

once afloat was speedily and greedily taken up by the race, and with the exception of a few rare and choice spirits, it has been haunted ever since. This view needs no criticism: It assumes that men are generally fools, and there is nothing to do but to return the compliment."

Frederick Harrison (*Nineteenth Century*, 1880) has also said, "that it is a mistake in presuming that religion is a morbid growth of the human mind—a weakness bred of ignorance or inaction." He speaks of all such explanations as "slight and shallow;" for he continues, "human nature, under the influence of its deepest sentiments—veneration, adoration and devotion—rises up from time to time and snaps their webs like tow; the instinct of feeling is paramount as well as indestructible, and philosophy and politics are in turn confounded by it."

In the language of an able writer on Comparative Theology, we may say that:

"It answers our purpose equally well to side with Malebranche, Schelling, Coleridge and Cousin, who pronounce these first truths of religion to be strictly and purely *intuitions*; or, with the early philosophers, the scholastics of the middle ages, and theologians of modern times, who say they are *discerned by the light of nature*; or, with Descartes, and his school, who assume that they are *connate* with the soul; or with Dr. Reid and the Scottish school, who interpret them as the ground of *common sense*; or with Dugald Stewart, J. S. Mill and Herbert Spencer, who account for them upon the ground of *experience and association that cannot be overcome or separated*."

Whatever account we may accept, the great, indisputable fact is ever before us in its most imposing form, that these ideas exist, and no empty guess or speculation can explain them away. And now the inquiry may be raised as to the reliability of these ideas. Are these religious convictions of humanity substantial and authoritative, or something mythical and misleading? Are they magnetic mockeries of the brain, or fundamental and constitutional perceptions of the soul?

H. Spencer has said that the best criterion of truth is "the inexpugnable persistence in consciousness." And again he has remarked that: