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BY DAVID SAVILLE MUZZEY

ETHICAL RELIGION

ITS HISTORICAL SOURCES

ITS ELEMENTS

ITS SUFFICIENCY

ITS FUTURE

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AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

ETHICAL
RELIGION

Education
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COLLECTION

THE four addresses presented here were delivered at Sunday morning meetings of the New York Society for Ethical Culture in 1943 and repeated elsewhere. They are now printed by permission of the Society and in response to many requests for their issue in book form.

Dr. Muzzey is Chairman of the Board of Leaders of the New York Society, of which Society he has been a Leader since 1905. He is also Leader of the Westchester Society for Ethical Culture. His published works include "The Rise of the New Testament," "Spiritual Heroes," "The Spiritual Franciscans," "An American History," "Life of Thomas Jefferson," and "A History of the American People." From 1912 to 1940 he was Professor of History in Columbia University.

The Ethical Movement, with the ideas of which this book is concerned, was founded by Dr. Felix Adler, in New York, in 1876. Ethical Societies now exist in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Brooklyn, and Westchester, N. Y. There are also several such Societies in England—and were in Germany and Austria prior to recent events making their present functioning impossible. The activities of the Societies include Ethical Culture Schools in New York and Brooklyn; close association with neighborhood-houses—founded by them—in several cities, substantial work in the sphere of adult education, and the issue of a magazine, "The Standard," and other publications.

Further information will be found on the concluding pages.

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AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

2 West 64th Street

New York, N. Y.



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I.

THE HISTORICAL SOURCES OF ETHICAL RELIGION

OUR THEME is Ethical Religion. Its sources are the concern of the present address. But before entering upon that subject let me make two preliminary statements by way of clarification and definition. In the first place, by ethical religion I do not mean a religion which merely includes ethical precepts and ethical conduct in its teachings. Every religion that rises above mere magical rites and superstitious ceremonies has more or less ethical content—some religions of course more than others. But it is nevertheless true that even in those higher religions, like Christianity and Judaism, in which the ethical element is prominent, it is still conceived of as a derivative from a creed which puts confession of faith in a supernatural revelation in the first place. The acceptance of certain doctrines or dogmas, such as the redemption of fallen man by the vicarious atonement of a God who took on human form, or the divine inspiration of a sacred scripture, or the choice of a certain race to be the peculiar carriers of the divine message to a darkened world, or the delegation of the magical means of salvation to a consecrated clergy set apart from the layman and rising in a priestly hierarchy to its culmination in the Pope at Rome, claiming to be the vicar of God on earth—the acceptance of some such doctrine is held by all the historic religions to be the source and inspiration of the ethical life. Ethics, according to this point of view, is a corollary which follows from the theorem of theology; it is an ingredient of religion, but not the basis of religion. If it were left out, the flavor of a given religion might indeed be impaired, but the substance of the religion would remain.

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Now ethical religion, as we shall consider it here, differs sharply from these religions based on theological concepts. It is not merely in the *degree* of ethical content that it differs, but in its unabashed claim that ethics is at the very core and center of religion. It is not an ornament in the temple of religion, but is the temple itself, its foundations, its walls and its dome. Were it not for the fundamentally ethical motive of the search for inner harmony and peace, there would have been no theological system framed, no ceremonial rite developed. These latter accessories of religion have varied from age to age with the stages of man's intellectual and aesthetic development. They have ranged all the way from crude superstitions and cruel immolations to the subtle sophistication of a Thomas Aquinas or a Jonathan Edwards and the inoffensive liturgies of modern orthodox churches. But the constant factor which has made religion through all the ages the chief concern and the crowning glory of man has been the thirst of the human soul for ethical perfection. Ethics, then, is not a corollary, a derivative, an ingredient of religion. It is religion. And it is this autonomous rôle of ethics, independent of any creed or ceremony, which I mean by the phrase "ethical religion." There are many, of course, who will censure this bold identification of ethics with religion, maintaining that the ethical life is dependent upon the acceptance of theological propositions. I shall not deal with their arguments now, because at the outset I wish only to give an unequivocal definition of what I mean by ethical religion. I shall return later to an amplification of that definition, when considering the sufficiency of ethical religion.

The second preliminary point is that in our ethical fellowship no one speaks *ex cathedra*. We are seekers together for light on all the manifold problems of thought and conduct which confront us, and each of us makes such contribution as he can to the common fund of ethical conviction. We are not bound to expound any traditional system of doctrine, attempting to adapt it to the needs of the present day, nor are we the dispensers of sacraments purporting to convey the means of divine grace. But if the phrase "Thus saith the Lord" is foreign to our lips, it does not mean that

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the sense of the solemnity and responsibility attached to the search for truth is absent from our hearts. A noted clergyman of the 18th century said that when he ascended the steps of his pulpit he felt the waves of eternity beating upon him. We acknowledge a like feeling of humble awe when, for instance, we stand beneath or sit facing the words above the platform of our New York society: "The place where men meet to seek the highest is holy ground." Let no one think that our meetings are a mere forum for the discussion of current political and economic questions or the review of the latest books. It is a religious motive that brings us together, a quest for the spiritual values which shall stimulate our will to righteousness, clarify our conception of duty, and give dignity and significance to our lives. If some say: But you cannot have this stimulation or experience this clarification or enjoy this dignity, without sharing a belief in the creed or participating in the sacraments of the church, it is simply for us to show by our life and conduct that they are mistaken.

Having thus defined ethical religion as the supreme and all-absorbing faith in the ethical values of life, and having disclaimed any higher sanction for that faith than the common human search for those values, let us now turn to our topic of the sources of ethical religion. Our most precious possessions are those which we have to win by continuous and incessant effort. That is the meaning of Goethe's famous saying: "What thou hast inherited from thy fathers that thou must win in order to possess it." Material goods can be hoarded like canned foods on a pantry shelf or bonds and stock certificates in a safe-deposit box. But the goods of the spirit, the supreme goods of life, cannot be treated so. You cannot put aspirations or ideals or creative genius in storage. They will degenerate into disillusion, as the petering out of so many promising reforms and hopeful careers shows. Remember the man in the parable who wrapped his talent in a napkin and put it away, thinking that he could thus keep it. Is not one of the main causes for the break-up of marriages which began in a glow of idealism and a selflessness of mutual devotion the sad fact that the man and woman have thought that they could insure their happiness

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by putting their marriage certificate in a strong box, like a share of stock, instead of realizing that they must win each other's confidence and affection every day and hour? In the novels marriage is the happy end of the story; but in real life it is the serious beginning of the story. So it is with the most precious of all our possessions, our religion. That possession everyone must win for himself in the unremitting effort of every day of his life. Though it may appeal to human weakness as a boon, there is no more deceptive and debilitating a doctrine than that of a treasury of merit taught by the Roman Catholic Church; the doctrine that the saints of the past have by an excess of virtue accumulated a surplus of grace on which sinners now may draw; a kind of spiritual dole. That the strong should help the weak, that the wise should instruct the ignorant, that the mature should guide the immature we readily agree. That is the function of education. But the help and guidance should always be given with a view to strengthening the weak and developing the immature, and not to perpetuate the weakness by covering it with the vicarious mantle of another's strength as the doctrine of the treasury of merit does.

Our religion, then, is a thing which each of us must acquire and refine by his own incessant effort; as the Scotch proverb says: "Every man must dree his own weird." But in this task we are greatly fortified and encouraged by the testimony of the past. The historical sources of ethical religion are abundant. Just when, where and how that tremendous event in human development took place, by which man emerged from the amoral, instinctive sense-life of the animal creation to the consciousness of right and wrong, of obligation and responsibility, we do not know. Whether this consciousness was something originally implanted in man by the Creator or was discovered by man in the relations arising from the earliest association with his fellowmen in family and tribe, we may let the theologians and anthropologists argue about it as they have argued for centuries. The fact is there, and the great scholar, George Romanes, declared that this step into moral consciousness was the most important fact in the evolution of man. Without it he could never have appreciated character or progress

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in culture. He might have conceived of a god of power, surrounded as he was by the terrifying and un-understood forces of nature; but to attribute to that power such moral elements as love and mercy would have been beyond his reach.

This moral evolution of man, which is today and always has been his supreme duty, may be traced to sources far, far back in the history of the human race. Long before the development of our established religions (which are all, indeed, the product of moral aspiration, however much they may have overlaid that primal urge with ceremony and dogma), we find the ethical motive working in the minds of sages and prophets. Read the beautiful book of the late Professor James H. Breasted called *The Dawn of Conscience*, and you will see how the Egyptian thinkers of 5,000 years ago and more announced the doctrines of moral obligation; how the sage Ptah Hotep emphasized the qualities of justice, mercy, integrity and sympathy, warning men that as they sowed so should they reap and exhorting them to cultivate harmony in their lives by obedience to the guiding principle of conscience. Give just measure; do not oppress the poor; honor the wise; choose the better way; consider the end of your actions—such were his famous “Precepts.” Confucius, the glory of the Chinese people, devoted his life to the preaching and practice of ethical religion. He was content to leave the questions of the nature of the gods to the wrangling of the theologians. “How can I understand God,” he said, “when I do not yet understand men?” And this was five centuries before the author of the First Epistle of John wrote, “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” When we reflect how often in the history of religion the alleged love of God has been made the pretext for hatred and cruelty to man, we could almost wish that men had never conceived of a God at all. Think of the religious wars and persecutions which stain the pages of history, of the stern and merciless inquisitors who burned their fellow men at the stake as a sacrifice pleasing to God, of the uncharitableness and invidiousness which has existed down to modern days between the rival sects and churches. Ah, but this spirit is dying out

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today, one says, and Protestants, Catholics and Jews are learning to dwell together in amity if not in unity. This is all to the good; a forward step in civilization. But how has it been brought about? Solely by the gradual penetration of the leaven of ethical religion into the lump of dogma. Sometimes this leaven has been furnished by devoted churchmen like Dr. Walter Rauschenbusch or Albert Schweitzer or Father Damien, but far more often it has been the contribution of dissenters and heretics; and often the clergymen who have espoused the ethicizing of religion, like Algernon Crapsey or Father Tyrrell, have been forced out of the pulpit by the pressure of the vested orthodox interests.

