

# RELIGION AND HISTORY

By

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THE LINDSEY PRESS

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THE ESSEX HALL LECTURE, 1943

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*The words in italics form a running synopsis of the Lecture and the line of the argument can be clearly seen if the sentences in italics are read consecutively.*

## RELIGION AND HISTORY

### NOTE

The Essex Hall Lecture was founded by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1892, with the object of providing an annual opportunity for the free utterance of selected speakers on religious themes of general interest. The delivery of the lecture continues under the auspices of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, as a leading event during the course of the Annual Meetings of the Assembly. A list of the published lectures still obtainable will be found at the end of this volume.

*Essex Hall, London,  
May 1943.*

PROFESSOR F. C. BURKITT once asked his readers what they would expect to see if they were to read in the Royal Academy Catalogue that Picture No. 973 was labelled "WORSHIP." Some might think of the celebration of Mass, with the priest in his robes and holding up the consecrated Host for the adoration of the faithful. Some might think of a Scottish congregation in the Highlands listening while the minister expounds the Word of God. "Or it might be a gathering of Friends waiting in silence for the word of inspiration which may descend upon any of them." "And if our fancy should stray outside the Christian religion," some might imagine worshippers prostrating themselves in adoration before a sacred or Holy Image.

"But if we were to go with our Academy Catalogue and ask some contemporary of St. Paul or Seneca, a chance individual resuscitated from the first century A.D., or B.C., what he understood by worship, I think the picture called up in his mind would be different. I think the scene he would visualize would look to us much more like a butcher's shop or an open-air kitchen. At least, the scene of 'Worship' would include an animal to be killed, cooked and eaten, or (in certain cases)

consumed by fire. To the inhabitant of the ancient world Worship and Sacrifice were inseparably connected. Speaking generally, the method of worship was sacrifice: sacrifice was the means by which worship was carried out." \*

This single illustration may be taken as a typical example of the fact that, in the course of history, religion takes on many different forms, is found at very different levels and is subject to the process of change.

*Religion appears in different forms*, in Buddhism, in Judaism, in Christianity, in Islam and in the religions of India and of China. Indeed, the historian of religion does not meet with religion in the abstract, but with particular religions in different times and places.

Each of these religions in turn has its own history. When a religion ceases to have a history, it dies. In the course of their history Buddhism and Christianity have both undergone profound changes, even though a certain continuity and unity can be discerned running through all these changes.

To have a history is to be in process of change, and the process of change is not one merely of change of form, but is a change also of level. In the course of time people have discovered more about the Being of God.

\* F. C. Burkitt: "Eucharist and Sacrifice." In *The Interpreter*, April 1921.

*Religion is found at different levels.* Men have bowed themselves in worship before symbols of the divine sometimes crude and repulsive and rooted in naturalism, and through symbols appealing to the deepest spiritual insight of man—the crucified Christ and the Buddha in meditation. Men have worshipped God by offering up to him human sacrifices, as Abraham was prepared to offer up his son, Isaac. Men have worshipped God by offering up animal sacrifices, as in the Temple in the time of Jesus, whom the Fourth Gospel represents as casting out both the sheep and the oxen. Yet long before this the Psalmist had written: "Thou delightest not in sacrifice: else would I give it; Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51). A change of level is manifest here, even though the Psalmist who insisted that such sacrifices were not enough did not mean to say that they should not be offered, as the later verses of the same Psalm show. But the time did come when such sacrifices were done away with altogether.

These differences are not merely differences of form; they are also differences of content. In the history of religion there is a raising of the level from lower to higher forms of religion. *Religion has a history, and religion has a history because religion is subject to the process of change.*

*Only in recent times has this fact begun to penetrate popular consciousness.* This could, indeed, have been discovered from the study of the Old Testament, but when the existence of lower levels and strata was recognized there, the explanation was accepted that the New Covenant had done away with the Old. Only as vast stores of such facts accumulated, did they begin to have any real effect on the popular consciousness. And the first result of this awareness has been devastating in its destructiveness. Large numbers of people have come to believe that religion has been proved to be an illusion.

But facts in themselves have no meaning. They have meaning only when they are interpreted—that is, when they are seen, not as isolated bits of analysis, but as forming part of some pattern. What is the right interpretation of the fact?

