

## HUMANE RELIGION

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AS the various sects and cults which depend upon beliefs in the intervention of other-worldly powers in the creation and life of this world steadily loses point after point, we feel the uneasiness which suffuses all religious bodies. Some deny this uneasiness very vehemently, and capitalize its existence in their rival sects, saying truly enough that to have faith in God is to have faith in truth. But below the surface, all religious bodies are lacking in this confidence. And as things are, they are rightly so; for any concern for things supernatural, especially for the world to come, effects a focusing of our powers. It sensitizes our thought in the direction of those slow-maturing fruits, those eternal values—sacrificing, as in giving one's best efforts and resources to the enhancement of the general future welfare of society; study of the why, whence and wherefore of all life; the desire to conserve the best that is in the human heart and soul rather than to produce the most that can be in the factory; and all the rest. Truly, "the *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," even though it be unconscious, overlaid with interests and purposes which themselves speak of no fear. Every primitive man was born into an environment of fear; and without that primeval element, no man can live his life naturally—none can get the most out of it for his fellow men and his own personal universe of ends and values.

But fear is an unhappy word; it has fallen into disrepute. It is supposed to connote a shivering and a shaking, a quivering and a quaking; it is supposed to speak of paralysing panic. And therefore we must seek to convey the idea of a focusing force by means of another word. Perhaps solicitude is the word which best serves us. It signifies uneasiness, care, concern, desire; it is a distinction without a great difference. Then the question is, what shall be the object

of our solicitude? What object can maintain our solicitude in a way which compares with that of these many superstitions which are now taking their due leave? And we remember that while they lasted superstitions were relentless in energizing us; they were very self-sufficient.

Here, at length, we think of more thoroughly substituting social values for moral. Society should be the god of all who have no god. "I believe in man" is the way one eminent preacher advises us to begin our creed. And, since man is supposed to be made in the image of God, this advice sounds reasonable enough. If God is self-sufficient morally, why cannot man as a whole be likewise—as potent as possible in the worship of the good that is within him; as fully energized as any worship can make him? This does not mean that the good in mankind should be magnified by any chance; it is not conceit of any degree which is wanted; for that would mean an increase of a trait only too evident over the face of the earth today. What we want, instead, is the sort of worship which is one with the earnest desire to conserve the best within mankind. It is a seeking and a striving, a freeing and a protecting.

And it has to do not so much with abstract human qualities as with living and active individuals. The individual must become the end of all solicitude. This, we recognize, is Kantian teaching, and has been held to for some time. But it has never been applied in the proper way. That is, it is believed that men are very much equal as ends, even in a practical world, and should be so treated. The truth is that there are differences among men in this respect just as in that of size, vigor, mentality, specialization, and all other characters. And this means that we must do a certain selecting and favoring among men, which is to say among ends—among the objects of our solicitude. We must not look for any gulf between the good and the bad, yet we must admit that there is an ever changing, developing, progressing hierarchy of values, social and moral, among the many individuals who go to make up mankind. We must have more concern for this man, who has shown himself of more than average good-will, conscientiousness, dutifulness, concern for his fellows, or whatever name we give that most valuable human quality. Conversely, we should have less concern for that man, who gives evidence of having less of that quality—of being narrower, more selfish, in his life and interests. This, indeed, is our criterion. And as we remember that the nineteenth century failed to find in

social values any very workable substitute for the moral values of previous time, we must remember also that the nineteenth century believed too much in Man with a capital M. Man in the abstract, rather than in men. The nineteenth century did not believe in showing differences between men. And so we have democracy foisted upon us: an unbounded faith in man, and an unyielding distrust of men, even though they hold office by the right of the divine majority.

Which shows that state and society are inseparable from religion in form. This has been half learned many times, and many times perverted. But now comes the time for knowing it so thoroughly that we know we know it: then it cannot easily be twisted to any anti-social purpose. Only in such well founded confidence can we hope to get our feet and stay there. But it happens here that knowing and doing are very much the same thing; we learn the basic unity of state, society and religion only as we work for their unity, and note the failures that have resulted from their improper separation.

