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Religion

DOES IT
MATTER



By Rev. John A. O'Brien, Ph.D., LL.D.



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RELIGION: DOES IT MATTER?

Its Meaning, Nature and Value

By

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Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

GEORGE WASHINGTON,
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE MEANING OF RELIGION.....	3
II. THE UNIVERSALITY OF RELIGION.....	12
III. THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION.....	15
IV. RELIGIOUS WORSHIP—A DUTY.....	20
V. RELIGION AND SOCIETY.....	30
VI. RELIGION AND MORALITY.....	40
VII. THE VALUE OF RELIGION.....	51
VIII. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.....	62

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CHAPTER I

THE MEANING OF RELIGION

Religion, pure and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world. James i. 27

No force in human history has exercised so potent an influence upon the life, thought and civilization of mankind as has religion. Whether the civilization be rudimentary or highly advanced, the influence of religion is paramount and all-pervasive. It puts its imprint upon man's laws, colors his art, creates the atmosphere for his literature. It shapes his ethical codes, filters through into his philosophy and embeds itself in the innermost conscience of the individual and in the corporate mind of the society in which he lives.

It supplies the answers to man's deepest questionings: Whence have I come? Whither am I going? What is the meaning and the purpose of human life? How can I achieve my ultimate destiny? Thus religion concerns itself with man's deepest values.

It gives him guidance in his relations with his Creator and with his fellow man. It enables him to walk safely along the path of reverence and obedience to his God and of justice and kindness to his neighbor. When that light is extinguished, man gropes about in the darkness, and life becomes a game of blindman's buff. Rob man of his religious belief, and he sinks to a level one step removed from the beasts of the field. An attack upon God is an attack upon the dignity of man and upon the sacredness of the human personality. This is the truth which has been painted in tragic and flaming colors upon the canvas of the world's history.

Mankind has no stronger bulwark for the protection of his own freedom and dignity than the teachings of religion concerning the essential equality of all men in the eyes of God and of their accountability to Him for their treatment of one another. "What doth the Lord, thy God demand of thee," thundered the prophet Micheas, "but that thou love mercy, do justly, and walk humbly with thy God." For the right of men and women everywhere to walk humbly and freely with their God, without the club of a dictator over their heads, America has poured out her treasure and her blood in two World Wars.

Importance of Religion

Because religion plays so far-reaching a role in the life of individuals and of nations, it is of paramount importance for every person to understand the real meaning of religion. For how can a person properly appreciate this great treasure if he does not understand what it is? How can he go out to fight and die for something which he does not really understand? Yet, are there not millions of people in our land, to whom religion is not much more than a word, and a confused word at that? To many it conjures up the thought of Sunday school, of preaching, of restrictions and taboos, of denominational rivalry, and of other such notions which blur or caricature the real nature of religion.

Accordingly we shall undertake to present the essential nature of religion, its universality, its reasonableness, its various kinds, its relation to morality, and the values it renders to the individual and to society. Without sacrificing any of the values of scholarship, we shall discuss the subject in popular language, seeking to carry to the general reader the fruits of scientific and philosophic research. We shall treat of religion in its broadest and most universal sense, embracing not only Judaism and Christianity, but the religion of all believers in a Supreme Being. We cherish the hope that the treatment will bring to the citizens of our land not only a better understanding of religion but a deeper appreciation of its powerful assistance in enabling them to live richer, nobler and more godlike lives.

From such increased understanding should result a renaissance of religion in America so that its wholesome influence will envelop every home in our land. Such an effect will, we are confident, be no small contribution to the morale of the American people. More important than that, the revival of religion will enthrone God in the life of the individual, of the family, and of the nation. By making us humble, charitable and obedient to His divine commands, it will merit for us in the stern hour of crisis the divine assistance, without which we cannot succeed, and with which we cannot fail.

Its Root Meaning

What is the meaning of religion? By tracing a word to its root or roots we can secure an insight into its original and basic meaning. The etymology of religion, however, has been a matter of dispute from ancient times. In his *De Natura Deorum*, Cicero derives religion from *relegere*, to treat carefully, saying: "Those who carefully took in hand all things pertaining to the gods were

called *religiosi*, from *relegere*.”¹ This is the view favored by Max Müller. As religion is an elementary notion, however, long antedating the time of complicated ritual presupposed in this explanation, we must look elsewhere for its etymology.

In his *City of God*,² St. Augustine derives religion from *religere*, in the sense of recovering. He says: “Having lost God through neglect (*negligentes*), we recover Him (*religentes*) and are drawn to Him.” Inasmuch as this explanation implies the notion of Redemption, it is not suited to the primary idea of religion.

Lactantius, a renowned Father of the Church who lived in the late third and early four centuries, derives religion from *religare*, to bind. In his *Divinae Institutes*, he writes: “We are tied to God and bound to Him (*religati*) by the bond of piety, and it is from this, and not as Cicero holds, from careful consideration (*relegendo*) that religion has received its name.”³ Here we have most likely the true origin of the term, religion. For in its simplest form, religion implies the idea of being bound to God. This same idea is uppermost in the word *religion* in its most specific sense, as applied to the life of poverty, chastity, and obedience, to which individuals bind themselves by vows. Hence, those who are thus bound are called *religious*.

St. Augustine later came to espouse the explanation of Lactantius. “He has certainly seized the broad popular sense of the word,” observed Canon Liddon, “when he connects it with the idea of an obligation by which man is bound to an invisible God.”⁴

This brief discussion of the root meaning of religion will not be without fruit, if it leaves in the mind of the reader the basic and indisputable truth, conveyed by the term religion, that man is bound by the bond of devotion, obedience and love to God, the Heavenly Father, to Whom he owes his very existence. Whenever the word *religion* is uttered, let it remind man of that everlasting and unbreakable bond which is designed to draw him ever closer in reverence, love and service to the Father from Whom he has come and to Whose all-embracing arms he is destined ultimately to return.

Essence of Religion

“Whatever be the truth about the origin of the name,” observes St. Thomas Aquinas, “religion as a reality indicates the re-

¹ *Qui, omnia, quae ad cultum deorum pertinerent, diligenter retractarent et tamquam religerent, sunt dicti religiosi ex relegendo.* II, 28.

² X, 3.

³ *Vinculo pietatis Deo religati sumus, unde ipsa religio nomen accepit, non, ut Cicero interpretatus est, a relegendo.* IV, 28.

⁴ *Some Elements of Religion*, Lecture I, 19.

lationship of man towards God." This relationship is the voluntary subjection of the creature to his Creator in acknowledgment of his complete and abiding dependence upon Him and of God's absolute and sovereign dominion over him. This sense of dependence upon God, this keenly felt need of divine assistance, coupled with the conviction that he can place himself in friendly and helpful communion with the deity along with the efforts to do so, constitute the very essence of religion. At the very heart of religion then lie two ideas: the consciousness of man's need of God, and the conviction that the appropriate expression of the need for divine aid can and will be answered.

The felt needs of the individuals vary with the tribes and societies in which they live, and with their own development. In lower stages of development the solicitude is more for material welfare than for moral perfection, though the latter is not neglected. The emphasis would seem, however, to be upon material prosperity and bodily comfort. In the higher religions the perfection sought in religion becomes increasingly that of moral goodness. In Christianity, the highest of religions, the individual aims at communion with God through the achievement of high spiritual perfection.

This entails a participation in the supernatural life of grace as children of God. In the Christian there is a clear perception of God's sovereignty and a consequent recognition of our duty to acknowledge that sovereignty by appropriate acts of praise, adoration, propitiation, and thanksgiving.⁵ The crown of such acts of filial homage is the love of God for His own sake, inasmuch as He is the infinitely perfect being, in Whom truth, beauty and goodness are realized in their highest possible degree.

A Personal God

From what has been said thus far it is evident that the concept of a deity required for religion is that of a *free personality, possessing intelligence and will*. Where the deity is identified with the earth and the sky, with sticks and stones, as in pantheism, and is thus devoid of all consciousness, religion ceases to exist. For the essential acts of religion, prayer, adoration, propitiation, supplication imply the power to hear and the power to respond. What would be the sense of talking to a rock or a clod of earth?

A deity without personality, and hence without consciousness, is no more capable of awakening the sense of religion in the heart

⁵ Hence St. Thomas Aquinas defines religion as "the virtue which prompts man to render to God the worship and reverence which is His by right" (*virtus per quam homines Deo debitum cultum et reverentiam exhibent*), II-II, Q. 81, a. 1.

of man than is the all-pervading air or the universal force of gravitation. Hence all attempts to substitute the cosmos or nature—even when written with capitals—for a personal deity are so many arrows aimed at the heart of religion. Man can admire the autumnal coloring of a tree, the fragrance of a rose, the beauty of a sunset. He can no more talk to them, however, than he can to a stick or a stone. Personality, consciousness, intelligence, the power to hear and the power to answer, constitute then the core of the concept of a deity required for religious purposes.

Religion is thus seen to be essentially a personal relation. It is the relation of the creature to his Creator, of the subject to his Sovereign, of man to his God. In that relationship man turns with outstretched arms, seeking to clasp the hand reached down from on high. He opens his lips to a listening ear. He pours out the love of his heart to a heart which reciprocates with an overwhelming love. Religion is not a one directional line. It is not talking to a deaf-mute. Reciprocation is of its very essence. God both listens and replies. Says James Russell Lowell: ⁶

God is not dumb, that He should speak no more;
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness
And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor.

Those who train their ears to catch the answering echoes from the mind and the heart of God hear a message which carries courage and inspiration, and feel a love which fills them with a rapture which transcends all the pleasures of earth and sense. It is this union of the soul with God in perfect love which constitutes the end of all religious striving. A union which is approximated in this life by high moral perfection, and which is achieved in the next life by the soul which experiences a joy which no tongue can describe. "Eye hath not seen," says the Apostle Paul, "nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." ⁷

Expression of Whole Personality

Religion is not the stunted expression of a single faculty. It calls forth the expression of man's whole personality with all its powers and faculties. It brings into play not merely the intellect, but the will, the imagination, and the emotions. The envisag-

⁶ *Bibliolatres.*

⁷ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

ment of the unseen world kindles the imagination. The consciousness of an offense against God elicits sorrow and stirs the will to amendment. The perception of the need of divine aid in times of perplexity and crisis intensifies the fervor of our supplications and bring us in humility to His feet.

Our hearts go out in paeans of joy and gratitude in times of deliverance from suffering and danger. We exhaust the powers of the painter, the musician, and the poet in seeking to express the varied sentiments which fill our minds and the emotions which tug at our hearts as we turn to God in all the changing vicissitudes of human life. Hence we see how far off the mark are those writers who seek to limit religion to the exercise of a particular faculty, or to identify it exclusively with ritual or ethical conduct.

Hegel describes religion as "the knowledge acquired by the finite spirit of its essence as absolute spirit." Max Müller terms it "the perception of the infinite." Schleiermacher refers to it as "a determination of man's feeling of absolute dependence." Kant speaks of it as "the recognition of all our duties as divine commands." Matthew Arnold characterizes it as "morality touched with emotion." John Stuart Mill defines it as "the earnest direction of the emotions and desires toward an ideal object recognized as the highest excellence and as rightly paramount over selfish objects of desire."

These are, however, but fragmentary descriptions. They are but slender strands in the rich and varied tapestry of religion. Distortion and deformation can only result from the effort to limit religion to a single activity or faculty. Recognizing his dependence upon Almighty God for every sinew and fiber and faculty of his nature, man strives to render to God a full-orbed expression of his dependence, his gratitude, and his love, by pulling every element of his being into that acknowledgment. Hence religion involves the expression of the whole man, mind and heart and soul. If any element of his nature fails to participate in that manifestation, the homage is correspondingly incomplete.

Natural and Supernatural

Religion may be considered subjectively or objectively. Viewed subjectively, that is as resident in the person or subject who practices it, religion may be defined as the *disposition* prompting the individual to acknowledge through appropriate acts of homage, praise and love his dependence upon Almighty God.

Viewed objectively, that is as something external to the person or subject, religion may be defined as a system of truths, laws

and practices which direct and regulate the rendering of homage and worship to God.

The most important division of religion is that which classifies it as *natural* and *supernatural*. Natural religion may be defined as the sum of man's duties to God in so far as they can be ascertained by the light of reason alone. In other words, it is the worship of God as prescribed by reason unaided by revelation. The duties of natural religion may be epitomized in the three great commandments which man's rational nature makes known to him, namely, to honor God, to subdue his passions, and to do unto others as he would have others do unto him.

The principal duties of man according to the law of nature find expression in the Ten Commandments with the exception that in the third, the day of designation would not necessarily be the Sabbath. Men would be obliged by the law of natural religion to set aside a day from time to time for the public worship of God, but the choice of a particular day would be at the option of each State or community. Prompting man to observe these commandments would be the twofold motive, the love of God and the fear of His judgment in the life to come.

Supernatural religion is the sum of man's duties to God as known by divine revelation. Thus there are certain truths, such as the Incarnation and the Blessed Trinity, which transcend man's capacity to discover and which, if they are to be known at all, must be revealed to him. There are other truths which man could arrive at by his reason, such as, that God is one, necessary, eternal and infinite. Many such truths of natural religion are also divinely revealed. They are supernatural only in the manner in which they have been made known to us.

Divine Revelation

Divine revelation is a beautiful and striking expression of God's solicitude and love for mankind. For if left entirely to himself, man would fall into many errors and abominations, as the history of pagan antiquity abundantly discloses. The gods of the pagans were often patrons of theft, lying and lust. Licentious orgies were publicly performed in honor of Bacchus and Eros.

