

Haeckel's . . . 6<sub>D</sub>.

Contribution

To Religion

BY

**A. S. MORIES,**

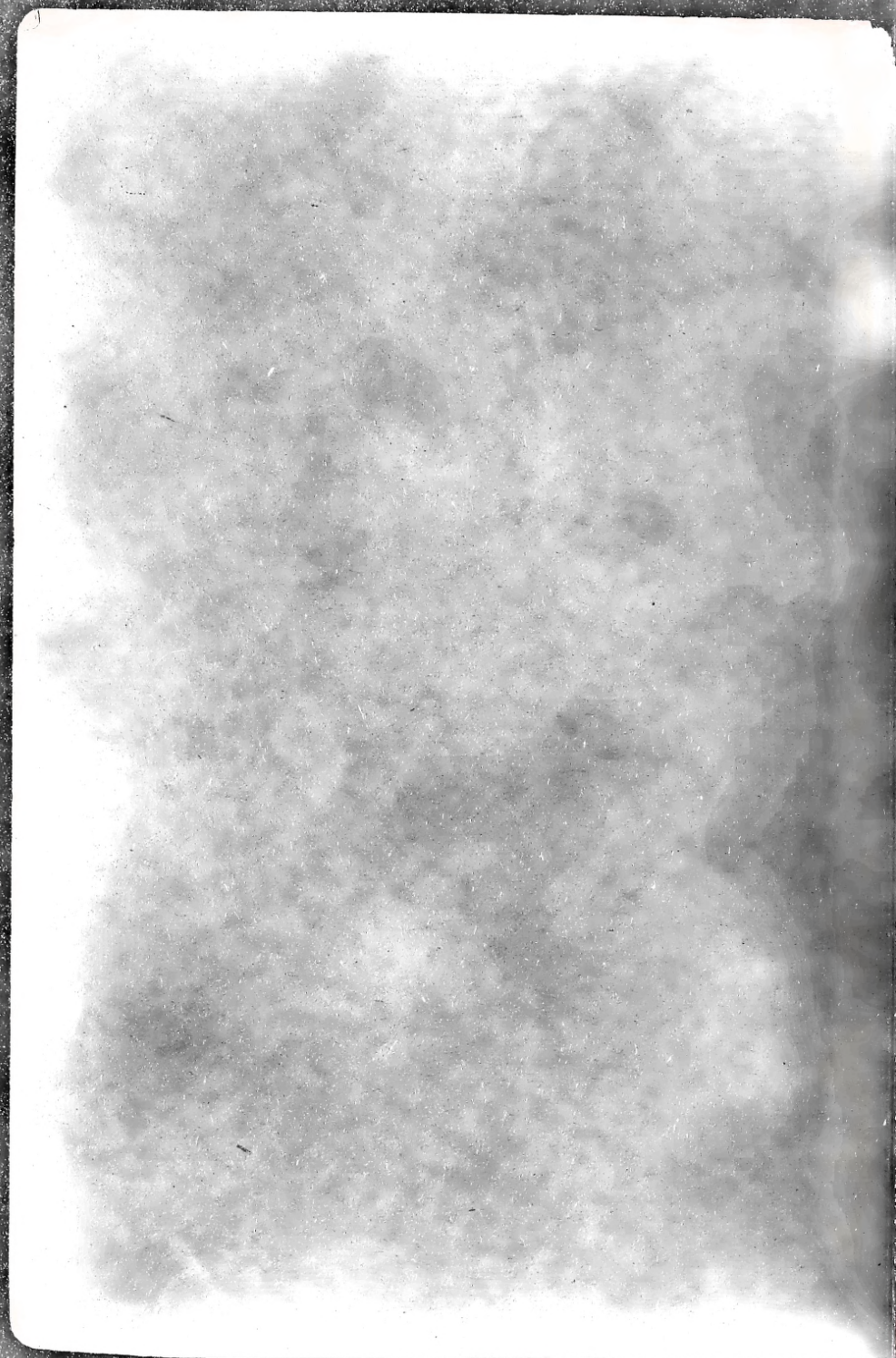
*Author of "A Religion that Will Wear"*

[ISSUED FOR THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LIMITED]

WATTS & CO.,

17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

1904



B2898

N494

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

HAECKEL'S CONTRIBUTION  
TO RELIGION

BY

A. S. MORIES,

*Author of "A Religion that Will Wear"*

[ISSUED FOR THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LIMITED]

WATTS & CO.,

17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

1904



TO THE MEMORY OF  
WILLIAM HASTIE, D.D.,  
PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW,  
SCHOLAR, THINKER, AND POET,  
WHOSE GENEROUS AND STIMULATING FRIENDSHIP  
I DESIRE THUS TO ACKNOWLEDGE.

## CONTENTS

---

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION? - - -	7
CHAPTER II.	
HAECKEL'S CONTRIBUTION TO RELIGION—THE CONTRIBUTION OF SCIENCE - - - - -	13
CHAPTER III.	
HERBERT SPENCER'S CONTRIBUTION TO RELIGION—THE CON- TRIBUTION OF AGNOSTICISM - - - -	27
CHAPTER IV.	
HEGEL'S CONTRIBUTION TO RELIGION—THE CONTRIBUTION OF PSYCHOLOGY - - - - -	48
CHAPTER V.	
THE MYSTICS' CONTRIBUTION TO RELIGION—THE CONTRIBU- TION OF SPIRITUAL INSIGHT - - - -	59
CHAPTER VI.	
WANTED—A NEW BUTLER - - - -	69

## PREFACE

---

"Too far East is West" is a proverb which has its counterpart even in philosophy. One object of this little volume is to show, however inadequately, that a rigorously applied Materialism ends of necessity in Idealism—that, however they may seem to differ in their methods, Science and Religion are in the end inseparable.

The title adopted does not cover the full scope of the argument, but it draws the reader's attention to its most important illustration.

Professor Loofs, in his *Anti-Haeckel* (English edition), makes it plain that he does not deal at all with Haeckel's "standpoint," nor with his "view of the world," but merely with "the audacious statements he has made regarding Christianity and its history." My purpose is exactly the reverse. It is of Haeckel's "view of the world" that I propose to treat. For that is the one essential matter in his whole argument. It is there that he has to be met, not in his incursions into theology, a subject which he frankly admits "in the strict sense is quite out of my line." I aim here at supplying a corrective to the anti-religious interpretations that have been put on Haeckel's main thesis, and at supplying that corrective in his own words, as well as

by means of the analogous and most deliberate declarations of Herbert Spencer.

While I take the contention here expounded to be Haeckel's own contention, I desire to make it clear that for the opinions here expressed the Rationalist Press Association is to be held in no way responsible. That Association has justified its title to the name Rationalist by its catholicity in allowing this expression of opinion to be published under its auspices.

A. S. MORIES.



## CHAPTER I.

### WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION?

---

“Philosophy is life’s one match for Fate.”—MEREDITH.

WITH such an object before us as is indicated in the following pages, it might seem more fitting to postpone the attempt to answer this question to the close than to deal with it at this early stage. But while it is clear that the answer we propose to suggest cannot have its full force at the outset, it is almost necessary to indicate here the line we propose to follow, so that the leading illustrations of which the various succeeding chapters consist may be the more intelligible and their force be the better appreciated.

These illustrations, as will be seen, are taken from types of thought and methods of investigation widely separated, some of them being often regarded as mutually exclusive.

But as the religious instinct is, in one form or another, inherent in the human mind, and can be met with at its best in the strongest minds of each age, we take these extreme illustrations designedly.

We have endeavoured to reduce their hard-won convictions to what may be called their common denominator—to the conceptions, that is to say, which are vital and common to them all; and these we claim as the essence of religion—that of which all its historical forms are more or less refracted images.

There is nothing new, of course, in the idea of the simplification and condensing of religious belief. The process is a familiar one in the history of the Church. There is hardly a doctrine of the ancient creed that

has not been eviscerated of that which its pious holders once regarded as sacred and essential. In the days of the first Apostles themselves the process was already in full force. The "Second Coming," which for a time was looked for at any moment, and in the most realistic form, had, perforce, to merge itself in the larger, and to them more prosaic, movement of human history.

The story of the Final Judgment, the "*Dies irae dies illa*," with all its lurid realism, has overpowered the imagination of the Church for ages in a way that no attempt to unfold the eternal issues of human character will perhaps ever do, so that the minds of the diplomatists of Church dogma may remain comparatively easy. And yet the story is a parable from beginning to end. Anselm's "*Cur Deus Homo?*" with its forensic exactitude and logical presumption, so long dominating the Church's thought, has been superseded by the more searching question, "*Quomodo Deus Homo?*" the answer to which is really the crux of modern Christianity.

This revolution, however, has been intramural. But the course of modern thought has carried us far beyond the internal controversies of Church or creed.

The Churches have always been the home of miracle. And nothing so characterises the whole course of modern thought as the decay and steady disappearance of miracle.

Outside the bounds of the Church no well-educated person dreams of accepting any miraculous narrative. He is convinced that "whatever happens or ever happened happens naturally." This difficulty in Scripture is steadily growing. It covers not merely the miraculous narratives themselves, but the "inspiration" of the books which contain those narratives. Thus the very "seat of authority" in religion

has been undermined, and we are driven to look elsewhere for the essence and foundation of the faith. Religion, we are compelled to admit, is one of the natural outcomes of the human spirit. From the point of view of ordered thought, then, where is the essence, not merely of Christianity, but of religion itself to be found, and in what does it consist?

Many have been the attempts to define the essence of religion. That essence, we believe, can only be found in some conception or conceptions that are perfectly consistent with reason and in harmony with observed facts, and are at the same time the most universal expression of the religious instinct. Such observed facts, explanatory of and illustrated in the various historical and traditional religions, and expressed in their most condensed form, we find to be these:—

(1) The perception of the intelligibility, and finally of the unity, of the universe—"The One."

(2) The consciousness, more or less vivid, of man's own kinship with this "Unity" or "One."

These two conceptions will be found to form a touchstone for the classification of the various phases of religious belief.

Those forms which the religious instinct has assumed, and which are known as Fetichism, Polytheism, and finally Monotheism, will be found to resolve themselves, from the speculative point of view, into more or less effective and consistent modes of realising the first of these. This great series of religions which culminate in Judaism and Moham-medanism have as their common feature the tendency towards the worship of an objective and transcendent God—a God external to the worshipper, and exercising an authority kin to that of a lawgiver.

For examples of the second we turn to Brahmanism,

Buddhism, and all the various forms of ancient and modern mysticism. Their predominating thought has been the more or less vivid consciousness of the soul's own kinship with the eternal—with God. The strength of Christianity lies in its combination of both, and especially in the firmer grasp and the bolder assertion of the latter of these two truths. The feelings which gave birth to these two complementary forms of the religious instinct seem to be, as it were, engrained in the nature of man.

For we find them in very early stages of his development. Their appearance in history does not seem to be a question merely of time. We cannot say that either is the precursor or the resultant of the other. And though classifications of national or racial thought are elastic, not mechanical, the one is no doubt more characteristic of certain great divisions of the human race, and the other of others.

But both satisfy profound aspirations and answer constant demands of the human spirit. Both are undoubted manifestations of the Divine through the human heart.

If we are to give each its place in the hierarchy of ideas, we cannot hesitate to accord the place of honour to the latter of the two—not as a matter of mere individual preference, but as its spiritual and even philosophical right.

For immanence is more profound and commanding than transcendence. Kinship and sonship are more purely spiritual conceptions than mere acknowledged dependence on a creator.

The human heart yearns for that which it long since learned to call a Divine Fatherhood. That Fatherhood is the pictorial and most endearing name for a kinship which is dynamic and fundamental. And even though the thought of it should be veiled

under the cold philosophical garb of "Unity," the warrant for all that we mean by Fatherhood is still there. Science, and even philosophy, may know nothing directly of a Divine Fatherhood ; but science and philosophy combine to establish a principle of what they call "cosmic unity," which not only covers it, but in some respects may be said to bring it nearer still to our hearts than any but the most saintly mystic has ever dared to conceive. For it represents us as not only kin with the Divine, but one with it.

In doing so, Science certainly raises other and serious questions. To these we shall refer later. The one thing we desire to emphasise here is that these two main types of religious thought are not only not mutually incompatible, but are beginning to disclose their fundamental harmony, and to be seen as complementary aspects of a thought which is deeper than either and embraces both. The true Catholic religion is that which finds room for both. In doing so, it faithfully reflects the very texture of our innermost nature. For we ourselves are living epitomes of these two principles or forms of thought. We are both immanent in, and transcendent to, ourselves. And the religion that is to satisfy the rounded thought of man must assimilate and embody both.

The conception of transcendence satisfies the individualistic, objectivating element of our being. That of immanence ministers to a still deeper need, and witnesses to a still deeper truth—that of our conscious possession of, and kinship with, the Divine. In face of modern thought, the faith that embodies and balances both these principles is the faith of the future. Such a faith is entirely consonant with science, and, at the same time, expansive enough for the most devout believer. It consecrates science and makes faith rational. Further, we hope also to

show that these two conceptions are but the religious embodiments of two still more fundamental conceptions which have exercised, and still exercise, an equal command over philosophic thought. The cleavage which their application has caused in the sphere of religion is matched in the world of thought by a similar phenomenon.

The earliest problem which presented itself to the minds of thinking men was how to explain the relation between nature and that which was recognised as above nature, between the visible and the invisible, between the objective world and the subjective ego. The philosophies of the world have oscillated age after age round this problem. Of this oscillation and steady evolution we shall give a rapid sketch in Chapter IV.

The two main types of mental outlook there set forth are the very same types which are illustrated in the great divisions of religions which we have indicated here.

The world's religious thinking and the world's philosophic thinking are thus seen to be but the appropriate expressions, in their respective spheres, of the inherent, mental outlook.

If this be so, it becomes evident that religion is an equally fit subject for analysis with philosophy ; and the religion that aims at expressing the highest reason of man is the ideal religion. Christianity, if it is permanently to hold the field, must fulfil this condition. In order to effect this, it must be purged of its non-essentials. Towards this consummation modern Rationalism and science have given valuable aid.

The typical and leading examples of this aid we proceed to consider.

## CHAPTER II.

### HAECKEL'S CONTRIBUTION TO RELIGION— THE CONTRIBUTION OF SCIENCE

---

“Le philosophe doit tâter toutes choses, même les plus poétiques, avec les antennes de la pensée froide et curieuse.”—NIETZSCHE.

