

# OF RELIGION

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**Richard Rogers Bowker**

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OF RELIGION



The Arts of Life

OF RELIGION

BY

RICHARD ROGERS BOWKER



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## OF RELIGION



RELIGION, binding anew the material with the spiritual, fulfills man, making him whole. It is therefore the supreme art of life. To heal men, to make them whole, to call them to health, wholeness, holiness — for these words are all one word — has ever been the end of religion. The man of whole life, *integer vitae*, sang the Roman poet, fears not, and is conqueror. Religion sanctions and sanctifies life, is its binding force. What, then, is religion?

Religion the  
supreme  
Art of Life

To this, the question of the ages, sect makes answer with creed, Christianity with Christ, the Jew with his One and Only Jehovah, Buddhists with the Noble Path and Mahometans with the teachings of Al Koran; priest, ritualist, puritan, each after his manner; while the reverent agnostic asks if he may not also be religious. The man of twilight times — “and in his soul was twilight” — our far forefather, like the savage of today, saw in the lengthening shadows of the setting sun, in the voices of the dark and of the storm, in dawn and cloud and stream and wood, in the mysteries of nature and of

What is  
Religion?

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

death, something beyond this material and present life, and imaged a Great Spirit, in an unseen world where dwelt the spirits of the dead, in worship or fear of whom he ruled his life, guided by medicine-man or primitive priest. Here was the early development of the religious instinct, from which in the progress of mankind was evolved, despite confusion of creed and of ceremonial, a wider recognition of Supreme Law and a higher thought of God. Throughout the earlier religions, — nature-worship, rites to ancestors, idolatry, the multifarious gods of India, the personification of manifestations and of attributes in Egyptian, Greek, Teutonic mythology, — modern thought finds evidence of a recognition, if dimly or not at all by the people, yet oftentimes clearly by the priests, of a Supreme Spirit, the Only God of Abraham, Rewarder of good to the spirits of the dead, in some cults combated by a World Spirit or Evil One, who was in most theogonies a lesser deity to be overcome by the Good in the final judgment. In these three concepts, of a *quasi* human God, of an after-life of men in an unseen world, of the relation of the ethical aspects of life to the Unseen, a modern evolutionist sees the essential features

The religious  
Instinct

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of religion. But a wider thought of religion would not exclude the essentially religious spirit, denied by temperament or habit of intellect the conviction of a personal God, whose perception of an after-life is in hope rather than in belief, which nevertheless recognizes in the universe a moral order, a Power that makes for rightness, in coördination with the higher or spiritual nature of man and affording a spiritual or supra-material sanction for right conduct.

Universal  
Concepts

That this world is ruled by righteousness is a thought so deep in the race that it is found at the roots of language. Our very words "morals" and "ethics" mean customs, that is to say, customs are based on a sense of rightness and fitness, and from them our code of morals or ethics, our practice of right, has developed. In the wider sense, religion is the recognition of the supremacy of the higher life, the spiritual, over the lower life, the material, which gives spiritual sanction to right living and sanctifies life. For the soul, the spirit, must have its supreme place in life.

The Rule of  
Right

Thus religion, as an art of life, is the art which cultivates spirituality, which develops

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The Supremacy of Spirit

character on the spiritual side, which uplifts duty by love. Conscience is the chisel by which the divine touch carves from the marble of human being the lovely statue of the perfected soul. It is the building upward and outward, by good thoughts and good works, from the lower self into the higher, the image of God, the ideal. Thus we realize, in the higher Christianity, the ideal which was the aim of the Greeks, but which they achieved in physical rather than spiritual perfection. It is for us to know, to have, to rejoice in both. Spirit rules body, God self, good evil, right wrong, in a working and resultful optimism which is faith. Morals is the bed-rock of religion.

The working Ground of all Religions

The geologist may not get near to the molten center of this earth, or the religious thinker penetrate the mysteries of the First Cause, but each nevertheless has sufficient field in the working ground of all mankind. In that eternal round, the Unknown, God, Humanity, the Unknown, it is not given us to know the infinite answer to the infinite questions, Whence? Whither? Why? — but the Here, that is our affair. And on this ground of morals, in the analysis of working religion as an art of life, there is a widening



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agreement among all religions and all sects. At last Christians begin to learn that if God is our Father, and Jesus the Elder Brother to us all, then we must all be brothers one to another — through Christian sect and non-Christian majority; and to learn this is to make much the essentials and to make little the differences of religion, to live a true personal life in harmony and godly love.

And it is only on this basis that religion and morality have meaning. They together are one, and make together the supreme art of life. The idea of duty, the conception of love — in these, life flowers. Herein the fierce warfare of every man for himself is tempered into love in fellowship, in friendship, race-love. Herein the strongest passion of the body is redeemed and transfigured into love in marriage, sex-love. Herein sins themselves are transfigured into stepping-stones that lead heavenward, in God-love. Man is religious in essence: on the ethical idea all religion builds, on the idea of spirituality all religion soars, as the cathedral is crowned by its spire. Duty and love — these are feet and wings of the man spiritual. The religion which says, We cannot know God, worships the race and woman; the religion

The Uplift  
of Love

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

which says, We do not know, accepts the command that man love his neighbor as himself.

The Limitations of Mind

There is one confession to which the Christian, the positivist, the agnostic must alike come, in negative agreement of human limitations. The Hindoos rested the earth on the tortoise, and the tortoise on the elephant, and so on and so on. But — beyond? The human mind stops here. Inspiration cannot tell it the secret, because there is no faculty which can know. The Infinite confounds us. One of two opposites must be true — but the human mind cannot conceive of either. There must have been beginning of Time, or no beginning. There must be end of Space, or no end. There must always have been Matter, or Matter must have been created out of nothing. The child asks, Who was God's father? We ask the same questions as the child. For us there is no answer; there can be none. Infinity is extension of which every point is a center: the finite mind rejects this as a mathematical contradiction.

The human mind cannot *think* a beginning, or no beginning: it cannot *think* an

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end or no end, Yet one of these must be true. Eternity, Infinity, a First or uncaused Cause, it can name, but it cannot conceive of them, or their absence, or their contraries. These be mysteries. The eye cannot see sound, neither can man reason of things beyond reason. That we cannot *think* either of two alternatives, one of which *must* be the truth, is a sufficient commentary on the limitations of thought, and the final proof of humility. Beyond, reason goes not: here the Christian rests his doubt, the unbeliever his challenge. If we cannot know God, neither can we deny his being. It is the fool who saith in his heart: There is no God; what knowledge hath he by which he may deny? The pantheist quibbles with himself: his Soul of Nature is not less unthinkable.

Yet in these days it is often the wise man, the unselfish and earnest thinker, who cannot truly say, "I believe." His *credo* has become *spero*. He will hope. He cannot by searching find out God: he hesitates to surrender reason to an elusive, perhaps delusive, faculty beyond reason: he will only reason about and recognize the limits of his reason, and, with hope, set himself to apply the past

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to a present which is making the future — whether the future be his or not his, infinite or finite. For such a man there can be no hesitancy of fear; there is no place here for the coward. The man of science must see what his sight shows him. He must believe not in Belief but in Truth. He must inquire of facts, not threaten them with fear of consequences. Here true service comes only from that unshrinking sight which discerns, and that unfaltering will which asserts, despite prejudice or tradition, those elements of permanent result that are to make the future. Shrinking conservatism may not stay him; it is not for him to bury his face in the darkened temples of the gods and cry out against the worshiper under the sunlight or the starlight of the revealing heavens. He shall try faith, that faith be found faithful, and live.

The Search-  
er assures  
Faith

Indeed, in the wide sense, it is the province of the scientific investigator to assure faith. He has no fear lest, fighting for good, in line with truth, he haply be found fighting against Him who is Giver of Good and Author of Truth. There is nothing more skeptical, more irreligious, more essentially atheistic, than that religion, falsely so-called, now pass-

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ing away, which flings Nature in the face of God, which makes its God illogical, inhuman, ungodly, a creator at odds with his creation, a contradiction of terms. There is nothing more promotive of real and abiding faith, more religious in binding men with good, more vitally godly, than that science which presents one harmony of Nature and of Gospel, working together, through convertive evil, into higher good ; which leads to a reconciling faith that when it finds God finds Him law-abiding, humane, truly divine, a logical God. Bravery is the best evidence of faith.