With such depraved notions of the deity, they lacked a fixed and unalterable standard of right and wrong. Even Plato (428-347 B. C.), one of the master minds of ancient Greece, favored a community of wives and the destruction of weakly and deformed

children.⁸ His great disciple, Aristotle (384-322 B. C.), who systematized so many branches of knowledge, entertained the same lax views in regard to infant life. Lacking a proper conception of human dignity, he regarded slaves as mere beasts who could be beaten, tortured or put to death by their masters without injustice.⁹

Seneca, one of the leading Stoic philosophers of ancient Rome, was emphatic in his approval of suicide. Even Marcus Aurelius, its last and noblest representative, was uncertain, now condemning, now approving the crime of self-destruction. In short, the best minds of pagan antiquity fell into grievous errors, while the masses were engulfed in sensual and licentious practices, destructive of the integrity of the home and of the dignity of the individual.

The light of divine revelation not only pointed the way out of these abominations but also gave mankind the necessary help to follow that path. For it spoke to mankind not in the faltering and uncertain tones of human reason but in the unfaltering and clear language of divine wisdom.

Revelation Affords Certainty

This is of great importance. For without that divine assurance of truth, mankind would be forever paralyzed by doubt. Thus, let us suppose that in some community there exists a master mind who devotes his whole life to the discovery of all the truths of natural religion and finally arrives at all of them. Then he undertakes to impart them to his fellow men. What chance of success would he have? Little or none.

The man, tempted to sin, might well say: "How do I know he is right? He is a man like myself. All his reasoning may be wrong. He is a hopeless minority, with no credentials of his authority to teach me the truth. I want and I need the assurance from God that this is wrong. Then only can I act with certainty."

Thomas Carlyle said of Robert Burns: "His religion at best is an anxious wish—like that of Rabelais, a great Perhaps." Man cannot, however, resist a driving passion nor prepare himself to face the martyr's fire on the strength of a mere Perhaps. He needs a certainty—an unequivocal Yea, uttered in the clear tones of the divine Revealer. Then all doubt and uncertainty are washed away forever. Thus vividly and impressively do the mercy, the goodness, and the love of God shine forth through the revelation which He vouchsafed to man.

⁹ Pol. IV (VII) 16; 17, i. 5.

This deposit of supernatural truths, along with those discoverable by unaided human reason, form a beautiful and harmonious mosaic of religious truth. There is a fundamental unity to all truth. For they all come from the same ultimate fountain. The supernatural truths buttress and reinforce those discovered by reason alone.

The human mind follows, as far as its finite tether will permit, the illimitable reaches of divine truth, and when reason falters and stumbles at the twilight of mystery, faith takes over and follows all the way. Faith rides on the donkey of human reason and when the latter falters, it rides the remaining distance in the chariot of divine revelation. It is a lovely virtue which, like the beloved disciple, John, leans its head upon the bosom of the Lord and hearing the throbbing of His beating heart, knows that all is well. Faith is a genuflection of the will before the tabernacle of God's revealed truth, a gesture of love whereby the heart of man answers a cry from the heart of God.

CHAPTER II

THE UNIVERSALITY OF RELIGION

There is no race so wild and untamed as to be ignorant of the existence of God." Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*

As the belief in God has existed among all the races of mankind from the earliest times down to the present, so the practice of religion has been likewise universal. This is as true today as it was at the dawn of history. Whether the race be comparatively primitive or highly civilized, religion will be found to play an important role. The practice of religion would seem to follow as a direct and immediate consequence of the recognition of the existence of a Supreme Being. Man expresses that acknowledgement through prayer, sacrifice and ceremonial of varied kinds. "Nature herself," declares Cicero, "teaches us that God is to be venerated, and of her law in this matter no man is free."

The findings of modern historic research corroborate the truth expressed by Cicero. Reflecting the conclusions of investigators in this field, Prof. C. H. Toy of Harvard declares: "As far as our present knowledge goes, religion appears to be universal among men. There is no community of which we can say with certainty that it is without religion."¹

Similar is the way Professor Tiele in his *History of Religion* sums up the findings of the researchers: "The statement that there are nations or tribes which possess no religion rests either on inaccurate observations or on a confusion of ideas. No tribe or nation has yet been met with destitute of a belief in any higher being, and travelers who have asserted their existence have been afterwards refuted by facts. It is legitimate, therefore, to call religion, in its most general sense, the universal phenomenon of humanity."

Granting then that religious worship has been universal among all the tribes and races in the past, the question may be raised: Have we any assurance that it will persist in the future? Has not the advance of modern science been characterized by a progressive substitution of mechanical for personal agency in nature, with the inevitable result, as a skeptic has expressed it, that God will be escorted to the limits of His universe and then politely bowed out as no longer needed?

To this we may reply: The advance of modern science is fatal

¹ *Introduction to the History of Religions*, pp. 5 f.

to all polytheistic forms of religion, in which the secondary causes are, through ignorance, mistaken for personal agents. The truth of the unity of nature's forces, so well established by modern science, is in perfect harmony with the monotheistic interpretation of nature. It is the polytheist, and not the Christian, who has a particular deity for thunder, another for lightning, and another for the earthquake. The monotheist recognizes all these phenomena as due to secondary or natural causes operating within the framework of universal law.

Far from being inconsistent with true science, Christian monotheism is necessary to supplement and complete the fragmentary interpretation of nature afforded by science. Being based on observation and experiment, science has for its legitimate field of study only secondary causes of nature. It can tell us nothing about origins, nothing about the great First Cause, from which nature with its network of myriad laws has come.

Science Deciphers God's Handwriting

In substituting physical laws for what was formerly thought to be the direct action of God, science has not accounted for the intelligent^r purposive action of nature. It has simply pushed the question farther back. But the demand for an Intelligent Cause, a Supreme Mind, remains as persistent and importunate as ever. Like the ghost of Banquo, it will not down. Dispense with Thor, explain thunder by physical laws, and you make not less necessary the need for the Legislator of such laws. "Let the chain of second causes be ever so long," observes George Lavington, "the first link is always in God's hand."

The discovery by science that thunder, lightning, tornadoes, earthquakes are due to the operation of physical laws, prompts us to seek to know more about such laws. They show that we live in a *law-abiding universe*. On the basis of the regularity of the operations of the laws and forces of nature, we build the edifice of all our sciences, and chart the position of stars whose light has not yet reached our earth. In changing the picture of the universe from a fitful, capricious one, such as primitive man envisaged, to one characterized by the universal reign of law, science reveals the universe to be not less but more wonderful, more awe-inspiring than ever our forebears dreamed.

By the same logic, the Author of such a law-abiding universe is correspondingly enhanced. The adjectives, omnipotent, omniscient, infinite, which were becoming somewhat anemic, are now seen to be filled with the red corpuscles of vital and startling

reality. Far from dwarfing the expression of God's power, modern science aggrandizes it. Far from elbowing God out of the universe, science shows His omnipresence, through the power of His laws in the whirling electrons within a tiny atom and in the swing of Betelgeux through the vastness of immeasurable space.

Far from outmoding the worship of God, science confirms its reasonableness with ever more impressive evidence of His divine dominion over the whole vast universe. He has written His name, as Lord and Sovereign, in the nuclear structure of every throbbing atom, upon the heart of every flower, and upon the illuminated manuscript of the skies. The whole of creation mirrors His intelligence and His power. As long as man can see and reason, he will not fail to acknowledge the sovereign dominion of God over himself and all creation. In such an acknowledgment, religion finds its most basic and essential expression—an expression that is as universal and enduring as mankind itself.

CHAPTER III

ORIGIN OF RELIGION

There is in the nature of man a desire to know the cause of the effects that he sees. St. Thomas Aquinas

Prescinding for the moment from the testimony of Holy Scripture, we ask: What was the natural origin of religion? For religion, like morality, has a natural basis or origin. It is the outcome of the use of reasoning whereby man concludes from the observations of the forces of nature that there must be some great Power, some supreme Intelligence to account for them. Observing the unfailing sequence of day and night, the regular order of the seasons, and other such evidences of power, order and plan, it was possible for primitive man to conclude by the light of human reason alone that there must be a Being, possessing intelligence and power, somewhere in the universe. In the absence of positive, historic data concerning the natural origin of religion, we can only give a speculative answer.

The process by which primitive man arrived naturally at a theistic interpretation of the world seems to have been a *simple, spontaneous application of the principle of causality*. So basic and far-reaching is this principle in enabling us to arrive at the existence of causes, which often lie beyond the range of our immediate vision, that it may be said to constitute the spinal column of the body of our scientific and philosophic knowledge of man and of the universe. It is the spinal column likewise of the philosophy of religion which seeks by reason alone to establish the basis of natural religion and to formulate its fundamental truths.

What was primitive man's view of nature? There is every reason to believe that it was to a large extent similar to that held by tribes and peoples who have not yet risen to a scientific knowledge of the laws of nature. The causes best known to him are living, personal ones, namely, himself and his fellow men. He has not penetrated to an understanding of secondary, mechanical causes of natural events. The result is that he attributes all the striking phenomena of earth, air and sky to personal agencies.

Personal Forces of Nature

His experience with lifeless objects, sticks and stones, utensils and weapons, shows him that they move and exercise force only when a person imparts energy to them. Consequently whenever

he perceives a phenomenon showing movement and energy outside his limited experience of mechanical causation, he is prompted spontaneously to attribute it to some mysterious person. Thus, the thunder suggests the thunderer. He thinks of the sun and moon either as living things or as the instruments of an invisible living agency. It was easy for primitive man to perceive in and behind the phenomena of nature the operation of mind and will.

To perceive in the vast diversity of these phenomena the operation of but one supreme person was, however, far from easy. While such an inference was indeed possible, it was not a likely one. This becomes evident when we consider the enormous difficulty confronting primitive man in attempting in his inexperience to co-ordinate the widely different phenomena of nature and to trace them to one and the same source of intelligence and power. The more likely tendency would have been to attribute different phenomena to distinct personalities. This is what was done by the peoples of antiquity. In fact this is still done by savage and uncivilized tribes everywhere.

Dr. Charles F. Aiken thus sums up the situation: "Peoples, whose ignorance of the physical laws of nature has not been compensated by revealed teaching, have invariably personalized the forces of nature, and, feeling that their welfare depended on the beneficent exercise of these powers, have come to divinize them. From this danger of falling into a polytheistic interpretation of nature, primitive man was saved by Divine Revelation. Such, it would seem, was the simple philosophy forming the natural basis of religion in primitive times. It was theoretically capable of leading to a monotheism like that of the ancient Hebrews, who viewed clouds, rain, lightning, and tempest as the signs of God's immediate activity. But, apart from revelation, it was very liable to degenerate into polytheistic nature-worship. Its defect was primarily scientific—ignorance of the secondary causes of natural events; but it rested on a sound principle, namely, that the phenomena of nature are in some way the outcome of intelligent volition. This principle commends itself to the Christian philosopher and scientist."¹

Conclusions Which Don't Follow

Religion did not have its origin in fear, as a few modern writers assert. They picture early man as frightened by the thunder, lightning, tempests and earthquakes, and calling upon

¹ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, art. "Religion," Vol. 12, p. 744.

the deity for protection. The fallacy underlying this theory is that fear is a feeling, and no mere feeling can account for the *idea* of personality which may or may not be associated with a dangerous or terrifying object. It is true that fear may stimulate man to call upon the deity for aid and protection. *But such supplication presupposes belief in such a deity.* When a man is attacked by a thug, his fear may prompt him to shout, "Help! Police!" But he calls for the police only because he *already* knows of their existence and their willingness to come to his aid, when attacked by a robber.

Here we should advert to the attempts of other writers to discredit religion by calling attention to the large admixture of superstition and error found in the religious practices of savage and barbarous peoples. Volumes have been written, piling up instances of the use of magic, fetishes, totems and other superstitious practices. Let all that be frankly admitted. What conclusion follows therefrom?

"Religion," they reply, "is without any rational foundation. Present day religion is but the refinement of the worship, supplications, propitiation and thanksgiving of primitive man. Since those practices were infested with superstition and error, all religion is without a solid basis and is valueless."

The conclusion is, however, too wide for the premises. If that line of reasoning were to prevail there would not be left in the world today a single valid science. For in their early stages all branches of science were infested with error. Medicine is a capital example. How many false potions, treatments and remedies were mixed up with the early practice of the healing art. Up until a few centuries ago it was the custom to bleed people to relieve fever and to cure other ailments for which it was no remedy at all. Does it follow that the whole modern science of medicine is without any solid basis and is utterly valueless?

In its early days chemistry was entangled with many errors, not the least of which were the methods used in attempting to change the baser metals into gold and silver. Do those errors vitiate modern chemistry?

In past ages astronomers often engaged in astrological practices, seeking to foretell events by the position of the stars. Does it follow that the modern science of astronomy is without any solid foundation and that every textbook on the subject is as valueless as a fairy tale? To ask these questions is to answer them. Thousands of years ago Cicero punctured the fallacy of those who sought to discredit religion by pointing to the super-

stitutions encumbering it, when he said: "*Religion is not removed by removing superstition.*"²

The Principle of Causality

The simple fact is that the basis of primitive man's theistic interpretation of nature and therefore of his religious worship is the mighty principle of causality which constitutes likewise the enduring and rational basis of all the sciences. Far from scraping that far-reaching principle, by which man reduces the fragmentary and discrete phenomena of the universe to the marvelous unity of universal law, the findings of both science and philosophy reinforce its validity and extol it as a principle more potent than the lever for which Archimedes searched to move the earth. By the application of that principle, man has found truth and reality in all the domains of intellectual questing—in science, philosophy and religion.