*The fact does present a problem above all for religious people.* Change is a problem to the philosopher and the scientist. It is one aspect of the problem of time which looms so large in contemporary thinking. To the historian it is even more a problem, for his subject-matter is the particular and the changing, and the particular and the changing have no meaning unless somehow related to the universal and the timeless. Yet history is so vast and so complex that attempts to discover in it the universal and the timeless are looked upon with suspicion as the imposition of

categories from the outside, rather than as arising out of the material itself.

The fact of change is an even greater problem for the moralist, for it seems to result in an endless relativism. If all life is in process of change, how can there be any absolute standards?

But to religious men the right interpretation of the fact is more than a problem—it is a matter of life and death. For in religion men seek that which knows no variation neither shadow of turning. They seek to rise above the transient and changing into the timeless and the eternal. “O Thou who changest not, Abide with me”, is the supreme cry. If the transcendent and timeless manifest themselves in the changing and the time conditioned, how can religious experience be an experience of ultimate reality?

*So far-reaching are the implications of the fact of change that religious men and women have not as yet dared to face them.* These are some of the ways in which religious men dealt with these facts.

Some men have continued boldly to identify religion with one particular manifestation of religion at one particular moment of time, and have claimed to possess an absolute and final revelation of God. Sometimes this claim is asserted with a crudity that repels thinking men, as in popular fundamentalism; but the claim can also be stated in more subtle and attractive ways,

as in those theories which, while formally recognizing the eschatological elements in the Gospels, explain them away as "realized eschatology."

Some, more boldly, have sought to find the universal element which exists in all religions. But too often, when they have found it, it has proved to be a lifeless abstraction, because divorced from any particular manifestation.

Some have sought to save a little corner of life for religion not subject to the process of change—a corner to which they could escape with their dreams and their visions untouched and unsullied by life as it exists. Or they have claimed that religious experience comes to man through a special faculty.

They have not realized that the religion thus isolated from the rest of life is not only unable to transform life, but is cut off at the roots and doomed to wither away.

*The failure of religious people to give a religious interpretation of the fact that religion has a history has left the way open to non-religious interpretations.* Large numbers of men and women believe that it has been proved that religion is an illusion. A few regard it with shallow, supercilious, superior scorn, as just silly: some regard it with longing regret as a pathetic illusion: many regard it with a passionate hatred as poisonous—the opium of the people—taking away men from their real task of playing their part in the dialectic process of life:

others regard it with contempt as well as hatred, as the way in which selfish men disguise their self-seeking from themselves and others. Today that is an increasingly popular explanation of the Protestant Revolution and of the religion of the Puritans. In the long run the passionate hatred is less dangerous than half-amused tolerance. But whether these people regard religion with hatred or with scorn, with sympathy or indifference, they all deny that in religion men and women have received a vision, however imperfect and limited, of something that lies behind and beyond and within the flux of time. All agree in regarding religion not as man's discovery of God, but as man's creation of God in his own image.

This criticism of religion in the twentieth century is more dangerous than the attack in the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century attack was conducted from outside by geologists, astronomers and physicists. The twentieth-century attack is an attack from the inside, claiming to be based on facts which have been discovered in studying the religious consciousness itself and its manifestations.

One of the most popular of these criticisms is the theory that religion had its origin in magic, and another is that expounded by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, a book which has been reprinted in the Pelican series. People have accepted the conclusion that religion is only a stage in human

development, and that, as it once began, so it will disappear as the race outgrows its infancy. Or that God is only man's projection of his own desires and emotions.

These and other theories have little more behind them than the premature guesses—and bad guesses—of early pioneers. The nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries are littered with the wreckage of theories which have had their day and have ceased to be, and these are usually the theories which are accepted as scientifically proved truth by the masses of men who derive their knowledge from books and theories always a generation behind the times.

But every attempt to discover the origin of religion has failed. The origin of religion will be discovered only when the origin of man is discovered. For religion is integral to human life. The very fact that religion is found in such an overwhelming variety of forms at all places and stages should have made this clear. And the belief that men and women can go on living without some form of religion finds no confirmation in experience. For when men cease to believe in spiritual religion, they create secular religions. I maintain that that which is essential to complete human life cannot be merely an illusion.

If time and space permitted, all these different interpretations could be shown to be even more inadequate as explanations of complete human

experience than the theories they reject. Anyone can see at once that in most cases they fail to do justice to those experiences and values which lie at the heart of the lives of those who expound them—their passion for justice or for truth, and their willingness to work and to sacrifice that their vision may be realized.