As these examples attest, we find a curious paradox in the history of religion. Two streams of influence are always conflicting, like waters in a rip tide. In one direction flows the stream of custom and conformity, gathering its strength from the accumulation of centuries of tradition and bearing along vast numbers of people by its very momentum. Probably comparatively few people in any of the churches, certainly very few in the Roman Church, inquire deeply into the historical foundations of the theological formulæ of the religion they profess to follow. That they leave to their priests and ministers. It is enough for them to attend the services at stated times and to have the ministrations of the church to call upon in times of crisis, like birth, marriage and death. Opposing this current of conformity is the stream of criticism and dissent, composed of those spirits who insist on summoning the creeds and customs to the bar of reason and conscience to show cause why they should continue to exist. This conflict of opposing trends is strikingly illustrated by the struggle between the priestly and the prophetic elements in the old Hebrew religion. The prophets were forever disturbing Israel: thundering against the altars to strange gods, predicting the chastisement of the people for their faithlessness to Jehovah, denouncing the feasts and the sacrifices as substitutes for righteousness, excoriating the rich for adding field to field and grinding the faces of the poor, rebuking kings for their sins of covetousness and greed, suffering imprisonment and exile for their outspoken censures. Not that this conflict between the prophetic-ethical

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and the priestly-theological was confined to the religion of the ancient Hebrews. We see it illustrated in another form in Greece, where the priestly religion of the Dionisiac cult, the processions of the thyrsos bearers and the Eleusinian mysteries are confronted by the poetic rationalism of Plato and the lofty ethical teaching of Aristotle. We meet it in the Middle Ages, when we see John Huss and Wyclif taking the church to task for its absorption in ceremony and pilgrimages and place-hunting to the exclusion of concern for the righting of the glaring social evils of the times. We meet it in modern history in the persecution of Galileo by bigoted ignoramuses, the burning of Giordano Bruno, the denunciation of Voltaire for exposing the tortures of a young man who had spoken lightly of the Virgin Mary, the rage of the New England clergy against Thomas Jefferson as an American Marat, the bitter and wholly undeserved sneer of Theodore Roosevelt in calling Thomas Paine "a dirty little atheist," the sad misdevotion of Bryan's last days to the support of the bigotry and ignorance of a group of Tennessee farmers. Indeed, the whole story of religion could be written in terms of this contrast between the priestly-theological and the prophetic-ethical spirit. And, if it were not a digression from our immediate topic, I believe that the story of politics, economics, education, labor and many another of the problems of our American life could be presented in essentially the same framework. Always authority, entrenched in power and bolstered by tradition, confronting new ideas, contesting fresh interpretations, frowning on innovation, clinging to pattern and precedent, and, in the words of John Morley in his profound essay *On Compromise*, letting their puny hope that things might be better for the changes proposed by reformers flicker out in the face of their firm conviction that things would certainly be worse.

Now we of the Ethical Societies take our stand squarely on the side of the prophetic as against the priestly tradition. We are seekers for truth and not the guardians and expositors of a final truth either delivered to the fathers in the form of a sacred scripture or entrusted to a peculiar people chosen by God or embodied in a hierarchy which claims to be the divinely appointed custodian of truth. But this does not

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mean, as many of our critics object, that our ethical religion is without roots. We do not break with religion, but seek to purge it of those elements which offend our intellectual integrity or fail to satisfy our moral aspirations. We do not condemn religion, but cherish it as the most precious thing in our lives. And we have a long and noble tradition for our inspiration and sustenance: a tradition older by far than any of the creeds of Christendom. For our forerunners are all the prophets of the past, even to the remote sages of Egypt and the Far East, the moral philosophers of so-called "pagan" Greece and Rome, the persecuted heretics of the Christian era, in short, every brave soul that has dared to think out his own religious faith and express it without fear or favor.

I wonder at times whether we appreciate the abundant sources of ethical religion which history furnishes us with; whether we realize what a tremendous stimulus to steadfastness is the sense of heirship to a great tradition. How, for example, could one preserve an unshakable faith in democracy in the face of all the perversions and betrayals of democracy one sees today even in our own land which makes the broad boast of being the home of democracy, unless one felt working in his own soul something of that zeal for democracy which animated a Washington and a Lincoln? John Milton wrote: "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." How much more precious for life beyond his own life is the faith of a man who, in the midst of discouragement and defeat, can keep his eyes fixed steadily on the ideal which has beckoned to him and bidden him forsake all for its attainment: a William of Orange, who could lose every battle and yet win the war against the best troops of Europe under the captains of Philip of Spain; a Washington, whom neither the sufferings of his hungry and shivering little army at Valley Forge nor the back-bitings and conspiracies of his jealous critics in the Congress could persuade to despair of the triumph of the cause to which he had dedicated his fortune and his sacred honor; a Lincoln, whose unflinching devotion to his task of saving the Union could blot out every thought of personal ambition

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or private resentment and make him the imperishable symbol of America's destiny—

"Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American."

Patriotism would wither without such sources to draw from. For patriotism is a product of long historical growth. It is like a plant rooted in the soil and watered by the memories of our country's achievements. Lip service may be paid to it in oratorical exhibitions or fervent songs; but unless the spirit of the patriots is in the hearts of the performers, all the shouting and the singing will be only as sounding brass and as tinkling cymbal.

So it is with religion, which is as easily counterfeited as patriotism. Not everyone who cries Lord! Lord! enters the kingdom of heaven. Our religion must be the apprehension and appropriation of eternal verities which have been the inspiration of the great prophets of righteousness in all countries and all ages. No church or sect has a monopoly of these inspired ones. They belong to humanity: Plato of Athens, Jesus of Nazareth, the Buddha of India, the Stoic Epictetus, the Christian St. Francis, the "God-intoxicated" Jewish Spinoza, the "gloved iconoclast" Emerson. Let us not ignore or renounce our heritage. Let us not neglect the life-giving sources of our ethical religion. We members of Ethical Societies must prize, with due humility, the heritage we have received from the past. Felix Adler did not discover ethics. Ethics discovered him, and found in him only another mouthpiece to preach the gospel of righteousness independent of creed or ceremony which has been the theme of thousands of men in the long history of religious thought and action. It was an oft repeated saying of Adler's that he was grateful for the idea that had used him. In his chief work, *An Ethical Philosophy of Life*, which contains his matured ethical testament, he reviews the sources from which he had drawn his inspiration: the Hebrew prophets, the message of Jesus, the intellectual keenness of the Greek philosophers, the social reformers of his fatherland, the stimulating but

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spotted ethics of Immanuel Kant, the serene confidence in man's power to respond to the call of duty repeated over and over by Ralph Waldo Emerson. All these influences were contributive to what he so happily called the idea which had used him. He never asked people to follow him, but always to follow with him the lead of the ethical imperative; to discover ever more clearly and exemplify ever more faithfully the moral duties of justice, truthfulness, sympathy, patience and humility which have been the burden of the teaching of the prophets of ethical religion through the centuries. We who believe in a purely ethical religion forfeit our birthright if we think of ourselves as belonging only to a little sect of dissidents, hardly worth notice in the religious census of the nation. No, we are heirs of a great tradition which has furnished its saints and martyrs, its philosophers and poets, its preachers and philanthropists to the cause of religious liberty. And to feel ourselves a part of this tradition, however small our part may be, must be the stimulus which gives us courage in weakness and comfort in trial, which gives worth to our unworthiness and significance to our life.

I have spoken of the two contrasting traditions in the history of religion: the priestly and the prophetic. Let us inquire more closely into the sources of these conflicting traditions, in order that we may gain a clearer insight into the meaning of ethical religion. It was natural that early man, confronted as he was by the awful manifestations of nature in lightning, tornado, fire and flood, and ignorant not only of the causes of physical phenomena but also of the sources of desires, passions and dreams in his own mysterious mind, should have invented manifold beings more powerful than himself who caused the caprices of nature and whose wrath he might placate or whose favor he might win by prayers, rites and incantations. It was inevitable that a class of experts should arise, who claimed to prescribe the proper rites and to mediate the favors of the various divinities. We find them in every primitive culture: medicine men, shamans, dervishes, magi, todas and the like. This rude priesthood controlled the minds and bodies of men so absolutely that when kings and emperors emerged in later ages,

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they found their power enhanced by arrogating to themselves the magical claims of the priests. They pretended to be descended from the gods; to be hedged about with a divinity, like King Claudius in *Hamlet*, which made them immune to injury from mere common people; to exercise magic by their touch, like Charles II of England who laid his hands on people along the streets to cure them of scrofula; to hold their thrones not as servants responsible to their subjects, but as a divinely bestowed privilege, like a William Hohenzollern. These claims (to say nothing of the mad pretensions of upstarts like Hitler and Mussolini, who have bewitched whole nations by a criminally permitted display of military power into believing them the instruments of God for the regeneration of the world) are all survivals of the primitive dominance of the medicine man and the shaman. Eradicated from secular affairs as they are for the most part in the western world through the progress of political emancipation and social enlightenment, they still survive in religion. Here we find a class of men who bear the title of "clergy" (or selected ones and reverend, or ones to be revered), who claim the privilege of administering the magical sacraments of the church or assume the duty of expounding the revealed word of God. They carry on the priestly tradition from generation to generation, with usually little or no understanding of its sources in the dim past and untutored childhood of the human race. They have the prestige of long established institutions. They give directions for reaching heaven, though the more liberal of them do not speak of hell except as a state of mind. They minister to millions who want the offices of the church for the religious instruction of their children, for the consecration of their marriages and for consolation in times of bereavement. They labor for the moral improvement of society and engage heartily in works of charity. But they do not have faith in man, irrespective of theological creed, to live the highest kind of life, in spite of the example of the Emersons and the Lincolns. Conditioning their ethics and making them derivative and ancillary, is the doctrine, subscribed to by all but the most liberal of independent churches, that while man does wrong by the

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inherent tendency to evil in him he has of himself no compensating power to do right. That must come from a source outside and above him.

The prophetic tradition, on the other hand, has always emphasized the inherent dignity and capability of man himself. Its spokesmen have often been persecuted and generally been misunderstood. They have declared that virtue was as native to the heart of man as vice, and that righteousness needed no validation by a supernatural stamp. "Look within," said Marcus Aurelius, "and there you will find the guide to life." "Truth is within ourselves," wrote Robert Browning, "it takes no rise from outward things whate'er you may believe." So the great ethical teachers of Israel decried the sacrifices of the altars and the feasts of the new moon, and bade the people to make clean their own hearts as the only acceptable service to their God. So Jesus told his disciples that their righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. It is always to the will that the prophetic tradition appeals. And it would be futile to make such an appeal if the will were not competent to respond. One can understand the Augustinian-Calvinistic-Fundamentalist doctrine of the complete paralyzation of the human will to good through the fall of Adam and the consequent reduction of man to mere passive recipient of the grace of God (if God chooses to elect him for salvation). One can also understand the directly opposite Emersonian-Adlerian doctrine of the full responsibility of man to shape his will and action to accord with the demands which the consciousness of his higher nature imposes upon him. But the attempt to combine these two opposing doctrines is like the attempt to mix oil and water. It results in a contradiction which no theological ingenuity can reconcile. Either we are or we are not the responsible architects of our own spiritual life. If we are not, then ethics is a word which has no meaning, a "weasel word" from which the meat of will and effort has been extruded; but if we are, then ethics becomes the core and substance of religion. One may not think of George Bernard Shaw as a religious teacher. Yet listen to these words of his as reported by Hesketh Pearson in his recent book *G.B.S.*: "There is a mystic something in us

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called a soul, which deliberate wickedness kills and without which no material gain can make life tolerable."

