---

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

Lord and Lady Radstock, and the Duke and Duchess of Westminster. And among the recently departed, Lord Cairns, twice Lord Chancellor of England, and especially the Earl of Shaftesbury, who as a legislator was constantly seeking the good of the working classes, in public meetings was continually advocating missionary work, and in private was indefatigable in efforts for the temporal and spiritual benefit of men, giving his days and his nights to this work. He was intimately connected with nearly all the institutions named, and with numerous others.

---

ARTICLE IV.

## THE GHOST THEORY OF THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION.

BY THE REV. S. H. KELLOGG, D. D., TORONTO, CANADA.

By the above title may be justly described that theory of the origin of religion which Mr. Herbert Spencer has now for some time been offering to the world to account for the evolution of religion. It is set forth with great fulness in his "Principles of Sociology," Vol. I, part I, and in outline is as follows:

After some preliminary matter, Mr. Spencer begins his argument with a reference to the conception of things as visible and invisible. The primitive man observed, for instance, that clouds and stars appear and disappear, and that the same is true of many other things. He sees, moreover, that sometimes that which is invisible may have great power, as when the wind uproots great trees. Hence among his earliest notions must have been this of existence as visible and invisible, and therewith the idea that to the invisible may belong great power. And as many things, *e. g.*, the stars, exist a part of the time as visible, and a part of the time as invisible, he concludes that everything may thus have a dual form of existence.

Again, the primitive man finds, let us say, a fossil. From

its appearance he would naturally infer, with his limited experience, that one and the same substance may be transmuted into another having entirely different properties. And, still further, as he observes that eggs change into chickens, and trees come out of seeds, he concludes that form as well as substance may undergo a total transmutation. This may well have been confirmed to his mind by the observation that certain insects and reptiles have the power of changing more or less their color and form, so as to seem exactly like that in the midst of which they live. And, whereas he has as yet no generalized knowledge, there is nothing to hinder his believing that such transformations are not merely apparent but real. When this belief in the possibility of transformation is once established, it would easily extend itself to other classes of objects than those named. In a word, since the primitive man observed that some things really or apparently become other things, therefore he concludes that anything may become anything. For—to use Mr. Spencer's illustration—"the tadpole, with a tail and no limbs, differs from a young frog, with four limbs and no tail, more than a man differs from a hyena; for both of these have four limbs and both laugh."[1] And thus, at this stage of the evolution, the primitive man had reached the conclusion that each object which he sees is not only what it seems, but, potentially, anything else.

Next in order, we are told, the primitive savage may be supposed to have applied this theory of things to himself. For example, seeing his own shadow following him, he might naturally believe it to be an actual existence belonging in some way to the person casting the shadow. Moreover, he must have observed, as in the case of clouds, and of fishes in the water, etc., that the shadow is in a degree separable from the person or thing which casts it, whence, beginning now to generalize, he infers that shadows must be conceived as existences appended to, but capable of separation from, the material things to which they belong. This inference is confirmed by the obser-

[1] Principles of Sociology, I. p. 128.

vation of other phenomena, such as reflections in water, echoes, etc. All these tended to develop the notion that with every existence of every kind there is a second, visible or invisible, existence.

In further explication of the evolution of religion, Mr. Spencer instances the phenomena of dreams. The primitive man, he tells us, could not have had the conception of mind, by the aid of which we explain our dreaming. What could he do but suppose that the dream was as much a reality as anything which he experienced in his waking hours; that, while asleep, he actually went where he dreamed that he went, and did what he dreamed that he did, and so on? And, not having the idea of a soul within him by which he might explain how he, who, as his friends tell him, was all the night lying in the self-same place, could also at the same time have been elsewhere, and have done and suffered what he dreamed—what could this primitive savage do but call in to his help the idea of the dualism of all things which he had already evolved? His observations of dissolving clouds and waning stars, shadows and echoes, have led him to believe that there is a visible and an invisible state. How natural, then, that he should conclude that he too is a double being, and has a visible and an invisible self,—a second self, which, in the dream, while the visible self is quietly sleeping, really goes elsewhere, and does or suffers or enjoys all that which was dreamed. And, continuing this primitive reasoning, why may not this be the existence which he often sees accompanying him in the form of a shadow, or as a reflection in the mirror of a lake? And how clearly this shows us how it has been that, getting at the conception of an indwelling soul in this fashion, men have come to speak of disembodied souls as "shades!"[2] The soul was, in a word, originally thought to be one with the shadow! Grotesque as these fancies seem, Mr. Spencer gives many illustrations of such beliefs from many different races.

