

May He who is the Brahma of the Hindus, the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jehovah of the Jews, the Father in Heaven of the Christians, give strength to you to carry out your noble idea. The star arose in the East; it traveled steadily toward the West, sometimes dimmed and sometimes effulgent, till it made a circuit of the world, and now it is again rising on the very horizon of the East, the borders of the Tasifu, a thousand-fold more effulgent than it ever was before. Hail Columbia, mother-land of liberty! It has been given to thee, who never dipped her hand in her neighbor's blood, who never found out that shortest way of becoming rich by robbing one's neighbors, it has been given to thee to march on at the vanguard of civilization with the flag of harmony.

SCIENCE A RELIGIOUS REVELATION.

BY DR. PAUL CARUS.

A French author of great repute has written a book entitled *L'irreligion de l'avenir*, "The Irreligion of the Future," in which he declares that religion will eventually disappear; and he whose opinion is swayed by the diligent researches of such historians as Buckle and Lecky will very likely endorse this prediction.

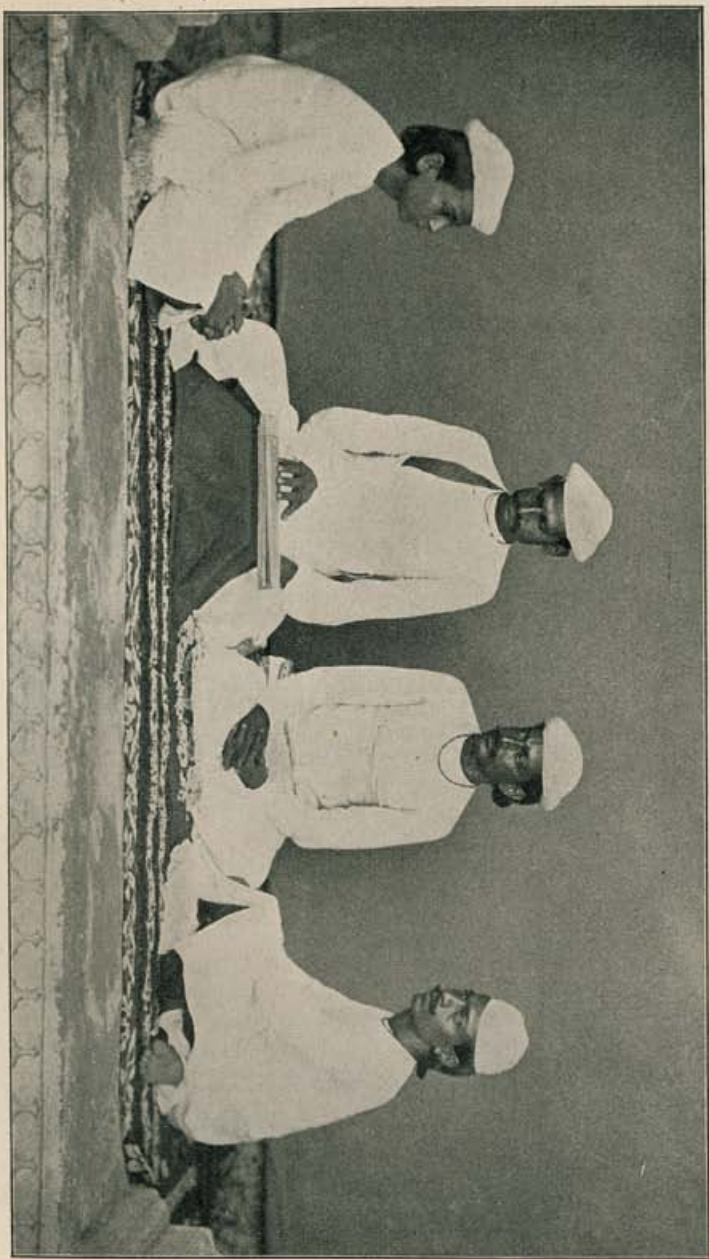
It is quite true, as these authors assert, that the theological questions of past ages have disappeared, but it is not true that religion has ceased to be a factor in the evolution of mankind. On the contrary, religion has so penetrated our life that we have ceased to notice it as an independent power.

That which appears to men like Buckle, Lecky, and Guyau as a progress to an irreligious age is an advance to a purer conception of religion.

Religion is indestructible, because it is that innermost conviction of man which regulates his conduct. As long as men cannot live without morality, so long religion will be needful to mankind.

Some people regard this view of religion as too broad; they say religion is the belief in God; and I have no objection to their definition provided we agree concerning the words *belief* and *God*. God is to me, as he always has been to the mass of mankind, an idea of moral import. God is the authority of the moral *ought*. To conceive God as a person is a simile, and to think of him as a father is an allegory. God is not a person like ourselves; he is not a father nor a mother like our progenitors; he is only comparable to a father; but in truth he is much more than that; he is not personal, but superpersonal.

