

**MODERN  
MORALITY  
AND  
MODERN  
TOLERATION**

BY  
**E. S. P. HAYNES**  
Author of "Religious Persecution," etc.

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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

MODERN MORALITY AND  
MODERN TOLERATION

BY

E. S. P. HAYNES

*Author of "Religious Persecution," etc.*

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1912

Dedicated

WITH AFFECTIONATE REGARD

TO

MRS. THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY

## INTRODUCTION

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THE two essays here published are, so to speak, pendants to my book on *Religious Persecution*, which was published when I was only twenty-seven years of age. The subject might well occupy a lifetime, and it is scarcely surprising that I should continue to meditate upon it in such moments of leisure as I enjoy. The first essay was read to ten male undergraduates at Oxford, and to about fifty male and female undergraduates at Cambridge. Both audiences belonged to the flourishing society of "Heretics." It is, perhaps, not odd that Oxford should still continue her tradition of discouraging heretics until they are senile or dead, but one very trenchant Oxford critic helped me to define and distinguish points which I had not sufficiently elaborated. At Cambridge I was told that the example of Jesus Christ's life was a potent force in contemporary morality; and I could only reply that the example of men and women whom we have actually known and admired in youth, and even in later life, ought to be equally potent. Personally, I should consider it more potent; but it is impossible to see quite inside the minds of others.

As each year passes it seems to me more and more impossible to take any abstract system of thought seriously unless it intimately affects the practical problems of everyday life; and I have known many excellent Freethinkers in the older generation who made a point of attending church because they thought that the decline of churchgoing would entail a moral cataclysm. If such admirable people as these can be induced to think otherwise, our Association will prosper even more than it has done hitherto.

I have to thank my friend Mr. Belloc for kindly allowing me to reprint my second essay from the columns of the *Eye-Witness*. It is at least consoling to reflect that we shall never relapse into complete "quietism" while Mr. Belloc lives; and the cordial admission of a Rationalist to the columns of his brilliant review shows that militant Catholicism is by no means incompatible with certain qualities of intellectual curiosity and comprehensive vision which Rationalists would always desire to see associated with their own cause.

I have used the personal pronoun without regard to the snobbish and vulgar prejudice against it. The fear of this prejudice often forces some writers into ponderous periphrases which no less often suggest that the writer's personal opinions are those of an influential majority. It is at once humbler and more courageous to avoid pretending that individual opinions have more than an individual value; and, in the matter of style, Cardinal Newman's example is good enough for me.

E. S. P. H.

*St. John's Wood.*  
*January, 1912.*

I.

## THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION AND MODERN MORALITY

AMONG Agnostics of the nineteenth century, and to some extent to-day, it was, and is, largely held that the disappearance of Christian, or even theistic, belief involves not only no relaxation, but also no change, of ethical sanctions or conduct. The latter view is, to my mind, a perilous fallacy. Clearly, the Agnostic sanctions must be different; and if this be true, it follows that conduct will also be different. Unless our society is prepared to face this fact, and also to impart to the rising generation some solid principles of ethical training, it must, as Goldwin Smith long ago predicted, be prepared to face a "very bad quarter of an hour."

In a book which I wrote some years ago on Religious Persecution I distinguished what I call "civic morality" from what I call "individual morality." I defined "civic morality" as that part of conduct which relates to other citizens, and is regulated by the appointment of State penalties for the enforcement of it. I defined "individual morality" as conduct which is only regulated by social, not legal, agencies, and is therefore more spontaneous. Broadly speaking, civic morality depends less on sentiment than on utilitarian common sense, though, of course, legislation is adapted to changing views of individual morality. Civic morality is, therefore, so much the less likely to be moulded by religious emotions or sanctions, except where the State is theocratic, as in the case of medieval Europe or modern Islam.

Let us now analyse the Christian or theistic conception of morality. Christian morality is essentially a matter of duty towards God and a Creator. God is assumed by the Catholic Church and many other Christian bodies to forbid, among other things, suicide, divorce, limitation of the family, or the sacrifice of the infant's life to the mother's life in childbirth without any saving clause whatsoever. The use of anæsthetics and cremation is still viewed with suspicion even where allowed. God is understood to have made certain definite arrangements for the life of each human being and the propagation of the species, which must on no account be interfered with. Imbued with some such belief, the early Christians declined to shave their beards, as they would not blasphemously attempt to improve upon the handiwork of their Creator.