He further suggests that the experiences of the somnambu-

[2] See for illustrations, *Op. cit.* I. p. 192.

list would confirm the above supposed reasoning. He is now and then found actually doing the very things that he dreamed he was doing. Such phenomena would easily be accepted by the primitive man as proof that men do actually in some sense go away in their sleep and do what they dream they do, and that they may in this condition sometimes be visible. True, Mr. Spencer admits, "a careful examination of the facts would show that in this case the man's body was absent from its place of rest." But this is no great difficulty. It is quite sufficient to reply that "savages do not carefully examine the facts."[3]

And now we have another step in the evolution. For, inasmuch as in dreams the sleeper meets with various people, dead and living, a man—if a primitive savage—would naturally conclude that he really met those people, and that therefore not only he himself, but other people also, have double selves, and that the second self survives death, and sometimes appears to those who are left. Hence he gets the idea of a life after death, and as he perhaps scalps or tortures in his sleep the dead men who in life had been his enemies, he infers that there may be retribution in that other life. Thus, according to Mr. Spencer, was evolved the idea of a soul, of a life after death, with future reward and retribution, and the superstition of the appearance of ghosts. And this last brings us, he assures us, to the very earliest and most rudimentary idea which man ever had of a God. His words are as follows: "It is unquestionably true that the first traceable conception of a supernatural being is the conception of a ghost. This exists where no other idea of the same order exists; and this exists where multitudinous other ideas of the same order exist."[4] That belief in a surviving self is both evolved among savages and is perpetually reproduced among the civilized, is, in the judgment of Mr. Spencer, a fact of great significance. He regards this fact alone as almost enough to prove that the ghost is "the primitive type of a supernatural being." For "whatever is common to men's

[3] *Op. cit.* 1. p. 151.

[4] *Op. cit.* 1. p. 305.

minds in all stages must be deeper down in thought than whatever is peculiar to men's minds in higher stages; and if the later product admits of being reached by modification and expansion of the earlier product, the implication is that it has been so reached." [5]

As consequent upon the above evolution, we are then told that it would follow that the man who had known the dead, would desire to please him now that he was gone, and to propitiate him if offended. Herein Mr. Spencer sees the origin of all sacrifice and of ritual of every kind. Still further, it is plain that, whatever of consequence a man had when alive, the more power would his ghost be supposed to have after death. And inasmuch as, through the idea which the child has of the greatness and importance of its parents, men would be inclined to worship them after death, ancestor worship would naturally arise as the earliest form of religion. And again, among departed ancestors, those would be most honored or most feared who had been persons of the most power for good or evil while in this life; whence the common deification of dead heroes, kings, warriors, and such like. And, as the years went by, the notion of these dead men would be expanded and exaggerated, till at last from being at first thought of as very strong, very wise and so on, they would be thought of as being all-powerful, all-wise. And finally, as the outcome of all, we should find—as we in fact do find—that men would at last come to worship the supposed *first* ancestor of their own tribe, or of all men, as being the supreme God, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Such, in outline, is the account that Mr. Spencer gives us of the evolution of the idea of God, and of all religion. A shadow, a dream, a ghost, a God—the Maker of heaven and earth and Judge of all mankind! The theory is supported by abundant illustrations, of every notion to which reference is made—illustrations drawn from every quarter of the world, from all races, and all ages of history. Even facts which at first sight might seem to be at variance with his theory, he presses into the service of this remarkable argument to prove that the idea of

[5] *Ibid.*

a God of all the earth was developed from the observation of a shadow! Thus, in many parts of the world, we find fetich worship, which other philosophers have supposed to be the original form of religion. But fetich worship Mr. Spencer regards as a secondary development, easily explained on his theory. In his judgment it is only an aberrant development of ancestor worship. The spirit, supposed to be resident in the fetich, is an ancestral ghost which through lapse of time has lost to the mind his special individuality, and is believed to have taken up its abode in the fetich. As for nature worship, in which others have thought they saw the original form of religion, this also he seeks to account for, on his theory, as a development subsequent to ancestor worship. His words are:

