

## RELIGION VIEWED AS DEVOUT OBEDIENCE TO THE LAWS OF THE UNIVERSE.

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IF one had the required power, leisure, and knowledge for the purpose, no work could be undertaken, at present, as it seems to me, more seasonable or more useful than to write a book on Religion viewed as consisting, simply, of devout obedience to the laws of the universe, and, in so far, as being obedience to the God of the universe.

I do not pretend that this definition of religion is absolutely perfect. But whatever its defects may be, it has, at least, one advantage. It lifts the subject out of the region of all dogmatic controversy. It runs back to ultimate principles, and is the only definition I can think of that is likely ever to bring rational and unprejudiced men everywhere into religious agreement. It rises above the narrow and superstitious tests of churches, and aims not, as sectarianism has done, at *breaking* up society, but at *building* it up. It takes account of men, not as believers in this metaphysical theology or the other, but simply as constituent parts of Humanity, and refuses, at all hazards, to acknowledge them under any more limiting classification.

All that can be attempted in this short paper is to group together a few ideas on the subject, and to offer them only as rough and fragmentary materials for a chapter in the suggested volume, which, I hope, may some day be undertaken by an abler pen than mine.

Perhaps the most noticeable fact to the reader of history is that Humanity has been looked upon by the

wise and good in all past ages as out of gear in relation to itself and to the whole physical and moral order of things; and philosophers, prophets, patriots, politicians, and philanthropists have, up till now, been thinking and toiling in their respective centuries, and in their several ways, to set it right. But this is found to be a longer and more difficult business than most of us, in our juvenile dreams, had supposed. Moreover, the good work has been too often complicated and retarded by the remedial schemes proposed being extremely partial. In some cases these schemes have had the misfortune to be based on an incorrect diagnosis of the disease, and consequently have not touched more than a very limited part of the surface to be covered by the remedy. In other cases they have been marred by the silly conceits of the world's benefactors and their disciples—the representatives of each cure praising their own as the only right one, and running down that propounded by their neighbours.

There can be little doubt that the ancient seers and reformers of the East battled with each other over their rival efforts to raise the people of *their* times, and weakened their most zealous attempts by jealousies and struggles for mere theoretic and party victory. The sectarian divisions of philosophers and theologians in India and China date back, it is impossible to say how far, and continue in bitterness up to this moment. The Jews were so vain of *their* systems of healing error and evil that they handed over even their own Samaritan kinsfolk to reprobation for the crime of following their religious convictions in preference to the creed and rubric prescribed at Jerusalem; and if we knew all, it is very probable that this arrangement of holy cursing was punctually observed on both sides.

The Greek schools of philosophy were so busy in attacking each other's ideas—the Stoics finding fault with the Epicureans and the Platonists with the Sophists—that these profound sects had neither time

nor strength left to test their different experiments in the raising of the helot population around them.

Nor does Christianity form an exception to this rule. It, too, had its enemies in the orthodox Scribes and Pharisees, as previous great schemes and efforts had their opponents; and so wrapt up were those Jewish dignitaries in their traditions and ritual that they could see no salvation outside their own pale, and would rather that the author of Christianity should perish ignominiously than that his more realistic teachings should supersede their rabbinical subtleties and ceremonial insipidities. The unhappy persecutions of the followers of Jesus by each other, too, since those times are familiar to all; so that the saying has passed into a proverb, that the greatest barrier to the extension of Christianity has been *Christians*.

But, at all events, it is painfully evident that, after all the systems for removing human evils which have been contrived or set on foot, Republics, Churches, Utopias, Arcadias, "New Moral Worlds," St Simonism, Fourierism, and the like, after all the battles of religions and philosophies that have been fought—the state of the world is still, without doubt, a great deal worse than it ought to be.

The tastes and habits of the masses of the people may not be so openly barbarous as in ages gone by, but still society is ill at ease with itself. Whether we look in the walks of commerce, the sphere of politics, the family, or the social circle, we find that the mass of the people continue under the sway of mad passion or foolish prejudice. We are over-ridden by priestcraft, social enmities, and class inequalities; capital and labour bidding each other defiance; pauperism draining the resources of the honest and the thrifty by its hungry and oppressive demands, and crushing the higher possibilities of the pauper's nature; crime, sparing neither age nor sex in the havoc it is continually making with human life and property; hard and fast

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lines, ridiculously capricious, drawn between class and class; vice, sitting without a blush in high places, and making its contagion to be felt, more or less, throughout all grades of society; ignorance, holding its carnival in the lanes and alleys of our great towns.

What is to be done with these moral and physical pestilences? No past religious, philanthropic or political system, has thus far been anything like a success in dealing with them; and the proof of this is as ironical as it is real. The countries which get the greatest credit for possessing pure religion are the homes of the darkest deeds, and after we have accomplished our fondest wishes in the adjustment of the relations between Church and State, and the reform of our Parliament, and the recognition of woman's rights, and the settlement of social and international differences by arbitration, and the universal extension of education, I fear the millennium will yet be a good way off. Are we quite sure that we have distinctly understood the ailment of the patient? If not, we need not be surprised that we should not have hit upon the adapted remedy. One thing is certain, that old theories of "sin" and "the devil" have failed to account for the disorder, and equally superannuated theories of "grace" and "supernatural regeneration" have failed to remove it, to say nothing of the doubtful benefit to the character in the case of those who profess to believe and follow such notions.