"Without having recourse," observes Prof. James Fox, "to psychological analysis of doubtful value, and contested assumptions as to the conditions which surrounded primeval man, we perceive an obvious inherent characteristic of the human mind common to all stages of development, which is amply sufficient to account for the appearance of religious beliefs and practices. This characteristic is the impulse of ascribing every perceived effect to some cause."³

St. Thomas Aquinas likewise calls attention to this inherent characteristic of the human mind. "There is," he says, "in the nature of man a desire to know the cause of the effects that he sees. . . . If the understanding of a rational creature cannot reach at the first cause of things, the desire of its nature will remain unsatisfied." So man is forever climbing up the ladder of secondary causes to the First and Supreme Cause—God Himself. In the breast of every human being there is an echo of the words of the Psalmist: "He has made us, not we ourselves."

The conviction of early man that the universe can not account for itself, that it demands an adequate cause, a Supreme Intelligence, is as true today as it was untold thousands of years ago. True, somewhat different and more enlightened expressions are given to that fundamental conviction, but its basic core is still the same. That core is the principle of causality by which we arrive at the conclusion that the earth, its phenomena, its order,

² *De Divinatione*, II.

³ *Religion and Morality*, James Joseph Fox.

and the myriad forms of life thereon must have an adequate cause. That Cause mankind has called from time immemorial by the venerable name of God.

"Don't Cut Down the Tree"

The errors which were mixed up in primitive man's religious worship no more invalidate religion than the presence of a few bad apples destroys the value of the whole tree. Reason dictates that we pluck off the infected apples, but it does not ask us to cut down the tree. Yet that is precisely what a few writers on the religious practices of early man would have us do—cut down the whole tree of religion. The simple truth is that when the myriad customs, rituals and practices followed by early man in religious worship are carefully studied and properly interpreted, they emphasize in an impressive manner the basic fact that mankind always and everywhere has felt the duty of rendering homage to God and the need of asking His divine aid and guidance in all the vicissitudes of life.

Thus do the facts unearthed by painstaking research in the history of religion and by studies in comparative religion add their own distinctive undertones to man's age-old and unceasing cry for God—the creative womb from which he issued and the all-embracing arms to which he is destined ultimately to return. Far then from tending to undermine religious faith, the data supplied by these two branches of knowledge, when properly interpreted, afford a new and a striking reinforcement. They accent the universality of such faith, and show that for mankind as a whole it is a necessary and inescapable consequence of the capacity to think.

Theism is thus seen to be the inevitable conclusion from the application of the principle of causality to the phenomena of nature and to the order and harmony of the universe. The name of God is written on the silver lining of the cloud that veils our world and the radiance of that name is glimpsed ever and anon by all those who penetrate with seeing minds and understanding hearts beneath that mystic veil which we call the phenomena of nature. Look with reverent eyes, clear mind and pure heart and you will not fail to see the handwriting of God and to catch something of the shining glory of His countenance.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP—A DUTY

I am the Lord, thy God. . . . Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me. Exodus xx. 2

We come now to the consideration of the important question: Is there a duty upon all mankind to render homage and worship to God? "No," reply some, "that is a privilege which may be exercised or not according to the whim or option of the individual." True, man is physically free to worship God or not. Likewise the legislation of virtually every State grants its citizens the right to engage in religious worship, but refrains from any enactment compelling them to do so.

The fact is, however, that there exists a stern moral obligation upon every human being to render homage and adoration to God. Why? Since man owes his very existence to the Creator, and is dependent upon Him for both body and soul, it follows that man should acknowledge this dependence upon God, proclaim his gratitude to Him, and express by appropriate action God's sovereign and absolute dominion over him. This is a law of nature. This is a dictate of reason. This is a command of God. The failure to make such an acknowledgment constitutes a serious violation of the whole moral order.

Let us illustrate man's dependence upon God. A newborn babe is cradled in its mother's arms, drawing nourishment from her breasts. It is a picture of complete helplessness. Unable to ward off a hostile blow, unable to take a single step, unable to speak a word, unable to provide for a single one of its many needs, it is a perfect symbol of sheer and utter helplessness. Dependent upon its parents for its life, it is likewise dependent upon them for its maintenance. Deprive that tiny newcomer of the loving care of mother and father, and quickly will the spark of life flicker and die.

Our Dependence on God

Similarly are we dependent upon the Creator from Whom all life proceeds. Our dependence is, however, even more absolute and universal. We are dependent upon God for body and soul, for every breath we take, for every movement we make, for every thought of our mind, for every decision of our will, and for every aspiration of our soul. All the faculties of the soul and all the

powers of the body come to us as gifts from the Creator's bounty. We are indebted to the divine omnipotence not only for their existence but for their actions as well.

Withdraw the sustaining power of God for but a moment, and we would cease to be. Withhold the divine concursus by which we act, and we would not so much as utter even the infant's cry of distress. Thus is God the ground of our being, the anchor of our preservation, and the sustaining power of our activity. So absolute and universal is our dependence upon Him that there is engraven upon every fiber of our being the indelible mark of God's unlimited and unconditioned ownership.

We may have the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of Samson, the beauty of Apollo, the riches of Croesus, the imagination of Shakespeare, and the genius of Pasteur. We may win the plaudits of our fellow men and bask in the sunshine of popularity. But we can never obliterate the birthmark proclaiming the nothingness of our origin and the insufficiency of our being. Sounding as overtones of the world's applause is heard in the soul's inner ear the whisper of the Creator claiming the work of His hands: "You and your talents and achievements are all Mine. For without Me, you can do nothing."

The little babe may in time become independent of his parents, and provide for his own needs, but the creature can never become independent of the Creator. The umbilical cord binding the babe to its mother is severed at birth, but the cord of the creature's dependence upon his Creator remains forever intact.

The true picture of man is not that of the lord of the universe. For with all his knowledge and scientific achievements, he still finds himself like an infant enveloped in a world of fathomless mystery. Everything he sees, hears, or touches, if pushed but a step or two, terminates in mystery. He has not yet learned the alphabet of nature's language, nor trained his ear to catch the music of the stars. Brief voyager on a planet lost in the skies, he is born today, to pass tomorrow into the Stygian darkness of the uncomprehending night. The true picture of man is that of an infant crying in the night, with no language but a cry, a cry to the God Who made him.

The title of the Creator's dominion over us is more absolute than any achieved by the creature. The picture painted by the artist, the poem penned by the poet, the statue carved by the sculptor, belong to their owners by virtue of their labor. They must be given, however, the material and the tools upon which they are dependent to achieve their products. Without the proper

materials there would be no paintings, no books of poetry, no statues. God knows, however, no such dependence. Not only does He fashion our natures but He also creates the very substance of our being. Hence God's title of ownership or dominion over us is as complete and absolute as the human mind can conceive.

Paying Our Debt

Now it is an ordinance of nature and a dictate of our moral nature that a debt should be acknowledged and paid. Since we are indebted to God for both our being and our continuance in existence, we should acknowledge that debt and seek to pay it by appropriate actions. That fundamental obligation we fulfill by acts of religion. For the essential element in all religious actions consists in the acknowledgment of our dependence upon God and His sovereignty over us.

What is the meaning of the bowed head, the folded hands, the bent knee? What is the significance of the act of adoration, the hymn of praise, the propitiatory striking of the breast, the song of thanksgiving? Are not all these so many efforts of the creature to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Creator for his life, his faculties, and for all that he may ever achieve? They are the language of adoration spoken with the accents of gratitude and love.

We can illustrate the duty of the creature to acknowledge his dependence upon the Creator by citing the universally recognized duty of a son to show honor and respect to his father. Why is he obliged to pay such homage? Because the father begot him and during the years of his dependence maintained him by his toil. The duty of respect flows therefore from the twofold gift he has received—procreation and maintenance. Acts of kindness, obedience, gratitude and love constitute the currency wherewith the son seeks to pay his debt. If he fail to pay his father the homage of his respect, gratitude and love, he is universally regarded as an ingrate of the blackest hue.

It is a debt from which the father cannot dispense his son. For it is rooted in the very nature of a son's relationship to his father—the relationship of dependence for his existence and maintenance. Hence it does not spring from any wish or whim of the father to be respected. It is grounded in the moral law which binds both father and son. It binds the father to require such respect and it binds the son to render it. That moral law is a reflection of the mind and will of God.

What would you think of a father who did not exact such filial respect? Suppose he were to say to his son: "True, I am your father. By my toil I provided for you during the days of your infancy and early youth. But you do not need to make any acknowledgment. You can ignore me altogether. You can treat me with utter indifference and neglect. You need not speak a kind, grateful or affectionate word to me. When walking with your friends, you need not speak or bow to me or indicate in any way that you so much as know me. You are free to disregard my wishes and to disobey my commands. I shall not complain if you forget all that I have done for you, not even if you return my love with hatred."

Would you not say that such a father was attempting to grant a dispensation which he had no moral right to grant? Would not every man and woman regard him as an unnatural father, a monstrosity, devoid of common sense as well as the normal instincts of fatherhood? The fact is that procreation begets not only the right, but also the duty, of demanding honor, obedience and love from children. By failing to demand such respect the father would sin not less grievously than the son in failing to give it.

More greatly indebted is the creature to the Creator than the child to his father. Not only for his very being but for every act as well is he indebted to his Creator. The father gave of what he had received. God, however, gives of what is absolutely His own. The creature is under a moral obligation to acknowledge his complete and abiding dependence upon the Creator. So absolute is this obligation that not even God can dispense from it. For such a dispensation would constitute a subversion of the whole moral order and would be equivalent to an open denial of God's authority over the work of His hands.

Worship—Internal and External

Let us now set forth the different kinds of worship, conditioned by human nature. Man is a creature composed of body and soul. He is capable therefore of originating two different kinds of acts. Some of his acts, such as thought and volition, may remain entirely in the mental faculties from which they proceed. Others, such as speaking, singing, genuflecting, find outward expression in the body. The former are internal, the latter, external. Corresponding to these two kinds of activity are internal and external worship.

Internal homage consists in the inarticulate thoughts of praise and adoration and in the unspoken affections of the soul leaning in reverence upon the bosom of divine love and listening to the throbbing of the divine heart. External worship expresses the sentiments of reverence, obedience, praise, loyalty and love through vocal prayer, the singing of hymns, and through the moving ceremonies of the Church's ritual service.

Since God is the Author of soul and body, we must render to Him the worship of both. We must give Him the love of the former and the obeisance of the latter. Otherwise we would be defrauding God by paying Him only half of the debt.

Thus it becomes evident that the rendering of homage to God by acts both of internal and external worship, is not a matter of option or caprice. It is a matter of strict obligation. It binds every creature born into this world, whether he be white or black, red, yellow or brown. It binds alike the rich and the poor, the king and the beggar, the scientist in his laboratory and the untutored Redman in the forest. From this universal obligation no court can dispense.

As the debt man owes to the Creator is greater than any he could owe to his fellow man, the obligation for its discharge rests with correspondingly greater weight and pressure upon the conscience of every human. It is man's first obligation in justice, his most important and urgent debt. Hence, St. Thomas ranks religion as the first of all the moral virtues, since by it we pay the first and the most important of all our creditors, our Creator, what is due Him.

An Obligation of Justice and Truth

The duty of rendering homage to God flows not only from the obligation of justice but from that of truth as well. God is the most perfect of all beings. He is wisdom, truth, goodness, beauty and love unutterable. Out of His infinite goodness and generosity He has lifted us from the valley of nothingness to the mountain of being. Out of His infinite love, He vouchsafed to us His divine Son, to die for us upon Calvary's cross. To fail to recognize and acknowledge such goodness and such love is not only an offense against justice but against truth as well. It is man's monumental lie. In comparison with it all others are but as pygmies.

Take the case of a soldier who fought with distinguished bravery for his country in the South Pacific. As a pilot he risked life scores of times by attacking the enemy in the trackless skies,

shooting dozens of them down, and thus saving the lives of thousands of men in the troopships below. At last he himself is shot down in flames. Badly wounded, he manages to drag himself from the burning plane. Through the jungle he gropes his way, suffering hunger, thirst, weariness and the stabbing pain of his wounds.

For months he barely manages to keep alive on a few berries and edible greens. By day the sun scorches his half-naked body. By night he shivers as the cold rain pelts him with icy pellets. Every nerve in his body is aching, while his mind is tortured with the fear of impending death in a wilderness where his body would never be found. At last when the cup of human misery is filled to the overflowing, he drags himself, emaciated and wan, into a settlement of friendly natives. Invalided back to America, he has lost an arm and a limb, while an injured spine condemns him for the rest of his life to a wheelchair.

On being returned to his native land, let us suppose that he receives no word of recognition. No Purple Heart is pinned upon him. No Distinguished Service Medal adorns his uniform. His commander, his fellow officers, his countrymen utter no word of admiration, no word of gratitude, no single acknowledgment of all that he has done and suffered for his country.

What would be the feeling of the victim of such black ingratitude? Would not their failure to express a single word of appreciation cut him to the very quick? Would it not stab him with a pain sharper than any he had endured from wounds, or cold or hunger or thirst in his jungle prison? Sharper than a serpent's tooth is black ingratitude.