> When it marks the place whence the race came, a mountain is described in tradition as the parent of the race, as is probably the sea, in some cases; and both also give family names: worship of them as ancestors thus arising in two ways. Facts imply that the conception of the dawn as a person results from the giving of dawn as a birth-name. . . The moon is still a source of birth-names among the uncivilized: the implication being that reverence for it is reverence for a departed person. . . . Lastly, worship of the sun is derived in two ways from ancestor worship. Here conquerors, coming from the region of sunrise, and therefore called children of the sun, come to regard the sun as ancestor; and there the sun is a metaphorical name given to an individual, either because of his appearance, or because of his achievements, or because of his exalted position: whence identification with the sun in tradition, and consequent sun-worship. [6]

Such, then, is Mr. Spencer's theory as to the origin of religion, and such the argument, in brief, by which he supports it. Against theory and argument stand the following considerations:

We have to notice, in the first place, that with commendable frankness Mr. Spencer tells us at the beginning of his argument that we shall not be able to determine the truth as to the original faith of man on the inductive method. He says that we cannot settle the question as to what were the religious ideas of the primitive man by merely taking the lowest types of men known to us, and assuming that their ideas, if not primitive, are, at least, very like primitive ideas. For this would be to assume that in these inferior races we had examples of men

[6] *Op. cit.* I. pp. 448, 449.

still in the primitive state, whereas there is not a little evidence to show that many, at least, of these savage tribes—in whom many may have supposed that they had before them types of primitive man—are, not developments, but degradations from higher forms. His words deserve to be noted:

> To determine what conceptions are truly primitive would be easy if we had accounts of truly primitive men. But there are sundry reasons for suspecting that existing men of the lowest types . . . do not exemplify men as they originally were. Probably most of them, if not all of them, had ancestors in higher states. . . . It is quite possible, and, I believe, highly probable, that retrogression has been as frequent as progression. [7]

Here, then, is indeed an emergency. It is required, in the name of exact science and after its method, to ascertain and represent the facts as to the original ideas of men on the subject of religion. Mr. Spencer's system of philosophy compels him to assume that those ideas were of the most rudimentary sort, that man did not begin his existence as a moral agent with the idea of God, but gradually evolved the idea of God and therewith grew into a moral agent. For if man is not a creation but a growth, it is clear that the original mammal which became man, could not all at once have risen to the idea of a First Cause and Moral Ruler of the universe. Now facts are needed which shall show us how this wonderful development of moral agency proceeded. But, unfortunately, facts as to primitive men, according to Mr. Spencer, are wanting. The situation, then, at the very beginning of the proposed investigation, is most embarrassing. On the one hand is Mr. Spencer's philosophy, which leads him to conclude that man has come up by a purely natural process of development from a condition of mere animality. On the other hand are the stubborn facts which constrain Mr. Spencer to confess that "most if not all of existing races" have had "ancestors in higher states."

How shall the difficulty be met? By an *a priori* hypothesis, is Mr. Spencer's answer! He tells us that we must endeavor, however difficult it may be, to form a conception of the primitive man, so as to be able to form some conception of his

[7] *Op. cit.* I. p. 106.

primitive ideas. This may indeed be difficult; but Mr. Spencer has encouragement for us. He says:

> Guided by the doctrine of evolution in general, and by the more special doctrine of mental evolution, we may help ourselves to dilineate primitive men in some of their leading traits. Having observed *a priori*, what must be the characters of those ideas, we shall be, as far as possible, prepared to realize them in imagination, and then to discern them as actually existing. [8]

This is certainly candid and clear; whether the proposed method be strictly scientific is another question. That method is, in a word, as follows: First form the conception of what the primitive man must have been, according to the principles of the Spencerian philosophy, and then seek for facts in nature and history which may be used to confirm the truth of that conception.

Mr. Spencer sets forth his conception of what the primitive man must have been in the following language:

> The primitive man has no such ideas as natural and unnatural, possible and impossible, no such ideas as law, order, cause, etc.; he lacks fit words for carrying on inquiry, as well as the requisite power of continued thinking. We see that, instead of being a speculator and maker of explanations, he is at first an almost passive recipient of conclusions forced on him. And on asking what these are, we find that he is inevitably betrayed into an initial error, and that this inevitably originates an erroneous system of thought which elaborates as he advances. [9]

On these postulates as to the condition and character of primitive man, Mr. Spencer bases his argument as to the origin of religion as given above. If ever there was such a being as Mr. Spencer's primitive man, then his theory as to the origin of religion might possibly be true; if not, then the theory falls to the ground. But to assume the original existence of such a being, involves a begging of the whole question at issue. For the point in debate between Mr. Spencer and Christian thinkers is just this: "Did man begin his existence with the idea of God, or did he by slow degrees develop it?" But since the idea of God involves the idea of a First Cause, Mr. Spencer, in assuming that the first man could not have had the idea of cause,

[8] *Op. cit.* I. p. 111.