Note that the prophetic-ethical concept of religion makes no claim to mastery over the vicissitudes of life. They are so varied and accidental as to be unpredictable. We are not the "masters of our fate"; but the other half of Henley's saying is true. We are the "captains of our souls." And every martyr of old who entered the arena, every heretic of the Middle Ages who was tortured for his conscience's sake, every victim today of the unconscionable cruelty of Hitler and Himmler is a testimony to the unconquerable spirit of man. As one reads the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, one may have doubts as to some of the promises. The meek may not inherit the earth; they that mourn may not be comforted. But there is one Beatitude which cannot fail: "Blessed be they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." That very hunger and thirst itself is its own quenching. Unlike the body, the spirit thrives on what it longs for. "What I aspire to be and am not comforts me." Thus justice is advanced by the desire for justice, liberty is gained by the vision of liberty, righteousness is nourished by the craving for righteousness.

Now we of the Ethical fellowship take our stand squarely on the side of the prophetic as against priestly tradition. We find the inspiring sources of ethical religion in the history of the unremitting struggle of man to proclaim truth as he sees it, whatever may be the weight of numbers, the claims to a special revelation or the inertia of convention and custom arrayed against him. It is a time for plain speaking. The awful danger which threatens our most cherished ideals has awakened us to the need to have done with equivocations, evasions and escape mechanisms and face the strenuous moment with a strenuous resolve to preserve the values without which life would not be livable. Never have we been brought to so poignant a realization of the fact that as a nation soweth so also shall it reap. Never have so many voices, from the President's down, warned us that our salvation lies in the revival of religion. But the religion which thoughtful men of today will follow must be stripped of the elements which offend the intellect or embarrass the

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moral sense. Religion lags behind every other interest of man in its reluctance to abandon outworn creeds and practices. It is even less ready than politics to come out into the open and meet the questions of today with an eye single to the education of the people in sanity, sincerity and independent judgment. Its spokesmen too often resort to apologetics, allegory, casuistry and evasion to show how doctrines which were once the product of honest conviction may still be retained as symbols of reverence. They put the new wine of ethical ferment into the old bottles of theological dogma. But the wine will burst the bottles. Men will truly revere only what ministers directly to their spiritual life opening to them new vistas of excellence, satisfying their hunger and thirst for righteousness. We are dealing in these days with stern realities. We are learning in the purging fires of world distress to put off the comfortable garments of self-indulgence, self-deception and self-satisfaction in which a faithless generation clothed itself and to put on the armor of courage and sacrifice.

Religion must share in this work of purgation. If it is to be the central factor in man's life, as it should be, it must be central to his whole aim and purpose, and not a mere social convention or even an occasional comfort to fall back on. The opening question of the Shorter Westminster Catechism reads, "What is the chief end of man?" That is our question too. But our answer differs from that of the Westminster divines. They said, "To glorify God and enjoy him forever." But ethical religion gives another answer. The chief end of man is to dignify man and improve him forever. We can leave the glory of God to himself. Nothing that man can do in the way of adoration or ceremony could cast any glory on a being who is by hypothesis the sum of glory. And as to enjoying him forever, that is the transfer of man's absorbing interest to another world, while all his devotion and strength are needed to make this world better. It has been to this noble task that all our forerunners in the prophetic tradition of ethical religion have devoted their lives. They have been driven out of churches and synagogues. They have been cast into dungeons like Jeremiah and banished from their native land like the Huguenots.

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They have been made to drink the hemlock like Socrates and nailed to a cross like Jesus. But it is to them that the world owes all the liberation that it has won from the superstitions and stagnations which have retarded man's progress toward a life of reason and righteousness ever since he began to emerge from the terrors of his primitive ignorance. These liberators of the spirit have lived for us. They have revealed to us the abundant sources of our ethical religion. It is for us to draw strength and courage from these sources. To paraphrase the words of the immortal Lincoln, it is for us the living to be dedicated to the unfinished work of these honored dead, to take from them increased devotion to the cause for which they gave their lives, and to highly resolve that the prophetic tradition of ethical religion shall not perish from the earth.

II.

THE ELEMENTS OF ETHICAL RELIGION

THE early Christian fathers were in the habit of enumerating the "Notae" as they called them, or the distinguishing marks or notes of the true faith. The winds of doctrine blew where they listed in those formative days of the church, carrying the pollen of heresy here and there. In a little village of Phrygia in Asia Minor a prophet by the name of Montanus appeared, claiming that the Holy Ghost had spoken to him directly, entrusting him with a special revelation. Did not the scripture say that the Holy Spirit would descend on the disciples when Christ had gone and guide them into all the truth? Had it not come on the day of Pentecost with a sound from heaven as of a rushing wind, appearing to the disciples like cloven tongues of fire and filling them so that they began to speak with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance? Why should it not continue to select its chosen instruments where it would? Were the days of prophecy ended? In the great province of Africa, which furnished such stalwart pillars of the church as Cyprian and Augustine, a priest named Donatus arose to declare that the sacraments of the church were invalid if they were administered by an unworthy member of the clergy, and drew after him a large following of heretics. A British monk by the name of Pelagius contended that, although man was crippled by sin, yet he had enough strength to go of his own will to meet the grace of God. In Rome flourished the sect of the Gnostics, who taught that the Old Testament was the work of Satan. There were many gospels, visions, epistles, revelations circulating among the churches, claiming to be inspired scripture, some of which were rejected by this congregation or that, while others were incorporated into the final canon of the Bible (not completed until the fourth century), or placed between the Old and the

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New Testaments as the books of the Apocrypha—a sort of second-rate scripture. But it was on the question of the nature of Christ that the most diverse and bitter struggles were waged in that so-called Apostolic Age. Was he God himself or only the Son of God, of the same nature or only of like nature? Did he empty himself of divinity to become man, or did he only take on the appearance of a man? Were the two natures divine and human mixed in him, or did the one exclude the other. And so we have a veritable hodge-podge of Christological doctrines with long and to all except professional theologians, meaningless names, like monophysitism, monotheletism, patripatissionism, docetism, Arianism, over which men fought with the ferocity of gladiators in the arena. Read Kingsley's powerful novel *Hypatia* and you will get a vivid picture of how savagely these doctrinal conflicts were waged.

Now, obviously, the Church, if it was to build up a great authoritative institution as the sole depository of the true faith, could not allow these diversities of doctrine to go unchecked. If anyone outside the consecrated ranks could lay claim to as authentic a revelation from God as the writers of the Gospels or the Pauline Epistles, where then would the revelation end? The polls must be closed to further prophecy, and those who pretended to have revelations from heaven beyond the ones contained in the canonical books must be branded as false prophets. If the validity of the sacraments were made to depend on the moral character of the priest administering them, their efficacy would be conditioned by a human element which would rob them of their inherent magical force. If man could by his own works make any approach toward deserving salvation, the free and unmerited grace of God would be thwarted. And so the fathers wrote heavy acrimonious tomes against the Montanists, the Donatists, the Pelagians and the Gnostics, emphasizing over and over again the "Notae" of the true faith and building up through four centuries that imposing structure of dogmatic and hieratical authority which culminated in the vast pretension of the Bishop of Rome to be the vicar of God on earth and the head of a church outside of which there was no salvation. "Extra ecclesiam, nulla

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salus!" And the same St. Augustine who pronounced this ultimatum also wrote, "I would not believe the scriptures themselves unless moved thereto by the authority of the holy church." To which Martin Luther replied eleven centuries later, "I will not believe any claim of the Roman Church unless I find it sanctioned by the holy Bible." It was one absolute, unquestionable, final authority against another.

Now let us inquire what are the "Notae" or distinguishing marks of ethical religion, as contrasted with the crystallized dogmas of the religion of theology.

An analogy will help. A noted political scientist wrote that democracy must be interpreted by every generation anew. That means that, with the ceaseless activity of man's mind and the consequent welter of political and economic theories, each generation finds itself living in its own peculiar social atmosphere or "climate of opinion," as Professor Whitehead has called it. Obviously, the Jeffersonian democracy of a small agrarian country, with its abundance of land for the nurture of a sturdy yeomanry, its antipathy to concentration of population in urban areas, its jealousy of any infringement of the federal government on the rights of the states, its dread of a strong executive and suspicion of a non-elective Supreme Court, presents a great contrast to our present conception of a democracy which must adapt itself to a huge industrial country, with its problems of conflicting class and sectional interests, its demand for the planned integration of its chaotic economic activities, and its need of a strong and wise guidance in new responsibilities forced upon it for its inescapable contribution to the peace of the world. The *ideals* of democracy have not changed since Jefferson's day. His plea, in his first Inaugural Address, for even-handed justice, incorruptible public faith, the freedoms of speech, the press and religion, is reiterated nearly a century and a half later by the chief magistrate of the Nation. The ideals remain like an inextinguishable beacon to illumine the path of the statesman; but the path itself must lead through the obstacles and stumbling-blocks with which the peculiar perplexities of each generation have strewn it.

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Do we not see the same progressive adaptation of experimental means to reach desired fixed ends in every field of human enterprise? The ideal of the law is justice; but what tremendous changes are taking place in our generation in the conception of the way to attain justice, with the substitution of conciliation boards, arbitral tribunals, family relations and juvenile courts, man to man consultations in chambers, for the formal and final pronouncements of judge and jury governed by inflexible legal precedents. The ideal of education is the elicitation of the mental and moral potentialities of the pupil; but what a revolution has taken place in the last generation in methods best calculated to realize this ideal? So it is with religion. The ideal of religion is the attainment of spiritual stature. This, I think, no adherent of any sect or creed would deny. But what a change we are witnessing in our generation in the conception of the way by which to attain spiritual stature! How the emphasis on rigid orthodox dogmas is fading out among the more broadminded theologians and preachers, giving way to a humanistic approach to religion. I read the other day the address of a prominent New York minister to the graduating class of a theological seminary. The title of the address was "The Truth of the Gospel," and the one question that the speaker said superseded all others was "Are the central affirmations of the Christian faith realistically true?" I am not attempting to answer that question here, but only noting that throughout the address the speaker made no reference at all to the "central affirmations of the Christian faith." Those affirmations are, as every student of the Christian creed knows, the fall of man in Adam, his redemption through believing in the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, the necessity of confessing such belief for salvation, bodily resurrection of Jesus from the grave, his ascent into heaven to resume his seat at the right hand of God, and his coming again to judge the world, when sinners shall be consigned to the flames of hell and the saints rewarded with eternal life in heaven. This is the "Christian epic," as Santayana has called it. But the young men were not to go into their pulpits to preach these doctrines. Instead they were told of "the reality of a moral order that inflexibly brings to men

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and nations the harvest of what they sow," that "every falling bomb and rumbling tank, every starving child and heartbroken home are preaching Christianity today," that the present world, realistically seen, calls not for the toning down of Jesus' ethical doctrine, but for a new confidence in presenting it. The address was an exhortation to preach ethics, and not the "central affirmations of the Christian faith." I cite it as an example of the changing interpretation of religion which is taking place in our generation. In our fathers' time a minister speaking to such an audience on such an occasion would certainly have admonished the prospective pulpit-holders to stick closely to St. Paul's rule to preach only Christ crucified as the power of God unto salvation. That the emphasis on dogma is giving way to that on ethics even among the representatives of orthodox churches today is a proof of that change in the climate of opinion of which Professor Whitehead speaks. And it is incumbent on us, in view of this rather implied than explicit recognition of the primacy of ethics over creed, to present to a confused age, in which the winds of doctrine are again, as in the days of the early church, carrying the pollen of religious doubts and dissents far and wide, as clear and simple a statement of the elements of our ethical religion as we can.