Let us now consider the feeling of the American people after they had been apprised of such a case. Would not every man, woman, and child in the land rise up as a single man to pay homage to such a hero? With a single voice they would say: Such heroism should receive the grateful acclaim of the nation. Such bravery under fire should be fittingly recognized. Such suffering and sacrifice should receive the public recognition of the American people as long as they have any regard for justice, merit, and truth. Indeed, if we knew that there was one single such unrecognized hero in our midst, would we not be restless and unable to sleep peacefully until we had ferreted him out and given to him the public recognition which his heroism demanded? Why? Because both justice and truth require it. Not only would his merit entitle him to such recognition, but truth itself would likewise demand that we pay homage to such excellence. If we did not

do so, we would experience not only the rankling sense of injustice but also the torturing guilt of participating in a public lie.

Public Worship—A Duty

God is the one infinitely perfect Being in the universe. All the perfections, such as goodness, kindness, honesty, truth, justice, mercy, generosity, love, which we find existing in a fragmentary manner in creatures exist in God in an infinite degree. In giving us our very being and all the faculties of body and soul, God has given us more and has done more for us than any and all the benefactors and heroes who ever lived. Therefore truth itself demands that we give public recognition to such excellence and such beneficence. It is a dictate of simple honesty. It is the thunderous demand of strict justice.

This truth is well expressed by Dr. F. Hettinger: "As religion consists in the recognition of God as our Creator and the end of all creatures, so its immediate and formal expression is adoration. Man naturally pays homage to real greatness, wherever found; he is naturally attracted by goodness and love, of which he is the object; he naturally admires genius in works which bear its impress. But God is the plenitude of Life, of Love, and Power; when, therefore, man reads His greatness in the marvels of creation, His love and goodness in the order of nature and the pages of history, His providence in the ordering of his own life and in that of others, then he falls prostrate, and exclaims with childlike awe, '*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbath!*' He confesses that both himself and all things are from God, by his prayer, 'Our Father, Who art in heaven'; that all things live and move in God, and are sustained by His might, by the 'Hallowed be Thy Name'; that he and all creatures are destined to serve God here, and to share His glory, by the prayer 'Thy Kingdom come.' And as long as man is man, so long will religion endure, and, with it, the obligation of worship."¹

A Curious Myopia

There has been a curious myopia on the part of many people concerning this obligation. People recognize instantly the malice of theft, drunkenness, and murder. Each would be horrified to be called a thief. Each would slink away in shame if termed a drunkard. Every one would be aghast if called a murderer. Yet

¹ *Natural Religion*, pp. 277, 278.

they seem to perceive little or no malice in withholding from God the worship which is His due.

Thieves they are, nevertheless, and robbers too, not of men but of God. If it be a sin to rob a human being of his due, how much greater a sin it is to rob God of His due? If we judge the malice of an offense by the dignity of the person offended, who is there who can measure the malice of a deliberate offense against the infinite majesty of God? Most crimes are the result of passion which blurs the reason and bends the will like a reed in a gale. They are usually the result of a passing disorder. But the crime of ignoring God and of withholding for a long time the worship due Him can plead no such extenuating circumstances.

Suffice it to say that the sin of irreligion is one of the most grievous which a creature can commit. To those who are less sensitive to the term, *sinful*, and more responsive to the term, *immoral*, we add that it is one of the most profoundly immoral acts which a creature can perform. For such a person places himself in direct and permanent opposition to the whole moral order because he is in opposition to the Author and Underwriter of that order.

The anarchist aims the assassin's bullet not at a private citizen but at the ruler of a nation, because he wishes to destroy law and order and thus plunge the whole nation into disorder and strife. We look upon his dastardly deed with greater loathing because of the more far-reaching consequences of the act. Like the anarchist, the irreligious person points a revolver, loaded with ingratitude and treason, at the heart of the Creator, the one Being Who has the greatest claim upon his gratitude and love. This may sound to worldlings and to irreligious like strong language. It is, however, well within the margin of the facts.

Considering the vast number of people who rarely or never darken the door of a church in our land, there is no truth that needs to be sounded so loudly or so persistently in the ears of the American people as that of the duty of rendering homage and worship to the God Who made them. It is man's first and supreme duty. It is absolute, universal and indispensable. Any one who violates it should feel upon his brow the mark of Cain, in his heart the treason of Benedict Arnold, and in his conscience the guilt of Judas.

Why Neglect God?

The overwhelming majority of the American people believe in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ. They possess many noble vir-

tues and qualities which provoke the admiration of mankind. They are generous almost to a fault. With no thought of selfish gain, they entered World War I, and sent their sons across the sea to free the countries of the Old World from aggression. With lavish hand they poured out their blood and treasure for the freedom of lands they had never previously seen. For the first time in the history of the world, mankind saw a major power emerge from a bloody conflict, into which that people had poured their substance on a gigantic scale, *without taking so much as a grain of sand.*

In World War II they are repeating the story, but on a larger scale. Fighting for the freedom of the Chinese, the Filipinos and the Australians in the Pacific, and for that of the occupied countries of Europe, they are pouring out their wealth on a scale never witnessed before. They are sending millions of their young men to fight in the Seven Seas, on all the battle fields, and in the skies of all the world. All this they are doing without a thought of gaining a penny of booty or a single inch of territory for themselves. It is no wonder that the oppressed peoples of the Orient and the downtrodden countries of the Old World, thrill at the thought of America and marvel at the feats of her people.

This is the flowering of the seed of religious faith and Christian idealism which the founding fathers planted deep in our land. Signs are not wanting, however, that the religious faith, which was once so sturdy in our national life, is waning through the failure of many millions to practice it. Religion, like all living things, grows through use and decays through disuse. The failure to teach religion in our public schools, because of the diversity of denominational creeds, is doubtless one of the important factors in the decay of religious life in our country. While it constitutes a serious administrative difficulty, it is one which, we believe, American resourcefulness and ingenuity can overcome.

Surely a way can be found, fair and equitable to all, whereby religion can be taught to the overwhelming majority of our children, sons and daughters of God-fearing men and women. Otherwise irreligion will grow by leaps and bounds, and the sturdy faith of our pioneer forefathers will be but a nostalgic memory. It will be a sad day for America and its future, when our children know more about Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse than they do about their Creator and His Son, Jesus Christ, our divine Redeemer. Yet that is the direction in which we are traveling at break-neck speed today.

It is time to call a halt. It is time to put first things first.

It is time to put God on the throne of American life, to thank Him for the blessings which He has poured out so lavishly upon our land, to obey His divine commands, and to render to Him the homage of adoration, propitiation, and love which are His due. It is time for us to remember that we can kill a faith by failing to practice it.

— The spiritual distemper of our day is indifferentism. This is the first stage in the sickness that leads to decadence and death. “*Nothing*,” warned Edmund Burke, “*is so fatal to religion as indifferentism, which is at least half infidelity.*” Similar, too, is the admonition of Samuel Johnson: “To be of no church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by Faith and Hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpresed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example.”² It is time for the American people to heed this warning. It is time for them to remember that while they are pouring out their blood and treasure for nations all over the globe, they must not be miserly toward the one Being in the world Who has the first claim upon their gratitude and love, the Creator, Who gave them their very existence and Who has showered upon them such a multitude of blessings.

² *Lives of the Poets: Milton.*

CHAPTER V

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

The Duty of Social Worship

The task and triumph of religion is to make men and nations true and just and upright in all their dealings, and to bring all law as well as all conduct into subjection and conformity to the law of God. Henry J. Van Dyke

Man is both an individual with a certain independence of action and he is a member of society. He has been endowed by God with gifts of mind, heart and will, whereby he can think his own thought, direct his affections to whatsoever object he desires, and make his own decisions, independently of the thoughts and actions of others. But he has likewise been endowed with a social nature, with gifts which enable him to co-operate with his fellows and prompt him to associate with them in all the great enterprises of life. As a matter of fact, he lives and moves and has his being in the society of which he forms a part. He has a craving for the company of others and reaches a richer and fuller life by the use of his social endowments.

From this twofold nature of man arises the duty of private or individual worship and of social or public worship. As we have already presented at sufficient length the duty of internal and of external homage on the part of the individual, we shall develop with equal care the *duty of social worship*.

As man is obliged to acknowledge God's authorship of his body and his mind by using both these natures in conjoint acts of adoration, so man is in duty bound to use his social nature in rendering homage to God. This he does by uniting with his fellows in acts of public prayer, praise and worship. In endowing man with a social nature, God becomes the Author of society. That debt therefore can be paid, not by the individual, but only by the society which bows its corporate head in reverent acknowledgment of its dependence upon God and His dominion over it.

That is why the act of public homage in which the ruler, the civil magistrates and the private citizens join is a well-rounded act of worship, especially pleasing to God and wholesome and salutary to the spiritual and moral life of society. Man is profoundly influenced by the example of his fellows. Social worship stimulates and reinforces individual worship and frequently adds

order and regularity to expressions of devotion which, if left entirely to the individual, might become fitful, desultory and uncertain. Hence the great advantage of having one day of the week set aside for the systematic, public worship of God by all members of society.

In such corporate action the devotion of the individual is greatly intensified by being blazoned forth in congregational singing, the joint recitation of prayer, and the performance of other acts of public worship. So closely knit together are the physical and the psychical natures of man that the external expression of an inward sentiment serves to deepen and stabilize it and render it easier of recall.

"Why No Welcoming Committee?"

Social worship is not therefore to be viewed as a superfluous supplement to private worship, a supplement which springs merely from fashion or convention, and not from the deeper elements of man's nature. It is a profound moral obligation which arises from the social nature with which God has endowed man. We can make this matter somewhat clearer by an illustration.

Let us suppose that the President of the United States announces his intention to pay your city a public visit. He arrives at the depot, but alas and alack! there is no one to greet him and his party. He looks around for the mayor, the civil officials, the welcoming committee of prominent citizens and the usual concourse of private ones. But he looks in vain! People are hurrying to and fro, intent upon their own affairs. A few idlers, who recognize him, stare and pass on.

Finally he hails a couple of Yellow Cabs and he and his entourage go to the mayor's office. There the mayor's attention is divided between his cigar and the morning newspaper. Later on when his eye lights upon the President, he lays down his paper and says:

"Hello! Mr. President, welcome to our fair city."

When the President inquires why there was no welcoming committee, no manifestation of public respect for the Chief Executive of the nation, His Honor replies:

"Oh! We don't believe in those artificial and superfluous expressions. I, the other officials and the citizens here keep our esteem for you in our hearts. It would be silly and meaningless to have any public expression of such homage and esteem."

What do you think would be the President's reaction to such strange procedure? What do you think would be the sentiments

expressed in every newspaper and upon the lips of every citizen of our land? Would they not be indignant against the magistrates and the citizens of that community for their gross lack of elementary respect for the President of our country? Regardless of any differences of political views which might exist, the members of that community, the nation would declare, should pay to the President the public respect which his exalted office justly demands. That is a debt which they owe him, and if they failed to pay it, they would be the objects of the indignation and the scorn of all the other citizens of the land.

From that conclusion, no citizen will dissent. Yet, if it be universally admitted that the President is entitled to that public expression of the respect and esteem of society, how can society withhold the expression of the honor and reverence due to the Creator? Is He not the God of presidents, the King of kings, the Lord of lords? At His name should not every knee bend, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth? Is not God the source of all authority, the fountainhead of all rights? Is it not in His name that kings rule and lawmakers issue just decrees? Does not the whole moral order derive its sanctions from God? What authority is there in human society that does not stream from God? For society to fail then in giving to the King of kings the public expression of its reverence and homage is to fail in its first and most important duty. This is the capital sin.

An Impersonal Force?

So reasonable and obvious is this conclusion that it admits of no equivocation or escape. Why is it then that there are so many of our fellow countrymen who fail to give God the public homage and worship due Him? The causes in our opinion are fourfold. First is the tendency of many people to think of the Deity in terms of a vague power or impersonal force far off in the universe.¹ Secondly, many wonder or doubt if God wants such homage. Thirdly, many fail to realize that they have a strict duty to render public worship to God. Fourthly, many are so engrossed in their own mundane concerns as to forget about God almost completely. Let us look briefly at these considerations.

The conception of God as a force operating throughout the universe, without intelligence and will, and hence devoid of personality, is easily disproven. Wherever we look at nature, whether it be at a blade of grass, a leaf on the tree, a flower, a bird, or man, we see the evidence of plan and purpose, the blue-

¹ See author's article, *God—A Blur in Modern Thought*, in *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, May, 1944.

Radical

By DR. FRANK CRANE

As a radical in good and regular standing with all my dues paid, and with a known and open record, and having often and publicly made full confession of faith, I want to protest against the various groups of loud fellows who occasionally drop in to meeting and claim they are the only real radicals and that the likes of me do not belong.

Radical comes from radix or radish or something like that, meaning root, and a radical, properly speaking, is one who goes to the root of matters.

He is supposed not to stop at half-way compromises, to lodge in no opportunisms, and not to put faith in catchwords and mob formulæ.

I am a radical in religion, for I believe in nothing short of God.

I am a radical in education, for I believe in studying the child and bringing out what's in him, and not in making him study a set curriculum so as to make him twofold more a humbug than we ourselves.

I am a radical in politics, for I believe in democracy, in the U. S. A., and in the people, and repudiate political parties—neither will I follow nor be led by them.

I am a radical in social questions, for I believe that the social organism is a growth, and that socialists, bolsheviks, and other Utopian-thinkers are trying to make something by their clumsy logic saws and theory hammers that can only be grown like a tree.

I am a radical in taxation, for I believe in single tax as the only system which is based on honesty and not robbery and crooked reasoning.

I am a radical in literature, for I believe there is no sense in writing anything except for the purpose of having it read. Tedious, long, involved, inconclusive letters are of no use to me; neither is any sort of smart aleck literature or anything else written, not to say something, but to show off.

