

# THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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No. 27—July, 1896.

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## I.

### THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SYN- THETIC PHILOSOPHY.

EVERY philosophical system has its distinct theological valuation. Philosophy guards the basis and fixes the lines of religious faith. As to its material, theology is transcendental; as to its method, it is a science, and, in so far as it is scientific, it is subject to the science of sciences, metaphysics. A contra-philosophical theology is an absurdity at once. If it be taken as true that "a man's religion is the expression of his ultimate attitude to the universe, the summed-up meaning and purport of his whole consciousness of things,"\* then his philosophy is the conception, the expression of which is thus defined to be his religion. As a matter of fact, as well as of logic, theology often falls as a corollary from philosophy. The rigid empiricist in the one denies the supernatural in the other. An obsolescent materialistic philosophy was the antecedent of what Lecky calls "the declining sense of the miraculous." Positivism is first a philosophical status, and then a theological creed. The agnostic is first a psychological dogmatist before he becomes a theological doubter of dogmas. Whatever may be regarded, therefore, as the relation between the two as antecedent and consequent, it is easily seen that enough philosophical presuppositions are involved in any complete theological system to warrant the remark of Mr. A. J. Balfour, "The decisive battles of theology are fought beyond its frontiers."†

Mr. Herbert Spencer is recognized by all as one of the profoundest

\* *The Evolution of Religion*, Edward Caird, Vol. i, p. 30.

† *The Foundations of Belief*, p. 2

philosophical thinkers of the age. He has made for himself a place of imperishable renown as one of England's greatest speculative metaphysicians of the nineteenth century. His powers of constructive philosophical imagination are marvelous. Bold, analytical, penetrating and comprehensive, his thought is never so untrammelled as when he is building a magnificent fabric upon foundations that less audacious spirits would regard as narrow and fragile. Less judicial than Tyndall, less popular than Huxley, less observing than Darwin, this survivor of them all surpasses them all in his genius for generalization and, within the purview of his *à priori* conception of things, in his faculty for assigning a distinct philosophical interpretation to every fact which these great collaborators set forth. The synthetic philosophy is Mr. Spencer's life-work. These almost six thousand pages show what a persistent purpose can accomplish even in spite of invalidism and lack of university training. The whole system is the expansion of a single thought, but that thought is believed to be the key that unlocks the mysteries of the universe. As by a flash from heaven's light, it came to him that Evolution is the secret of all things, and these nine volumes are a setting forth of that secret. No one doubts that the synthetic philosophy, though now in large measure regarded as *passée* by many leaders of thought, is immeasurably influential upon contemporaneous thinking. The assumed modesty of agnosticism wins timid disciples, while its audacious pretensions are a bait to ambitious though superficial spirits. Now it is too humble to know anything; now it has wrested the secret from the world and boldly announces that it *knows* its ignorance.

There are many who grant the greatness of the philosopher while repudiating, root and branch, his philosophy; and there are many who insist that his greatness is the result of the greatness, the originality, the almost divine insight of his teachings. Let a few representative critics speak for themselves. Prof. William Henry Hudson, of the Leland Stanford Junior University, an ardent worshiper at the Spencerian shrine, says, "His work stands to-day, and will, we believe, continue for many generations to stand, as one of the most Samson-like efforts of human genius and power."\* And John Fiske, the American apostle of the synthetic philosophy, says, "Spencer's work surpasses that of Aristotle and Newton in its vastness of performance as the railway surpasses the sedan-chair, or as the telegraph surpasses the carrier-pigeon."† On the other hand, one of the ablest metaphysicians of our country writes these words: "An ambitious attempt and a dismal failure is our

\* *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*, p. 3.

† *Excursions of an Evolutionist*, p. 295.

deliberate verdict upon the so-called New Philosophy. The doctrine began in a fog, and never succeeded in getting out of it."\* And the late Dr. McCosh gave his judgment in this characteristic manner: "My friend, Hugh Miller, said of an author, that in his argument there was an immense number of *fa'en steeks* (fallen stitches): the language might be applied to Mr. Spencer's philosophy."†

Mr. Fiske somewhere demurs that people should complain that Mr. Spencer has not written a system of theology also. Mr. Fiske is right. The complaint is ill-timed. Careful study and logical inference will transform his philosophy into a theology. It is folly to say that a teacher is not responsible for another man's legitimate deductions from his teachings, and when Mr. Spencer tells us what he believes, positively and negatively, in the sphere of philosophy, it is for the world which he would enlighten, to deduce, by good and necessary inference, what he must and may believe, and what he must not and may not believe, in the sphere of religion.

#### THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE.

The starting-point in Mr. Spencer's whole system is in his theory of knowledge. His skepticism is primarily psychological. His *First Principles* has been fitly called the "Bible of Agnosticism."‡ There is an agnosticism which is as old as the race, the result of a presumed lack of external evidence. But modern agnosticism is of another kind. It is the result of an alleged lack of power in man to know the truth. The trouble is not with the fact but with the faculty. This doctrine of nescience was born of Kant, who taught that we can know only phenomena, and that the "thing in itself" is beyond our ken. Sir William Hamilton developed this thought into his *Philosophy of the Unconditioned*, and Dean Mansell, in his one famous Bampton lectures, with relentless but suicidal logic, applied this doctrine to the truths of religion. From these writers, who aimed to defend Christianity against the invasions of rationalism, Mr. Spencer steals his ammunition, and turns in battle against the very possibility of forming a consistent conception of the Infinite or the Divine. However, it is necessary to observe that this theory of agnosticism is, in the first instance, innocent of any immediate theological significance. It is a cold theory of mind. Fundamentally, the Spencerian philosophy is purely epistemological. Kant affirmed the inherent impotence of man to know anything absolutely—not more in religion than in commonest affairs;

\* *The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*, by B. P. Bowne, p. 282.

† *Christianity and Positivism*, p. 363.

‡ *An Introduction to Theology*, by Alfred Cave, B.A., p. 158.

not more of God than of the pen I hold in my hand. Prof. Huxley, who coined the word "agnostic," tells us that in his boyhood he had read Hamilton; and while he insists that the word designates only a method, and applies alike to all activities of the intellect, still he admits that the term was suggested to his mind in antithesis to the "gnostic" of Church history, and, certainly, in all his writings, he placed special emphasis upon its meaning as bearing upon matters religious. This coiner of the word which is *prima facie* so destitute of religious implications, frankly says that though "agnosticism is not a creed, yet the application of the principle it involves results in the denial of or suspension of judgment concerning" religious propositions.\* Thus the godfather of modern agnosticism virtually confesses himself a skeptical atheist. The confession must stand for the whole school of agnostics. The denial of our power to know is in effect tantamount to the denial of the thing we are wrongly supposed to know. If the agnostic is told that there is a personal God, whose will is law to man, he replies: "It may be so, I cannot know it nor can you," and so strong may be his bias that he deliberately ignores that law. "If a man die, he shall live again;" again the agnostic makes reply: "I cannot know it; I doubt it; yes, I disbelieve it; for anything that all the world can know, I am at liberty to deny it, and I shall act and live accordingly." And it must be said that this attitude, not merely of suspended doubt but of practical denial, is not without its rational defense. If there be a good God who has created man intelligent and thoughtful and yet unable to know his Creator, then men may argue that God is weak and so unworthy of their homage, or that God is unjust and so forfeits their reverent regard. Granted the premise of intellectual agnosticism, and the conclusion of entire indifference to God follows. Incapacity for religious knowledge becomes a sufficient warrant for lack of religious faith. Prof. Huxley's candid confession of the blighting influences of his method is supported by reason as well as by the facts: "Agnosticism can be said to be a stage in the evolution of religion only as death may be said to be a final stage in the evolution of life."†

It is not in mind to refute the teachings under examination, but only to indicate what they imply. This idea that human knowledge is phenomenological, and never ontological, has been a fruitful source of skepticism in religion. The doctrine of the relativity of knowledge limits cognition to the seeming, as over against the being; and since the seeming must always be contingent upon the

\* *Christianity and Agnosticism*, p. 196.