First and foremost is the conviction that the ethical end is supreme over all other ends and aims of life. That is our absolute, categorical imperative. It does not proceed from the command of any extraneous power or the authority of any institution. We do not hold with Matthew Arnold that it is a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness, but rather that no righteousness can exist except by virtue of the power within ourselves. The doctrine of an imputed righteousness, which figures so prominently in the theological systems is a contradiction in terms. For if righteousness is imputed, the effort of the individual to attain it is set at naught. This is the flaw in the whole theory of vicariousness, whether it be the vicarious suffering of a divine victim for our sins or the vicarious attribution of our virtues to a power without ourselves. The sins may be many and the virtues few; but such as they are, they are our own. And

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therein lies the stern responsibility of each of us for the elimination of the former and the increase of the latter. No man can serve two masters or two master ideals. The one or the other must be supreme, must have final jurisdiction, like the Supreme Court in our political structure. And by asserting that ethics is the supreme ideal we mean that every religious doctrine, rite, custom and tradition must be brought to the bar of ethics to justify its claim to our acceptance. This by no means implies that there is no inspiration for us in the faith that in our striving for ethical perfection we are in harmony with an indefinable power that pervades the universe. Indeed, such faith in the supreme ethical nature of reality seems to me a necessary postulate for the conviction of the supreme ethical imperative in our own individual lives. Some call it doing the will of God, others getting in tune with the infinite, others helping to build the golden city. It makes little difference in what terms our grasp of this indefinable sense of co-partnership with the urge to the good life is expressed. The important thing is that it is there, an inescapable datum in human consciousness. There may be a greater or less admixture of mysticism in it; for that depends on the distinctive psychological bent of the individual. There may be an inclination to or an aversion from ceremonial; for that again is largely a matter of taste. There may be a firm belief in the existence of God, or a reverent agnosticism which is content to rest in the indubitable truth that if God does not exist, no assertion of man can create him, and if he does exist, no denial of man can destroy him. We do not, then, seek to banish mysticism or condemn ceremony or exclude theism in our declaration that ethics is the supreme end of man. We only insist that all these varieties of religious expression and opinion shall be brought to the touchstone of ethical judgment to test their validity. The question is, Do they actually promote right living? Are they directly translated into ethical conduct? If not, they are nothing more than empty formalities or idle speculations.

This affirmation of the unqualified supremacy of the ethical end is in sharp contrast with the place assigned to ethics in the creedal religions. They teach ethics, to be sure,

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but they do not teach the supremacy of ethics. It is an ethics conditioned on or derived from an acceptance of theological doctrines. It is an ethics qualified by an adjective. For example, the phrase Christian ethics is constantly used in religious books as if it were synonymous with ethics itself. The implication is that ethics is a corollary of the Christian faith, whereas ethics is prior to Christianity both in time and in logic. The fact is that Christianity is a corollary of ethics—one of the many varieties of religious faith and worship proceeding out of the ceaseless ethical urge of man to find significance for his life and peace for his soul. We may speak of Christian ethics then in the sense of an interpretation of ethics, as we speak of Stoic ethics or Epicurean ethics. But to make Christianity the source of ethics is to confuse the cause with the effect. Long ago Goethe protested against the pretension of sectarian religion to monopolize ethics: "You take the feathers from where you will," he wrote, "to deck out your own bird."

The second element of ethical religion that I would emphasize is intellectual integrity. In no other field of human interest is this virtue so hard to attain as in religion. And the reason is that religion has almost invariably discounted scrupulous intellectual honesty as a menace to faith. There was thought, and still is thought by some religious teachers, to be a special merit in depreciating the intellect, which, after all, is the very instrument they use in the work of depreciation. "I believe" (the Christian doctrine) said the African father Tertullian, "because it is incredible." "Believe, don't reason!" shouted St. Bernard to his opponent Abelard, who insisted on trying to understand what he was asked to believe. Martin Luther called the intellect "the harlot of Satan." And Thomas Aquinas, who had one of the keenest minds of the Middle Ages, used that mind to elaborate a system of theology (held in highest honor by the Catholic Church today) which is based on propositions about the nature of God, the devil, angels, Christ, and man that are both beyond the control of reason and foreign to the actual religious experience of men. He confessed as much when he wrote that if the reason could understand these revealed mysteries entrusted to the Church, there would be

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no merit in faith. Why man, who of all the living creation alone is endowed with "discourse of reason," should have used that gift for its own disparagement is even more difficult to understand than the fantastic systems which he has thereby produced. Doubtless long before the intellect developed, ages before even the crudest scientific attempts to explain the mysterious and terrifying forces of nature about him and the psychological urges within him, man became the victim of emotions. They still play the chief rôle in life, and when uncontrolled by reason they lead to the disastrous results which we see in society today and are informed of by scanning the headlines of the newspapers: feuds and factions, greed and graft, violence and vandalism, prejudice and persecution, racial hatred, broken marriages, unbalanced personalities.

Religion by its imposing wealth of ceremony, its weight of tradition, and its claim to hold the key to the mysteries which confront every mortal, makes the strongest appeal to the emotional side of man. Fear, hope, release, exaltation, craving for fellowship, stimulus to ethical conduct, promise of future bliss, are all components of its powerful influence on men. In emphasizing intellectual integrity as one of the elements of ethical religion, we are not so foolish as to deny or depreciate the emotions. What we mean is that they shall always be subject to the control of reason. Since the great Greek thinkers introduced sanity into the world by recognizing the mind as the organizer and orderer of human affairs, thus laying the foundations for science, politics, education, and general mundane culture, it has been impossible to ignore the directive faculty of reason without slipping back into some form of superstition and obscurantism. Neoplatonism, for example, rejected reason for a flight into ecstasy and mysticism, and ended in a hodge-podge of religious nonsense. The Dark Ages were dark because the light of reason was extinguished by the descent of the barbarians on the lands of classic culture and the reliance of the heir of that culture in the papal church upon magic, miracle, processions and interdictions to stay the catastrophe.

~ || "A second deluge thus the world o'erran,
And the monks finished what the Goths began."

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Need one point today to the sad condition of lands where the people have followed leaders who make a boast of elevating the irrational concepts of blood, soil, intuition, racial purity and national infallibility above the allegiance to mental sanity and plain common sense! William James in his fascinating textbook on psychology has given us a vivid picture of the rôle of the intellect. He represents the various desires and urges of the senses as coming into the mind through the afferent or in-carrying nerves. Then in the brain they meet the judge—intellect—who weighs their claims, approves or condemns them in the light of reason, purges them of emotional passions, and sends them forth, if they obey his behests, to stimulate the conduct which shall increase the fund of human sanity and brotherhood.

Note, that it is intellectual integrity and not intellectual attainment that we cite as an element of ethical religion. We make no pretense to omniscience. We acknowledge the depths of our ignorance. We are as cognizant as any mystic of the vast amount of truth which lies outside the present range of human knowledge and which may forever lie beyond human knowledge. Integrity is a qualitative and not a quantitative word. And intellectual integrity means complete mental honesty in dealing with such knowledge as we have. It means honesty in religion as well as in business or science or sport. The man who resorts to sharp practices in business is condemned, or deserves to be condemned, because by his actions he is attacking the foundations on which alone business can be built. Likewise those who resort to sharp practices in religion, such as the preaching of doctrines in which they no longer really believe, or the performance of ceremonies which no longer convey moral or spiritual blessing, or the evasion of the patent meaning of a passage of scripture by giving it an allegorical interpretation, are undermining and not strengthening real religious faith. The whole subject is a refined version of the casuistry which many a professor of Protestant theology would censure in a Catholic teacher. There is a peculiar temptation for a priest or a minister to subordinate strict intellectual integrity to emotional appeal, because he is pledged by his ordination vows to the support of doctrines which

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he may find difficult, as his mind matures, to reconcile with his convictions. Intellectual integrity forbids us in religion, as well as in science, to give hostages to any system or theory that would block the way to the attainment of new light and new knowledge. In a purely ethical religion there can be no conflict between intellect and faith; because no advance in knowledge, no enlargement of the understanding, no refinement of critical acumen can impair the majesty of the ethical ideal.

A third major element of ethical religion is the affirmation of the infinite worth of every human being. This is a hard saying for some who point to the criminal or the drunkard or the wastrel and ask, How can you speak of the worth of such a being? They are confounding his worth with his value to society. His value may be nil. He may even be a curse to society. Yet we affirm his worth. Why do we do this? In the first place, because he is a human being and as such endowed with the potentialities, however neglected or abused, of fulfilling his unique station as a member of the *corpus spirituale*, the great spiritual fellowship of humanity. How many an instance we have of persons who had no value to society awakening at last to the realization of their worth and becoming the responsible personalities that they should be. The prodigal son comes to himself and returns to his father's house. But even if the man fails to the end of his life to meet the duty to which his unique and induplicable personality calls him, we must still attribute worth to him; for only so can we be assured of our own membership in the body spiritual of humanity. If there were a celestial potter who by his own arbitrary will fashioned one vessel to honor and another to dishonor (as St. Paul so unethically declared), then we might flatter ourselves, as the old Puritans did, that we belonged to the honorable pottery. But we can lay no such flattering unction to our soul. We are part and parcel of a common humanity, and the possibility of worth in any must be predicated on the possibility of worth in all. Value is measurable: there are scales of value. But worth is immeasurable, hence infinite. It is qualitative, not quantitative. Such things as love, honor, fidelity, integrity, sympathy cannot be computed.

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So we err when we say in common parlance that a man was "worth" so much or so little according to the size of the estate which he happens to leave.