Moreover, the Church declares that Socialism is sinful. To quote an excellent pamphlet of Ernest R. Hull, S.J.: "The right of private property is a divine ordinance.....the state of probation does not suppose equality in the present lot of men.....There is to come a final reckoning day in which all inequalities will be levelled up and compensated for."<sup>1</sup> Men, therefore, must not try to improve upon the social structure set up by their Creator as exemplified in the Christian world.

A different set of considerations emerges in regard to the nature of the ethical sanction. Morality, according to the theologian, is primarily concerned with God, who rewards and punishes men exclusively in relation to their obedience or disobedience to his commands. An old man, alone in the world, without ties or obligations, may prefer euthanasia to a slow and painful death by cancer. This man is (theologically) quite as inexcusable in the eyes of God as the man who by his suicide leaves a wife and family to starve. God has ordered all men to

<sup>1</sup> *Why Should I be Moral?* p. 95. (Sands & Co.)



live until the unavoidable moment of death. God has also commanded all men and women to increase and multiply, subject to the conditions laid down by the Church. The Catholic Church has always told the wife to comply with the husband's demands for conjugal rights in case he should be tempted to offend God by committing adultery. Consequently, many a man has forced his wife to have children every year till she died. He has then married another wife and continued the same course of conduct till the second wife died, and so forth. This is a perfectly true picture, not only of medieval Christendom, but also of Victorian England.

"Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die" sums up the situation. "Reasoning why" may frequently lead to eternal damnation.

Starting with these ideas of duty to God, religious thinkers quite logically proceed to indicate certain changes in modern morality as the direct result of religious unbelief, such as, for example, a greater tolerance of suicide, divorce, and limitation of the family, as well as a tendency to try and improve human society from a purely terrestrial point of view. I cordially agree with them, and am sorry to see so many Agnostics attempting to deny the fact. I cannot see the use of attacking the Christian religion except with a view to substituting a rational morality for Christian or theistic morality. Theologians can no longer interfere with modern science, but they can and do still block the progress of modern morality.

The theologians defend their position by suggesting that even on utilitarian grounds modern morality is dangerous. "Once admit euthanasia," they argue, "and suicide will become epidemic. Once admit divorce, and society will become promiscuous." Again I cordially agree with them. All moral changes are, in the last degree, perilous, unless men know clearly what they want and define clearly the sanctions on which they rely. It is, therefore, all the more important not to

continue pretending that Christian morality is independent of the Christian religion.

It would be idle to deny that Christian morality connotes a great deal of morality that is common to all human societies, and it is of course largely based on the Stoic and humanitarian ideas which filled the atmosphere in which Christianity was born. That is why it is so necessary to determine exactly how much of our morality to-day is traceable to distinctly Christian influences. I have tried up to now to define the Christian basis of morality; but it is equally incumbent on me to try and indicate what I consider to be the basis of modern, as distinct from Christian, morality. A friend of mine once remarked that society was only respectable because we did not all want to commit the seven deadly sins at one and the same moment. The reason why we do not want to commit them is because we are for the most part the slaves of moral habits inculcated in early youth. Our moral habits and faculties have been hammered into us by a long process of evolution. I cannot do better than quote again a passage from Father Hull's dialogue, in which he is putting certain arguments for the Agnostic view into the mouth of one of the many speakers whom he subsequently refutes:—

We have no evidence to show how ethical ideas first came into the human mind—whether they formed part of it from the very first origin of the race, or were gradually evolved as time went on. It is notorious that the "moral sense" flourishes best in a moral environment—that is to say, in a circle where both public and private opinion stand on the side of morality, and the supremacy of the moral code is accepted by all without question, and taught to and enforced on the young from their very birth. Among the savage races and the criminal classes it hardly appears at all;<sup>1</sup> and experiments seem to show that children separated from all moral influence from birth grow up apparently quite destitute of the ethical sense, and show little or no capacity for imbibing it later on. May it not therefore