STRONG minds sum up in their own comprehensive and condensed experience the more scattered and timid thoughts of common men. It is this that constitutes such men not only the result and expression of the generation they are born into, but the most dominant intellectual force of their day. In the scientific world there have been many such men, who not only stood for the prevailing thought of their time, but, by a happy exercise of the imagination, discounted the future, and set other and less venturesome minds on new and prolific lines of thought. Of this type Haeckel is probably to-day the most pronounced instance that could be cited. He has been a scientific man all his days. He has lived through a time when the floodgates of scientific discovery have been wide open, and he has indulged the daring gift of generalisation to an extent which places him among the thinkers as well as the observers of his time. On what ground, however, do we speak of his “Contribution to Religion”? And what is the nature of that contribution, if any?

To enable us to answer this question it is not necessary to give any *résumé* of Haeckel's scientific work. That is written at large in many well-known

works, and spread over a long series of years. It is sufficient for our purpose to take up the parable at the point, or points, where his latest works begin to impinge, as is generally believed, on the central conception of religion. The only proviso we make at this stage is that the man who insists on treating the current dogmatic tenets of the Church as the central conceptions of religion need proceed no further with us here. The conflict of the day is not with these, but with something far more vital. It is the citadel that is at stake, not the outworks. The "miraculous" outworks of religion are to-day, indeed, ignored. Like the German colonies, they cost more to defend than they are worth. They are a constant drain on the reserves of faith. Gradually scientific discovery and literary investigation have succeeded in banishing the miraculous from shelter after shelter. One of the most persistent refuges was the sphere of what is called organic nature. Here, at least, it was believed a divine intervention must be accepted as indispensable.

Life must be a special creation, and the occasion of its first appearance a red-letter day in the annals of the divine. Alas! even here Miracle found no rest for the sole of her foot. All clear demarcation between organic and inorganic disappeared, and we were thrown back on the all-embracing doctrine of evolution, which in its protean application covers everything, from the inanimate clod to the most perfect human frame. But even then there was one unquestioned reservation to which for long no one had dreamt that science could ever assert a claim. The soul of man was surely beyond the reach of physical science. Even the keenest scientific investigators were content at this point to accept the apparently inevitable. Mind, they seemed to agree, was *sui generis*. And a new genus such as this presupposed



a new effort of the generator. Here again, however, latest science maintains, in the words of Haeckel, that "Man has no single mental faculty which is his exclusive prerogative." "Man's power of conceptual thought and of abstraction has been gradually evolved from the non-conceptual stages of thought and ideation in the nearest related mammals," and differs from them "only in degree and not in kind, quantitatively not qualitatively." One of the last barriers for faith seems here to be broken down, and the very soul of man made continuous with the instincts of the brute creation, and all these in their turn merely the outcome of a material combination.

But the last word of Haeckel is more searching still. The hitherto undisputed assumption of science has been dualistic. The sharpest investigation and keenest criticism agreed on the two fundamental factors of the universe, matter and force, or matter and motion. Given these, science could construct the universe—matter as the raw material, and energy or force as the moving power. It is here that Haeckel comes in. With him any form of dualism is intolerable. Unity or Monism is his all-embracing principle. And his special contribution to the everlasting riddle of the universe is to transfer the whole ultimate issue down to one clear point, beneath even the accepted fundamentals of his scientific brethren. The way, indeed, has been to some extent prepared for the admission of a larger and more profound conception. Physicists themselves have declared that it is becoming more and more difficult to determine the supposed immutable boundary between matter and energy. The forms of matter are found to be so rarefied and impalpable that we pass insensibly from matter to energy, and from energy to matter. Haeckel combines the two principles of the persistence of matter and the conservation

of energy under a single generalisation, which he calls "the law of substance." The discovery and establishment of this law is, he maintains, "the greatest intellectual triumph of the nineteenth century, in the sense that all other known laws of nature are subordinate to it." "Substance" is thus defined by Haeckel to be that original unitary whole whose first differentiation is into what he declares are really but two phases or conditions of itself—viz., ponderable matter and ether. The difference between these two things is described as merely a difference in the intensity of the condensation of the original simple "substance." This point in his exposition is, to all appearance, an assumption. It is of essential importance to the argument, however, to note that this ponderable matter and ether "are endowed with sensation and will," though naturally of the lowest grade; they "experience," they "strive," they "struggle." This definition is so far satisfactory, inasmuch as all that evolution afterwards shows to have been taken out of "matter" is here declared to be originally in it. And probably there is no part of his latest book so interesting, from the philosophical point of view, as that in which he sets forth with the keenest appreciation the remarkable anticipation of his fundamental conception of "substance" in the work of "the great philosopher, Baruch Spinoza." And the astonishing thing is that Mr. McCabe, his British champion, totally ignores this vital part of his teaching, and does not even name Spinoza. Now, Spinoza was a passionate Monist before the term was heard of. And the striking thing is that that powerful thinker had not had the advantage which the advance of modern science has given to the philosopher of to-day. What they are driven to by the steady compulsion of wider and wider generalisation of physical

laws Spinoza reached, we may say, through intuition, the sheer force of the higher reason. His phraseology for the two great phases of the world-substance is different from that of Haeckel and his school. Spinoza called matter and spirit but two complementary aspects or attributes of the one substance, which is identical with God. Material things and immaterial ideas are both but modes of the eternal substance, which is as close a paraphrase as possible of the philosophical position of Haeckel, while the phraseology is richer and warmer and more kin with our religious instincts. Both believe, though they express it a little differently, in "the divine nature of the world." Spinoza's own words are strikingly in accord with the teaching of Haeckel. "*Nescio*," he writes, "*cur materia divinâ naturâ indigna esset*," meaning by *materia*, of course, not the ponderable matter of the physicist, but that reality which may be regarded as the basis of the phenomenal world.<sup>1</sup> And this agreement contains much that is of large promise for the future of modern thought.

This is the point in the teaching of Haeckel which negatives entirely the charge of Materialism and Atheism so persistently hurled against him. Monism is neither Materialism nor Atheism. It is really the denial of both. And if any reader should doubt the fact as characteristic of Haeckel, let him read that

<sup>1</sup> David Hume himself, the most unmystical of men, when labouring with the cosmological argument, asks at one point, "Why may not the material universe be the necessarily existent Being?"—surely the brightest flash of mystic feeling of which Hume's severely analytical mind was capable. Or consider the strong, reverent language of the devout Lord Gifford in his own lecture on "Substance": "Said I not that the word Substance was perhaps the grandest word in any language? There can be none grander. It is the true name of God. Do you not feel with me that it is almost profane to apply the word Substance to anything short of God? God must be the very substance and essence of the human soul" (quoted by Dr. Hutcheson Stirling in his *Gifford Lectures*, p. 207).

writer's reference to Spinoza and note the unrestrained enthusiasm with which he proclaims his agreement with the most spiritual of all our modern philosophers, the "God-intoxicated" Spinoza. "In his stately pantheistic system," writes Haeckel, "the notion of the world (the universe or the cosmos) is identical with the all-pervading notion of God—is at one and the same time the purest and most rational Monism and the clearest and most abstract Monotheism. This universal 'substance,' this 'divine nature of the world,' shows us two different aspects of its being, or two fundamental attributes—matter (infinitely extended substance) and spirit (the all-embracing energy of thought). All the changes which have since come over the idea of substance are reduced on a logical analysis to this supreme thought of Spinoza's. With Goethe, I take it to be the loftiest, profoundest, and truest thought of all ages" (p. 76). And he declares succinctly (p. 8), "We adhere firmly to the pure, unequivocal Monism of Spinoza."

The thinker who can speak in terms such as these, and can do so, as Haeckel does, in the name of the most advanced modern science, so far from being a Materialist or an Atheist, makes a contribution to religion that is of the highest importance to modern thought, and must prove to be of permanent value in helping to explain "the riddle of the universe." Haeckel, indeed, in one of the closing paragraphs of his book, plainly admits all this. "I must not, however," he writes, "take leave of my readers without pointing out in a conciliatory way that this strenuous opposition [of Monism to Dualism] may be toned down to a certain degree—may, indeed, even be converted into a friendly harmony. In a thoroughly logical mind, applying the highest principles with equal force in the entire field of the cosmos—in

both organic and inorganic nature—the antithetical positions of theism and pantheism, vitalism and mechanism, approach until they touch each other.”

In almost the exact words of Herbert Spencer, he says (p. 134): “We must even grant that this essence of substance becomes more mysterious and enigmatic the deeper we penetrate into the knowledge of its attributes, matter and energy, and the more thoroughly we study its countless phenomenal forms and their evolution.” And his “conclusion” is a tacit admission that the “riddle” is, after all, more in name than in reality. “Only one comprehensive riddle now remains,” he says “—the problem of ‘substance.’ What is the real character of this mighty world-wonder that the realistic scientist calls Nature or the Universe, the idealist philosopher calls ‘substance’ or the Cosmos, the pious believer calls Creator or God?” Is anything further required to show how striking and valuable a defender Haeckel shows himself to be of the central conception of religion? Could a purely scientific writer, as such, possibly supply a more direct and unequivocal contribution to religion than such a declaration?

But there is more involved in Haeckel's teaching than even this.

One of the most important bearings of this fundamental conception is on the nature and meaning of consciousness. And it is here where, it seems to us, Haeckel and his school do not rise to the level of their own doctrine. The question (of which so much is made) whether consciousness is a physiological or a transcendental problem is comparatively needless. Consciousness is both. Science shows that consciousness is dependent for its appearance on “the normal structure of the corresponding psychic organ, the brain.” But, whatever be the physiological method

by which consciousness is enabled to appear, the content of consciousness is essentially transcendental. And to say so is not really inconsistent with the essence of the Haeckel doctrine. On the contrary, it seems to us to be its fitting and culminating expression. The physiological machinery of consciousness is but the frame of the telescope by which we see back and down into the infinite "substance" on which it and all things rest. The human consciousness is simply the divine "substance" of the world coming to self-consciousness. That of which our consciousness is conscious is the divine "substance" itself. This is where the divinity of human nature, so consonant with the teaching of Haeckel, is seen to be the true solvent of all such philosophic difficulty. We are touching the divine at every point, and whether we call it world-substance or cosmos, or by any other title which the advance of science may render more accurate and intelligible, the reality predicated is the same. We are not only in touch with the Divine; we are divine. As has been well said, "There are unfathomable depths in the human soul, because God himself is at the bottom of it." The transcendental in this deep sense cannot be avoided. It is easy for the hard materialist to say that this is mere hallucination, for no human mind can actually come into conscious contact with the Infinite. But no more can Haeckel lay his scientific finger on that "substance" which he nevertheless regards as the underlying basis of all things. "Substance," so far as scientific objectivity is concerned, is a figment of the imagination; but it is vital to his intellect, and we accept it at once as a sufficient name for that to which both science and philosophy point. On exactly similar lines we contend that the united, continuous, determinate conviction of the richest human minds as to the content of the

higher consciousness is not to be lightly brushed aside. The "ideas" of the human mind are, on the showing of the Haeckel school themselves, literally the final efflorescence of the whole evolving cosmos. They are the culminating point, so far as known, of the one undivided "substance" from which sprang ultimately the whole sum of "created" things. How are they related to this substance?—which, after all, is but Haeckel's name for what we call God. We maintain that it is absolutely consistent with the line of the Haeckel teaching to hold that these "ideas" of ours are what we call divine—that self-consciousness is consciousness of that which is part and parcel of the divine "substance." And if this be so, we have a firm scientific basis for faith and for true idealism in all its outlets, untrammelled by "dualism" of any kind. To Haeckel "substance" is the final, irreducible element of the universe, the *fons et origo* of all. And the name we may give to this final irreducible is a matter of very little moment. We call it God, and believe ourselves to be part of this divine element. Haeckel does the same under another name. Monism does not abolish, it only reaffirms, the continuous vital connection between the "substance" and its offshoots, between the human and the Divine.

This is the only truth that can preserve to us our "immortality." To Haeckel, the immortality of the soul is "the highest point of superstition." To our thinking it is the direct suggestion of his own principle. His doctrine of "substance," indeed, rather guarantees than weakens the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. He himself, for example, accepts "the idea of immortality in its widest sense." "The indestructibility and eternal duration of all that exists is not merely acceptable, but self-evident to the monistic philosopher" (p. 68).

His difficulty, of course, is with the immortality of the individual soul. But this, when analysed, simply means that the feeling of individuality or personality which we associate with the spiritual life is apparently lost at death.<sup>1</sup> Now, there is no subject on which it is so rash to dogmatise as this. The scientific man deals admittedly with appearance only. Of unchallengeable knowledge on the subject he is as destitute as anyone else. But, in the absence of any possible demonstration, it is surely a striking fact that this loss of conscious personality is the very thing which, as we shall see later, our great mystics declare to be characteristic of their ecstatic experience. They lose the consciousness of personality. They, in fact, scout the idea of its permanence in the concrete, individualistic sense in which we are accustomed to use the word "personality." They seem to feel the clinging to individual personality to be a forfeiture of the highest bliss and a profanation of the beatific vision. The scientific mind, approaching the subject, of course, from the purely physical side, declares against such a thing as a continuous personal existence after death. The factors of personality, it declares, are dissolved and disappear.

The spiritual mind professes to reach the subject from the other side, and, curiously, they meet each other half way, and find that in this thought of the disappearance of individual consciousness they are on common ground. May not the Haeckel doctrine on this point really connote just what the experience of the mystics of all time declares to be fact? Even the changing forms of matter are redeemed from annihilation by the doctrine of the conservation of energy. Similarly, the change which we call loss of conscious

<sup>1</sup> All the monistic philosophers of the century are thanatists (*Riddle of the Universe*, p. 69).



personality by no means invalidates the idea of persistence after death. With that change the mystics have long since made us familiar as matter of personal experience here and now. It is absolutely consistent with reason and science, we contend, to regard the scientific Monist's absorption into the eternal "substance" as simply his way of describing what the spiritual Monist calls absorption into the Divine Spirit. Nirvana, in short, is the spiritual realisation of Monism. If a human spirit can so abstract itself from the purely physical condition of its ordinary life, and so enter into the unseen as to lose all sense of individuality and become one with the All, may this not be a perfectly natural anticipation and foretaste of the condition which the materialist prefers to speak of as dissolution and disappearance? Involution, we must remember, not dissolution, is the true antithesis of evolution. And even if we were entitled to assume that this mysterious involution takes place at death, can any scientific man justly challenge the mystic's unvarying personal experience when it is put forward as an indication of what the involution or re-absorption really is?

