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A NEW FAITH AND AN OLD FOLLY.

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PRESIDENT ELIOT, of Harvard, has written very hopefully and confidently concerning the prospects of the American Union. Among other encouraging signs, he refers to a new type of Christianity, which he represents as rapidly progressing amongst us. This *revolution*, as he calls it, has been effected since the beginning of the present century. The characteristic of the liberal Christianity seems to consist in a *new* conception of God, and *new* views of human life. God is no longer, as in ages past, regarded as a Judge who will call the impenitent to account; and life is not a season of preparation for a happier sphere. "By the multitude of the unchurched, also, it is generally understood that there is no angry God to popitiate, and that the *only* way to take securities for the morrow, whether in life or in death, is to do well the duties of to-day." Without explicit statement of belief, and by the light of these shadowy hints, it is easy to see that the *revolution* in which he rejoices is a complete rejection of what the Bible teaches concerning condemnation and atonement.

President Eliot is high authority. His statement is questionable only as to the extent of the apostasy which he recognises and welcomes. Advocates are naturally apt to exaggerate the success of the cause they represent. But there is no doubt of the fact, that New England thought, if not that of the whole North, is largely infected with *radical disloyalty* to Christianity, as it is written in the sacred oracles. I do not propose to discuss this obvious trend of opinion on religious subjects, except in a single aspect. It is a part of a vast aggregate of popular error, that has thoroughly mastered the mind of many of the devotees of light literature in that region. The *literati* of New England, as a distinct class from the great *thinkers* of the land, are, with few exceptions, under the false impression that no equal area in the world can compare with their section in wisdom. The assumption of superiority to foreigners, by the Chinese literary class, is not more pronounced. This complacency is manifested, consciously and unconsciously on all subjects, and religion does not escape. With few exceptions, they concur in regarding the divine authority of the Scriptures as an untenable dogma, and erect self-consciousness into a final criterion. . . . In opposition to this "revolution," I maintain that society cannot be regenerated, or sinners be saved, in any way but that revealed in the gospel. I refuse to argue the matter. The problem has been attempted with conspicuous failure in every nation of the world. Man cannot save himself. The cultivators of light literature and a rose-colored philosophy, are deceiving themselves, and

misleading others, with fanciful dreams of a perfection never to be realized. If they are right, Christ was wrong. The "leaves for the healing of the nations" are on "the tree of life," and not in the novelettes and magazines of the hours. "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." The American Union, if destined to survive, cannot prosper and remain free, independently of a Bible with a cross in it, distinct dogmas of revealed truth, teaching man his lost condition, and pointing him to a divine Saviour. It is not true, as President Eliot seeks to convince us, that society is improving through the influence of the new ideas in religion. Crime and vice are horribly prevalent in those very centres where their points ought to be manifest. No signs are visible of the altruistic millennium. Agitators and reformers, in societies without end, are at work unceasingly upon the corrupt mass of sinning and suffering humanity; and still the moral putrescence continues unchecked except so far as regenerating grace, breathing through the gospel, here and there infuses its spiritual life into dying souls. If the Bible were banished, the country would perish.

This "revolution" lacks nothing but general prevalence to be far more disastrous than any political crisis. It is a radical change in the basis of morals. In its most consistent form, it is *atheistical*, since it rejects God as a moral governor. Its central doctrine is that virtue is to be practiced for its own sake, and not as Christ teaches, to please the Father. The motive of all moral action is thus converted into a self-satisfying sentiment of conformity to a standard of self-righteousness erected by each individual for himself. . . . We are urged to subvert the whole system of morals and government, and forsake our relations to the Almighty, as the ruler and judge of men, and the giver of every good and perfect gift. The new theory bids us do good for the self-satisfaction it affords and not to satisfy the demands of a lawgiver. It proposes to reform society and eradicate its evils, by means of agitation and instruction. The chief end of man is, to mount a hobby, and keep it in a gallop. But it is madness to adopt a remedy based on a mere theory. Let us have the facts of its efficacy upon communities. If an abstraction is more efficient in regenerating society than a holy God and a bleeding Redeemer, the power of its influence ought to be easily demonstrated, not by fine writing, which can never equal the Scriptures, but by substantial results in healing the evils and miseries of man.

THE grand difficulty is to feel the reality of both worlds, so as to give each its due place in our thoughts and feelings, to keep our mind's eye and our heart's eye ever fixed on the Land of Promise without looking away from the road we are to travel towards it.