

Is There a Universal Religion?

Second of Two Articles Intended to Clear up Popular Misconceptions

By G. C. WORKMAN, D.D.

THE answer to the question, Is there a universal religion? depends in part on what is meant by religion, and in part also on what makes a religion universal. Loosely speaking, there are several universal religions; but, strictly speaking, there is only one, because there is only one that is suited to the requirements of all men, and is able to meet the spiritual wants of all.

In the practical sense, it has been shown, religion is a life lived in accordance with one's honest convictions of God and goodness, or the application to conduct of the principles of action which such convictions presuppose. In other words, it is the practice of morality, or the performance of moral duties, in obedience to the divine will. Any person, therefore, who acknowledges a Supreme Being, and lives in harmony with his highest knowledge of him, is a religious person, whether man or woman, old or young.

THE nature of religion having been evinced, it is important next to show how it arises, or rather how it arose. Its origin is very interesting. It appears to have sprung in primitive times from a sense of need in the presence of unseen powers, on which man found himself dependent, to which he felt himself beholden, and with which he wished to be on friendly terms. It originated, therefore, in a human instinct; and its evolution seems to have been a psychological necessity as soon as the race had reached a certain stage of development. But that necessity, though partly physical at first, was fundamentally a spiritual one. This must now be shown.

Man has admittedly a religious instinct. That fact does not imply, however, that he has innate ideas of right and wrong, but it does imply that he has an innate capacity for forming such ideas. That is to say, he has an intuitive faculty, which enables him to recognize distinctions among personal actions, and which not only impels him to discriminate them according to their character, but also prompts him to conform his conduct to what he considers right. The popular name for the power to make moral distinctions is conscience, but it would be better styled, perhaps, the moral faculty.

IN the sense explained, religion is instinctive in humanity. It is natural for man to be religious, because he is born with a capacity for discriminating actions and for engaging in reflection and adoration; and all healthy persons have a spontaneous tendency to be religious—a tendency which, if properly encouraged, would incline them to be reverent towards God and obedient to his will. It is thus demonstrable that religion rests on and grows from morality, for man is moral before he is religious, and becomes religious because he has a moral sense.

It has seemed advisable to explain how religion arose, because its origin is generally misunderstood. Some persons have been led to suppose that it originated in heaven, and came directly from the Deity; but that supposition is quite incorrect. The religious instinct comes from the Creator, of course; but each people has developed its own type of religion, under the quickening influence of the Spirit of Truth. The lowest discovered tribes of men have had some religious ideas and customs.

THERE was, doubtless, a time when mankind were rather superstitious than strictly religious; but, from very ancient times, the instinct of religion has manifested itself by unequivocal proofs of its reality. The nature of the proofs would differ in different parts of the earth and in different ages of the world. There have been three distinct periods, at least. The limit of each period is not known, and cannot be determined. It must, however, have been very long, for the last one extends back into the indefinite past.

In remoter ages, the reality of religion was probably proved by an effort on the part of men to relate themselves satisfactorily to the unseen powers which they saw operating about them; in ages less remote, it was proved by an endeavour to unite themselves to the spiritual energy by which they believed the forces of nature to be controlled; in less distant ages still, among some members of the race, it has been proved by communion with a spiritual Being, having the highest conceivable qualities, to whose likeness the noblest natures have sought to conform themselves.

Because of the instinctive origin of religion, there is a fundamental resemblance in the religious usages

of all known peoples. That resemblance is owing to the fundamental similarity of their religious consciousness. A similarity of consciousness would naturally seek to express itself in similar practices. For example, sacrifice, which is an expression of dependence, and worship, which is an expression of regard, have been common to all classes of men, and have been characteristic of religion ever since the race developed a feeling of accountability.

THE various forms which religion has assumed among the peoples of the earth have been the natural outcome of their various habits of life and thought. These would depend largely on the mental and moral attainment of each people, and would represent approximately the degree of development it had reached. The reasonableness of that statement will scarcely be questioned by those who have studied the subject.

As a people ascended in the scale of intelligence, its notion of Deity would gradually become more adequate, and its forms of worship more spiritual and refined. In the earlier stages, besides sacrifice and worship, religion has assumed such forms as fasting, scourging, and penance; in the later stages, such forms as aspiration, prayer, and praise. At each stage of development there must have been latent in the mind, if not present to the thought, of men the motive of self-realization.

