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### "THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE."

MR. COTTER MORISON'S striking book, "The Service of Man" (London: Kegan Paul and Co.), reminds us that there are questions before the world more serious than any of a political kind, serious as the political questions are. He is moved to write apparently by his alarm at the approach of a great industrial catastrophe, a catastrophe not less terrible than the Black Death, which he predicts will be brought on through the loss of employment by the working classes, owing to the increasing displacement of manual labour by machinery. Without going into a close analysis, we may say that we do not share Mr. Morison's fears on this particular point. Increased powers of production can hardly, as their general results, bring impoverishment and suffering. That which we do agree with him in apprehending is that between the fall of religion, if religion is destined to fall, and the rise of a scientific morality strong enough to control the passions of men, society will have a bad quarter of an hour. "A transfer of allegiance from one set of first principles to another, especially on subjects relating to morals and conduct, cannot be effected without considerable loss of order and continuity by the way. Many will halt between the two régimes and, owning allegiance to neither, will prefer discarding all restraint on their freedom of action. The corruption of manners under decaying polytheism in the Roman world, the analogous corruption during the Reformation and the Renaissance, offer significant precedents. It would be rash to expect that a transition unprecedented for its width and difficulty, from theology to positivism, from the service of God to the service of man, could be accomplished without jeopardy. Signs are not wanting that the prevalent anarchy in thought is leading to anarchy in morals. Numbers who have put off belief in God, have not put on belief in humanity." There is coming, in other words, a Moral Interregnum, though when the fear of its advent was first expressed, all the Positivists and Agnostics scoffed at so preposterous an apprehension. They bade you remark that round their philosophic tea-table no sudden tendency to murder and rape had been manifested, and hence they concluded that there could be no danger of any moral disturbance in the world at large.

Mr. Morison tenders a double issue. He affirms that the Service of God is at end, and that its place must be taken by the Service of Man. His grounds for the first proposition are the growth of scepticism, the failure of the Christian religion as an instrument for producing morality and the evanescence of the idea of a personal God. The first is an indisputable fact, and is, no doubt, closely connected with the effect produced by the advance of science and of historical criticism on the belief in the Christian miracles. With regard to the second, Mr. Morison, while he depicts with great force the shortcomings, which have been terrible enough, of Christian communities, fails to note the broad fact that moral progress has been continuous only within the Christian pale. A discussion

of the third proposition would lead us into metaphysics. But we venture to deny that the gradual stripping of imagery derived from human personality, moral or intellectual, from our idea of God, refines the idea out of existence. That our moral nature points true to that of the Author of our being, and that virtue identifies us with Him and assures us of His love and of our ultimate happiness, are the fundamental propositions of Theism; and these no metaphysical difficulty of conceiving a nature clear of human conditions can affect. That religion can be superseded by material or scientific progress Mr. Morison would not seriously affirm. He quotes with derisive approbation the saying of a silly female saint when she caught sight of the Britannia Bridge: "Oh, how wonderful! But if men do such things as these they will begin to think they have no need of God," and says that the thought is rapidly spreading all over the civilized world. But what have Britannia Bridges to do with our spiritual life?

That, however, of which we feel sure is that if the Service of God is at an end, its place will not be supplied by the Service of Man. There can be no religion without God. Man is the highest of the vertebrates. Does that make him an object of religious sentiment? He is a vast improvement on the original ape, supposing that theory of his genesis to be true; but why should we fall on our knees before any development of an ape, especially when each of us is himself a part of the equivocal divinity to be worshipped? Humanity is an abstraction or an aggregate. If it is an abstraction it can be the object of no emotion, whether religious or of any other kind. If it is an aggregate, it includes the bad as well as the good. Moreover, it includes the future of the race, which is unknown to us, but which, according to the Spencerian theory of necessary disintegration, is likely, after a certain point, to be anything but worshipful. If a man has a taste for disinterested benevolence, well and good; but if he has the opposite taste, as Nero, Eccelino, and Napoleon had, there is nothing that we can see to hinder him from indulging it except force. Provided he can escape the gallows and get through life successfully, as many a scoundrel does, he may snap his fingers at "Humanity." Mr. Morison tells us that we are bound to take care of our health and our bodily faculties because "a servant of humanity has no right to be unable to perform his duties to her." We should like to ask how he justifies "right" and "her." If he will analyse them, he will find we believe that "right" is a divine law, and that "her" is a female deity. The religion of Humanity is a figment invented to appease a craving and fill a void; and we prefer looking the facts, grim as they may be, in the face to cozening ourselves with figments of any kind.

Mr. Morison is a "Determinist" of the most thoroughgoing kind, and extends his necessarianism with startling emphasis to character as well as action. "Nothing," he says, "is gained by disguising the fact that there is no remedy for a bad heart and no substitute for a good one. Only on good, unselfish instincts can a trustworthy morality repose." Moral differences, he holds, are congenital, like differences of physical constitution, and "neither therapeutics nor moral training will ever turn the bad into the good, the evil constitution or character into the vigorous and moral." Here he is, of course, directly at issue with Christianity, which bases itself on the freedom, though not on the arbitrary freedom of the will, and refuses to despair of the Thief upon the Cross. When he is asked how he reconciles his necessarianism with moral responsibility, he boldly answers: "The sooner the idea of moral responsibility is got rid of, the better it will be for society and moral education. The sooner it is perceived that bad men will be bad, do what we will, though of course they may be made less bad, the sooner shall we come to the conclusion that the welfare of society demands the suppression or elimination of bad men and the careful cultivation of the good only. This is what we do in every other department. We do not cultivate curs and screws and low breeds of cattle. On the contrary we keep them down as much as we can. What do we gain by this fine language as to moral responsibility? The right to blame and so forth. Bad men are not touched by it. The bad man has no conscience; he acts after his malignant nature. The fear of sharp punishment may deter him from evil doing and quell his selfish appetites; but he will not be converted to virtue by our telling him that he has no moral responsibility, but he is a free agent to choose good or evil, and that he ought to choose the good. His mind is made up to choose the bad. But society,