brought together by geographical position, voluntary or forced influences, over which the individual, as such, has little or no control. The laws so framed are in all cases revealed; not revealed directly by the mouth of the Divinity, or by some supernatural agent, but by that self-consciousness which, in its turn, is the result of man's material organisation.

This brings us once more to the never-ending discussion of mind and matter. History illustrates most distinctly the fact that in humanity, as in electricity, there are elements which will be negative, or positive, or static, and dynamic. Neither the negative nor the positive electricity, however, predominates by itself,

nor does a machine exist exclusively constructed on the dynamic or static principle. A proper balance between the two forces alone will produce action and reaction, motion and resistance. What is static in electricity or in a machine is moral in humanity—a stationary element. Absolute morality, if there be such a thing, can only be one and the same from eternity to eternity. Relative morality may vary with the intellectual “plus” or “minus” in man’s social development; but “wrong,” as wrong can only be one in an absolute sense, and must be “wrong” in all times under all circumstances. So it is with virtue. To the philosopher “murder” is murder, whether perpetrated by a single individual to satisfy his passion, or by an army wholesale for the glory of a nation; though relatively war, or wholesale murder, pillaging, robbing and ravaging may be excused under certain circumstances, and even deserve a bright monument. To draw a sharp distinction between the absolute and the relative in dialectics is of the very utmost importance. Absolute morality can only be one immutable, unchangeable element, which renders the existence of humanity as such possible. This existence would be impossible if theft, murder, and adultery were allowed. We trace thus in humanity the existence of one constituent—a static element—morals.

The next element will be intellect—a pushing, dynamic force, ever-changing, ever-growing, ever-varying; to-day different from what it was yesterday, building up slowly the mighty temples of science and art, to which every one may contribute, consciously or even unconsciously, a small pebble or a few grains of sand to form cement; whilst some place the huge corner-stones, others raise a flag-staff on a lofty spire from which a bright banner, floating in the air, shows whence the cosmical wind blows.

These banner-bearers only become possible when every-day working men have dug the foundations, collected materials, mixed the mortar, heaped up stones, constructed the edifice, and crowned it with spires. All work according to the plan of the grand, invisible, and still, through man's intellectual power, ever-present architect, who, in endowing humanity with self-conscious intellect, ordained its use to be continuous, leading to a correct application of morals by an understanding of the aim and purpose of humanity in its component individual particles.

The process of constructing the progressive intellectual development of humanity underwent different phases according as imagination or reason predominated. Both are merely faculties of our intellect; the one engendering superstition and religious creeds, the other science and art. The primary constituent elements begin to be subdivided, and in their subdivision we find the first germs of confusion, but also of activity, of action and reaction. Those who, by their superior intellectual consciousness, assume the lead of humanity, begin to be divided into two divergent groups, each assuming that man has only to cultivate one of its constituent elements.

The moralists presume that, with their superior intellectual power, they have found out for eternity the laws according to which man may be best induced to be virtuous. They proclaim him to be conceived in wrath, created full of wickedness and sin, and propound that ignorance is his birthright and *faith* in the system of the creeds, which they have worked out in the name of the Divinity, his only salvation. They pronounce the innate spirit of inquiry to be of evil, wish us blindly to abide by certain formulæ, separate morals from intellect,

mind from matter, the static element from the dynamic, and hinder the progress of our social development, which they try to limit or altogether to check by their dictates. The despotic sway of these dictates they deny, for they consider that their wish to promote the welfare of humanity one-sidedly palliates everything they say or do. They create the first terrible rent in humanity by arbitrarily separating the component parts of our spiritual and material existence; they devote themselves to the exclusive culture of morals and foster an inordinate contempt for intellect. The division is brought about by their remaining stationary, and ignoring the dynamic force as one of the component and indispensable elements in human nature. Wherever this happens, superstition is fostered, and knowledge is only so far promoted as it will serve the general superstition. Faith will be exalted as the best tool with which blind ignorance can be made subservient to the system of an incredible creed. Intellect will be looked down upon as of evil. Morals in the garb of set dogmas thus often become the greatest immorality, for they promote hypocrisy, cowardice, and voluntary stupidity. Emotions are excited, but convictions are silenced. Happily this is a condition of humanity bearing the elements of spontaneous dissolution in its unnatural and one-sided attempts.