Forbid that I should disparage any earnest experiments to improve the world which history records. There is much in past leading systems of religion, philosophy, and ethics that shews them to have begun in a sincere attempt to advance the world's good, though their gradual enfeeblement and decay proves that they were only intended to bring partial and temporary relief, and to be mere foreshadowings of the true and complete remedy. Indeed, it could not be otherwise with methods planned before the idea of conformity to

natural law came to be discovered and comprehended as the one effectual and permanent cure for the world's errors and sufferings.

If I have expressed, then, in the last sentence, the only fixed and absolute condition of the deliverance of Humanity from the manifold burdens under which it groans, I show no disrespect to that form of religion which traditional Christians tell us is to cover the earth and change it into a moral and physical paradise. I am not aware that I cast any slight upon Christianity, as commonly understood, if I venture to say that, in the nature of things, it is impossible that it can ever achieve such an universal triumph. Whatever in it is *naturally* permanent will prevail, but nothing else. The best systems ever founded before the principle of *scientific induction* came to be known and applied in the investigation of law in the universe and in human history, must necessarily be limited in the time and area of their influence. If they rest on any authority short of the cultured and unsophisticated reason of Humanity, and on any authority short of universal law—whether that authority be *church*, *book*, or *man*—their power can only be temporary. They contain within themselves the elements of eventual decay *as systems*, though whatever modicum of truth may be in them will be taken up by the system which at length is destined to advance beyond and displace them.

I do not hesitate to assert that the popular habit in Europe and America of regarding Christianity as the final and absolute revelation of God's moral nature and will to man and as the sole medium of regenerating society, has no historical basis to rest upon, and is, in fact, a species of idolatry. The orthodox theory of Christianity, by centering the thought and veneration of mankind in a man, a book and a theology all belonging to a period between one and two thousand years ago (though several of the evangelical tenets are much more recent,) tends to check that free and onward development of our perceptions which was clearly the design of God in the arrangements of our being and of the

universe.\* The traditional founder of that religion, moreover, judging from what trustworthy statements the New Testament contains about him,—would be the last man to give countenance to so pernicious an idea, tending, as it does, to arrest the progress of the human mind in its pursuit of the new forms of truth that daily invite our study. At the outset of his career as a teacher and before the foolish worship of Jewish peasants brought any shadow of *ego-ism* upon his constitutionally self-forgetful nature, he seems to have breathed a truly *universal* spirit,—the spirit of a brother of all Humanity. No doubt, at first, his simple aim was to lay the foundation of man's future good in piety and charity sufficiently broad and deep to carry the world-wide moral structure he proposed to raise upon it. It must be admitted that the *real* as distinguished from the *mythical* Jesus towers above all the ancient

\* The eminent statistician, Professor Leone Levi, a short time ago delivered an address at Birmingham on the issues of the Bible, which brings out the monstrous views of the character of God held by the orthodox in a light not intended by the speaker. He said, "the Mission of the British and Foreign Bible Society was simply this—to see that every individual in the world had a copy of the Bible in his own vernacular. Consider what this meant: in this wide, wide world of ours, scattered over its continents and its islands there were 1100 million human beings. How many Bibles had been issued for them? Taking the issues of this and of all other societies, including Bibles, Testaments and portions of Scripture, there was 112,000,000, or including issues from private sources, 120,000,000. Taking one-fourth of the people and apportioning the Bible (among them) there would be one in 40. . . . Taking the number of Bibles which had been distributed as being now in existence, the number would be 8,000,000 and if it was over 10,000,000 the proportion of Bibles to people would be one in four. In France the proportion was probably one in 20; in Italy one in 30; in China one in 600, and in India one in 2000." But even granting that the supply of Bibles circulated had been at all equal to the number of adults in the world capable to read them the professor goes on to inform us that "a great hindrance to the diffusion of the Bible was the comparatively small number of readers. "Tak-

seers known to us in the clearness of his perceptions of the grand secrets of men's moral growth; viz. looking upon God as a Father and upon mankind as a brotherhood, knowing no *orthodoxy* but loyalty to conscience, and disapproving no *infidelity* but infidelity to conscience, living up to your lights and conceding credit for sincerity to all who reverently differ from you. Such a beautiful blending of unselfish truth-seeking and charity is quite enough, without any effete theory of supernaturalism, to account for the spread of Christianity in spite of the superstition, bigotry, and error with which human passions have, from the first, alloyed it. But looking at the whole question of religion in the light of modern research, it must forcibly strike us that the religion associated with the name of Jesus—very wise and good though many of its principles are—could not, by any means, ever serve the purpose of an authoritative and exhaustive exposition of religion for all Humanity and for all time. The line of