Here we may well delight to turn back to Plato and Aristotle, who said that all governments fail because their bases are too narrow and become ever more narrow. Indeed, what we have been in need of all along is a recognized basis of the state which will include every desired human quality—every quality which is essential to the maintenance of the state. And, of course, that quality is the supreme human quality which we have mentioned—let us call it duty, in this connection. Without duty no state could last any time; and without duty properly organized, seeing properly to its own perpetuation by means of properly *rewarding the individuals* who show that quality, duty weakens in every case, and no state fails to fail.

Conservation—yes, duty must aim at its own conservation—in fact its own increase and power. And in this, we must never forget, the means and end is the individual—the individual who has that quality, and lives that quality and shows that quality. That is to say, the dutiful man, who regards himself as a means, an instrument, of duty, should be regarded by his fellows among the dutiful as an end of *their* duty. To work as far as practicable for his receiving his due and proper reward becomes included within the kingdom of human duties. Indeed it becomes a part of the duty of the very man himself. It becomes his right—something for which he

should fight. For has he not ample need for all possible reward in his endless task of duty? If he is an instrument, should he not seek to become as effective, as instrumental, as possible? Reward is a stepping-stone from lesser duties to greater. It is the harvest of duty, and the seed of a yet greater harvest. And the world that speaks against reward speaks against its own moral nature and intelligence; the narrowness of its thinking fits in with its narrow selfishness.

In the capitalist system we have a frank recognition that there must be reward; the basis of that system is that there should be due payment for service rendered. And indeed if this were only more truly the case there would be no great complaint against that system; we should not find wealth going to the merely executive type so greatly out of proportion to that going to the creative type—the business man getting so much, and the philosopher and social organizer so little. We should in fact see the most “priceless” services, as we call them, paid more or less accordingly, so that the man who gives his life for medical research brings greatest reward upon those nearest and dearest to him—reward which has nothing to do with living requirements, but is gauged by a consensus of authoritative opinion as to the value of the service. And all acts which seem to be acts of duty, of love for the human whole, would bring from all dutiful men who witness them sufficient assistance towards attaining reward, which is to say sufficient cooperation, sufficient sympathy and gratitude of the effective sort, sufficient backing.

This is the thing we want—the active, telling spirit of reward, which unifies all men of dutiful intent, and makes their brotherhood more than an abstract name—more than a word to please and lead them all astray in a false sense of security, in a false belief that the mere name, brotherhood, and an inactive, effervescing sympathy will make the world better than it is, and the dutiful happier. We want that sympathy which brooks an isolation of no dutiful individual, but pulls the hearts of them all together through their many helping hands. This is the spirit which maketh alive, which bursts through all deadening letters and laws and customs, ever creating these things anew to fit its growing nature. This is the spirit which sees that it is not the institution, not the state, not the machine, which lies at the center of all loyalties, but is the individual, human and therefore nearest being divine. This is the most beautiful and true among religions. The reciprocation taught

by Confucius—what can it signify but this? What else can be the meaning of Christ's golden rule? And where else could Royce's "loyalty to loyalty" bear us than to this? When we realize that the dutiful man is *most truly* a man, we find an overflowing significance in the words, "God is the helping of man by man, and such is the way to eternal life."

When this becomes our religion, we recognize all superstitions, all unscientific beliefs, as stumbling-blocks and belittling, as proof that religion is not sure of itself, not confident of its own life and power and office. And we are ready to throw them all off with a will. For we have found that such strengthening of the heart of religion, namely the good men, by means of reward (which may also be called cooperation, active sympathy, etc.) makes religion so much the more powerful, and indeed pervasive. All the ideals and sympathies which meet in each good, dutiful individual like rays in a focus, then become brightened and glorified accordingly with the things which appeal to the world at large; and few if any men stand unaffected. All are urged towards the good and dutiful life by all those urges which are fundamental to the nature of man, who is the divine image. Love of wealth, honor and glory, love of unfailing fellowship, love of one's own family, one's own children, who could reap the fruits of one's duty where one does not survive it, who would receive the measure of solicitude due from good men at large—all these loves, and more, then act to support the good, the good men, the heart of all religion.

And to this end, again, we have but to change our point of focus from other-worldliness to this-worldliness, from a Heaven too far above us to the earth which must ever be reckoned with, from Man to men—good men.