

If "Outsider" really wishes to overthrow the evolution philosophy with which Spencer's name is indissolubly connected, let him adduce a single fact in direct contradiction, for a single adverse fact is the Samson that can pull down the most imposing structure of theory.

GEORGE E. WEST.

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THE EVOLUTION OF SCIENTIFIC
RELIGION.

THE STEPS IN THE PROCESS UNTIL
RELIGION BECOMES A FACTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY.

To the Editor of the New-York Times:

It seems to me that all distinctions attempted to be drawn between science and religion result in assumed antagonisms between them, and that these will disappear as soon as the fact becomes familiar that there is a science of religion. Harmony is involved in the suggestion. It would be confusing to name this science theology, on account of its etymology, and equally confusing to name it ideality, on account of the transcendentalism associated with that word, and so, for want of a better name, let us coin a word and call it idealogy.

If religion can be treated scientifically, then religion as a science should be able to point to some fact which all concrete religions possess in common, (and it will do this if it can point to the fact that religions evolve,) and it should be able to state a formula of religion which will hold good throughout all its divergent modifications. What, then, is the highest, widest generalization of science upon this subject? What is religion? I would answer this question in this way: Religion is man's efforts to realize his ideals and his longing after such of his ideals as he thinks he cannot attain--and, so defined, I would contrast it with its fruit, morality, where the ideals have been attained. Ideals are the abstracts of ideas; and even the savage, dominated by incoherent fears, has yet an idea of his fears from which he abstracts the ideal that it must be a grand thing to be a fear-exerting creature like the ghost of his chief, and the next evolutionary stage thereupon becomes potential; the seeds of awe and admiration are sown. All the facts of religion having reached unity in idealization and having been formulated in the definition above given, the science of religion has no further function. This last deliverance of this science now becomes a factor of philosophy, but it is not intended now to follow religion into that science of the sciences.

If religion can be treated scientifically, does it obey the law of evolution? Do historical religions evolve? First, then, what is evolution? Mr. Spencer's final definition of it is as follows: "Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the

matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity, and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation." If religion can be brought under the sway of this law it must be done by showing that the evolution of religions conforms to the characteristics of evolution in general. That it does so conform seems to be demonstrable by the following method and treatment: Far down among the tribes we find indefinite, incoherent, homogenous fear. Integrating, as the races improve, we find greater and greater degrees of wonder, awe, admiration, and reverence as the motion of religion integrates; and from homogenous anthropomorphism, the worship of the chief, to the heterogeneous worship of the ghost of the chief, of increasing ghosts of chiefs, of ghosts in general, of gods thence derived, of a hierarchy of gods, of the chief god of the hierarchy, of the god without a court, and, finally, of an ultimate, controlling Power, as the matter of religion integrates. That religion is personal pursuit of ideals, suggests the fact that it is confined to phenomena, as evolution is, and therefore it can have nothing to do with anything like Force or the Power which Mr. Spencer assumes to exist behind phenomena; for this does not integrate.

W. H. B.