

while they admit the possibility of an inscrutable force behind or above all this ; but they either deny the possibility of knowing anything about this unknown power, or they absolutely limit it to a force which has no operation save through matter. It may be safely affirmed that those who adopt the leading principles of Materialism either are or soon become Atheists. And, renouncing God, everything that confers dignity on man or worthiness on life is gone. The system denies the existence of anything beyond matter : it takes away from man his spirit, his immortality, his all. It ought to deny him the consciousness of personal identity ; its principles lead that way ; for if man is only material, and the particles of his physical self are every moment changing, and undergo a total change in the course of a few years, what can be the substratum of his identity ? It dares not take that away ; but it takes away all that makes it important. Materialism is the most irrational error that ever misled the human mind ; and to the holder of it, if to any, applies the Apostle's apostrophe, *ἄφρον !* Yet we have now to see this made into a philosophy.

1 Cor. xv.
36.

Positivism

POSITIVISM.

Positivism has been dignified by the name of a philosophy. Its founder, Auguste Comte, was a legacy of the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, and of French Encyclopædism and St. Simonianism to modern science. The result of his labours is a philosophy of the physical sciences which is almost entirely limited to induction, renouncing all thought of the causes of things, tracing simply the sequences of nature, and so ascertaining its laws, with a professed rejection of everything that is merely speculative or probable, and stern limitation of knowledge to what can be demonstrated beyond doubt, and is therefore Positive. To construct such a philosophy certain fundamental principles were adopted, which, however, are far from being positively determined : such as that nothing exists of which our senses do not assure us ; that there is nothing existent but matter ; that all phenomena are subject to invariable laws which it is the business of science to register, and only to register ; that these laws are simply relations of succession and resemblance ; that in the cerebral phenomena of

mind they are as absolutely physical in their necessary sequence as any other observed phenomena, only that they require greater care in observation ; and that the highest aim of science should be to forecast by scientific prevision the certain future of human actions, just as the courses of the planets may be predicted. Hence the Positive Philosophy, interpreting the possible future by the past, and the necessary laws of human action which it has discovered, exults in the ambition to reduce the infinite complications of human freewill and congregated action to the exactness of a physical science. "I will venture to say that sociological science, though only established by this book, already rivals mathematical science itself, not in precision and fecundity, but in positivity and rationality." This assertion of Comte was not empty declamation. Both he and his followers have surveyed the history of the world on this principle, and are full of confidence that by mastering the laws of human action they will provide the ordained rulers of the world's social fabric. But Sociology is never far from Religion ; and the Positive Philosophy is no exception to the universal rule that every system of thought that commands human attention must deserve it by at least attempting to account for the principles that men call their faith. What then is the relation of this philosophy to Religion ?

1. First, Positivism has its method of accounting for the religions that now are, before it substitutes its own. It sets out with the broad generalisation that the human race passes through three stages of intellectual evolution. First comes that in which the supernatural haunts the thought, seeking for causes of things, and inventing a Deity with all His court to account for them : this theological stage works itself slowly upwards from abject superstition, such as Fetichism, through the Polytheistic and Pantheistic systems, up to Christianity. Secondly comes the Metaphysical stage, which is only a modification of the first : that in which the ideas of abstract forces, or occult powers, are introduced to account for the phenomena of the universe by those who have rejected the idea of a Creator. Thirdly and lastly, comes the Positive stage, in which the mind, ashamed of its superstitions, and wearied of its ontological researches, limits itself to the arrangement of phenomena. When this generalisation is examined it explodes imme-

The
Positivist
Account
of
Religion.

The Three
Stages.

diately. It is not true historically ; nor has it any right to govern a philosophy of history. It is undoubtedly correct as an explanation of the history of many individual minds, which have passed through the phases of simple faith in God, and metaphysical, pantheistic, or dualistic subtilties which have been substituted for it, ending in a dreary determination to accept only what is, and to leave the rest to nescience. The celebrated "three stages" have not the slightest value, save as registering the progress of faith through scepticism to unbelief.

The
Positive
Religion.

2. The Positive Philosophy has its religion. For, in its fidelity to the observation and record of positive facts, it finds nothing more positive than the universal aspiration of mankind towards the unseen and the all but universal practice of some kind of worship. Now these facts must not be accounted for theologically or metaphysically : that is to say, there must be no God ; nor must any force, making for what it may, be substituted. It is a positive fact which must be dealt with philosophically and socially. But, looked at in either light, the Positivist way of treating man's religion is a gigantic inconsistency.

False to
Induc-
tion.

(1.) This last development of the scientific spirit refuses to carry the inductive principle into the region of the mental and emotional and active phenomena of mankind. It observes and notes these things ; but with the foregone conclusion that they are the result of a certain combination of material atoms, and development of these forces not yet perfectly accounted for. Forced by its hypothesis to exclude all metaphysical or occult causes on the one hand, and swayed, on the other hand, by the despotism of the desire to find the unity of all things, it notes and registers all the mental and spiritual phenomena of mankind, the thoughts that penetrate the lowest depths, and the aspirations that shrink not from the highest heights, as so many new facts concerning matter. Now here is the deep inconsistency of the whole system. The innumerable phenomena of thought, feeling, and will are as much facts as gravitation, cohesion, and molecular motion. The same consciousness guarantees both : the one as belonging to self, and the other as belonging to not-self. The testimony of conscience asserts that the continuity is broken between these ; that they go together up to a certain point, and

then separate; not taking two paths, however, for there is an illimitable gulf between. The world of concepts, imaginations, feelings, and emotions, absolutely unallied with matter, is a real world, and ought to be dealt with as such. Positivism shuts its eyes to the positive fact that this ideal world governs the other material world, and is not governed by it.

(2.) Socially, Positivism uses, or would use, the religious instincts—by whatever name known—of mankind for the good of the body corporate. It must have its objective creed; and the only positive thing to believe in, venerate, and worship is Humanity: "The Great Collective Life of which human beings are the individuals. It must be conceived as having an existence apart from human beings, just as we conceive each human being to have an existence apart from, though dependent on, the individual cells of which his organism is composed. This Collective Life is, in Comte's system, the *Etre Suprême*; the only one we can know, therefore the only one we can worship." This being the first article of the New Creed, its last, as the substitute for Resurrection and Immortality, is "Living in the remembrance" of survivors. Here, it must strike everyone, is another proof of a fact that has forced itself upon us everywhere, that no system is without its god: the human mind can no more think without that condition than without the conditions of time and space. Positivism must have its something beyond, and above, and surviving its material nature. What is its abstract humanity but the creature worshipped *κατὰ τὸν Κρίσιντα*, instead of the Creator?

Worship
of Hu-
manity.

Lewes'
Princ. of
Pos. Phil

SECONDARY CREATION, OR COSMOGONY.

The Wisdom of God, accompanying His Power, presides over Creation as secondary, that is, as Formation. It is necessary to establish a distinction between the first production of matter and its subsequent elaboration, if such a term may be used, into the Cosmos, which brings us into the region of Cosmogony or Cosmology. It is important to consider whether the terms used by the inspired writer permit the distinction. Generally, it may be said that *בְּרָא*, *עָשָׂה*, and *יָצַר* in the Hebrew, are used interchangeably for both, answering to *κτίω* in the Greek, and that

Formation
or Cosmo-
gony.