In analysing a drop of water we know it to be a compound of hydrogen and oxygen. Add to it any other element, and the water loses its purity. Take only hydrogen by itself, it may burn, but it is not water without oxygen. Taking man as a mere essence of morals, we have as unreal a being as a mere essence of intellect would be. As purely moral or intellectual he might be an angel, an imponderable something, but not man, who is formed of dissoluble

matter, endowed with mind. This mind is often assumed to be an entity in itself, through itself, for itself. This may, perhaps, be, but we cannot prove it; we know only that it exists, thinks, reasons, directs our motions, our will, in a certain limited sense, but is nowhere to be found as a separate entity. It has an analogous nature with electricity in an electric battery. We have the machine before us; the proper acids, the metallic elements are there; we hear their working; we take one of the conductors in our hand—no effect—we take the other, and we feel the shocks, gradually and with increasing force, passing through our body. All these circumstances and combinations were indispensable for the production of an effect of electricity on our body. So it is with mind. It is there, under certain circumstances and combinations of the material elements of which we are formed; disturb these particles, change their relative proportion or quantity and quality, and you have an explanation for our different moral and intellectual faculties. Mind is not a cause, but an effect—absolutely, it must exist in the universe and pervade it as well as electricity—relatively, it requires certain conditions, under which it will alone come into entity and activity. If mind be directed one-sidedly, it will become superstition; if filled with mere emotions, it will be driven to madness and engender ghost-seers, spirit-rappers, ritualists, and lunatics; if left uninstructed, it will believe anything, and can be brought, through a long training, to such a state that it will look upon those who are anxious to enlighten or to instruct it as its sworn enemies; hate, persecute, murder, burn, and crucify them. Still, just as in the external world, continuous combinations and dissolutions take place, forming the different phenomena, as air, heat, water, minerals, metals, plants, animals,

and human beings, so an intellectual process of the mind, forming and undoing religious systems and scientific theories, has been in operation since the first dawn of human consciousness.

That this is the case no honest and unbiassed student of history can deny. The most spiritual elements in humanity are the different religious systems, by their very nature treating mostly of the unknown and unknowable; and still, though every one of them has been proclaimed as the direct or indirect dictate of the Supreme Being, every one had in the course of time to undergo changes, modifications, to enter into different combinations, or to dissolve into its component parts under the action of the voltaic battery of intellect. All religions are composed of certain elements, partly acting on our moral, emotional, and partly on our intellectual nature. All religions take their origin in the natural tendency of the human mind to explain the surrounding phenomena of nature, and to assign to man his destiny, not only in this but often also in another world. Religions originate in man's imagination, more or less enlightened by knowledge, whether guided, as some teachers assert, by Divine inspiration or revelation, or whether as the mere result of intellectual effort. The position of those who assume a Divine revelation or inspiration is a very difficult one, and requires an immense amount of credulity; for history furnishes us with undeniable proofs that the Divine inspiration and revelation of one period has often been not only contradicted but altogether abolished by an equally Divine inspiration and revelation at another period.

Brahma himself is asserted to have dictated the Vedas, but he has couched his dictates in so unintelligible a language that man, with his limited intellect, had continually to explain, to correct, and

to comment upon the utterances of the infinite Spirit. Several times the second person of the Indian Trinity had to assume the human form to save humanity from utter destruction, and we may congratulate ourselves that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales went to India, because one of the religious enthusiasts has proclaimed him the last "Avatar," or incarnation of Brahma. We may here learn, in reading history backwards, how such incarnations occurred in olden times; how they were proclaimed by one or several poetical or fanatical enthusiasts, and how by degrees such proclamations were believed, and served as the bases of several Eastern religious creeds.

Manû had in time to step into the world with a new Code of Laws, which, as well as the Vedas, were the breath of the Divinity in every chapter, verse, word, and letter; and Buddha came at a later period and had to correct again the dictates of Brahma, and to proclaim, quite in opposition to the Divinity, that men were not born in different castes, but that they were all equal. How it could have happened that the divine Being, in proclaiming His will through Manû, should have made such a mistake is perfectly incomprehensible. But the Divinity went even further in its incomprehensible proceedings. For a thousand years the Buddhists had been worshipping Brahma according to the dictates of Buddha, who was Brahma himself; they had constructed temples in honour of that Brahma-Buddha, which, in their splendour and grandeur, are unsurpassed, and yet in the seventh century after Christ this very Brahma-Buddha, who taught his followers a more humane religion, and endowed them with so much virtue, that they are still, though the most numerous, the only sect on the surface of the globe that has not shed one single

drop of human blood in the propagation of their faith—this very "Brahma-Buddha" allowed these, his faithful worshippers, to be massacred, and to be driven from the very birth-place of his divine mission. The same occurred with the Magi and Zoroaster. The whole religious system of the Magi was proclaimed by means of the prophet Hom (Homanes), who was also the great tree of life, the source of all bliss and prosperity, the first revealer of the word, the *logos*; the first teacher of the Magi, of the learned in the Scriptures and the prophets; and notwithstanding this another divinely-inspired master was required to purify and to revise the revelation of God made through Hom, and to found the Zoroastrian creed.