Belief must mean the same as its original Greek *πίστις* which would be better translated by trust or faithfulness. It must mean the same as its corresponding Hebrew word *ammunah*, which means firmness of character. Belief in God must be an unswerving obedience to the moral law.



BRAHMAN PUNDITS.

Science is a revelation of God. Science gives us information concerning the truth, and the truth reveals his will.

It is true that the hieroglyphics of science are not easy to decipher, and they sometimes seem to overthrow the very foundations of morality. But such mistakes should not agitate us nor shake our confidence in the reliability of science. By surrendering science you degrade man; you cut him off from the only reliable communication with God, and thus change religion into superstition.

Some of the schoolmen made a distinction between religious truth and scientific truth, declaring that a proposition might be true in religion which is utterly false in philosophy, and *vice versa*. This view is not only logically untenable, but it is also morally frivolous; it is irreligious.

The nature of religious truth is the same as that of scientific truth. There is but one truth. There cannot be two truths in conflict with one another. Contradiction is always, in religion not less than in science, a sign that there is somewhere an error.

Religion has often, in former ages, by instinct, as it were, found truths, and boldly stated their practical applications, while the science of the time was not sufficiently advanced to prove them. The religious instinct anticipated the most important moral truths, before a rational argumentation could lead to their recognition. This instinctive or intuitive apprehension of truth has always distinguished our great religious prophets.

Almost all religions have drawn upon that wondrous resource of human insight, inspiration, which reveals a truth, not in a systematic and scientific way, but at a glance, as it were, and by divination. The religious instinct of man taught our forefathers some of the most important moral truths, which, with the limited wisdom of their age, they never could have known by other means.

In almost all practical fields men have made important inventions which they were unable to understand. Their achievements were frequently in advance of their knowledge.

Centuries before Christ, when ethics as a science was yet unknown, the sages of Asia taught men to love their enemies.¹ The preachings of Christ appeared to his contemporaries as impractical and visionary, while only recently we have learned to understand that the fundamental commands of religious morality are the only correct applications to be derived from the psychical and social laws of human life.

As the instinctive inventions of prehistoric ages show "by the side of highly ingenious appliances the crudest and roughest expedients," so our religions, too, often exhibit by the side of the loftiest morality a most lamentable lack of insight into the nature of ethical truth.

¹ We quote one instance only selected from the Dhammapada, one of the most ancient books of the Buddhist canon: "Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule."—Sac. bks. of the East, vol. x. p. 5.

The science of mechanics does not come to destroy the mechanical inventions of the past, but on the contrary, it will make them more available. In the same way a scientific insight into religious truth does not come to destroy religion; it will purify and broaden it.

The dislike of religious men to accept lessons from science is natural and excusable. Whenever a great religious teacher has risen, leaving a deep impression upon the minds of his surroundings, we find his disciples anxious to preserve inviolate not only his spirit, but even the very words of his doctrines. Such reverence is good, but it must not be carried to the extreme of placing tradition above the authority of truth.

Reverence for our master makes us easily forgetful of our highest duty, reverence for an impartial recognition of the truth. The antipathy of a certain class of religious men toward science, although natural and excusable, should nevertheless be recognized as a grievous fault; it is a moral error and an irreligious attitude.

Our religious mythology is so thoroughly identified with religion itself that when the former is recognized as erroneous, the latter also will unavoidably collapse.

And what a downfall of our noblest hopes must ensue! The highest ideals have become illusions; the purpose of life is gone, and desolation rules supreme.

The destruction of dogmatism appears as a wreck of religion itself, but, in fact, it is a religious advance. We must pass through all the despair of infidelity and of a religious emptiness before we can learn to appreciate the glory and grandeur of a higher stage of religious evolution.

Is there any doubt that all our dogmas are truths figuratively expressed? Why should we not take the consequences of this truth?

Religious parables, if taken in their literal meaning, will somehow always be found irrational. Says an old Roman proverb, *Omne simile claudicat*, every comparison limps; it is somewhere faulty. Why should religious similes be exceptions?

Man's reason and scientific acumen are comparable to the eyes of his body, while his religious sentiments are like the sense of touch. The simplicity and immediateness of our feelings of touch does not make it advisable to dispense with sight.

That conception of religion which rejects science is inevitably doomed. It cannot survive and is destined to disappear with the progress of civilization. Nevertheless, religion will not go. Religion will abide. Humanity will never be without religion; for religion is the basis of morals, and man could not exist without morals.

Religion is as indestructible as science; for science is the method of searching for the truth, and religion is the enthusiasm and good will to live a life of truth.