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John Rickards Mozley
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THE DIVINE ASPECT OF HISTORY

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOLUME I

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THE DIVINE ASPECT OF HISTORY

by
JOHN RICKARDS MOZLEY

Take better part, with manlier heart,
Thine adult spirit can ;
No God, no Truth, receive it ne'er—
Believe it ne'er—O Man !
But turn not then to seek again
What first the ill began ;
No God, it saith ; ah, wait in faith
God's selfcompleting plan ;
Receive it not, but leave it not,
And wait it out, O Man !

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

VOLUME I

Cambridge :
at the University Press
1916

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107605176

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First published 1916
First paperback edition 2011

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-60517-6 Paperback

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TO THE DISCOVERER OF THE LAW OF UNIVERSAL GRAVITATION
ILLUSTRIOUS AMONG THE IMMORTALS

ISAAC NEWTON

THIS TREATISE

WHICH GIVES REASONS FOR THE BELIEF
THAT A SPIRITUAL FORCE ISSUES FROM GOD
WHEREBY LIFE IS MADE DOMINANT OVER MATERIAL FORCES
AND SOULS IN THE FLESH ARE LINKED WITH SOULS DEPARTED

IS DEDICATED

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PREFACE

THE purpose of this book includes a certain amount of negation, but is nevertheless essentially positive and affirmative. The negation will be found in arguments directed to show the unhistorical character of the Biblical miracles; the miracles of healing, in the New Testament, being admitted to be exceptions in some degree, and to contain some truth. Certain parts of the doctrinal system of the New Testament are too dependent on the miracles to stand when the miracles are discarded; but there are other parts of New Testament doctrine which remain uninjured, even though we disbelieve most of the miracles.

The positive affirmation of this book lies in its vindication of the main current of Biblical teaching as unique in its spiritual truth, especially the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth; whom Christians are right in regarding as the revealer of the way into eternal life, and as the reconciler of God and man, and who was also (though this is not the way in which Christians commonly put it) the first of the sons of men to feel intimately his true filial relation to God, which relation he also taught us to believe as belonging to ourselves, and as capable of being realised by us if we trust God and pray to him with all our hearts. That Jesus is rightly called the Christ, or in other words the ruler of all mankind (which is what the title Christ implies) is also affirmed in this book; though it must be understood that the rule attributed to him lies in his attractive power, not in any external compulsion exercised or authorised by him. External compulsion, though not always avoidable among men, is quite different from the government and the organisation which spring from true religion.

The Christian society which has sprung from the teaching of Jesus Christ is regarded in this book as a society which has been in many ways truly faithful to its Master, and truly like him, but which yet has been liable, as all men are liable, to error; and the error has sometimes been great and complex; but in the Christian

society the possibility of reform and renovation has always existed. At the present day the greatest difficulty of the Christian society lies in the doubt whether the critical intellect of man has any right at all to judge of those religious emotions which have been handed down as sacred among Christians from generation to generation. It is maintained in this book that, though the critical intellect may doubtless go wrong, yet it cannot be altogether debarred from that province.

It is a question which cannot be quite disregarded, in view of the present divisions in the Christian society, which part of that society has preserved the original type, instituted by Jesus himself, most truly, and with most profit to the world at large. But I have thought that the unity, rather than the differences, of the Christian society ought to be accentuated at the present day, and I have given no distinct answer to the above question; though some account of the separation between the eastern and western churches, and of that between the Roman church and the Reformed churches, had of course to be given, and has been given.

The great religions of the world outside Christianity, Brahminism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, the worship of ancestors as practised in China and Japan (not quite without recognition of a Divine Being), the ancient religions of Greece and Rome (which have now perished, but still affect us by the extraordinary merit, and even the spiritual insight, of Greek and Roman writers), and finally the religion of Islam, are regarded as possessing true merit, and as capable of affording instruction to ourselves; though they have not penetrated into the centre of religious truth in at all the degree in which Christianity has done so. Judaism is regarded in this book as so near to Christianity, as hardly to be outside it—at any rate it ought to be so regarded in the estimation of Christians.