Science, we hear over and over, is skeptical and disastrous. If it be skeptical, it is disastrous, for no people that believes not ever does greatly. It *is* faith that moves mountains. But this earnest questioning that seeks the True and the Good in religion, in morals, or in knowledge, — this is not skepticism, in the ill sense in which the word is commonly heard. Skepticism is the essence of negation. It is the chronic condition of corrosive doubt, doubt not simply of God but of good. In the “religious” philosophy that gives evil, or its incarnation, the practical supremacy in life, it finds its strongest type.

The Sanc-  
tion of  
Science

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

But when Science, in a spirit not of doubt but of seeking, brings to us with her questionings the strongest sanction natural ethics can receive, she brings to us also new stimulus of faith. That sanction is the simple fact of the eternity of influence. Every motion alters in its degree the relations of the universe forever. In this sense nothing dies, nothing is lost. Responsibility is infinite. Science confirms the sanction of religion; the one approves what the other has fore-said.

Fatalism  
irreligious

There can be no greater mock of a real religion, a true God, a living faith, than the fatalism which finds its culmination on the one hand in the dull serenity of the Mahometan devotee, on the other in the lurid predestination of a Jonathan Edwards. The logical result is fatal ease of conscience — the sensuality of the Turk, or that reckless indifference to unavoidable sin, the dreadful results of which among his flock drove Edwards from his Northampton parish after “the Great Awakening” had done its awful work. Ever the human soul revolts against the metaphysical chains which deny its freedom. Predestination we know indeed, in

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science, as heredity, environment, circumstance, which make tendency; but tendency is not all — there is something within which can direct, convert, utilize tendency. We know it; we feel it; we build all practical life upon it. “Sir,” said Dr. Johnson, “we *know* our will is free, and there’s an end on’t.” “Reconcile the foreknowledge and the foreordination of God with the free will of man? Your own conscience,” — answered Mr. Apollo Lyon to the would-be Devil-puzzler. It is this, in the finality, on which all practical religion is based.

In progress, much comes, much goes, much remains. The old “evidences” of the Christian faith, which through the centuries have raised more doubts than they have solved, give place to a larger faith and a wider hope. One by one they have gone, but in their place greater has come. The *consensus gentium*, the majority vote for Christ, so to speak, was an argument that meant much until it was met by the arithmetical fact of the wider vogue of the earlier Buddha and of the later Mahomet. The Christian who builded on this ground found it swept away as sand, and his faith with it. So long as all religions but Christianity were “heathen,” —

The old  
Evidences

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

works of the devil, — so long it was evident that the devil had the better of God in His world.

The new  
Evidences

But modern investigation, in the true spirit of science, has opened our eyes. We witness the evolution of religion, from a lower to a higher thought of God, from a lower to a higher conception of good, from a lower to a higher ethical standard. And evolution itself teaches us that as all appetites, functions, and instincts prefigure something in the objective environment which answers to their subjective demand, as hunger implies food, and thirst drink, the eye light and the ear sound, sex-love woman for man and man for woman, so there must be answer to man's spiritual instinct, his appetite for religion, his thirst for God, his desire for a future life. Thus science confirms and broadens faith. In all religions we see God, adapting Himself through human leadership to humankind, according to the need of tribe and time. In the great books of the great faiths we read Gospels only less noble than those of our own Bible, the Book of Books. Even in the stocks and stones of the savage we find symbols of a Great Spirit, a God dimly seen by dim men. In due time came



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the Christ, son of God, God in man, divine or human, to vouchsafe to the higher races of mankind at once the simplest and highest of religions, the essence of all religion, in whose Light we have Life.

So, also, the letter, "which killeth," is no longer the foundation of faith. A reverent criticism, tracing the evolution of our religion from the fierce Jahveh of the nomad Israelites to the loving Father of all men, has brushed away much legendary tradition, much repulsive teaching of a rude race, and taught us to reject the human weaknesses of the writers and to reverence all the more the spiritual strength which has made our Bible the Book of Books. And with "verbal inspiration" has been swept away also the confusion of creeds built upon contradictory proof-texts, erroneous translations, and verbal misconceptions; the whole fabric of verbal religion has indeed been whirled away into thin air.

Even the miraculous birth, the immaculate conception, which has in our own day been carried yet a step further as a foundation-stone of one great church, is seen in a new light. In the dim and shadowy days of our

The Use of  
Criticism

The mystic  
Birth

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

far fathers, before writing, every hero was miraculously born; and in later ages, about Buddha, as Founder of a Faith, centered the very legends associated with the birth and childhood of our own Jesus. This discovery destroyed nothing. To the true disciple it confirmed faith, because it showed how the ever-recurring yearnings of humanity, forming themselves into loving legends, wove this wreath of miracle with which to greet the son of God, or son of man, who was to bring God down to man, to lift man up to God.

All Birth is  
Miracle

The miracle of this Birth, be it truth or legend, is patterned indeed by every birth, the daily miracle of new being. That the seed of a flower, the acorn of a tree, should contain within its tiny self the laws, principles, and tendencies which define it as itself, which from one or another set of cells of starch develop the simple blade of green grass, the tasseled ear of corn with its mathematically arranged kernels, the white and shining lily, the exactly patterned color of the pansy, the parti-colored tulip, the spired poplar, or the spreading oak, — this would pass belief were it not the common experience of our daily life. Said Linnæus, as he watched a blossom

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unfold: "I saw God in His glory passing near me, and bowed my head in worship." So, too, the egg of insect or of bird, — of the queen bee, with its passionate instincts developed in the chrysalis; the duck, whose young take to the water from their shells; the pigeon, homing true from fields far and unknown, — each is a mystery and a miracle. And at last these culminate in the final miracle of the human life, — bodily form and spiritual character fashioned from the parent forms of generations and ages before, mingling and commingling in forms ever new and ever old. All birth is miracle.

Life, indeed, has two gates from the unknown, and both are miracles. The gate which opens on mysterious hinges for birth is patterned by the mystic gate of death. We depart into, as we came from, the Unknown. As to immortality, it is not given us to *know*. The Christian minister, at the bedside of the dying or beside the grave of the dead, can only hope. He may not verify or prove. And Paul, in that glorious outburst of religious fervor in which the human imagination reaches its highest flight, does not *prove* immortality: his splendid analogy falters at the very heart of the question, for it is because

The Gate of  
Death

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

the spiritual body lacks that bridge in the material life with the natural body which the risen grain has in its seed that the doubter questions. As we tread in the mists of morning a great bridge suspended above a mighty river and see the curve of the cables sweeping down from the seen tower, left uncompleted to our vision in the veiling cloud, we scarcely need the witness of returning travelers to prove to us that there is a tower on the farther shore to which the chain ascends in completed curve. Yet without this evidence we cannot say that analogy is proof, or confound the doubter who says that this may be a "cantilever" balanced on one tower only and ending in the mists. On this bridge of life, over which all must pass, and on which there is no returning, we can but press on to a goal of hope.

The Resur-  
rection

Yet natural religion points to what revealed religion asserts. The story of the Resurrection, be it vision or allegory or literal truth, voices and answers to the great hope of our race. It is, in a sense, no greater miracle than those wonder-workings of risen and ascending life which we see about us every day; yet to the earnest doubter, like questioning Thomas, the proof may not suffice for an event so con-

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trary to our experience of life. The reason that "they would not believe though one rose from the dead" is that questioning minds would require corroboration and cumulative proof that the witness of whom Jesus speaks in the parable *had* risen from the dead. That which required most proof, they might say, had least. But though to orthodox believers the Resurrection may be the central fact of Christianity, it is not the sole fact, and the teachings of Jesus, before the Crucifixion, harmonized in our recognition of the imperfect media through which they have come down to us, are in themselves a sufficing gospel. And when the great Apostle to the Gentiles, whose mission was to include within Christianity all mankind, cries, in confusion of the Sadducees who had the same incertitude as to a future life that appears in the Old Testament: "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain. . . let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," he limits Christianity by basing it on a single fact which many minds cannot accept, in the cardinal error of the sectary who asserts that if his truth is not *the* truth, there is no truth.