ing the number of recruits as a guide, he found that in Prussia 4 in every 100 could neither read nor write, in Belgium 14, in Great Britain 21, in France 23, in Italy 70, and in Austria 71." The gist of these remarks is that to meet the religious wants of 1,100,000,000 human beings there have only been sent forth 120,000,000 *portions* of the Bible or 8,000,000 *entire* copies of it. So that, at most, only a little over 100,000,000 have it in their power to possess individually a copy of even a portion of the Bible while there are still little short of 1,000,000,000 or nearly ten-elevenths of the inhabitants of the world left without *even the smallest portion of the book*. Yet, according to the popular faith, that volume is the sole revelation of truth and duty to the world, and he who dies ignorant of Jesus as the atoning sacrifice for "original" and "actual" sin must be eternally roasted or annihilated. That is to say, for not doing what it is totally impossible for them to do, ten-elevenths of the inhabitants of the world are doomed to the most frightful destruction. The case is aggravated when we take into account the unhappy fact that many who happen to possess the Bible are denied ability to read it, in general from no fault of their own, but only from the destitution or the neglect of their parents. Almost any deity in the pantheon of ancient paganism is a fitter object of worship than a god so grossly immoral as the God of Evangelicism.

religious thought marked out in the New Testament, as far as it is true, forms but an arc in the circle of universal moral truth. Jesus probably spoke and lived the highest and most comprehensive moral truth possible to his times and the one most needed by the world at that stage of its culture. He enunciated the eternal and unchangeable principles of morality and religion with unsurpassed fervour and wisdom. But voices were to speak whose time had not come yet. Humanity was not then prepared to understand them. Laws of the universe were yet to be revealed, but their revelation to the prophets and teachers of the future was to be brought about by slow and gradual preparation. Not even the highest and truest seer of those dimmer times was permitted to anticipate, in detail, the further unfolding of the mysteries of God and of the universe which would be needed, and made *when* needed, at a distant day.

The moral experiments that have been tried in the past, therefore,—not excepting organized Christianity, have been too local, too partial, too much mixed up with party interests, and too unscientific to meet the whole length and breadth of the world's present and future wants. It is according to analogy that the woes of men and the cure alike, should not come to be known and realized all at once. The training of the world and of the child are substantially similar. In both instances the process is necessarily very gradual.

The individual cannot at first travel in thought beyond the parental hearth. His parents, in general, are to him all the providence he knows and all that as a child he can be expected to know. His sense of obedience is directed, in the first instance, only by the parental approval or displeasure. At length he gets to know his relation to those beyond the dwelling, and connected with him by family ties. His next social experience probably concerns the religious body to which his parents belong. He comes to think, as most do, who yield for a while to the teaching of traditional



beliefs—that the only effectual method of setting the world right is the *theological* method. But if he have anything like a progressive mind, he will rise, in time, above and beyond these primal relationships and ideas. He will take in by and by, his position and duties as a citizen, and afterwards his connection with the whole family of Humanity. As he advances from twilight to day-light he will become firmly established,—as his ancestors had not so favourable an opportunity of being before him, in the immovable conviction that the revelation of God and the well-being of man physically, morally, intellectually and religiously, turn on knowing and keeping of the laws of the universe. But this last experience, if it come at all,—comes only in its fulness, in riper years.

So it is with the race : there is first the tribe ; and in barbarous times people used to think all other tribes the natural enemies of their own. They carried the same prejudice into their religion. Everybody else's religion was held to be dangerous and heretical, and scheming politicians and unscientific traditional systems have united in strengthening this social and religious exclusiveness more or less up to the present time. These primitive circumstances however are the first "tutors and governors" of Humanity. But "when the fulness of the time has come" all narrow dogmas and enslaving creeds and alleged infallible authorities and sectarian boundaries will perish. It will then be found that religion, in its broad and absolute form, is but remotely connected with theologies and churches, and that, in its greatest purity, truth, and power, it can be cultivated outside these institutions. And this Emancipation of the human mind will not consist, as many timid persons fear it may, in Humanity merely passing from superstitions to *negations*. Humanity will rather be emancipated by passing out of useless speculations about what cannot be proved into positive faith in those great verities and phenomena of the universe which have the

clearest and closest bearing upon our every-day life. The transition will be from the experience of the vague and the partial to that of the plain and the universal. Just as the worship of *things* gave way among the Hebrews to the higher development of *Jehovah worship*, and as Mosaism was succeeded by Christianity, which latter form of religion professes to be less occupied with details and more with principles than the faith which immediately preceded it: so, existing systems and sects which at present claim to have their roots in the religion of Jesus, must, sooner or later, succumb to a religion grounded solely upon a devout recognition of the known laws of the universe, taken as a whole. The operation of these laws will be deemed by the disciples of this highest, truest, most absolute, and most practical faith, the one, all-sufficient and ever-expanding revelation of truth and duty,—equally accessible and adapted to men of all countries and times. Compliance with these laws will then be viewed as the one sure antidote to human evil of every kind.

When this religion becomes universal,—as it certainly will do,—the world will be able to dispense with ecclesiastical and theological props, with the authority of tradition, with theories of supernatural interference and with formulated doctrines, expedient,—perhaps in some measure necessary, as these things may have been up to a certain point in the training of Humanity. The new development of Religion will recognise all feelings, thoughts, acts, and experiences tending in any way to our individual elevation and culture, and to the general good of mankind.