I am a radical in morals, for I believe in the whole Ten Commandments; and not in the seventh alone; I believe that purity is based on intelligence and not ignorance; and I believe that most popular moralities are concerned rather with conventions and manners than with fundamental righteousness.

And finally my radicalism does not make me superior, cranky, misunderstood, and different; on the contrary, it keeps me human and makes me like nine-tenths of my readers, who are just as radical as I am.

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 l thrift of German families may
 said to have regained its status.

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print of means carefully arranged to secure a previsioned end. But such a careful dovetailing of a multitude of means to achieve a predetermined end is the unmistakable evidence of intelligence and will. Therefore the Author of nature must be a Personal Being, and not a blind force.

The same conclusion is reached by the following simple line of reasoning. One of the basic principles of logic declares that every effect must have an adequate cause, that the effect cannot transcend the cause any more than water can rise higher than its source. In other words there cannot be anything in the effect which does not exist in some way in the cause. Before a sculptor carves a statue he must have the idea or image of that statue in his mind. Before an artist paints a picture, he must have the picture in his mind. Since man possesses intellect and will and personality, it follows with inescapable logic that the Creator must possess personality. Otherwise we would have an effect without a cause, and all possibility of logical thinking would collapse.

Thousands of years ago the Psalmist proclaimed this mighty truth, which all the findings of science and philosophy have but underlined. "He has made us," declared the Psalmist, "not we ourselves." God is the supreme personality of the universe. We are but tiny echoes of Him. "Trailing clouds of glory do we come," said Wordsworth, "from God Who is our home."

Does God Want Our Homage?

Now in regard to the second point. Does God really want our homage? What does He gain from it? We are so small. God is so great. Isn't it somewhat presumptuous to think that the God of a million worlds and of the immeasurable spaces would be interested and pleased by our expressions of reverence and love? The answer is simple and direct. God does want our worship and our love. He has proclaimed that time after time in Holy Scripture. This is the burden of the prophets and the focal point in the Saviour's message to mankind. This is the duty proclaimed in the first of the ten commandments, given by God to Moses amidst the thunders on Mount Sinai. "I am the Lord, thy God. . . . Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me."

A doctor of the law asked Christ: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

Jesus replied: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. *This is the greatest and the first commandment.*"²

² Matt. xxii. 36-39.

The structure of one's moral character rests upon the shifting sands of expediency if it is not built upon the rock of compliance with this, the greatest and the first commandment. One's whole life is topsy-turvy, if it is not ordered on obedience to God's primal and supreme demand. This mandate is written not only upon the tablets of stone but also upon the fleshy tablets of the human heart. Our whole nature reaches out to Him in aspiration and love. He is our Father and our God.

Does a father want the love of his child? Is he indifferent as to whether his son ever give him any expression of respect, any tribute of love? Let us picture a father returning after the day's toil to his home. His three little children, aged five, seven and nine are at the door. Instead of running to greet him, to take his hand and welcome him with gleeful shouts of joy, they stand motionless and silent. Entering, he holds out his arms to them. But instead of running to them to enfold themselves in his loving embrace, instead of struggling to be the first to climb upon his knee and give him the tender expressions of children's love, they turn and walk silently away.

What would the father think of such behavior? Would it not cut him to the quick? Would it not break his heart? What could hurt him more? Why, the very thought of such unnatural conduct fills you with indignation. What monstrous children must they be, you would exclaim, who could show such ingratitude to the father who begot them and who maintains them in existence by his toil.

A Contrast

Contrast with that the opposite scene. As soon as the children catch sight of their father, they make a mad dash for him. They seize his hands, tackle him about the knees, and seek almost to devour him with their greedy expression of love. His youngest, a daughter, climbs upon his knee and tells him with the eloquence of little arms twined tightly round his neck how much she loves him. Go to that man as he sits there, basking in the sunshine of his children's love, and say to him:

"That's all meaningless . . . silly . . . nonsense."

"Why," he would reply, "you amaze me. Don't you have any mind or any heart? Don't you know that nothing is dearer to a father than the expressions of his children's love. This means more to me than all the yellow gold in the mines of Solomon. This is something which money cannot buy—the sincere and tender expressions of children's love."

Yes, those expressions mean much to the father because they are rooted in the very nature of children's relationship to a father—a relationship which demands the expressions of respect, gratitude and love. Not less, but more, do the expression of His children's homage and love mean to God, our Heavenly Father. What a monstrous conception it would be to think that, after creating us and endowing us with hearts to love and mouths to speak, God would cut us adrift and have no interest in hearing the cry of our love. Why, that would be to degrade Him to a status below our own human fathers.

Deep Calls Unto Deep

The seashell echoes of its ocean home. Deep calls unto deep. The creature cries out to his Creator. To that cry, which is like the mystic radio wave heard round the earth, God turns a listening and a loving ear. Of no fact in life can we be more certain than that God wants the expression of our gratitude and love. This we know from reason and from divine revelation.

Indeed it is the very essence of religion. For without prayer and worship, religion vanishes into thin air. These expressions of trust, obedience, reverence, thanksgiving, atonement, adoration, supplication and love constitute the golden bond that ties the heart of the creature to the heart of God. This is the truth which Tennyson expresses so beautifully:

More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friends?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

A mind greater than that of Tennyson, namely, that of St. John, who rested his head upon the bosom of Christ and felt the throbbing of the divine heart, gives us the basic reason why the creature should pay homage to his God. "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God," declares the beloved disciple, "to receive glory and honor and power: because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were, and have been created." To that divine Being there is due, he tells us, "benediction and glory, and wisdom and thanksgiving, honor and power and strength, forever and ever."

Don't Realize Duty

Now for the third reason why so many people fail to render public homage to God. That reason is because they fail to realize the duty of rendering such worship. This, we are convinced, is the chief reason why so many of our fellow countrymen rarely if ever darken a church door. Receiving scarcely any religious education at home, they attend public schools wherein the teaching of religion is forbidden by law. The result is that they know little or nothing about religion. They do not understand the claims that God has upon them, and not understanding, they do not satisfy them.

Like everything else that is to be understood, religion must be taught—and taught in a thorough and systematic manner. How much of the history of our country would its citizens know, if it were not taught in school? They would have but a hazy and sketchy knowledge of the great and moving events which brought our nation into being. So it is with religion. It is apparently regarded by great numbers of our citizens as exercising no weighty claims upon them. It is an optional affair with them.

They feel free to go once in a while, or to remain away altogether. The latter alternative is unfortunately too often followed. Only in times of crisis, of great emotional upheaval, when the bottom of their world seems to be dropping out, do many of them turn to God.

The fact that man is *physically* free to worship God or not, should never be construed to mean that he is morally free to ignore his Creator. We are physically free to commit theft or murder. But we are under a *moral* restraint. So it is with the worshiping of God. While physically free to turn our backs upon Him, we are under the most serious and compelling moral obligation to render to Him the homage of gratitude, worship and love due Him in strict justice.

This truth perhaps above all others, needs to be driven home to the people of America. This means that a way must be found, and found quickly, if our nation is not to continue to fall deeper and deeper into a form of veneered paganism, of bringing in a systematic manner to the vast masses of our people the saving truths of religion. This is the crying need in America today as it will be in the days ahead. This is the appeal that should be sounded from every pulpit, echoed in the press, flashed upon the screens of our cinemas, and burnt into the conscience of the people of our land.

We need to write upon the skies of America the truth, which the experience of humanity the world over has proven to the hilt: An education which sharpens the intellect but does nothing to strengthen the character, to purify the heart, and to sensitize the conscience to the undertones of the moral law, may render a person more clever but not necessarily a better citizen. The conscience which does not sink its roots into the subsoil of religious faith, nor shot its antennae beyond the roof of the skies, misses alike the music of divine inspiration and the thunder of divine commands. To strengthen the character and to quicken the conscience to the duties of citizenship, religion is of vital value and of supreme importance. "Educate men without religion," observed the Duke of Wellington, "and you make them the creatures of circumstance."

Lest We Forget

A word about the fourth reason why many of our citizens fail to give God the public homage due Him. That is because they are so engrossed in their mundane affairs as to forget about God and their duties to Him. Man has never been short of alibis for busying himself with his material pursuits to the neglect of the divine invitation to spend one hour with Him. Down through the ages come the echoes of those who, in Christ's parable of the supper, spurned the king's invitation to the banquet table: "I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it." "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them." "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."³ Old as Ur of the Chaldees, they are as up-to-date as this morning's newspaper.

Especially subject to absorption in material pursuits are the American people. Busy for a century in pushing forward the frontiers of an expanding civilization, our people move to a tempo which astonishes visitors from other lands. They have compared the bustling energy of our people to bottled lightning. Only when an American lives abroad for a year or two does he begin to realize the abnormal speed at which our nation moves and lives. Pep, speed, and action have become our national watchwords.

We are a nation of "go-getters," engrossed night and day in the frenzied pursuit of the almighty dollar. Unending streams of autos shoot along our streets at a speed that spells danger to the occupants and to the pedestrians. Thus have we been killing more than 30,000 and maiming more than a million a year. Crowds rush hither and fro in our cities. We are eternally on the go. But where? No one seems clearly to know. Many pile

³ Luke xiv. 18-21.

up wealth which exceeds all the needs of body, mind and soul. In a little more than a century we have become the richest and the mightiest nation on the face of the earth. Virtually all others now look to America for favors, help and largesses.

It is time for the American people to remember that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. It is time to remember that they have souls as well as bodies. It is time to remember the God Who has showered such riches, wealth and prosperity upon our land as no other nation in all history has ever known. When Great Britain was at the zenith of her imperial power, exercising a tributary sway over one-fourth of the earth's surface and population, Rudyard Kipling, the poet laureate, sounded a note of warning in the famous *Recessional*, lest the nation forget the Source from Whom all power and blessings flow. He wrote:

God of our Fathers! Known of old,
Lord of the far-flung battle line
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine.
Lord God of hosts! Be with us yet,
Lest we forget. Lest we forget!

A Warning to America

That is the note that needs to be sounded in America today. We must not forget the divine Being Who has poured out His blessings and favors upon us with so lavish a hand. Common decency requires us to acknowledge our indebtedness to our Creator and to return to Him the homage of our worship, gratitude and love. That is the note that we fain would sound today through all the sections of American life, that every man, woman and child would fall upon their knees to thank God both for the blessings they have received as individuals and as members of the most favored nation on earth.

Such is the dictate of our minds. Such too is the clamorous demand of our hearts. As America has achieved the first place among the nations of the world for its wealth, let it now achieve eminence for its gratitude to God. For upon the brow of a nation distinguished for its power and influence there rests no crown so regal as that which is composed of the gold of gratitude and the pearl of humility.

The failure to render such homage constitutes a double sin—the sin of ingratitude and of injustice. Against such a sin there is warning America today a voice mightier and more impressive than that of Kipling. It is the voice of the great Apostle of the Gentiles who is addressing to America today the warning he uttered to the Romans of old: “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and the injustice of those men that detain the truth of God in injustice: because that which is known of God is manifest in them. For God hath manifested it unto them. For the visible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity; so that they are inexcusable. Because that when they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God or given thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools . . . who changed the truth of God into a lie; and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen.”⁴

⁴ Romans i. 18-25.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION AND MORALITY

Christianity is the good man's text; his life is the illustration. Charles Montesquieu

What is the relation between religion and morality? Are they separate and independent? While there has been some confused thinking which has pictured them as unrelated, the fact is that they are so intimately related as to constitute but different aspects of the same basic reality. As it is of enormous practical importance both for religion and for morality to understand their true relation, we shall discuss this point at some length and offer a few illustrations.

First, a definition. Morality may be defined as human conduct in so far as it is freely subordinated to the ideal of what is right. It is antecedent to ethics, and denotes those concrete actions of which ethics is the science. The evolutionary, positivist and idealist schools have brought much confusion into popular thought by seeking to substitute an independent morality for that based on belief in God.

Ethical Culture Societies have carried on a propaganda whose general thesis is that people can be made good citizens by inculcating in them ethical ideals and standards with no reference to God or the supernatural. In the education of the young they would substitute discussions of codes and criteria of ethics, for religious training. They would take the eyes of youth away from God and place them entirely on man.

We can perhaps best show the close relationship between religion and morality by pointing out that the *obligation for both types of conduct stems ultimately from God*. Thus, after Christ had enunciated the duty of loving God with one's whole heart and soul as the first and the greatest commandment, He added: "And the second is like to this: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets."¹ To love one's neighbor implies the duty of being just, fair, kind and generous to him in all the relations of life. To do this is not merely a dictate of right reason, but it is also a divine command.

A Divine Command

In His Sermon on the Mount, Christ proclaimed the law which may be said to be the basic rule in all human relations and the

¹ Matt. xxii. 39-41.

fundamental principle of all *morality*. It is the famous golden rule: "*All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets.*"² From these two utterances of the divine Founder of the Christian religion it is clear that one's relations with his fellow man are not merely matters of expediency or of social propriety. *They are regulated by a divine command which binds every rational creature, regardless of race, color or creed.*

Now in obeying that divine ordinance we are acknowledging, with the eloquence of deeds and not merely of words, God's sovereign dominion over us. We are rendering to Him a most pleasing homage. It is a homage comparable to that which we give to God when we praise, adore and love Him. The worship of God is direct homage. A good moral act, such as a kindness to one's neighbor, is *indirect* homage. God exacts of His creatures not only the direct homage of worship but also the indirect homage of virtue and morality.