*These non-religious interpretations have been accepted, not in virtue of their own strength and adequacy, but because the interpretations given by religious people have not really faced up to the facts disclosed in the history of religion.* And so long as religious people claim to possess a final and infallible revelation of religion, so long will they be unable to do justice to these facts. *Only those people who regard religion as a spiritual adventure are in a position to deal with them.* We are not tempted to explain them away, for we find in them one ground for our belief that so long as man is man, religion will not die. They prove that religion is interwoven with the texture of the life of man—even in man's mistakes and shortcomings. "Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final



good, and yet is beyond all reach, something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest." \*

*Religion has a history because religion is relevant to history. Religion is relevant to history because history has a meaning. In history, in the changes of our life, a process is being worked out and a purpose realized whose ultimate meaning and value transcend any moment in the process.*

At every moment of time the timeless is present. And in every moment of change the changeless. But there is tension between the changeless and the changing, between the timeless and the time-conditioned, the actual and the ideal. It is this tension which gives its meaning to life, and those who attempt to escape this tension in the end choose death.

How this can be so is a problem to which I know no completely satisfactory answer. But the problem is only another form of the fundamental problem of all thought—how can the one reality behind all life manifest itself in such myriad appearances? How can one life express itself in so many different forms? All the world's thinking has so far failed to do anything but establish more deeply and profoundly the oneness of life. If life were not one, there could be no thinking at all. If life were not one, there could be no religious experience. For in religious experience men seek the reality behind appearance, the

\* A. N. Whitehead: *Science and the Modern World*, p. 275 (Cambridge University Press).

one behind the many, in whom we live and move and have our being.

This problem of the relation of the changing and the changeless is not solved by taking one part of it as ultimate, but by finding a deeper synthesis, which will do justice both to the changeless and the changing. The timeless requires the changing to give it actuality, and the changing requires the timeless to give it meaning and value.

Religion then takes on many forms, exists at many different levels, and is subject to the process of change just because religion is integral to life.

*The expressions of the vision which lie beyond and behind the flux of time are always partial and time-conditioned.* No man has ever succeeded in giving adequate expression to the vision. The great mystics have even refused to try, for to describe the vision is to limit it, and thus to falsify it. Every expression is conditioned by the limitations of the man who expresses it, and at every stage of human life he is conditioned to some degree by the limitations of his time.

“ The letter fails, the systems fall,  
And every system wanes :  
The Spirit over-brooding all,  
Eternal Life remains.”

Popular attempts to describe God are very naïve. Men have pictured God as made in their own image. In Genesis God is described as walking in the garden in the cool of the evening.

What was worse, men ascribed to God their own imperfections. As early as the sixth century B.C. a Greek thinker made an oft-quoted protest against this :

“ Homer and Hesiod have ascribed to the gods things that are a shame and a disgrace among men—thefts, adulteries and deceptions. But really there is but one God, most high over all men and gods. All of him sees, thinks and hears: he has no parts: he is not manlike either in body or mind. Mortals think that the gods are born as they are, and have perceptions like theirs, and voice and form. Yes: and if oxen and lions had hands and could paint with their hands, and produce works of art as men do, horses would paint the forms of the gods like horses, and oxen like oxen. The Ethiopians make their gods black and snub-nosed: the Thracians give theirs red hair and blue eyes. Let us rid ourselves, then, of the paltry notion of a multitude of gods made after the likeness of man, and subject to the same ignoble passions.”

In some medieval church windows the three persons of the Trinity are represented in the stained glass as three separate individuals—a representation indeed ignorantly tainted with heresy, but welcome to popular imagination.

Facts like these have led people to accept the conclusion that in ascribing personality to God men have only been making God in their own

image. Whereas the explanation is rather the utter inadequacy of all attempts to express the nature of ultimate reality, combined with the urge to do so which is also an important fact in human experience. The real problem is to explain the urge.

It is interesting to note that in India, where above all the primitive sense of one life manifesting itself in many forms has been continuously active, God was pictured very often in animal form. A whole volume could be filled of pictures, the images of the Elephant God: Ganesha indeed has been embodied in glorious works of art. And the Elephant God was the god of wisdom.