The race will have done with slavish devotion to any one set of commandments, be they *ten* or *ten thousand*, and to any one written book,—however interesting and inspiring to us, religiously, that book may be. For only thus can we rise from letter to spirit, from printed ideas in one volume—ministering to one part of our nature—to all thought-prompting and heart-stirring books, which

gleam upon us like the light hues shining through parti-coloured window panes—all fitted to delight, refine and develop, in due proportion, our whole nature.—We shall cease to show deference too exclusively to one teacher, richly endowed though he may be with prophetic gifts. We shall ever accept his teaching thankfully, as far as it goes; but our nature is many-sided, and every part claims alike to be trained. So in the future to which I refer, men will everywhere lay themselves open to the influences of *all* true teachers who can contribute, in any wise, to the unfolding of their *whole* nature in its nobler individualism, and who can strengthen their relations to the world in charity, harmony and peace. An universal religion now dawning, but not, as yet, generally received—not new, but already in its essence, underlying all the splintered forms which the religions of the nations have assumed, will rise upon the ruins of all existing and conflicting faiths, whether they be based on tradition or sentiment. Orthodox churches must die, for they are erected on this latter sandy foundation. Even churches of more liberal tendencies, unless resolved to place themselves in accord with the prophets who stand on the heights of true scientific thought, and who are “ringing in the Christ that is to be,” unless, moreover, they are ready to follow the true spirit of the age which beckons us forward, they cannot last. Every religious institution that is accustomed to view religion chiefly from dogmatic stand-points, and to rest in the perpetuation of theological shibboleths and antiquated forms and phrases is already an anachronism.

The church of the future will insist on truth being looked at, not in relation to barren controversies ecclesiastical or dogmatic, but simply in relation to God, Humanity and natural law. It will teach that “the root of the matter” can only be reached by the devout knowledge and application of the laws of the universe, as far as they can be known and applied. It will urge upon individuals and communities to consider how far

they have fallen short of those laws and to help each other on in the path of intelligent and rational obedience to them, as the "one sure and certain hope" for the race.

Up till lately most religious sects have suspected science as the natural foe of religion. THE CHURCH OF HUMANITY to be founded solely on the reverent acknowledgment of universal law, will welcome the discoveries of science in every department as its chief means of knowing what the will of God is, and how that will is to be obeyed. The priestly distinction between *secular* and *sacred*, with all the childish folly which that distinction has wrought, will then cease. Everything whatsoever which aids in making up a rich and full mind and character—whether it pertain to health, pleasure, art, literature, morals, philosophy or devotion, will then be held to be equally religious. Worship will not then consist simply or mainly in frequenting churches, and in offering up prayers and praise,—exercises which however, I admit, are honestly valued by a certain class now, as helps to a good life. But the pure and loving heart, the cultured mind, the tender conscience, the enlightened and happy family, the unselfish friendly circle, will then everywhere be acknowledged as the true consecrated altar, and *that* devotion will be respected as the very highest expression of religion, which consists of a brave, kind, and noble life. Our fellowship will then be based, not so much on connection with some theological sect as on *natural humanitarian sympathy and enterprise*. The ministers of the coming church will not be men trained chiefly in theories of theology and church government and in whom, as at present, the leading qualification for their work is the predominance of the devotional element. Religion will then be felt to include every development of law affecting individual and social interests, and so the teachings of that church, will have a correspondingly wide range. Each assembly of kindred minds will have a plurality of ministers, though they will need no sacerdotal or professional

badge to distinguish them, and these ministers will number among them all the strongest spirits of the community who have high truths to tell of whatsoever kind, and are able to teach them. These ministers will include cultivated and earnest men and women of all occupations and of no occupation. Their themes will embrace the laws of health, the laws of mind, the laws of conduct, the laws of sociology, the laws that govern every department of material and spiritual life, and they will be listened to with equal interest upon all these subjects. In that happy day "the mountain of the Lord's House" shall indeed "be established on the top of the mountains and all nations shall flow into it."

Now let us see how this notion of religion as the recognition of and compliance with *law* will *work* in effecting the improvement which the partial systems of philosophy, philanthropy, and theology have, as yet, failed adequately to accomplish.

Man's being and character are made up of two factors:—first, the natural constitution inherited from those who gave him birth; and, secondly, the educating conditions in which he has been trained and in which he lives. Now, there is no religion at present, that I am acquainted with, which lays it down definitely as an offence against Law or against God, for two persons to be united by conjugal ties whose offspring are certain to be tainted with hereditary blemishes, physical or moral, through that union. It is seldom that this is made a religious question at all. Few magistrates or clergymen would be prepared to take the legal consequences of refusing to be a party to the union of such a pair, rather than be instrumental in introducing bodily suffering, mental defect, or moral obliquity into the world. I have met with but few members of popular religious bodies who seriously look at violation of law in this respect as having anything to do with religion. But if the world is to be radically reformed we *must* begin

here, and get rid of that morbid squeamishness which evades so solemn and urgent a consideration. Mr Herbert Spencer powerfully reminds us in one of his remarkable essays that, in the rearing of animals for the race, the hunt, or the market, the necessity of regard to the law of their breeding is felt to be vitally important. But when the propagation of human beings, with "sound minds in sound bodies," is at issue, this matter is usually left to the control of chance or caprice, the impulse of passion, or the motive of social aggrandisement. To make the most sacred earthly alliance subservient to the mere demands of the lower nature, or to the ridiculous demands of the deity of fashion, is to desecrate an institution which was expressly ordained to be the mightiest lever in the elevation of the race, and to evince, moreover, a state of mind grossly irreligious. But the natural penalties which persistently and without exception track this most "respectable" sort of folly, ignorance, and transgression, prove unmistakably that "higher law" has been outraged by such acts.