[9] *Op. cit.* I. p. 442.

assumes that he could not have had the idea of God. This, we repeat, assumes in advance the question in debate.

Here we might be content to rest the whole case as regards Mr. Spencer's argument, until some one shall have furnished the proof that ever on earth there existed such an idiot as this Spencerian "primitive man." Meanwhile we have the highest scientific authority for saying that all ascertained facts point the other way. Even Mr. Spencer is not far from admitting this. All the facts ascertained up to the present day go to show that man appeared suddenly upon the planet, and then not as a muttering man-monkey, but, in all essential particulars, as really and truly a man as the man of to-day. There is not a particle of evidence that such a creature as this hypothetical man ever existed except in the dreams of this modern evolutionist philosophy.

In Mr. Spencer's argument it is assumed that there are no innate ideas; that the notions of cause, responsibility, etc., and all other so-called intuitive ideas, are the product of experience. Even if true, this would not be self-evident; and if not true, then it is certain that there was something in the constitution of the primitive man, no less than in our own, in virtue of which he naturally and necessarily conceived of things in the relation of cause and effect. To build up a theory to account for the origin of religion, and leave out of consideration the idea of cause, as of necessity involved, explicitly or implicitly, in all thinking, is not permissible. For neither Mr. Spencer nor any one else is able to adduce a single instance of a people so low that they have not exhibited the causal judgment in full operation. It constantly appears that, however crude and erroneous notions any people may have as to the nature of God, they are constrained to believe in His existence, in part at least, because compelled to believe that every event must have an adequate cause.

It is another remarkable and most suggestive fact that in Mr. Spencer's elaboration of his theory as to the origin of religion, he has practically ignored the phenomena exhibited in man's

consciousness of sin. One might almost imagine that he had never heard that there either was, or was by any race of men believed to be, such a reality as sin. The index of his "Sociology" is exceedingly full and satisfactory, filling ten finely printed pages, but we have not found the word "sin" or any of its equivalents in any of those pages! This omission is specially noticeable in his account of the origin of sacrifices. It is one of the most notorious facts connected with the customs of men concerning sacrifice, that these, as a general rule, stand more or less distinctly connected with ideas of placation and propitiation. They rest upon the assumption more or less distinctly made, that there is something wrong in man's relation to the supernatural power or powers to whom the sacrifice is offered. To us this seems one of the most remarkable defects in Mr. Spencer's argument. To attempt to construct a theory of the origin of religion, and leave out of account the practically universal consciousness of sin, is very much as if a man should seek to construct a theory of the heavens, and leave out of the account the law of gravitation. Such attempts have indeed been made in the region of physical science, but they have led to no valuable result, and are interesting chiefly as an evidence of the ingenuity of the men who made them.

It is another serious defect in Mr. Spencer's theory that, even if it be granted, it fails to account for the whole content of the idea of God. It does not show us how the conception of a self-existent First Cause, which, according to Mr. Spencer, man did not have at first, could possibly be developed out of the idea of a ghost. He tells us, indeed, that "no other causes for all unexpected changes are known or can be conceived" by the primitive man; and therefore he reasoned that the souls of dead men must be the causes.[10] But this assertion itself needs to be proved. Until proved, what right has Mr. Spencer to say that the primitive man did not and could not conceive of any cause of the phenomena of the universe of which these souls themselves were parts, than these same souls themselves?

[10] See *Op. cit.* I. p. 237.

But the conception of a God as we have it, also includes the conception of a Power to which we are responsible and which we have displeased, and which therefore requires to be propitiated. How could these ideas, again, of responsibility, sin, and propitiation, be developed out of one's relations to a ghost or a shadow? Mr. Spencer does not show us. He says indeed that propitiatory rites had their original in funeral ceremonies designed to secure the favor of dead ancestors; but he does not seem to see that this leaves unexplained the very thing which most needed explanation; namely, why it should ever have occured to men that the spirit of a dead friend would be likely to injure them. Rather should we infer that they would naturally have thought of a departed father or mother, for instance, as still cherishing their former parental love.

Mr. Spencer has indeed made an extensive collation of facts which he claims as substantiating his theory as to the origin of religion. We cannot here review them in detail, but only remark that, however many of these facts may be consistent with his theory, they are no less easily accounted for in other ways; while, besides those which he adduces, there are many other facts, to some of which we shall have occasion to advert, which are utterly irreconcilable with the supposition of the truth of his theory.