Not the  
sole Fact

There are two immortalities — one certain, one possible, — the one of influence, the other

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

The two Im-  
mortalities

of identity. We know, for science assures us, that our deeds live forever. Let us heed and hope — for the inspiration of both is the same. And if we ask why, if human life is immortal, animal life is not? why the intelligent and kindly dog or horse, the companion of man, may not survive as well as the man brute, again the answer is, it is not given us to know. If there is truth in the theory of selective immortality, that a soul which earns spirituality earns also a future life of the spirit, while the evil or the brutish may die, this all the more is inspiration and sanction for right living.

The Mira-  
cles of Na-  
ture

The lesser miracles of the ministry are not without their correspondence in the large miracle of living. The water made wine, be it fact or phantasy, is not more wonderful than the chemist's daily miracle. An atom of carbon from our hearth, an atom of hydrogen from a drop of water, an atom of nitrogen from a particle of air, these together, no more, make the molecule of prussic acid which, by another miracle, instantly destroys life. An atom of oxygen to each makes them again earth, water, air! So, too, the miracles of healing are not without witness in our day.

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Daily we see the mind dominating the body, working in it evil or good, the will commanding the nerves and they in turn the muscles, courage resisting contagion, fear inviting cholera, cowardice producing physical effects on the eve of battle, a thought bringing the blush to the cheek or congesting the blood in other parts of the body, the spiritual elevation of the martyr defying pain, visions as of Our Lady of Lourdes stimulating recovery, and the mind-cure, despite all vagaries, doing real service to humankind by teaching the subjecting of subordinate matter to supreme spirit.

It is indeed not as wonder-workings, but as exceptions to law, that miracles challenge modern belief. Early man, unknowing of law, was widely credulous: he saw the unseen, spake with the dead, and expected Deity to reverse nature. But credulity is not belief. Belief requires proof, and reviews evidence. We can even reverse the seeming evidence of the senses. Incredulous at first that the world is round, that the earth moves, that the blood courses through our bodies, that one form of life is evolved by far steps from another, that the forces of nature and the sensations of the body are but

Miracles as  
Exceptions  
to Law

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

modes of motion, man came to belief in each of these seeming contradictions because each ranged itself at last in line with law. The modern mind accepts with rightful readiness evidence in accord with "established facts" and the observed order of nature, and as rightly it requires more and cumulative proof of what is contrary to experience, a seeming exception to law. But as to this order of nature, we do not know all; we have much to learn.

Exceptions  
in every-day  
Life

The very possibility of human life depends on two facts, seemingly quite exceptional and out of the order of nature. Water as it freezes expands instead of contracts with cold, so that ice floats and by forming on the surface protects the fluid beneath; else our rivers would freeze solid from the bottom, and in winter the flow of the earth's blood would cease. Though oxygen and nitrogen combine in wide range of chemical equivalence, air is a merely mechanical mixture of these two elements, so that the lungs absorb the oxygen freely, without the waste of force necessary to dissociate it from a chemical combination. The wonderful law of the diffusion of gases by which the products of combustion from our lungs and our chimneys are



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in turn harmlessly re-absorbed into the air seems an exception contrary to the great law of gravitation. A Shakespeare, a Napoleon, an Edison, is an exception in the order of nature not to be accounted for ; nor can any lesser Shakespeare, the creator of any literature, explain whence or how his thoughts came.

The order of nature is itself a miracle, a wonder-working, and seems not so only because we do not consider. It is often above and beyond sense. So the searcher for truth may not believe the miracles of the Bible ; he may say with sincere judgment that they are to him not proven ; but he cannot deny them. The Christian and the agnostic may in this measure agree.

But what basis remains then for "religion" in such agreement, — an agreement on mysteries, in an Origin forever unknowable, in a First Cause revealed without absolute certainty, in an Immortality which is a hope never proven, in a Gospel which partakes of the fallibility of man, in a Christ who may be God and may be man, in miracles and evidences which may prove all or nothing. Indeed, there remains the essence of all reli-

The Order  
of Nature a  
Miracle

The  
Essence of  
Religion

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

gions, in the simplest, the purest, the noblest, the highest form in which religion has been vouchsafed to the most spiritual races of mankind. Thou shalt love God — or the Good, O skeptic! — with all thy heart and soul and mind, and thy neighbor as thyself. This is the law and the prophets. Here is broad ground on which we may agree with all lovers of good, and within which each may work out his own beliefs, provided he damn no other's.

Tempera-  
ment and  
Belief

For belief itself is in large measure a matter of temperament, of innate tendency and mental equipment. There are those to whom it is not given to believe, however much they desire to do good and to know God. Shall the blind be condemned because they see not? A loving God will not deny mercy to His creatures whom He has not endowed with the gift of belief. The student of science, who is above all a student of the divine order, develops his mental powers nevertheless in the direction of proof, and God has not permitted Himself to be proved. Proof stops short of the First Cause. God is veiled. Let the Christian then lament the limitations which keep the man of science on one side of the veil, but let him not condemn the man

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nor impeach God. Let him regret imperfections, if he will, but let him not dare to pass sentence as of God. On the other hand, suspense, not skepticism, is the attitude of science. Reverence is its true virtue, denial is its caricature. Goethe's Mephisto is the spirit that denies. Moreover, the man of science, above all men, knows the meaning of art. He preaches the cultivation of habit. Let it be, therefore, his habit of mind to cultivate himself toward that art of life which we call religion.

For science itself meets the same limitations as religion. The problem of a First Cause, of the beginnings of time and space and matter, of the finite and the infinite, are also its problems. No man living ever hopes that any human being will ever see an "atom;" yet it is absolutely visible to the eye of faith. It is counted, sized, weighed; it is the foundation of scientific reasoning. The atom, indivisible, must have size, yet can have no size. So also the "ether;" infinitely tenuous, it must be infinitely dense. Both are contradictions to our sense. What is true of the infinitely little is true of the infinitely great. The beam of light which

Limitations  
of Science

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

tells to the man of science the story of the stars appeals to his faith rather than to his sight. Between the human organism which sees, hears, smells, tastes, and feels, and the organism of nature, the physical universe, there is a great gulf fixed, and the vibrations which come from one to the other, the angels of the world physical, can be caught and interpreted only by those mind-faculties — the metaphysical, intellectual, or spiritual — which are themselves a mystery of mysteries, a miracle of miracles. Scientific reasoning is in itself a process of faith, building bridges from the seen to the unseen.

Science  
must ques-  
tion

Why then has there been conflict between science and religion? For two reasons — one of habit, and one of essence. It is the process of the man of science to doubt, to question, to deny, to reject; thus only he obtains his fine metal, Truth. It is the method of the professor of religion to “believe without question;” in his habit of mind, to question is to deny, and denial is the crime against the Holy Spirit which is the unpardonable sin. To the man of science, this is intellectual dishonesty, moral blindfoldness, treason to Truth, an impeachment of God. The virtue of virtues of the

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one is the vice of vices of the other. Science is here in the right: a real God, who *is* Truth, must honor the searching which He has implanted in His own, and the ministers of religion who have preached a gospel of blindness instead of His Gospel of Light, these are they who have sinned against the Holy Spirit of Truth.

But there seems to be between the faith of science and the faith of religion one abyss, of profound depth, reaching to the very center of all things and of all thoughts. Science is sure, religion is not sure, in the continuity and exactness of the evidences. The seeker in science finds that in the physical universe like causes produce like effects, and he reads the history of the past, the conditions of the present, the prophecy of the future, in clear, sure light. The omnipresent, eternal force of nature never fails in the physical justness, exactness, of its effects; it is on this that scientific reasoning builds its certain conclusions. The man of science asks why, if religion is true, this is not true of religion? Why does theology speak with uncertain witness? Why has religion produced conflicts, sects, wars, martyrs? Why has Christ's teaching, if it is the final Truth,

The Gulf  
between  
Science and  
Religion

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

not prevailed in Christendom and among all mankind?

The Problem of Evil

And we face here also the practical working problem that ever confronts man — the problem of evil. Men of science will say that in science there is no evil. Why then this awful dilemma in religion? If God is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, why does evil exist in the moral world? Why should a God, all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful, permit in His world and among His creatures, these seeds of ill? Why should there be implanted in mankind passions, many and raging, to yield to which is the swift act of a moment, but which reap their harvest in the misery of a whole life and in the misery of lives to come? Why do good motives produce ill? Why are the sins of the fathers visited upon the children instead of upon the sinner? Why does an omnipotent God permit evil in conflict with His good?