Mr Huxley's well-known essay on "The Physical Basis of Life" has in it, I think, the elements of the psychology of the future; and the tendency of the greatest philosophic minds, at present, is in the direction of believing that the cast of one's thoughts, tastes, and habits depends even more, if possible, upon our born physical organisation than upon the moulding agencies by which our daily life afterwards may be surrounded. In fact, education is but a *leading out* of what powers may be in the brain, and not so much the altering of its original structure; and I believe the day will come when married combinations, physically and morally unequal, will be pronounced to be wrong as emphatically on *religious* grounds as they now are on *scientific* grounds, because, then science will be revered as one of the mainsprings of religious emotion and action. As the knowledge of the secrets of nature

gets more spread abroad, an increasingly deterrent influence will be exerted upon all who may seek to enter the family relation from sensual or sordid motives. If, in short, the scientific conditions of begetting a progeny, vigorous in mind and body, be not thoughtfully recognised as the basis of our operations in the general improvement of mankind, the best choice of schools, books, companionships, and principles for children afterwards, will be almost labour lost. "How is it possible," some may object, "to secure spontaneity and depth in the loves of the sexes by such an arrangement?" My reply is not difficult. Does not the reason, at present, usually come somewhat into play, to determine, first, *when* and *where* love is to be encouraged, in what are deemed "prudent marriages?" Men and women already, for the most part, let considerations of suitability go before and direct matrimonial selections, *in respect of station and culture*, at least, in the middle and upper classes; and when scientific intelligence on this subject is more widely diffused, the reason will command and shape the outgoing of the affections so as to secure right physical and moral conditions in the domestic partners sought for.

There is a fine touch in the gospel parable of the sower, which I do not happen to have seen noticed anywhere, bearing on the vital importance of natural susceptibilities. The writer distinctly lays it down there that Jesus trusted more to the *innately* candid, self-forgetful, truth-loving disposition than to any outward and applied scheme of regeneration in producing that disposition. In that parable he accounts for the inoperativeness of his teaching in certain classes of persons, and in every such case traces the cause of spiritual insensibility to the particular constitutional tendencies of the recipient, and, at the same time, shows the happy affinity that there is between the universal moral truth he strove to teach and "the good and honest heart," the truly gentlemanly

nature.\* Like all other great and good qualities in Humanity, this one, if it exist at all, must be born with us. It may be feebly simulated, but can never be acquired by any evangelical or other process. In this respect it is just on a footing with intellectual qualities. The man of bright parts cannot help being clever; the man of obtuse faculties can never rise above dullness. No more can he of high moral qualities, if justice be done to his training, be other than right-hearted. To bring into being, then, a generation that shall rise above their ancestors in all the higher attributes of manhood and womanhood, we must become more religious—wider in our conceptions of what religion is in its relation to natural law, and more devoutly alive to the necessity of loyalty to natural law in relation to parentage as an indispensable condition of human improvement.

But when we have achieved this essential preliminary to the world's advancement, there is still a great deal to be done before we get civilised communities—to say nothing of barbarians—to lay to heart religiously their duty as to the education and training of their children. Before popular organized religion be good for much, it must cease the mystical business of arraying itself in ceremonial vestments and lifting up a whining voice, and dealing in super-mundane phraseology and ghostly manipulations, and giving itself to vague unrealities; it must have done with its weird way of holding itself aloof from the practical world, as if its sorcery-mongering were a higher sort of exercise than

\* It is not uninteresting to observe that the phrase, *καλη και αγαθη*, which occurs in the parable (Luke viii. 15), to describe the approved state of heart, is the very one used by Plato, with only a difference of gender, to describe a *gentleman*, and the writer of the parable probably intended to convey the idea that only the disposition which was *naturally* ingenuous could ever have the courage, honesty, and readiness to receive truth for its own sake, independently of the name and position of the teacher and of the consequences to the recipient.