Once again, if Mr. Spencer is right in assuming that the worship of a personal God is everywhere and always a development from a prior ancestor worship, then it is plain that the lower the moral and intellectual state of any people, the less and less distinct we ought to find the idea of God, while, on the other hand, the worship of ancestors should be so much the more prominent. So also it should follow, if Mr. Spencer's theory were true, that everywhere the more ancient a people,—in other words, the nearer we approach to the days of Mr. Spencer's primitive man,—the more we should see of ancestor worship, and the less of the recognition and worship of God. And finally, seeing that we have the history, more or less full, of tribes in every grade of mental and spiritual development, reaching back for a period of from five to seven thousand years,

we ought to be able to see not a few examples of the actual development of the idea of a Supreme God out of the worship of dead men. In all these respects, however, the facts are the opposite of what the theory requires.

It is not true, in the first place, that as a rule it is the most degraded tribes who are most given to the worship of ancestors. Neither is it true that among such the idea of God is always dim in proportion to the development of ancestor worship. Mr. Spencer indeed gives abundant evidence that tribes of a low rank are often addicted to ancestor worship. But this fact of itself proves nothing to the purpose. Such facts can be just as readily accounted for on the Christian belief that there has been in such cases a degradation from the earlier conception of God. Mr. Spencer needed to have proved that the worship of ancestors has been the universal historical antecedent of the worship of God. This he has not proved, and—we venture to add—it cannot be proved. Against the truth of such a position stands the notable fact that among those peoples where the worship of ancestral ghosts prevails, even among the lowest or the most ancient of them, the idea of God, in more or less distinctness, is found coëxisting with that of the ghost. Mr. Spencer's reasoning in answer to this difficulty, if we understand him, is sufficiently remarkable. It may be put, for the sake of clearness, in the form of a syllogism, thus:

"The feeling out of which worship grows up must be a feeling which is common to all men; the dread of ghosts is a feeling common to all men, while the fear of God is not. Therefore the dread of ghosts must be the feeling out of which worship must have grown. Which reminds one of the formula of erroneous logic, 'All A is B; but all C is B: therefore, all C is A.'"

Again, instead of its being true that there are tribes who worship ghosts or the spirits of their ancestors, but have not yet reached the idea of God, it cannot be shown that anywhere there is a tribe so degraded as not to have in some form or other the idea of a God, quite distinct from the ordinary objects of their worship. Dr. Livingstone assures us that

"there is no need of beginning to tell the most degraded of the people of South Africa of the existence of God or of a future state, both these facts being universally admitted." The Rev. J. Leighton Wilson, long a missionary on the west coast of Africa, gives the same testimony as to the degraded natives of that part of Africa. In no land is the worship of ancestors more extensively practised than in China, and we have the advantage of being able to trace the religious history of China with confidence to a very remote period. But that form of worship which is confessedly the most ancient among the Chinese is not the worship of ancestors, but that of heaven, for which solemn service there is a temple at Pekin, in the ritual of which the emperor himself officiates as the high priest of the nation. It is indeed true—as admitted, for instance, by Dr. Edkins—that the worship of ancestors belonged to the earliest form of Chinese religion of which we have definite account. But the same high authority tells us that the Chinese have also had along with this ancestor worship the tradition of one Supreme Ruler "from the earliest period of their history." There is no evidence that the idea of God was any less distinct, or, on the other hand, that the worship of ancestors was any more prominent, in the earliest ages of Chinese history than at present. On the contrary, the facts accessible rather indicate that the idea of the one Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth had a more commanding place in the faith of the people in the earliest times than in modern days. Dr. Edkins asserts that the early Chinese had conceptions of the Divine nature "far in advance of most pagan nations," and in their ideas concerning God were "in advance of the moderns."

Of a similar character in their bearing on the argument of Mr. Spencer, are the facts as regards the religious history of India. The deification and worship of dead men is indeed very common in modern India; but it is the fact, which Mr. Spencer ought to know as well as any one, that, the further one goes back in the history of the religions of India, the less there is of this ghost, ancestor, and demon worship, and the clearer and more frequent is the recognition of one God, the Father of all and

the Giver of all good. And when we ask as to the days yet more remote in antiquity, before the Vedas were written, when the whole Indo-Germanic race were living as yet undivided on the plains of Iran, we learn that at that time there was no such state of things as Mr. Spencer's theory would require. There was not more of ghost and ancestor worship then than in the Vedic and post-Vedic days, but, as Professor Fairbairn has clearly shown, more clearly recognized then than ever since was the idea of one Supreme Being, the Father of all and the Lord of the conscience, *Dyauspitar*, the "Heaven-father"—a "person, whose 'thou' stood over against the 'I'" of the worshipper, and that "no ghost of a dead ancestor seen in feverish dreams!"[11]