Religious Difficulties

The tradition of Adam's fall is a trivial solution which common-sense religion accepts only as a parable. The blind theology of an Edwards, building a diabolic ogre of divine Justice, which wreaks infinite ven-

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geance as the fit punishment of the rejection of infinite love, shutting its eyes and sealing its lips against the logical denial writ into this contradictory image of God, offers but an ostrich-like solution. And the doctrine, as old as the Manichæans, as new as the Christian Scientists, that evil or error is that which is not good or God, whether the doctrine takes the form of belief in a dual principle in the government of the universe, or of denial of the reality of evil because it is not of God, is not less unsatisfying to logical thought. The darkness is but the absence of light, the shadow conditioned on the interposition of our earth itself before the sun, our source of light ; yet it is a fact inherent in the constitution of the universe and the great negative factor in each day's life. To define darkness with Edwards as produced by the sun, or with the Manichæan as caused by the earth, or with Eddy as non-existent because not of the sun, is equally an imperfect solution. To say that God, knowing all, knows not evil, and therefore that evil does not exist, is to deny a fact of life with juggle of words. Men know evil and pain and darkness ; if God does not, then men know more than God, and God is not

Darkness  
and Light

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

all-knowing. Neither the In-justice of the All-good in the Edwards theology, nor the Ignore-ance of the All-knowing in the Eddy theology, solves the problem of evil.

Evil an Incident

But we have lines of leading. We know that the choice of good, as against the temptations of evil, makes for good and produces character. The unspeakable anguish, through five years of isolation from all mankind, of the living martyr on Devil's Isle, the victim of colossal and unmitigated injustice, an agony in itself evil and only evil, is redeemed in the shining service to justice, to his country, to the world, which the faith, the courage, the patriotism, the devotion of that heroic soul have emblazoned on the black background of an infamous wrong never to be forgotten or forgiven. We see also that evil is sometimes not in itself pain, but a lower viewed from a higher condition, the shed chrysalis of the caterpillar seen from the wings of the butterfly. The family life in the humble cottage or in the tenement of the slums, deprivation as seen from the richer and fuller and freer life, has nevertheless its redeeming delight. We know also that the whole process of development, evolving good, involves evil. We ask why God could not



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have created perfect man in a perfect world, and we answer our question from our daily experience that the highest result comes from upward struggle. The mountain-top, in its fullest glory, must have achievement. The cloud of evil veils the sunshine of good.

Also, the man of science is here guilty of an imperfect generalization. He is himself sure only in the elementary field in which he can fully know or completely control all the causes and conditions of his result. Thus elementary chemistry may almost be accounted an exact science and a certain art. But where he passes into complex conditions, as from inorganic to organic chemistry, he is no longer sure, for he no longer knows or controls all the conditions. A problem of evil begins to confront *him*. He starts a process of fermentation, and his bread or his beer turns sour. He administers a drug to the human system, and the results confound him. Thus doctors, who are men of applied science, notoriously disagree; and the fading conflicts of religion are not more virulent than the animosities between schools of medicine. Science also has had its conflicts, sects, wars, martyrs — nor have its martyrs always been killed by the church. The Co-

Science has  
its Evil

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

pernican view of the universe, the undulatory theory of light, the circulation of the blood, the doctrine of evolution, — these are but a few of the battlefields of science.

Science as  
Discoverer  
and Inter-  
preter

In very fact, science, like religion, is but an interpreter of facts existent in the universe long before the interpreter existed, and has been not less slow and uncertain in reaching toward first truths. It is only within the past century that we have really read out from Christ's Gospel the full meaning of the brotherhood of man, and so abolished slavery ; it is only within the past generation that we have read out from God's Nature the force of electricity, which we begin to find is perhaps the dominant force of forces, and applied it to human use. Truth has not varied ; the face of Nature and of Nature's God remain the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever ; but man, the imperfect instrument of perception, of interpretation, has been opening his inward eyes and his unfolding mind.

Predeter-  
mining Law

We come thus to some light upon the problem of evil. It is the light of law, the law of Nature, a divine law, which is the essence of the universe. It may be that we err in speaking of God as omnipotent, in the

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sense that He is superior or acts contrary to law. In the nature of things, by definition, two and two make four, a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, a cause produces result. This nature of things God cannot, or does not, change. It is predestination. It is within and by means of law that the Great Law-giver is potent, over all things material and spiritual, which proceed from this law. And it is the law of His laws that His creation is not a perfected, but a perfecting, universe. We can conceive of an earth without mountains and valleys, without threatening cliffs or yawning chasms, or treacherous quagmires, or barren "bad lands," an earth all an even plain or undulating park-land, with fairly distributed forest, with showers at exact intervals feeding rivers that run evenly into a stormless sea, an earth without darkness and bitter cold, or glare of light and scorching heat, an earth inhabited only by animals, the friends of man, and by perfected man himself, the conflict of the *carnivora* forever over, and all life supported on the spontaneous fruits of the field, without waste or loss, sorrow or pain, disease or death. But against this harping heaven the human imagination has always been in revolt.

A perfect-  
ing Universe

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Somehow, we prefer a world which throbs, an earth with mountains and valleys, with difficulties and dangers, with ups and downs, material and spiritual, in which the throes of birth are followed by the pangs of death, and life *succeeds*. As no mortal has ever designed a new form of leaf or flower that is beautiful, so no mortal has ever designed, even to his own suiting, a working world without the imperfections of this.

The Tra-  
gedy of Evil

But in this imperfect world, law itself works out evil. Though justice reigns, injustice exists. Evil is a fact. We cannot rid ourselves of the fact by calling it a shadow and a seeming, except as good also, with all things, is a seeming. The law of gravitation, which binds the solid rocks together, dashes to cruel death or yet more cruel death-in-life, the innocent child who toddles over the face of the cliff. The lightnings, the winds, the floods that keep the earth pure and sweet as the habitation of man, doom to disaster and death the most provident and the most virtuous. The tragedy of *Œdipus*, innocently fore-doomed to woe unutterable; the tragedy of *Gretchen*, surrendering self to exalting love; the tragedy of *Tess*, betrayed by duty itself into the toils of lust, — these are im-

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mortal, because from generation to generation, such cruel facts repeat themselves in life. The individual is crushed, betrayed, doomed, by the very forces which conserve the race.

Yet these are but the spots on the sun's face. The order of nature is not, in general, cruel. Life, indeed, feeds on death; man destroys life for his own food, as the animals below him have in their turn destroyed. But such death is not a cloud that foredooms life with blackening shadow. Self-preservation is doubtless a controlling instinct, but the life of the animal is lived in hours of delight after its kind. The lurid pictures of the earth as a great killing-ground, in which poor, hunted things dwell forever in terror of their lives, is as unnatural a generalization as to judge human happiness from the story of an *Œdipus* or a *Tess*. Races, classes, are happy in their "station of life," however they may lack those conditions necessary to give their analyst his happiness. The last of a dying race, of man or beast, may not in personal being be unhappy. Most individuals have in their lives more joy in being than pain in suffering. And few, even in the most miserable of human lives, are without hope in the

Life out of  
Death

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

world. What wrecks of humanity have indeed been floated off the rocks by buoyant helpfulness of other men, and brought in safety into the haven of peace. Not evil, but good, survives.

The Balance of Facts

When, therefore, we balance facts, the existence of evil in this world is not a negation, a denial, of the goodness of God, though it may limit His omnipotence of goodness. It remains to the human mind a problem, and one of the insoluble problems. We come to think of it, in the chemistry of being, as the chemist comes to think of those wonderful re-agents which, from the simplest life-giving elements, combine atoms into a complex substance, which may be at once the deadly foe of life and the most preventive or curative of remedies against disintegration and death. Alcohol, ether, carbolic acid, are such substances. They are the servants of man, but also they slay. The drunkard whose first thirst for drink comes from the hospital medicine, the patient dying upon the operating table, the child, or the suicide, who swallows from the bottle of disinfectant, — these victims, innocent or self-doomed, as it may be, cannot cause us to forget the great good that has come to humankind from the application

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of these gifts of nature, discovered by man in God's universe.