<sup>1</sup> This is clearly untrue of savage races. See Dr. Westermarck's works *passim*.

be that evolution is right in explaining that the whole cluster of moral ideas is the outcome of a gradual process of development, which, starting from practical experience and the clash of interests, gradually gave rise to social conventions and tribal laws, thus creating a habit of thinking in a groove which in course of time became a sort of a second nature, indistinguishable from nature itself? My contention in this case would be that the ideas of right and wrong and the categorical form of the dictate of conscience are indeed facts of consciousness; not, however, pertaining to our nature as such, but artificially induced by the habit of generations—by perpetually drumming into the minds of the young, as absolute truths, the ideals which are already stereotyped in the minds of the old. A similar example occurs in the department of manners. The European and the Hindu are both so imbued with their ancestral customs of eating and the rest, that so long as they remain apart each takes for granted that his is the only feasible way of going on. And even when they come together this conviction remains so immovably fixed in the mind that they detest each other's ways heartily, and simply cannot tolerate them. May it not be the same with the ethical ideas of the intuitional theory—that they are so ingrained by tradition in the mind as to become inseparable from it, and are thus taken as part of the intrinsic constitution of human nature; whereas in fact they are merely an adventitious accretion, the inheritance of countless ages!

To this Father Hull adds, on his own side:—

So long as this view seems possible, so long does an air of uncertainty pervade the whole sphere of ethics; and so long does it remain possible to doubt the absolute validity of its principles and its dictates.<sup>1</sup>

Father Hull, of course, lays down the Christian principle that all morality, being a divine command, is comprehensive in every detail, and does not vary from age to age. He deduces a great deal from the operation of "Conscience," and seems to forget Montaigne's apophthegm "Conscience is custom." This view is clearly repugnant to the modern Agnostic. Perhaps the best statement of what ought to be an Agnostic's point of view is set forth in Sir Leslie Stephen's *Science of Ethics*. Stephen reconciles the utilitarian and evolu-

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

tionary theories, and points out that the aim and object of every society is to achieve a certain kind of social hygiene which will probably produce a social, though not necessarily an individual, happiness. He points out, for example, how a man who is too morally sensitive for his generation, is liable to suffer just because of this very fact.<sup>1</sup> Shortly, however, the ordinary modern test of our morality is its social value.

This view has been violently contested by writers like the late Mr. Lecky. Mr. Lecky satirically commented on the social position of the prostitute, in spite of her seemingly obvious claim to honour on the utilitarian ground of her existence being essential to the chastity of other women.<sup>2</sup> I do not see how Lecky's contention can be denied so long as we are content to admit that the supposed chastity of all other women justifies the social evil of prostitution; nor must we forget that both in ancient Greece and modern Japan (as opposed to Christian countries) the prostitute enjoyed, and still enjoys, the social esteem and recognition accorded to the ordinary self-supporting citizen. The whole tendency, however, of modern England is to rely less on prostitution as an instrument of social welfare, and to attach a less superstitious value to female chastity. Advanced thinkers—like Mr. Wells and Mr. Bernard Shaw—attach more importance to the economic independence than to the chastity of women; and in many cases, of course, female chastity needs the security of economic independence.

I have chosen this particular example because Mr. Lecky made his most effective point by means of it. But in every region of morality we are to-day measuring acts exclusively by their social consequences. Had a strike, for example, occurred in the Middle Ages, the population would at once have asked each other whether

<sup>1</sup> A perfect example of this would be Sir Samuel Romilly, the sensitive humanitarian, whose contemporaries thwarted almost every effort he made to remedy the barbarous cruelty of his age.