Yet another pertinent illustration of our argument is afforded by the history of ancient Egypt. The primitive religion of Egypt presents to Mr. Spencer's, as to every false theory of the history of religion, a most decisive and fatal test. The wonderful progress made of late years in the discovery and decipherment of the literary remains of that most ancient people enables us to speak with assured confidence. And what is the testimony of those venerable authorities? Was fetich worship or ghost worship first, and was the idea of God a late development? Assuredly not! Despite the bold assertions of Professor Tiele in the interest of the fetich theory, and the exigencies of Mr. Spencer's theory of religious evolution, M. Renouf, in the Hibbert Lectures for 1879, has shown most conclusively that the earliest form of Egyptian religion was monotheistic. He quotes M. Rouge, as a scholar than whom "none is better entitled to be heard," as using the following language, which he himself endorses: "The first characteristic of the religion of ancient Egypt is the unity of God most energetically expressed; God, one sole, and only, and no others with Him. He is the only Being living in truth! He has made everything, and He alone has not been made.[12] And, after proving by

[11] Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, p. 43.

[12] Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by the Religion of Ancient Egypt. By P. de Page Renouf. London: 1880. p. 89.

numerous citations from the most ancient Egyptian writings the above statement, he concludes: "The belief in the unity of the Supreme God, and in His attributes as Creator and Lawgiver of men, whom he has endowed with an immortal soul—these are the primitive notions, enchased like indestructible diamonds in the midst of the mythological superfetation accumulated in the centuries which have passed over that ancient civilization." [13] All this M. Renouf emphatically endorses as the unquestionable result of the most accurate investigations into the religion of ancient Egypt. He says further that, although along with this reference to a God who is one, there are constant references to other gods also as coëxisting with the One, such as Horus, Osiris, Ra, and Set, yet a power without any name or mythological characteristic is constantly referred to in the singular number, the Power from which all powers proceed. In illustration he cites many striking passages from the most ancient Egyptian documents, only one or two of which can be given here. Thus we read: "Give thyself to God; keep thyself continually for God, and let to-morrow be like to-day. Let thine eyes consider the acts of God; it is He who smiteth him who is smitten." "It was in this style," continues M. Renouf, "that in all periods of their history, in the earliest not less confidently than in the latest, the Egyptians spoke of the *Nutar* "God" in the singular number." [14]

Was then this "*Nutar*," the God of primitive Egypt, perhaps only a deified ancestor, the first king of Egypt, or the first man, as Mr. Spencer's theory would have it? For this there is not a vestige of evidence. M. Renouf's answer to this question is most unambiguous. He says:

> There can be no doubt, I trust, who the Power is, which in our translations, we do not hesitate to call God. It is unquestionably the true and only God, who "is not far from any one of us," for "in him we live, and move, and have our being;" whose "eternal power and Godhead" and government of the world were made known through that Light "which lighteth every man which cometh into the world." [15]

[13] *Ibid.* p. 91.

[14] *Ibid.* p. 103.

[15] *Ibid.* p. 103.

Neither, according to this same eminent Egyptologist, can this ghost theory of religion account even for the subordinate gods, which, along with the true and living God, the Egyptians came to worship. M. Renouf is very explicit on this matter. He says that these subordinate gods of ancient Egypt "were not the ghosts of ancestors or other dead men, or representatives of abstract principles, as ancient and modern philosophers have supposed, . . . but the powers of nature." [16] Which statement, it will be observed, agrees precisely with the account which is given in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans as to the origin of all idolatry.

We have given with such fulness the testimony of these high authorities as regards the ancient religion of Egypt, because the extreme antiquity to which we are able to trace that history, through the witness of contemporaneous documents, makes it in a special manner a test case for all theories on this subject. If in Egypt we find no trace of ancestor worship as the antecedent of the worship of one God, then we are not likely to find it elsewhere. The testimony, we have seen, is such as to make it clear that the facts as regards the early religious history of the Egyptians, cannot be comprehended under Mr. Spencer's theory.