“waiting upon the oracles of nature,” and serving God by solemnly keeping nature’s laws. Most earnest men, who put a right value upon the scientific method of viewing the universe and of doing duty, are fast getting to look upon much that goes on in churches and chapels as a fanatical perversion of true religion. Before popular organized religion be good for much, it must not confine its attention so exclusively to teaching the young, Sunday after Sunday, what happened to the old Hebrews, and the alleged incidents in the life of Jesus or of Paul, and the contents of some gospel or epistle, proper as these things are to be known in their place, though forming a very small part of the infinite circle of truth; it must take the form of bringing up the rising race, in every respect, in harmony with the eternal laws of their being and development. The first thing religiously demanded of us is, that the child have secured to him, as far as possible, thorough vigour of brain and muscle and proportionateness of form, as the groundwork of all future culture. He should next be trained to the habit of accurately observing the ordinary objects that meet his eye in the nursery and in his daily walks. He should be brought in contact with refining influences in the scenery, the sounds, the pictures, and the persons around him; and when the Government and the nation become religiously impressed with a sense of duty in the education and development of the children of the State—which they are far from being at present—the lot of no citizen will be incompatible with those conditions. Not only should the imagination be early filled with visions of varied beauty, but the memory—which is so largely drawn upon for the *data* of reasoning in after life—should be systematically stored with well-sifted facts, and where fictions are admitted they should be distinctly labelled as such, whether they be found in the Bible or any other book. When he has learned the leading realities of the universe and the outlines of human history, he should be trained to the right use of

his reason, and taught to put on one side what cannot be proved by evidence, whether it relate to science or morals, and to cleave through good and through evil report only to what has forced itself upon him as matter of conviction. While made to feel that he must conform to reason and law in using his senses and his appetites, and to be severely exact in all details pertaining to the exercise of the intellect, he will have to be taught to remember that both physical and intellectual powers are intended to be subject to the control of the moral. The discipline of the conscience is seldom conducted with that specific discrimination to which it is entitled. When we consider the subtle influences by which it is prone to be warped—some of these arising from the excessive and dominant activity of certain other parts of the nature, and others arising from outward circumstances unfavourable to clear moral ideas and the self-denying performance of duty; when we consider that the prevailing tone of society is against our feeling with scrupulous delicacy on moral questions, and that there is no sphere of work or pleasure free from temptations to our tampering with the moral faculty, surely the education of it, on philosophical principles, ought to receive more anxious attention than it usually does. Otherwise, the law of proportion, which is the test of correct human development, will be disturbed and the design of existence frustrated.

The culture of the child's emotions should next engage thought and effort that they may always be controlled by sober, well-considered conclusions of the judgment, and that they may be kept from running to the equally dangerous extremes of stoicism and fanaticism.

Strict regard to the law of our mental structure and progress also requires that we give just and proper scope to the exercise of the child's social affections, never allowing him to shrink from the sight of pain, squalor, or poverty in others, but making contact with such

experience the occasion of stimulating and guiding those sympathetic human feelings that cannot be held back from their appropriate objects without marring the symmetry of our nature. A lively connection should also be established in our little ones between the decisions of the judgment and the will, the appointed vehicle for carrying out the behests of all the other powers. In brief, if, in the process of training, we fail to treat the child's nature as a sacred whole; if we fail to remember that we cannot slight or mismanage one faculty without more or less weakening and lowering all, we violate the laws inscribed upon our constitution, and act irreligiously.

Are these views of religion prominently set forth in the teachings of the pulpit? Do they mainly influence church-going populations? So far from this being the case, I fear that any painstaking effort to adapt the training of youth to the repression of innate weaknesses, and to the bringing out of the nobler parts of the organization in a strong and well-balanced life is rarely felt by the orthodox to have much to do with religion. There is a sad lack of system and principle in the choice of the things taught, and in the proportion in which they are generally taught. Parental ambition is often satisfied, even in evangelical circles, with acquirements in children that simply serve the purposes of expediency or display; and no wonder, for the orthodox faith implies—if it does not positively teach—that the great business of life is to have the soul insured against risk of eternal torture or annihilation through faith in “the sufferings of God the Son,” and this end gained, the symmetrical discipline of the whole nature is deemed a thing of secondary moment. Once the soul is “saved” religion comes to be very much a matter of decently *waiting* till death remove us beyond the reach of suffering. Hence, often the remarkable exhibitions in religionists of this class, of narrowness, meanness, pride, and covetousness, side by side with an enthusiastic en-

joyment of unctuous evangelical services. Where they can gratify their love of "pomps and vanities," this passion does not, as a rule, grow less for all their stickling about "salvation through the cross," and "living by faith."

There is no more melancholy spectacle than the ignorance of an *average* middle-class English girl of nineteen or twenty, in many a so-called religious family, after her education is supposed to be over. The vacuity of her mind, as regards the knowledge and management of her physical, intellectual, and moral being is appalling. As far as any thoughtful preparation for domestic or other responsibilities is concerned, the subject rarely suggests itself to her. As for boys, in the same station, they are not unfrequently fitted out only with the particular education that bears on the professional or commercial career chosen for them, and are sometimes allowed to stumble into positions in life for which they prove quite unsuited. If the parents have risen in wealth and social standing, it sometimes happens that they look down upon the honest toil by which they have been raised, and their children follow in their wake of contempt for their own origin; so the parents resolve, (carried away by the witchery of feudal illusions, and irrespective of fitness in their sons,) that one of the lads shall enter the profession of law, and another the profession of war, and another the profession of the church, and thus many hopeful minds getting misplaced, are blighted in the spring-time of their days, and fall a wretched sacrifice to parental ambition. And this profane disregard of reason and divine law is carried on to the detriment of humanity by many who believe themselves to be the "regenerate" favourites of heaven.\*

\* I am optimist enough to believe that every moral absurdity in mankind carries with it its own remedy, and the presage of its own ultimate removal. The marvellous far-reaching and wealth-producing influence of commerce is still a comparative

But if these things be done in the green tree of well-to-do society, how shall we estimate the sad and unconscious outrage upon physical, intellectual, and moral law which takes effect in the dry tree of poverty, where the struggle for a bare existence is so hard, that many great powers are suffered to rot in neglect, and minds naturally inclined to good are mixed up in the same polluting society with minds naturally inclined to evil, in undistinguishable confusion.

