

**TWELVE MONDAY
LECTURES IN TREMONT
TEMPLE, BOSTON, U.S.**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649726110

Twelve Monday Lectures in Tremont Temple, Boston, U.S. by Joseph Cook

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JOSEPH COOK

**TWELVE MONDAY
LECTURES IN TREMONT
TEMPLE, BOSTON, U.S.**

TWELVE
MONDAY LECTURES

IN

TREMONT TEMPLE, BOSTON, U.S.,

ON

EMERSON'S VIEW OF IMMORTALITY.
THEODORE PARKER'S ABSOLUTE RELIGION.
THEODORE PARKER ON THE GUILT OF SIN (Two Lectures).
THEODORE PARKER ON THE PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE HERALD.
THEODORE PARKER ON THE PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE NATURE.
THEODORE PARKER ON ADORATION.
TRIUNITY AND TRITHEISM.
POPULAR AND SCHOLARLY THEOLOGY.
COMMUNION WITH GOD AS PERSONAL.
THE TRINITY A PRACTICAL TRUTH.
THE TRINITY THE MARTYR'S FAITH.

BY REV. JOSEPH COOK.

BY PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR.



LONDON:
R. D. DICKINSON, FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.

1877.

141. i . 364.

EMERSON'S VIEWS ON IMMORTALITY.

By THE REV. JOSEPH COOK.

As light fills and yet transcends the rainbow, so God fills and yet transcends all natural law. According to scientific Theism, we are equally sure of the Divine Immanency in all Nature, and of the Divine Transcendency beyond it. Pantheism, however, with immeasurably narrower horizons, asserts that natural law and God are one; and thus, at its best, it teaches but one-half the truth—namely, the Divine Immanency, and not the Divine Transcendency. Christian Theism, in the name of the Scientific Method, teaches both. While you are ready to admit that every pulsation of the colours even in the rainbow is light, you yet remember well that all the pulsations taken together do not constitute the whole of light. Solar radiance billows away to all points of the compass. Your bow is bent above only one quarter of the horizon. So scientific Theism supposes that the whole universe, or finite existence in its widest range, is filled by the Infinite Omnipresent Will, as the bow is filled with light, and this in such a sense that we may say that natural law is God, who was, who is, and who is to come. In the incontrovertible scientific certainty of the Divine Immanency, we may feel ourselves transfigured, as truly as any poetic Pantheist ever felt himself to be when lifted to his highest possible mount of vision. But, beyond all that, Christian Theism affirms that God, knowable, but unfathomable—incomprehensible, but not inapprehensible—billows away beyond all that we call infinities and eternities, as light beyond the rainbow. While He is in all finite mind and matter as light is in the colours seven, He is as different from finite mind and matter as is the noon from a narrow band of colour on the azure. Asserting the Divine Transcendency side by side with the Divine Immanency, religious science escapes on the one hand the self-contradictions and narrowness of Pantheism, and attains by the cold precision of exact research a plane of thought as much higher than that of materialism as the seventh heaven is loftier than the platform of the insect or the worm.

It would be very Emersonian to differ from Emerson. His mission, according to his own statement, is to unsettle all things. It is common to hear the acutest readers assert that his writings have no mental unity. The poet Lowell thinks that sometimes Emerson's paragraphs are arranged by being shuffled in manuscript; and the

EMERSON'S VIEWS ON IMMORTALITY.

best British criticism* says "they are tossed out at random like the contents of a conjuror's hat." But is there no point of view from which the Emersonian sky

"With cycles, and with epicycles
Scribbled o'er,"

may be seen to have within it a comprehensible law? Before Hegel, Emerson's master, became obsolete or obsolescent in Germany, no doubt Emerson was a pantheist; but I cannot explain by any form of pantheism the later motions of some stars in his pure soft azure. You may prove that he is more poet than philosopher, more seer than poet, more mystic than seer; and yet the surety in the last analysis is that he is more Emerson than either. *Individualism held firmly, pantheism held waveringly*, are to me the explanation of the bewildering and yet gorgeous motions of the constellations in his sky. Mr. Frothingham acutely says that Mr. Emerson's place is among poetic, not among philosophic minds.† It is not Emersonian to wince under philosophical self-contradiction; but it is Emersonian to writhe under the remotest attempt to cast on individualism so much as the letter of a shadow.