I trust I have never forgotten that historical conclusions cannot have mathematical certainty. The attempt to assimilate history to science, by treating the history of our contemporaries as that which it is most important for us to learn, after which (it is suggested) we may mount up to the more recondite regions of mediævalism and antiquity, appears to me an impossible attempt. Contemporary history cannot be understood without reference to the past; hence, in spite of all difficulties, we have to begin with the past, and then we can give a consecutive story, in the proper lines of evolution.

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But it is not of course to be disguised that the history of the remote past does present us with many difficulties. I do not think I have generally been paradoxical; but it may be proper to mention where I have most diverged from the conclusions arrived at by previous writers. I have ventured to put the date of Zoroaster in the first half of the sixth century before Christ, believing that the Magi had had a creditable career of considerable length before he appeared among them, and that their less worthy characteristics in after times were in no wise chargeable to Zoroaster, but were the result of their unsuccessful revolt against the Persians in the time of Darius—a calamity which they had not the strength to endure without loss of rectitude.

Another point in which I do not stand alone, but in which still the common opinion is against me, is my belief that Zerubabel lived, not under Cyrus and Darius Hystaspes, but under Darius Nothus, a century later than is usually supposed. The effect of this alteration of historical view is very much to raise the character of the Jews of the fifth century before Christ, who on this showing had to surmount difficulties far more serious than is usually conceived in obtaining their restoration to their own country, and who did surmount those difficulties with extraordinary patience, fidelity, and resolution. But I must refer to my fourteenth chapter, and to the first appendix to that chapter, for the reasons for this opinion.

It is not quite the same sort of difference from ordinary opinion, but I may note it here, that I hold the Christian Church of the fourth century after Christ to have had a greater share of responsibility for the fall of the western empire than is generally believed; at the same time I think it was want of experience more than moral error which misled the Church authorities of that time; so that it does not tell vitally against them.

In my first chapter I have expressed the opinion that organisation, which so powerfully assists human action, has also had a share in the evolution of sun and stars. This is an opinion which does not admit of speedy verification; but if organisation were found, not merely to increase human power on the earth, but also to increase the natural powers of the earth itself, to make it permanently more fruitful, more filled with living agencies (and living agencies that work harmoniously together), we should have ground for expecting a still greater development of terrestrial energy as time goes on; and it is impossible to set limits to such an advance. If mankind could peacefully unite for a

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few centuries, we should know better than we do now what is the power of organisation in raising the whole condition of our earthly habitation; and it is fervently to be hoped that this experience may be won by mankind. The present treatise endeavours to show that such a hope is justified by our knowledge of the power which resides in religion.

This is, I think, all that I need say in regard to special points mentioned in the present work; but there are some more observations that I must make.

The anthropologists, I know, have added much to our knowledge of the curious habits and superstitious fears which have accompanied the evolution of religion; but the true evolution of religion is that which takes place by the divine enlargement of the spirit of man; and my present belief is that the anthropologists have not added much to our knowledge of this. If I am shown to be wrong, I will gladly confess my error.

Metaphysical philosophy is capable of being a great support to religion, and I can by no means think of it as an unfruitful subject, though a very difficult one it certainly is. The philosophy which Socrates began, and Plato continued, was the first attempt to show the importance of the mental element in experience; and they were right in connecting it with religion; but detailed clearness of view was not to be expected at that stage of the world's history. Indeed for long afterwards, though ethics advanced, metaphysical philosophy remained as a kind of vision, in which the divine nature was the culminating point, and man was somehow transcendently connected with this divinity. Kant was the first to show that these beliefs as to God and man are not proved by such arguments as had been offered on their behalf from various quarters; at the same time he did not deny the value of the beliefs; and in practice he held that God, human freedom, and immortal life were guiding conceptions for mankind. To practical life then, the proof of these doctrines was committed; and if the view of history given in the present treatise be correct, practical life confirms them. The embracing of great conceptions because they are necessary, and proved to be necessary, for our practical guidance—that is, I think, the central character of true philosophy; and Kant was the person who first distinctly led men to this kind of view. However, philosophy radiates from this centre into all manner of inquiries and subjects of thought; and there is just a little more that I should like to say of it in this place.