The final element of ethical religion which I will emphasize is the rule or maxim which we follow for proving the infinite worth of the individual. The Golden Rule reads, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them." Confucius stated it in the negative form, "What you would not have men do to you, do not to them." Neither statement puts the stress on the attempt to kindle in the other man a desire to do the good and refrain from the evil. It is too much like a bargain: You treat me well and I'll treat you well. The famous Kantian maxim, "Act so that your conduct might be taken as the universal norm," lacks the humility which should characterize the ethical ideal. Who am I, with all my faults and failings, to set up my behavior as the standard to which others shall conform? No individual can serve as an example to others, to be copied by them. There are, to be sure, marked differences in moral conduct; but even the best of men knows in his heart that he is not always actuated by an ethical motive unmingled with some baser alloy of selfishness, jealousy or pride. Now the ethical rule or maxim, which has often been repeated in our Ethical Societies, reads: "Act so as to elicit the best in others and thereby in thyself." The emphasis is on the word *elicit*. It is a precept of mutual stimulation. It recognizes the need for reciprocity in the cultivation of the ethical life, which is the meaning of our phrase "Ethical Culture." We attribute worth to the individual then, because it is only to the worth in him that we can make the ethical appeal and from the worth in him that we can receive the reciprocal stimulus to our own ethical endeavor. And we call this worth infinite because there is no limit to the process of exchange.

These four affirmations, of the unqualified supremacy of the ethical end of life, strict intellectual integrity, the attribution of infinite worth to every individual as an irreplaceable member of the spiritual community, and the enhancement of that worth in others and in ourselves in our mutual intercourse in all of our human relationships, I take

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to be the chief "Notae" or elements of ethical religion. There are, of course, many consequences and corollaries of these four principles. Certain of the corollaries may seem to some to deserve a place in our teaching higher than the four principles which I have chosen. Some might put social reform or educational method or economic planning or religious radicalism in the forefront of our distinctive "Notae." As a fellowship free from rigid dogmas, we can not only tolerate but we must welcome such differences of emphasis, believing that no single person can grasp the whole pattern of the spiritual community which we long to see established on earth, but that each can weave into the pattern his own golden thread. Our task is to conform our conduct to that pattern as we catch glimpses of it in our best moments, to rise, as the poet says, on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things. That, I believe, is the meaning of ethical religion.

III.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF ETHICAL RELIGION

WITH this topic we come to the very heart of our discussion of the meaning of ethical religion. People of every creed will undoubtedly agree that inspiring sources of ethical religion are to be found in the history of every age and country. They would agree also in the affirmation of the infinite worth of the human being, though they might differ from us in assigning that worth not to the inherent potentiality in man to work out his own salvation as a member of the ideal body spiritual, but to the possibility of his being snatched as a brand from the burning by the unmerited grace of God. Some, even, in spite of the creeds which they profess, would probably agree that our fundamental doctrine of the supremacy of the ethical end above all others is the test by which men are actually rated in the give and take of human relations. For they know that, when it comes to a concrete case, no man in entrusting his wealth or his family to another would ask, "Is the trustee a trinitarian or a unitarian, a Presbyterian or an Episcopalian?" but only, "Is he an honest and reliable man?" But when it comes to the question of the sufficiency of ethical religion we find a widespread disagreement with our position. Ethics is indispensable, of course. It is good as far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. Unsupported and unsanctioned by a belief in a supernatural revelation it is only a vain attempt of man to lift himself by his own bootstraps as it were, an attempt which is bound to end in impotence and pride. If this is true it is a fatal indictment of purely ethical religion. Are we deceiving ourselves? Are we feeding on husks, like the prodigal son, while the fatted calf is waiting for us in our Father's house? Are we being content with a second-

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rate or a third-rate religion? Are we hitching our wagon to a will o' the wisp instead of to a star?

I shall not pause to take up the charge brought by fundamentalists and evangelical revivalists that men deliberately spurn the salvation offered by Christ because they want to continue to live a life of sin. It is not only a base slander against many of the noblest characters that the world has ever seen, but it is also a silly misunderstanding of the motives which determine human choice and conduct. For no sane-minded man would change the chance of an eternity of bliss in heaven for a few brief years of riotous living on earth if such choice appeared to him as a real alternative. A Faust, wearied by years of closeted study, might yield to the temptings of Mephistopheles and sell his soul to the devil in return for the promise of worldly pay. But no Spinoza or Emerson or Lincoln or any other noble soul was ever impelled by such a motive to reject a theological creed which seemed to him an intellectual stultification or a moral equivocation. "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die" has ever been the philosophy of fools. We may leave, then, these fundamentalist critics of ethical religion as deliberate rebellion against a divine scheme of salvation to their own satisfaction in thinking of themselves as the chosen instruments of God for warning men to flee from the wrath to come. Our concern is with another sort of critic, who appeals not to the undisciplined emotions of fear of punishment or hope of reward in a future life, but rather to what he believes to be a need for something more than an ethical philosophy in order to satisfy man's religious nature. This type of critic is represented by the great bulk of liberally minded clergymen. They are friendly to us. They commend our ethical earnestness. They do not regard us as stiff-necked rebels against religion, but rather as mistaken persons who have tried to make a religion without using the necessary ingredient of religion: namely, the belief in a divine revelation in the Bible or the church. Let us inquire more closely into the justice of this criticism.

| *Sufficient* means that which meets needs. The question | of the sufficiency of ethical religion, then, is the question of

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whether it meets man's religious needs. And to answer this question we must ask the further question of what are man's religious needs. Obviously, since we are individualized personalities, with wide differences in tastes and temperaments, our religious needs will be expressed in various ways. A person with a highly developed aesthetic sense will crave some artistic element like music or colored windows to appeal to his emotions. A more puritanical nature will find such accessories of religion rather a hindrance to his concentration of thought upon moral duty. In religion, as in every other phase of life, a man's peculiar bent or set of nature comes out. Charles Darwin, for example, was wholly without aesthetic appreciation. Music to him was only noise; he never read poetry. Biological science completely satisfied his spiritual need. Another great scientist, Albert Einstein, finds release in playing the violin. Given all these varieties of temperament, can we discover *one* supreme need of man to which all others are subordinate, and on which they all focus? I believe that we can; and that this supreme need is the need to attain such harmony of desire and duty in his life as shall bring him inward peace and joy. That there are many paths to the attainment of that harmony we may not deny. Some approach it along the way of mystic meditation; others seek it by the path of intellectual enlightenment; others through devotion to social reform; and still others in accepting the authority of a religious tradition which is weighted with the prestige of age and numbers. A Thomas à Kempis, a Socrates, a Jane Addams, a Cardinal Newman stand as examples of these various approaches. We do not deny the value of any of these paths to inward harmony and peace. What we deny is the denial that a purely ethical religion can furnish such a path.

One of the indictments brought against ethical religion is that it is not a religion at all but a rejection of religion. We are looked on as a group of dissidents interested mainly in asserting what we do not accept as articles of belief. Our attitude is represented as a negative one, the Mephistophelian "Geist der stets verneint." This judgment is perhaps due to a misunderstanding of a motto we have used

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at times, "Deed, not Creed," in which the two terms are not meant to be mutually exclusive, but to indicate the relative importance of each. Deed comes before creed, because it is conduct which testifies to the soundness of the belief. We agree fully with Carlyle that a man's faith does not consist in the things which he does not believe. We have a positive faith, as positive as that of any orthodox sect. And if that faith in ethical religion, by its very affirmations, makes invalid for us articles of traditional faith, it is no more than every new religious interpretation of the past has done for the traditional faith of its time. The birth of Christianity, the Protestant Reformation, the rise of religious toleration, the acceptance of the modern scientific and critical spirit by all except the most belated of the churches is proof of the inevitable withering of the old blossom when a new bud puts forth. Many years ago a noted minister preached a sermon on "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection," to demonstrate how love for God would drive out of the heart love for all lesser things. There is the same expulsive power in every new religious insight and experience. It makes a belief or a practice which once seemed important now no longer significant. So Emerson left the pulpit because, as he said, the public prayer and the celebration of the Lord's Supper ceased to be a source of nourishment for his religious life. He did not attack or ridicule the traditional rites of the church; he simply found them an encumbrance instead of an inspiration.

The truth is that every affirmation carries with it a denial of some sort. They are the obverse and the reverse of the same medal. If we affirm liberty, we condemn slavery in the same breath. If we affirm the absolute supremacy of ethics, we thereby relegate other aspects of religion, like creed and ceremony, to a subordinate place. We can put the emphasis on either the affirmation or the corresponding rejection. And the point I am making here is that we advocates of ethical religion put the emphasis on the affirmations. We declare that we have a positive faith, founded on such principles as those presented here. Such negations as they imply are only incidental to the affirmations. We may, then, dismiss as a misunderstanding of our position, the charge

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that we are motivated by the Mephistophelian spirit of denial.

But, objects the critic, how can you have the positive faith you speak of without the sanction of a supernatural power to whom you pay worship? Let me emphasize the word *sanction* in this objection. It is not a question of the existence of a supernatural power. That is a matter beyond the scope of the human mind, though I think few men would be found who doubt the existence of such a power. The question is whether there can be a vital religion which finds its sanction in human experience and relationships, regardless of the existence or the non-existence of a Deity beyond the skies. As a preliminary to answering this question, let me make an historical digression, which may at first seem irrelevant, but which I believe has an important bearing on the question.

All the great world religions—Hebraism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Mohammedanism—originated in Asia. It was a land of absolutism. Great God-descended monarchs ruled their slave-subjects with a rod of iron and led mighty armies to conquer their neighbors. They sat on jeweled thrones demanding obeisance, prostrations, adulation. Men came crawling to their feet with the salutation, O King, live forever! Power was the essence of their life. And the gods conceived by these Eastern peoples were gods of power, absolute, arbitrary, far-raised above the human mass. Even the Jahveh of the Hebrews was originally a terrifying thunder god dwelling on Mount Sinai. With the progress of civilization, as man became more humane so did his gods. The awful Jehovah, the thunderer and the leader of the hosts of Israel in battle, became the ethical god of the prophets, his power undiminished but exerted for the triumph of righteousness. And with Jesus he became the loving Father of all mankind. Nevertheless, traces of their Asiatic origin continued to exist, and still do exist, in these world religions. The God of Calvin was an oriental monarch, wrapped in power and majesty, unquestionable in his arbitrary will, requiring obeisance and adulation. And do we not see in the hymns the churches sing today the influence of this Asiatic idea of enthroned pomp and mili-

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tary prowess as symbolic of Deity?—"O worship the King, all glorious above," "Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon the throne," "Come thou almighty King, help us thy name to sing," "The Son of Man goes forth to war, a royal crown to gain," "Onward Christian soldiers," and dozens more of like tenor. The complement of this insistence on the exaltation and power of God has been the depreciation of man. In spite of the Psalmist's declaration, "Thou hast made him but a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor," orthodox Christianity has been savage in its denunciation of man as a corrupt being from his mother's womb, ruined by the fall of Adam, and a creature whose alleged virtues were, in the words of St. Augustine, only "shining sins" (*vitia splendida*). The Vicar of Hoddeston emptied his church of its more respectable attendants by beginning his sermons with the words "Fellow worms."