<sup>2</sup> In his Introduction to the *History of European Morals*.

the strike pleased or displeased God, and would have supported or opposed the strike according to what they imagined to be God's will. Had the strike coincided with a pestilence breaking out among the strikers, this would have meant that God did not intend the strike to continue, and the State would have taken measures accordingly. The modern man discusses such a phenomenon simply from the social point of view. He asks himself whether the strike is or is not likely to promote the ultimate welfare of society. For that reason a great deal of modern morality is made up of compromises between conflicting claims. In short, social harmony is preferred to the development of particular virtues as ends in themselves. Many thinkers vastly prefer the doctrine of civic order and efficiency to the workings of Christian charity. Again we subordinate so-called moral principles to social convenience. It is to-day frankly acknowledged that society would be instantly dissolved by any serious adoption in practice of the Sermon on the Mount. It, therefore, seems odd that medieval morality was in some respects more inconsistent with Christian morality than our own. Crimes of lust and hatred were far more common in the Middle Ages than they are to-day. The uncertainty of marriage was a perfect scandal, in spite of the unquestioned dogma that the marriage was indissoluble except by death. Private warfare was rampant throughout medieval Europe, though it was quite unsafe to challenge the inspired word of the Prince of Peace.

It must, however, be remembered that moral transgressions could be easily remedied by indulgences and death-bed repentance. The more mundane process of terrestrial cause and effect was obscured from view by the supernatural machinery.

The improved and more stable morality of our civilisation is of itself an argument in favour of what I call modern morality. If theological conceptions produce no better results than they did in the Middle Ages, when they were far more literally accepted than they are

now, they clearly cannot command as much confidence as the appeal to reason. Moreover, the historian would probably admit that the humanitarian movement of to-day is rooted in the new doctrines of society that came to birth at the end of the eighteenth century, and in these doctrines religion is undoubtedly postponed to human welfare. It may be specially remarked that Christian morality, as such, exercises very little influence on the modern world. Such influence as it has can only be observed in certain departments of human life where old traditions have survived and escaped analysis.

I may perhaps take as an example the law of marriage and divorce in England. Whatever the merits of discussion may be on social grounds, it is perfectly ludicrous that the matter should be discussed with reference to the textual condition of an old manuscript, or that any intellectual body of persons in our generation should concern themselves with a controversy conducted on those lines; yet in 1910 we had the astonishing spectacle of bishops appearing before the Royal Commission on Divorce, and solemnly arguing this grave and weighty matter as if the solution of the problem depended upon the doctrine of verbal inspiration.

It may be argued that modern Churchmen are more in line with other humanitarian movements of to-day, and the social reforms of the nineteenth century are often attributed to religious influences such as the influence of the Wesleyan and Evangelical movements. Men like Lord Shaftesbury are frequently cited in this connection. It is difficult to prove anything strictly in discussing so large a question; but the study of history disposes many people to believe that religion follows morality rather than morality religion, and that both are deeply influenced by economic changes. It seems odd that Christianity should have continued for 1,800 years without producing the enormous humanitarian and ethical changes which occurred in the first fifty years of the nineteenth century, and that these changes should then

be ascribed to a "revival" of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, writers like Voltaire and Rousseau and Fielding had produced an enormous effect, and the new wealth of the industrial revolution became widely diffused. The railway, the novel, the newspaper, and scientific discoveries enormously enlarged the sympathies of the average man. Nor did the "revival" of Christianity continue. The whole forward movement here referred to became associated with the most formidable spread of sceptical ideas known to European history. A curious sidelight on the connection of religion with moral progress is thrown by Mr. Joseph Clayton's book on the *Bishops as Legislators*. Why should the bishops have so sturdily and consistently declined to abolish a barbarously varied system of capital punishment for small thefts if the Church was really achieving the moral improvement of England during this period, or if the bishops themselves had an atom of real confidence in the moral influences of the religion which they professed?