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First, those philosophers who are called idealists, who have insisted that matter is an unmeaning word unless mind is assumed as well—that matter acquires its definite character through the percipient mind, and would be vague unless it were regarded as somehow perceived—these philosophers are not easily refuted; though in our ordinary life we seem to disregard them, and to treat matter and mind as separate things. Berkeley in England, perhaps Malebranche in France, and Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel in Germany, are the most famous of these philosophers; but the most cardinal proposition of all idealism appears to me best expressed by a Scotch philosopher of the middle of the nineteenth century, James Frederick Ferrier. He said that our personal self is known to us as the universal element in all our knowledge; that it cannot be thought of as a particular thing among other things. It is true that in the spiritual world our self is regarded as a self among other selves; but in the world of our sensuous perception this is not so; in that external world our self is a universal element, present in every perception of ours. I am not quoting Ferrier's words, but I am sure I am giving his meaning rightly, as expressed in his *Institutes of Metaphysic*; and it appears to me that he expresses both a true plain fact, and also a true mystery in which that plain fact is involved. We cannot escape the region of mystery even in our most commonplace thoughts, nor can we desire to escape it, for in mystery lies the seed of progress. It is evident how entirely this kind of view fits in with the religious temperament, and sanctions it on the intellectual side.

The same result is enforced on us by another consideration, which biological science makes absolutely clear. Our senses, or in other words the faculties by which we apprehend the external world, are growths, just as much as a tree is a growth; they began, ages ago, with a very small power of discernment; they have increased in power until sight and hearing have become able to discriminate in a truly marvellous degree. But is it reasonable to suppose that we have come to an end of this growing process? Will not new methods of perception rise up in the generations to come? May we not hope, and even expect, that the souls of the departed, who are still joined to us by love, will be known by us in due time with a knowledge that we shall recognise as genuine and unquestionable? I think we may expect this.

Of the authorities referred to in this book, there are three,

not mentioned as often as might be expected by English or Scottish theologians, but looked upon by myself with much admiration, and therefore proper to be mentioned here. One is the *Acta Conciliorum*, published in Paris early in the eighteenth century by Harduin and his fellow Jesuits. This work is invaluable for anyone who wishes to understand the mediæval Church. Another is the *Church History* of Neander; a work clumsy, it is true, in its structure, but so serene, impartial, and large in its knowledge, that every thoughtful religious inquirer must be the better for reading it, especially the later volumes of it. The third authority, or perhaps I should rather say set of authorities, is that great series *Sacred Books of the East*, edited by the late Professor Max Müller, and written by learned and able men of many nations; the most enlightening set of works on the Asiatic religions which has ever been published in England.

A few more books, for different reasons, I must mention here. Our greatest English historian, Gibbon, is so necessary to every one who undertakes to say or write anything about the latter days of imperial Rome, that to name him is sufficient. At the time when I wrote the twenty-third chapter of the present work, I had not read Mr F. Warre-Cornish's book on *Chivalry*; else I should have borrowed some of the descriptive touches given in that interesting account of the most picturesque side of mediæval life. Lastly, I must not leave unrecognised, in relation to the question of miracles, what is I suppose the best defence of the New Testament miracles written in England in the nineteenth century, the Bampton Lectures for 1865, by my uncle, Dr James Bowling Mozley, who shortly afterwards became Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford. It is a work full of acute and valuable remarks, but it does not include any critical examination of the gospel evidence, which is not, I think, at all as strong, when properly weighed, as it is assumed to be in those Lectures; also the characteristic results of Christian doctrine are assumed to be altogether good, whereas the action of the Christian Church in the middle ages was often of a very questionable kind indeed, and the *primâ facie* (and I think the correct) view is that this was not unconnected with Christian doctrine. If the greater power wielded by the human race, from its European centre, in modern times as compared with antiquity, be drawn from the strength of the Christian religion, as I think is the case (and I have argued in this sense in the present work)—if the greater respect paid to women, and greater mildness in general behaviour, be due to the

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same cause—must not the fantastic asceticism, the repression of the intellect, the persecution of Jews and heretics, which for so many centuries were ordinary forms of Christian action, be reckoned as indicating some fault in Christian doctrine? To recover from errors, is a power inherent in the Christian Church; but to deny the errors of the past, is impossible; and the natural inferences to be drawn from those errors must not be shirked.