Now it is against these twin doctrines of the arbitrary God and the corrupt man as the sanction for religious faith that we protest. They have been responsible for the persecutions, the barbarities and the hypocrisies which have stained the pages of religious history. We set in opposition to them the doctrine of the dignity of man. We are as keenly aware as any evangelist of the sins and shortcomings of ourselves and our fellowmen; but we assert that the way to overcome these evils is through the constant effort to obey the divine voice of duty within ourselves, each act of obedience helping us to hear that voice more clearly and to heed it more faithfully. We need no command thundered from on high. The command is in our hearts. The hope of heaven is no incentive and the fear of hell is no compulsion to the fulfillment of that inward command:

“Virtue could see to do what virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk.”

Away, then, with these survivals of Asiatic absolutism which infest religion still, making man a mere foil for the splendor of the divine monarch, and robbing him of the most precious thing in his life, the indefeasible responsibility

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for raising that life to ever higher levels of purity, sympathy, honesty, and self-sacrificing love. Our belief that it is in the power of man to choose and follow this way is our sanction for ethical religion.

But again, it may be asked if this doctrine is not a profession of spiritual pride. Do you not offend humility in claiming thus to be the captains of your souls? Is not your ethical religion only the assertion of a sense of superiority over people who humbly accept the traditional doctrines of Christianity? If this indictment is true it is a grievous fault in us. For there is no more reprehensible thing in a man than spiritual pride. The ancient Greeks, with their stern doctrine of retribution, called this spirit *hubris*, and taught in their great dramas that it inevitably drew the wrath and punishment of the gods. Modern *hubris* finds its most complete expression in the arrogant self-assertion of the would-be conquerors of the world—in the frenzied ravings of a Hitler, shouting his everlasting defiances to any who would presume to question his intuitive mission to remake this world; in the prognathic boastings of the pitiable puppet sawdust Caesar Mussolini, blinded by his own sense of importance to the actual insignificance of his rôle in the international situation. If there is the slightest trace of such a spirit of superiority in our ethical religion, then we stand condemned before the judgment of our contemporaries. Any hint of such an accusation arises from a misunderstanding of what we mean when we speak of the sufficiency of ethical religion. Our position is best expressed in the illustration which the founder of the Ethical Society used again and again. There are two men in every man; the empirical man with his plus and minus qualities, his actual virtues and failings; and the spiritual man which he is endeavoring to become. His constant task is to transform the actual man (for that is the only material that he has to work on) into the potential man, to build on the foundation of the "empirical substratum," as Dr. Adler phrased it, the spiritual temple. And this supreme task of the human being was to be done by eliciting in others, through all our contacts in family, vocations, business relations, political affiliations, and so forth, the worthy conduct which would in turn react

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upon us to strengthen our own faith in the potentialities of our nature. What more indispensable element can there be in such a process than humility? We cannot begin the work of transformation without first realizing the need for it, and we cannot continue the work without discovering at every step the wide gulf between our present unworthiness and the goal we have set for ourselves. This discovery causes us to bow with reverent humility before our ethical ideal.

There are still other objections brought against the sufficiency of ethical religion. One says, Your meetings are cold; they are too much dominated by intellectual discourse; they lack the appeal to the emotions which is the chief function of religion. It is true that we lay little stress on the external features of worship: we have no robed choirs or recited prayers or incense burners. Those who crave such stimuli to the good life will find them aplenty in the ceremonies of the church. But it seems to me that none except those who come to our meetings with coldness in their own hearts could find the ethical faith we preach bleak and barren. Ought anything that appeals to the sensuous emotions of color or sound or smell kindle in us a warmth equal to that of meeting to seek together new light on the path of duty and mutual encouragement in following that light? Though we do not regard devotion to intellectual clarity as a reproach, we nevertheless hold the intellect to be the servant and not the master of our ethical life. It is the tool, and the necessary tool, which we use for shaping the end and purpose of moral improvement. That purpose can and does irradiate the souls of men who are intent upon it with a warmth which no external ceremony can provide. As James Cotton Morrison has truly said: "A passionate ideal of excellence can so fill the mind that no pleasure is felt in anything but the effort to realize it."

Another critic says, But do you not cut yourselves off from a great tradition and thus show the insufficiency of ethical religion? The answer depends entirely on what tradition the critic has in mind. If he means the priestly tradition which is perpetuated in the formalized worship of church and synagogue, and which enjoys the prestige of

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long established institutions and many millions of followers, he is right. But there is another religious tradition, one that is older than church or synagogue, one whose bearers through the ages have been the oft despised and persecuted prophets who have rescued religion in their day from the dry rot of spiritual stagnation. We seek to belong to the latter tradition. We feel closer to Isaiah and Jesus and John Huss and Luther and Emerson than we do to the high priests of Israel or the Sanhedrim or the Roman Pope or the Puritan inquisitor. The former men were the forerunners of ethical religion. They and thousands of brave dissidents like them are fountain-heads of inspiration for us. If we are not called upon to suffer for our faith as so many of them did, it is largely because they by their sufferings won for us the liberty we enjoy today. It is for us to revere them in gratitude and take courage from their fidelity to the prophetic tradition of ethical religion.

A final criticism of the sufficiency of ethical religion that I would mention is that it must fail to furnish comfort and support in times of sorrow and bereavement. This is a question which cannot be decided by argument, but only by the actual testimony of facts. We are all subject to the frustrations of life; hopes are unrealized, sickness lays us low, friends and loved ones are taken from us and we know that we must follow them ere long into the great silence. Each of us must find in his own soul the degree of fortitude or weakness with which he faces these inevitable frustrations. All that I would say on this subject of universal poignancy is that I am convinced from such observation as I have made that ethical religion has furnished as much courage and comfort to its followers in time of trial as any devotee of the orthodox faith has received from the ministration of priest or minister. Here I cannot refrain from quoting the noble words at the close of Felix Adler's *An Ethical Philosophy of Life*: "As my last act I affirm that the ideal of perfection which my mind inevitably conceives has its counterpart in the ultimate reality of things. . . . I affirm that there verily is an eternal divine life, a best beyond the best that I can think or imagine, in which all that is best in me and best in those who are dear to me is

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contained and continued. In this sense I bless the universe. And to be able to bless the universe in one's last moments is the supreme prize which man can wrest from life's struggles, life's experiences." Measuring faith with faith, I find such heroic resignation far more comforting than the fantastic argument of St. Paul for the resurrection of the body in his letter to the Corinthians. Ethical religion *can* say to its disciple in time of trouble, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Whether or not I have answered these criticisms of the sufficiency of ethical religion convincingly, I do not know. For I am keenly aware that my ability to present the arguments for the sufficiency of ethical religion falls far short of my conviction of that sufficiency. And, after all, does not the validity of any religion depend on its fruitage in the lives of men rather than on the interminable arguments on the subject which have filled the pages of contentious volumes and often been accompanied with revolting manifestations of bigotry, persecution, and spiritual pride? "By their fruits ye shall know them."

I would not, therefore, end on the negative note of refutation. Rather let me suggest what seem to me some of the positive witnesses to the sufficiency of our ethical religion. First of all, it is liberating. In John Bunyan's famous allegory of the *Pilgrim's Progress* the hero, at a certain point on his journey to the Celestial City, feels the pack which is the burden of sin roll off his back and experiences a great sense of release and joy. Such a sense of liberation comes to a sincere man when he is rid of a chafing burden of religious dogma. He has been taught in childhood that he must believe certain statements of the catechism. He has perhaps wrestled in spirit in the yeasty years of adolescence with the doubts which he fears as sins. He has tried to cultivate a will to believe, knowing all the time in his heart that while his actions are subject to his will his real beliefs are determined by the weight of evidence for or against which presents itself to his mind whether he will or not.

What a relief it is then, when we change the emphasis from belief to conduct. We are freed from the haunting sense of guilt which has caused agony to so many people

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who have not been able to believe doctrines which they have been told to believe on pain of eternal punishment. We are delivered from the great fear of unbelief, which is the chief tragedy of religious history. To the overanxious responsibility assumed by the theologians of expounding the nature and will of God there succeeds a tranquillity of mind which is content to leave the mystery of human existence to the realm of mystery where it must forever belong, while we devote ourselves to the practical task of making our indubitable personal existence the opportunity for cultivating the moral life. For, as Goethe said, "Man was not born to solve the problem of the universe." He must learn, as another wise philosopher put it, to "sleep on the pillow of doubt" concerning the insoluble questions of the beyond and the ultimate, certain only of his present responsibility for redeeming the here and the now.

Not only does ethical religion liberate us from any lingering feeling of obligation to subscribe to doctrines which more often hinder than help our efforts to attain spiritual stature, but it also furnishes us with the strongest motives for pursuing that task. It is stimulating as well as liberating. And it is stimulating just because it appeals to the hidden springs of potential virtue in man, bidding him to clear them of the silt of selfishness and the dried leaves and sticks of indolence, so that their waters may well up in life-giving freshness. Conversion is a word generally used for the profession of a sudden change of heart under some emotional strain. It is even applied to the mere formality of substituting one mode of worship for another, as when, for example, a princess brought up in the Greek Orthódox faith is "converted" to Romanism in order to marry a Catholic prince—the conversion consisting in the hurried recital of a catechism and the profession of new vows. But religion cannot be put on and off like a garment. It is the life-long work of converting the moral imperfections of one's character into incipient virtues. It is a process like making steel. From the crude iron the impurities like carbon and sulphur must be removed, and then to make the finer grades of steel other elements like chromium, tungsten, and molybdenum must be added. So do we have to eliminate

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from our religion the impurities which weaken its strength; the superstitions that have come down from a primitive age, the uncharitableness which has characterized sectarian rivalry, the equivocation which has so often been resorted to for the justification of dubious doctrines. And then to this negative duty of eliminating the impurities we also have to add the precious elements of courage and patience and love which are needed for the finer product. Can anything be more stimulating than this challenge to the literal conversion of the crude ore of the empirical self into the shining product of our aspirations?

Finally, ethical religion is humanizing. Cicero remarked that Socrates brought philosophy down from heaven to earth, meaning that he changed the emphasis from vain speculation about the origin of the universe and the nature of the gods to a study of man. He asked for definitions instead of theories. What do you mean by justice, temperance, courage, religion, education, and so forth? I cannot converse with stones, he said; I must have answers. "The proper study of mankind is man," wrote Alexander Pope more than twenty centuries later. So, I believe, does our ethical approach bring religion down from heaven to earth. It is anthropocentric. All the religions of the world have been *made*. Every alleged divine revelation has been a human formulation of a human effort to explain human experience. And every such formulation is now, thanks to the progress of scientific and moral knowledge, subject to the control of the intellectual and ethical judgment of man. If he loses or relaxes this control, religion will revert to the mass of absurdities and superstitions that it once was. We want to save and not to destroy religion. We want to preserve it as the salt of life. And we are convinced that it is only by maintaining the supremacy of the ethical end of life that religion can be made a vital force in man's life today and the promise of his progress in the days to come. We are convinced of the sufficiency of ethical religion. We believe that it will be the religion of the future.

