

**SMALL BOOKS ON GREAT
SUBJECTS. - XVII. MARTINEAU'S
"STUDY OF RELIGION": AN
ANALYSIS AND APPRECIATION**

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RICHARD A. ARMSTRONG

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UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

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Preface.

JAMES MARTINEAU was born at Norwich on April 21, 1805. He died in London on January 11, 1900.

Twelve years ago, at the age of eighty-two, he published "A Study of Religion." At the request of the then Editor of *The Inquirer*, I contributed to that journal a series of articles constituting, not so much a review, as a brief analysis and exposition of the work. It is these articles which are here collected together, with only such slight variations as the lapse of years and the death of Dr. Martineau make necessary.

Dr. Martineau has left to the world (besides volumes of sermons famous throughout Christendom, devotional compositions in hymn and canticle and prayer of the rarest beauty and spirituality, collections of essays and addresses in many departments of philosophy, theology, criticism, and even in politics and sociology, and an extended monograph on Spinoza,) three great works summing up the thought and study of his life, namely, "Types of Ethical Theory" (1885), "A Study of Religion" (1888), and "The Seat of Authority in Religion" (1890). Each work is unique in its kind. The first is the most powerful and competent reply that has been made to the advocates of the Utilitarian and

Determinist theories of morals. The second takes up the ethical position of the first and extends it to a vindication of Theistic belief incomparable, in my view, in force and scope. The third combines with a restatement of the grounds of Theism the most trenchant criticism in literature of the Roman Catholic and Protestant positions, and an examination of the original documents of Christianity abreast of the most advanced Continental scholarship.

To religious inquirers at a certain stage probably the most illuminating and helpful of all Martineau's writings is "The Seat of Authority," and it is less weighted with the technical language of philosophy than the

“Types” or the “Study.” But it has not the concentrated unity of the prior essays. And, distinguished as was the critical scholarship of Martineau, it is not of the same authority as his philosophical thinking. Many will go with him the whole way in his great Theistic argument, yet part company with him sharply in his New Testament criticism. To such a man, for example, as the late Richard Holt Hutton, the “Types” and the “Study” seemed almost perfect arguments, while he could not fail vehemently to dissent from many chapters in “The Seat of Authority.” Tennyson, too, enthusiastic about the “Study of Religion,” was deeply disappointed by the later

work: The most commanding strength of the great teacher was undoubtedly concentrated in the "Study of Religion." That is his supreme positive contribution to religious philosophy. While I personally go with him in much in his last great volume from which many will dissent, I must still hold "A Study of Religion" to be his greatest constructive contribution to human thought.

Believing, as I do, that in these great chapters Martineau has laid down indestructibly the lines on which the highest and truest religious thinking of the twentieth Christian century must proceed, I have willingly agreed to the republication of my humble restatement of the main elements