

**THE NATURE AND REALITY OF  
RELIGION: A CONTROVERSY  
BETWEEN FREDERIC HARRISON  
AND HERBERT SPENCER**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649655496

The Nature and Reality of Religion: A Controversy Between Frederic Harrison and Herbert Spencer by Frederic Harrison & Herbert Spencer

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](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**FREDERIC HARRISON & HERBERT SPENCER**

**THE NATURE AND REALITY OF  
RELIGION: A CONTROVERSY  
BETWEEN FREDERIC HARRISON  
AND HERBERT SPENCER**



Youmans, Edward 24700  
Livingstone, 1821-1887, ed. and com

THE  
NATURE AND REALITY  
OF  
RELIGION.

A Controversy

BETWEEN

FREDERIC HARRISON AND HERBERT SPENCER.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION, NOTES,


AND

AN APPENDIX ON

THE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE UNKNOWNABLE

By COUNT D'ALVIELLA.

NEW YORK:  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,  
1, 3, AND 5 BOND STREET  
1885.



COPYRIGHT, 1896,  
BY D. APPLETON AND COMPANY.

## PREFACE.

---

THE recent controversy between Frederic Harrison and Herbert Spencer concerning religion, which appeared in the "Nineteenth Century" and "The Popular Science Monthly," has attracted wide attention both in Europe and this country, and has been much called for in the separate form in which it now appears. This is not surprising, as the subject is one of profound interest, and is treated by men of representative positions and of great ability.

But we are very little concerned with the discussion, merely as a personal polemic. This volume has been prepared because of the light it throws upon a subject of much moment, by which many minds are deeply stirred at the present time. The views put forth by Herbert Spencer on religion, many years ago, have been much misunderstood and much misrepresented, while he has been in a position very unfavorable for defending them. They are now attacked, and in some important respects still further misconstrued, by one of the most brilliant and skillful of English writers, and one, moreover, whose especial studies give authority to his utterances; and, as

Mr. Spencer has here come forward to the explanation and defense of his views more prominently than ever before, we think it desirable to give wide circulation to the controversy in a shape most favorable for forming a judgment upon it. The book, moreover, has been edited with a view of still further interpreting and vindicating the religious doctrines of Mr. Spencer. An introduction, some notes, and an appendix, have been added, which, it is hoped, will be found instructive to such readers as are not already familiar with the bearings of the questions in issue.

Especial attention is invited to the very able article of Count D'Alviella on "The Religious Value of the Unknowable," which is a review of the Harrison-Spencer discussion, and has been translated in full for present publication. The notes added to articles in this edition are distinguished from those of the authors by being inclosed in brackets. The brief synopsis of the "Synthetic Philosophy," made some time ago by Mr. Spencer, and referred to by Mr. Harrison, has been much inquired for, and, as it is not conveniently accessible, it has been reprinted in the Appendix. E. L. Y.

New York, February, 1885.



## CONTENTS.

---

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| PREFACE . . . . .   | 3    |
| INTRODUCTION . . . . .  | 7    |
| RELIGION: A RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT . . . . .                       | 17   |
| THE GHOST OF RELIGION . . . . .                                     | 39   |
| RETROGRESSIVE RELIGION . . . . .                                    | 61   |
| AGNOSTIC METAPHYSICS . . . . .                                      | 103  |
| LAST WORDS ABOUT AGNOSTICISM AND THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY . . . . . | 151  |
| MR. HERBERT SPENCER AND AGNOSTICISM . . . . .                       | 175  |

### APPENDIX.

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| THE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE UNRENEWABLE . . . . .          | 187 |
| CARDINAL PRINCIPLES OF THE SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHY . . . . . | 218 |
| A POSITIVIST RELIGIOUS SERVICE . . . . .                  | 217 |



## INTRODUCTION.

---

THE eminent contestants in the following controversy occupy such different grounds that a few explanatory words regarding their positions and views may be helpful to some who will look over this volume.

In the beginning of last year Mr. Herbert Spencer published an article under the title of "Religion: A Retrospect and Prospect," which was a chapter from that division of his "Principles of Sociology" which treats of the evolution of "Ecclesiastical Institutions." In this article he reviewed in a narrow compass and a condensed statement the past tendencies of religious ideas, determined in what religious progress essentially consists, and on the basis of these results drew conclusions as to the direction and extent of further changes to be expected in the future. The position taken was a reaffirmation of views arrived at long previously. In the preliminary part of his "Synthetic Philosophy," begun in 1860, and upon which he has been ever since engaged, Mr. Spencer opened an inquiry into the boundaries of the sphere of valid knowledge as determined by the nature and necessary limitations of intelligence. This led him to the important question of the relations of Science and Religion. That the dividing line between these subjects has hitherto been a movable one, and that science in its progress has, from the first, encroached upon the recognized domain of religion, is not open to doubt. The