IV. THE FUTURE OF ETHICAL RELIGION

IT is not with any thought of prophesying an immediate or proximate acceptance of ethical religion by the mass of the people that I approach the question of the future of ethical religion. Only those men and women to whom our conception of religion has appealed as the answer to their own spiritual search will seek our fellowship. "I would not seek thee if I had not found thee," cried Pascal in his famous confession. The important thing is not to count our numbers but to cherish our ideals; not to be so eager to have a person join us as to be worthy to have him join us. The greatest ethical teacher the world has ever known spoke to the hearts of men in simple stories or parables which contain undying truths. He said:

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed some seeds fell by the wayside and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell on stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, but because they had no deepness of earth, when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them. But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold."

What a wonderful description that is of the world's reception or rejection of religious truth! The sowers are the prophets and teachers. It is their task to scatter the seed. But the harvest depends on the soil as well as the seed. How aptly these pictures of the different soils fit the dispositions of men today: the hearts hardened by indifference and cynicism, where the seed finds no lodgment; the shallow ones, enthusiastic at first, but lacking the endurance to persevere because of feeble rootage; the backsliders, who allow

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the concern for material things, "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches," to spring up like thorns and strangle the growth of the higher life; and finally the faithful and persevering ones who deepen the soil of religious receptivity, water the plants of idealism, weed out the brambles of unworthy ambitions, and bring forth, each according to his gifts and talents, his share of "the fruits of the spirit." We all know these types of men. It is our business to sow the seed, hoping that the area of the good may be extended until the harvest is abundant.

Nor are we without strong encouragement in our zeal for the spread of ethical religion. In spite of the deplorable condition of the world that has been brought about by the selfishness and cowardice of a faithless generation, there is today a more conscious and widespread determination to vindicate such moral conceptions as man's dignity and worth as a human being than there has ever been before. That is the silver lining to the dark cloud of destruction and misery that hangs over the world. No longer is it left to a few men, regarded as impractical visionaries, to insist that unless ethical principles are embodied in national and international relations as well as in personal conduct there can be no lasting prosperity or peace. From all sides comes the cry for the recognition of righteousness as the foundation of society and the only guarantee of its health. A few decades ago it would have seemed like cant or sanctimoniousness for a president of the United States to include religion in the recommendations to Congress on the state of the nation, as President Roosevelt has done. It is not now an indifferent, unimpressed people that listens to such pleas as Woodrow Wilson made thirty years ago when he spoke in his inaugural address of the "tasks which we must enter upon as befits men charged with the responsibility of shaping a new era"; when a few months later he bade us persevere on the path to the uplands where "we shall get our ultimate view of the duties of mankind"; and five weeks later still, in his first message to Congress, spoke of the "happy manifestations foreshadowing an age of settled peace and good will." Such sentiments now are, to his honor, being echoed by millions of chastened people in a

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tormented world. The responsibility for shaping a new era, the ultimate view of the duties of mankind, the foreshadowing of an age of settled peace and good will—are not these ethical aims the very marrow of the concern of statesmen and peoples today? Are they not the inspiration of the demand shouted from every housetop: "This must not happen again!"? Has not the agonized desire for a world in which men can live in liberty, security and peace so captured the mind of the millions now that they are receptive as never before to the truth that righteousness exalteth a nation? If so, then the devastation and suffering of the present holocaust will not have been in vain, and the future of ethical religion will have gained mightily in promise.

Disillusionments, too, have an element of encouragement. Ugly though they be, yet, like adversity, they wear a precious jewel in their head. Think of the trust our fathers and grandfathers put in various reforms or inventions to accomplish the well-being of society without the directive power of an ethical purpose. One school of political scientists pinned their faith on a logical frame of government as the panacea for social evils. Thus the theorists of the era of the French Revolution elaborated scheme after scheme of governmental machinery (limited monarchy, unitary republic, Jacobin dictatorship, an oligarchic Directory, Napoleonic imperialism), each faction believing that it had the formula for a happy and prosperous state. Every Frenchman, as Sieyès ironically remarked, went about with a constitution in his vest pocket. But events proved then and have proved always that the most perfect of paper constitutions is no guarantee of political health for a people who are not schooled in the discipline of moral responsibility. The South American republics more than a century ago patterned their frames of government on the constitution of the United States; but that did not prevent a century of political upheavals, military dictatorships, revolutions and international wars in the countries south of the Rio Grande. Nor in our own "happy land" can we entertain the complacent conviction that we have achieved democratic liberty by the establishment of a democratic form of government. We give the people universal suffrage and votes are bought

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in blocks like shares of stock. We bestow the responsibilities of self-government on our cities, and political bosses and rings seize control and manipulate the offices created as a public trust for the personal enrichment of themselves and their satellites. We endorse the right of petition as an inalienable privilege of a free people, and it is turned into the clamors of hundreds of highly paid lobbyists, besieging Congress for the enactment of legislation favorable to their clients. It is no tinkering with the constitutional machinery alone that can insure political justice. The whole legislative, administrative and juridical functioning of government must be imbued with the spirit of disinterested public service if the state is to survive. In a word, it is the leaven of ethical religion that is needed to raise the sodden dough of mass inertia and indifference and convert it into the bread of life for a nation.

Another group of men have put their faith in the progress of science as the promise of the eventual happiness of man on earth. "Glory to man in the highest," sang Swinburne, "for man is the master of things." So man's glory is the mastery over *things*, over the soil of the earth to make it produce his food and to yield the metals for the construction of his tools and his skyscrapers; over the electric energies of the ether to harness them, as he once harnessed the beasts of burden, to do now the work that a million strong horses could not have done a century ago; over the seas to convert them from the limitless expanse of waste which struck terror into the hearts of Columbus's crews into the crowded lanes of commerce. Many conveniences and comforts this mastery of things has undoubtedly furnished; but has it brought, or can it ever bring, the satisfaction of the deepest human needs? Science as such ignores ethical considerations. It is concerned only with the process and not with the use of the creations of its genius. It is indifferent whether the steel it turns out be employed in the building of a hospital or a battleship. It has done a ghastly service to the cause of human misery by the invention of bombs, torpedoes and poison gases. It sends on the same ship the medicines and drugs to save life and the terrible weapons to destroy it. It is impossible to strike the balance between the beneficent

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and the maleficent uses to which the products of a neutral science are put. But I think that any sane man today would willingly forego the automobile and return to the horse and buggy in exchange for the elimination of the dive bomber and the armored tank. The sad fact is, however, that we have to give up the automobile in order that more bombers and tanks may be produced. Only if science were restricted to the production of those things only which benefit mankind could we speak of its progress as a guarantee of the happiness of the race.

Again there are those who have believed that extension of free public education to the children and youth of all classes would inevitably result in the emergence of an enlightened people. We in America have far outdistanced all other countries in the number of pupils in our schools and colleges and in the amount of money spent for their education. We have rightly maintained with Thomas Jefferson that what the public spends in order to instruct the oncoming generation is but a fraction of what it would cost to have that generation grow up in ignorance and blindness. Certainly, education is indispensable. But is the kind of education which so many teachers have been content to impart enough? We have required the student to memorize rules of grammar, exercises in arithmetic, dates and names in history; and thousands of them grow up without being able to speak correctly or add a column of figures or tell what a great historical person thought or did. We have prescribed reading in the classics of the language, the works of Shakespeare, Scott, Irving or Emerson; and nine out of ten persons riding in the subway are poring over the trash of the tabloids. Our vaunted system of education, with its elaborate marble-halled school buildings, seems not to stipulate a great hunger for the studies which Cicero, in one of his grandest passages, spoke of as the nourishment of youth, the delight of old age, the adornment of prosperity and the consolation of adversity. Why is it that young people have so generally (in spite of perfunctory valedictorian regrets) regarded the quitting of school as like the liberation from prison? Is it not because the classroom and study-hall routine has not been ennobled with the sense of belonging

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to the illustrious company of scholars who have bequeathed to us our heritage of wisdom? The very heart of education is left out when this inspiring ethical element is missing.

Perhaps the most persistent illusion that social well-being can be attained by any devices that ignore the ethical element is the belief, so widely held in this materialistic age, that a rise in the economic standard of living will automatically usher in a social millennium. Certainly, no one would deny that an income sufficient to allow a family to live in decent quarters, with food and clothing adequate for the protection of health, is an indispensable factor in building a wholesome society. But an indispensable factor must not be confused with the total product. Man is much more than a body that needs food, clothing, rest and recreation. A rise in the material standard of living can bring him an increase of these things, but it is no guarantee, in itself, of an increase in his moral stature. Would a raise of ten dollars a week in wages change an untruthful man into a truthful one, or a mean man into a generous one, or a churlish man into an amiable one? Do those most amply provided with the material goods of life offer us the best examples of the virtues of unselfishness, uprightness and the love of their fellow men? Is material prosperity a school of humility? Moreover, the standard of living is no standard at all, but rather a most variable conception, according to the economic status of the people who debate it. The constant struggle between labor and capital is testimony to the fact that on the one side a raise in wages is always the basis for the demand for a further raise, and on the other side the grant of a further raise would be ruinous to the employer's standard of living! No one is inclined to accept the apostolic injunction, "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content." "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can take nothing out."

Thus the trust in a democratic framework of government or in the progress of scientific invention or in the diffusion of literacy among the people or in the improvement of the material standard of living as a guarantee for the eventual happiness of mankind is seen to be illusory. Such contributory factors, important as they may be, will not

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satisfy the agonized cry that has been wrung from the heart of humanity by its unspeakable suffering for a new world in which hatred, rivalry, cruelty and war shall be replaced by love, coöperation, security and peace. We can make such a world if we will. But only if we realize that it is an ethical task that summons us; that permeating and directing every political, economic or territorial adjustment must be the devotion to ethical idealism which converts makeshifts into principles. I have spoken of the positive encouragement to this ethical task furnished by the universal longing of men of good will for a new age of world brotherhood, and the negative encouragement of the inadequacy of movements not inspired by the ethical ideal to usher in such an age. We are conscious today as never before in our lifetime that we are standing at the crossroads. Every period in history is, of course, transitional; but no period, perhaps, since the dimout of Roman order in the Dark Ages, has been faced by a crisis comparable to the one which confronts the world today. There is no need to dwell on the seriousness of that crisis. It is the burden of innumerable warnings and exhortations in books and articles, in the speeches of political leaders, in the deliberations of parliaments and congresses, in the letters pouring into the newspaper offices from the anxious public. It is truly "a time for greatness," because it is a time for a great decision.

Now the challenge of such a crisis to us of the Ethical fellowship is, I think, to estimate and vindicate the rôle which ethical religion has to play in the making of the better world for which we long. In discussing the future of ethical religion, it is the leavening influence of ethics in the religion of the future that I am interested in rather than the future of any particular group (and there are many such groups) devoted to the spread of ethical ideas. And I would present three reasons why I believe that the religion of the future (even if it be not of the immediate future) must be a religion of ethics.