In Hesiod we may trace an altogether different process. The Asiatic gods, who assumed for certain purposes, at certain times, human shape or form; who, in fact, represented in monstrous conceptions the different phenomena of nature, were at last deprived by Hesiod of their revolting material and spiritual attributes. They were, for the first time, represented in human shape by the *humane* and poetical Greek mind. Their beautiful outer-forms led to an elevated conception of their spiritual nature, and the Greek gods became mere men and women endowed with higher bodily and intellectual faculties. Through the Greeks, humanity was enabled to leave the regions of the supernatural and to embark on the ocean of inquiry, and provided with the compass of intellect, to make glorious voyages of discovery in the realms of speculative philosophy, and to furnish us with the models of rational inquiry. When the Greeks proclaimed their "*γνώθε σεαυτόν*"—"Know thyself," man's spirit became conscious of its own self as part of the eternal divine spirit, but not altogether freed from the fetters of

outer-form. Intellect with the Greeks was yet *generalised*, and had to take a beautiful form, as manifested in their immortal works of art; man was not yet unfettered as pure *individual* intellect. We must look for this spiritual development of humanity elsewhere.

The historical importance of the Jews begins with their bondage. In misery and wretchedness they learned their higher aspirations. Their legend about the creation of man in the image of God and the forfeiture of his innocence in eating from the tree of knowledge is a mighty truth, bearing in it all the elements of future dissolution. For if man was created in the image of God, why should the gods have been jealous of Adam becoming as one of them, "knowing good and evil?" With this antithesis the Jewish misfortune for humanity began. They taught us to be images of God, to long in boundless eagerness for that Godhead, and condemned as sinful this very yearning. Mankind had to undergo endless bodily and intellectual sufferings in consequence of this decomposing composition of heterogeneous elements, placing reality in eternal opposition to the ideal. The Jews always hoped to find a Messiah to reconcile their old oriental antithesis, which they had in reality borrowed from the Persians and Egyptians; they always hoped that somebody would redeem humanity from the fetters of spiritual darkness or sin. It was clearly felt by the Persians, as well as by the Jews, that this redemption could only come through man.

Real religiousness consists in man's consciousness of his double attributes and his attempt to bring harmony into the apparent dissonance of his divine (intellectual) and human (material or animal) nature. This pure process must not be disturbed, interrupted, or checked by any secondary and arbi-

trary element. Man embodies the eternal divine spirit only in a transitional phase, that is for a limited time. During that limited phase he has to exert all his intellectual and moral powers to promote his own as well as his fellow-creatures' happiness. All those elements that hinder him in this task through obscure verbiage, revealed and re-revealed incongruities, mystic symbolism, or theological hair-splitting, are irreligious.

The contradictions in the conception of God, the transcendent materialism, and the complicated incomprehensible spiritualism with which Jehovah was conceived by the Jews; the half-Assyrian and half-Egyptian mask which he wore—now Osiris, the redeemer, then again Ahriman, the slayer, the destroyer, made him now a mystic tyrant, then again a partial father. He promised his chosen children plenty on earth, and many goodly things, and left them continually in the bondage of the surrounding Gentiles, who were proclaimed to be his abomination. Now he appears in the Psalms, as in the strains of the Vedas, to be a God after whom the soul may thirst to lead us to holiness and righteousness, then again it is "the Lord thy God" who gives away the cities of other people, which they built, the trees which they planted, the wells which they dug and the vineyards which they cultivated, as an inheritance to the Jews, and tells them without cause and reason: "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth, but thou shalt utterly destroy them, namely, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord commanded thee." And if you ask for an explanation of the morality of these enactments, you receive the answer: "the ways of the Lord are mysterious." But this is no answer. The mind of man cannot be satisfied with such replies,

it finds them in their very mysteriousness irreligious.

The marble form of Zeus, in spite of its beauty, had to give way to a more ideal conception of the Divinity, and in a similar way the invisible God of Moses had to assume another shape. Mosaism had to undergo a reform after having long before divided the Jews into different sects, who hated one another with that intense fervour which is the natural outgrowth of oppression and long slavery. The records of the religious system of the Jews were more favoured than those of the Indians or Egyptians; for their tenets became sacred not only in the eyes of the privileged priesthood, that kept all sacred and profane knowledge to itself, but also in the eyes and ears of the whole nation. Moses faithfully kept his promise, and made the Jews "a nation of priests;" in telling them, freed from all symbolism, what made the Egyptian priesthood so powerful in their sway over the ignorant masses for thousands of years, he made every Jew a theologian. Notwithstanding all these advantages, the Hebrew records had the element of dissolution as a mere formal creed in them; for the mythic was treated as historical; phenomenal facts were stated with an utter ignorance of science, as was only natural in times in which all sciences were in their infancy, or as yet unborn. Though the spirit of inquiry was fettered for centuries, the reform had to come as a natural sequence of the historical progressive development of humanity. John the Baptist first commenced it, Christ followed.

