

**LECTURES ON THE
PANTHEISTIC IDEA
OF AN IMPERSONAL-
SUBSTANCE-DEITY**

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Lectures on the Pantheistic Idea of an Impersonal-Substance-Deity by Morgan Dix

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MORGAN DIX

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Lectures were prepared in the early part of last year, and were delivered at St. Paul's Chapel during the Lenten season of 1863. They were preached, for the second time, in Trinity Chapel, during the past winter, at the request of a large number of the members of our parish. After that, the Vestry of Trinity Church expressed, by a resolution to that effect, the wish that they should be published. This desire could not be acceded to without embarrassment; for the lectures were written without reference to publication, and the author, while aware of the character and extent of their imperfections, knew also that he had no time to make them what he would have them, and that they must go forth as they were, or not at all. But the hope that they might do good outweighed the fear of criticism, while the author felt that the known difficulties of his position would establish his claim to favorable indulgence. It is our misfortune, in this country, that we have no body of clergy sequestered for careful and holy studies in defence of the faith;

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INTRODUCTION.



ALTHOUGH it is considered that the design of the following Lectures could hardly be misunderstood by one who should read them without prejudice, yet it seems proper to meet one objection which may be thought by some to lie against them. The writer would, therefore, in advance disclaim the intention of fixing upon every one whose theories on history, on ethics, and on the course and movement of terrestrial things, are in the following pages more particularly referred to, the stigma and reproach of consciously holding the philosophical system with which those theories are undoubtedly allied. For it is a well-known feature of the pantheistic heresy, and characteristic of that profound spiritual disease, that the very individuals whose views most nearly harmonize with it may yet be strenuous in disclaiming the relationship, although it be evident that their position is a complete inconsequence, except as interpreted on the hypothesis of such a tie. We are willing, then, to admit and to give prominence to the fact of their protests and denials, thinking it sufficient to prove the identity

of the results reached in either case. If the popular and plausible rationalism of the day is found to involve the same consequences which follow from the principles of simple Pantheism, that should be enough to secure for it the mistrust and aversion of thoughtful men ; the question of the degree of consanguinity may be held as not essential.

The object proposed in these lectures is as follows:— To show, after stating scientifically the vast and disastrous heresy of the ages, that modern lines of thought, professed modern discoveries, and modern theories of human progress, of history, of ethics, and of religion, are but new developments of the spirit which invented that fatal system ; that they run in parallel lines with it ; that they lead to the same conclusions. The author entertains no doubt of the fact of this correspondence. It is not necessary to prove identity of origin : it is enough to show that the principle which underlies the whole system of modern speculation involves the results which were reached by the ancient philosophies, and that the movement is toward the very same position of a final and universal skepticism. After that, it matters little whether the writers of our day consent or decline to be classed as followers of the old pagan masters. They labor toward the same ends, and are walking in the same direction.

The grand idea of the age in which we live is

progress. That word is rung in our ears incessantly, from pulpit and platform, with the pertinacious tintinnabulation of a jangling chime. It is a progress without God, and apart from the institutions of Christianity; a progress aside from revelation and in independence of spiritual authority; the progress of humanity, confident in itself and in its own powers. The Church also announces a progress to mankind; but not a progress such as that of which the world is dreaming, and in the fancied accomplishment of which society seems fairly drunk. A progress is implied in the very idea of redemption; the prophets, the evangelists, the apostles, have spoken and written thereof, in language of unmatched sublimity; and God Himself, incarnate, has illustrated its nature and initiated it in His own person. Let us not forget that progress is the symbol of Christianity; but let us also remember of what sort that progress is: that Christ, becoming man, did grow in wisdom and in stature, and in the showing forth of love and sacrifice, until, having been made perfect therein, He was lifted up, and glorified, and set on the right hand of the Majesty on high; and that, in Christ, man is also to be in like manner elevated and exalted, yet only through grace and by the favor of God,—not for his own merits, nor in his own strength; and that he is also to grow to the measure of the stature of the fulness

of Christ, and to find at length his home in heaven, and his sphere of action in eternity. This idea of progress, — through grace by faith, and in the path of sacrifice and love, — is the grand idea of Christianity. But it is not that progress which is spoken of in the world and in the philosophic and rationalistic schools. Their's is a godless progress, a merely human progress, an illusion and a dream; the speech is as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, and the end is disappointment and disgrace. It is so, because men do not include in their idea of progress the truth concerning the personal and living God, revealed to us in the gospel and through the Church of Jesus Christ. When that faith is lost to man, his progress is that of one who rushes headlong in the dark, and sees not the gulf toward which he is hastening.

The rationalistic schemes in vogue in our own day would seem to rest, as upon a basis, on three principles, two of which are positive and the third negative. The two positive principles are, the unity and identity of substance, and the mutable and variable character of truth. The negative principle is, the denial of the existence of any revelation aside from that which is supposed to be made to each individual through his own mind and spirit. The presence of these principles may clearly be detected, not merely in the writings of the phi-