But Mr. Spencer has ventured to repeat the assertion of Sir John Lubbock that there are tribes existing who have no conception of a God. If this were true, it would not prove anything for his theory; for it would be equally explicable on the supposition that such tribes had once had the idea of a God and lost it. The remarkable degradation of races who had ancestors in higher states, we must remember, has been most candidly admitted by Mr. Spencer in the beginning of his argument. [17] But Sir John Lubbock's statements on this point require confirmation. Mr. Spencer himself instances alleged examples of this total ignorance of God, as in the case of the Juangs, a hill tribe of India. But no one who has had any

[16] *Ibid.* p. 122.

[17] *Vid. sup.*, p. 279.

experience in endeavoring to communicate with a people whose religious notions were exceedingly diverse from his own, and that in an unfamiliar language, will be disposed to accept such testimony except after the most searching investigation and criticism. The misapprehensions in such cases have been very serious and very numerous. And this implies no disparagement of the intelligence or truthfulness of the witnesses. The difficulties under which one labors at best in prosecuting inquiries into the religious beliefs of a strange and savage people are many and great. One needs but to instance that of the unfamiliar language. It is by no means by such a smattering of a savage tongue as a sea captain can casually pick up, or a passing traveler in a foreign land may gain, that one becomes able to ascertain the real religious opinions of a savage people. The testimony, therefore, of such men as Captain Cook, whom Mr. Spencer quotes as authority with regard to the religious beliefs of the Fuegians, cannot be accepted without hesitation. Sir John Lubbock, in like manner, quotes a Mr. Jukes as authority for the statement that the natives of Dalyrymple Island are atheists; but it appears that this Mr. Jukes,—an honest man, no doubt,—was only one day on the island; nor is his testimony more than the negative statement that in that one day he was not able to discover any traces of a belief in a God among them.[18]

Mr. Spencer agues for his theory from the original meaning of the words which are used in many languages to denote "God." His words are:

> Even the words applied in more advanced societies to different orders of supernatural beings, indicate by their original community of meaning that this has been the course of genesis. The fact cited above, that among the Tannese the word for a god means originally "a dead man," is typical of facts everywhere found.[19]

In reply to this we have to ask for evidence that such facts are "everywhere found." It is not given, as it should have been, in his argument. In the meantime, we venture to dispute

[18] See in this connection Flint's Antitheistic Theories, Appendix, Notes xxvi-xxxi, pp. 259-281.

[19] Principles of Sociology, I. p. 323.

this sweeping assertion, and submit the following facts to the contrary.

Among the Chinese, the word Shin, used for "God," means originally, according to Chinese scholars, "breath," and then "spirit." Among the ancient Hindoos, as also among the moderns in South India, the word *deva*, for "God," is derived from the Sanskrit *div*, "to shine," and has nothing to do with a dead man. No more have other words used to denote the Divine Being in North and South India, any reference to the spirits of the departed. The etymology of *Brahma* is uncertain; but has been thought by high authority to denote God as the worshipped one (from *vrih*, "to increase"?).[20] The word *Ish* (*Ishwar*) means "lord." *Deus*, as every scholar knows, is connected with the Sanskrit *divas*, from *div*, as above. The yet older name *dyaus*, preserved for us in the syllable *Ju*, of *Jupiter*, etymologically means "heaven," and has never been used in any language with reference to the dead. The etymology of the Greek θεός is yet uncertain; but, among all the derivations which have been suggested, there is not one which embodies any allusion to dead ancestors. Among the Hebrews and other Semitic peoples we have many names for God, but not one, so far as we are aware, which affords any semblance of support for Mr. Spencer's astonishing statement. *Jahveh* (Jehovah) probably denotes the Supreme Being, as everyone knows, with reference to his self-existence. *El*, *Elohim*, *Alláh*, etc., as also the ancient Egyptian word *Nutar*, by their etymology denote God as simply the Mighty One.

But such facts as these, if known to Mr. Spencer, do not seem to have troubled him. He even goes boldly to the Old Testament for support for his theory, and quotes Isa. viii. 19: "And when they shall say unto you, consult the ghost-seers and the wizards that chirp and that mutter; should not a people consult their gods, even the dead, in behalf of the living?"[21] So also he refers to the case of the Witch of Endor (1 Sam. xxviii. 17), as seeing "gods" coming out of the earth.

[20] *Vid.* Benfry; Sanskrit English Dictionary, *sub. voc.*

[21] *Op. cit.* p. 323. The translation is that given by Mr. Spencer.

But what have these words to do with proving his position? They imply, no doubt, that the people addressed were in the habit of worshipping the dead; but that does not prove that this worship of the spirits of dead men *preceded* the worship of God so that the idea of God is to be *derived* from the conception of a ghost.