† *Christianity and Agnosticism*, p. 250.



seer, it is impossible, absolutely to know anything. Instead of regarding the substance as making itself known by its properties, it is held that the properties, in manifesting themselves, veil the mysterious entity. Thus properties as such are abstracted from the substance in which alone they inhere and, forgetful that the abstraction is only *in intellectu* and never *in esse*, the abstracted property is hypostatized into an independent agent, having an imputed distinctness of existence which is truly predicable of the only actually existent entity, namely, the substance to which the property belongs. For example, the table on which I write is hard. The only substance in the case is the table. The property named inheres in the table. Annihilate the table, and that property with the others belonging to it would be gone. But, in mind, we abstract that one property and invest it again with properties of its own. This abstracting process is purely intellectual, and erecting the property into an entity is a fiction required for the convenience of language and thought. To predicate efficiency of this intellectually abstracted attribute is wisdom in thought, but the supremest of follies if regarded as having any correlative in fact. Hardness is not a thing, but a quality of a thing. Hard things may be causes, but hardness never. Mr. Spencer himself says, "Matter is known to us only through its manifestations of force; our ultimate test of matter is the ability to resist; abstract its resistance and there remains nothing but empty extension."\* And again, "Force, as we know it, can be regarded only as a conditioned effect of the unconditioned cause; as the relative reality indicating to us an absolute reality by which it is immediately produced."† Thus it appears that to hypostatize an abstracted quality and dismiss the substance or entity to which alone that property belongs, and without which it has no sort of actual existence, is the monumental mistake of a certain school of modern thought.

Here is the vicious assumption of the synthetic philosophy. Mr. Spencer postulates the existence of an eternal and almighty power. "If religion and science are to be reconciled, the basis of reconciliation must be this deepest, widest and most certain of all facts that the power which the universe manifests is to us utterly inscrutable."‡ "The certainty that on the one hand such a power exists, while on the other its nature transcends intuition and is beyond imagination is the certainty towards which intelligence has from the first been progressing."§ But what *is* power? What is force? Is it an actual entity or is it an abstracted property? The question opens up one of the most intricate of metaphysical discussions.

\* *First Principles*, p. 58.  
*First Principles*, p. 170.

† *Ibid.*, p. 46.  
 § *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Prof. W. R. Grove says, "I use the term (force) as meaning that active principle inseparable from matter which is supposed to induce its various changes."\* Dr. J. R. Mayer says, "Forces are causes;"† and though he afterwards urges the distinction between property and force, still, whether force be metaphysically a property or a mere accident of substance, the bearing upon the question now in hand is precisely the same. Prof. Grove says it is "inseparable from matter." Widening our thought beyond the range of mere physical science, let us say it is inseparable from *substance*; but this inseparableness is in no wise contingent upon its being an essential attribute, or only an accidental though invariable accompaniment of matter. Certainly, it is not venturing very far to say that all properties are forces; and unless we are prepared to accept the doctrine of dynamism, holding that all matter and spirit *is* force (not *has* force), then we must maintain that if the substance, Kant's *Ding an sich*, has no objective existence without its properties, so certainly the properties have no kind of efficiency or actual existence abstracted from the substance. The whole conception of force, therefore, as an independent and isolated cause is a fiction. Force exists, in fact, only as the property of a somewhat; or, if so it be urged, as the dependent but inseparable concomitant of something. Mr. Spencer himself repeatedly argues to this effect. His posited inscrutable accordingly is a mere hypostasis, and can be retained only as the being in which it inheres or resides is retained. Thence it appears that force is not the ultimate fact, but that its very existence presupposes a substance further back.

It would carry us too far afield to argue just now that this force-quality presupposes that that being is a person. It is enough to intimate that many of the greatest thinkers have so believed, from Sir John Herschel and the Duke of Argyle to Hegel and Schopenhauer. This is the ripe conclusion of the late Mr. Romanes: "Now to the plain man it will always seem that if our very notion of causality is derived from our own volition . . . he will always infer that all energy is of the nature of will-energy and all objective causation of the nature of subjective."‡

Nothing could be easier than to convict agnosticism of error but for the fact that it fain would cut away all ground upon which it can be either proved or disproved. As Dr. Harris has said: "It is impossible to appeal to knowledge to prove that knowledge is impossible, or to reason to prove that reason is irrational."§ Mr. Romanes may well charge Mr. Spencer with teaching an *impure*

\* *Correlation and Conservatism of Forces*, p. 19.

† *Ibid.*, p. 250.

‡ *Thoughts on Religion*, pp. 124, 125.

§ *The Philosophical Basis of Theism*, p. 17.

agnosticism, implying negative knowledge of that of which he affirms we are absolutely ignorant.\* If Mr. Spencer be a theist, it is in spite of his philosophy that he believes all that makes God God. On the very face of it, agnosticism involves a contradiction; it is a theory of knowledge which knowledge it denies the very possibility of; to accept it as true and to act upon it as a basis of conduct is utterly impossible; it is a dogmatic affirmation of inevitable ignorance, and if taken at its word, would destroy every achievement of mankind, and turn the bankrupt race, untaught and unteachable, out into the trackless wastes of baldest skepticism.

#### BEING OF GOD.

The theistic conception has two distinct genealogies, the metaphysical and the historical. Only the former falls to be considered now. "We come down, then, finally to force, as the "ultimate of ultimates." "Thus all other modes of consciousness are derivable from experiences of force; but experiences of force are not derivable from anything else."† This is as near an approach to theism as the synthetic philosophy will allow us to make. Mr. Spencer denies—truly—that his system is atheistic, and such passages as these just quoted present the ground of his denial. He repudiates the charge alike of materialism and of spiritualism.‡ He is never so vigorous as when exposing the fallacies of positivism; and certainly, whatever other sins may be laid to his charge, his first and fundamental postulate justifies his disclaimer as to the doctrine of Comte. It is not easy to put the right name on a man who, to every question, stolidly answers, "I don't know." However, it is undoubtedly fair to say of Mr. Spencer that he is a monist and, if a theist, then a monotheist. Granting arbitrary definitions, the pantheist may call himself a monotheist, though the brilliant German satirist called him "a bashful atheist." With Mr. Spencer matter and mind are both but transitory phenomena of the changeless and inscrutable noumenon. If this be properly theism, then the system is theistic. If a belief in the bare existence of a somewhat concerning which, or, peradventure, concerning whom, we can know absolutely nothing whatsoever, be faith in God, then this system warrants it. Such a theism is built upon a thousand negations with the saving clause of a single concession. If it be true that the framed conception of a God is the formative factor in every religion, that adoration of that Supreme Being is of the very essence of the soul's piety in every age, and that the will

\* *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 114.

