

**WHAT IS THIS UNIVERSE?
CHRISTIAN FAITH VERSUS
MONIST DREAMS**

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What Is This Universe? Christian Faith Versus Monist Dreams by S. Ph. Marcus & R. W. Felkin & William Durban

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S. PH. MARCUS & R. W. FELKIN & WILLIAM DURBAN

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WHAT IS THIS UNIVERSE?

CHRISTIAN FAITH *versus* MONIST DREAMS

(AN ANSWER TO PROFESSOR HAECKEL'S BOOK
"THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE")

BY
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TRANSLATED BY
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WITH INTRODUCTION BY
REV. WILLIAM DURBAN, B.A.

"All that is wise and clever has already been thought; now we must
try and think the thoughts again."—GORTHE.



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P R E F A C E

IN the following pages the author has brought together some 'afterthoughts,' using the term in its widest sense. He lays no claim either to priority or to originality; should thoughts appear in this book which the reader has not met with elsewhere so much the better.

The author is well aware that he has only been able to consider afresh thoughts which have been considered already by countless thinkers; all he claims to do is to reconsider and restate thoughts which he has heard or read at any time or in any place.

Repetitions and at times a wealth of examples are intentional, in order to render clear thought more easy; the reader who does not need such aids will pardon them.

BERLIN

S. PH. MARCUS

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THIS little volume has been written with the object of stimulating men and women to *think*. I trust that it may succeed in this aim in its English dress also.

Materialism is spreading far and wide to-day, and it seems to me that this is largely due to want of sound thinking. The rush and hurry of modern life too often prevents deep or sound thinking, and leads many people to take their views of life and faith ready-made. A great name leads, or misleads, the popular ideas as to what is false and what is true.

Now, Haeckel has a great name (and justly so, for he is a great scientist), and hundreds of his books are being read with avidity by those whose training does not enable them to separate the wheat from the tares, with the natural result that they get mental and moral indigestion. On the Continent some thirty churches have been founded to worship his 'Mighty Atom'!

In this small book the author has sought to

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provide, as it were, thought tabloids containing an antidote. He asks his readers not to skim hastily, but rather to absorb slowly and assimilate his tabloids. If they do so, they will doubtless find that, if they possess a moderate amount of common-sense, much can be said upon the other side in reply to that tremendous problem, 'The Riddle of the Universe.'

With regard to the translation, the author has been very anxious that it should be as literal as possible, and it may, perhaps, have suffered in the endeavour to fulfil his wishes. Be that as it may, it is offered with the conviction that no one can read it without perceiving the pitfalls into which some scientists lead their thoughtless followers.

ROBERT W. FELKIN

LONDON

A CRITICAL FOREWORD

By Rev. WILLIAM DURBAN, B.A.

PHILOSOPHY is at one and the same time the oldest and yet the most unsettled of all the sciences, while it is certainly the most fascinating to real intellectuals. From the days of Plato down to our own time acute controversy has been rife between the representatives of different systems of the loftiest thought. The very objects, as well as the methods of the science, are as much as ever open to debate, and the impossibility of formulating even a definition that would be universally acceptable is freely admitted.

Some of the most plausible and pretentious of the various rival systems of abstract thought have proved to be the most hollow and unsatisfactory, though they have for a short period captivated hosts of adherents. Monism, the theory that all being may be referred to one category, is the most striking of recent instances of this kind of spell cast over very many minds. The vast majority of philosophical thinkers have been Dualists, or believers in matter and spirit as separate entities. The way was, of course, paved for a systematic formulation of Monism by such theories as Idealism, Pantheism, and Materialism. For these are all really opposed to Dualism. The system of Spinoza was Monistic; but it was reserved for Dr. Ernst Heinrich Haeckel to seek to popularise Monism, and to render what had been reckoned recondite and abstruse familiar to the man in the street.

His treatises have been scattered broadcast in cheap editions, and his rhetoric has constituted an alluring bait for the multitude.

The wonderful work achieved by Professor Haeckel in his proper sphere as a zoologist abundantly demonstrated his genius. Few living naturalists have equalled the veteran professor at Jena in this province. His treatises on the medusa, the monera, and other deep-sea forms of life gained him a cosmopolitan reputation, and as a biologist and morphologist he hardly has a rival. But this able German naturalist was not content, like most of the ablest Germans, with the rôle of a specialist. He to a great extent abandoned his detailed zoological work, in which he had gained well-deserved fame, and aimed at making a fresh application of the doctrine of evolution. For a considerable period the doctrine of Darwin was not accepted in Germany, for it was sternly opposed there by the illustrious Virchow, just as it was in France absolutely rejected by Quatrefages. But Haeckel boldly championed the theory, standing for a time almost alone in his attitude of endorsement. His transition to Monism was the next movement of his mind. But in the most intellectual circles a reaction speedily set in against the peculiar dogmatism styled *Haeckelismus*, a painful example being the reckless and scurrilous attack in one of his works on the character of the Mother of Jesus, which Haeckel was constrained to elimi-

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nate from subsequent editions, so vehement was the resentment which it excited.

Monism seeks to constitute a meeting-ground between Materialism and Idealism by maintaining that a universal and changeable substance is the root principle of the universe. But Haeckel is incapable of being consistent with himself. There is a Haeckel No. 1 who is hopelessly at variance with Haeckel No. 2—a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde battling over scientific problems! For though he is a Monist and an utter Materialist, yet in his 'Riddle of the Universe' he says—'We hold with Goethe that matter cannot exist or be operative without spirit, nor spirit without matter. We adhere firmly to the pure unequivocal Monism of Spinoza; Matter, or infinitely extended substance, and Spirit (or Energy), or sensitive and thinking substance, are the two fundamental attributes, or principal properties, of the all-embracing divine essence of the world, the universal substance.'^{*}

Unfortunately, this philosopher who thus seems to wish to make an affirmation of a divine process of some kind, nevertheless makes it understood by his readers that he absolutely denies God. Monism is simply a delusive avenue to blindest and blackest negationism.

LONDON, APRIL, 1910

^{*} See an able chapter on 'Scientific Materialism—or What?' in William Kingsland's 'Scientific Idealism' (Rebmanns, Ltd.).