Finally, to every man who faces facts, the facts show that the dominant power in this human world, whether called God, or Law, or Fate, or Nature, *is* a power that makes for righteousness, and that to obtain the full good of life, literally to make the best of it, we must put our thinking, willing, and doing in line with that power. The development of life is a moral, not an immoral or an unmoral, development. There are episodes in a life when neither reason nor science gives clear guiding, where to do evil that good may come *seems* the wise course, — yet every man knows that these are at worst exceptions to the law of life. To “go it while you're young” in the pursuit of happiness is seen to be “a poor bargain with the devil.” Happiness, in the lowest sense, is in the long run a matter of morals, of *morale*, in the highest sense. Those moments of infinite rapture, in the old-fashioned novel, which seem an eternity, constitute as a matter of fact a very short eternity, and are indeed but a small part of life. A happy life is lived through years of ups and downs, each of

The Dom-  
inance of  
Righteous-  
ness

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

which years has three hundred and sixty-five days of twenty-four hours each. A healthful body, a content mind, an aspiring soul, make full happiness. If the body is healthful by heredity, a true regimen in line with "righteousness" keeps it so; if by heredity it is unhealthy, the same regimen will at least better its condition, and to that extent induce happiness.

The practical  
Problem  
of Life

The questions of the origin of man are in this reading "academic." Whether for millions of years this earth, appointed among myriads of stars for the habitation of man, has been a-making for him, under the direct personal guidance of a God in whose image man is made, or whether, under the large law which rules the universe, a time has come on this earth, as it comes on greater stars, when development blossoms into humanity, the fact remains the same, — that here is man, environed by circumstances which in part control him and which in part he controls. His problem — and the problem of each of his race — is the same in either course. And this is measurably true also as to his destiny. We say rightly of many lives that they are ill requited, ill adjusted, unless they are continued into another



## OF RELIGION

world, where wrongs of to-day may be translated into the eternal right. Yet, if all hope of that future life is put aside, we discern clearly enough that the way in this life is "to make the *best* of it," and that to go contrary to rightness is to invite more ill. The same living which best fits a man for a life without end best fits him for a life which ends in this world.

But if religion is true, why is it not one? if Christianity is the Truth, why is the Truth divided against itself? Religion has in fact been too often an antagonism instead of a communion. It has been an art of polemics rather than of irenics: the last word is scarcely to be found in the theological dictionaries. The American maiden who told the Pope that he must like her country because it was the most religious in the world — for it had most "denominations," was not without historic basis for her notion. Men have seemed to seek whereon they might disagree. Three great religions still divide the world. Buddhism is divided into a multitude of sects, on lines of division geographic, metaphysical, ritualistic, from the papalism of the Grand Lama of Thibet to the reforming sim-

Why is not  
Religion  
one?

The three  
great Re-  
ligions

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

plicity of the truer followers of the Buddha. Mohammedanism has its lines of cleavage, on the genealogies of the Caliph successors of "the Prophet of God ;" and in the schools, endlessly subdivided, of the four great Imans who have expounded the Koran ; and it finds its protestant reformers in the Wahabee zealots. Religion has been indeed the bloodiest battlefield of mankind. Christianity has warred against Islam, and not conquered ; and within itself is the confounding of "the peace of the church." What witness, then, does history bear to the truth of religion, of Christianity itself ? Is it not disproof ? No, for the light is not less light when refracted into colors which each man sees for himself. The differences are not in the nature of God, but in the nature of man.

The real  
Unity of  
Religion

There are not many Gods, many Christs, many religions. The one God, most of us believe, has developed through the ages the supreme race of man. But of this race are many races, diverse, with minds and spirits of many kinds. The human mind is one, but its expression in speech, even though it may have been one in the beginning, tends to infinite variety. As men know more of speech, they come to know each other's

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speech and to see, in all speech, laws or forms or words common to all or to many. Thus God, expressed to these diverse races and many minds, is and will always seem of many forms, seen under conditions which are conditions of the seeing, not of the Seen. Thus doctrines, or statements of what each kind of man thinks about God, become the foundations of sects. And because it is the wont of men to talk about their differences rather than about the agreements that go without saying, they build fences about their own fields of religion and think of these, instead of the great and beautiful plain which underlies them all. But those of far sight and fair eye are coming more and more to see how lovely is the land without the fences.

Christ brake bread and drank wine with his chosen friends, with every-day bread and wine of his time, in that brave and touching scene of the Last Supper: from this has come the gorgeous ceremonial of the Roman Mass, translated into the liturgy of the Church of England; the doctrines of Transubstantiation of the Host and the Blood; the separatist exclusion of close Communion; the practice of excommunication; and the superstition of thirteen at table. Christ

Sect Forma-  
lizations

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

dedicated himself to his work, at the hands of another, with the lovely symbol of water : from that has come the sacerdotal rite of Baptism, wrangles innumerable over immersion and sprinkling, over the baptism of infants and the doom of the unbaptized, confusions of Anabaptists and Pedobaptists, and a hundred sectaries amongst sects. Christ spoke of God as his Father, and in warfares over Trinity and Unity, in creeds where words were used to conceal the absence of thought, the brotherhood of man was long forgotten. Christ charged his friends to continue his work, and the simple organization which they adopted has been made the basis of hierarchies, episcopates, presbyteries, monastic orders, and endless varieties of church government, which in strong forms and in strong hands became tyrannies, and in weak forms and in weak hands a confusion of tongues.

Against this tendency of all religions to a formal and physical crystallization, it has ever been the mission of the religious reformer to protest, in defense of a more spiritual and less conventional devotion. So Christ against the Pharisaic Jews, Buddha in Brahmanism, Mahomet with his idolatrous compatriots

## OF RELIGION

and against a debased Judaism and Christianity. In like manner, over against this extreme and that vagary, there have arisen, from time to time, reformers within the Christian church, seeking to turn it from specific errors or to bring it back to primitive simplicity. Thus Paul among the Judaizing Christians. Thus Luther. Thus Calvin. Thus Edwards. Thus Wesley. Each in his turn did his great work for God in his world. Each of these later men in his turn swung the pendulum too far in his own direction, and made a new sect, "a new wound in the body of Christ, a new rent in his seamless garment." Then came the Friends, bearing **The Friends** testimony of the Inner Light, putting aside communion and baptism because these had come between man and God, and in the spirit of the meek and simple Christ, seeking to dwell at peace with all men, in the simplest of religious democracies. These were the true individualists. But their very contrast of simplicity became a form ; they too became a sect, persecuted even unto death by other sects, Catholic and Protestant alike ; and no sooner were they crystallized by this outward pressure into a definite church body than they too "split," on the rock of the Trinita-

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

rian controversy, into orthodox and Hicksite. But to all Christians the Friends brought a true thought, which has been a leaven throughout all the churches.

### New Sects

Within the nineteenth century there have not been lacking new sects, seeking each in its own way to bring back the church to what the sectaries sincerely believe to be a true faith or form. The Millerite delusion overswept the whole country, and numerous bands, clothed only in ascension white, waited again and again, on days specified only to be postponed, the second coming of the Lord. The Mormon leader of this century, like the Mahomet of a millennium ago, organized a new church on a new revelation, a superstructure on Christian foundations. The votaries of both, whatever the leaders, were sincere believers, and found in their faith a true religion. The *Christ*-ians, so-called, sought to bring back Christianity to Christ. The Abolitionists found a religion in their holy cause. The Christian Scientists of to-day, emphasizing the healing power associated in the Gospels with Christ, build, upon a curious mixture of metaphysics and theology, a practical working religion, with a devotional service of primitive simplicity, which preaches

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a true gospel of mental and spiritual discipline as the conditions of bodily health, and has brought real Christlikeness to many thousands of disheartened and perplexed members of the Christian church.

It is not reasonable to suppose that all men will come to think alike about God, or about Christ, or about religion. As long as there are differences in the form and doctrine of religion, the Roman church, or its equivalent, giving to certain kinds of people a richly symbolized and pictureful expression of religion, relieving them of individual problems by furnishing priestly interpreters of infallible omniscience, may always exist, for it meets one great human need. The religion of individual relationship with God, of individual struggle and crisis, meets other needs, and is expressed in sects according as one or another feature or doctrine of the religious life is emphasized. Thus the Catholic church, one and indivisible, exists coördinate with individualist sects, reformed and always re-forming, — and this difference may, by the nature of the human mind, continue, perhaps always, to exist. But, beyond all varieties of faith and of form, there is a unity in the brotherhood of man, reverent of its divine

Men will not  
think alike

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

origin, in which more and more all faiths and all forms agree as the essence of religion. "Religions may die ; religion lives."