† *First Principles*, p. 169.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 558. *Principles of Biology*, i, p. 491.

of that Sovereign fixes the norm of human life and determines the destiny of the world, then this system denies it all by denying man's power to know, and therefore his right to believe it. If the postulate of a remote and unknown causality can satisfy a thirsting soul, can forgive sin and save the world, then this philosophy can do it.

Agnosticism withers the religious instincts of mankind. The human heart can neither fear nor love the unknowable. We cannot know all about God. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne."\* "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"† And yet that man can know God, has been the basis of every religion, true and false, since the world began. All such substitutions of the impersonal for God—a stream of tendency, a power that makes for righteousness—are nothing less than robbery from religion, in the name of philosophy. Mr. Harrison's phrasing of the only prayer which an agnostic humanity could offer is open to criticism only because the systems to which it applies, not excluding his own, are themselves such caricatures of the true: "O X<sup>n</sup> love us, help us, make us one with thee." Certainly the Christian world will agree with the strong words of one who himself came from the deep darkness into light: "To speak of the religion of the unknowable, the religion of cosmism, the religion of humanity, and so forth, where the personality of the first cause is not recognized, is as unmeaning as it would be to speak of the love of a triangle, or the rationality of the equator."‡

#### ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

Consistently, Mr. Spencer could believe nothing concerning the character of God. His mind is a blank, and to every creed he could only render the Scotch verdict, "Not proven." Nevertheless, being human, he is sometimes theistic, and his system is relieved occasionally by compensating inconsistencies. Mr. Spencer distinguishes between real conceptions and symbolic conceptions; our idea of the plank on which we stand is of the former, but our idea of the earth or of the firmament or of the universe is of the latter.§ Most of our thinking is done in symbolic conceptions, and we are constantly making the mistake of regarding these as real conceptions. Ultimate religious ideas are symbolic conceptions and therefore *pseud*-ideas.

\* Psalm xcvii. 2.

† Job xi. 7, 8.

‡ Prof. Romanes' *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 41.

§ *First Principles*, p. 25 et seq.



Of the three thinkable doctrines of the origin of the universe, all are verbally intelligible, but literally inconceivable; therefore impossible. Religious creeds are largely theories of original causation. Inconceivability sounds the death-knell of all ultimate ideas both in science and in religion. It does not seem to have occurred to Mr. Spencer that he could scarcely have employed a more ambiguous term than *inconceivability*, and yet in pivoting so much upon its meaning, greater clearness is certainly a desideratum. By the inconceivable may be meant the unimaginable; or the self-contradictory; or the unclassifiable; or what is unframeable into realizable relations in thought; or the unknowable; or simply the untrue, that is, that which, with the evidence in possession, cannot be conceived as being actually true. Whatever he means, his ground is doubtful. He speaks as an empiricist, but he has already, in his primitive postulate, conceded the transcendental. Even Mr. Fiske says, "The test of inconceivability is only applicable to the world of phenomena from which our experience is gathered."\* Self-existence, self-creation, and creation *ab extra*, exhaust the possible hypotheses of origins, and yet each of these is inconceivable! And so we have no world. Such suicidal ratiocination needs no extended remark.

Mr. Spencer is continually horrified at the perils of anthropomorphism. Sophomores in theology are wont to be jealous of such degradations of the theistic idea; but with the synthetic philosophy it is the haunting Nemesis of all human thought. To make sure of escaping this deadliest of dangers, it recoils into the other extreme of bloodless and meaningless universal abstractions. This pretentious Greek word, with which Mr. Spencer delights to conjure, is also of exceedingly elastic import. The Greeks degraded their deities to the low level of their own whims and vices and passions. We undeify God if thus we anthropomorphize Him. "Thou thoughtest that I was such an one as thyself."† But there is a kinship, a kind-relation between God and man. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him."‡ If we are to think of God at all, we must think of Him as like ourselves. Either God is anthropopsychic—either man is theopsychic—either there must be something in common between God and man: or indeed agnosticism has spoken the last word. The human mind humanizes every conception it forms. Goethe says: "Man never knows how anthropomorphic he is." By the magical alchemies of thought, we assimilate every force, every truth, every fact we know into moulds distinctively human. There are few chapters in any book more suggestive than that by Dr.

\* *The Idea of God*, p. 136.

† Psalm l. 21.

‡ Gen. i. 27.

Iverach, in which he supports this thesis: "If we take the systems of philosophy which from the dawn of speculation until now have been in vogue, or the questions which at present divide the schools of philosophy, we can easily show that from line to circumference they are wholly anthropomorphic."\* Whence does Mr. Spencer get his idea or his impression of force? His psychology limits him rigidly to human consciousness as the source. He believes in the unknowable, but how can he image the unknowable to himself? He tells us that the ultimate ideas of science, not less than of religion, are inconceivable, and yet his book on education prescribes the study of science as the cure-all for the race. Why of science, and not of religion as well?

Creation is inconceivable, therefore impossible. God is inconceivable, therefore there is no God. *Homo mensura rerum*. And yet, in another connection, these are his words: "We are obliged to conclude that matter, whether ponderable or imponderable, and whether aggregated or in its hypothetical units, acts upon matter through absolutely vacant space; and yet this conclusion is positively unthinkable."† "Unthinkable conclusions" are acceptable concerning matter, but concerning God they block the way to all further thinking or knowing! One of the most surprising passages in all of Mr. Spencer's writings is that in which these words occur: "Is it not just possible that there is a mode of being as much transcending intelligence and will as these transcend mechanical motion? It is true we are totally unable to conceive any such higher mode of being. But this is not a reason for questioning its existence; it is rather the reverse."‡ And this from Mr. Spencer, who so persistently warns us against faith in fancies! Can it be that the voice that is wont to admonish us not to believe the inconceivable here tells us that its inconceivableness is rather a reason for believing? The inconceivability of a personal Creator is its own disproof; but the inconceivability of *super*-personality "is rather the reverse."

But really, the fancy is as unwarranted as it is inconsistent. Mr. Spencer allows nothing but force, but certainly force, as we regard it, is rather below than above personality with its intelligence and consciousness and will. If he contend that personality is but the name and form of that same force, highly organized and refined, then the human race must revise its lexicons, to suit Mr. Spencer's mode of speech. It is scarcely fair to toll us with such generous *possibilities* when it suits his purpose. The human mind is absolutely uninformed of the remotest intimation of any mode of

\* *Is God Knowable?* J. Iverach, M.A., p. 39.

† *First Principles*, p. 60 (all italics ours).

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

being higher than the personal. The loftiest ranges and reaches of our thought only bring us into nearer touch with the powers and processes of a Great All-pervading Personality in whose image we know we are because the evidences of its reason our reason can trace, the marks of its beauty our sense of beauty can detect, the tokens of its goodness our appreciation of the good can discover and approve. Lotze \* regards the Infinite Personality as more complete than the finite ; more complete it may be, as the resources of the Infinite may afford other conditions of maintaining its eternal consciousness and vastly more extended areas of opportunity for the free play of its unfettered faculties ; but not more complete in the integrity and essential outline of its ineffable and eternally self-constituted being. If the divine personality is essentially unlike the human, then there is absolutely no safeguard against the agnostic conclusions of the synthetic system. God as God is infinitely more complete than the creature, man ; to be sure, the morally perfect is more complete than the morally imperfect ; the prototype is higher than the image, but unless consciousness and Scripture are both in error, man knows God, not fully but really, in virtue of the fact that the creature is formed in his Creator's image.