But the case of the Jews, notwithstanding these words from Isaiah, gives Mr. Spencer no little trouble. How to reconcile the facts concerning their history and worship with his theory, is the problem, and he does not find it an easy one. He deals with it in the following manner.

In the first place, he admits the silence of the earliest Hebrew "legends" on the subject of ancestor or ghost worship. But, he rejoins, mere silence does not prove that it did not exist.[22] Very truly said! But, unfortunately for his argument, the Hebrew writings are not silent as to the original worship, but have much to say about it. They emphatically and unanimously testify that the Hebrews, and indeed all mankind, began—not with ghost worship—but with the worship of a living and personal God. But this fact, so vital and decisive, is passed over by Mr. Spencer in silence. Possibly, however, he may have had this in mind when he next remarks that the sacred books of a religion "may give very untrue accounts concerning the actual beliefs of its professors,"[23] and asks why this may not be the case with the writings of the old Hebrews. At last he ventures upon citing another proof text, namely, Deut. xxvi. 14, wherein the sacrificer is required to say that he has not given of his first fruits "for the dead."[24] From this passage he concludes that ancestor worship had then developed "as far as nomadic habits allowed, before it was repressed by a higher worship." But granting that the words imply the worship of the spirits of the departed at the time when the book was written—which no one would think of denying—what bearing has this on his argu-

[22] *Op. cit.* p. 316.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] *Op. cit.* p. 317.

ment? For the conclusion to be established is not that ancestor worship is ancient, but that it was original. The words prove the former, but have no bearing on the latter.

We have only to remark further at present, in review of Mr. Spencer's theory, that it stands in contradiction to the common traditions of mankind. With a general unanimity, which, if his theory be true, is unaccountable, these traditions everywhere testify that long ago, at the beginning of his history, man was not indefinitely lower than at present, but was on a higher level than now as regards the elements of his truest worth. They tell us—not that man knew nothing of God at first—but that his fellowship with God was then nearer and more immediate than now. According to Mr. Spencer, all these traditions must be pure inventions, without the least basis in fact. The facts, according to his theory, were the exact opposite of the accounts set forth in the traditions. But how is such a universal contradiction between tradition and fact to be explained? What conceivable motive of universal operation could possibly have prompted all the diverse races and nations of men to unite in inventing stories of this kind? To have told stories in their *sàgas* of that marvellous improvement and development, which, according to Mr. Spencer, actually marked the early religious history of man, would have been gratifying to a natural pride, and most encouraging for the future. Why, then, did all agree to pass down a story which is as discreditable to man in the past, as it is, apart from any other revealed hope, discouraging for his future? If Mr. Spencer and his fellow evolutionists are right in their account of the naturalistic development of the idea of God, such questions, to say no more, are very hard to be answered.

So far, then, in review of Mr. Spencer's theory of the evolution of religion. We have read his argument through with no little interest, and can readily admit the ingenuity of his reasoning, and the extensive research which the argument exhibits. But none the less are we persuaded that as an hypothesis to account for the phenomena of religion, this must be written a failure. Especially is it to be emphasized that no theory on

this subject can be judged satisfactory, even in a scientific point of view, in which due place is not given to the solemn fact of the universal consciousness of sin, and the profoundly significant phenomena of conscience.

---

ARTICLE V.

# THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST; ITS PHYSIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

BY WM. O. AYRES, M. D., LECTURER ON NERVOUS DISEASES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE, YALE UNIVERSITY.

WAS it like an ordinary death? The two thieves could not die, and were killed by the soldiers. Was Jesus Christ *killed* by the agonies of the crucifixion? Have we reason to believe that any other human death has ever occurred in the same way that this occurred? These are very momentous questions and they are worthy of the most scrutinizing study that we can give them. We will follow them in three lines of thought:

I. The physiological principles which are involved.
II. The claims which Christ makes for himself.
III. The facts as they occurred at the time of his death.

## I. THE PHYSIOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES.

Without discussing at all the absolute nature of *life*, we are fully entitled, in the present state of our knowledge, to assume that it has in itself an inherent persistence of continuance which necessarily insures its duration, until it is destroyed by forces exterior to itself. Of itself it is self-existent. Be its mode of commencement what it may, it is doing its own special work, and it ceases to exist only when external forces destroy it.

We find but one law of life. The same principles and rules prevail from the most simple and undifferentiated types of vegetable life to man, the most differentiated of all; and we may