The Church  
of the Holy  
Sepulchre

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, built about the rock in which, as Latins, Greeks, and Armenians alike believe, the body of Jesus was entombed, contains within its walls chapels for each of these orders of Christians. It has been a sad epitome of the history of the church of Christ. Confusion of tongues, diverse rituals, conflicting holy days, din of discordant preachers, babble of gossip and contention, treachery and violence, have culminated more than once within Holy Week itself in murder and massacre, until the soldiers of the infidel Turk have been called in to prevent war among the Christian disciples of the Prince of Peace, in the very Holy City of the Jews where Christ is not yet owned because his professed disciples know him not. But it is also the parable of the true and possible church, in which each form of religion may have its appointed place, but under whose over-arching dome all Christians may unite in listening to the risen Truth, while Jew and Gentile, believer or agnostic, may find in the peace within, some-



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thing that answers to their spiritual need and brings each nearer to the divine.

If this religion, the religion of Christ, the religion which accepts Christliness in all faiths and forms, though it be for all time and all times, must change, like all expressions of the divine through the human, in its expression, its organization, its methods, to conform with the conditions and answer the demands of each age, of each generation, of each type of mind or kind of soul, meeting with the eternal verities the needs of the passing hour, it behooves Christians to look facts in the face and learn where and why churches have failed. When the holy day becomes merely a holiday, not for re-creation but for amusement only; when neither the Bible nor other spiritual literature gives gospel to men, but the Sunday newspaper takes their place; when church meetings cannot withstand the competition of the cheap theatres in our cities or overcome the inertia of country life; when heads of churches are no longer men of religion but of affairs, and a spiritual teacher may be cast out because he does not draw to the pews a "paying" congregation; when churches have no longer

Failures  
of the  
Churches

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

the religious vitality in their public opinion to reform or to discipline those who pay high prices for pews and hold high place in church politics, but are anti-Christ in daily life; when worship becomes ritual and prayer a form; when, in short, the church is no longer religious, — there is no longer answer within the churches to that need, dwelling within every soul, however dormant, for the things of the spirit. For “man is a religious animal” and craves spiritual food. No plea of “lack of time” can condone the failure of the churches, for in this hurried world of our day each man works fewer hours to earn a better living than in the olden times “of leisure,” and has still “all the time there is.” It is still a matter of choice. The dried husks of religion will never invite nor satisfy the hungry souls that flocked to hear a Phillips Brooks, for whom time was never lacking, morning or noon or night, to seek spiritual food at his hands.

The Differentiation of Functions

It may be that religion, like government, has suffered, in this period of transition, from the lapse of individualist relations which has followed the development of great organizations. The chief of a state, the head of a

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great industry, no longer knows citizens and workers in their individual relations, but directs the mass. The shepherd of a thousand sheep cannot know his own and call each by its name. The preacher who attracts a thousand hearers into a great church-house cannot be the pastor of a thousand souls. The Pope, as the head of the great Roman hierarchy, dispenses religion as it were at wholesale. The Protestant bishop is an executive, no longer distinctly a godly man, but a man of the world, of affairs, whose conversation is not of religion but of everything else. To this extent, the church has recognized, somewhat to the bewilderment of its people, the differentiation of functions or of duties which has developed elsewhere in modern life.

But few Protestant churches have followed the example of Plymouth Church in providing a pastor as well as a preacher. The "minister of religion" must be orator, organizer, executive, spiritual adviser, and comforter, in one. But to few men is it given to be all these: Phillips Brooks are rare. The Roman church with its superb organization has more availed itself of this principle of differentiation. The Puritans of New England had their preacher and their teacher for each

Pastor and  
Preacher

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

church. When a church committee "calls" a new man, who will "fill the pews" and be "heard of in the newspapers," and disregards character and the quality of spiritual sympathy, expecting from him that which he cannot give, it commits a double wrong. And when the theological seminaries, fencing out men of large spirituality by narrow creeds, and inviting by unwise beneficences weaklings, spiritually and otherwise unfit, to secure a living in the church, send men out to strangle struggling churches at home or to misrepresent Christianity and misunderstand paganism in the missionary field, the church is handicapped with a burden no other modern organization carries.

A live and life-giving church must offer to men a living Christ, whose "second coming" is visible in the lives of disciples in whom his spirit is ever-present. It proves itself by doing the Master's work, fulfilling in its day his mission to men. A church of Christ should create a Christ-like environment for those within its fold, helping these to be Christians in every-day life, and should offer in its members a Christ-like example to those without, winning those to become Christians. In such an environment, each disciple is in-

The true  
Church of  
the living  
Christ

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spired to discipline, to devotion, to achievement toward likeness with Christ, and out of it should come the ideal, yet to be realized, of the Christian state. The primitive church, the Pilgrim fathers, the pioneer reformers in each Puritan movement before it conventionalized into sect, constituted literally a band of brethren in the bond of Christ, a spiritual family, known each of all by his name, united in personal intimacy as well as by common purpose, having all things in common so far as necessary to respond to spiritual or physical need, knowing no distinction of class within and reaching out to welcome into communion men of every class without, creating thus a Christian environment, a possible millennium, in which outward circumstance, however hard the physical lot, ministered unto inward peace. The confessional of the Roman church, the crude relations of the Sunday-school teacher, the formal visitation of "the minister," are sorry substitutes for this heart-to-heart relationship, the touch of soul with soul, possible among such bands of disciples, in a sympathetic environment, by help of which religion is made applied ethics and the spirit is enabled to withstand in the struggles of daily life.

A spiritual Family

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

Rites of the  
Church

It is natural that there should be "rites" of the church, as of other organizations. Every society accepts or initiates its newcomers or novices with more or less of ceremony, receives some formal enrollment or pledge, and holds festivals of communion or of commemoration. As the mystic gates from Eternity, through which the spirit incarnated in body makes entrance and exit, open and close, in birth and death, it is the proper office of religion to give welcome to the arriving and God-speed to the departing soul, in baptismal and funeral rites; and the wedlock of man and woman, from whose union, the foundation of the home and of human society, is to come offspring of new life, should also have sanction from the church as a part of the divine order. But the churches, bidden to seek and to save all men and to rejoice in the faith, have ever committed the dull and deadening error of making entrance or "confirmation" not a dedication but a definition, profession not of desire to live the Christ-life but of intellectual belief in complex and contradictory creed, fencing out more than it gathered in; of converting the memorial supper from a feast to which all are bidden into a sacerdotal ceremony excluding would-be

## OF RELIGION

guests; of marking the exit of the believer into eternal life with trappings of woe and lamentations of penitential grief. Christ invited the multitude to flock to him on the open hillsides of Judea; his ministers raise barbed-wire fences of creed and catechism even against the tender lambs who would seek shelter in his arms. The subtleties of the Nicene and the anathemas of the Athanasian creed, even the phantasmagoria of the simpler Apostles' Creed, so called, the "thirty-nine articles" and the "shorter catechism," overlaid upon the religion of Christ, perplex and repel the thoughtful and candid soul, and condemn the pulpit, bound by conscience to expositions against which conscience revolts, to verbal dexterities and logical evasions which are both irreligious and immoral.