Such an involution may be called death, and is at least death in the ordinary sense of the word as we know it. But it may be death only in the sense in which the new-born babe dies to its previous state, that state being henceforth to it as if it had never been. In the Monist's creed there can be no death in the sense which he endeavours to impose upon the word. Life is universal. The whole question is as to the particular form or character of that life at any particular stage of being.

The old apothegm of Paul, "In Him we live and move and have our being," was surely admirably suited to the scholarly audience he addressed at

Athens. It is marvellously suited to the tendency of latest thought. It has a philosophical as well as a spiritual side, and is equally suited to express the faith of a Monist as of a mystic.

"In water lives the fish, the plant in the earth,  
The bird in the air, in the firmament the sun,  
The Salamander resides in fire,  
And the heart of God is Jacob Böhme's element."

If in the mystic's case the loss of self-consciousness is found to be part and parcel of the soul's experience, why should it be thought incredible in this other case? If not incredible, then surely in this respect extremes meet, and wisdom is justified of all her children.

Besides, as Haeckel tells us (p. 94), "the life of the animal and the plant bears the same universal character of incompleteness as the life of man. Evolution seems, on the whole, to be a progressive improvement in historical advance, from the simple to the complex, the lower to the higher, the imperfect to the perfect." And as the merely physical evolution of man seems to be completed, it can only be to his psychical evolution that we must look for the further continuation of that great process. To such a continuation of evolution who will dare to set limits? To trace the past development of the physical organisation of man, and even the efflorescence of mind as science does, is but one half of the task prescribed by the doctrine of evolution. The mystical phenomena of human nature are a necessary consequence of human nature. These phenomena point prophetically to the future. It is quite an arbitrary proceeding to accept the theory of evolution, but at the same time to detach from it its weightiest consequence. The field of man's future evolution is the psychical. The materialistic scientists who make so much of man's past evolution, but ignore his future evolution, resemble people who retail an

anecdote, *but forget the point* (Carl du Prel, *The Philosophy of Mysticism*).

One of the most slashing critics, and at the same time self-restrained thinkers (M. J. Guyau), says: "If the unknown activity that lies at the basis of the natural world has produced in the human race a consciousness of goodness and a deliberate desire for it, there is reason to hope and to believe that the last word of ethics and metaphysics is not a negative." May we not with equally modest assurance say that, if the "substance" that lies at the basis of the natural world has produced in the human race the consciousness of a condition of thought and feeling that rises far beyond the range of common experience, that is open to all, and of which the element of conscious time is no part, and has produced at the same time in the best minds everywhere a deliberate and passionate desire for, and delight in, that consciousness, there is reason to hope and to believe that the last word of the most perfect evolutionary science does not negative the idea of the continuance of that life hereafter in some intensely real, though necessarily undefinable, manner?

To such a life we may give what formal name we choose. The more we realise it here, the more indifferent we become to all attempts at defining it, the more catholic in welcoming every form of expressing it, that may commend itself to the meditative soul. For such a union with the Divine immortality is quite an intelligible word. It is a word that attempts to describe, under the one category of endless time, a life and a condition of thought which in our own actual experience transcend time. Where demonstration is impossible, we must perforce be satisfied with the indications which our own highest experience gives us of the possibility and naturalness of

a life for which such words as "immortal" and "eternal" are as permissible and suggestive as any other.

If religion, then, means essentially recognition of the unity of the universe, and of our kinship with that unity, even the "materialist" Haeckel makes a contribution to religion that, in the present state and direction of educated thought, is of high importance. His recent book, *The Riddle of the Universe*, may seem at first sight to give the lie to such an estimate of his teaching as is here put forward. And the orthodox world has certainly represented it as hopelessly inimical to religion. With some of his references to the origin of Christianity we have no sympathy. But while there is no denying that Haeckel's teaching is quite incompatible with the authorised dogmatic faith of the Church, the fact remains that his fundamental position is essentially religious, and, as he says himself, identical with the teaching of the most spiritually-minded philosopher that ever lived—the God-intoxicated Spinoza.

### CHAPTER III.

## HERBERT SPENCER'S CONTRIBUTION TO RELIGION—THE CONTRIBUTION OF AGNOSTICISM

AGNOSTO THEO.

"I gazed on power till I grew blind.  
On power; I could not take my eyes from that."—PARACELUS.

MR. SPENCER was long the *bête noire* of a large proportion of our religiously-minded people. Indeed, many people, by no means ignorant, believe that the philosophy of Mr. Spencer boasts of giving the final quietus to everything that has hitherto been associated in the popular mind with religion. And there can be no question that the Synthetic Philosophy has permanently affected our conception of the basis of religion.

Science and philosophy in the hands of Mr. Spencer lead us easily and unaided to the borderland of the unseen. But when we begin "toiling in the presence of things which cannot be dealt with by any other power" than that higher imagination, intuitive faculty, call it what we will, which is the glory of our manhood, Mr. Spencer seems to leave us to our own resources, and to drop to earth again like a spent ball.

This is the only faculty which Mr. Spencer almost refuses to cultivate. And yet even he cannot wholly escape its cautious exercise.

His Synthetic Philosophy is a monument to individual genius such as the world has seldom seen.

For, notwithstanding the prolonged labours of a host of trained scientific collaborators, the synthesis itself is the work of a single brain, and evinces a grasp of detail, a dovetailing of endless material, coupled with a comprehensiveness of generalisation, that stamp its author as one of the thinkers of the world.

On the real issues, then, that are of never-failing vital interest to the human soul, what has Mr. Spencer to tell us? What is his definite message to the world?

Probably the shortest form in which we can epitomise his philosophy is to say that it is the apotheosis of evolution. What in our more serious moments we want to know is, What or who is it that is evolving? Why should there be—why, indeed, is there—such a process at all?

That there is not behind it all or underneath it "some far-off divine event," which sheds a meaning on it, the human spirit refuses permanently to believe. That there is at the heart of it all a presence and a purpose of which it is but the tangible expression is the instinctive feeling, if not the ineradicable conviction, of every calm, clear-thinking soul.

Why, then, does not Mr. Spencer, with his massive intellect, acknowledge and entertain this conviction? The truth is, that is exactly what he does, though naturally he uses a cautious phraseology of his own to express it. His apotheosis of evolution represents the universe, organic and inorganic, as self-contained and automatic. His successive "integration and disintegration," "evolution and involution," are but his hard modern form of the truth long ages ago discovered by the Oriental thinkers, and taught by them more poetically as the "outbreathing" and "inbreathing" of God. It is often supposed by those who have not examined Mr. Spencer's metaphysical basis or First Principles that he leaves no

room whatever for faith. The very reverse is the case. If there is one thing which Mr. Spencer has made more clear than another in this connection, it is his unshakeable belief in a Power "whose positive existence is a necessary datum of consciousness," and which, though "not capable of being brought within limits, nevertheless remains as a consciousness that is positive and is not rendered negative by the negation of limits." What Kant surrendered as knowledge he restored as belief. Spencer, strange though it may seem, would rather reverse the process. His never-resting analysis dissipates ordinary concrete and apparently positive conceptions. Conscience, "stern daughter of the voice of God," is but the ever-growing moral experience of the race. Its dictates, *à priori* to the individual, are *à posteriori* to the race. Authoritative "revelation," too, is but the symbolic representation of a purely natural process. Nothing is at first sight more spiritually disintegrating, more absolutely corrosive of all customary religious teaching, than this philosophy of evolution. But even analysis has its limits. And in the end synthesis is triumphant. For the man who is so eagle-eyed in tracking this universal symbolism pulls up at last before a "certainty" which even he declares, with intensest conviction, is "more profoundly true than any religion supposes":—

Not only is the omnipresence of something which passes comprehension that most abstract belief which is common to all religions, which becomes more distinct in proportion as they develop, and which remains after their discordant elements have been mutually cancelled; but it is that belief which the most unsparing criticism of each leaves unquestionable, or, rather, makes ever clearer. It has nothing to fear from the most inexorable logic, but, on the contrary, is a belief which the most inexorable logic shows to be more profoundly true than any religion supposes (*First Principles*, 5th ed., 1890, p. 45).

Again:—

Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more

they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty that we are ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed (*Nineteenth Century*, January, 1884).<sup>1</sup>

Could more be asked from the metaphysics of a philosophy based, as Mr. Spencer's is, on concrete facts, and not daring to launch the human spirit on that shoreless sea of unseen reality which, in spite of all castrated intellectualism, is its natural element and abiding home?

Even in this, his unmistakable attitude, he is denounced as a renegade from the principles of his own philosophy. Some of his leading disciples have proclaimed themselves his defenders against himself—as, indeed, more Spencerian than Mr. Spencer himself.

Mr. Frederic Harrison long since felt acutely the importance of Mr. Spencer's contention, and how fatal it is to the arrogant pretensions of a superficial Positivism.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As Mr. Spencer himself says in his *Facts and Comments* (chapter on Ultimate Questions), and *apropos* of a letter of Jowett's, "Considering what I have written, I might reasonably have thought that no one would call me a Materialist."

<sup>2</sup> And if Mr. Spencer's doctrine of the existence of "the Unknowable" has been so condemned by the straiter sect of his own followers as supplying (to use M. Brunetière's words) "*une base ou un fondement scientifique à la religion*," how infinitely more pregnant with religious issues is his determined declaration of the identity of this unknowable Power with the power which we call ourselves? If the one conception is the *fondement*, the other is surely the chief cornerstone of the building itself, and is being recognised as such by discerning minds everywhere. M. Brunetière has gone into this subject more deliberately still in his article, "La Métaphysique Positiviste" (in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, October 1st, 1902). He there quotes the words "*si souvent citées*" of Mr. Spencer to the effect that, "From the necessity of thinking *en relation*, it follows that the relative is itself inconceivable except as related to a real *non-relative*. If we do not postulate a non-relative reality—an absolute—the relative itself becomes absolute, which is a contradiction. And we see, by considering the trend of human thought, how impossible it is to rid oneself of the consciousness of *une chose effective*—an actuality—underlying appearances, and how from this impossibility results our indestructible belief in the existence of this thing." And, as Brunetière puts it, "the foundation of science is metaphysical, and we see without any effort of reflection or of reasoning, but without any contradiction, metaphysics re-established, if I may so say, in the very heart of Positivism."



Mr. Macpherson, Mr. Spencer's recent biographer, is evidently alive to the same fact, and seems to be almost equally disappointed with Mr. Harrison.

What, then, are Mr. Spencer's grounds for this most profound certainty which he champions so vigorously?

Nothing is more striking and suggestive in the annals of philosophical thinking than to observe its inevitable convergence on the one testing question: What is Consciousness, and what does it really tell us? This is what is called technically the Theory of Knowledge. It is the Armageddon field of all intellectual analysis. Aristotle's "*nōthi seauton*" was one of the profoundest directions ever given. For we may truly say of the human consciousness, as Tennyson says of the

"Little flower—if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is."

Mr. Spencer is characteristically careful in all that he says on this fundamental point, but his biographer is characteristically reluctant to give Mr. Spencer's phraseology its full and natural weight. "It is idle," Mr. Macpherson says, "to inquire into the ultimate nature of consciousness."

This is not the view of Mr. Spencer. And though he is remarkably careful of the phraseology to which he commits himself, yet, where controversy has intervened, we naturally get his meaning, if possible, more sharply defined still. This is the case on this very point. For hear him in his "Explanations" in the 1870 preface to his *Principles of Psychology*:—

The aggregate of subjective states constituting the mental "I" have not in themselves the principle of cohesion holding them together as a whole. But the "I" which continuously survives in the subject of those changing states is that *portion* of the Unknowable Power which is statically conditioned in special nervous structures

that are pervaded by a dynamically conditioned *portion* of the Unknowable Power called Energy.

The mind is thus not simply "a power of recognising and distinguishing feelings," which power, so far as Mr. Macpherson's version is concerned, may be merely a function of matter. It is "the I which continuously survives." It is "a *portion* of the Unknowable Power," or Substance, to use Haeckel's word. The Problem of Personality, Mr. Macpherson rightly says, is "the great difficulty which faces Idealism." It is here solved so far as Mr. Spencer's conviction is concerned. And this passage is an express refutation of Mr. Macpherson's contention, where he says:—

Self-consciousness, according to the New Kantian and Hegelian, is impossible except on the assumption that in the mind there exists a unifying spiritual principle which, so to speak, sits at the loom of time and weaves the isolated, unrelated threads of experience into an organised and coherent whole. Have we not here an illustration of the tendency of the mind to personify the processes of Nature, and convert a final product into an initial, all-controlling agent?

This "unifying spiritual principle" is exactly what Mr. Spencer insists on—"the I which continuously survives." And this "I" is directly linked on to the "Eternal Energy." Mr. Macpherson says "the basis of the system [of Idealism] is the identity of the human with the divine self-consciousness," an identity which is expressly asserted here by Mr. Spencer—if language has any meaning.

And lest this assertion by Mr. Spencer, that "the I is a portion of the Unknowable Power," should be challenged as in this bald form a mere passing dictum, let us follow his reasoning a little more in detail, and we find the grounds of his "dictum."

There are two great philosophical paths by which we are brought face to face with this riddle of the universe—those, namely, of psychology and objective science.

By the former line of investigation Mr. Spencer

finds that the one thing the human mind is directly conscious of is will, force, our own will—that is to say, as the one form in which we directly experience force, “Force as we are conscious of it when by our own efforts we produce changes.”<sup>1</sup>

By the method of objective science we reach a similar conclusion. The conservation of energy and the whole modern teaching of science compel us to believe in an Eternal Energy underlying all things. This Eternal Energy is that “from which all things proceed.” This is the *cul de sac* into which all the wonderful unification of scientific thought lands us, and from which there is no escape. And when Mr. Spencer declares in most carefully-chosen language that “it is the same power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness,” we do not require his formal *imprimatur* to assure us that in the most fundamental conception of all religion, in that truth which has made religion possible, he is not only “not against us,” but “for us.”<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Spencer says it wells up in us under the form of consciousness, and he calls this consciousness of force—and otherwise self-consciousness. Now, what does this familiar word “self-consciousness” really mean? What can it mean but that we ourselves stand, as it were, outside of ourselves, beside and

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to notice how the same effort to define to the intellect the content of consciousness takes shape, in Schopenhauer's case, in the definition of the world as will—the “will to live,” in short, as the metaphysical substance of the world and of man. It is but the same idea as that which Spencer more vaguely describes as force. Schopenhauer approximates the force more nearly to every-day human experience. And this apparently slight difference in expression at the start leads him directly into moral considerations of the most searching kind, and ultimately into his pessimistic philosophy.