Christ again was followed by the two apostles, St. Paul and St. John. It is an authenticated fact, that the canonical writings of the New Testament contain different accounts of most important incidents, and are the outgrowth of mighty minds who could

but impress with their powerful individuality what they wrote. Next followed the Fathers, who did not content themselves with commenting on Christ's, St. Paul's, or St. John's teachings, but added dogma upon dogma, borrowing them from old forgotten Egyptian mysteries, or from the writings of Greek philosophers; so that in the course of a few centuries, when Christianity became the ruling faith of the Roman empire, it comprised all the elements of spontaneous dissolution in its heterogenous borrowed forms, symbols, dogmas, and articles of faith.

Christ's Christianity, the doctrine of love and forbearance, of humility and self-sacrifice, of common brotherhood, and the harrowing tragedy of his life and death, were all turned into symbolic mysteries. What was simple and intelligible was surrounded by incomprehensible contradictions. Christ was to be the mighty, royal, hoped-for Messiah of the Jews, though he tried as a mere teacher to reform Judaism and to bring vitality into what had decayed into a mere dead formalism. Not to abolish the old law was His mission, but to purify it from its narrow national particularism, and to restore its monotheistic and moral universality.

St. Paul saw in Christ a dying God, who had to atone for the sins of Adam, in order to satisfy the demand of the Jewish law. *Grace* was everything with him. St. John made of Christ the incarnation of Plato's Logos, and added that nobody could come to God except through Christ, which was an uncharitable anathema against all those who were honest and virtuous, but who either knew nothing of Christ, or could not understand the mystic dogmas under which Christ had been buried. Christ's incarnation as the Logos could not have been different to that of Brahma, as Krishna or Rama, or

Buddha, of Amn, as Osiris and Horus. Each of these incarnations took place under very analogous circumstances, and for analogous purposes.

The Divinity to the student of ancient creeds appears continually to assume new shapes and forms and to succeed always only in a very partial redemption of humanity. Did Christ, however, ever assume a Godhead in a Buddhistic or Egyptian sense? is a question which will, in time, be differently answered than at present. Christ the rigorous Jew who conscientiously kept the spirit of the law, though He opposed its dead meaningless formality, who appeared with scrupulous regularity at the grand festivals at Jerusalem, could He have ever violated the sacred monotheistic basis of the Jews so far as to proclaim Himself as anything else but the "Son of Man," to which title He had every claim, when He declared the whole of humanity to be the children of one Father in heaven? Did Christ ever intend to make Himself anything but the spiritual redeemer of mankind, by proclaiming on high-ways and in market-places what was kept as a secret by the Esoteric teachers, that there was only one God, and that man had one realm, to unite whether poor or rich, if only "pure of heart," into one bond of divine love, pervading the universe?

Love was with Christ the connecting element between the divine and human in man. As attraction is scientifically the vital element of the material cosmos, so love is the binding element which was, is, and will be the fundamental basis of any religion; and where this element of universal brotherhood is discarded or stifled, by whatever dogmas, our enlightened reason will never be persuaded that the mystery is for our benefit; for the very assumption, that morals can be fostered and best understood through unintelligible types and symbols in antagon-

ism to intellect, is the very element of a spontaneous dissolution of any creed, and always only a question of time.

The sanguinary persecutions that disgraced the religion of Christ would have horrified no one more than Him, in whose name they were perpetrated. And who were those who were most cruelly treated, robbed, pillaged, insulted, and murdered? Those for whom He prayed in dying with his last breath: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Christ was said to have established eternal hell-fire. He who commanded us to forgive our enemies "seventy times seven," could He have conceived a Divinity less forbearing in His *infinite* love, wisdom and mercy, than a *finite* human being? In this cruel and contradictory assumption we have another element of spontaneous dissolution, because it is an unchristian dogma borrowed from the Egyptians, with whom Osiris was more an infernal judge, than a loving, supreme Being. With the Egyptians gloomy unconscious fear, and not self-conscious love, was the beginning of wisdom and the motive element of their gloomy creed, which element transferred to Christianity changed its very essence, made Romish idolatry a possibility, and worked as an antagonistic dissolving element in Christ's glorious and simple code of morals.