Fences of  
Ritual

The creeds and articles of the sects are not the only survivals from a dead past which afflict the church and must pass away. Sacrifice, ceremonial, intercession, have been the vicarious exercises of religion by which a priestly class, from medicine-man to Roman priest, came between men and God. Fear, lording the savage mind and superstitious into our own day, imaged a God of Wrath and Death, whose anger was to be appeased

Supersti-  
tious Reli-  
gion

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

by taking life — the slaughter of enemies, the sacrifice of children, the burnt-offerings of flesh — and ungrudgingly paid taxes, in blood-money or tithes, for hire of those who could ward off His terrors. For to Ignorance the unusual in Nature — the storm, the flying comet, the stroke of death — is the striking fact, unmindful as it is of the sunshine and the starlight in which Nature usually abides and which suggests in the reflecting mind the smile of a God of Love and Life. To us it is not waste, but use, that pleases God ; sacrifice gives place to service. The abnegation of monks, as St. Simon on his pillar, or he who in the Russian Lavra lived his useless days immured in earth to his neck, is no longer religious. That power of the priesthood, the tool of statecraft, to invoke destruction of the disobedient, as when Moses is said to have punished the democratic revolt of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram by causing them, “even to their little ones,” to be swallowed up by the earth, is passing out of human belief, and with it “the forgiveness of sins” by a vicarious absolution. So, too, that view of prayer which makes it a special appeal to Deity to abrogate His Laws in our favor or against our adversaries, and with it will pass,

Priestcraft



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let us hope, the habit of taking His name in vain in so-called prayer to expatiate upon and explain the happenings of the day or to parade "the finest prayer ever addressed to a fashionable audience" or the weary waste of words of the prayer-meeting Pharisee. When, in the Mexican revolution, the revolutionists, under the white banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the "powers ordained of God," with the sacred image of Our Lady of Los Remedios, looked to this same "Mother of God" to invoke victory for each against the other; when, in the Cuban war, Catholic priests and Protestant ministers on either side, American and Spanish, vied in adjuring their common God of peace to overwhelm His, meaning their, enemies; when a community beseeches the Lord of Righteousness to "direct and prosper, for the safety, honor, and welfare of His people all the consultations" of a body to which it has sent an unrighteous representative; when a church begs the Law-giver of Nature to "restrain these immoderate rains" and "send us seasonable weather," — then prayer becomes a mockery, provoking the inward derision even of the most religious, and is no longer a religious exercise.

The Mock-  
ery of  
Prayer

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

The Exercises of Religion

But despite perversions of rites and of religious observances, the exercises of religion must remain a part of life so long as the spiritual nature remains a part of man. It is still true that human beings need, and are likely always to need, means of spiritual expression and communion which shall satisfy the hunger of the soul. The exercise of religion implies food and regimen. The spiritual man, like the physical man, needs nourishment and discipline, aids internal and external, to assure wholeness of life. What the great apostle means by faith and works, the uplifting of the soul toward the heights as well as the daily toiling on the plain, are necessary parts of the religious life. Service, worship, prayer, are natural means of spiritual development. For service only, the gospel of works, that love and duty towards our neighbor which is the best fulfillment of love and duty toward God, though the practical side of religion, is not enough. Mere altruism is not all. Man, as a social being, craves expression in common of his religious or ethical aspirations, as in public worship, no less than individual uplifting, as in private prayer.

As in social celebration, or on political occasion, men gather for the expression of com-

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mon thought or aim, hearing together the inspiring thoughts written aforetime, joining in song, renewing fidelity to their common cause, gaining new inspiration from the winged words of an "orator of the day," so religion answers a like need in a like way, developing this natural "order of exercises" into rich liturgy, or confining it to Puritan simplicity. When men are not repelled by dry form and rigid creed, but are offered the bread of righteousness and the water of life that answer to the spiritual hunger and thirst in every man, it is not duty that drives them to church but desire that speeds them, as a lover to his beloved. To the feast of the spirit all men come gladly, if they are but rightly bidden ; religion need hold no second place after business, politics, society, amusement. To Phillips Brooks, preaching in Trinity Church at noon-time, Wall Street flocked.

Church Liturgies

The great preacher has always his mission and his hearers, and, though from the pulpit of sect, he preaches to the church catholic, not theology but religion, not doctrine but devotion, "not creed but Christ." It is not given to all preachers to be, nor to all hearers to hear, a Beecher or a Spurgeon,

Preaching

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

yet men have only to be awakened by the enthusiasm, the God-in-us, of a religious reform or the force, too often crude and fleeting, of a "revival" of religion, to "crowd the churches" of humblest pulpits. And it should not be forgotten that every preacher of righteousness, from platform as from pulpit, is to-day, as of old, a prophet of God, aiding in the development of character, personal or national, toward the spiritual life. The spoken word kindles as the written word does not, and every man is the better for joining in the assembling of the people together, with uplift of common rejoicing, in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." In the richer forms of public worship, noble music, art, and architecture perform their splendid part as accessories of religion, but are a poor substitute for it when they become the idols of the church. As for doctrine, whereon men agree to disagree, and the study of the scriptures in its light, it may be that this will become the function of smaller organizations of fellow-believers within the greater church, as chapels in a great cathedral, in whose class-rooms the teacher of righteousness expounds to men like-minded with himself their view of truth.

Spiritual  
Songs

## OF RELIGION

The seeker after God, the student of the spiritual life, who obtains inspiration in the common joy and instruction from his spiritual teacher, needs not the less the private aids of prayer and meditation. As the thought of God changes from a Boss or Joss to be placated and besought for favors, to a Divine Power ruling the universe by laws of righteousness, there comes a like change in the thought of prayer. True prayer, whether in speech or in silence, public or private, is a communing with the divine, a meditation on divine knowledge, a recognition of divine laws, an aspiration toward divine being, raising the soul into active harmony with the divine order, and is in this sense the more an active part of religion as the vital relationship of each soul with the divine is recognized as the essence of religion. The office of prayer is not to beg God to stoop to men, but to uplift men toward God.

Both in public worship and private meditation, man finds spiritual food in the sacred literature of the past and of the present, — in the reflections of the divine thought in our own Book of Books, seen not as infallible and perplexing dogma but as the record of a religious yet errant race, in the Bibles of

Prayer

Sacred  
Books

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

### Nature

other religions, in the holy books of all times, in the uplifting literature of great poets and great thinkers, in all scriptures that make for good. These are the seed-thoughts which, germinating in the meditations of the devout mind, produce the flowers and fruits of spiritual blessing. And not least the contemplation of Nature and the study of its law, as developed in science, in which shines out the order and law of divine mind, are distinctly, to him who sees and reads aright, an exercise of religion. For there is no vista opening more directly toward the conception of a pre-ordered development under divine thought than that which sees the evolution of the material world from nebulous "stardust" into suns and planets, becoming in our own earth the home of life, developed by the wonderful principle of natural selection at last into man, paramount through mind, with whose advent there came newly into action the principle also of ethical selection, and who began to coördinate and modify and conquer Nature by mind, to compass the earth and set bounds to merely natural forces, until Nature is no longer the lord of life, but life the lord of Nature.

## OF RELIGION

This we come to see at the last — that the godly life, the Christian life, the religious life, may be lived in sincere unity amidst and amongst all these diversities of theological doctrine and ceremonial expression. The Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man in Christ, are doctrines on which all Christians agree, but there is a still wider basis of agreement on which also non-Christians may stand. The goodly life is the godly life. Right living is at once the condition and the aim of a true religion. We hear talk of the need of a new religion. But we have only to practice the old. Freed from the accretions and conventionalities of doctrine and of form that are part of a dead past, the barnacles of the centuries, the old religion is found to suffice abundantly for the new times. “Do I think Christianity a failure? — I think it has not been tried!” said the great Jewish rabbi. To live like Christ has been throughout the Christian centuries a sufficing religion. Wars have been fought over definitions of God; ceremonial usages have been evolved from Christ’s simplest acts; doctrines diverse and contrary have been read into His words as the basis of anathemas, — but it is the life of the Christ, in its simplest teaching, that has been the suffi-

The godly  
Life

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

cient model for all time. The way of the Christ is still the way of life.

“What would Jesus do?”

To live the Christ-life amid the complexities and perplexities of modern living is indeed no easy endeavor. The question, “What would Jesus do?” is sometimes easier asked than answered. We wish, for instance, to feed the hungry but not to promote pauperism — and so we must have our charity organization societies, and as an act of charity must refrain from an act of love. We seek to uplift our fellows by abolishing industrial slavery and organizing free labor, but not to develop a new despotism of trade unionism. We must think not only of the motive but of the effects of what we mean to be Christ-like actions. It requires indeed wide vision to apply the principle of guidance that we must work in line with the power that makes for righteousness, the work of good — and yet the Christ-life is the key to our living as to all living.