The fact remains that men are not moral without some sort of reason for being so, or without growing up in moral habits; but the time is long past when the young could safely associate moral truths with the truths of orthodox Christianity. Yet the advocates of secular education for the most part tend to forget the need for

<sup>1</sup> As a specimen of Christian morality in eighteenth-century England the following extract from Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* deserves quotation (Vol. III., p. 537, Library Edition). It relates to a case mentioned in Parliament in 1777 of a sailor taken by the press-gang from a wife not yet nineteen years of age, with two infant children. "The breadwinner being gone, his goods were seized for an old debt, and his wife was driven into the streets to beg. At last, in despair, she stole a piece of coarse linen from a linen-draper's shop. Her defence, which was fully corroborated, was: 'She had lived in credit and wanted for nothing till a press-gang came and stole her husband from her; but since then she had no bed to lie on and nothing to give her children to eat, and they were almost naked. She might have done something wrong, for she hardly knew what she did.' The lawyers declared that, shoplifting being a common offence, she must be executed; and *she was driven to Tyburn with a child still suckling at her breast.*" What were the Christians doing at this date? Little, it is to be feared, but enjoying rather gross pleasures and discussing how to make the best of both worlds.

some kind of moral training, and that if we are to give the young moral training we must clearly give them cogent reasons for moral conduct. It is worse than useless to attach importance to religious sanctions of morality unless we are prepared to justify the truth of those sanctions up to the hilt. Are we to tell our children that they must not lie or steal because God will send them to Hell if they do, or because lying and stealing are injurious to society and incidentally to themselves? That is the question which modern society shirks answering.

Modern society tries to meet the difficulty by a compromise, which consists in hiring teachers who frequently do not believe in the Christian religion to pretend that they do. Indirectly, of course, these teachers employ other inducements to morality besides the sanctions of the Christian religion; but the whole system is so chaotic that it frequently ends in producing moral chaos.

For these reasons it seems to me that the modern Agnostic must not be content with the mere avowal of disbelief in the Christian religion. If he does not believe in the Christian religion, he cannot possibly believe in the Christian sanctions of morality. If he does not believe in the Christian sanctions, he must find other sanctions, as I have indicated. If these sanctions hold good for him, he must admit that they will hold good for other people who have lost faith in the Christian religion, and he must be prepared to make an open profession of these principles, in spite of the fact that the moral reformer encounters worse prejudice than the religious reformer.

Rightly or wrongly, Agnostics believe that the Christian religion is declining, and will progressively continue to decline. If this be true, it means that an increasingly larger number of persons will reject the sanctions of Christian morality, and must either find other sanctions for themselves or else be taught on an



entirely new system in early youth. This seems to me far the most important concern of the modern Agnostic, more especially because it has been neglected by the old-fashioned type of Agnostic who wished to vindicate himself and his friends from the suggestions of immorality that were at one time made by the less scrupulous kind of Christian. We cannot, and must not, therefore, shirk the obvious conclusion that the old morality based on Christian sanctions must be largely modified in accordance with social sanctions. Society must not, for example, enforce celibacy on a particular class of men because they are devoted to the service of God, though society may well be justified in enforcing celibacy or sterilised marriage on those who are unfit to become parents. The real danger to-day is our inclination to put the wine of this new social morality into the old bottles of the Christian religion.

It may be asked how anything so fluctuating as the social sanction can serve as a standard. When, for instance, Antigone buried her brother in defiance of the State, was she obeying or disobeying a social sanction? Assuming that she *disobeyed*, are we to deny her the right of appeal to the social sanction of a future generation? Are not all heretics constantly trying to modify or even destroy the social sanctions of their own age? Indeed, is any social sanction of any ethical value unless it is the spontaneous agreement of individuals, and not a compulsory code enforced by a bureaucratic or social tyranny? No one can be more alive to these difficulties than a strong Individualist like myself; but I maintain that in any society most people are fairly well agreed on a number of questions concerning the moral hygiene of that society, such as the reprobation of murder or theft. Society can at least agree that the starting-point of all discussion must be the welfare of society, and not the textual criticism of antiquated folklore.

I should compare the social sanction with a debenture

—that is to say, a floating charge on the present and future assets of a company. The property affected by it varies from year to year; in ten years it may be entirely different from what it was. The terms of the debenture bond or stock may be changed from time to time; but no variation of the terms of the loan or of the assets makes the debenture less real or legally enforceable. The debenture perishes only on redemption; and the social sanction will perish only with the abolition of the criminal law. When every individual ungrudgingly and spontaneously fulfils his social obligations, the social sanction will become superfluous; at present it represents the claim of society to enforce such actions on the individual as are determined for the moment to be his duties to society.