Day by day the historical ground was cut from under the feet of Christ's Christianity. Dogmas, ceremonies, rituals, and symbolic performances were borrowed by the Christian priesthood from Indians (Brahmans and Buddhists), Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, Hebrews, and Romans. The clergy of the Romish Church strove to become, like the Brahmans and Hierophants, the augurs, magi and bonzes of old, masters of the minds of the ignorant masses, who were kept purposely and systematically in igno-

rance; for the greater the ignorance of the people, the greater the influence of allegories, symbols, and mystic incomprehensibilities. So it came to pass that the clearest laws of humanity and common sense were trampled under foot with reckless ferocity. From the times of Gregory VII. Christianity became hourly more unchristian.

Unchristian Christianity persecuted, killed and burned for nearly a thousand years, from Charlemagne, the Christian Mahomet, down to the year of grace 1780, when the last witch was publicly burnt at Glarus, in the Roman Catholic part of Switzerland. To whatever Christian country we turn we find the militant Church of Rome desiring prerogatives and immunities. The Church claimed the right to punish those who spoke disrespectfully of the clergy; the right to the luxury of burning heretics; there were continual disputes as to whether emperor or pope, cardinal or king, should be first in authority. Deans and bishops quarrelled in open courts with one another about images, postures, or the right to possess a crucifix. The clear enactment of Christ, "Give unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's," was distorted and placed under mental reservation. A dignitary of the already half-reformed English Church (Archbishop Sandy) dared to proclaim that we must obey princes "usque ad aras," as the proverb is, "so far as we may without disobeying God." And who had to decide what was considered disobeying God? The priesthood—which cared more for prerogatives, the right to fell timber, to seize lands in mortmain, to receive such estates as were forfeited for high treason, to have the right of investiture, and to possess authority in lay as well as in ecclesiastical matters, than to educate the masses, to teach them soberness and cleanliness, forbearance, peace, and goodwill.

The priests loudly proclaimed Christ's law: "Do unto others as you wish that they should do unto you;" but their deeds were in contradiction to the ordinance, and they did unto others as they must have wished that they should never be done unto. They acted like the great mass of the Chinese, to whom Confucius, more than four centuries before Christ, gave the same law: "Do unto others as you wish that they should do unto you"; but as we are cheated, we cheat; as we are calumniated, we calumniate; as we are persecuted, we persecute; as we are robbed, we rob; and as we are served with false measures or sham goods, we do the same. This is certainly not Christianity, and though commentators, exegetists, apologists, dogmatists, and inquisitors tried hard to smooth down and explain the contradictions, the creed, that had served humanity for 1,500 years, had to undergo a new reform. Christian unchristianity was once more to become pure, primitive Christianity.

In the eyes of the Romish Church Christianity was no longer the doctrine of Christ, but the enactments of the Church. Christ's personal commands had for a thousand years to give way to the assumed higher wisdom of councils or popes. These councils and popes could, however, not avoid being influenced by the spirit of their times, and were forced unconsciously continually to vary their doctrines, according to the exigencies of the moment, always with one clear aim—to keep the power and the means of being the hieratic masters of the world. So long as the priest could live with a wife, it was Christ's command to have one; so soon as it was found that the priest became too worldly, too humane with a wife and family, it was Christ's command to resign himself to celibacy. So long as Platonism served them the priests were Platonists. In the first three cen-

turies they had no Trinity, they were *de facto* Arians, and then they became Athanasians or Trinitarians, in imitation of the Indo-Egyptians, and cursed all who were not of their incomprehensible opinion. On one day Origen, on another St. Augustine, swayed their minds. They had deadly controversies on the Lord's Supper, and about the use of bread and wine, or the Real Presence, or the Transubstantiation, whilst often thousands were starving around them for want of food. They forgave sins, but only to those who could pay for such remission. They introduced self-abnegation, self-flagellation, and self-torture for the masses, and lived in pomp and vanity. They smiled and cursed in one breath; they spoke immediately before the Reformation, but their language was always ambiguous, for they tried to please all parties; and still they attached more importance to outward ceremonies, vestments, symbols, types, and mere verbal professions without any inward, spiritual meaning, than to moral reality and real religiousness.

Whilst the Romish Church was thus a house divided against itself, many honest monks and more enlightened laymen turned back to the old Greek and Roman classics, and tried to take up the thread of the progressive historical development of humanity, which appeared to have been rent asunder and lost for ever. To re-unite it where it had been broken, they revived sciences and arts; and dogmatists, mystics, and dry school-men were more and more silenced. The Reformation was finally victorious in the terrible struggle; but it had to fight its way through torrents of blood. When the peace of Westphalia left Europe in the possession of religious freedom, Europe sealed her right to scientific progress. The Romish Christian creed was then dissolved, and no Vaticanism will

ever revive it. Christianity with the Reformation ceased to be a special creed based on mere outer-signs; it was once more made universal. Christ's God of Love and Reason who was enthroned through the Reformation is the God of the Universe, his existence, in one shape or another, is believed in by Brahmans, Buddhists, Jews, Mahometans and Christians.

