THE BASIS OF RELIGION: BEING AN EXAMINATION OF "NATURAL RELIGION"

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The Basis of Religion: Being an Examination of "Natural Religion" by A. W. Momerie

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A. W. MOMERIE

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THE BASIS OF RELIGION

"We Live by Admiration."

—*Motto of 'Natural Religion.'*

THE BASIS OF RELIGION

BEING AN

EXAMINATION OF "NATURAL RELIGION"

BY THE

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE substance of the following Essay I delivered, as Select Preacher, before the University of Cambridge. As the sermon-form, however, was not necessary to the argument, and as many persons on principle avoid reading sermons, it appeared advisable to publish it in its present shape.

I should like to take this opportunity of saying that for the author of 'Ecce Homo' I shall always feel the deepest reverence and gratitude. I am not, of course, blind to the literary charm and other excellencies of 'Natural Religion.' But in spite of its fascination, it appears to me exceedingly faulty in argument, and to some extent even pernicious in tendency. Pernicious for this reason: let us once be persuaded that the negative theories of modern science are com-

patible with religion, and we lose the strongest motive for that re-examination of the grounds on which the theories rest, which is the crying want of the present day. Whereas, on the contrary, if it be seen that these negative views divest the universe of all beauty, and make worship in this life and hope for the next utterly impossible, there will be less danger of their being accepted with undue haste and on insufficient evidence.

I should also like to take this opportunity of saying I cannot but feel very strongly that much time and scholarship and ability are being at present *wasted* by theologians. Work which is useful enough in one age becomes often perfectly futile in the next. Modern science conceives that it has disproved the existence of the soul and of the Deity. Now nothing can show that a Being, whom there is no reason to suppose existent (viz., God), has done anything to reveal Himself to another being, whom there is every reason to suppose non-existent (viz., the human soul). Of what use, then, to those who are imbued with the new ideas—and the number of such persons is increasing with tremendous rapidity—are treatises on the authorship of the