<sup>2</sup> Haeckel, too (as his translator and champion says), “maintains that the force associated with the atom or the cell is the same fundamentally as that which reveals itself in our consciousness” (*Haeckel's Critics Answered*, p. 54).

apart in some way from "ourselves," as we still call this "object" of consciousness, and feel its moving, throbbing life in our spirits? Is it not, in short, a form of the God-consciousness? As T. H. Green says: "It is the irreducibility of this self-objectifying consciousness to anything else that compels us to regard it as the presence in us of the mind for which the world exists."

As a French writer says: "For the old doctrine of a consciousness absolutely one, the new psychology substitutes the formula 'continuity of consciousness.'" How can we ourselves be both the subject and the object of consciousness at one and the same moment, except on the principle, as Mr. Spencer puts it, that our "I" is just a "portion of the Unknowable Power" which thus, as some writers express it, "comes to self-consciousness in man"?

Mr. Spencer himself deals thus elsewhere with the direct psychological evidence, and seems again to suggest, or at least imply, the same idea. He says, *First Principles*, p. 88:—

Besides that definite consciousness of which logic formulates the laws, there is also an indefinite consciousness which cannot be formulated. Besides complete thoughts, and besides thoughts which, though incomplete, admit of completion, there are thoughts *which it is impossible to complete*, and yet which are still real in the sense that that they are normal affections of the intellect.

And it is specially interesting to turn to his own version of the actual historical origin of the religious consciousness as it slowly rises into clearness and definiteness.

'Unlike the ordinary consciousness,' he says, "the religious consciousness is concerned with that which lies beyond the sphere of sense"; and the rise of this religious consciousness, he contends, "begins among primitive men with the belief in 'a double,' belonging to each individual, which, capable of wandering

away from him during life, becomes his ghost or spirit after death ; and from this idea of a being eventually distinguished as supernatural there develop in course of time the ideas of supernatural beings of all orders *up to the highest.*"

This conclusion is his reading of an immense number of facts gathered from the traditions of uncivilised peoples. It is, in short, an attempt to trace the natural history of the God-consciousness in man. And to challenge Mr. Spencer is, as usual, but to bring out his meaning more clearly. "Surely," exclaims Mr. Harrison, "if the primitive belief [in a material double] was absolutely false, all derived beliefs must be absolutely false."

"This objection looks fatal," replies Mr. Spencer ; "and it would be fatal were its premises valid. Unexpected as it will be to most readers, the answer here to be made is that at the outset a germ of truth was contained in the primitive conception—the truth, namely, that the Power which manifests itself in consciousness is but a differently conditioned form of the Power which manifests itself beyond consciousness." This shows Mr. Spencer's view to be that the earliest form of what ultimately is seen to be God-consciousness is simply the direct consciousness of our own spirits. In other words, it is through the narrow channel of our self-consciousness that we gradually become conscious of "that which lies beyond the sphere of sense," and which we call God. The latter consciousness is but the developed form of the earlier. What is this but an admission that it is practically impossible to draw a sharp line of demarcation between the one and the other ? The Inscrutable Power is the same in both cases. And Mr. Spencer, so far from denying or dissipating the fundamental ideas of religion, shows them to be stereotyped in all

nature and enthroned in the very citadel of our own being. Not only is the evolution philosophy thus robbed of its terrors for many devout souls, but it shows us philosophy and religion joining hands in a much more directly religious truth than that which Mr. Spencer seems formally to enunciate—in short, in a common declaration of the essential unity of the Divine and human natures.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Mr. Spencer, when he sums up his whole philosophy and defines its relation to the Unseen, strains his vocabulary to find the most unequivocal terms possible in which to assert its intensely religious basis. Passages to this effect might be quoted in abundance. Take this as a sample:—

The spiritualist, setting out with the same data [as the materialist], may argue with equal cogency that, if the forces displayed by matter are cognisable only under the shape of those equivalent amounts of consciousness which they produce, it is to be inferred that these forces, when existing *out* of consciousness, are of the same intrinsic nature as when existing *in* consciousness. And that so is justified the spiritualistic conception of the external world as consisting of something essentially identical with what we call mind. (*First Principles*, p. 558.)

And though in this same passage he seems to accord equal validity to the materialist argument, he seems to us rather to overstretch his phraseology in the latter connection. For when he says that “what exists in consciousness under the form of feeling is *transformable into* an equivalent of mechanical motion, and, in consequence, into equivalents of all the other forces which matter exhibits,” the word “transformable” seems to connote more than is legitimately implied or required. It would surely be truer to his

<sup>1</sup> As has been well said, “Every man is in a very true sense essentially of divine nature, even as Paul teaches, ‘Theion genos’; . . . but no man is conscious of himself as divine; otherwise expressed, in no man does this divine energy directly identify itself in consciousness with the source from which it proceeds. ‘In fact, while we say and are compelled to say ‘I,’ while we speak and cannot but speak of our Self, in reality the essential content or nature of this Self, of this subjective noumenon, is veiled from us.’”

own teaching to say that what exists in consciousness is capable of being manifested in an equivalent of motion. And when he adds that the phenomena of consciousness are "therefore material phenomena," would it not be more consistent with Mr. Spencer's own positions elsewhere to say that these phenomena of consciousness in the form of feeling, when looked at from outside, are *recognisable* through, or suggested by, material phenomena?

Mr. Spencer, we submit, is fundamentally an Idealist. He links the human with the Divine; and this, as his biographer admits, is the "basis of Idealism." He is not an Idealist, of course, to the detailed extent to which such a thinker as Lotze and others of the German school are. Lotze deliberately professes to "reconstruct an idealistic philosophy on a materialistic basis." And he and his school do so with very great power and on lines that are essentially Spencerian. They point out that the inseparable relationship of every material element to every other by the law of what is called causal connection presupposes the inner unity of all material elements. "The scientific interest," Lotze declares, "is satisfied by the assumption of such elements or atoms as are actually indivisible in our experience. But the assumption of a plurality of extended elements, even if they are conceived as infinitely small, can never be a *final* assumption of thought. We must give up either the unity of the atoms or their extension. We must conceive atoms as centres of force, each of which is a starting-point for the working of the *original substance*." This inter-relationship of the world according to law is the objective basis of the philosophy of religion.

This is the fact which, so far from making the idea of God superfluous, makes it a necessity of thought.

For even the supposed mechanical conception of nature, if rigorously followed out, lands us in a perfect unity, whose only rational name is God. And Idealism thus, from this point of view, may be said to rest on and spring from Materialism.

Nothing, however, is more persistently characteristic of Mr. Spencer, once he lays down the all-important position we have referred to, than his determined agnosticism as to all beyond. The Unknowable Power is to us—while the most absolute of certainties—utterly inscrutable.

Our object here, presumptuous as it may seem, is to show, if we can, that the implications of this position of Mr. Spencer are deeper and more commanding than at first sight appears. And we are the more convinced of this when we find a striking convergence going on among Christian thinkers towards the form which this implication takes in Mr. Spencer's teaching. Purely Christian thinkers, of course, start from quite a different standpoint. And the movement of their thought is, in form at least, a movement of surrender—in reality, a movement of retiral and concentration. But concentration always takes place round vital points. And the conception which is steadily being accepted by the strongest Christian thinkers as the most central, illuminating, and prolific of all is just that which, we maintain, is more than implied, is directly expressed in Mr. Spencer's philosophy—the essential unity of the Divine and human natures.

We have it in the well-known passage already cited, where he tells us that "it is this same Power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness." It is the *same* Power that is subjective as well as objective. And though he here interposes the word "*form*" of consciousness to indicate its subjective



form, we find elsewhere, as already cited, that "the 'I' is that *portion of the Unknowable Power.....*" So that, making every allowance for the limitations of language (and in no case is there less need for this than in Mr. Spencer's), the identity of the Divine and the human is here deliberately asserted.

The importance of the fact is evident. In one form or other Mr. Spencer is constantly insisting on it. He speaks of the tendency towards the identification of "Being as present to us in consciousness with Being as otherwise conditioned beyond consciousness." His own farewell word to us is to the same effect:—

And then the consciousness itself, what is it during the time that it continues? And what becomes of it when it ends? We can only infer that it is a specialised and individualised form of that infinite and eternal energy which transcends both our knowledge and our imagination, and that at death its elements lapse into the infinite and eternal energy whence they were derived. (*Facts and Comments*, p. 203.)

This contention of Mr. Spencer is one of the bravest things yet done by strictly analytical thought. Unfortunately, Mr. Spencer, after he discovers the existence of this great Power, refuses to turn his gaze on its face, or attempt to learn any more about it. Now, this function of the human spirit, called by metaphysicians consciousness, cannot be isolated and castrated in the way Mr. Spencer attempts to do. To say that the *existence* of this Power may be present to us in consciousness, but that His nature as he affects this same consciousness cannot by any possibility be present to us there, seems more an unconscious subterfuge of logic than a contribution to philosophy.

Mr. Spencer's declaration clearly implies that we are in some kind of conscious contact with God. But on what psychological principle can he justly contend that the only form in which this "eternal energy from which all things proceed" can well up in us is

that of a bare consciousness of His *existence*? God has no meaning to our minds as mere existence. To speak of God's existence apart from His Being is to be the slave of words, not the possessor of ideas. And the question at this stage is not whether we can form a complete conception of the being of God in our minds. That is at all times impossible. The question is: If God touches us at all, is it rational to suppose that He does so as "mere" *existence*? Our neighbour's existence wells up in us as a fact in consciousness. If we can attain to a knowledge of our neighbour's being and character, whose existence is so apart from our own, and draws its life directly and independently from the same source as our own, shall we not much more be able to attain to some knowledge of that eternal energy with which our own is so interfused, and in which at every moment it lives and moves and has its being? On the contrary, with the windows of our souls clear, how can we escape that consciousness, avoid that knowledge?

Is "the categorical imperative" not an equally real "welling-up" in us of that eternal energy from which this, as "all things" else, "proceed"? If, as Mr. Spencer says, force in us is the "correlative" of the universal Power beyond us, is not the ideal in our minds the "correlative" of the ideal mind beyond us? (*First Principles*, p. 579). No theory of the slow evolution of the human conscience from the interaction with our environment can remove God from the process. That environment is itself but a form of the eternal energy. Are we to measure the depth of that well which so fills our consciousness by the first trickle that reveals its presence? Shall we not rather look for its measure in the highest moments of the highest types of our race, those in whom the unity of the Divine and human natures is all but a direct and

conscious experience? The moral ideal in man is the correlative and counterpart of the Divine Ideal outside of man, and is as clearly and directly evidence of God as force, as we experience it in consciousness, is evidence of the Divine Power beyond consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

Mill rightly contended that, if this Divine Power is to be understood as but the infinite degree of what we know in our human experience as power, we are entitled to do the same with the Divine Goodness and Justice. Infinite Goodness, in short, must still be goodness—which is the self-same conclusion as that more Platonically maintained by Maurice. Thus is the essential kinship of God and man vindicated both by philosopher and theologian.

Is the metaphysician's cold conclusion to be taken as the measure of the attainment of man's spirit towards the unseen, and the rapt communion of the mystic to be treated as mere hallucination?

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the foregoing I find the following suggestion of a similar idea in the slashing critical work of Marie Jean Guyau, entitled *The Non-Religion of the Future*, p. 386: "According to Spencer, the unknowable itself is not absolutely unknowable. Among the mysteries which become more mysterious as they are more deeply reflected upon there will remain, Spencer thinks, for man one absolute certitude—that he is in the presence of an infinite and eternal energy which is the source of all things. No religion can stop with the bare affirmation of the existence of an eternal energy or infinity of energies. It must maintain the existence of some relation between these energies and that of the moral impulse in mankind." Is it not remarkable, too, to find among the earliest of the Greek thinkers, busy with the same irresistible search after God, so close an *alter ego* of Mr. Spencer as was Xenophanes? The vivid description of that thinker given fifty years since may be read to-day, word for word, as a true portrait of our own great philosopher: "Xenophanes was no atheist, but a very earnest theist. He asserted a Being. If he had been asked, 'What Being?' he would have owned that he could not reply. He could only say what he was not. He approached the border of negation, but he approached it manfully and reverently; therefore he did not pass it. He pointed out a void which he could not fill. That alone would have been a reason for feeling gratitude to him. But he also saw the way to a radical truth." (Maurice's *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, p. 110.)

If so, what a deliberate invitation and encouragement to all revelation-mongers! The human mind refuses to content itself with merely believing that "He is." As long as thinkers take up that attitude, so long will "special revelations" flourish and abound. But let thinkers declare, as they are entitled to do, that the mind of man is in real contact with God, even though it should legitimate every religion under the sun, and Christianity will then take its true place as the high-water mark of man's vision of God.

Ruskin had a metaphysical and analytical intellect as keen as any man's. Listen to his criticism of Spencer in this connection thirty years since:—

It will not, I trust, be thought violation of courtesy to a writer of Mr. Spencer's extending influence if I urge on his attention the danger under which metaphysicians are always placed of supposing that investigation of the *processes* of thought will enable them to distinguish its *forms*. As well might the chemist who had exhaustively examined the conditions of vitreous fusion imagine himself therefore qualified to number or class the vases bent by the breath of Venice.

Mr. Spencer has determined, I believe, to the satisfaction of his readers, in what manner thoughts and feelings are constructed; it is time for him now to observe the *results* of the construction; whether native in his own mind, or discoverable in other intellectual territories.

That is to say, the true problem is not with what degree of consecutive exactness can we track the process of conscious thought, but what does conscious thought at its unmolested highest teach us? What, as matter of historical fact, has it taught the best and strongest minds the world has known?