Christ, if considered as the incarnate divine spirit of self-sacrifice and love, has freed men of their finiteness by teaching them to surrender their *outerselves* to a pure moral and intellectual consciousness of their *inner-selves*, and thus only has redeemed humanity, and dissolved all ancient and modern creeds by establishing real religion based on reason aided by science, promoting real morality, freed of all dogmatic dross and from the unnatural bondage of prejudices and the mystic fetters of ignorance.

Polytheism of old had to yield to a more refined creed of *one* creative power; but Polytheism had already borne the elements or constituent particles of spontaneous dissolution in itself. However poetical the deification of the different phenomena of Nature may be, it was merely the outgrowth of an ignorant and over-heated, an unconscious and unbridled imagination. Bitterly, though poets and artists bewailed this time, they had to surrender their fanciful world of self-created gods. Man, however, wishes at all times to have his emotions taken into consideration. The culture of the emotional element seems to be the last retreat of those who think that dry morals (as if morals did not continually exercise our emotional elements), and mere science (cold, calculating science, as they say in turning up their eyes) cannot suffice to fill man's nature. They then turn to a vague and incomprehensible anthropomorphism, man-worship, which in

one form or another, has not yet ceased to be the cherished creed amongst those who crave for the merely emotional.

The Greeks were the first and most cultivated anthropomorphists. Their creed has vanished, but it contained much emotional element that, purified of idolatry, might serve the masses of our modern times as an element of unlimited artistic emotion; for art will and must replace that fervid craving for emotion. Art will yet again shape beautiful forms for their own sake, and ethics and æsthetics will repair our loss of barren phrases referring to supernatural matters. The anthropomorphism of old will revive again, though in another spirit; it will not be sanctified as a creed, but hallowed, because it will lead man, through love, to understand the ideal beauty of everything created, from the tiny and bashful daisy to the lofty-snow covered summits of the Himalayan Mountains.

Ancient Creeds, after having gone through the dissolution of Polytheism and Anthropomorphism, enter upon a species of anthropopatism. The leaders of this creed try to combine revelation and reason, faith and science; they use all possible sophistical contortions to prove that there are no contradictions in the Sacred books of the Eastern nations; that all is clear. You have only to take the different passages in their corresponding allegorical, parabolical, tropological, anagogical or literal meanings. They assert, with a mild gentleness, that there are no difficulties except to the blind, to the heartless, and to those who live to cold science and have no higher aim than the "Fata Morgana" of a dreary materialism. These anthropopatists work out in their own imagination a more or less lofty portrait of the Divinity, and describe, praise, draw, model or paint it according to their individual idiosyncrasies, their

sympathies or antipathies. They persecute, hate, despise, or, if they are very kind-hearted, pity those who fail to see a "personal" Father in their dim half-theological, half-rationalistic colours. These men are like some Protestants who deny to the Romish Church the right to have miracles, but keep certain miracles which must be believed in. They do not see that in this very contradiction is a thriving element of spontaneous dissolution. Before a tribunal of logic these half-theologians and half-Rationalists could not pass a "spelling-bee." These men feel that they have lost their historical basis, and to find a new one would necessitate too much study; they could only find it through a correct appreciation of the gradual development of humanity, to attain which they would have to make themselves acquainted with the intellectual pressure of mind brought to bear upon progress. Fortunately the discharges from the electric theological clouds that have gathered, or are gathering, have, since the invention of the lightning conductor of tolerance, become extremely harmless, though they may occasionally be unpleasant. The anthropopatists should base their ethics and metaphysics, if the latter exist, on the ruling principles of the Cosmos, but it is much easier to talk morals than to introduce a new creed in our times, after so many spontaneous dissolutions of ancient creeds.

Who, indeed, wishes for a new creed? We do not want the ridiculous Acosmism which denies the reality of the world, asserting that it had been created out of nothing, and that matter is a non-entity. These modern apostles in tail-coats talk of an "Unseen Universe," as though it could be seen; if it can, then to call it "unseen" is nonsense, and if it is invisible, to waste time in describing it with copious verbiage, is still more absurd. Though we

may never know what the absolute essences of matter or life are, we may still study matter in its phenomenal results, and see the aberrations of mind whenever it treats of the so-called supernatural, and its glorious conquests in arts and sciences, when man deals with given forms and quantities, either transforming them into works of ideal beauty, or discovering, after centuries of hard labour and keen observation, more scientific explanations of the secret workings of the hidden forces of nature, than the theologians could find on the easy and lazy path of an assumed revelation. The world belongs in future to another body of priests, to the priests of science and art!