Thus the love which we bestow upon our fellow man may be said to be the completion of the homage which we render to God when we love Him directly and immediately. The common Fatherhood of God makes us all His children and therefore imposes upon all of us the duty of loving one another as brothers.

We are to see in the countenance of the poorest and the most afflicted of men the lineaments of the face of Christ. We are to minister to the outcast, to the hungry, the thirsty, the naked and to those in prison as we would minister to Christ Himself. For Christ has assured us: "*As long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me.*"³ It was the realization of this truth which held St. Peter Claver at his post of duty ministering to the Negro slaves at Cartagena with the tenderness and kindness with which he would have ministered to the wounded Christ. It was this realization which has prompted all the saints of God to love His children and to spend themselves in sacrificial service for them.

"Bring Him In"

During the American assault on Attu Island, our soldiers came across a Jap, named Ito, badly wounded in his foxhole. He and a companion had exhausted their ammunition. Each had held his last grenade against his stomach and pulled the pin. Ito's proved to be a dud. But his comrade's grenade exploded, disemboweling

² Matt. vii. 12.

³ Matt. xxv. 40.

him and shattering Ito's leg. When our soldiers found him several days later, he was still clutching his dud grenade.

His leg had now become a greenish, muddy, bloody mass of gas gangrene. The stench was terrific.

"Throw that stinking mess overboard," barked out a wounded gunner on the hospital ship, "before he suffocates us all."

"Gimme my trench knife," yelled an infantryman with a bayonet slash in his hip, "and I'll operate on the . . ."

A few nights before, the Japs had broken through our lines and slaughtered some of our unarmed medical corpsmen. The situation was tense—loaded with the dynamite of hatred, needing only a spark to ignite the fuse.

Lights had burned all night over the operating table. Finally the last American had been lifted from it. Dr. Cass Stimson, the chief surgeon, stepped forward.

Did he have the right to use the blood plasma, donated by an American to save an American's life, for the hated Jap? Did he have the right to endanger his life and those of his assistants by coming in contact with the highly infectious gas gangrene? Wasn't it their business to *kill* Japs, not to *save* them?

Here, too, were the passions of hatred and vengeance pounding at the central dogma of the Christian faith, the teaching that all men are brothers. Would religion gird him with the power to resist the flaming passions of nationalism and the clamor of hatred and vengeance?

"Bring him in," ordered Dr. Stimson.

When the operation was over, tears of joy streamed down Ito's cheeks as he grasped the surgeon's arm, and sobbed, "A-mer-REEK-A! A-mer-REEK-A!"

Here was the flowering of the central teaching of the Christian religion into a deed of service, kindness and love for one's enemy. So knit together are we all as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, that we cannot unjustly harm any of our fellow men, even the most loathesome of our enemies, without injuring ourselves. Any cruelty inflicted upon that helpless Jap—even the refusal to relieve his pain—would have degraded those who inflicted it. There is no cave deep enough for us to hide in, when the cry of suffering is heard, even though it be the cry of our enemy. Thus does religion stretch out her hands, full of healing, of beneficent service, of loving kindness to all mankind.

The Homage of Virtue

Well does St. John declare: "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he that loveth not his

brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, Whom he seeth not?" Then the Beloved Disciple sums up the case thus briefly and simply: "And this commandment we have from God, that he, who loveth God, love also his brother." ⁴

No man therefore can be said to render to God the perfect homage of love, if that love does not extend to his fellow men and embrace even his enemies. From all this it is clear that our moral duties to our fellow men are based ultimately not upon the theoretical conclusions of ethicists, the dictates of self-interest, or even the ordinances of human reason, but upon the express will of God. Remove God from the scheme of human life and you remove the basis not only of religion but of morality as well.

The concept that religion is largely a matter of lip service to Almighty God, of oral prayer and hymn singing, with little or no connection with moral conduct is a grotesque caricature of Christ's teaching. "By their fruits," the Master declared, "you shall know them." Then He reminded His hearers and all His followers in future ages: "Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." ⁵

This truth is central in the teachings of Christ. It is stressed by every writer on the spiritual life. It is echoed by Thomas à Kempis in his great masterpiece, *The Following of Christ*: "Sublime words make not a man holy and just, but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God."

Hence God wants not only the worship of prayer, but also the homage of virtue. To render Him the former without the latter is to hand Him a branch from which the fruit has been plucked. It is like the action of the man who places on the collection plate on Sunday an envelope, orthodox and imposing enough on the outside, but empty within. Religion is not an empty sham. It is a living tree, producing the fruit of morality, and both the tree and the fruit derive their vitality from God.

God and the Moral Law

As this point is of great practical importance, let us supplement the above considerations, drawn from the revelation of Christ, with the evidence of a philosophical character. We have already indicated that man is indebted to God both for his exist-

⁴ John iv. 20.

⁵ Matt. vii. 20-22.

ence and his faculties. Furthermore, he is dependent upon God for the operation of his faculties.

The nature of this dependence we may illustrate with the following example. A watch owes its existence to a watchmaker. But if that watch is to operate, the watchmaker must do more than simply put together the various parts of its mechanism. He must convey to the spring a portion of his own energy which is there stored up in the form of tension. It is only in virtue of this stored up power that the watch can function.

In a somewhat similar manner, the Creator must place His own energy at the disposal of His creatures, if they are to be able to use the faculties with which they are endowed. Without the divine concursus the creature could not perform a single act. Hence God's co-operation is essential in all our thoughts and actions. As God is infinite holiness and perfection, the action in which He co-operates cannot be a matter of indifference to Him. He must necessarily will that it be in accordance with His own divine nature. *Hence the Creator's will must be the ultimate norm of all the conduct of His creatures.*

This is true, irrespective of the specific natures of the creatures. Whether they be living or inanimate, rational or irrational, they are all under the Creator's jurisdiction and must conform to His will. The expression of the divine will is accommodated to the specific nature of each creature. In beings devoid of reason, God's direction finds expression in the physical determination of the precise manner in which they are to act, so that they cannot swerve therefrom by so much as a hair's breadth. In creatures endowed with intellect and free will, the divine direction is reflected in the moral law, enunciated by the practical reason.

"It is a law," observes Bernard J. Otten, S.J., "written in the intellect after the manner of knowledge, and communicated to the will as a moral obligation."⁶ While leaving man physically free, it binds him to a type of conduct from which he may not swerve. What is the binding force of that law? It is identical with the binding force of the Creator's sovereign will, since it is but the manifestation of that will in rational nature.

Morality, like religion, is thus seen to consist essentially in the free acknowledgment of man's dependence on God. Both are thus linked together in a union strong and inseparable.

Two sea shells, though of different size and color, tell by their echo of the common ocean home from which they come. So religion and morality, differ though they may in outward form and

⁶ *The Reason Why*, B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, Mo., p. 84.

expression, tell by the echo of the binding force within them both, of the *common* source from which they come—God, the Ruler of the far-flung heavens and the Moral Governor of the questing hearts of men. The slanting rays of light, that splash the skies at sunset with the colors of the rainbow, point like fingers to their fountain. So religion and morality, that paint on the multicolored canvas of human life the shining deeds of man's love of God and of his fellow man, point like stabbing arrows of light to the common Source of all Light, the Author of all holiness, the Fountain of all perfection—the Light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.

The Need of Sanctions

This vital truth may be established with equal clarity by the consideration of the *need of adequate sanction to make the moral law effective*.⁷ By sanction we mean a proper reward for the observance of the law, and a condign punishment for its violation. Since the moral law extends to all rational activity, whether internal or external, it follows that its sanction must do likewise. But most of man's actions, whether good or bad, escape the eyes of men. This is true of all of man's unexpressed thoughts wherein so much of his life consists. It is true likewise of most of his private actions. If the only sanction is that which comes from human justice, then most of man's rational life would be devoid of proper reward or punishment.

The seeds of action lie in thought. Whoever seeks to control his action must therefore begin by shepherding his thoughts. "As a man thinketh in his heart," says the author of the Book of Proverbs, "so is he." Thoughts constitute the core of one's mental life, issuing forth later in words and deeds. The policeman cannot arrest a man for murderous thoughts or larcenous desires. For he knows nothing of them and can take therefore no cognizance of them.

God, however, labors under no such disadvantage. He holds a man to strict accountability for his thoughts and secret desires. "You have heard," said Christ, "that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."⁷ *It is only God Who can surround that segment of man's rational life with adequate sanctions.*

Proponents of a system of morality independent of religion are fond of quoting the adage: Virtue is its own reward; vice, its own

⁷ Matt. v. 27-29.

punishment. This cannot, however, stand close scrutiny. For in this life, this is only partly true. Instances all too numerous can be found, by any one who takes the trouble to investigate, of persons who violate the moral laws and grow fat upon their ill-gotten gains. Indulging their appetites and passions, they scarcely know the meaning of self-denial or self-sacrifice. The just man not infrequently lives in penury, and the martyr dies at the stake.

Moreover such an abstracted and doubtful speculation is not likely to deter a person from the satisfaction of an inveterate passion. Will the average person struggling with the raging passion of anger, jealousy, hatred, revenge, or lust be aided in quelling the tumult within him by such a consideration? All around him he sees persons taking what they want and, in the language of the day, "getting by" with it. Why should he be an exception? How warm and enticing is the voice of human passion? How cold and unappealing, if not positively unreal, is the voice of such a speculation.

"Carve the Granite with a Razor . . ."

What such a man needs, and needs desperately, is the clear, stern voice of God, reminding him that he cannot throw dust in the eyes of the Almighty, and that he will be punished with unfailing certainty for any violation of the moral law by an omniscient and eternal God. To Him our most secret thoughts are as the pages of an open book. Considerations of conventional propriety are no more capable of restraining the individual in whose bosom a tumultuous passion is raging than are chains of straw. No brass-buttoned policeman is near. No prying eye of a neighbor will detect his deed. No empty, verbal rhetoric will restrain him. Only the thunder of God's stern command, heard in the inner ear, is competent to encompass the whole cycle of man's rational life, both internal and external, with sanctions that grip the muscles of his will like bands of steel.

One may echo the words of Kipling's poem about wishing to be "east of Suez, where there ain't no ten commandments." But he would speedily find, if he went there, that God's commands and His mighty sanctions embrace the globe, and know no barrier of border, breed or race. When the storms of human passion are beating tempestuously against our frail bark, threatening at any moment to capsize it, it is only the divine voice commanding "Peace! Be still," that is able to save the day.

Knowledge, without religion, will no more sanctify than painted fire will burn, or the sight of water cleanse. Mere human knowledge or intellectual subtlety will not avail. No one has brought

this out more strikingly than the great scholar of Oxford, Cardinal Newman, when he said: "Carve the granite with a razor, moor the vessel with a thread of silk, then you may hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passions and the pride of men." In that immortal utterance there is epitomized a whole volume.

Those words came back to the writer when walking one July day in the famous cemetery of Pere La Chaise in Paris. Here are buried many of the notables of France. Suddenly we came upon the grave of one we least expected to find in the soil of France. It was that of Oscar Wilde. Poet, playwright, orator, he wrote and spoke our language with a brilliance and an eloquence which have rarely been surpassed. He was a symbol of refinement, learning, and culture. Yet he fell to the lowest depths of degradation and fled in shame and disgrace to seek refuge in the alien soil of France. The weeds, growing high and luxuriously upon his neglected grave, seemed to proclaim with myriad tongues:

"Education, refinement, culture cannot save. Intellectual subtlety, cleverness, sophistication offer little protection against the tumultuous waves of human passion. They are but broken reeds in a storm. A man may walk intellectually among the stars and grovel morally among the swine. The mighty power of religion which purifies the mind, chastens the heart, tames the passions, and energizes the weak muscles of the will with a divine strength, is an indispensable requisite for a life of sustained moral rectitude. Let the nations of the world know that they are but heading the way of Nineveh and Tyre if they seek to educate their youth without the saving leaven of religious truth."

✓ True, a religious person may stumble and fall. For he is a man and not an angel. But he will not remain complacent in the mire. His conscience will give him no peace until he rises and with his tears and penitence washes away his defilement. Religion bears down upon him with its stern requirements for contrition, purpose of amendment and penance. Not content with general resolutions for betterment, it demands the avoidance of the proximate occasions of sin. Stay away, it thunders, from whatever has led to your downfall in the past.

For frail mortals, perfection is achieved not by never falling, but by rising every time we fall. It is the man who refuses to stay down who eventually wins the fight. Religion will not let a sincere believer remain prostrate. It lifts him up and puts his unsteady feet upon the right path. It puts courage in his soul, and

strengthens the will for more determined effort. Peter thrice denied his Lord. But tears of repentance wore furrows in his cheeks, and he climaxed a life of heroic service in the Master's cause by shedding his blood for the faith of Christ.

Religion—Basis of Morality

Religion is the basis of morality. If morality is to be functional, it must have the sanctions which only religion can provide. This truth has been borne out by the experience of the centuries. It is writ large in the history of the rise and decline of civilizations. It has been recognized by all the profound students of society, regardless of philosophical or religious belief. "He who destroys religion," observes Plato, "overthrows the foundations of human society. Recurring to this theme, he declares: "It is an incontrovertible truth that if God presides not over the establishment of a city, and if it has only a human foundation, it cannot escape the greatest calamities. . . . If a State is founded on impiety and governed by men who trample on justice, it has no means of security." ⁸

Long before Plato, the Royal Prophet had expressed this same truth: "Unless the Lord build, the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it." ⁹

The social philosopher, J. J. Rousseau, voices this truth in a brilliant passage in *Emile*: "Attempts have been made to constitute reason the basis of virtue, but I find that religion is the only solid basis for morality. Virtue, it is said, is the love of order. But am I bound to sacrifice my happiness to this order? Granted that wherever intelligence exists, there is a certain moral order; but the difference is that the just man subjects himself to the whole moral order, whilst the unjust man subordinates the whole moral order to himself, and constitutes himself the center of all things. If God does not exist, then the unjust man reasons rightly in thus regarding himself."