Turn to the highest stages of human imagination. The mystics were rarely metaphysicians. They had and have a gift before which mere metaphysical acumen is comparatively incompetent. Mr. Spencer's statistics tell of the slow trend of human thought. The mystics read their own spirits. Mysticism discounts the intellectual labour of later generations and pierces straight to the truth itself. It is this

thought of the identity, in some sense, of the soul with God that has fed their souls, and lifted them into their rapt communion. Are we to be told that this spiritual ecstasy is but "a bubble of the blood"? The keenest analysis, we have seen, discloses at last truths which are enough to tax the powers and fire the imagination of the most exalted mystics. Are we to be told that just when man is at his highest he most misses the Divine? On the contrary, by the actual pressure of modern thought, impelled alike by science, psychology, and religion, are we not beginning to see that this recognition of God in man is not only on all fours with the most advanced scientific teaching, but solves psychological problems and satisfies religious aspirations with a completeness that nothing else can match?

Have not our philosophers and metaphysicians, from Plato to Kant and Spencer, from whatever point of view they try to answer the riddle of the universe, and after each exhausting the ingenuities of his intellect, found themselves driven at last "in a mathematical necessity" to fall back on the only satisfying solution; found that if they calmly, as it were, place their open palm on the world's breast, they feel the very heart of God beating through it, and at once arise and worship?

And although this satisfaction is only to be reached by the sacrifice of much phraseology that is naturally dear not only to the popular mind but to the devout Christian soul, that is a loss which is more than made good. The fact remains that we are capable of coming into a true consciousness of God, and, indeed, cannot escape from it. And as Mr. Spencer says:—

This inscrutable existence which science in the last resort is compelled to recognise as unreached by its deepest analysis of matter, motion, thought, and feeling, stands towards our general conception of things in substantially the same relation as does the creative power asserted by theology. And when theology, which has already dropped

many of the anthropomorphic traits, eventually drops the last of them, the foundation-beliefs of the two must become identical.

We do not profess to be authorised expounders of Mr. Spencer's definite but cautious pronouncements; neither would his friends' repudiation of such a commentary as ours much trouble us. Mr. Spencer, in such utterances as these, is (and he takes no pains to hide that he is) what we Christians call "feeling after God, if haply he may find him." It is generally felt that he does not venture beyond the vestibule of the temple, but he is on holy ground. His striking declaration of the identity of our human consciousness with the Divine Presence shows him to be very near to the centre of the deepest religious faith, and (with reverence be it said) is but a philosophical way of expressing the profoundest spiritual conviction of Jesus himself. "I am in the Father and the Father in me." "I am in my Father and ye in me, and I in you," the divine element overshadowing, suffusing, and inspiring all nature. As one discerning writer says: "This grand and comforting doctrine of the incarnate presence of God in each man's consciousness is rapidly becoming the dominant conception of God in all the greatest religious teachers." And faith, which in spiritual things is open vision, may enter in and worship where philosophical intellectualism declines to commit itself to anything so presumptuous.

Even Comte's *Grande Être*, Humanity, in so far as it betokens reality at all, is but his objective method of reaching the realisation of this God-consciousness. It is the result of that instinctive yearning after some permanent object of affection that can only be satisfied by some form or other of the God-consciousness. For, as Mr. Spencer says, "it owes whatever there is in it of beauty to that Infinite Eternal Energy out of

which humanity has quite recently emerged, and into which it must in course of time subside."

As has been well said, "In that newest phase of natural religion called Positivism there is a more real apprehension of the natural unity of humanity, both as to its rootage in the past and its progressive life in the future, than is possessed by many professing Christians; but its conception of humanity is closed in by the gates of Hades, on both sides of the gulf of time. Its Gospel of Humanity is wanting in the essential element of Divinity, in which alone can be found the reality, promise, and potency of eternal progressive life for the individual no less than for the race, as the Son of God. Christian faith takes nothing away from Positive conceptions; it comprehends, fulfils, and eternalises them."

To Spinoza this same conviction of the presence of God in the heart of man was irresistible. It swamped all else, and earned for him the title of the "God-intoxicated" man.

Was this conception of the unity of the Divine and human natures not just the essence, too, of the famous early controversy over the person of Christ? In the light of modern Christian development we come to see that Athanasius and his victorious allies digged deeper than they knew, and that (to change the metaphor) in the casket of their triumphant dogma they succeeded in preserving intact to later ages the symbol of a truth which nothing else could have so well preserved. The instinct of the Church's strongest thinkers prevailed, and they succeeded in stamping on the Church's heart for the ensuing fifteen hundred years the tremendous truth that very God and very man had, in that unique form at least, come together. The God-man became to believing souls the intelligible symbol of the Divine Presence in the race of which he and

they were alike members; and that achievement was worth all the struggle it entailed.

Mineralogists tell us that the most precious diamond is but a condensed globule of intensely heated vapour, thrown up in one of those wild eruptions to which our earth is subject; and they point us, in evidence, to the fact that very often, when transplanted from its native bed to the colder and more temperate regions, the diamond bursts into a thousand fragments, and merges itself with the circumambient air.

So with the triumphant dogma of Athanasius. Called into being by the deep need of the human soul, it was cradled in wild controversy and matured on the field of battle. It has been the object of the Church's passionate attachment ever since. Though it has assumed degraded forms in degraded times, it has survived intact, to become at last the object of the coolest and most unrelenting criticism, until now it begins to burst its limits and expand into a universal truth, revealing in our human nature an inherent glory else unseen, and lifting all humanity into Divine fellowship and communion.

On Mr. Spencer's own showing, then, and utilising his own deliberate admissions, we see no ground on which he can consistently object to the construction of earnest practical religious faith. For we are then merely following his own principle, and "interpreting this great single induction *deductively*." Subject always to the inevitable Spencerian rider that man is in no sense "the measure of the Infinite," or to the equally decisive declarations of Paul that He "dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto," "whom no man hath seen or can see," there is nothing theoretically inconsistent with a strong rational religious faith. The Spencerian faith, that final truth of the Spencerian philosophy, is really what is called



Panentheism. It is a consciousness of God which, to use his own words, "gives the religious sentiment the widest possible sphere of action." "Every man may properly consider himself as one of the myriad agencies through whom works the Unknown Cause. And when the Unknown Cause produces in him a certain belief, he is thereby authorised to profess and act out that belief." Such a faith by no means banishes the thought of God's transcendence, properly understood; but it brings God so near to us as to irradiate our whole life with his presence, and make us rejoice in his perpetual inspiration. To the man who holds this faith

"Earth's crammed with heaven  
And every common bush afire with God."

Mr. Spencer would probably have scouted all association with so distinctly religious a conception as this. But the unity of the Divine and human natures is a religious as well as a philosophical idea. And the quotations here given, and the considerations naturally suggested by them, show, we submit, that to the promulgation of this doctrine Mr. Spencer must be acknowledged as directly contributory. His phraseology is characteristically metaphysical, and his caution is consistently Agnostic. But the thing signified is essentially the same. And, if this contention be sound, Mr. Spencer has earned that which he neither wrought for nor hoped for—the lasting thanks of every Christian thinker.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HEGEL'S CONTRIBUTION TO RELIGION— THE CONTRIBUTION OF PSYCHOLOGY

---

“The soul in some way—how, we know not—identical with God.”  
—TENNYSON.

In previous chapters we endeavoured to show that the great modern exponents of the purely scientific and materialistic attitude of mind had reached a conclusion so profound and suggestive as to constitute the basis of an idealistic philosophy.

Spencer's declaration of the identity of the power of which we are conscious in ourselves (as force, will, or energy) with the great Power or energy outside of us, strikes one, when we first encounter it in his writings, as a boulder from a higher latitude, a meteoric stone from a world beyond his philosophical range. Yet there it is—propounded and reiterated—though not, we venture to think, with his full customary realisation, or at least admission, of its philosophical import.

The object of this chapter is to show that this same conclusion was reached long ago by minds equally powerful with that of Spencer, and on lines perfectly distinct from his, and at first sight apparently quite opposed in their direction. Purely psychological thinkers, occupying a position of perfect aloofness towards all schools of thought, and dealing directly with the elemental energies of human nature, have in their more abstract way been equally compelled to proclaim the same truth, which we cannot but regard,

therefore, as the greatest generalisation of modern times.

The long, slow outcome of Western thought, from the days of Plato, and even Thales, to those of Kant and Hegel, and the whole modern schools of Western Europe, is just the slow but steadily growing apprehension of this same truth, veiled, no doubt, in the garb of metaphysics and psychology, but, when stripped of its technicalities and cleared from its haze, seen to be absolutely one with the truth discerned by Haeckel and Spencer. Nay, more. By the very necessity of the case, the purely psychological thinker, when he does reach his conclusion, states it in a form that is more comprehensive still than either of the others, and shows them to be but illustrations in their own sphere of a great dynamic fact that is part and parcel of the very being of man.

It would be endless to attempt to trace in detail the long, slow movement of human thought which has finally culminated in this conclusion. But, in order to make the conclusion more intelligible, it is almost necessary to point out the two main lines on which the movement has proceeded, dealing, as they do, respectively with the objective and the subjective worlds—with the thinking being and the object thought.

At one time, and among particular nations, and especially in the earlier stages of thought, the influence of the objective world naturally predominated, at another the subjective. In both cases the human spirit was searching for the same thing—seeking more or less consciously an access to the Divine Spirit.

It is the generalisation which both have finally reached that now throws back a light that gives every step of the movement a meaning, and shows them all to have been directly or indirectly contributing to the slowly evolving conclusion.

In *Egypt*, for example, the objective world was fatally victorious. There was not sufficient intellectual reaction in the Egyptian mind. The thinking spirit was dwarfed and intimidated by the terrors and immensities of Nature. Egypt, therefore, cannot be said in strictness to have left us any philosophy. In *India* it was exactly otherwise. The Indians produced no history. Their writings, which are psychological and religious, are really their history. Their spiritual passion, their joy in the soaring, seeing power of the human spirit, is the special and valuable contribution of India to the world's grasp of the Divine. In *China*, on the other hand, the sense of the invisible and ideal seems almost to have been absent. But this cannot really be the case. Laotse's teaching was kin with Indian and later Western thought. But Confucius was the typical Chinese mind. And the teachings of Confucius are not a philosophy at all. They are but the hard-baked fossils from a soil on which a long anterior philosophy once flourished. Practical maxims and ceremonial directions are not philosophy; neither are they religion. They are but—in Bacon's phrase—its translation into the vulgar tongue. Confucius inculcated reverential forms. The ancient thinkers of China had more or less clearly discerned that, in whose presence reverence was the only fitting attitude of spirit. Confucius taught rules of conduct between man and man. The ancient thinkers had grasped the principle of reason and justice of which all rules of conduct are but working formulæ. This reason was the divinest thing Confucius knew. This is not a large or very vitalising contribution to human thought. But it contained an element of the ideal. It sprang from the moral vision of that ancient people. A great nation has lived on it for ages. Even at the lowest estimate, it is an illustration on a large scale

of the saying that "it is marvellous in what a comparatively exhausted receiver the Divine spark will continue to burn." At the highest estimate, it was an illustration of astonishing devotion, not to the vivid conception of a Divine Being, but to what we may call the metaphysical principle (the idea, as Plato afterwards called it) of law, order, duty. And in so far it entitles Chinese thought to a humble place in the pantheon of Philosophy.

*To the Persian mind*, again, the spiritual world seems to have been its native atmosphere. And it is surely striking to notice that it was through the exercise of their naturally keen moral sense that they rose to the conception of the Eternal Spirit. Is it not in reality a curious anticipation of one of the modern declarations of European philosophy, in which Kant acknowledges the Categorical Imperative as the most commanding evidence to man of the Eternal Spirit, of which our own is an abiding echo? Was its highest spiritual conception, of which the most fitting symbols they could find were light and fire, not an anticipation even of the Christian conception of Him "Who is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all"? Yet Zoroaster failed to find a solution of the moral difficulty of the world. But who are we, with our Satan and our story of the Fall, that can afford to smile contempt at the Ahriman of the Persian theology?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a book on *The Ideals of the East*, just published by a Japanese author (London: John Murray; 5s. net; 1903), is to be found a very discerning confirmation of the general view here taken. The author, Kakasu Okakura, emphasises the unity of Asia, "the love for the ultimate and universal which is the common thought and inheritance of every Asiatic race," and finds in "Arab chivalry, Persian poetry, Chinese ethics, and Indian thought a common life, bearing in different regions different characteristic blossoms, but nowhere capable of a hard and fast dividing line." Speaking of his own special subject, the art of Japan, he says: "The history of Japanese art becomes the history of

*Buddhism*, again, was the great Protestantism of the East. And in its philosophical aspect our Western Protestantism pales its ineffectual fires before it altogether. Buddhism not only reasserted with a vehemence and passion that have astonished the world, the truth of which its ancient predecessor had been a great efflorescence—the truth, namely, that there was a Divine strength in the human spirit, a power of piercing to the unseen, and of true communion with the Eternal Spirit. It carried that faith to a point not even yet dreamed of by the ordinary Western mind.

As F. D. Maurice says :—

European sages in the last century and in the present have cried out: "When will philosophy break loose from the fetters which priests have imposed upon it?" Philosophy in Asia performed that task 2,000 years ago. It threw off the yoke which was become quite intolerable. It affirmed that man's soul is capable of unlimited expansion. It claimed for that soul the homage due to a divinity. It made no mere idle boast of power. It actually won the allegiance of multitudes. (*Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, p. 53.)

Or, to use the words of Professor Rhys Davids :—

For the first time in the history of the world, Buddhism proclaimed a salvation which each man could gain for himself, by himself, in this world, during this life, without having the least reference to God or Gods, either great or small.<sup>1</sup>

This conviction was a tremendous advance on anything previously attained or attempted. The only thing that can give it a reasonable explanation to our minds is the belief that its founder, at least, and his

Asiatic ideals—the beach where each successive wave of Eastern thought has left its sand and ripple as it beat against the national consciousness."

<sup>1</sup> Not only so, but, as M. Guyau says, "the Hindu books are the most extraordinary example of moral symbolism. The entire world appears to the Buddhist as the realisation of the moral law, since in his view beings take rank in the universe according to their virtues or vices, mount or descend on the ladder of life according to their moral elevation or abasement. Buddhism is, in certain respects, an effort to find in morals a theory of the universe." (*Non-Religion of the Future*, p. 170.)

immediate followers, felt the passionate inspiration of this very principle, whose slow possession by the human spirit we are attempting to trace, the affinity of their own spirits with the Eternal Spirit. In this light what has often been called mere Atheism was but Mysticism become conscious of itself, and exercising the spiritual strength which intense consciousness of the Divine always supplies.