It is not forgotten that his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. But unless, when Jesus announced to the woman at the well, that far-reaching truth that God is a Spirit, we are to understand the announcement in terms that our own consciousness, as spirits, employs, the announcement is absolutely meaningless to the human race. "God is love : " but unless we can take the truth and interpret it in terms of what we know and experience and observe as love, this precious text might as well have been given in the language of the inhabitants of Mars. "As a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him : " unless we can understand it to mean precisely what it so explicitly says, we cannot understand it at all. In our excessive zeal to guard against anthropomorphic views of God, we must beware lest we annihilate the Word of God and make its great and precious promises of none effect. It is ungracious in human wisdom to resent the condescensions of the Divine ; and to *patronize*† God is to be wise above that which is written and thus to achieve the ignoble heights of man's supremest folly. The prophets and apostles but hoodwinked bewildered humanity, and Jesus of Nazareth was the arch-agnostic of the ages, if their utterances were not leveled at human thought and need, and if the meaning of their sober sayings is not to be obtained by sober, sensible and rational pro-

\* *Mikrokosmos*, ii, p. 687.

† See Dr. Bruce's *Apologetics*, p. 310.

cesses of the human intellect. Indeed, in his zeal to shield his unknowable from the ruthless desecrations of anthropomorphism, Mr. Spencer refuses to attribute to it intelligence, while still positing force as its persistent manifestation. But which is the higher attribute? Assuredly of the known, we regard intelligence as a higher possession than power; who can tell us that this order is reversed in the realm of the unknowable?

After all, in this philosophy, the unknowable becomes, in considerable measure, the known. It is omnipresent; it is underived; it is a Power, "with a capital P;" its modes of motion, heat, light and the rest, are transformable not only into each other, but also into its moods of sensation, emotion and thought; it is not "all-nothingness," but "all-being;" indeed, Mr. Spencer, spurred on by his positivistic critic, feels warranted in saying that his doctrine is "not an everlasting No, but an everlasting Yea."\* Little wonder that the sage who finds himself in the midst of such confusions and inconsistencies takes refuge in the hollow resounding caves of agnosticism!

#### RELATION OF GOD TO THE WORLD.

The system under examination often seems unreservedly pantheistic. Creation, not the process but the product, is eternal, and its relation to the absolute reality is not that of origination, but strictly that of manifestation. If the cause-and-effect relation exist, it is only logical and not chronological. "Matter, motion and force are but symbols of the unknown reality."† "The one thing permanent is the unknowable reality, hidden under all these changing shapes."‡ In substance there is entire homogeneity and unity; heterogeneity and variety exist only in the forms.

"All are but *forms* of one stupendous whole  
Whose body nature is, and God the soul."

The first condition of the universe is described as that of a limitless ocean of merest specks. These specks are materialized just above the ideal mathematical point, having position without magnitude. They are absolutely ultimate, equal, similar. These homogeneous units of matter are uniformly related to homogeneous units of force. This embryonic universe hangs at the absolute zero-point of minimum simplicity. The breathless, formless, boundless depths of space are filled with these infinitesimal atoms of world-germ, motionless, monotonous and monopolizing all that is. Here is the raw material for the Spencerian cosmogony. This

\* *Nineteenth Century*, July, 1884, quoted in Orr's *The Christian View of God and the World*, p. 101.

† *First Principles*, p. 557.

‡ *Principles of Psychology*, ii, p. 503.



amorphous ocean is in a state of absolutely stable equilibrium. Equilibration follows from universal homogeneity and accordingly there can be nothing to disturb the equipoise from within or from without.

However, again an inconsistency graciously comes to our relief, and to it we owe the existence of the heavens and the earth. After, with some difficulty, adjusting ourselves to this ante-eosmic condition of things, what is our surprise to find these words: "The absolutely homogeneous must lose its equilibrium; and the relatively homogeneous must lapse into the relatively less homogeneous."\* Of the ground of this necessity, no intimation is given, and none can be given which does not do violence to the first, assumption laid down. And yet the whole process of the evolution of the universe hinges upon that one inconsistent and illogical assumption. The beginnings of differentiation are the beginnings of the disturbance of the assumed stable equilibrium. But what disturbed the equilibrium? Or what induced the differentiation? No matter which be viewed as the first, the question persists, *What did it?* Having assumed the stable equilibrium of the homogeneous, Mr. Spencer then proceeds to assume the incipient and subsequently ever-increasing instability of the homogeneous. "Thus a stick poised on its lower end is in unstable equilibrium; however exactly it may be placed in a perpendicular position, as soon as it is left to itself it begins at first imperceptibly to lean on one side and with increasing rapidity falls into another attitude. Conversely, a stick suspended from its upper end is in stable equilibrium; however much disturbed it will return to the same position."† But a stick poised on either end would stay poised forever if no force *ab extra* disturbed it. Mr. Spencer forgets that his stick is *the all*. His boundless ocean of specks had neither upper end nor lower end. An egg standing on end may be in unstable equilibrium, but if there were nothing in existence but the egg and (for the sake of the egg) what it stands on, then the egg will stand there eternally. The entire realm of being is Mr. Spencer's egg. Here again we are forced by the synthetic philosophy in spite of itself to the conclusion that this incident force from without is the force which belongs to the supramundane substance which the theist calls God.‡ It must be clear that, given the assumptions, the initial *ictus* in the evolutionary process is due to some power from without the mass. Assuredly, we cannot assume an absolutely stable repose and at the same time the latent impetus residing therein which is by and by to start the disturbance.

\* *First Principles*, p. 429.

† *First Principles*, p. 402.

‡ *Supra*, p. 390. For a masterly statement of this argument in full see Chapman's *Preorganic Evolution and the Biblical Idea of God*, pp. 145-178.

But, passing that by, what is regarded as the relation of this force, whatever it is, to the emerging and differentiating cosmos, once it has begun to evolve? Upon this point these volumes are for the most part silent, except occasionally, but distinctly, to ridicule what is called the "carpenter theory" of creation. There is no action among the atoms that is not essentially mechanical; chemistry is mechanics; vitality is mechanism; consciousness is force mechanically pushing itself along lines of least resistance; sensation, idea, purpose, memory, volition are susceptible of a purely mechanical interpretation. The definition of life itself is "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations."\* He finds the open entrance to this definition in the fact that of the four chief elements in nature, namely, carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen, three are so volatile as with greatest difficulty to be reduced to any other than the aeriform state; while, again, three of them are very low in intensity and very restricted in their range of chemical affinities. These two extremes of wide physical mobilities on one side and narrow chemical affinities on the other, supply the needed conditions for that differentiation and integration which is of the very essence of the evolutionary process. "Organic bodies which exhibit the phenomena of evolution in so high a degree are mainly composed of ultimate units having extreme mobility."† But without by any means denying all that is here taught, it is still pertinent to inquire whether the easy opportunity for a certain process can become *so* easy as to become itself the cause or the beginning of that process. Can an opportunity be so opportune as to become an efficiency? Because the balanced egg finds it is so easy to fall over, will it therefore just fall over? Because it is so easy for a boulder to roll down the mountain side, will it therefore *dislodge itself* from the spot where, stable and balanced, it has rested for ages and roll? Because the gases can form combinations so easily, will they *therefore* form them? Why did they wait so long? Why not wait a little longer? If they have a reason for their action or for the time or mode of their action, then they are rational; then too they are of a higher mode of being than the subpersonal inscrutable power which they and their actions but manifest; but if they have no reason for their action, then they are the tool and sport of chance. But *chance* is only an abstraction, a creation of the thought-power in the mind; and even as such, it is not contemplated as an efficiency but only as a method, or rather a lack of method. To credit the slippery volatile particles of that homogeneous mass with the origination of all the vast and varied forms of being and types

\* *Principles of Biology*, i, 80.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. i, Sec. i.

of life that exist in the world of fact to-day is a miracle of credulity which only an antinomian agnosticism can perform.

