

**CAUSATION VIEWED
IN THE LIGHT OF
CHRISTIAN SCIENCE**

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Causation viewed in the light of Christian Science by Frederick Dixon

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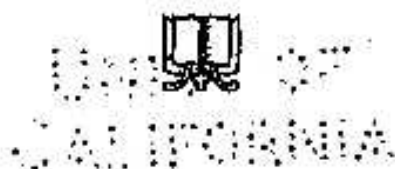
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FREDERICK DIXON, C.S.B.

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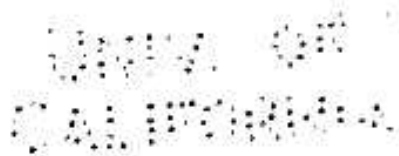
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TO THE
ASSOCIATES

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CAUSATION

Spiritual causation is the one question to be considered, for more than all others spiritual causation relates to human progress.—Science and Health, by Mrs. Eddy, p. 170.

THE question of causation has been, for centuries, the riddle of the universe. The human mind has traveled, like Oedipus, over the sands of time, demanding with insistence, "What is life?" The globe, said an ancient people, rested on the howdah of an elephant, the elephant stood upon a tortoise—and then? With greater definiteness Mrs. Shelley explained how man was made in Frankenstein. The one solution is about as valuable as the other. Yet the explanation has existed all the time, for those with eyes to see, in the pages of the Bible. Even now that it has been given to it, the world claps its telescope to its blind eye, with the determination of Nelson, and declares, with all his vehemence, that it is unable to see the signal.

PHILOSOPHIC MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM

It has been said that every man, whether he knows it or not, is either a materialist or an idealist. Certainly human thought, in one channel

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or the other, has rolled down the hill of speculation into the ocean of doubt, throughout all the ages. The materialist, roughly speaking, insists that nothing exists but matter and the forces inherent in it. He accounts for its indestructibility by means of some one of his atomic theories, the proof of which he recognizes in the balanced action of chemical activity or the conservation of energy, and practically sums up life in the famous couplet of the Persian poet:

What, without asking, hither hurried whence?
And, without asking, whither hurried hence?

The idealist, on the other hand, declares that all that exists is mind or energy, and that matter, being nothing but a phenomenon, is necessarily unreal. He does not, it is true, say that the phenomenon is eternal. He may agree with Sir William Crookes that its disappearance in "the formless mist," out of which it originally emerged, is a possibility, but inasmuch as he insists on the reality of the noumenon, the phenomenon becomes, to all intents and purposes, so real that the difference of opinion between the two schools degenerates into something perilously near Demosthenes' story of the quarrel over the ass's shadow. So apparent was this to Huxley that he declared that, for his part, he was unable to see any difference between the two, whilst Berkeley himself gave practical expression to the

same contention when, in the words of Mr. Balfour, he elevated tar water, the humblest drug in the pharmacoepœia, to the altitude of a universal panacea. It is perfectly certain that if, as Huxley insisted, the idealistic theory is the more reasonable, the materialistic practice is the more logical.

THEOLOGICAL IDEALISM

This, of course, is to consider the matter quite apart from religion. The time, however, comes when as the appreciation of a First Cause becomes more clearly defined, the spiritual instinct asserts itself determinedly. The statement that no man is entirely devoid of spiritual perception has become almost banal through repetition. This is probably the case, whether God is defined simply as nature, or as a person, or, in the words of Jesus, by the well of Sychar, as Spirit. To the materialist, admitting no reality but matter and its inherent forces, the First Cause or, if you choose so to conceive it, God, is physical nature. This theory is a perfectly simple and intelligible expression of pantheism, but it entails the admission that all the horrors of nature are part of the divine economy, and that the universe is simply "the fair show" which veils

one vast, savage, grim conspiracy
of mutual murder, from the worm to man.

No wonder Huxley wrote that, so far from the materialistic theory clearing up the mysteries of existence, it left them precisely where they were.

The attempt to escape from this by means of idealism, in the end, scarcely improves matters very much. To the idealist, the First Cause is either the divine Mind or God of Bishop Berkeley, or the energy of the natural scientists of today. In either case, the explanation of matter simply amounts to this, that it is the expression of divine Mind in the one case, or the result of energy in the other. Such a theory is not only as frankly pantheistic as that of the materialist, but becomes, on its theological side, in its efforts to account for the origin of evil, positively bewildering. It was, indeed, this very dilemma of the primitive church which gave birth to Gnosticism.

GNOSTICISM

Gnosticism itself was the outcome of that contact of the Jew and the Greek in the Asian church which led to the attempt to blend Hebrew and pagan ideals in a philosophy which would reconcile the ceremonial dogmatism of the one with the cultured skepticism of the other. This contact has been epigrammatically described by Matthew Arnold as the collision between "Culture and Anarchy," and was more comprehensively put by Paul, in his first letter to the church at Corinth, when he wrote, "For the Jews require a sign, and

the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." The result was that there grew up within this church a school of thought which had for its object the reconciliation of what may be termed Hebrew materialism with Greek idealism. The two cardinal difficulties which led to the movement were: first, how to reconcile the creation of the material universe by an absolutely good God, with the existence of evil, and, second, how to account for the incarceration of the human spirit in matter. The one difficulty found expression in the attempt to account for the origin of evil, the other in the attempt to explain the dogma of the incarnation.

Now, the book of Genesis distinctly declares that "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," whilst the gospel of John equally emphatically explains that "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." The conclusion is, therefore, unavoidable that, if evil is real, either it was made by God, who pronounced it very good, or else that there are two creators, and that God cannot be the First Cause. It is this original dilemma which has involved orthodox Christianity in the second dilemma of the incarnation. Oblivious of the fact that Paul writes, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God,"