One more literary production, and a very recent one, I must now mention. In the *Observer* newspaper for January 30, February 6, and February 13 of the present year are three articles by that eminent physicist, Sir Oliver Lodge, so similar in their purport to the view advanced in the first chapter of this treatise (and expanded at the close of the twenty-seventh chapter) that I cannot avoid speaking of them here. The gist of them is that life is the restorative element in the universe. Here is the paragraph in which this thesis is summarised (a paragraph prefixed to each of the three articles mentioned above):

“It has been assumed from a physical point of view that the universe must come to an end, unless it receives a new impulse of creation, such as it must have had at its beginning. Every mathematical thinker during the last century has held that cosmic energy must decay by dissipation of heat—that the whole clock of things, as it were, must come to the stillness of an everlasting death. This is the greatest and most mysterious of all the themes of pessimism. Sir Oliver Lodge seeks escape from the physical aspect of the problem, and suggests that it may be found in the nature of life.”

In the articles themselves, the following is the central proposition which elucidates the whole: after saying that “Life is definitely not a form of energy,” Sir Oliver Lodge adds, “Life certainly guides or directs energy; that is its physical function; and I see no reason against some form of life being able to direct energy uphill, so to speak, instead of being only able to utilise energy while in process of falling down.” A luminous sentence; but I venture to add that this guiding function of life is impossible, unless we take into account Herbert Spencer’s theory of an Infinite and Eternal Energy *beyond* our senses, which streams into the world surveyed by our senses. For the actual point of the guidance of material energy by the living agency lies in a region unknown to us. Hence I have placed this theory of Herbert Spencer at the foundation of the whole view, and without

it I do not believe that the view can stand. Further, considering the mysterious nature of life, the possibility follows that life of a very exalted kind exists in the sun and stars now. This addition to the theory Sir Oliver Lodge does not (I think) hold; but it explains a very great deal, if it be true.

But now I must refer to another point—a small one. I trust that the reader will not think the absence of capital letters, in pronouns indicating God or Jesus Christ, a sign of want of reverence; which reverence I truly feel. But I think that in naming the most exalted beings, it is a wrong habit of mind to feel oneself obliged to express that exaltation by a particular sign; and it has a tendency to lead other people into hypocrisy; for there are sceptics in the world who do not want to flaunt their scepticism, and yet are harmfully affected if through custom they express themselves so as to imply belief. The practice of using capital letters, in these cases, is a modern one.

I must not forget to express my thanks to those private friends, who during a long course of years have helped me, in one way or another, in the work which is now completed. There are too many of these for me to mention them all by name. But I cannot leave unnamed Henry Sidgwick, now departed, who represented to me the duty, for candour's sake, of giving a careful account of my opinions, for the benefit of persons interested in religion; or Henry Graham Dakyns, also departed, whose continual sympathy and encouragement were of the greatest value to me; or Warren Maude Moorsom, whose interest in the book has been unflinching, and who told me when it ceased to be amorphous and became an organism. To my three surviving children I am also greatly indebted; to my elder son, Edward, for a great deal of excellent criticism; to my younger son, Kenneth, for information concerning the early Christian writers and also concerning modern continental opinion; and to my daughter, Eleanor, for some valuable suggestions. I trust my readers clearly understand that the kind help thus acknowledged is no indication that the helpers are in agreement with the views expressed in these volumes. In these difficult and delicate subjects a helping hand is often given where agreement cannot be reached; and it would be a great pity if the acknowledgment of such help were debarred by reason of intellectual differences.

This also is the best place for me to say that I am sorry if I give pain to any by disturbing ancient landmarks; but, conversely, I may ask my readers not to judge of my book by reading a few

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casual pages, without giving the trouble necessary to grasp the purport of the whole.

Finally, let me not omit to mention the many benefits for which I am indebted to the University of Cambridge, from the time when I first entered her walls as an undergraduate in the year 1858, down to the present day, when she has done me the honour of publishing my book.

J. R. M.

May, 1916.

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