The Indian philosophers already attained the consciousness of creation, preservation, and transformation as the external actions of *one* force, in three equally powerful emanations, and, notwithstanding this philosophical starting point, free of every taint of dogmatism and anthropomorphism, a connecting link of different incarnate gods was worked out by the priesthood to satisfy the emotional ignorance of the masses.

The Jews set up a god of their own, a national, jealous god, who was to be stronger than all the others, which was a silent indirect admission that there were other gods. Jewish monotheism reached merely the notion of a mighty ruler, who was master even over the false gods; and those gods who gave comfort and hope for thousands of years to innumerable generations, saw themselves hurled by Javeh into the abyss of hell, where they had to rule as mighty demons. But the "immanence" or inherence of a pervading spirit in the universe cannot be a person in the sense of an anthropopapist or acosmist, for omniscience and omnipresence is only possible with an impersonal deity. The burning ques-

tion of modern thought is not, as Renan has it, a contest between Polytheists,—namely, Roman Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists and Brahmans, and Monotheists—namely, Jews and Mahometans; but the struggle is between those who assume an all-pervading infinite spirit, and those who deny the existence of any Deity, between Panmonotheists and Atheists.

But who are those who deny the Divinity? Such men as either cannot or will not understand the cosmos, who can see only matter, but do not grasp the effects produced by matter in the universe as well as in humanity, which is but its reflex. Those who never will draw a line between cause and effect, and most of all those who drag the Divinity down to their own low level, transforming it into an idol of their own, which they wish to force upon humanity at large; these proud, conceited theologians promote atheism even more than some professed atheists. But who are atheists?

Certainly not the scientific men as physicists, who bow down their heads, and profess, with child-like lips: "We are too humble, too finite to grasp the infinite; we shall be contented to trace here and there some minute workings of the innumerable elements forming phenomena that are, that must have had an origin and must have an aim." Not the philologists who, in languages freed from all the trammels of a paradisiacal tongue, in which God himself spoke, trace and systematize the phases through which languages had to pass to attain their different sounds, alphabets, words, concrete and abstract expressions. Not the geologists, who, unfettered by any Eastern cosmogony, follow up the growth of our globe according to law and order, and find in this very inherent law and order the vestiges of an eternal first cause, which personi-

fied becomes utterly unintelligible. Not the historian, who, in the complicated phenomena, of which men are the units with all their passions, yearnings, hopes, and fears, traces the eternal laws of action and reaction, which force humanity onward on the path of continuous progress. To so great an extent is this the case, that if we carefully consider the subject, we are astonished at the relative progress of humanity, and this improvement has been attained since the reformation, since the revival of classic art and philosophy; since scientific inquiries have silenced the grand inquisition, and stopped the burning of witches and heretics; since logicians have disproven the false and pernicious principles of the reasoning of an infallible priesthood; since tolerance and forbearance have clad themselves in ermine and meted out justice with an even hand, regardless of the creed to which those belonged who sought redress for wrongs inflicted upon them; since even bishops and deans dare to thunder at the gates of narrow-mindedness, and to proclaim the right of free investigation, not only for themselves, but also for those who are under their sway; since the lay-authority took upon itself to spread sciences and arts amongst the ignorant and neglected masses, and to prevent through the strong arm of the law a reactionary and anachronistic movement inaugurated by some of the priesthood, who, craving for the emotional, think to find in tapers, fancy embroideries, monkish dresses, and the most childish mimicry of a creed that went through the process of its spontaneous dissolution more than 350 years ago, a solution of the religious questions of our days.

Mysticism has been for thousands of years the bane of humanity. Ignorance is her cherished foster-sister. Mysticism and ignorance presumed

not only to lead humanity on the path of emotion to virtue, through different creeds, but also to regulate man's intellectual powers. Ignorance and mysticism built up astronomical, zoological, and geological hypotheses which had to be destroyed; they prescribed to the Divinity how and when the world must have been created; science had to rectify these errors of a natural ignorance. That such errors should have been transformed into articles of creed, indispensable to the salvation of our better intellectual nature, and that this deception should and could have been practised for thousands of years, is not a mysterious riddle, but the natural effect of an equally natural cause. Whenever and wherever ignorance assumes the mask of theological knowledge, it leads men into error. The error once having become, through continuous repetition, an accepted truth (though it may be only *negative* truth, viz., falsehood), it takes the positive shape of an indispensable entity for the happiness of mankind, and it requires thousands of years to remove such falsehoods, and historians testify to the fact that the whole progressive development of humanity consists in the destruction of such falsehoods.