The first reason is that ethical religion is oriented toward the future and not toward the past. It is forward looking. Most of the religions have put their golden age in a remote past which they have attempted to recover. One thinks of

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the Garden of Eden in the Hebrew mythology, the Roman primeval era of justice, peace and plenty celebrated by Virgil in the Fourth Eclogue, the age of innocence pictured in so many of the religious legends of the East. There seems to be a strange fascination for the mind in the belief in a once perfect state of man which he hopes will be restored by the intervention of some miraculous agency. So the earliest years of Christianity were filled with the expectation of the millennium. The "second coming" of Christ was at hand. This evil world would be consumed with fire and the heavens would be rolled up like a scroll. St. Paul believed that it would come in his lifetime, and wrote, "Then we that are alive shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet with the Lord." He warned the Corinthians that "the time is short." A whole literature sprang up on the subject of the impending end of the world: apocalypses or revelations, one of the most famous of which found and retained a place in the Christian Bible, under the name of the "Book of Revelation." Now, although the proximate end of the world is not anticipated except by a few little sects like the Millerites or the Second Adventists, the influence of this apocalyptic idea has been felt even down to the present day. It is the cause of the emphasis on otherworldliness which is so common in religion. It has acted as a deterrent rather than as a stimulus to the effort to make this world a better place to live in, because it has represented this world as only a temporary abode of man, a vale of tears which he must pass through, a narrow corridor which leads to the eternal dwelling-place beyond. It has therefore stressed resignation, submission to oppression, patience with the world's evils—an attitude which we can easily understand in a people under the heel of the despotism of the Roman Empire, forbidden to worship their God in public, and considered fit to be thrown to the wild beasts in the arena.

But modern man is not content with a religion which promises that in some millennial future the evils of the present world shall be compensated for by an eternity of bliss. He does not wish to escape from the world, but to remake it. He has won many a battle of political and intel-

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lectual freedom. He feels the pulse-beats of new energies in his blood. He wants to make his religion, like his science and his art, the expression of his free creative soul. It is not revolt against the dogmas of the past that moves him, so much as the impelling force of new insights which have come with the increase of knowledge. He refuses to confuse reverence with orthodoxy. He insists that the ethical ideals of the humble seeker for truth and light today are more worthy to be revered than any religious doctrine handed down from the seekers of the past.

A second reason why we believe in the eventual emergence of an ethical religion is that such a religion comports with the democracy which we believe to be the best social order. Now the basic idea in democracy is the dignity of man, an idea which includes both his liberty and his corresponding responsibility, both his rights and his duties. Whenever the former are restricted or the latter neglected, democracy is impaired. The traditional religions contain elements which have been unfavorable, to say the least, to both these requisites of democracy. On the one hand almost every battle for the freedom of thought has had to be fought against an authority claiming divine sanction; and on the other hand man's responsibility has been sapped by the doctrine of his impotence to pursue a course of righteousness except by divine grace. The wonderful adventure of winning through to independence by self-discipline—the adventure of democracy—has been denied him. But he cannot tolerate in this day a hobble to his religious freedom any more than he can tolerate a threat to his political freedom. The modern age has brought a situation in which not only the hope but the necessity for building a new society confronts us. Passive endurance was a virtue in the days when men had no chance of improving their lot of slavery or serfdom. What is called for now is a determined, venturesome, aggressive spirit to go forward and redeem our age from the follies and frailties which have brought us to the brink of disaster. And we must have a religion which squares with this spirit of adventure. As Professor Max Otto has daringly but truthfully said, "We must engage in the task of making God safe for democracy." Blasphemy!

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cries the fundamentalist. But the fundamentalist Athenians put Socrates to death as a blasphemer when he tried to substitute a god of reason for the mythological gods which the city worshipped; and the fundamentalist scribes and Pharisees had Jesus crucified as a blasphemer because he declared that the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath. Blasphemy has ever been the charge of autocracy against democracy, whether of political, economic or religious autocrats. Voltaire's famous remark that if God did not exist it would be necessary for man to create him is a cowardly counsel of expediency to provide a great policeman to keep men in order. But no man can truly reverence a power through fear of punishment. If there is not in man himself a power which itself furnishes the motive and strength for righteous conduct, then we have little hope for the preservation of civilization. This is the postulate of democracy. This is the ethical religion that sanctions democracy.

Finally, ethical religion must be the religion of the future because of its universality. One wholesome lesson this global war which is bringing misery to countless millions of people has taught us; and that is the truth of the prophetic words: "And he hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." The area of human sympathy and understanding is widened as instantaneous communications and air transportation have brought the ends of the earth together. The jealousies and divisive nationalisms of the 19th century, which have brought untold woes upon mankind, we are now seeing to be as petty and parochial as the limited feudal jurisdictions of the Middle Ages which they succeeded. Nor can a religious parochialism fit this enlarged frame of human relations. No longer will national churches like the Anglican or the Lutheran suffice. No longer can the claim of catholicism, which literally means universality, be allowed to the Roman Church. It never has been universal, and it never can be. No longer will even Christianity itself, with all the blessings it has brought mankind, suffice as *the* one world religion. It must be seen for what it is in the light of past history and present necessity. "This world," writes Percival Chubb, "is no longer

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bounded by Palestine on the east and the British Isles on the west. The story of man is no longer a biblical story of six thousand years. Christianity takes its place as a recent episode in human history, and is now seen against an expanding background of ancient civilizations and cults which explain its gestation and development. We are escaping from parochial views of humanity, and are living in a world that is coextensive with its mundane home and coeval with perhaps a million years of human adventure. Culture is engaged in the endeavor to transcend regional, ethnic and national differences and barriers; and religion must follow suit." Is there then a religion which can be the embodiment and inspiration of this new and comprehensive view of the solidarity of the human family? Is there a truly catholic, universal religion? The answer is Yes. Ethical religion, and ethical religion alone, satisfies the call. It appeals to men of every race, color, clime and condition. It is the great common denominator in all the higher religions of the world, of which it has been in truth the creator. It needs no sanction of supernaturalism for it is native to the heart of man. Ceremonialism is as adventitious to it as cosmetics are to character. Orthodoxy or right belief is supplanted by orthopraxis or right conduct. No man will need to persecute or proselytize another, because all are agreed in their hearts that the very privilege of living carries with it the most august command to live the good life. What a power for good the thousands of churches would be if, dismissing meaningless ritual, they would concentrate only on preaching the gospel of the ethical obligations of man to man; what an invigorating stream of influence would come from the seminaries if, dropping all their courses on the exegesis of ancient texts and the defense of dubious dogmas, they devoted their time to the study of the historical and psychological factors which have aided or impeded the progress of man toward the goal of social brotherhood and individual fulfillment.

"The most powerful thing in the world," wrote Victor Hugo, "is an idea whose time has come." Quietly, persistently, inexorably that idea ripens into actuality like the fruit maturing in the vernal sun. The time for the emergence

ETHICAL RELIGION

of a forward-looking, democratic, universal religion of ethics is at hand. The world is waiting for a common faith which shall inspire its new-found and travail-born resolve to gather all the nations into the common fold of humanity. How near or distant the daybreak of that faith may be we do not know. But the signs of its dawning are multiplying with every year that passes. The footprints of history are pointing toward the goal. The future is with ethical religion.

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SUGGESTED MATERIAL by Ethical Leaders suitable for reading in connection with this book: *Pamphlets*: By Felix Adler—"The Meaning of an Ethical Society"; "The Purposes of the Ethical Movement." By H. J. Bridges—"The Enthusiasm of Humanity." By A. D. Black—"Our Godless Age." By W. E. Collier—"Changing Relations of Religion and Morals." By David S. Muzzey—"Toward Unity in Religion." By Henry Neumann—"What Religion for Our Children?" By V. T. Thayer—"A Freeman's Faith." By Lord Snell—"The Ethical Movement Explained." *Books*: By Felix Adler—"An Ethical Philosophy of Life"; "Life and Destiny"; "Seven Addresses." By H. J. Bridges—"The Religion of Experience"; "The Emerging Faith"; "Aspects of Ethical Religion: A Symposium." By Percival Chubb—"On the Religious Frontier." By Jerome Nathanson—"Fore-runners of Freedom." By Henry Neumann—"Education for Moral Growth"; "Lives in the Making." By Dr. Adler and others—"The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Ethical Movement." "The Standard," an organ of the Ethical Movement, is issued monthly from October to May. For further information with regard to publications address the American Ethical Union, 2 West 64th Street, New York 23, N. Y.

Ethical Societies, 1944

THE AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

A Federation of the Ethical Societies of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Brooklyn, and Westchester, N. Y. President, Robert D. Kohn (New York); Vice-Presidents, Leon T. Stern (Philadelphia) and M. Edward Abram (Chicago); Treasurer, Charles Sonfield (Brooklyn); Secretary, George E. O'Dell (New York). Office, 2 West 64th Street, New York. Office Secretary, Theresa Gould.

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE

Leaders, David Saville Muzzey, Henry Neumann, Algernon D. Black, V. T. Thayer, Jerome Nathanson. Meeting House, Central Park West and 64th Street. Sunday meetings 11 A. M. Sunday School 10 A. M. Day Schools 33 Central Park West, and Riverdale, New York City.

CHICAGO ETHICAL SOCIETY

Leader, Horace J. Bridges. Office, 203 N. Wabash Avenue. Wednesday meetings, Curtiss Hall, Fine Arts Bldg., South Michigan Avenue, 8 P. M. Sunday Assembly for Children 11 A. M. at the Society's office. Director of Groups, Maud V. McRoberts.

PHILADELPHIA ETHICAL SOCIETY

Leader, W. Edwin Collier, Weston Meeting House, 1906 Rittenhouse Square. Sunday Meetings 11 A. M., at the House. Sunday School, 9:30 A. M.

ST. LOUIS ETHICAL SOCIETY

Leader, J. Hutton Hynd. Meeting House, Sheldon Memorial, 3648 Washington Boulevard. Sunday meetings, 11 A. M. Children's Assembly, 9:30 A. M.

BROOKLYN SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE

Leader, Henry Neumann. Society House, 502 First Street. Day School, 49-50 Prospect Park West. Public Meeting at the House, Sundays at 11 A. M.; Children's Assembly, Sundays at the School at 10:45 A. M.

WESTCHESTER SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE

Leader, David Saville Muzzey. Meetings held on second Mondays, 8:30 P. M. at the Women's Club, New Rochelle, N. Y. Sunday Morning Classes, 10:30 at Thomas Paine Memorial House.

AN INVITATION to membership in any of the Ethical Societies is extended to all who are in sympathy with their purposes and philosophy. No creed or fixed set of principles is submitted at any time. A simple application for membership is followed by the opportunity for personal interviews with one of the Leaders, when the significance of the ethical point of view and the opportunities within the Societies can be explained. The Societies are supported by voluntary contributions. Each member is expected to share in the responsibilities as well as in the privileges of the Societies and to give as generously as means will permit. Individual memberships are also welcomed in the American Ethical Union.

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