Christ-like-ness outside Christianity

And when the Christ-life is simply seen, and its teachings simply read, it becomes known to us that this life and these teachings are a Bible of which there have been many translations, however imperfect, in other tongues and in other ages. Thus the follower of Christ finds Christ's likeness in the



## OF RELIGION

fellowship of the earlier Buddha and sees reflections of his teachings in the Koran of the later Mahomet. Though to us of Christian faith, Christ, the supreme fulfillment in human form of the divine spirit, is the Way-shower above all who in less measure have been filled with the spirit of God, it becomes evident, as we know more and think more about the religion of others, that any great religious teacher is a leader in the upward path. The Christian may not despise those who follow the teachers of their race in paths leading where Christ led, or disdain those who practice a Christian virtue better than himself. The followers of Buddha have no need for societies for the prevention of cruelty to man or beast, nor those of Mahomet for temperance movements and prohibition parties. We need not become Buddhists to learn from Buddha, or Mahometans to seek what Mahomet may have to teach, nor join each Christian sect to get good from the precept or practice of Romanist, Anglican, Methodist, Quaker, or Christian Scientist.

As the Christ had his forerunner in John and his interpreter in Paul, so in a wider vision, the earlier Buddha and the later Mahomet had each his mission in the fulfillment

Non-Christian Religions

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

Buddha —  
“the noble  
Path”

of religion for the races of mankind. Buddha, seeking through the great renunciation a simpler way and a truer aim, failed, as all human effort must fail, to satisfy with his doctrine of Nirvana the insatiate desire of the finite mind to solve the problems of infinity, and his followers, as generations passed, divided like Christendom into innumerable sects, papal and protestant, idolized the destroyer of idols, and formalized a religion which was to free men from forms. But Buddha's “noble path” is not the less a way of virtue and of life, and his “silver rule” the other statement of the “golden rule” of Christ. Mahomet, fierce like the prophets of old with holy wrath against the idolatrous practices of his Arab brethren, and against Jews and Christians who had corrupted the pure monotheism of their fathers with superstitions and idolatries innumerable and with ungodly life, fell before the temptation of world-conquest, and his religion became perverted into fanaticism, fatalism, and sensuality. But the simplicity of the mosque and of the liturgy, in heed of his commands against graven images and idolatries, and the devotions of his people in every-day life, are not without their lessons for Christians.

Mahomet  
the  
Reformer

## OF RELIGION

To him who sees in all times and amongst all nations the workings of God in His world, **The Bible** it must be evident that the three great religions which, originating within the compass of a thousand years, have divided the allegiance of the great mass of mankind, must each have a real basis for their triumph; that neither is true to the exclusion of the others, however supremely true may be our own faith; and that in the truth underlying all and to which all point is the way of life. And in this same light, the Bible, our own Bible, in the "newer criticism" which makes it human as well as divine literature, is no longer an arsenal of weapons from which one adversary may slay another with contradictory "proof-texts" and doom whole "denominations" to eternal perdition, but the record of a race gifted above all others with the gift of religion, seeking after God, finding Him in the terrors of broken law and in the beneficences of law fulfilled, listening to His voice through Moses the great law-giver and that line of statesman who were prophets of his righteousness, until in Christ the Messiah came, at last, the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

In this new light the missionary impulse

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

The  
missionary  
Spirit

is yet to find its full glory. At first denying to all men but the few the mercy of God, the churches presently sought to pluck "heathenism" out of the minds of half-developed men, and replace it with the Christianity of civilization, as defined by each church in its own creed. That could not be done. The result was often disastrous. Creeds confused. The Buddhist, taught that Romanists in the sacrifice of the Mass ate the body and drank the blood of Christ, or misled by the atonement imagery, not less sanguinary, of Protestant hymns, considered Christians a kind of cannibals who "ate their God," from whom his reverence for life revolted in horror. The Mahometan, confronted by the doctrine of the Three in One, by devotions before the images of Christ, the Virgin, and the Saints, and by the intoxication of men from Christian countries, was confirmed in his belief of the purity of his own religion, which knew only One God and kept him from idolatry and from drunkenness. The vices of civilization were often transplanted instead of its religion. Fire-water and firearms went with the Gospel of Peace. But now has come a better way — not to destroy but to develop, to find not only the agreements

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among Christians but between Christians and those of lesser light, that these may be led into the clearer shining of the perfect day. The struggle is but begun, yet the result should be sure. Christian missionaries who are truly Christ-like and have truly the missionary spirit, will seek lovingly to interpret, instead of hatefully to misunderstand, the ceremonies, beliefs, and aspirations of the twilight peoples and make them bridges toward the faith of the perfect day. And in turn Christianity is receiving from other religions their aid towards the higher life. The prayers from Egyptian temples, the teachings of Socrates and Plato, the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius, are helps to the devout life. Buddha joins forces with St. Francis of Assisi in teaching us to love our little brothers of the earth. The Orient contributes to our sacred anthology, and its aspirations seem not out of place in Christian pulpits.

The better  
Way

All religions are useless, and the exercises of religion waste, if they do not show their fruits, harvest after seedtime, in practical every-day life. He who is truly godly or good will not rest short of helping in his

Religion  
practical

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

turn to increase good among his fellow-men, and in that sense at least bring them nearer to God, more in accord with divine order. In state as in church, in business as in society, — that is, in politics, trade, conversation, — religion must be known by its practical applications, in fulfilling the direct aim of religion, righteousness of life. And he who believes not in a “personal” God has not the less, indeed has the more, need to use all helps toward the spiritual life, which uplifts man from strength to strength, as on wings of eagles.

Soul  
supreme

All religions join with ethics, with philosophy, with common sense, in emphasizing for the soul, the spirit, supreme place in the making of man. And this necessity is shown by contraries. The most awful crime among the most hardened people, as the murder of a mistress from jealousy by a brutal outcast, witnesses to the strength of that personal individuality, dwelling in the body, yet not the body, which binds man to man. Friendship, love, hate, — these are relations not physical, but meta-physical, supra-material, spiritual, and they are supreme relations. The thought of the soul fighting with the body for supremacy is as old as life itself;

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it is a thought in the Bibles of all peoples, and comes home to every man's experience. A modern sculptor has carven a group in which, joined as they touch the earth, the man spiritual with face alight in aspiration is seen struggling against the man physical, of form alike yet different, with face dull in brutishness. If the soul does not conquer, the body will. If the body conquers it dooms the soul to base subjection. If the soul conquers, the body follows its leadership into new life. The one is discord, the other harmony. It is only in the supremacy of the soul that life can be one, that man can live his life in unity with himself and with the Power that makes for righteousness.

And which shall be conqueror is a question not so much of original gift as of training. Despite heredity, men are born with possibilities of good, and may be educated, physically or morally, to withstand and survive the seeds of ill. The soul may be an athlete or a weakling. Many a man, puny in body, with small gift of physical life, has outstripped in the race of life his fellows of greater physical strength, by careful and well-willed development of a weak physique. So also has the soul choice. It may put itself

The con-  
quering Soul

## THE ARTS OF LIFE

in line with the forces of good, or let itself go with the current of evil. It may be educated, developed, quickened; or it may be dulled, stunted, deadened. There must be training of the soul, by the exercise of spiritual powers, lest there be atrophy of the man spiritual. It is sometimes true that the uplifting of the soul requires the crucifixion of the flesh—the eternal parable of the Cross. The waters of sensuality drown darkly the breath of spiritual life. Education is therefore a duty toward the soul.

The uplift-  
ing Spirit

This the modern man too often forgets. Being good, godly, to his fellow-man, he neglects to be good, or godly, within himself. Non-godliness, not ungodliness, is the condition of present-day living. But the exercises of religion are a vital part of life. In some form, the Sabbath, the Bible, worship, prayer, or their equivalents, belong with every well-ordered man and nation. Altruism may forget self, but self should not be forgotten. We owe a duty to ourselves, within ourselves, as well as without ourselves to our fellow-man. Religion redeems not destroys self. And the higher life uplifts the body itself into its most perfect wholeness and peace. Thus the higher and the lower motives con-



## OF RELIGION

join in the great unity that makes for righteousness. And whether we think only of the life that now is, or also of the life that is to come, whether the pathway of being seems to any one of us to lead to the shut or to the open door, it is in the supremacy of the higher man, in the fulfillment of the supreme art of life, that life on earth is indeed worth the living.

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