While I recognize that these early attempts to picture God in human form are now stumbling-blocks to many people, who take them to be intended for expression of literal fact, I do maintain that even in the crudest of them there is more truth about essential reality than in any view which attempts to picture God merely as a great mathematician working out his equations but unable to respond in any way to man's longings. At least these pictures do recognize that personality is at once the greatest of facts and the greatest of values in life, and that no theory of life can be adequate which asserts that that which lies at the heart of life is less than any of its manifestations.

That is no doubt why in Hinduism and Buddhism the Lord Krishna and the Lord Buddha

were placed alongside the impersonal reality at the heart of existence. Theologians and philosophers were left the task of reconciling the two fundamentally opposed outlooks. Professor S. Radhakrishnan has found it in the statement that God was the Absolute from the human end. In the Bhagavadgita—the greatest book of Indian religious devotion, which is as precious to the peoples of India as the New Testament is to Christians—these two incompatible views stand unresolved side by side. The incompatibilities in it are so great that many scholars have taken upon themselves the task of separating the Gita into what they regard as its component parts, and thus to free it from these contradictions. But there is no reason to believe that the devout Hindu is at all disturbed by these incompatibilities.

*Religion then takes on many forms.*

1. *Some of these differences in form are only attempts to express this vision in different ways, to say the same thing in different language.* They have no more ultimate significance than the fact that some houses are built of stone, some of brick, some of timber, some half timbered, according to the material available in the locality. Such varieties are part of that infinite richness of life which makes life so beautiful in the concrete but so difficult to express in the abstract. Or such differences may be compared to the way in which an idiom or a

metaphor in one language is translated into another language, not word for word, but by another idiom or another metaphor. Though indeed eventually it may be that the difference of form, of expression, does involve a somewhat different quality of experience.

2. *Other differences of form may be the result of man's blindness and mistakes.* Men may be blind to the vision because the process of revelation is not a mechanical one, but a spiritual one. There is no infallible revelation, because men have to struggle and to strive to fit themselves for it. If it be the purpose of God to create personality—and in the words of the Irish poet George Russell (AE), we can imagine no other purpose for which God could have created the universe—then God's purposes can be carried out only by the willing co-operation of men and women. Men in their blindness may resist the process, for in the process there is real conflict and struggle. "Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life and few be they that find it." If it be God's purpose in the time process to create personality, then men must have real power of choice. Otherwise the world would just be a vast machine run by a power outside it, and this is a conception of God against which men have rightly revolted when stated by theologians, though they have often been willing to accept similar conceptions when put forward in the name of science.

People have asserted that man's sense of freedom and of choice is only a delusion, but in doing so they have not explained experience—they have only tried to explain it away. On the other hand, the existence of freedom is not opposed to the existence of order. Freedom has no meaning without an order in life, for without an order no action would have any consequence. Once again, truth is found not by accepting one side of a two-sided truth, but by finding a deeper synthesis, in which full justice is done to both aspects of life.

3. *Again, some forms in which religion has expressed itself are due to partial insights into different aspects of a reality too great to be wholly grasped by anyone.* Hinduism and Christianity stress very different and almost opposed aspects of existence. Where Hinduism stresses the impersonal aspect, Christianity stresses the personal aspect. In course of time, indeed, as each absorbed more and more from the converts whom it took in at a lower level, they tended to approximate. Mediaeval Buddhism has much in common with mediaeval Christianity, but even in this form the different emphasis on certain aspects of reality was never wholly obliterated. It is not the case that Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity have been trying to say the same thing in a different language. Through them, indeed, men have obtained a vision of that which lies beyond and behind the flux of time, but they have differed very

widely in their interpretation of the way in which this vision was to be expressed in daily life. And if it were true that Buddhism and Christianity were trying to say the same thing in different language, scholars would not have found it necessary to write so many volumes discussing the question whether Buddhism is a religion without God. In Christianity the attempt to discover exactly what experiences lie behind the Gospels has led to endless controversy, but in all this controversy no one has ever been tempted to deny that Christians did not believe intensely in God.

This fact of the different emphasis on different aspects of reality in different religions is not to be deplored. The religious life of the world is richer because one aspect has been emphasized by one form of religion and another aspect has been emphasized by another form of religion: just as all human life is richer because one man is a great musician, and another a great painter, and another a great mathematician, than it would have been had everyone been an average specimen of each—provided always that all these partial manifestations of life are recognized to be partial though true insights into reality.