Nor indeed does Mr. Spencer hesitate in other parts of his work to affirm the impossibility of absolute repose initiating its own action. "As rationally interpreted, evolution must in all cases be understood to result, directly or indirectly, from the incidence of forces."\* "The life of a species, like the life of an individual, is maintained by the unequal and ever-varying actions of incident forces."† Certainly no more is needed for *maintaining* a process than for *commencing* it. Rather, should we say, that on the basis of the assumptions, allowing for automatic *momenta* in the self-initiated process, the tendency would be to hold the reverse. Mr. Spencer, with commendable frankness, admits that his definition of life is "somewhat too wide;" and Dr. McCosh has not been slow to show that the admission was not entirely gratuitous: "It would apply to a man putting on his clothes and keeping them clean. The essential element of life is omitted; and in accounting for the things he has defined he has not accounted for life."‡

Mr. Spencer does not believe in spontaneous generation of life. On being challenged to account for the crossing of the line between the inorganic and the organic, he argues substantially that the transition is so gradual, so imperceptible as indeed to be not a transition at all. "The affirmation of universal evolution is in itself the negation of an absolute commencement of anything."§ Chemical laboratories are called upon to illustrate that organic matter is not produced "all at once." "The separation between biology and geology once seemed impassable; but every day brings new reasons for believing that the one group of phenomena has grown out of the other."‡ "The chasm between the inorganic and the organic is being filled up."|| Thus does he explain the difficulty by explaining it away. A man is wide awake at noon and fast asleep at midnight, and because it is impossible to indicate the precise moment when he ceased to be awake and began to be asleep we conclude that there is no difference between wakefulness and slumber. It took Rome three hundred years to die; because the process was so gradual, there is therefore no difference between Rome living and Rome dead. It may be impossible to trace precisely Mason and Dixon's line; therefore there is no difference between North and South. Dead matter crosses the life-line so secretly and subtly that the scientist cannot know when the transition is made; therefore there is no life-line. It is bad science and

\* *Principles of Biology*, i, 399.

† *Ibid.*, p. 286.

‡ *Christianity and Fositivism*, p. 366.

§ *Principles of Biology*, i, 482.

|| *Principles of Psychology*, i, 137.

worse philosophy to hold that inorganic matter has no life-principle, or that only organic matter has life-principle, for the bounding line between the two has been erased forever simply because it has been crossed so imperceptibly that no eye can see it, no science can trace it.

It must be said that, to the uninitiated, Mr. Spencer's logic here seems less at fault than his statement of the facts. He denies that there is any essential difference between vital phenomena and the merely mechanical or chemical. The distinction, conventionally and popularly recognized, is like the Tropic of Cancer—a purely imaginary line. All differences are of degree and not of kind. Everywhere, according as we may choose to regard it, either all life dies or all death lives; geology, biology, psychology, physiology, sociology, theology are only advancing chapters in the science of mathematical mechanics. This line once crossed, or rather obliterated our philosopher's difficulties are largely behind him. Evolution having done so much, evolution easily does the rest. The argument is *à fortiori* for the subsequent stages. What the origins have kept hidden, the processes need not and do not disclose. There can be no supernatural where all is natural, or, if you please, there can be no natural where all is supernatural. Miracles are meaningless where either all or nothing is miraculous. The divine is a dream where the course of nature is the phantasmagoria of all that is. Providence is left to comfort him who knows no better. Teleology is the creed of the ignorant and the jest of the learned. If La Place could say that the mathematician in solving his equations does not need the hypothesis of God, so much the more the agnostic evolutionist in studying the laws and forces of nature, the thoughts and lives of men, the rise and destiny of nations, and the origin and development of solar and stellar systems, not only does not need the hypothesis of a personal God, but, by the very mental compact which at the beginning he has already made with himself, he rejects that hypothesis, with the scorn of his proud intellect, and with the full consciousness of the fatal perils involved in contemplating, for a single moment, the folly of accepting it.

#### IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

*The Principles of Psychology* is regarded by many as the *magnum opus* of Mr. Spencer's whole system. No one can question the profound learning and acute thought which these volumes display. His point of view is rigidly empirical. An advance has been made in the scale of cosmic activity. Evolution has segregated the primordial elements into masses. As yet no feeble thrill has responded to movements without. The faintest "shock" or "jar" in the



mass, occasioned by a disturbance in the environment, is the first phenomenon of life; and from this faint shock or jar is developed everything that constitutes the subject matter of psychology. This science takes notice of the coördination of the connected internal phenomena and the connected external phenomena. The thing contemplated "is not the connection between the internal phenomena; nor is it the connection between the external phenomena; but it is *the connection between these two connections.*"\* Psychology, then, is the science of connections between connections. It is not the science of mind, for of mind nothing is or can be known. "If the phrase (substance of mind) is taken to mean the underlying something of which these distinguishable portions are formed, or of which they are modifications, then we know nothing about it, and never can know anything about it."† With David Hume, Mr. Spencer assumes that impressions and ideas are the only things known to exist. It is true that elsewhere he discourses contrariwise: "No effort of imagination enables us to think of a shock, however minute, except as undergone by an entity."‡ If a cat grin, we may conceive the cat without the grin, but we cannot conceive the grin without the cat; nevertheless, under the strange franchises of inconceivability, that is exactly what the agnostic fain would do. There can be no shock without an entity to be shocked; and yet, that entity is studiously ignored, and psychology is the science of the shocks. The science of shocks is built upon the nescience of the things shocked. How could this fail to lead our author into most strange and inconsistent positions? Now his language is deeply pantheistic; now it is just as boldly materialistic; now it is suited to the associational doctrines of Mr. Mill; and now he speaks the sober truths of the most orthodox realistic psychologist.

The nearest approach to a definition of mind which he gives us is that it is a series of feelings; "its proximate components are feelings and the relations between feelings."§ These feelings are peripherally initiated, *i. e.*, sensations, and centrally initiated, *i. e.*, emotions. These are the ultimate mental units. As Prof. Watson says, "The mind he conceives as made up of ultimate units of feeling, absolutely identical in their nature, just as all nerve action is reducible to simple indistinguishable nervous shocks."|| The five senses, as old Democritus taught, are only modifications of the sense of touch. These five senses are the foundation-material for everything higher. The mind is nothing more or less than a *nexus* or bond that holds together the various transitory states that constitute

\* *Principles of Psychology*, i, 132 (italics his).

