

RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS

OF

THE WORLD

A Contribution to the Study of Comparative Religion

A COLLECTION OF ADDRESSES

Delivered at South Place Institute

NOW REVISED AND IN SOME CASES REWRITTEN BY THE AUTHORS,
TOGETHER WITH SOME OTHERS SPECIALLY WRITTEN FOR THIS VOLUME

THIRD EDITION.



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"A new Catholicity has dawned upon the world. All religions are now recognised as essentially Divine. They represent the different angles at which man looks at God. Questions of origin, polemics as to evidences, erudite dissertations concerning formulæ, are disappearing, because religions are no longer judged by their supposed accordance with the letter of the Bible, but by their ability to minister to the wants and fulfil the aspirations of men. The individual, what can it make of him? As it raises or debases, purifies or corrupts, fills with happiness or torments with fear, so is it judged to accord with the Divine will. The credentials of the Divine origin of every religion are to be found in the hearts and lives of those who believe it. The old intolerance has disappeared, and the old indifference, which succeeded it, has well-nigh disappeared also. The new tolerance of faith recognises as Divine all the creeds which have enabled men to overcome their bestial appetites with visions of things spiritual and eternal."

—UNIVERSAL REVIEW, December, 1888.

Some Opinions of the Press on the First Edition.

"From an interesting volume just published by Messrs. Swan Sonnenschein & Co., much of interest may be learned regarding the different religious systems that are in vogue in the different countries of the globe. Each system is treated by a specialist, and thus, far from exhibiting the faultiness sometimes apparent in such works, the volume treats the subject in question with a comprehensiveness and an accuracy that render the pages both interesting and instructive."—*City Press*.

"They give collectively such a view of the religions of the world as has not hitherto been attainable—a bird's-eye view of the field which will enable even the reader with little time at his disposal to appreciate the relations of the various systems, and to form some intelligent conception of what is involved in the study of comparative religion."—*Birmingham Daily Post*.

"A remarkable contribution to the literature of religious thought."—*Manchester Guardian*.

"A remarkable compendium on religions which will well repay study."—*Liverpool Post*.

"While on the subject of the Church and her clergy, let me recommend to you a book which is as significant as it is interesting and opportune, "Religious Systems of the World."—*Truth*.

"Will prove very agreeable and instructive reading."—*Newbery House Magazine*.

"The volume is full of interest and instruction."—*Christian World*.

"Valuable and fascinating."—*Literary World*.

"As a contribution to a more reasonable method of arriving at truth, this collection of addresses will be welcomed by the serious mind. Its contents are unequal, but in many chapters we are given the essence of much thought and research. To the religious student who wishes to understand the wide questions of the origin and developments of religion itself the book will be especially useful. There is no other that we know of which has been compiled in exactly the same representative way; and the South Place Institute has more than justified its existence by the issue of such a volume."—*Inquirer*.

PREFACE.

"In proportion as we love truth more and victory less, we shall become anxious to know what it is which leads our opponents to think as they do. We shall begin to suspect that the pertinacity of belief exhibited by them must result from a perception of something we have not perceived. And we shall aim to supplement the portion of truth we have found with the portion found by them."—HERBERT SPENCER. "First Principles," part of § 3.

THIS volume is published in response to requests from numerous friends who desire to have, in a permanent form, the Lectures delivered on Sunday afternoons at South Place Institute, during 1888-89 and 1891, on "Centres of Spiritual Activity," and "Phases of Religious Development."

The Lectures were first designed to explain and illustrate the different Religious Movements of the day, for though most thinking persons are fully persuaded of their own belief, they are often unable to understand the standpoint of others equally earnest, and thus fail to do justice to men of different creeds. After the current divisions of Christianity and Modern Ethical Philosophies had been treated, it was thought that Ancient Religious Systems might also be profitably studied in the same manner, especially as the general public have very little opportunity of becoming acquainted with them, and not unfrequently mistake their mere accidents for their spirit and substance.

Some of the Lecturers have been so kind as to re-write their essays for this volume, while the articles on the Religion of Egypt, Shintôism (second article), Zoroastrianism, Religions of Ancient Greece and Rome, Hittites, Quakers, Irvingism, and Evolution have been specially written for the present edition.

The willingness with which the various Lecturers have come forward, without fee or reward, to speak on his or her special topic, to audiences not always sympathetic—in some cases at the risk, almost certainty, of offending their own co-religionists—and the sympathy expressed by several eminent men, who from various causes were unable to take a personal part in the course, have been very encouraging to those who organized the series of lectures.

That a publication of this kind meets a distinct want is clearly shown by the fact that the first edition was exhausted within a few months of issue. It is hoped that the present work will, owing to its greater completeness, be even more widely appreciated. It is published simultaneously in England and America.

WM. SHEOWRING, } *Hon. Secs.*
CONRAD W. THIES, } *Institute Committee.*