Even when we come to *Greece*, the great forerunner and inspirer of the European intellect, what a long process of vacillating thought do we find! The philosophical and scientific and psychological instincts are all there. At all hazards the Greek felt that he must find the reason or cause or single idea (if there was one) that lay at the root of things. Water, air, earth, fire, even number, were successively set forth as the one secret of the visible universe. But these early Greek physicists were more poets than physicists. They looked, and dreamed, and allegorised; but the era of patient observation was not yet. By-and-bye, however, they began to be conscious of laws or an order which seemed to govern the inner world of their own minds. And this conception of the laws of thought is of interest here, not for its details, but because it was, so far as it went, a true intuition—a direct attempt at the analysis of human consciousness. As such, it was the opening of a new and most suggestive channel of inspiration as to the very Being that is at the centre of the universe. "Know thyself" contained the possibility of a true knowledge of the Divine.

Plato was the first mediator between the two great factors of the world of thought. He set forth in the strength of his own spirit, and endeavoured to enter and breathe the atmosphere of the Divine. Plato the Seer came down from the Mount like Moses the

Legislator, but not with tables of stone to be a working code for a hard-hearted people. Plato, too, felt the Spirit of the Eternal coursing through his own soul, and, with the instinct of the poet and the seer, he bodied it forth in thoughts that have ever since been the accepted foundation of all spiritual philosophy. As has been well said of him, "Plato's abstractions seem to become for him not merely substantial things in themselves, but little short of living persons, and constituting together a sort of divine family or hierarchy with which the mind of the individual, so far as it is reasonable and really knows, is in communion and correspondence." Plato faced the problem of duality, and minimised no side of the difficulties connected with it. He set all his successors on the right track towards its solution. From Plato down, it would be a task too minute to attempt to follow the course of thought in detail. Enough to point out that from his time, with varying intensity, each side of this great antinomy came to the front. It was this double consciousness in its most intense form that was found in the pure, strong vision of Jesus, the profoundest and *most practical of all the mystics*. The truth which fuses these two sides of the human consciousness together into a great moral and spiritual force was not only implicit but even explicit in his teaching. Jesus was no speculator. But the intuitive mystical element in the Jewish nature had come to a climax in him. He saw and felt intensely this union of the Divine and human natures. It was this that he lived to teach and died to attest. "I and my Father are one." "That ye (His disciples) may be one, *even as we are one.*" And if this is the truth for which the religion of Jesus stands, and of which it was the first complete assertion, what a light it throws on the character and person of Jesus!



How is it conceivable or consistent with any just notions we can form of a Divine economy, that an emanation of deity of a kind previously unheard of should have to appear among men, in order to teach us authoritatively a truth which *lay in the direct line of human thought and investigation*? Such an idea, instead of emphasising, tends rather to nullify the principle of the Divine self-manifestation.

Paul could boldly speak of men as "the temple of God," and to very poor specimens of mankind did he address these pregnant words. Even uneducated Peter could describe the object of the Christian life in such mystical words as these: "That ye might be partakers of the Divine nature."

But *the Church* for ages almost smothered this essential truth under a mass of dogmas and symbols and organisation such as the world has hardly seen matched elsewhere.

*The Reformation* (to take a long leap forward) was essentially, so far as it went, a reassertion of this inherent dignity and glory of the human spirit.

*Descartes'* "I think, therefore I am," and *Schopenhauer's* "I will, and that is the essential element not only of my being, but of all spiritual existence," were fresh reassertions of the inalienable force of the human spirit, and did much to hasten the inevitable conclusion.

*Spinoza's* whole work was an unmatched expression of this great reassertion, but the pantheistic monism in which it culminated was, in his day, too absolute a diet for daily food. *Kant's* doctrine of the generative power of the human spirit as the creator and fashioner of all that can be called true knowledge was the nearest approach that had been made since the days of Plato to the solution of the riddle of philosophy. A discerning writer (*Schwegler*) says of *Kant*:—

As regards the thing-in-itself that lies behind the appearance of

sense, Kant, in the first edition of his work, expressed himself as if it were possible that *it* and *the Ego* might be *one and the same thinking substance*. This thought, which Kant only threw out as a conjecture, has been the source of the whole subsequent evolution of philosophy.

But it is when we come to *Hegel*, and study his capacious grasp of the whole problem, that we find the master-mind able to gather up the separate threads of previous philosophic thought and bind them together by a piercing insight and bold generalisation that is nothing else than a reassertion of this intuitive conjecture of Kant, which we take to be the greatest generalisation of modern times.

Now, we do not pretend to break down Hegel for popular consumption. The 1,200 somewhat verbose pages<sup>1</sup> in which *The Secret of Hegel* has been disclosed to English readers are enough to deter any ordinary man from the attempt. But, after all, the secret, as it is called, is there. And, despite the caution as to the impracticability of attempting to convey a general idea of a modern philosophic system for the benefit of "well-informed people," we venture to see in this *Secret of Hegel*, the most commanding analysis of that very consciousness and self-consciousness yet made by any philosopher, and the most daring transference of the results of that analysis to the curtain of the Infinite, to the very mind of God.

As the author of *The Secret of Hegel* says, "that process of self-consciousness strikes the keynote of the whole method and matter of Hegel" (p. 78).

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Stirling's style, in its alliterative, accumulative, and accentuated ponderosity, is most irritating. It is not confined to *The Secret of Hegel*. Here is a passage taken at random from his Gifford Lectures, p. 279: "It is really very odd, but Hume is never for a brief instant aware that in that he has answered his own cardinal, crucial, and climacteric question. The immediate nexus, the express bond, the very tie which he challenged you and me and the whole world to produce, he actually at that very moment produces himself, holds up in his hand even, openly shows, expressly names, and emphatically insists upon."

Kant had sounded the same depths before Hegel. Kant, indeed, had discerned and laid bare to ordinary thinking men the leading land-marks, the constitutive elements of human thought. He called these the "Categories of Thought." These categories (which we need not here refer to in detail) Hegel grasped, unified, and expanded, and declared them to be essential elements of that Pure Reason in man which is absolutely kin and identical with the Universal Reason which is God.

Hegel, in fact, showed that what the Mystics knew to be the only satisfaction of their spiritual nature was also the only possible answer and satisfaction to the very laws of thought.

A later expounder of Hegel (Professor Wallace, *Prolegomena to the Logic of Hegel*) says, emphasising the very point we here insist on:—

The Hegelian was the first attempt to display the organisation of Thought pure and entire, as a whole and in its details. The organism of thought as the living reality and gist of the external world and the world within us is called the "Idea" (p. 174).

The Idea is the reality and ideality of the world, the totality considered as a process beyond time. God reveals his absolute nature in the several relatives of the process. He is cognisable in those points where that process comes to self-perception or self-apprehension. They are the several forms under which the Absolute is cognisable to man. In logical language, these forms of the Absolute are the Categories of Thought.

And he proceeds to comment thus on a well-known and vital philosophical controversy:—

Spencer and Mansel, Hamilton and Mill, are nearly all at one in banishing God and religion to a world beyond the present sublunary sphere, to an inscrutable region beyond the scope of scientific inquiry. He is the Unknown Power, felt by what some of these writers call Intuition, and others call Experience. They do not, however, allow to knowledge any capacity for apprehending in detail the truths which belong to the Kingdom of God.

The whole teaching of Hegel is the overthrow of the limits thus set to religious thought. To him, all thought and all actuality, when it is grasped by knowledge, is from man's side, an exaltation of the mind towards God; while, when regarded from the Divine standpoint, it is the manifestation of His own nature in its infinite variety (p. 27).

In short, we may say that God is cognisable by man

just because the very spiritual substance of man is a breath and true part of the Divine Spirit; and the highest forms in which the human mind can think, and according to which it is ultimately compelled to think, are just those features of the Divine mind which are irrevocably stamped on the human spirit.

This embracing thought of Hegel, then, the unity of the thinking being and the object thought, of the subject and the object, of the Divine nature and our human nature, we take not only on its merits, but because we find it, as we have shown, to be the essential identical conclusion reached by quite independent thinkers.

In respect of their personal attitudes towards religion, no one would dream of linking together such men as Haeckel and Spencer with Hegel. Our sole object here is to show that on quite independent but analogous lines all three have reached what is essentially the same conclusion. All three contribute their own characteristic corroboration to the teaching of the religious instinct. They confirm us in the possession of a solid rational foundation for that which the human heart demands, and the higher reason has always supplied.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MYSTICS' CONTRIBUTION TO RELIGION —THE CONTRIBUTION OF SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

---

“Avicenna, the Philosopher,  
'All that he sees I know.'  
Abu Said, the Mystic,  
'All that he knows I see.'”

MYSTICISM is often regarded as a transient and unimportant excrescence on the religious history of man. On the contrary, it is neither transient nor unimportant. It is found in active force and in developed form among some of the earliest peoples of whom we have any record. East and West, we find it in all climes and among all races.

The peculiar feature of the mystics is that in their most characteristic moments and states they seem to ignore and overleap merely intellectual barriers, and fly straight to the apprehension of the very truth which we find so laboriously wrought out by more cautious and sceptical minds. The mystics, wherever we find them, profess to have reached the joyous consciousness of a union with the Divine Spirit beyond any power of description which they themselves could command, or which others, however desirous to do so, could adequately understand. How is this to be explained? How should one man feel himself compelled by the hard necessity of his ratiocinative faculties to plod step by step, and with long oscillations,

towards a point which another man seems able to reach with almost lightning speed, and to leave little or no ratiocinative track to show his path? Is there any evidential value in the experience of such men towards understanding the great conclusion which they, in common with very different minds, arrive at? What, in short, is the rationale of mysticism?

Those who have studied the writings and the lives of the mystics have not hesitated to declare them to be the most profoundly spiritual of the race.

One of the most philosophical minds of our day (the Master of Balliol) has defined mysticism as "Religion in its most concentrated and exclusive form, that in which all other relations are swallowed up in the relation of the soul to God." Another Gifford lecturer (Professor Wm. James, of Harvard) says to the same effect that "all personal religious experience has its root and centre in mystical states of consciousness." And mysticism is distinguished from all other phases of mental action in this—that it cannot be called the direct result of long intellectual processes. Intellectual differences have formed the perpetual element of division among ordinary religious people, and are much modified after every minor or major "reformation" that takes place. The essential ideas, and, generally speaking, even the language, of the mystic recur age after age with remarkable uniformity. The explanation lies on the surface—the thought of the mystic is nearer the centre, if we may so say, than that of any other student of divine things. And if mysticism be thus more deeply rooted than ordinary forms of faith, any fluctuation in the form of expression is so lit up by the vivid inner faith as to be seen as but the play of the intellect round that which is beyond its grasp. The true mystic thus finds himself as much at home in the spiritual apophthegms of

ancient India or Persia as in those of modern Europe.

The mysticism of the ancient Brahmanic faith is well known; and we refer to it here only to point out a characteristic feature of mysticism wherever we find it. One able writer says :—

Mysticism as a genuine, progressive world-illuminating power began with the Greeks. The Indians, no doubt, asserted the I and the not I to be one. But they made nothing of this great truth, save to seek, each man for himself, absorption into the Absolute. The Absolute was real; the Phenomenal was illusion. The Greeks were more honest thinkers. In short, the Indians were merely mystics. The Greeks were mystics *plus* philosophers.

There is undoubtedly truth in this statement. The mystical consciousness, unless it can be intellectualised—expressed, that is to say, in more or less definite and illuminating language—will never be of much spiritual value to other minds—though there is a most true sense in which the mystic consciousness is “ineffable”; its spiritual contents cannot be effectively conveyed from one to another, just as the sun’s rays may be reflected from one object to another, but the full strength of his influence must be received directly by each object for itself. But the form which this mysticism assumed in the ancient Indian mind was not the result of a mere unassisted imaginative *tour de force*. It had been preceded, we may be sure, by thought and experience. And though the actual entry into the mystic consciousness would no doubt be what is called an intuitive act, which at one bound rose above the level of the intellect, brooding meditation is the soil from which it grows. For the very perception of the phenomenal as Maya or Illusion was almost certainly the outcome of long meditation on the fleeting things of time and sense. And though they could not succeed in thinking this phenomenal into God, or conceiving it in terms of God, these mystical minds felt that *there* was no abiding city; that, on the contrary, their own spirits were greater

than all these visible things; that this spirit of theirs must, in some deep sense, be an index to the meaning of the world; and they clasped to their hearts the belief that God was not only spirit, like themselves, but the only Spirit, the only Reality in the universe, and their own spirits but breaths and sparks of that Eternal Spirit with whom it was their highest spiritual satisfaction to feel themselves united. We may call this philosophy or not, as we choose. It was the profoundest philosophy the world had at that time heard of. And even European philosophers whose names no thinker can afford to despise have called these "the loftiest heights of philosophy." The correct definition of mysticism, however, is a minor question. The real point is that the mystic—that is, the characteristically religious spirit—long since instinctively grasped the truth which we desire to emphasise: the union of the Divine with the human.

The Platonic doctrine that the human soul is a portion of the Divine nature is as simple a digest of the mystic principle as any. And even Plato was long anticipated by the old Brahmanic philosophy. "The kernel of the Vedantic philosophy—the great sentence, it is called—is '*Tat tvam asi*'—'That thou art.' Thou, O neophyte, art thyself the Brahman whom thou seekest to know. Thou thyself art a part of the All."

And see how naturally this same thought finds itself reproduced in our latest modern philosophy. Hegel says, recognising the affinity to his own deepest thought, of the great Persian mystic lately introduced to English readers by Dr. Hastie:—

In the excellent Jelaeddin Rumi in particular we find the unity of the soul with the One set forth, and that unity described as Love. And this spiritual unity is an exaltation above the finite and common, a transfiguration of the natural and spiritual in which the externalism and transitoriness of nature is surmounted. In this poetry, which soars above all that is external and sensuous, who would recognise the prosaic ideas current about so-called Pantheism?