† *Principles of Psychology*, i, 145.

‡ *Ibid.*, i, 626.

§ *Ibid.*, i, 163.

|| *Comte, Mill and Spencer*, p. 155.

the sum total of our subjective life. He denies that we can have any immediate experience of the mind as an internal existence distinct from the body.\* The organic autonomy of instinct is accounted for by heredity.† Intelligence, as indeed every other so-called faculty of the mind, grows because the occurrence of one psychical state tends to make easier the occurrence of another just like it. Each wave passes with greater facility over the path of its predecessor. What we regard as intuitive conceptions are but the capitalized experience of the race. The axioms of the individual are the outcome of the unnumbered actual tests of his ancestors; what is *à priori* for the *vir* is *à posteriori* for the *homo*.

It is not necessary to add much in order to show the bearings of all this upon the cardinal doctrine of the immortality of the soul. It is nothing to the point that in his discussion of forces, physical and mental, he constantly regards equivalence and correlation as proof of identity, whereas they certainly do not prove more than a certain relation between the two. We are not interested in convicting Mr. Spencer of materialism; let his disclaimer be taken at its face value. We only need to observe with some care that, according to his view, the composition, indeed the very existence of mind, though *per se* unknowable, is absolutely inseparable from the physical organism, with the ever-changing states of which it is so vitally correlated. Mind is a series of feelings; feelings are mere shocks, primordially occasioned by a disturbed environment. Muscular tension, as against an outward resistance, is the genesis of the will. Ultimate mental units are always and only and altogether *feelings*; and feelings are perceptions of relations, and relations imply phenomena to be related, and these related phenomena are phenomena within and phenomena without. Certainly Prof. Tyndall's famous Belfast address applies as strongly against such a psychology as against the pure materialism of a Maudsley, when he tells us that mental phenomena are absolutely untransformable into physical terms.

Mr. Spencer denies that the human *ego* is a distinct spiritual substance; it is only a principle of continuity. Is it any wonder that he withholds personality from his unknowable reality? He is more anthropomorphic than he seems. If his own consciousness fail to witness that he himself is a person, truly to him there is no person. Self-ignorance is a high price to pay for ignorance of God; what intellectual fanaticism it is that leads the agnostic to pay it! Upon such a basis the immortality of the soul would be but the permanence of a nexus of relations, after the things related had ceased to exist. When the bodily organism crumbles, this "series of feel-

\* *Principles of Sociology*, i, 132.

† *Principles of Psychology*, i, 439.

ings" must vanish away. The empty phantasm we call the soul is no substance; therefore it is not permanent, and with the disintegration of its correlated organism, its consciousness-states, which are only relations, will forever pass away. But these consciousness-states *are* the soul. The immortality of the soul is the perpetuity of subjectivities beyond the period of existence of the objectives of which they are the passing states. Mr. John Fiske revises the teachings of his great master, and, in a somewhat pantheistic vein, frankly avows his own belief in the immortality of the soul.\* His faith is better than his teacher's philosophy, but we welcome the great truth which the author of the cosmic philosophy rescues from the synthetic: "According to Mr. Spenser, the divine energy which is manifested throughout the knowable universe is the same energy that wells up in us as consciousness. Speaking for myself, I can see no insuperable difficulty in the notion that at some period in the evolution of humanity this divine spark may have acquired sufficient concentration and steadiness to survive the wreck of material forms and endure forever."†

#### NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION.

In the universal sweep of evolution, the phenomena of religion have their appropriate place. Everything grows; nothing is made. Glancing back at the emerging point of man, it is manifestly difficult for us now correctly to picture the character and condition of the primitive man. It is a standing criticism upon Mr. Spenser's sociology that he considers his primitive man as fairly represented among savage peoples now. This ancestral man had neither defined consciousness nor self-consciousness. There was a time when he could say neither *cogito* nor *sum*. The Adam of evolution dreamt before he thought. "Dream experiences necessarily precede the conception of a mental self; *and are the experiences out of which the conception of a mental self eventually grows.*"‡ But this self means two selves, one of which remains with the body while the other goes off on an excursion during sleep. This vagrant "double" is responsible for all the religion, true and false, that has blessed or cursed mankind.

Different forms of insensibility, such as swoon, catalepsy and ecstasy, are so similar to sleep that the naïve primitive man makes more of the resemblance than of the difference. In them, also, the duplicate wanders. So, likewise, in death, which the bushmen of the jungles as well as the Parisians of 1789 called "an eternal sleep." To a sleeping man, the double returns at waking; the

\* *The Destiny of Man*, p. 116.

† *Ib. id.*, p. 117.

‡ *Principles of Sociology*, i, 141 (italics his).

dead man never wakes, and so his double has gone forever. Hence the other life, the future life. This double may afterward return to visit the resting-place of the body it once inhabited. Hence, ghosts. Tender regard is cherished for departed loved ones. The living frequent the burial places of their dead and affectionately provide for the wants of their occasionally returning doubles. Time and fond remembrance lend enchantment to the charms of the departed and, while marveling at the mysteries of their strange estate, the living become incipient worshipers of the dead. The tomb becomes a shrine, the mound becomes an altar, and the rude image of the deceased becomes the fetish of the consecrated spot. Already, faith in the supernatural is born in those wondering worshipers' minds. Gods are but ghosts refined, idealized, deified. Those who loved us most and cared for us first in life are the first to claim our homage among the hosts of the departed. Hence, ancestor worship. "There is no exception then, using the phrase ancestor worship in its broadest sense as comprehending all worship of the dead, be they of the same blood or not, we conclude that ancestor worship is the root of every religion."\* "In their normal forms, as in their abnormal forms, all gods arise by apotheosis."† Our Heavenly Father is, in Matthew Arnold's word, our earthly father "magnified." The divine is the human raised to a higher power. Divinity is apotheosized superiority—nothing more. Religious rites are traceable to funeral observances; all churches and cathedrals originally were as vaults and tombstones marking the places of the dead. The fact that the New England Country Church has its burial ground in the rear, so often making the graveyard the churchyard too; the fact that England's most sacred place of worship in Westminster Abbey is at the same time the mausoleum of England's most illustrious dead; the memorial cathedral of St. Peter's at Rome; the memorial chapel of the Medici in Florence; the beautiful Taj Mahal in far-away India, with its tomb for the beloved queen, and its mosque for the only Allah; the mausolea of Nikko in Japan, where every patriotic son of the Mikado's empire aspires to worship his gods while at the same time he pays his tribute to the dust of Nippon's moldering Shoguns of the past: all these might do service for Mr. Spenceer in tracing the worship of the divine back to reverence for the human dead. And, too, the elevating of a dead Cæsar into a place in the Roman pantheon, the sacred scaffold of a departed medicine-man among the peaceful Ojibways of Minnesota, the act of a Chinese woman in placing her cup of rice on the curbstone of Jackson street in San

\* *Principles of Sociology*, i, 411.

† *Ibid.*, ii, 687.



Francisco for the spirit of her dead ancestor: these and such as these are reputed relics in historic times of the primitive practices to which we are to look for the origin of all the religious rites and institutions of human history.