Loyalty to the Over-Soul is Emerson's supreme mood. Whether it lead to philosophic consistency or not is to his scheme of thought an empty question. Whatever shooting star streams at this instant across the inner sky of personal inspiration is to be observed, and its course mapped down, even if it move in a direction opposite to that of the last flaming track of light noted there. What if the map at last show a thousand tracks crossing each other? Are they not all Divine paths? Are they not to be all included and explained in a sufficiently wise philosophy? The point of departure of all the shooting stars in Emerson's sky is the constellation Leo. All his metaphysics he is ready to abandon at any moment if the loftier movements of the Soul as it exists in himself come into conflict with his philosophy. He utters whatever the Over-Soul seems to him to say, whether in harmony with previous deliverances or not. He is a pantheist, but not a consistent pantheist; he is an idealist, but not a consistent idealist; he is a religious mystic, but not a consistent mystic. *He is an individualist, mapping his own highest inner self—or, as he would say in pantheistic phrase, mapping God.* The Over-Soul comes to consciousness only in man. In the transfigured work of tracing on the page of literature all gleams of light in the Over-Soul in Emerson, he is consistent with himself, and in this only. A maker of maps of the

* *Encyc. Brit.*, 1875, art. on American Literature.

† *Transcendentalism in New England*, 1878, p. 236.

EMERSON'S VIEWS ON IMMORTALITY.

paths of shooting stars is Emerson, and he is more devout than any astronomer intoxicated with the azure. Sit in the constellation Leo if you would understand the Emersonian sky.

A brilliant and learned volume by a reverend preacher of this city* contains the most luminous analytical proof that a pantheistic trend sets through Emerson's writings, as the gulf current through the Atlantic. But Emerson often proclaims his readiness to abandon pantheism itself if the Over-Soul seems to command him to do so. In the whole range of his often self-destructive apothegms I find no single sentence so descriptive of his position as a fixed individualist and a wavering pantheist as this:—

"In your metaphysics you have denied personality to the Deity; yet, when the devout motions of the soul come, yield to them heart and life, though they should clothe God with shape and colour. Leave your theory, as Joseph his coat, in the hand of the harlot, and flee."†

Whoever would come to the point of view from which all Emerson's self-contradictions are reconciled must take his position upon the summit of individualism, and transfigure that height by the thought that there billows around it, what we call God in conscience, and what Emerson calls the Over-Soul. In the loftiest zones of human experience there are influences from a somewhat and someone that is in us, but not of us, and Emerson is so far pantheistic as to hold that this highest in man is not only a manifestation of God, but God and the only God. Therefore he is always in the mount. His supreme tenet is the primacy of mind in the universe, and I had almost said the identity of the human mind with the Divine mind. As the waves are many and yet one with the sea, so to pantheism finite minds and the events of the universe are many and yet one with God. As the green billows that dash at this moment on Boston Harbour Bar, and cap themselves with foam, are one with the Atlantic, so you, and I, and Shakespeare, and Charlemagne, and Cæsar, and the Seven Stars, and Orion, are but so many waves in the Divine All. The ages, like the soft hissing spray, may take this shape or that, but they all come from one sea. "There is," says Emerson, "one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same, and to all of the same."‡ "The simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God." Eight generations of clerical dissent are behind Emerson's unwavering reverence for the still small voice; one generation of now almost outgrown German thinkers is behind his wavering reverence for pantheism. Would he only assert,

* Rev. Dr. Manning, "Half Truths and the Truth," 1872.

† Emerson, "Essays," vol. I. p. 50.

‡ Essay on History.

EMERSON'S VIEWS ON IMMORTALITY.

side by side with the Divine Immanence, the Divine Transcendency, we might call him a Christian mystic, where now we can only call him a teacher of transfigured pantheistic individualism.

Pantheism denies the personal immortality of the soul. To pantheism death is the sinking of a wave back into the sea. We shall find, however, that Emerson, true to his central tenet of hallowed individualism, has again and again asserted the personal immortality of the soul, and never denied it in reality, though he has often done so in appearance.

When, in 1832, Mr. Emerson bade adieu to his parish in this city, he used, as on every occasion he is accustomed to use, memorable words. "I commend you," the last sentences of his letter to that parish read, "to the Divine Providence; may He multiply to your families and to your persons early genuine blessing; and whatever discipline may be appointed to you in this world, may the blessed hope of the resurrection, which He has planted in the constitution of the human soul, and confirmed and manifested by Jesus Christ, be made good to you beyond the grave. In this faith and hope I bid you farewell."^{*}

These are wholly unambiguous words. You say that Emerson never has asserted, since 1832, the personal immortality of the soul; but what do you make of certain almost sacredly private statements of his to Frederika Bremer? That authoress, whose works Germany gathers up in thirty-four volumes, came out of the snows of Northern Europe, and one day found Mr. Emerson walking down the avenue of pines in front of his house, through the falling snow, to greet her. Day after day they conversed on the highest themes; months passed while Frederika Bremer was the guest of Boston; and toward the end of the lofty interchanges of thought between these two elect souls there occurred what Frederika Bremer calls a most serious season. One afternoon in Boston, with all the depth of her passionate and poetic temperament, she endeavoured to convince Emerson that God is not only in all natural law, but that he transcends it all; that He demands of us perfection, and that, therefore, as Kant used to say, we must expect personal immortality or opportunity to fulfil the demand; that religion is the marriage of the soul with God; and that the idea that God is objective to us, and that our souls may come into harmony with His, a Person meeting a person, is vastly superior, as an inspiration, to any pantheistic theory that all there is of God is what is revealed to us in the insignificant scope of our faculties. She endeavoured, in the name of lofty thought, to show the narrowness of

^{*} Emerson, B. W. Letter dated Boston, December 22, 1832, quoted in Frothingham's *Transcendentalism in New England*, 1876, p. 235.