It is easy to see how such a faith might lead its possessors into many extravagancies. Modern illustrations will occur to every reader. Take Böhme, the German mystic. Böhme in early life felt so acutely the working and suggestions of his own spirit that he instinctively regarded the thoughts which thus came to him as Divine revelations. And he was nearer the truth in this than colder natures could imagine. His consciousness of the Divine was not at fault; it was no hallucination. But his efforts at exposition were often confused, and even unintelligible. Not only so; his mind was so hampered and bound by an almost slavish adherence to the dogmas of his day that his writings often suggest to the mind of the reader the wild flutterings of an eagle in the cage of a sparrow.

There are, in fact, two classes of mystics. One, the more familiar, consists of such as Böhme, Blake, and even Swedenborg, whose *forte*, and at the same time weakness, was that they felt themselves overwhelmed by the Infinite—their spirits swayed helplessly beyond the control of the intellect, in a kind of hypnotic sleep of the spirit. Their mystical experience intoxicated them—made them all one as if they were insane. They often failed to grasp the mystic lesson that their reason is but universal reason. Hence it was not to the normal workings of their spirit that they attended. Voices, visions, ecstatic visitations—these only were to them messages from God.

In the case of other mystic souls the mighty thought of their oneness with the All steadied rather than staggered their intellects. Tyndall, in a letter, recalls Tennyson saying of the mystical condition, with the passionate confidence of one who has experienced it, "By God Almighty! there is no delusion in the matter! It is no nebulous ecstasy, but a state of

transcendent wonder, associated with absolute clearness of mind" (*Memoirs of Tennyson*, vol. ii., p. 473).

The thought of their oneness with the All freed them from "the heresy of separateness," and enabled them to say, "If we are one with the All, the thought that is in us is not our thought, but simply Thought. It follows that, if we cautiously yet boldly record the utterances of our own spirit, we shall be recording the everlasting oracles themselves." Thus Plato, Wordsworth, Emerson, and a host of others. Plotinus, who has been called "the only analytical mystic," only twice or thrice in his life claimed to have had direct vision of the perfect and absolute One. His intellect was too active and critical to admit of its habitual surrender to the mystic passion.

Inspiration has been called merely "an intensified state of consciousness"; and he is but a poor specimen of our common human nature in whom the Divine does not find some more or less conscious flashpoint.

The commonest experience of this, and fortunately the most valuable for the conduct of life, is that of our moral convictions. The man who has learned the force of the categorical imperative, as Kant called it, or the imperious dictate of a reasonably enlightened conscience, has learned the presence of the Divine in his inner nature, even if the thought of it strikes him as a kind of presumptuous familiarity. "Stern daughter of the voice of God" is not all a metaphor. We touch the Divine, or, rather, the Divine touches us, at many points. Who has not felt it? Who has not experienced something of that overshadowing of his spirit that comes through what we appropriately call Communion—that conscious approach to the Divine which slowly, but at last instantaneously, passes into unconscious submersion of the spirit?

"Clear thought dies out in love's absorbed delight."

"With thy sweet soul this soul of mine  
Hath mixed as water doth with wine.  
Who can the wine and water part,  
Or me and thee when we combine?  
Thou art become my greater self;  
Small bounds no more can me confine.  
Thou hast my being taken on;  
And shall not I now take on thine?"

—*Jelaleddin*, X.

When that stage of spiritual intensity is reached, the only language possible is that of symbol. And the symbols, being but the counters of the intellect, are but feeble illustrations of that which is the ineffable and incommunicable. They have their value up to a certain point. Beyond that, their light is lost in a brightness that is past their ken.

And yet mysticism is not unrelated to ordered thought. There is no reason to suppose that it is in any way incompatible with the largest attainments of scientific and philosophic thought. On the contrary, it has nothing to fear from the encroachment of the scientific spirit. Latest science and latest philosophy alike point unmistakably to the truth which is the core of mysticism. In the words of a careful French writer,<sup>1</sup> "It is my opinion that mysticism, pure of all alloy, will expand as much as science, and *will expand with it.*" The progress of scientific and philosophic thought, therefore, only confirms the mystic faith. Mysticism, in its exercise of what we call intuition, or deep spiritual passion, has thus all along discounted the slow attainment of more prosaic powers.

Spencer's own conclusion is that mysticism underlies all knowledge. To-day it is the slow-footed scientific spirit that is at last coming into line with the swift, unquestioning faith of the mystic. All shades of the

<sup>1</sup> E. Recejac, *Essay on the Basis of the Mystic Knowledge*, translated by S. C. Upton (Kegan Paul & Co., 1899).

orthodox faith, if they could recognise their true interest, would thank God, not merely for the strong, persistent faith of the mystic, which has borne perpetual witness to that for which all religion stands, but for the latest outcome of modern thought, which, so far from weakening that faith, is rendering its essence more impregnable than ever.

See, for example, how even the Agnostic may find himself fundamentally at one with the mystic. To Dionysius, the mystic, Negation and Affirmation were the two appropriate methods for knowledge of the Infinite. Vaughan says of him—and the words cannot fail to recall to memory the ever-recurring language of our modern Agnostics—“To assert anything concerning a God who is above all affirmation is to speak in a figure—to veil him. The *more you deny* concerning him, the more of such veils do you remove. By Negation we approach most nearly to a true apprehension of what he is.” Thus does the mystic avail himself of the Agnostic's most cherished phrases as the fittest help in the expression of his own deepest faith. God is regarded as “the Nameless,” “the inscrutable Anonymous.” With all deference to Spencer's favourite phrase, “the Unknowable,” this of the Nameless and the inscrutable Anonymous is distinctly superior. It covers the whole difference between the Agnostic and the mystic. Of the existence of the eternal reality both are passionately convinced. Both are prepared to defend it against all shades of materialists. The Agnostic never gets or hopes to get any nearer to an apprehension of the Infinite Reality. All his phraseology is the phraseology of despair. When he has once satisfied himself of its reality, he immediately turns his back and retires from its presence with a wail of hopeless denials. He thus feels himself for ever debarred from attempting to commune with

the Eternal. The mystic, on the contrary, even with a similar and reverent refrain of denials, feels himself drawn ever the nearer to the one object of his faith.

"I am what is and is not; I am the Soul in All."—*Jelaleddin, XVI.*

Dionysius, with the mystic's ready gift for similes, aptly compares his negative method of speaking concerning the Supreme, to the operation of the sculptor who strikes off fragment after fragment of the marble, and *progresses by diminishing*. With such an issue as this before us we must beware of becoming entangled in the limitations and inadequacies of mere words. To the true mystic language is but noise. As one of them said ages ago:—

So long as the bee is outside the petals of the flower it buzzes and emits sounds; but when it is inside the flower the sweetness thereof has silenced and overpowered the bee. Forgetful of sounds and of itself, it drinks the nectar in quiet. Men of learning, you too are making a noise in the world; but know the moment you get the slightest enjoyment of the sweetness of the love of God you will be like the bee in the flower, inebriated with the nectar of Divine love. ("Ramakrishna," *Nineteenth Century*, August, 1896.)

Thus do the mysticism of thousands of years ago and the latest generalisation of modern philosophy meet and join hands in one and the same truth. And as Professor Wm. James suggests (p. 389):—

What reader of Hegel can doubt that that sense of a perfected Being, with all its otherness soaked up into itself, which dominates his whole philosophy, must have come from the prominence in his consciousness of mystical moods in most persons kept subliminal?

Our union with the Divine, then, the truth which was clasped to their hearts by the mystics with the first appearance of developed thought, has been contributed to directly or indirectly by every nation under the sun; has at last been slowly, and one might say almost unwillingly, confessed by the purely scientific men who were not searching for it; has been acknowledged by discerning Christian theologians as the fundamental principle of their faith; has been finally

grasped and stated in its most comprehensive form by the legitimate heirs of all the slow deposits of human thought, and stands forth challenging the verdict, not only of philosophers, but of every human being who chooses to think seriously on the subject, and is destined, we believe, to provide ultimately a great eirenicon for all the creeds and cults of the human race.

## CHAPTER VI.

### WANTED—A NEW BUTLER

---

“There is in progress a movement vastly more important than that which is the special concern of the higher criticism, and that is the total reconstruction of theological theory, in fearless logical accord with the truth of incarnation.”—“*The Christ of To-day.*”

It would be interesting to trace the disintegrating and at the same time illuminating effect which the general naturalistic view expressed in the preceding pages has on Church dogma. That must be left for some future occasion. Meantime, it is distinctly suggestive to note the confusion and perplexity which the want of such a view creates in the minds of the more thoughtful adherents of the Church. The best minds, of course, feel this most. But it is not often that we find it so vividly illustrated, and even admitted, as in a recent work by a representative theologian.

Dr. Fairbairn, of Mansfield College, has lately brought his proved ability and insight to bear on a *Philosophy of the Christian Religion*. It is one of many like attempts; and we call attention to this one here because it is an elaborate effort to apply anew, in the full light of modern science and criticism, the famous *Analogy* of Butler. So faithful is the attempt at reproduction that the good Bishop's failures, too, have been carefully repeated, on a scale proportionate to the larger material now available for the treatment of the argument. For, as is well known, Butler attempted too much. In principle, his argument was

irrefragable. It was a memorable *tu quoque* to the Deists of his time. But he accepted to the full the whole dogmatic framework of the Church, and deemed it to be his duty to show that even dogmas that have been quite discarded since were equally in line with his great analogy. Needless to say, that was an impossible and futile task.

The Bishop's natural cast of mind and his reverential study of "the constitution and course of nature" assure us that, in other circumstances and with larger light, he would have been the first man to hail the slow, orderly, self-manifestation of God as the one key to Nature and Religion alike. Unfortunately, the nearest approach he could make to this larger conception was to "prove," as he endeavoured to do, that that special dispensation of Providence, the Christian Religion, being "a scheme or system of things carried on by the mediation of a Divine person, the Messiah, in order to the recovery of the world," is analogous to what is experienced in "the constitution and course of Nature." "The whole analogy of Nature," he says, p. 151, chap. v., "removes all imagined presumption against the general notion of a Mediator between God and man. For we find all living creatures are brought into the world, and their life in infancy is preserved, by the instrumentality of others; and every satisfaction of it, in some way or other, is bestowed by the like means"!

That is to say, the fact that we are brought into the world by means of the instrumentality and mediation of our parents is the good Bishop's proof, by analogy, that the theological mediatorship ascribed to Christ, in the Church's dogmatic system, is a truth consonant with all Nature.

The Bishop dug from a rich quarry, and his ground-plan was admirable! But his architecture is



antiquated, and many of his rooms are long since deserted.

Dr. Fairbairn adjusts his effort to the new situation, and fortunately puts the crux of the matter plainly before his readers. "The problem of the person of Christ," he says, "is exactly the point in the Christian religion where the intellect feels overweighted by mysteries it cannot resolve." Another question arises—Is that mystery "a thing of nature, or is it a made or manufactured article, a myth which the logical intellect has woven out of the material offered by a simple and beautiful story"? The *theological* mystery of the person of Christ is undoubtedly "a made or manufactured article." We accept Dr. Fairbairn's description of the process of its production:—

The imaginations [of the early disciples and evangelists], touched by the enthusiasm of an all-believing love, became creative, and they saw Jesus as if he had been the Messiah they had hoped he was. . . . and it needed only the fearless logic of a metaphysical, unscientific age to identify him with Deity, and resolve his humanity by the incarnation of the Son of God.

But that process of their imagination, and that logic of a metaphysical unscientific age, were really unconscious vindications of that larger truth, that *universal* "mystery" in which there is nothing that is "fictitious or artificial," but which is, on the contrary, the full expression of that unity of the Divine and the human for which Jesus lived and died.

Under the unconscious shelter of this deeper truth, the conflicting theological contentions of the Gnostics, the Arians, and the Athanasians find their explanation and their historical justification. Without the hard-fought decision of the early Councils, this larger truth would have been lost for ages. Without this larger truth, waiting its full realisation, the deification would have remained in the region of pure dogma,

and lost its fertilising power altogether. At the present moment this is more apparent than ever before in the history of Christian theology. Scaffolding after scaffolding is being taken down, and the "building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," and in the heart of man, is being laid bare to our view, and all the struggles of past ages justified and made intelligible.

Dr. Fairbairn himself admits that it is not the Gospel records that supply him with the chief mystery of the person of Christ:—

It is not Jesus of Nazareth who has so powerfully entered into history. It is the deified Christ, who has been believed, loved, and obeyed as the Saviour of the world. *The act of apotheosis created the Christian religion* (p. 15).

The question as to the person of Christ is a problem directly raised by the place he holds and the functions he has fulfilled in the life of man collectively and individually.

And so boldly does Dr. Fairbairn sum up his solution of the problem that he says:—

The conception of Christ stands related to history, as the idea of God is related to nature—*i.e.*, each is in its own sphere the factor of order and the constitutive condition of a rational system (p. 18).

This is the point where a sober philosophy parts company with Dr. Fairbairn. For, needless to say, this is a tremendous contention to maintain. Here is how he attempts to base his analogy:—

What do the theories of energy and evolution mean but the continuance of the creative process? But if new forms in biology have emerged, if from however mean an origin, in a mode however low, mind once began to be, why may not new and higher types appear in the modes and forms of being known to history as politics, ethics, religion? In other words, may not the very power which determined the appearance of the form, and the whole course of evolution from it, determine also the appearance of creative persons in history, and all the events which may follow from their appearance? Might we not describe the failure of the fit or needed man to appear at some supreme moment as a failure which affects the whole creation? And would not the work which he did for God be the measure of the degree of the Divine presence or quantity of the Divine energy immanent within him? It seems fair, then, to conclude that, so far from the idea of a supernatural person being incompatible with the modern idea of nature, it is logically involved in it!

Will any tyro in logic pretend that this attempted analogy from new forms in biology can by any strain of legitimate reasoning suggest a "Divine Man," a "stupendous miracle," as he elsewhere calls Christ? The attempt made in this passage is quite unworthy of Dr. Fairbairn, and absolutely inconsistent with the profession of his preface. He shuffles and alters the cards in such a way that, beginning with the innocent phrase, "new and higher types," he passes on to "creative persons"; then deliberately steps from the plural into the singular number, "the fit or needed man," which is still, however, conceivable as one of an orderly series; and at last boldly "concludes" for "a supernatural person," as being "logically involved" in the idea he started with. This is first to parade a philosophical attitude, and then repudiate it inch by inch.