4. *Most important of all is the fourth kind of difference to be found in the history of religion—the difference of level.* As life exists at different levels, so do religions. Some of these were mentioned at the beginning. Men have worshipped God by

offering human sacrifice, by animal sacrifice, by symbolic sacrifice and by the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit. To deny the existence of different levels is to deny the existence of values. These changes to be seen in the history of religion are not merely changes of form. There is a change of level. In the time process through the rising levels of life a purpose is being worked out. In the history of religion can be seen man's increasing knowledge of God corresponding to the increasing purpose which through the ages runs.

Professor Julian Huxley has recently maintained that while evolution has been a fact in the life of nature, only in man is evolution continuing. He agrees that "the word progress is not a mere anthropocentrism. There *has* been a trend during evolution which can rightly be called progressive," but "only in one single line is progress and its future possibility being continued—the line of man." It is for us to take control of the process. But "it is we who read purpose into evolution . . . purposes in life are made, not found." There I believe he is profoundly mistaken. And men and women who accept his view will not long continue to take charge of their destiny. Man discovers purpose in history because purpose is there, and when man takes charge of his destiny he is making himself one with that purpose. There the dialectic materialist and the religious

man can find a common ground, though they may differ in their interpretation of the quality of this purpose. When people rise to this deeper and truer vision, they are not making God in their own image, they are discovering more about what God really is. When men discovered the existence of electricity, they were not making the world according to their own conception of it: they were discovering something more of what the universe was really like.

*In the course of history men's awareness of God became more highly moral and more deeply spiritual, and involved a higher quality of thinking.*

The earliest forms of religion helped men to live by giving them a glimpse of something beyond and behind their changing lives, but they tended to emphasize the power of God rather than his righteousness. Early religions are, in fact, very utilitarian. They seek above all security. They expressed themselves above all in ritual and in myth. The myth gave the rational explanation of the ritual, and gave it its intention and significance. In course of time the quality of the ritual was raised. Rites, later regarded as cruel and disgusting, were transformed in various ways. The sacrifices which once had been made in fact were later made symbolically, or received symbolic interpretations.

The righteousness of God, as well as his power, was more exalted, and with it higher demands

were made on the individual. In time men even rose to the awareness that God is love.

*The rise of level manifests itself at certain creative periods of history.*

In these great changes in the history of religion, as in the rest of life, a double process can be seen at work. On the one hand these are ages of long preparation usually recognized as such only after the event, and then a sudden outburst of new creativeness—resulting in one of the flowering periods of history. What is true of the history of art, literature, science and of nature itself is true also of religion. There are certain great creative periods when life takes on new forms and is raised to higher levels. Their existence is undeniable. Dr. A. C. Bouquet in his book *Comparative Religion* in the Pelican Series gives a time-chart on which these periods are marked.

If we could only read the secret of these ages of creativeness, we should have penetrated deeply into the mystery of the relation of the creative spirit of man to the creative spirit of God. We do not yet understand the causes and conditions of these outbursts of creative activity through which the most precious achievements of the spirit have come into being. *Two things we do know about these periods.*

*In the first place, the stimulus which is given when one form of religion comes into close contact with another form of religion often results in a new out-*

*burst of creative activity.* This is true also of the stimulus through the contact of two civilizations. Such a result can be seen when the Aryans met the non-Aryans in India. In Christianity, Hebrew and Greek influences have combined together to create something which is neither Hebrew nor Greek, and when men have tried to make it one or the other, Christianity has lost something of its special quality.

It may be that in the days ahead, as the Western world comes into still closer contact with the Eastern world, another example may be given of that mutual stimulus which has done so much to enlarge and enrich the life of man in the past.

*In the second place, these higher levels of creativeness are associated with the name of some great person.* The earlier and lower forms of religion are nameless. The later and higher forms of religion find expression through some great prophet or saint, just as the highest revelations of music and art and science find their expression through some great person. We do not understand why the creative spirit should work in this way, but we can see the value of it. Life is richer for these great personalities.

No prayer is more futile than the prayer: "Send no more giants, Lord, but elevate the race at once." Our prayer should rather be: "Send giants, Lord, but make us ready to receive them."

