

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *In Tune with the Infinite; or, Fulness of Peace, Power, and Plenty.* by Ralph Waldo Trine

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of the people, which make their religion worth understanding. The volumes are full of controversial matter, which cannot fittingly be discussed here. The value of the book seems to me to lie in the importance it gives to the social, as distinct from the purely individual, factors in the development of religion. Every religion seems inevitably to involve devotion to a real or ideal person; but the share of the worshippers in the making of the religion has been too often minimized. Mr. Gould's book will help to correct this. It will not commend itself to the orthodox, but it is carefully and reverently written, in a clear and simple style, and it puts into small compass a great amount of reading in the best authorities.

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IN TUNE WITH THE INFINITE; OR, FULNESS OF PEACE, POWER, AND PLENTY. By Ralph Waldo Trine. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1897.

An amiable spiritual pride, a humane but essentially immature idealism, an edifying vagueness, a somewhat dilute solution of the ancient lore of mystical faith,—these are the constituents that go to make the doctrine of this not at all unattractive little volume. The type to which it belongs is well represented in the American popular literature of to-day. This book is by no means a poor or unworthy representative of its class.

Every one is "building his world from within." "The optimist, by his superior wisdom and insight, is making his own heaven." "The great central fact of the universe is that Spirit of Infinite Life and Power that is back of all, that animates all, that manifests itself in and through all." "There have been and are highly illumined souls who believe that we receive our life from God after the manner of a divine inflow. And, again, there have been and are those who believe that our life is one with the life of God, and so that God and man are one. Which is right? Both are right; both right when rightly understood." God's relation to man (p. 14) is like that of an "inexhaustible reservoir on the mountain side" to a smaller reservoir "in a valley." Both contain the same water. They differ in the amount of the water. So man's life is the "same in essence" as God's life. There is only a "difference in degree." The practical result is that if man "opens himself to this divine inflow," he "approaches" God, and "takes on the God-powers" (p. 15). The "only limitations man has are the limitations he sets

to himself by virtue of not knowing himself." "Ignorance is the most potent factor in setting limitations to the majority of mankind." The cure for this ignorance is "the operation of thought," defined in the well known mystical fashion. The "soul life" is "direct from God" (p. 23). The "physical life" "relates us to the material universe about us." "The thought life" connects the one with the other. It is this that "plays between the two." Thought is "a vital living force" as we nowadays prove "in our very laboratory experiments" (p. 24). "We are all living in a vast ocean of thought." The true spiritual art consists in closing myself to "all things below," and making myself "receptive to all higher influences." "Bodily health and vigor" (p. 42 sqq.) result from such opening of the self to the divine inflow, and our author devotes a considerable space to the discussion of the mental causation and cure of disease. "Mental therapeutics" (p. 51) must now be studied by every doctor. "Many absurd and foolish things have been claimed and done" as to mental healing, but the "great underlying laws" themselves remain. The author knows "*personally*," as he assures us, of cures belonging to this type. Meanwhile "one may cure another, but to be *permanently healed* one must do it himself" (p. 53). "Suffering is designed to continue only so long as sin continues; sin not necessarily in the theological, but always in the philosophical sense, though many times in the sense of both." Exercises for the improvement of health through mystic communion are hereupon discussed, with that curious tendency to encourage chronic spiritual hypochondria which too many lovers of mental healing seem nowadays disposed to indulge. The length of the chapter upon this topic (pp. 42-88) indicates the author's general position as to this whole subject. "Love," "Wisdom and Interior Illumination," "The Realization of Perfect Peace," "Coming into Fulness of Power," "Plenty of All Things—The Law of Prosperity," and "How Men have become Prophets, Seers, Sages, and Saviours," are the titles of later sections of the book. And here it is that the amiable spiritual pride aforesaid finds plentiful and not ungracious expression. "Miracles have abounded in all places and at all times" (p. 201). Anybody who "lives in the realization" of the "oneness of his life with the Source whence it came" becomes "a prophet, seer, sage, or saviour," and can presumably work miracles (p. 152). Among the author's friends are numbered several people who seem to have reached very beautiful elevation of life and character, and in such

company one thinks little of many attainments that on the "physical plane" would seem impossible. "Whatever can't be done in the physical can be done in the spiritual."

The new mysticism, very prevalent at this time in America, is thus, indeed, not ill represented by this very pleasant book. Critical thinking there is none, of course, from one end of the volume to the other. There is the simple assumption that this is what any philosophical Idealism must come to,—an assumption that the present reviewer has several times dealt with at some length in the course of discussions on Idealism. As a fact, this gentle optimism, with its well known opposition of "lower plane" and "higher plane," of the "physical plane" and the "invisible," becomes often rather painfully dualistic at the very point where a sound idealism, facing the problem of evil with a true sense of its gravity, is most needed to give a practical unity to the concrete life and warfare of humanity. The new mysticism, like the old, is selective, and appeals only to a portion of mankind; but the old mysticism—the doctrine of the Hindoo forest sages, of the mediæval mystics, or even of our own earlier Transcendentalists—had an historical background, an energy of life, and an originality of expression and of experience that one has almost wholly to miss in our recent disciples of mental therapeutics, and of the "higher plane." The new doctrine saves its invalids, and has already given us a few really valuable contributions both to poetical literature and to the literature of direct personal experience; but it has yet to produce its "prophets."

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THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGION. An Essay in English Culture History. By M. W. Wiseman. London: The University Press, Limited, 1897. Pp. 340

This book is an attempt to criticise the movement of theological thought in England since the Reformation from the atheistical stand-point. According to the writer, religion is a disease, priests are impostors, and the "main forces in the making and unmaking of churches are those of personal and pecuniary interests." At the end of the eighteenth century these conceptions of religion and ecclesiastical institutions had a certain vogue; but it is rather remarkable to find them dug out of their graves towards the close of the nineteenth to serve as an explanation of the dynamics of reli-