Supernatural *man*—that is to say, man conceived in terms of the invisible and transcendental—Dr. Fairbairn apparently cannot bring himself to treat seriously as an element in philosophy. And yet he speaks of "the incarnate reason we call man" (p. 291), and in many passages uses language which shows how willingly, if he dared, he would utilise this larger conception if only he could reconcile with it the idea of "the" supernatural person, the "stupendous miracle." Even his friendly reviewer, Dr. Orr, feels compelled to point out this inconsistency. Referring to Dr. Fairbairn's contention for the perfect supernatural personality of Christ (p. 92), Dr. Orr says:—

This is finely put, and undeniably has truth in it. But language must not conceal from us the fact that this mode of interpreting the supernatural, however noble, leaves us still a long way from the *kind* of supernatural implied in the incarnation, as Dr. Fairbairn would have us understand it, or in miracles like those of the evangelical history, as Dr. Fairbairn in a later chapter (pp. 331-5) defends them. What we have reached so far is the supernatural as a spiritual *principle in nature*, but not a supernatural which transcends

nature, save in the sense in which every man as personal and ethical is supernatural. The formula applicable to the former—viz., that the supernatural is but the natural viewed under a changed aspect (pp. 56, 307, etc.)—can certainly not be stretched without amphiboly to cover the supernatural of the Gospel and the Creeds. Dr. Fairbairn's idealistic friends will go with him his whole length in the one contention. They would probably not go with him a single step in the other.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Fairbairn's comparison of Christ and Buddha is remarkably well drawn out. We cannot deal with it here in detail. Sufficient to say, nothing could be more strained and inconsistent than the quite opposite conclusions he draws from two cases admittedly so similar. Here again, Dr. Orr (though, like all his *confrères*, without the full courage of his conviction) says:—

Here we may begin to feel that we are getting on very slippery ground indeed. There must be interpretation and apotheosis by the community, but in the case of Buddha, at any rate, that apotheosis is purely imaginative—fictional. Is it to be presumed that it is the same with Christ? Dr. Fairbairn would repel that inference with his whole soul, but in some of his parallels he comes perilously near suggesting it.<sup>2</sup>

And again, referring to Dr. Fairbairn's appeal to history as the ultimate verification of the claims of Christ:—

Might not the same argument, *mutatis mutandis*, be urged as establishing the truth of the conception of the idealised Buddha?

For our own part, we accept Dr. Fairbairn's bracketing of creation and incarnation. We are even prepared to press the analogy. For, if truly applied, it is illuminating in the highest degree. But every analogy that can be consistently drawn from the idea of creation points not to a single historical event like the life of Christ, as Dr. Fairbairn contends, but to a fact as fundamental and universal as creation itself—the incarnation of God *in humanity*.

If creation, as the *rationale* of the material universe,

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Review*, September, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

be incarnation, as Dr. Fairbairn says—that is to say, an embodiment of the Divine so far as it goes—so, the analogy teaches us, incarnation, as the *rationale* of the moral and spiritual world, is the embodiment of the Divine in a sense and to a degree of which the material universe is only a pictorial suggestion.

If the promise and potency of all organic life is enshrined in the germ which science has disclosed as its secret, so, if the analogy has any force at all, in that same germ there lies the promise and potency of all the moral and spiritual life of man.

What the precise method of the Divine inhabitation may be neither science nor psychology will probably ever fathom. But in both respects the germ is possessed by the Divine energy, and all the wondrous life of man—body, soul, and spirit—lay latent in its insignificant folds.

It is painfully evident that Dr. Fairbairn feels the inadequacy of his own attempt to apply the Bishop's method to the problem which faces us to-day. It is this that explains his aspiration after something more effective than Butler's *Analogy*.

"The time is coming," he says, "and we shall hope the man is coming with it, which shall give us a new analogy, speaking a more generous and hopeful language, breathing a nobler spirit, and aspiring to a larger day than Butler's." And the striking thing is that, feeling this inadequacy so acutely, he was unable to grasp the larger analogy when it was put vividly before him. Dr. Fairbairn came into personal contact in India with men to whom the larger conception of incarnation is part of their spiritual being, and it is deeply interesting to see how Dr. Fairbairn's mind was affected by this contact. He admits frankly that he was both "illuminated and perplexed" by it. "It was not that his

previous knowledge of their religion was found to be incorrect or false, but that it was mistaken in its emphasis." This is a confession that does Dr. Fairbairn credit, and it expresses very correctly the exact position of his mind. He saw the larger truth, and was "illuminated." He failed to see—or, rather, as we believe, he could not afford to admit—the radical importance, to a true philosophy of the Christian religion, of the great predominant doctrine of India, "the community of Gods and men," as Dr. Fairbairn calls it, or the incarnation of God in humanity, to give it its proper name. This is what "perplexed" him. "The Jew," he tells us, "could not conceive how his God could become incarnate in any man. The Hindu cannot conceive how any man could be the sole and exclusive incarnation of God. He thinks of God as incarnate in every man and in all forms of life. In so thinking he makes incarnation in the Christian sense impossible; and, by deifying everything, he undeifies all." Evidently, according to Dr. Fairbairn, we may have too much of the Divine! But "what God hath cleansed, that call not thou common"! So what God has glorified by his presence, that call not thou common or undeified, else you fly in the face of that very Scripture whose letter you so magnify.

This truth requires no twisted or strained analogies to support it. Its perfect analogy with all Nature is complete. Dr. Fairbairn constantly flutters around it, but can never fling himself on it, or tear himself away from his great presupposition. He can say in one passage that "the reason that is in man is one with the universal reason." But for the practical purpose of his philosophy that is a forbidden fruit to him. He is afraid to pluck it, but cannot keep his eyes off it. Or, to change the metaphor, he is like the timid bather who cannot trust himself beyond the

solid footing to which he has been accustomed, having no faith that the sea, the apparently yielding sea, can ever support him.

The incarnation of God in all men, the manifestation of the Creator in the whole race he had created, might be an arguable position, but not its rigorous and exclusive individuation or restriction to a single person, out of all the infinite multitude of millions who have lived, are living, or are to live. In some such manner the understanding, by means of its keen, dexterous logic, might argue that "*the*" incarnation was a mere fictitious and artificial mystery.

We feel, after reading such a passage, that the writer is really envying the "arguable position" and the "keen dexterous logic" to which he somewhat cynically refers. His dogmatic presupposition blinds him to the fact that this larger doctrine of incarnation is implicit, and in some places quite explicit, in his own faith, as that faith was taught by the Founder himself.

To surrender what he has no better name for than "the metaphysical conception of Christ," and to hail in its place this great spiritual dynamic fact, would not only have fed his own spirit, but satisfied his intellect and proclaimed the essential truth of all religion.

Dr. Fairbairn, when stating "the problem," in his opening chapter, speaks of the "mass of intricate complexities and incredibilities" which surround the orthodox view of the person of Christ. And after letting "the dexterous logician" speak for himself, he says:—

The dexterous logician is not the only strong intellect which has tried to handle the doctrine. The contradictions which he translates into rational incredibilities must either have escaped the analysis of men like Augustine or Aquinas, or have been by their thought transcended and reconciled in some higher synthesis. It is a wholesome thing to remember that the men who elaborated our theologies were at least as rational as their critics, and that we owe it to historical truth to look at their beliefs with their eyes (p. 13).

We accept the spirit of Dr. Fairbairn's reference to these ancient authorities. There is a higher synthesis.

It by no means follows that *they* had seized it. There is not necessarily any presumption in maintaining that these "rational incredibilities," of which Dr. Fairbairn speaks, have gradually forced modern thought towards a synthesis that, in its simplicity, universality, and spiritual power, gives them all their due place, and preserves, for the higher life of man, all the truth which they contained. Illusion and tentative dogma have formed a large element in the moral and spiritual progress of man, Christian and pagan alike. We can only reconcile the confused attitude of Dr. Fairbairn in this whole book by suggesting that, to use a modern phrase, his subliminal consciousness is loaded with the true higher synthesis which we here emphasise, but that his logical faculties are enlisted in the defence of the orthodox conceptions. He frequently writes as if under the influence of the former, but perpetually falls into the meshes of the latter.

We commend to Dr. Fairbairn and his whole school the following from the Master of Balliol's latest exposition. We know of no philosophical pronouncement, in recent times, that means so much for the future of Christian thought, and that says what it means in plainer and less pugnacious language:—

From the beginning Christianity involved a new conception of the relation of God to man. But this conception was at first an undeveloped germ—a germ of *which the whole history of thought from that time has been a development*. It was the idea of God in man, and man, by a supreme act of self-surrender, finding the perfect realisation of himself as the son and servant of God. It was this as embodied in an individual, to whom others might attach themselves, and by this attachment participate in the same life.....The issue of the controversy (of the early centuries) at the moment was the assertion of the unity of Divinity and humanity in Christ, but this issue was deprived of a great part of its meaning, in so far as it was confined to Christ alone, and in so far as the unity was regarded, not as a unity realised *in the process of the Christian life*, but a unity that existed independently of any process whatever. The imperfection of this result was explained by the necessity that *the principle of unity of the human and the Divine should be asserted*, ere it could be worked out to any



further consequences. Christ was the one crucial instance, which, if it could be maintained as real, must inevitably determine the whole issue. And if one man, living such a life of self-sacrifice for mankind, was in perfect unity with God, so that his consciousness of himself could be taken as the Divine self-consciousness, then must not the same be true of all who followed in the same road? In that case, the highest goodness was shown to be only *the realisation of an ideal which every human soul, as such, bears with it.*

There is the true philosophic ring. There is the true rationalising of the Christian religion, showing it to be, when rightly understood, in perfect harmony with the whole "constitution and course of Nature."<sup>1</sup>

If Dr. Fairbairn could have assimilated an *inclusive* principle, such as we have endeavoured to set forth, instead of the absolutely *exclusive* doctrine which forms the assumption of his book, he would not have been merely "perplexed" by what he saw and heard in India—he would have had his whole philosophy widened and rationalised, and would have been able to proclaim a far greater Analogy than Butler's, in a universal truth which, once it is really seen, finds a response in the human spirit everywhere. He would have proved himself a pioneer in a movement which, sooner or later, must secure the spiritual sympathies, as well as the philosophic acceptance, of Western Europe. Dr. Fairbairn, in this great undertaking, has lost his chance, and completely fails in the "philosophical" task to which he set himself. Will any candid reader maintain that such argument as Dr. Fairbairn's book contains induces him to believe that human history, ancient and modern, "has no meaning apart from Christ, *in the sense in which Nature is unintelligible without God*"? That is the demand which Dr. Fairbairn makes on our reason.

We can only conclude by saying that, while he has added yet another to the innumerable apologies for

<sup>1</sup> *Glasgow Gifford Lectures.*

---

the Christian dogmatic system, he has made more patent than ever the impossibility of framing a consistent "philosophy" of that dogmatic system as it at present stands. The larger Analogy he prays for is ready to our hand; and Dr. Fairbairn might have been the modern Butler.

---

By the same Author.

# "A RELIGION THAT WILL WEAR."

SECOND EDITION.

## Some Personal Opinions.

PROFESSOR MAX MÜLLER.

"A book with most of which I fully agree, and from which I have learned a great deal."

STOPFORD BROOKE.

"I think it will do a great deal of good among laymen, more probably than any authorised preacher is likely to do. Things are faced not in the conventional manner, and without the catchwords of the mere theologian. I am glad to see the book, and wish it God-speed."

PROTAP CHUNDER MOZOOMDAR, LEADER OF THE BRAHMO SOMAJ, CALCUTTA.

"I must beg your forgiveness for writing to such length. Believe me, I have been unconsciously led to it by the inspiration of your book."

PRINCIPAL STORY.

"I am struck with its freshness and force and sincerely religious tone. I do not think I should differ from you to any essential extent."

PROFESSOR HASTIE.

"The high-water mark of lay thought in theology."

PROFESSOR MENZIES, ST. ANDREWS.

"Able and most interesting; symptomatic of the position of the Presbyterian laity."

PRINCIPAL HODGSON, EDINBURGH.

"A remarkably interesting and significant little book."

DR. JOHN GLASSE, OLD GREYFRIARS, EDINBURGH.

"I am sure that it will do much good. The spirit of the book is excellent. It is written with great intelligence, and every subject is treated with marked moderation. There is not a canting statement in it, from beginning to end."

DR. STRONG, MELBOURNE.

"'A Layman' shows an intimate knowledge of theology, such as many clergymen do not possess. It is an honest attempt to get down to the bed-rock of religion, and to show that religion and Christ abide in the deepest and truest elements of human life, though theology may change and critics re-write the Bible."

ROBERT BIRD, Author of *Jesus the Carpenter*, *Joseph the Dreamer*, etc.

"It is a valuable contribution to practical Christianity for thinking men, and should place some wavering feet on solid ground. I am delighted that a layman life myself should have read so widely and reflected so deeply about things over which the fogs of theology have hung for centuries."

LONDON: JAMES CLARKE & CO.

By the same Author.

# "A RELIGION THAT WILL WEAR."

SECOND EDITION.

---

## A Few Press Notices.

*GLASGOW HERALD.*

"The writer reflects the attitude of many thoughtful and religious minds towards the Churches and the Christian Faith."

*SCOTSMAN.*

"It is a clearly-stated and interesting discourse, which meets the objections raised by philosophy and science to revealed religion, and offers an acutely reasoned and well-informed, if perhaps not definitely conclusive, intellectual justification of the message of Jesus."

*ABERDEEN FREE PRESS.*

"It is a book fitted to make both believer and unbeliever think."

*CHRISTIAN LEADER.*

"An able book, strongly written, broad and reverent."

*THE LITERARY WORLD.*

"...In both these instances we trace that discrimination between the essential and the dispensable which is a chief qualification for work of this kind."

*LIVERPOOL MERCURY.*

"Very able, thoughtful, devout, and scholarly....We do not remember having seen this line of thought put more persuasively or more forcibly."

*CAMBRIDGE INDEPENDENT.*

"The case is stated with great argumentative power, much intellectual penetration, and, at the same time, great clearness of expression."

*THE OUTLOOK, NEW YORK.*

"The book is an eirenicon, addressed to unbelievers. It should be read by believers also."

*THE OUTLOOK (2ND NOTICE).*

"Thoroughly modern in spirit, and thoroughly religious also; wholly free from all bonds to theological formulas, it presents the simple faith that Jesus held as at once reconciling and rounding out the conflicting beliefs of men, and satisfying all the essential demands of our nature."

LONDON: JAMES CLARKE & CO.