But the religion of the future will be brought to bear throughout the State in discovering, under enlightened governmental supervision, the distinctive natural tendencies of the children of the state, that they may all be educated, and especially that their education may be rightly directed in the unfolding of their nobler individuality, and that they may be led in that path in which their abilities will be most beneficial to the world. The economic law will be reverently acknowledged, that every human faculty has its corresponding sphere amid the activities of the universe, and that it clashes with the designs of being for any community to permit the powers of any of its members to be misdirected or to run to waste.

When this law of social economy—the principle of the utilization of all human powers, great and small—comes to be respected by nations as an integral part of religion, it will be embodied in the statutes of every realm; the right situation will be found for every citizen, and all will be qualified by training to do the work for which

novelty in the western world. The rise of commerce and manufactures has inflicted a blow that will eventually prove fatal to feudal rank and has already reduced to a *minimum* the influence of pedigree and title. Aristocratic birth will now-a-days do little for a man who is without brains and industry. So the advance of general education among the people will, in time, make "British Philistinism,"—our rougher money-ocracy,—ashamed of their "fantastic tricks" in aping a style of things which is untrue to their associations and their nature.

they are naturally fitted in the very best way. Every man will be compelled to contribute his quota of labour to the common weal and will be adequately supported and honoured in whatever position he may be called to fill. Of course a sense of public duty will guarantee to all the poor and the sick whom misfortune prevents from adequately providing for their own wants, a liberal supply of what they may need. Then, but not till then, will science, art, literature, and religion truly flourish, for the division and faithful consecration of labour will ensure unceasing and intelligent industry everywhere. Idleness will be put to shame by law, and by the force of public opinion expressed through law, and with the disappearance of idleness, want will be comparatively rare. Sensuality, intemperance, and crime will no longer be dealt with by the unphilosophical and barbarous arrangements of the prison and the gibbet. We are largely indebted for the long continuance of these absurd forms of punishment among the Bible-reading communities of the west, to the stern Oriental Criminal Codes which characterize the Old and, in part, the New Testament. The enthralling doctrine that the Bible was sent as an infallible and a miraculous authority, has greatly tended to perpetuate this foolish and useless penal severity and keep us from looking into the subject rationally. But signs are not wanting, that reason will soon assert her rightful authority in the adjustment of these questions. All natures *disposed* to vice or crime will by and by be treated medically. Any man or woman in that good time coming, who lives at variance with the laws of nature and of intelligent society—who, for instance, feels an impulse to take the life or the property of another, will be looked upon as in some way the subject of cerebral derangement or defective education, and dealt with as one insane or ignorant, and requiring to be placed under the control of doctors and teachers.

In the world-embracing religion, to the advent of which we look forward, the application of law to mental and moral affinities will also be better known and more fully acted on. The accident of birth, fortune, or social status, will no longer determine, as now it does, the range within which friendships may be formed. When a high education becomes universal and braces and refines all the powers of the mind in every section of society, the dignity of all honourable and useful labour will be duly respected. The degree of a man's intellectual and moral force may then—though not now—be safely judged by the work to which he is chosen; for the right man will always, under the universal reign of law, fill the right place; but the intelligence of all will be so broad, their feelings so pure, their hearts so generous, and their characters so correct, as to make them companionable to each other, let their outward circumstances be what they may. The wise will walk with the wise, and the good with the good, irrespective of the accidents of birth and wealth.

The laws of mind and of morals too, will then coincide with the laws of the state, and proved vices of the mind such as selfishness, dishonesty, envy, ingratitude\* and conceit will be dealt with by the enlightened authorities of that day with full public consent, as prejudicial to the whole nature of the individual and, in so far, as dangerous to the interests of the entire body politic.

Religion will also take the form of conformity to political justice, and every measure brought before Parliament will be decided upon its merits; not as now according to the effect it will have, if passed, upon the fate of a political party. It is needless to say that, at

\* The reader will remember the fact recorded by Xenophon, that the ancient Persians had so advanced an idea of morals that they punished ingratitude as a crime.

present, this self-evident principle of justice has not as yet found a place in "the rules of the house" or in the jurisprudence of the country. Our legislators, for the most part, do not even pretend that abstract justice and eternal right are practicable in statesmanship, and the man who would be so bold as to enforce these principles upon "honourable members" would be at once put down as a fool or a bore. We are very scrupulous about keeping up an Established Church "as a solemn public acknowledgment of God by the nation." But we have high authority for believing that it is one thing to have the popular religion which cries "Lord, Lord" in hymns and prayers, and quite another to observe that higher religion which consists in "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly."\* The time is coming, however, when official and diplomatic expediencies will no longer usurp the throne of conscience and right. The "golden rule" will be held to be as necessary, as a test of religion in reference to politics, as the law of gravitation is necessary as a fact in astronomy. Prejudice, passion and class-interests will then be felt to be so flagrantly opposed to the laws of reason and of social progress that these qualities will effectually disqualify any candidate for the responsibilities and honours of parliamentary life.