Certainly it is not necessary to spend much time indicating the theological implications of such a natural evolution of the supernatural. Christian creeds and cults and cathedrals are only advanced but transitory stages in this development. Monotheism is an inference and an afterthought. It belongs at the "far end" of the course. Hebraism, nominally monotheistic, retained a large infusion of polytheism. Christianity displays vestiges of primitive polytheism in its doctrines of the Trinity, of the devil and of angels. In this development, every religion had its rightful place and best supplied the needs of its age. The religious education of mankind consists in the process of what Mr. Fiske calls the deanthropomorphization of the theistic idea. Mr. Spencer would depersonalize it and leave it to be decided afterward whether or not men will worship it. All manifestations of this religiousness are alike in kind, differing only in form and degree. "The relatively pure theism of modern Christianity cannot be accepted by the evolutionist as an immediate, divine revelation, nor can he consent to draw a hard-and-fast line between this and other great concrete expressions of the religious emotion."\*

And yet Mr. Spencer believes in religious institutions. The task of religion is the all-essential one of preventing men from being wholly absorbed in the immediate and relative; † and even now the great mass of men need that there should be vividly depicted future torments and future joys—pains and pleasures of a definite kind produced in a manner simple and direct enough to be clearly imagined. ‡ And this in the synthetic philosophy! Are we to lure the ignorant with promises that are not true and to scare the wicked with threats that we know are false? Can it be that the doctrine of the relativity of knowledge in metaphysics finds in ethics its equivalent in the idea that we are to teach error that good may come? Believers in the Christian religion at least will not thank Mr. Spencer for tolerating its teachings simply because "men need them," and the judgment of the world will doubtless be that if the utility and not the truth of religion is to be its *raison d'être*, then it is better not, prudentially, to appeal to unbelievers to practice hypocrisy; to semi-believers to hide their eyes from what might shake their faith; or to people in general to "abstain from expressing any doubts they may feel since a fabric of immense in-

\* Hudson's *The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*, p. 182.

† *First Principles*, p. 100.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

portance to mankind is so insecure at its foundations that men must hold their breath in its neighborhood for fear of blowing it down."\*

#### THE ETHICAL IMPERATIVE.

The task in hand does not include a study of the ethical phases of Mr. Spencer's system; and yet, in the *rationale* of the moral sanction, certain theological implications are always involved. There is the less need of even outlining his ethical views since they are the most widely read and known of all his works. Still his standpoint is consistently empirical. "The establishment of rules of conduct on a scientific basis is a pressing need."† That this is to be the only basis appears from the next sentence: "Now that moral injunctions are losing the authority given by their *supposed sacred origin*, the *secularization of morals* is becoming imperative."‡ True to the idea of universal adjustment of relations, conduct is defined as "comprehending all adjustments of acts to ends . . . whatever their special natures and whether considered separately or in their totality."§ Conduct is good or bad as it produces good or bad results to self or others or both. That is to say, the goodness or badness of conduct is contingent upon the pleasurable or painfulness of its total effects. Pleasure is as necessary a moral intuition as space is as an intellectual one. The test of these results is essentially biological, and Emerson is quoted with approval that the first condition of a gentleman is that he be a good animal. Only experience, however, can determine what conduct accomplishes good results, and hence ethical science is purely inductive. In his first work on social statics, Mr. Spencer announced himself an intuitionist, but qualifications came one by one until he finally abandoned that position entirely. Here again he avails himself of the experience of the race rather than of the individual, thus, by his contested hypothesis of transmitted acquisitions in the way of achievement and trait, avoiding the objections to Mr. Mill's notion that every man's idea of right is derived from his own individual experience. Mr. Spencer congratulates himself, seeing that by this means he conserves all the merits and escapes all the weakness of both the intuitionist and the inductionist in morals. The inconceivableness of the negation of a moral axiom is the result of probably millions of generations of experience. The savage has no idea of right or wrong in the abstract. A perfect man in an imperfect society would still be imperfect because the *adjustment* would be inharmonious. As in religion, so in ethics, like

\* J. S. Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 70.

† First Preface to *The Data of Ethics*, p. xiv.

‡ Italics ours.

§ *Principles of Ethics*, i, 5.

Leibnitz' world, the prevailing system is always as good as it can be. What is pain for one is pleasure for another. Asafoetida is to us the typically disgusting odor, but to the Esthonians it is the favorite perfume;\* and so good and bad conduct is to be judged in accordance with the subjective sensitiveness of the beings that are to be affected by it. Perfection is always an *à posteriori* and variable conception. The social instincts are the foundation of all morality.

The argument is explicit and elaborate to show that *freedom* is only apparent. The illusion consists in supposing that the *ego* is *something*. Indeed, freedom of choice would obstruct all true progress in the world. Tennyson's fancy is sober truth—"to let the ape and tiger die." Sin is a theological back number. The ethical development of the race is the slow process of the elimination of the brute out of its too loyal and filial descendants. Sin is the harsh and antique name for the maladjustment of man to his environments. Evil is a help to the development of the good and so, of course, can be no longer evil; it is "good in the making."

"All nature is but art unknown to thee;  
All chance, direction which thou canst not see;  
All discord, harmony not understood;  
All partial evil, universal good;  
And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,  
One truth is clear: Whatever is is right."†

The theological factor in ethics has been its greatest bane, and, by reducing ethics to a scientific basis, that factor must be speedily exorcised. Historically, ethics was originally involved in religion; religion was ancestor worship, and ancestor worship had its origin in purely prudential considerations.‡ All divine injunction originated in the supposed wish of a departed ancestral spirit, and regarding that wish was not so much out of love for the ancestor as for the benefit to be got from it. The past rules the present; dead Solons enacted the laws which living nations obey; political obligations are those of allegiance to a living chief, and religious obligations are those to the spirit of a dead one.

Egoism antedates altruism, and is eventually to be reconciled with it by practically swallowing it up. When egoism ceases to pay better than otherism, wise men will all be altruists. When altruism becomes as pleasurable as egoism, the happy equilibrium will have been struck. The continuous *adjustment* will be alike complete and spontaneous; the path of virtue will have been worn smooth; neither the intellect will have to reflect nor the conscience

\* *Principles of Ethics*, i, 179.

† Pope's *Essay on Man*, i, 289-294.

‡ *Principles of Ethics*, i, 307.

to decide, and as Mr. Balfour says, "by the time we are all perfectly good we shall also be all perfectly idiotic."\* All this is from below and not from above. Humanity has no God-given ideals. The conception of a supreme righteousness, whose codes define right, and whose sanction dignifies duty, is lost. The Decalogue is an affront to the emancipated reason. Calculating expediency becomes the rule of the world's conduct. Holiness is handmaid to happiness. Duty is mere prudence, and wrong is but folly.

