

## THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE

The majority of religions have, in spite of their great differences, one common feature, which is, at the same time, one of their strongest supports in many quarters. They declare that they can elucidate the problem of existence, the solution of which is beyond the natural power of reason, by the supernatural way of revelation; from that they derive the authority of the dogmas which in the guise of "divine laws" control morality and the practical conduct of life. "Divine" inspirations of that kind form the basis of many myths and legends, the human origin of which is perfectly clear. It is true that the God who reveals himself does not always appear in human shape, but in thunder and lightning, storm and earthquake, fiery bush or menacing cloud. But the revelation which he is supposed to bring to the credulous children of men is always anthropomorphic; it invariably takes the form of a communication of ideas or commands which are formulated and expressed precisely as is done in the normal action of the human brain and larynx. In the Indian and Egyptian religions, in the mythologies of Greece and Rome, in the Old and the New Testaments, the gods think, talk, and act just as men do; the revelations, in which they are supposed to unveil for us the secrets of existence and the solution of the great world-enigma, are creations of the human imagination. The "truth" which the credulous discover in them is a human invention; the "childlike faith" in these irrational revelations is mere superstition.

The true revelation—that is, the true source of rational knowledge—is to be sought in nature alone. The rich heritage of truth which forms the most valuable part of human culture is derived exclusively from the experiences acquired in a searching study of nature,