In this connection it may be useful to illustrate my meaning by applying the principles I have formulated to modern Socialism. I should say at once that I am no Socialist. Most of the Socialist writers I have read seem to me to ignore either economic truths or the truths of human psychology. They seem to me to assume a state of society in which no one has an axe to grind, and to draw too large cheques on public spirit and altruism; but their power and influence are largely due to the omission of those who are not Socialists to preach and to practise a social code of morals. Even bishops hesitate nowadays to console a starving man by telling him that he will be better off in the next world than the rich man. They do not usually exhort him to take no thought for the morrow, and to live like the lilies of the field.<sup>1</sup> Society must be prepared to justify itself on a rational basis; to convince the labourer that he is receiving his proper hire, and to give him a reasonable opportunity of earning what is due to him. Society must also tackle the whole sex problem on rational

<sup>1</sup> Except, perhaps, in regard to the irresponsible propagation of large families.

lines. Marriage must be rational; men must share equitably with women the responsibilities for children born out of wedlock; female labour must not be sweated; and the whole question of venereal disease must be scientifically handled. The word "sin" must be eliminated from the discussion of social or medical remedies, for it has invariably been used as an excuse for shirking social or medical remedies—as, for example, when we are told that a certain venereal disease is the "finger of God."<sup>1</sup>

The Socialists are bound to win all along the line unless their opponents are prepared to face the question of sanctions fairly and squarely, because in the meantime Socialists are allowed by others to arrogate to themselves the profession of public service and of working exclusively for the public good. Christianity, however one may twist its doctrines, is concerned with the end of an old world. The business of the Agnostic is to share in the beginnings of a new world.

<sup>1</sup> An edifying remark frequently made by a deceased English officer who was once Governor of Gibraltar.

## II.

# THE EXPERIMENT OF MODERN TOLERATION

THE word "toleration" has been used so constantly in a theological sense, while theology has become so much less prominent in our thoughts than it used to be, that the word sounds almost obsolete, except perhaps in connection with the position of religious orders in countries like France and Portugal. About ten years ago I wrote a book to demonstrate that nearly all that we understand by the name of Toleration was necessarily associated in its religious sense with an undercurrent of scepticism, either implicit or explicit, in regard to ultimate problems, and that no really free discussion is allowed by any human society concerning matters which they think all-important. On the other hand, I was forced to admit that our generation had more cosmopolitan interests, more intellectual curiosity, and far more novels and newspapers to read, all of which promoted and necessitated a larger freedom of discussion.

During the last ten years I have constantly been wondering how much toleration exists in regard to free discussion of subjects outside religion, and especially of what John Stuart Mill called "experiments in life." On the whole, I think that any contemporary observer is bound to admit that the issues raised by the controversies of to-day are amazingly wide and deep as compared with those of the nineteenth century.

The two main obstacles to free discussion have at all times been the conviction (1) that the principle "*salus populi, suprema lex*" must express the permanent attitude of the State to public criticism; and (2) that

those fundamental principles of morality on which human society is deemed to repose must never be subjected to the test of reason or argument. Thus, for instance, there could be no free discussion of religious problems so long as (a) it was feared that such discussion might bring down the wrath of the gods on the State or community which permitted the discussion ; or (b) the identification, or close association, of morality with religion compelled men to believe that religious creeds and moral principles must stand or fall together.

On either assumption the free discussion of religious problems necessarily provokes a breach of the peace and becomes a matter of police supervision, as we see in modern Spain, where Rationalism becomes confused with anarchy. The State may sometimes bridge over difficulties by tolerating a sort of passive heresy in religion or morality, as, for example, the Romans did in the case of local or particular cults, or as our Indian Penal Code of to-day tolerates obscene works of art connected with purely religious representations ; but such partial toleration as this is not extended to any kind of missionary effort or proselytism.