How vastly remote is this from the cardinal principles of Christian ethics, which is indeed "the application of Christian beliefs to the conduct of life."† Such dust-born ideas fail to account for or to interpret the unselfish, the noble, the pure in the biographies of the past. To measure the character of the Man of Nazareth by such a measuring rod is to mock His memory at once. The egoism and altruism of human ethics find their complete reconciliation in the Golden Rule, which contemplates the heart as well as the hand; and the ultimate analysis of ethical truth covering the broadest areas of motive and conduct and result, whether Godward or manward, finds its best expression in those familiar words of which Thomas Carlyle said that they conveyed the grandest truth of human thought: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

#### ESCHATOLOGY.

As an oracle of prediction, the synthetic philosophy is not entirely dumb. With some confidence it foretells the future of the existing economy. Man is the goal of the evolutionary process, and the gradual harmonizing of life with environment will mark and measure the advance of all things terrestrial. As concerning the supernatural, religion is baseless, but men will long need it, nevertheless. Accordingly, it will exist in response to that creating need; and churches will differentiate more and more into the many varieties that will be begotten of intellectual independence. Prof. Huxley speaks truly in saying that the doctrine of evolution encourages no millennial hopes. "Evolution is commonly conceived to imply in everything an *intrinsic* tendency to become something higher. This is an erroneous conception of it."‡ Given his premises, it is certainly not easy to contest this pessimistic conclusion, although elsewhere he tells us that "evolution can end only in the establishment of the greatest perfection and the most complete happiness."§ The reconciliation of these two views doubtless lies in his distinction between the relative and the absolute.

\* *The Foundations of Belief*, p. 75.

† Newman Smyth, *Christian Ethics*, p. 12.

‡ *Principles of Sociology*, i. 93.

§ *First Principles*, p. 517.



Scientific to the last, Mr. Speneer foresees lapse into absolute death as the universal and inevitable goal of all we know. Astronomically, this may be science; biologically, psychologically, spiritually, he regards it as equally so. The visible creation is without beginning and without end.\* The whole system abhors definite lines and limits. Indeed, the primordial equilibrium from which all worlds came was but the lapse and repose of a universe that had emerged, had its day and been forgotten. The first act of a new cosmology is the last act of an old one. Nothing ever began and nothing ever ended. The tomb of one world is the womb of its successor, and the *débris* of one cycle furnishes the elements for the next. "We are compelled to entertain the conception of evolutions that have filled an immeasurable past and evolutions that will fill an immeasurable future."† In this endless play of the eternally persistent force, with its vast rhythm of firmaments in space, the age-long forenoon of evolution is inevitably followed by its age-long afternoon of dissolution; so that, in this inconceivably stupendous sweep of the eternities, the poet sang science when he said:

"Worlds on worlds are rolling ever  
From creation to decay:  
Like the bubbles on a river  
Sparkling, bursting, borne away."‡

This is certainly audacious agnosticism. Possibly, according to the law of the compensation of faculties, the fertile imagination makes up for defective intelligence. If there is a sphere for legitimate agnosticism, certainly it is this.

It is interesting to note that this doctrine of cycles, though by no means unknown to the early Greek philosophies, is only a re-sectated and Anglicized Oriental cosmogony. Buddhism has a theory surprisingly similar. Only the becoming is eternal. Mr. Speneer traces the course from equilibrium to a world and from a world back to equilibrium; the Eastern philosophy traces it from non-entity to entity and from entity back again to non-entity; and apart from the force from without, which Mr. Speneer repudiates, it is hard to see how the Western theory excels. "It was this ceaseless rotation that led to the wheel being adopted as the favorite symbol in Buddhism."§ "In short, the constant revolving of the wheel of life in one eternal circle, according to fixed and immutable laws, is perhaps after all the sum and substance of the philosophy of Buddhism."|| This is the agnostic history of

\* *First Principles*, p. 551.

† *Ibid.*, p. 551.

‡ Shelley's *Hellas*.

§ Sir Monier Monier-Williams' *Buddhism*, p. 119.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 123

eternity. Some one has said that the empiricist is not entitled to a philosophy; how much less to prophecy! He forecasts the future by his knowledge of the past, but apart from the implications involved in the assumed uniformity of the manifestations of the unknowable, he stands on his narrow plank, alike ignorant of the past and of the future. Why is it not entirely proper to call the synthetic system the "Philosophy of the Wheel?"

It is now for the reader to judge whether there are theological implications in Mr. Spencer's philosophy; and, if so, what they are. He may not deny as true, but he does deny that we can *know* as true, the whole distinctive body of Christian doctrine. He supplies the basis of theism, but denies the right to build thereon. His is a profoundly able, comprehensive and suggestive system; its error is in its assumptions, which positively forbid adding to or taking from it. It makes God unknowable, whom to know is life eternal. Notwithstanding its apparently generous concessions, in its last analysis it furnishes force and sanction to that "radical skepticism which sees in religion only an irrational pathological phenomenon."\* It holds anthropomorphism in abhorrence, and scouts the incarnation of the Divine; and yet the Christian world believes that in the man Jesus in history it sees Him "who is the image of the invisible God." The Bible of Christendom is no Bible. Salvation and a Saviour are a fable where sin is a fiction. As religion was born of dreams, so it lives in shadows and airy legends, and will at last die out into the blackness of a dawnless night. It is blind to the eternal reason and the absolute right in which the nineteenth-century civilization sees the source of all solemn conviction and the ground of all moral obligation. The God-created heavens and earth, with all their vital forms and starry hosts, are but the transient manifestations of the eternal and inscrutable.

"Is not the vision He, tho He be not that which He seems?

Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?"†

Mr. Spencer delights his soul in all-comprehending generalizations. Not years, nor ages, nor centuries, nor millenniums are the units of his theorizing measurements; evolutionary cycles emerge and subside under the magic spell of his wondrous wand. In the mighty rhythm of worlds following upon worlds, the whole æon from the initiative impulse that grew into a differentiated universe until in dead repose its last spark goes out in the awful stillness of a world-night, so far as we can know, no mind presides, no hand

\* *Philosophy and Development of Religion*, Otto Pfeleiderer, D.D., i, 113.

† Tennyson's *The Higher Pantheism*.

directs, no intelligence controls. The truth of the yester-epoch may be contradicted in the sciences of to-day. The specks may have taken a different path; the monads may have grouped themselves into different affinities and correlations; the nerve-waves may have worn a different channel, and man and mind and law and right and truth and duty and good and God may accordingly be wholly unlike what has bubbled up in the brief course of this evolutionary world-age of ours. There is no wrong for there is no absolute right; there is no error for there is no eternal truth; there is no solemn obligation for there is no supreme Sovereign, save of our own crowning.

And this is agnosticism! This is pyrrhonism; this is absolute intellectual, moral and spiritual chaos. It still leaves the world nebulous, floating, a dreary mist. It is borne upon the back of no Atlas; it is chained to the foot of no Jove. Having no aim, it cannot fail; having no course, it cannot be lost. Truly from such mist-germs, no world of truth can come. There is a unity in the universe grander and sublimer than this, even as the will-product of the eternal God is grander and sublimer than the earth-born fancies of a passing day. Subsistence, coherence, harmony, unity are the product of no inscrutable force pulsing itself into bubble worlds; of no great world-soul of which the ancient Stoics taught. It is the magnificent handiwork of a volitional impulse, a rational principle, a vigilant providence, and the immanent Logos of the eternal Godhead is the bond that binds the whole creation into one. The science of man is but reading over again the thoughts of his God. Euclid is outdone among the stars. The artist takes his lessons from the seas, the mountains and the fields. Man reaches his highest and achieves his best in spelling out the letters of the thoughts of God. We read the artist in his art. We see the Creator in His creation. We find God in all His works. Power may be the ultimate of ultimates in the synthetic system, but we rejoice to know of One—the Theanthropos of time—who could say: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;" and of whom it is written, "All things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things and by him all things consist."