What are all the painful eruptions on the surface of our society but beneficent signs and faithful warnings that social laws whose observance is necessary for our social health, have been broken? The workhouse, the prison, the lunatic asylum, the criminal *nisi prius* and divorce courts, the daily "inhumanity of man to man," ay and to woman, too, the strife going on between employers and employed, in all these troubles God is standing like

\* "A man may cry 'church' 'church' at every word  
With no more piety than other people  
A daw's not reckoned a religious bird,  
Because he keeps caw-cawing from the steeple."

*Hood.*



the fabled angel with the uplifted sword in the path of the disobedient prophet, to stop us in the career of ignorance and wrong-doing, and to urge us in the path of obedience to natural law. Just as discoveries in the laws of physical healing have sometimes been suggested to great minds by the sudden and untimely death of thousands from a virulent plague, and as our forefathers sanctioned the burning of witches before their eyes came to be opened, (through the very enormity of the folly they were thus superstitiously committing,) to the delusion of demoniacal possessions and the appreciation of the uniformity of universal law, so it is through the experience of present religious, social and political anarchy that we are destined to come to a clear understanding of the eternal laws designed to govern religious, domestic, social and political life. When these laws are intelligently apprehended by the whole people, our religion will simply be measured by the extent to which they are earnestly complied with. The family will then be a scene of unbroken joy and peace, the master will feel it to be to his interest to be just and liberal to his workmen; the workmen, not, as at present, in many cases, the creatures of impulse and caprice, will find an intense satisfaction in devoting their best energies to the work for which their faculties specially fit them, the rich and the strong will cheerfully render aid and sympathy to the deserving who are poor and weak, and not as now to bestowing their attentions mostly upon those who least require their help.

There is a touching legend related of Jesus, when he is said to have risen from the dead and met two of his disciples on the way to Emmaus. It is written that their eyes were holden so that they did not know him. In like manner the moral vision of the world is "holden" that it does not usually discern wisdom in the first instance, unless it strives and cries and lifts up its voice in the streets, is accompanied by *prestige* and

"arrayed in fine linen and fares sumptuously." If a prince or a millionaire happen to have the merest grain of sense or kindness, though it be mingled with childish frivolity, the toadies of the earth would fain exalt him to the dignity of a philosopher or a saint. But if a humble John the Baptist, a witness for truth, freedom and justice, living on rough fare and clad in homely attire, seek a hearing, he is ruthlessly *poo-h-pooed* as a crazy intruder. It will be clearly seen, one day, that the gifts of insight into the higher laws of thought and life and heroic resistance to oppression and wrong are vastly more precious than mines of wealth. Noise, audacity, diplomacy, show, and monopoly, will then have died out, and enlightened goodness and truth, forgotten amid ages of neglect, will be called to the leadership of the world. Mankind will then be *civilized*; and to that term I for one attach a very definite meaning. Civilization means something more than railways and telegraphs, conveniences and luxuries. It is the art of putting a right estimate upon things, and the countries which have not acquired that art have no right to be called civilized. The African is not civilized while he parts with lapfuls of ivory, and gold, and rivers of palm oil for glass beads and iron pots. The Englishman is not civilized while he places more value on a large income, a costly establishment and a popular faith, than upon scientific spiritual insight, the honest investigation and profession of truth, and an unselfish life. Our country is only civilized and religious in proportion as its citizens come to know and reverence law in its universality and uniformity.

It is the habit of paid teachers of Christianity to credit that form of organized religion with all the higher civilization of the world. We only know Christianity, so called, as it is embodied in creeds and churches, and it is simply a fact that so far from this boast having any foundation, popular churches and creeds, have invariably denounced, as pernicious or

profane in one age, discoveries in science and criticism, which the inexorable logic of events has compelled them to approve in the next. Science and criticism have always, in the first instance, had to encounter clerical opposition. The most superficial study of history irresistibly leads to the conclusion that at least during the last three centuries, however, science and criticism looked down upon, though they have been by priests and their disciples as only "carnal" or "secular" have greatly modified theological and ecclesiastical principles, while the influence of churches upon science and criticism has only been to alienate more and more the intellect and learning of the world from orthodoxy and its creeds as gigantic unrealities and persistent hindrances to human progress.

Is it not the case that the human mind has become strong and clear, and that even the cause of morality has thriven just in proportion as the laws of nature have been found out, studied and followed in relation to the government of the world? Had we only been allowed the fare which orthodox churches would have provided for us, had the ecclesiastical spirit proved stronger than the scientific and sceptical one, our minds would simply have been embittered by angry theological controversies and warped by the bondage of papal dogmas or protestant bibliolatries. But science has sped its fearless course towards light and truth in spite of the thunders of the vatican and the anathemas of Geneva, and its beneficent mission will continue till it has swept from the world the last vestige of superstition, bigotry, ignorance and suffering.