It will come as a surprise to most admirers of our public school system to learn that Horace Mann, who is generally regarded as its founder, laid down the stern warning: "If the intellect, however gifted, be not governed by a sense of justice, a love of mankind, and a devotion to duty, its possessor is only a more splendid, as he is a more dangerous barbarian. *For we are fully persuaded that the salt of religious truth can alone preserve education from abuse.*" The rejection of that saving salt, unwittingly brought

⁸ *Ibid.*, tom. VIII.

⁹ Psalm cxxvi. 1.

about by the diversity of creeds and the resulting administrative difficulty, has caused such a decline in the morality of the youth of our land that educators, social planners and legislators are now struggling desperately to find a way to restore the lost heaven.

That penetrating student of political science, Edmund Burke, proclaimed this truth to the people of Britain, when he declared: "True religion is the foundation of society, the basis on which all true civil government rests and from which power derives its authority, laws their efficacy, and both their sanction. If it is once shaken by contempt, the whole fabric cannot be stable or lasting."

"Reason and Experience Both Forbid . . ."

The voice which will strike the most responsive chord in the hearts of the American people is that of the beloved Father of our country, George Washington. In his *Farewell Address*, Washington took particular pains to warn his countrymen of the importance of religion for political welfare and as a basis for public morality. Above the portals of every school, library, and public building, and framed on the walls of every home in our land, should be these memorable words of our first President:

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, *reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles.*"

Those are words of mellow wisdom, which America can afford to neglect only at a cost of national morality and welfare. The unfortunate circumstances, which have unintentionally issued in the complete divorce of religion from public education, are bringing youthful morality to the lowest ebb in our nation's history. Appearing recently before a Congressional Committee in Washington, Mr. Edgar Hoover, F. B. I. chief, testified to the alarming increase of juvenile delinquency and pleaded for remedial action. "Return to the old-fashioned home and Church life," declared Mr. Hoover, "is essential if we are to provide an effective remedy for the situation."

In a recent symposium, *Democracy—Will It Survive?*, Walter Lippmann sounds the same urgent note of warning. "I venture to

submit," he declares, "that the prevailing education is destined, if it continues, to destroy western civilization, and is in fact destroying it. . . . *By separating education from the classical religious tradition*, the school cannot train the pupil to look upon himself as an inviolable person because he is made in the image of God. . . . The teacher has no subject matter that even pretends to deal with the elementary and universal issues of human destiny. The graduate of the modern school knows only by accident and hearsay whatever wisdom mankind has come to in regard to the nature of men and their destiny."

The testimony of careful students of society, men of every shade of political and philosophical faith, could be piled sky high to the effect that religion is the basis of public morality and the foundation of good citizenship. The witnesses we have cited, however, will suffice to carry conviction to all open minds. There is in their testimony a note of warning, and a call for action, which cannot longer be delayed if we are to protect our nation from the growing tide of delinquency, lawlessness and crime.

A Reasoned Conclusion

To sum up. We have shown from the words of Christ that man is under a divine command to love his fellow man as well as God. In other words the obligation to be moral and the duty to be religious stem from the same source—God Himself. We then presented the philosophical evidence showing that since God's co-operation is essential for our every act, He cannot be indifferent as to the character of our conduct, but must will it to be in accordance with His nature. *Therefore the divine will constitutes the norm for the conduct of all creatures.* In irrational living creatures as well as in inanimate ones that divine norm finds expression in the physical determination of the precise method of acting, from which no deviation is possible. *In rational creatures the divine will finds expression in the moral law, known by the intellect and communicated to the will, resulting in moral, but not in physical obligation.*

The second philosophical consideration was drawn from the necessity for adequate sanctions for all rational activity, which only God and religion can provide. We then presented the testimony from the history of civilization, as expressed by philosophers, social scientists, educators and statesmen, showing that religion is a necessary basis for public morality and good citizenship. From all this we have seen that morality is the fruit which grows upon the tree of religion, and that the best way of cultivating that fruit is by nourishing the tree upon which it grows.

CHAPTER VII

THE VALUE OF RELIGION

Religion is the final center of repose; the good to which all things tend; apart from which man is a shadow, his very existence a riddle, and the stupendous scenes of nature which surround him as unmeaning as the leaves which the sibyl scatters in the wind. Robert Hall

What is the value of religion? We can best answer this question by indicating its values first to the individual and then to society. *Its supreme worth to the individual lies in the fact that it answers his deepest questionings:* Whence have I come? Whither am I going? What is the meaning and the purpose of human existence? Unless these questions are correctly answered, man walks about in a daze and life becomes a jig-saw puzzle from which essential parts are missing. Uncertainty paralyzes the springs of action, and no man can chart his course intelligently if he is ignorant of his destination.

Religion floods our darkness with a divine light. It reveals to us the God Who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End of our existence. Not only does it disclose to us our ultimate destiny, but it also provides us with the means of attaining it. Religion brings into the focus of attention the two supreme values—God and the human soul. It makes clear to us that only in the possession of God, Who is infinite Beauty, Truth and Love, will the human soul find the answer to its ceaseless questing.

Thus does it enable us to form a true hierarchy of values by appraising all things in accordance with the degree in which they aid us in the achievement of eternal life. It enables us to put first things first. It guides us in offering our supreme loyalty to God and in putting ourselves in the right relationship to God. "If you are not right toward God," wrote Lord Chatham to his nephew, "you can never be so toward man; and this is forever true, whether wits and rakes allow it or not."

Without religion we cannot be right toward God, toward man or toward ourselves. With religion and with the faithful fulfillment of all of its commands, we look out upon life and the universe with a serene eye and a peaceful heart. Clasp His almighty hand, we know that no evil can befall us. We can see His face in earth and sky, His laughter in the running brook, and His voice in every song bird's call. For to the believer, as Hood¹ points out:

¹ Thomas Hood, *Ode to Rae Wilson*, 1, 385.

Each cloud-capped mountain is a holy altar,
An organ breathes in every grove;
And the full heart's a Psalter,
Rich in deep hymns of gratitude and love.

Strengthens Character

Secondly, *religion helps the individual in the proper formation of his character by supplying him with adequate incentives for the observance of the moral law.* Character means that a man acts according to principle, not on motives of expediency. But this demands that the principles of morality be clothed with proper sanctions to secure their observance even in the teeth of passion, at the risk of unpopularity with the crowd, yes, in the face of death itself. Religion alone, as we have pointed out previously, can supply the sanctions which are co-extensive with all man's actions, whether they be private or external, whether they be seen by the eyes of our neighbor or known only to God and conscience.

There is but one rule of conduct for a man: "Always do the right thing. The cost may be high in money, in friends, in sacrifice. The cost not to do right, however, is infinitely higher. For a temporal gain we barter the infinities." But how are we going to develop the character and acquire the strength to pay so dearly in pleasure, in popularity, in life itself, if we do not sink the roots of our being in the infinite might and wisdom of God Himself?

Seed that is placed on rocks and stones cannot develop a harvest. Neither can the character that rests upon motives of opportunism develop the power necessary to fight through to victory when money, power and good weather friends have fled. In contrast with the worldling's dependence upon external factors, the religious person knows that God and one constitute a majority, and that with God on his side, he cannot fail. Who is there who can hurt you, if you be zealous of good?

The importance of religion for character is thus ably set forth by Daniel Webster: "Political and professional fame cannot last forever, but a conscience void of offense before God and man is an inheritance for eternity. *Religion, therefore, is a necessary, an indispensable element in any great human character.* There is no living without it. Religion is the tie that connects man with his Creator, and holds him to his throne. If that tie is sundered or broken, he floats away a worthless atom in the universe, its proper attractions all gone, its destiny thwarted, and its whole future nothing but darkness, desolation and death. A man with no sense of reli-

gious duty is he whom the Scriptures describe in so terse but terrific a manner, as 'living without hope and without God in the world.' Such a man is out of his proper being, out of the circle of all his duties, out of the circle of all his happiness, and away, far, far away from the purposes of his creation."

Without the zest which only religion can give, the individual puts up but a faint-hearted struggle. He feels bewildered, helpless and alone. "No one," observes Jean Paul Richter, "is so much alone in the universe as a denier of God. With an orphaned heart, which has lost the greatest of fathers, he stands mourning by the immeasurable corpse of the universe."²

During World War II, as during the previous one, the press has recorded thousands of instances wherein soldiers, sailors and aviators have testified to the strength and help received from God in circumstances of dire plight. Fighting with their backs to the wall, at the end of their own tether, men have turned instinctively to God for strength to endure and courage to carry on. When his soldiers were being hemmed in on all sides, their ammunition running out, their food almost gone, their strength exhausted, and they still fought on, General MacArthur made the significant announcement: "*There are no atheists in the foxholes of Bataan.*" No, for it takes character to fight on when all seems lost. And character is rooted in faith in God and in His ultimate vindication of right.

Writing to his former teacher, Father R. C. McCarthy, S.J., at Marquette University, a young bombardier who had gone out on repeated missions of the utmost danger over Germany, said: "Believe me, Father, when you're miles up in the air with flak bursting all around and fighters spraying you with hot lead, rockets, and 20 mm. cannon shells, it is mighty comforting to know that there is Someone in Whom you can put your trust and realize that He is watching you! It's at times like that a fellow fully realizes what his religion means to him." In the words of that young gladiator of the skies, there is reflected the sentiment of the myriads of warriors who in all ages have battled at the very brink of the abyss and knew not at what moment they might disappear into its all-embracing darkness.

Sharpens Individual Responsibility

Thirdly, *religion sharpens the sense of individual responsibility.* By its central teaching that God will reward or punish the individual according to his deserts, and that no one can hide behind the

² *Flower, Fruit and Thorn Pieces.*

skirts of his neighbor, religion quickens the sense of accountability which the tendency to shift the blame and to forge alibis is so common for one's own deeds. This is of enormous importance in a society in motion. Since society is but an aggregate of individuals, the place at which to begin the improvement of society is with the individual. All social reforms, to be effective, must grip the conscience of the individual and start him on the upward plane. Otherwise there is noise, agitation and excitement, but no real improvement.

The answer to the Totalitarian heresy that man was made for the State lies in the truth which Christian philosophy has taught for twenty centuries that man, and not the State, has been endowed with an immortal soul. "There will never be," observes Thoreau, "a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived." Another New England thinker, Henry Ward Beecher, expressed this truth when he wrote:

Christ did not die for laws and governments.
He did not die to build a nation up.
He died for men, the separate souls of men.

When this basic truth of Christianity is lost sight of, man becomes the mere chattel of the all-powerful State which uses him as mere cannon fodder in a war about which he has never even been consulted. "There is something appallingly wrong," declares Alfred Noyes, "something tragically wrong with a world in which hundreds of millions of those individuals for whom Christ died to save, are hurled helplessly into bloodshed by half a dozen men whose plans and motives have been completely hidden from all but perhaps another half dozen; so that entire nations, which in their general level of individual character and intelligence—not to speak of their outstanding individuals, a Beethoven, a Pasteur, a Shakespeare, a Galileo—have far surpassed the general level of the half dozen manipulators of the political machinery, suddenly find themselves helplessly slaughtering one another."³

Social Value of Religion

Now let us look at the values of religion to society. First, *religion ennobles the relations between man and man by teaching that we are all the children of God and therefore are all brothers.* The implications of this central dogma of religion are tremendous.

³ *The Edge of Darkness*, E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1942, p. 35.

It was the perception of these implications which was chiefly responsible for the abolition of slavery and of a thousand other forms of blatant human injustice. How could a man enslave a person and treat him as a beast of burden when his religion proclaimed in the inner citadel of his conscience that that person was his brother and was as dear in the eyes of God as he?

It is this central teaching of Christianity that constitutes the basis of human dignity and therefore the basis of true democracy. When the essential dignity of the human personality is lost sight of, men are regarded as chattel, serfs and slaves, and the evils of dictatorship and totalitarian regimes follow apace. *In vain will we crush military dictatorships if we do not root out the ideological heresy which constitutes their spawning ground.* We must keep forever before the eyes of men the true basis of the dignity of every man, be he peasant or king.

That basis lies in the fact that personality is the high creation of Almighty God, Who has vested therein the dignity of a human soul, endowed with understanding and free will. That soul is created in the image of God, and transcends all earthly commodities as heaven transcends earth. Since an infinite God saw fit to vest in that temple of clay the tremendous gift of free will, by which the creature becomes the sculptor of his own destiny and can choose either Heaven or Hell, can obey God or defy Him, how can a mortal man undertake to impose upon him a compulsion which God Himself refused? If the infinite Creator thus respects the freedom of the human personality, how can a mere creature undertake to shackle it with the chains of slavery?

Be it noted, however, that man's essential dignity stems ultimately from God, Whose image and superscription he bears. Remove God from the scheme of human life and you remove the basis of man's unique dignity. Man becomes a chattel, a beast of burden. Dictatorships and totalitarian regimes, which ride roughshod over the individual and enslave him, are the ruthless tracing out in society of the logical implications of the banishing of God from human life. Remove the sun and you extinguish the reflected glory of the moon. Remove God and you strip from man every vestige of that reflected glory wherein his unique dignity lies.