It is not, of course, that these men can be under-

stood without any relation to their time. If the world is not ready for them, they fail to accomplish what they might have done. They speak where men have not spoken, but they do not think where men have not thought; they do not feel where men have not felt. Men catch fire from them because they are as a spark to tinder. In them, for good or for evil, the longings and aspirations of an age are expressed. They are, I believe, the response the Creator Spirit makes to the longing spirit of man.

*In these creative periods of history the mould is set which shapes the lives of after generations, sometimes for centuries.* Men try to keep alive the sense of their great experience by creating a society in which the tradition is preserved; they imagine new myths; they create new forms of worship or give new shape and significance to old ones; they draw up creeds. And for centuries something of what that life meant is conveyed to men and women through that society, through those forms of worship, through those myths and through those creeds.

*But in time the mould begins to crush out life.* The life goes out of these forms, but people cling to them. So precious does the form become, so associated with all that gives life its meaning, that people identify the letter with the spirit and the institution with the life. Indeed, the letter becomes more precious than the spirit and the

institution than the life. *The time comes when, if religion is not to die, a new mould must be created. People resist the process, and the mould is shattered in some great catastrophe!*

*We live our lives amidst such a catastrophe.* To many people that catastrophe has seemed to prove the futility of human striving and the powerlessness of the vision of the ideal. But catastrophe has come upon the world not because of the futility of human striving, but because men and women have ceased to strive enough. The sufferings and sacrifices and aspirations of centuries raised the level of human life and gave new opportunities of service and creativeness. But they also brought new problems and new difficulties, and people refused to face them. They had lost the vision which makes men and women aware of the imperfections of their lives and at the same time nerves them to seek to overcome these imperfections, to make the ideal and the real one in their lives as they are in the being of God. "See I set before thee this day, death and life"—creation or catastrophe—and men chose death. But that is not the end. In suffering and destruction people will learn the lesson they refused to learn in other ways.

*Out of the ruins of the old order, in religion as in society, a new and finer order will be created:* when men recover their vision of that which lies beyond and behind the flux of immediate things and



gives meaning, direction and purpose to their lives.

What form that order will take, no one can say. But *already something of its nature can be seen*. It will embody all the highest mental, moral, artistic and spiritual achievements of men. People will be permeated by the new sense of the oneness of life towards which all scientific discoveries point, and without which religious experience could not be. Life will not be regarded as something static and unchanging, that can be analysed into aspects and parts which retain their life independent of each other, but as forming a pattern of which we have, as yet, only glimpses. The barriers which men have erected between different forms of experience will go down. The mental, moral, artistic and spiritual aspects of consciousness will no longer seek separate expression in a shallow emotionalism, a mechanical morality, an arid intellectualism, a barren art and an escapist religiosity. As in the early days of religion, religion will permeate every aspect of life, but it will permeate every aspect of life at a higher level, taking another turn along the spiral course of history. *Life will be felt and seen as a whole, as a dynamic process rising to new levels*, as men seek to embody in their changing lives that which transcends change.

The sense of oneness of the life we share will not only break down the barriers inside the

individual consciousness, but the barriers between peoples. There is a fundamental unity in mankind. The most important things in human life are those which are common to all men—the need for significance, security and adventure. And all these require for their existence the realization that in our life here a purpose is being worked out in which all people have their part to play for the common good. *The time has come when men must find a world-religion or perish*. Not only is a world religion essential to the men of our time, but it is involved in the very nature of religion, if religion be, as we believe, “the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within the passing flux of immediate things . . . something that gives meaning to all that passes . . . and yet eludes apprehension.”

*That world-religion will not be an abstraction, but a new synthesis*, bringing together all the partial revelations men have received of God, not as bits of a jigsaw puzzle, but through the creative power of life,

“dim fragments  
meant to be combined in some wondrous whole.” \*

*And we who believe in religion as a spiritual adventure have a great part in shaping that future* if only we are true to our faith that the letter killeth and the spirit giveth life; if we ourselves escape

\* Robert Browning: “Paracelsus.”



the common fate of becoming set in a mould ; if we show our faithfulness to our tradition, not by trying to copy what our ancestors did, or by trying to repeat what they said, but by going forward in the spirit in which they went forward in the past, to face the problems of the day in the serene confidence that

“ No power can ever die that ever wrought for truth,  
 Thereby a law of nature it became  
 And lives unwithered in its sinewy youth  
 When he who called it forth is but a name.” \*

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\* Alfred Russell Lowell: “Elegy on the Death of Dr. Channing”.

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