In England and Germany, as the two countries most advanced in civilisation, the one politically, the other intellectually, this process of undoing the past is most apparent. In both countries set dogmas appear to go down the stream of time with ever-diminishing buoyancy, form and bulk, till they must sink altogether. Curates and pastors become rarer and scarcer. In 1831 there were in the eight Prussian Universities 2,203 theological students, and in 1875 there were scarcely 560 (about 70 to a University). In the Universities of Southern and Western Germany the decline of theologians was in the same ratio. In addition to this, *one-third* of the

matriculated theological students abandoned theology altogether, and entered other professions, tired of asserting things they could not understand; for they had gone through a scientific training in Logic, Mathematics, and Universal History. The ecclesiastical authorities in Germany had to acknowledge that, in one year or so, *one-sixth* of the vacant benefices would have no clergymen to fill them.

Yet, in the face of this growing dissolution, we have our "Burials Question," as the result of Christ's command, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." After 1875 years of grace and Christian teaching, we find men trying to prevent some of their Christian brothers from lying side by side in the same churchyard, in the same soil from which we have all sprung, to which we all return, from which all our pleasures stream, on which all our woes are concentrated. And why? Because these Christians differ, on certain theological questions without real distinction, from those in power. For this reason Christians of another shade of thinking should be carried in silence to their last resting-place. What tyranny, what cruel tyranny, perpetrated in the name of Christianity! And these cruelties are practised whilst words of piety, fraternal condescension, and humble submission are used on one side, and on the other the stern, indomitable "no surrender" is proclaimed with the blind obstinacy of an Eastern despot. This intolerance is the more remarkable, in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, in our free and enlightened country, whilst in Germany, Russia, and Austria tolerance is practised, at least amongst the different members of the Christian faith. In Germany, Roman Catholics and Protestants often use the same sacred building, the one for his mass, the other for his sermon, and both for their prayers to their common God. In Russia

and Austria the Christian children of one ruling, pervading spirit, may lie peaceably side by side when fate has sealed their controversies, when they can no more pronounce God's anger and judgment against one another, when they rest from their labours. But we persecute one another even beyond the grave, notwithstanding our great political and social movements. We are trying to bring education into the hovels of our rural population, and to the gutter-children of our over-crowded towns. Our scientific discoveries are teaching us day by day to distrust our preconceived prejudices; our historical inquiries demonstrate how falsehoods were spread; how truth was distorted; how dreams, fancies, myths, and legends were taken for realities; how space and time were filled with the tears and sufferings of men for the sake of false theories; how nations and individuals lost themselves in dogmatic oyster-shells, and were unable to see beyond their narrow ossified world—and yet we cannot let our fellow men sleep their last long sleep in peace.

Philosophers and physicists may smile at this with tears in their eyes, seeing how the self-contradicting elements in creeds not only lead to irreligiosity, but contain in themselves—through placing the form above the spirit, matter above mind, emotion above reason—the elements of a spontaneous dissolution. This inevitable dissolution can only be directed into the right groove of a higher moral and intellectual phase by a thorough understanding of history, which teaches us that only a synthetical combination of the Indian and Hebrew-Christian creeds and their sublime ethics, divested of all extraneous matter, may furnish us with real religion, as a code of morals binding on the whole of humanity, without fettering in any way our intellectual nature.

The bigoted and credulous, the fanatics and ignorant in the Church and in our Universities, in our colleges and educational establishments, do not tremble in vain at the very name of "Universal History" as the grand store-house of man's immortal deeds, follies, and crimes, committed for thousands of years, partly in the name of the Divinity, and partly to satisfy the religious emotions of a Torquemada, or a Calvin, or some false assumptions based on some imaginary theory or divine revelation. Not in vain have our Universities shut their doors on an honest, unbiassed study of the development of humanity on general principles. Were it not for this, we might lose our insulated position; we might discover a continuous gradual growth and decay of creeds as well as sciences, and see how one system of ancient fallacies served another as basis of development.

Not without grave reason does Cardinal Manning clamour against an appeal to history, and brand it as "heresy and treachery." He does not stand alone, he is supported by our own theologians and the heads of our own Universities, who consider the study of "Universal History" superfluous, pernicious, leading to scepticism; for it might teach us that man formed his own gods and dogmas, influenced by the aspect of nature and his relative amount of brain; that man has wasted his time and energy in trying to answer questions "*à priori*" (out of his imagination) before he could gather information "*à posteriori*" (by experience). We might learn that every step in the progress of humanity had to be fought for single-handed by independent men in whom morals and intellect were well balanced. We might become conscious that dogmatic superstitions in India, China, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Egypt, Judæa, and Rome, during the Middle Ages and in

modern times, had caused the dissolution or stationary state of all these Empires and times.

For man, composed of the two constituent elements of matter and mind, of morals and intellect, must cultivate both; the one according to immutable laws, necessitated by his very organisation, and the other unfettered by any capricious, emotional, and unintelligible self-created and self-imposed creed.

Man's destiny lies in the perfect balance of his moral and intellectual nature.



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