Yet to-day we behold the astonishing spectacle of entirely free discussion in regard to the most crucial problems of State and society. I need only refer to disarmament, socialism, anarchism, the endowment of motherhood, and the treatment of crime as disease. Nor is all this discussion without practical results. Arbitration is now a real force in European politics, the Socialists have found their ideas embodied in a so-called Liberal Budget, discontented artisans and suffragettes increasingly disregard the King's Peace, unmarried mothers are less harshly treated by society, and prisons are seemingly more attractive than workhouses. All these changes evoke deep disgust in a large number of citizens ; but they take place in a piecemeal and tranquil fashion which never gives an opportunity for real

fighting. Even modern revolutions come to pass without appreciable bloodshed.

So far from this result being anticipated, it may be remembered that Mill dreaded the uniformity and mediocrity of democracies as an engine of obscurantism. But the democratic uniformity of to-day is principally manifested in the cosmopolitan habits of modern Europe, which make less for repression of the individual than for international peace. We seem to be achieving a sort of Chinese "harmony," a spirit of pacific compromise, in all departments of life. The only coercive force appears in that bureaucratic tyranny which so often distinguishes the more pacific types of society.

All these characteristics point either to an almost universal confidence in the common sense of mankind, and in the capacity of human nature to revolt effectively, in the last resort, against intolerable abuses, or to a prevalent conviction that nothing is much worth fighting about. Some will be heard saying: "*Magna est Veritas et praevalabit*"; others that no principle on earth is worth going to the stake for. The first attitude of mind seems curiously associated with the second. Belief in the ultimate victory of truth seems easily to breed indifference as regards the immediate prospects of truth. All persecution, however, necessarily implies an attitude of distrust towards those who would allow the collective intelligence of mankind free play. The persecutor will not accept the consolations that Newman found in repeating the words "*Securus judicat orbis terrarum.*" False theology must be suppressed as speedily as false economics; for men will either not distinguish the true from the false, or else will resent the toil and inconvenience of always making the effort to do so. I choose the analogy of economics because false economics are likely to alarm the modern world more than false theology, and we live in an atmosphere of Socialist and anti-Socialist leagues, and of Free Trade and Tariff Reform leagues. Indeed, all disputation about burning

questions, such as property, seems bound to entail a disturbance of civil order, even if men really care little about distinctions between true and false theories, and rely on the financial common sense of the community. Thus, however strongly I may be convinced that socialistic experiments will never destroy the proprietary instincts of humanity, yet I may violently resent the inconvenience of temporarily losing my property while such experiments are going on. Nevertheless, in modern society such questions rarely tend to reach a violent, or even decisive, issue. Some sort of compromise is nearly always practicable. In a given year I may have to pay to the State one-eighth of my income, instead of one-tenth; but, in the first place, there is always the hope that the electorate may stand this no longer, and, in the second place, it is clearly more enjoyable to spend seven-eighths of my income in freedom than to be imprisoned for resisting even a tyrannical and unjust surveyor of taxes. The instinct of the highly civilised man leads him to avoid the employment of force even where he would not be opposing the State. If an armed burglar comes to my house, and I am insured against burglary, it may save a great deal of trouble, not to mention my life, if I request him merely not to abstract articles of sentimental value, but otherwise to make a free choice. An increasing disrespect for the ideal of chastity may lead to men's marital or paternal rights over their wives and daughters being less strictly regarded; but it is quite old-fashioned for an injured father or husband to aggravate the scandal by assaulting the offender.

The spirit of compromise seems, in fact, to increase with all civilisation, and it is especially characteristic of the oldest civilisation we know—namely, the Chinese. In the *Independent Review* for April, 1904, an acute observer recorded the tendency in Chinese civilisation to encourage only an "irreducible *minimum*" of the virtues.<sup>1</sup> "Man," he wrote, in describing the Chinese

<sup>1</sup> Mr. A. M. Latter.