Elevates Family Life

Secondly, *religion elevates and ennobles the family life.* It emphasizes the sacredness of the marriage contract and stands steadfast for the permanence of the Christian home. It proclaims to both husband and wife their solemn obligation to shoulder the

responsibilities of marriage and bids them to pass on in a generous manner the precious heritage of life. It stresses the duty of parents to set a good example to their children and to train them in virtue and holiness of life. Offering uncompromising opposition to marital infidelity, religion constitutes the strongest bulwark for the life-long union of husband and wife.

It reminds a married couple that the observance of that solemn vow which they make, when they take one another "for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death," is an obligation which transcends all considerations of pleasure or expediency. It is the test of character and the hallmark of honor. Only in homes where children have the care and guidance of both father and mother do they get that well-balanced upbringing which is so important a factor in the development of good citizens.

If children see their own parents breaking their solemn vow of life-long love and loyalty and entering into new unions, how can the offspring of such broken vows and broken homes escape the demoralizing influence of such examples? All too often they are thrown out to shift for themselves, soon to appear in courts as delinquents, incorrigibles and criminals. Religion raises its voice against such marital delinquents and warns them in stern tones that Almighty God will demand a strict accounting for the precious souls entrusted to their charge.

She points out that there would rarely, if ever, be juvenile delinquents if parents did their full duty and were careful to rear their children in the fear and love of God. Religion is the strongest cement holding together the members of a family. It safeguards the sanctity of the family fireside and converts it into a house of God and a gateway to Heaven. The home is the solid bedrock upon which civilization rests. In safeguarding the home, therefore, religion constitutes the strongest bulwark for the protection of society against inward decay and the mightiest rampart for the preservation of human civilization itself.

Renders Morality Functional

Thirdly, *religion provides society with the most effective sanctions for the observance of law and the fulfillment of duty.* The performance of one's duty is in the last analysis a matter of conscience. If conscience does not prompt one to fulfill his duty to his fellow man, what force can compel him? Policemen, you say, and constables. But if the voice of conscience be stilled, who will

police the policemen, and who will watch the constables? The simple fact is that no external guardian of the law can take the place of that internal monitor which touches off the springs of action and holds the reins of conduct.

Quickly would society fall into the abyss of anarchy and strife if conscience did not curb the rapacity, restrain the animosities, and hold in leash the tumultuous passions of men. But what is the agency which quickens the conscience and keeps it responsive to the gentle tug of the moral law? That agency is religion. To seek to quicken conscience without an appeal to God and the sanctions which religion provides is like a person seeking to lift himself by pulling at his bootstraps.

Convince a citizen of the existence of a Divine Legislator, the Supreme Source of all law, by Whom "Kings reign, and lawmakers decree just things."⁴ Convince him of the truth of the inspired utterance of St. Paul that "there is no power but from God, and that those that are, are ordained of God, and that, therefore, he who resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God."⁵ Convince him that an incorruptible Judge, Who knows all his thoughts, words, and deeds, will mete out to him, with unfailing accuracy the rewards or the punishments which are his dues. Convince him of these truths and you place within him a guardian of law and a sentinel of duty, which never sleeps but which walks with him in the sanctuary of the home, in the crowded market place, in the arena of public life and in the loneliest mountain pass.

Because religion convinces us of these great truths, it provides us with the strongest incentives for the observance of law and the fulfillment of all the duties of good citizenship. Thus does religion constitute the firm foundation of society and its best insurance against the corrosive influence of vice and crime. Thousands of years ago the author of the *Book of Proverbs* proclaimed this truth when he said: "Righteousness exalteth a nation."⁶ Only that nation is great which is great in justice, in generosity, in truth—in short, in righteousness, the offspring of religion.

Champions Social Justice

Fourthly, *religion is the champion of social justice*. The special objects of its predilection, as of Christ's as well, are the poor, the downtrodden, the underprivileged, and the afflicted. It is not the sycophant of kings or of the rich and powerful. It is the one

⁴ Prov. viii. 15.

⁵ Romans xiii.

⁶ Prov. xiv. 34.

voice which proclaims fearlessly to the king his duty to his subjects and threatens him with divine punishment if he treats unjustly the lowliest in his realm.

It warns the employer, who defrauds his laborers, of the divine wrath which shall come upon him. "Behold the hire of the laborers," says St. James, "who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth: and the cry of them has entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth."⁷ It admonishes the servant to discharge his duties faithfully and well, "not serving to the eyes as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."⁸

By championing the rights of all classes and emphasizing that the welfare of society is best attained by giving every man his due, religion renders a powerful service in removing the grounds of class warfare and in promoting the unity and the brotherhood of all. No agency is so effective in sterilizing the grounds of antagonism and strife between employer and employees as social justice. This is the medicine which religion uses to heal the wounds in the social organism and to promote the harmonious growth of all its members.

Promotes Stability of Government

Fifthly, *religion promotes the stability of government.* This is no small benefaction. For the welfare of society is safeguarded by a stable and responsible government, hedged round with constitutional limitations, and responsive to the will of the people. Anarchy is the enemy of law, order and civilization. By teaching that all just authority comes from God, and by stressing the duties of civic obedience, religion rears a mighty bulwark against lawlessness and strife. "Render therefore to Caesar," it ordains, "the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's."⁹

The terrors of the French Revolution, when the junta in power rushed their enemies to the guillotine only to be rushed there themselves when they fell from power, remain as a blood-stained page in history to warn posterity of the bloodshed, ruin and destruction which the apostles of anarchy never fail to inflict upon a country. The scaffold becomes their altar. The shrieks of victims become their incense. Ribald songs are made their hymns. Lust, rapine, and bloodshed become the idols at whose shrines they worship with a cruel and bloody fanaticism. During the few

⁷ James v. 4.

⁸ Eph. vi. 6.

⁹ Matt. xxii. 21.

months of the reign of terror in France, the apostles of anarchy accumulated, as De Lamennais observes, "more ruin than an army of Tartars could have left after a six years invasion."¹⁰

Neither they, however, nor the Bolsheviks in Russia were able to stamp out religion. They could kill religious people. But they could no more kill religion than they could extinguish the sun. "Religion," says Thomas Carlyle, "cannot pass away. The burning of a little straw may hide the stars of the sky, but the stars are there, and will reappear."

Anterior to society and more enduring than political parties, religion is the focus of the social virtues of patriotism, obedience and respect which underlie all governments and give them stability and endurance. "Every philosopher and statesman," points out Cardinal Gibbons, "who has discussed the subject of human governments, has acknowledged that there can be no stable society without justice, no justice without morality, no morality without religion, no religion without God."¹¹ The recognition of God as the Fountainhead of rights and the ultimate Source of the authority of governments runs like a thread of gold through the warp and woof of our own Constitution and Bill of Rights and is responsible in no small degree for the marvelous stability of our American system of government.

Founds Institution of Charity

Sixthly, *religion brings into existence the institutions of charity, mercy, and philanthropy which pour such a mighty stream of healing and benediction upon society.* Up until comparatively recent times the Christian Church bore almost alone the entire burden of establishing and maintaining such institutions as hospitals, asylums, orphanages, homes for the aged, homes for the incurably afflicted, and many other institutions to minister to the poor and the afflicted. "The highest flights of charity, devotion, trust, patience, bravery," observes William James, "to which the wings of human nature have spread themselves have been flown for religious ideals."¹²

Similar is the note sounded by Theodore Parker: "Silence the voice of Christianity, and the world is well-nigh dumb, for gone is that sweet music which kept in order the rulers of the people, which cheers the poor widow in her lonely toil, and comes like light

¹⁰ *Essai sur l'Indifférence*, p. 431.

¹¹ *Our Christian Heritages*, p. 467.

¹² *Varieties of Religious Experiences*, p. 259.

through the windows of morning to men who sit stooping and feeble, with failing eyes and a hungering heart.”¹³ The Church is a tender and a loving mother who has reached her arms out through society in every age and has gathered to her nourishing breasts the poorest and the most afflicted of all God’s children.

Mother of Education

Seventhly and lastly, *religion is the mother of education, enlightenment, scientific progress, and the most zealous worker for the outlawry of war and the organization of international institutions for the stabilizing of the peace of the world.* For many centuries the Church bore alone the burden of education. She founded many of the great universities of the world. She has taught in all ages the holiness of wisdom and the wisdom of holiness. She has been the generous and munificent Patroness of art. She has inspired many of the world’s masterpieces in painting, sculpture, music and poetry. “Religion,” observes A. E. Haydon, “is the mother of dreams. Over the gray world, ruined by deluge and death, it has sought ever, and found the arching rainbow of hope.”¹⁴

She honors those who push back the frontiers of our darkness and give us new glimpses of nature and of her marvelous network of law, wherein we see the handwriting of nature’s God. For God reveals Himself to us not only through the inspired books of the Bible but also through His handwriting in the vast book of nature from tiny atom to the farthest star. All truth streams from Him and all truths lead us back to Him.

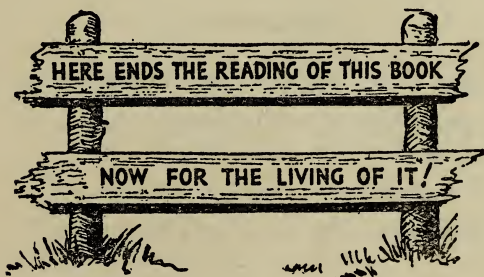
Religion and science walk hand in hand in giving us a deeper appreciation and a greater reverence for the Supreme Architect of the universe and the Ordainer of its every law. This truth finds expression in the words of Asa Gray, inscribed beneath his bust in the Hall of Fame: “I confidently expect that in the future even more than in the past, faith in an order, which is the basis of science, will not be dissevered from faith in an Ordainer, which is the basis of religion.”

The greatest evil that plagues humanity with ever increasing devastation and death is war. By teaching that all men are brothers and that the human race constitutes one family, religion has provided mankind with a principle which ultimately will secure the eradication of the vicious institution of war. She fights against the narrow nationalism which would blind one to the virtues of peoples of other lands.

¹³ *Discourse of the Transient and Permanent in Christianity.*

¹⁴ *The Quest of the Ages*, p. 205.

She proclaims in clarion tones to all mankind that the time has come when nations must build the framework of those juridical institutions which will settle by reason and conscience the disputes which arise between nations. Likewise does she insist upon the necessity of sanctions which will secure the enforcement of those decisions. When her voice is hearkened to by the nations of the world, war will become but an ugly nightmare of the race's past. Thus "religion is," in the words of Homer, "the golden chain which suspends the earth from the throne of the eternal." Not less striking are the words of Eugene Savage, Professor of Art at Yale University: "All that separates the white man from barbarism is the Christian Church." In short, religion offers to both the individual and to society the highest values of life. On the rungs of her divine commandments, the individual climbs up the golden ladder of service to humanity and of love toward the Creator, till he reaches the very throne of God. For religion is the golden bond that binds the heart of man to the heart of God.



QUESTIONS

CHAPTER I

1. Discuss the importance of religion.
2. What is its root meaning?
3. What is the essence of religion?
4. Why is a personal God necessary?
5. How is religion an expression of the whole personality?
6. What is natural religion?
7. What is supernatural religion?
8. What is meant by divine revelation?
9. How does it afford certainty?
10. Is there a fundamental unity to all truth? Why?

CHAPTER II

1. What does Cicero say about the universality of religion?
2. State the conclusion of Professor Toy.
3. State the finding of Professor Tiele.
4. Why is modern science fatal to polytheism?
5. How does science decipher God's handwriting?

CHAPTER III

1. What was the natural origin of religion?
2. What is meant by the principle of causality?
3. State Dr. Aiken's conclusion.

4. Is fear the origin of religion?
5. Do early superstitions invalidate all religion? Why?
6. State the observation of Professor Fox.
7. What does St. Thomas say is a characteristic of the human mind?
8. What do the findings of comparative religion really prove?

CHAPTER IV

1. Is religious worship a duty? Why?
2. How are we dependent upon God?
3. How should we pay our debt to God? Why?
4. Could God dispense us from worship? Why?
5. Differentiate between internal and external worship.
6. Prove that worship is an obligation of justice.
7. Prove that it is an obligation of truth.
8. Compare the sin of irreligion with other sins.
9. Why do many neglect to worship God?
10. What is the spiritual distemper of our day? Why?

CHAPTER V

1. Differentiate between individual worship and social worship.
2. Why is there a duty of social worship?
3. Illustrate by an example from civil life.
4. Is God an impersonal force?
5. Does God want our homage?
6. What is the greatest Commandment? Why?

7. What is the essence of religion? Why?
8. Why must religion be taught in a systematic manner?
9. Why are Americans particularly apt to forget God?
10. What warnings need to be sounded for America?

CHAPTER VI

1. What is the difference between religion and morality?
2. How do both the obligation of religion and of morality stem from God?
3. What is the Golden Rule?
4. How does morality complete the homage of worship?
5. Relate the incident of the wounded Jap.
6. State the teachings of St. John on the duty of loving others.
7. What duty follows from the dependence of man's faculties upon God?
8. Explain the need of sanctions for morality.
9. How is religion the basis of morality?
10. State the opinion of our leaders on the necessity of religion for sound morality.

CHAPTER VII

1. What is the first value of religion for the individual?
2. How does religion strengthen character?
3. How does religion sharpen individual responsibility?
4. What is the first social value of religion?
5. How does religion elevate the family life?
6. Why does religion render morality functional?
7. Is religion the champion of social justice? Why?
8. How does religion stabilize government?
9. What institutions of charity has religion inspired?
10. Show how religion is the mother of education.