EMERSON'S VIEWS ON IMMORTALITY.

pantheism at its best. The interview was serious in the last degree, and Frederika Bremer says that Emerson closed it with these words: "I do not wish that people should pretend to know or believe more than they really do know and believe. The resurrection, the continuance of our being, is granted; we carry the pledge of this in our own breast. I maintain merely that we cannot say in what form or in what manner our existence will be continued.*"

Transcendentalism in New England was marked by a bold assertion of the personal continuance of the soul after death. The Dial always assumed the fact of immortality. "The transcendentalist was an enthusiast on this article," Mr. Frothingham says; and Mr. Emerson's writings, he adds, were "redolent of the faith." Theodore Parker thought personal immortality is known to us by intuition, or as a self-evident truth, as surely as we know that a whole is greater than a part. It must be admitted that New England Transcendentalism caused in many parts of our nation a revival of interest and of faith in personal immortality.† Mr. Emerson was the leader of New England Transcendentalism.

But you say that since 1850 Emerson has changed his opinion; and yet, if you open the last Essay he has given to the world, that on "Immortality," you will read:—"Everything is prospective, and man is to live hereafter. That the world is for his education is the only sane solution of the enigma. . . . The implanting of a desire indicates that the gratification of that desire is in the constitution of the creature that feels it. . . . The Creator keeps His word with us. . . . All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. Will you, with vast cost and pain, educate your children to produce a master-piece, and then shoot them down?" What do these phrases amount to taken in connection with the two earlier passages which I have cited, and which assuredly assert personal immortality? "All sound minds rest on a certain preliminary conviction—namely, that if it be best that *conscious personal life* shall continue, it will continue; if not best, then it will not; and we, if we saw the whole, should of course see that it was better so. . . . I admit that you shall find a good deal of scepticism in the street, and hotels, and places of coarse amusement. But that is only to say that the practical faculties are faster developed than the spiritual. Where there is depravity, there is a slaughter-house style of thinking. One argument of future life is the recoil of the mind in such company—our pain at every sceptical statement."

The "conscious personal" continuance of the soul, Emerson no more

* Emerson, Conversation with Frederika Bremer, "Homes of the New World," vol. 1. p. 223.
† See Frothingham, Transcendentalism, pp. 185-186.

EMERSON'S VIEWS ON IMMORTALITY.

than Goethe denies. In this very essay, however, we must expect to find apparent self-contradiction, and accordingly we can read here these sentences, written from the point of view of a wavering Pantheism : "Jesus never preaches the personal immortality. . . . I confess that everything connected with our personality fails. The moral and intellectual reality to which we aspire is immortal, and we only through that."

Allow me on this occasion to contrast arguments with *ipse dixit*, and to use only the considerations which are implied in Emerson's teachings on immortality. You will be your own judges whether the conclusion that there is a personal existence after death must follow from his premises. I shall, of course, unbraid the reasoning and show its strands, but its braided form is Emerson's axiom : "The Creator keeps His word with us." The argument is old ; and, for that reason, probably, Emerson values it. It has borne the tooth of time and the buffetings of acutest controversy age after age. In our century it stands firmer than ever, because we know now through the microscope, better than before, that there is that behind living tissues which blind mechanical laws cannot explain.

1. An organic or constitutional instinct is an impulse or propensity existing prior to experience and independent of instruction.

This definition is a very fundamental one ; and is substantially Paley's.*

2. The expectation of existence after death is an organic or constitutional instinct.

3. The existence of this instinct in man is as demonstrable as the existence of the constitutional instincts of admiration for the beautiful, or of curiosity as to the relations of cause and effect.

What automatic action is you know ; and an instinct is based upon the automatic action of the nervous mechanism. Who doubts that certain postures in anger, certain attitudes in fear, certain others in reverence, certain others in surprise, are instinctive ? These postures are taken up by us without reflection on our part ; they are organic in origin. It is instinct for us to rest when we are fatigued, and to take the recumbent position ; and we do not reason about this. The babe does it. Instinctive actions appear early in the progress of life, and are substantially the same in all men and in all times. An educated impulse does not appear early, and is not the same among all men in all times. Of course it would avail nothing if I were to prove that the belief in immortality has come to us from education. If that belief result from an organic instinct, however—if it be constitutional—then it means much, and more than much.

* Nat. Theol., ch. 18.