philosophy of life, "is a difficult animal; and human intelligence must devise the best means of inducing him to live in peace with his neighbours, to make the earth yield to him its utmost, and to develop the most useful part of him—his intelligence. To this end certain moral ideas are doubtless useful; but the foundation of all such ideals is *harmony in society*, and, in so far as any other ideal appears to conflict with this, it must be checked. Inasmuch as harmony is the end of all civilised beings, with regard to other ideals the best thing to do in practice is to use the irreducible *minimum* of them; and it is in the discovery of the irreducible *minimum* that the Mongolian intellect has developed most completely its civilisation." As a concrete instance, the writer, who is and was a practising barrister, cites "the attainment of justice, without either the discovery of truth or the employment of dishonesty. The harmony of the people forbids the decree of a gross injustice; the harmony of the magistrate and the yamen forbids the abstention from bribes; the actual circumstances of the case are impossible to discover; while the fact that the litigants have, by mere litigation, disturbed the general harmony" leads to a decision whereby "both sides are punished slightly, and the side that recommends itself to the tribunal is also rewarded." This attitude is forcibly contrasted with the old European ideal of seeking the highest development of particular virtues as ends in themselves without making social and political harmony the paramount aim. Side by side with all this one remarks the pacific character of Chinese civilisation, based not so much on humanitarian feeling as on motives of general convenience.

I have quoted all these observations on China because they seem curiously applicable to the tendencies I have before noted in modern Europe. Such progressive toleration as we see to-day seems to indicate a growing subjection of the emotions to reason. Mr. Shaw has been preaching this doctrine for years in regard to the



military virtue of courage. Mr. Wells and other Socialists prefer the doctrine of civil order and efficiency to the spirit of Christian charity. Modern men and women set a higher value in society, politics, and business on tact than on veracity. Advanced thinkers attach more importance to the economic independence than to the chastity of women. We all demand an irreducible *minimum* of armaments. The criminal is no longer to be a pariah; he is to be adapted to the uses of a society which he must be taught to love. We deplore nothing so much as physical pain or violence. Fighting, whether on the hustings or the battlefield, is beginning to appear nothing but a futile waste of time.

In such a climate of opinion toleration is bound to thrive; but this very climate of opinion implies an almost revolutionary transformation of European ideals and a radical overthrow of our older traditions. Its existence can scarcely be denied. It is what the journalist really means when he writes about "materialism" or "lack of public spirit." This spirit of "peace at any price" or "anything for a quiet life" may or may not have set in permanently. But the late Mr. Charles Pearson, who called it "the decay of character," thought that it had set in permanently, and resigned himself to the prospect with stoical calm. Indeed, a future generation may conceivably take the view that we have initiated a social harmony which is the only real and substantial fruit of human reason and progress.

Whatever the ultimate result may be, the fact remains that our modern toleration is conditioned by, and points to, either an absence of really strong convictions in the mass of men, or a collective conviction that the peace of invariable compromise must in all circumstances and at all costs be maintained. This has visibly come to pass in the sphere of theological controversy, and it is also coming to pass in the sphere of all other controversy. The duellist can only resort to the law courts, the fanatic to the pulpit, the moralist to the newspapers, and the

politician to the hustings. We have abolished the pistol, the rack, the pillory, and almost the gallows. We are trying with some success to abolish war. It will be interesting to see if we have set up a stable or unstable equilibrium. The achievement of free debate concerning all subjects, reposing on a foundation of internal and external peace, has been the goal of human effort for centuries, and especially of liberal thinkers in the nineteenth century. But the success of the achievement would possibly be damping to men like John Bright or John Stuart Mill, whose enthusiasms were not precisely those of the quietist.

For the most salient object of human endeavour is a "quiet life." We seek for the community the same sort of existence, free from accidents and disturbance, that Metchnikoff prescribes for the individual man with aspirations to longevity. Our ideals have lost a certain belligerency, except in so far as they imply class-warfare; they have become more terrestrial than celestial. The late Mr. Charles Pearson so admirably sketched out the future on these lines nearly twenty years ago that I need not elaborate the theme. The accuracy of the prophecy depends very much on the course of international politics. The most civilised societies are constantly broken up by more primitive foes, and the future historian may find some analogy to the phagocytes of the human body in the bureaucrats of the community. The bureaucrats begin to wear out the community just as the phagocytes begin to wear out the body, as each becomes old. Complete freedom of discussion may be only a symptom of national decline and individual degeneracy, due to an exaggerated development of intelligence at the expense of more primitive qualities. The next fifty years will at least be of keen interest to all those who feel that our society is passing through a phase of experiment.

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