But universality of instinct does not make a universal religion, neither does similarity of ritual, nor community of interest, nor even uniformity of doctrine. Some of these ingredients help to produce it, but a universal religion requires other constituents, as well. These remain to be explained.

AFTER a portion of mankind had developed out of savagery and become partially civilized, there were gradually established tribal or national religions. Such religions have been very numerous, as well as very wide-spread; but in every case they were originally confined to a single people, or to a group of nearly related peoples, and each tribe or nation had a divinity of its own. The religion of ancient Israel was a national religion, and Jehovah was its national God. A universal religion knows no such limitations.

For a Greater Canada

How City and Country Measure up Together for Canada's Growth

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IN a former article in the CANADIAN COURIER I drew attention to the fact that Canada is developing industrially, as well as agriculturally, and advanced the opinion that the true welfare of our community lies in setting up and maintaining a proper balance of city and country population and in developing each as the complement of the other. I shall try to show in this article that time and conditions are ripe for building up a great home market in Canada and that the co-operation of the whole people along these lines will work wonders for the upbuilding of Canada.

The recent Government Census gave Manitoba 455,614 people, Saskatchewan 492,432, Alberta 374,663, and British Columbia 362,768. Of these, the number living in towns or cities is 194,205 in Manitoba, 97,028 in Saskatchewan, 138,665 in Alberta, and 172,915 in British Columbia. These figures show that the urban population of the West is increasing quite as fast as it ought to in proportion to the people who live on farms. In the present growing stage of the country's development there is bound to be a considerable shifting population, but the figures quoted give a fairly accurate statement of the proportionate parts of the population of Western Canada.

THE latest statistics show that fully a quarter of the entire population of Canada depend upon industrial pursuits for their living; that the industries of Canada employ a billion dollars of capital and more than four hundred thousand men, and that these men receive \$200,000,000 in wages each year. The product of Canada's factories is valued

The term "universal" in this connection is employed in two different senses. It is used to signify either a fact or a quality. When a religion has extended beyond a single people and made converts among many and diverse nations, it is sometimes called a universal religion as a fact; but it should rather be called an international than a universal religion.

IT is not the extension, but the quality, of a religion that makes it a universal religion. Besides its natural fitness for tribes and peoples that differ widely from one another, it must possess a peculiar character. It must contain genuinely universal elements, which give it a universalistic nature. What are these genuinely universal elements?

The first of them is ethical monotheism, or a belief in one only God, all-mighty and all-loving and all-wise, who is the righteous Creator of the world, and the moral Governor of the universe. In the Gospel this is known as the doctrine of divine fatherhood. The second is divine childship, or the belief that all men are children of the same All-Father and members of the same great family. This is known in the Gospel as the doctrine of human brotherhood. The third is disinterested benevolence, or unselfish love; that is, the doctrine that all men, being children of a common Father and members of a common family, are, irrespective of colour or class or creed, entitled to brotherly consideration, and should be treated with brotherly regard. The fourth is intellectual liberty, or the doctrine that all men are at liberty to think for themselves on religious subjects, and to develop themselves freely in any direction they choose, so long as no one interferes with the moral rights and privileges of another.

THESE four elements are truly universalistic, knowing neither national nor racial limitations. They are germinally found in Judaism, but are found in their completeness only in the Christianity of Christ. Some of them are less completely found in Buddhism, and less completely still in Mohammedanism. Some of them, also, belong to the Sikh religion, which proclaims a monotheistic doctrine, and maintains that the true worship of the Deity is to serve one's fellow-men. Some of them, too, belong to Babism, which is a species of pantheism, its message being one of peace, love, and good-will towards men.

Any religion, therefore, that regards national boundaries, or fosters racial prejudices, or imposes arbitrary dogmatic tests is not, and cannot be, a universal religion; and any person who is bigoted, or prejudiced, or intolerant is not a proper advocate, much less a worthy representative, of it.

at \$900,000,000. These figures show that Canada's home market is already set up and doing business, but, large as the figures of industrial investment and industrial product are, there still remains a great void between the demand and supply of home-made goods in Canada. Since markets, like nature, abhor a vacuum the void is filled by imported goods. Canada imports vast quantities of manufactured goods from other countries. In 1910 we brought in \$250,000,000 worth of goods from the United States, \$95,000,000 worth from Great Britain, and smaller quantities from other countries.

Many of these goods can be made as economically in Canada as anywhere else on earth, and it is obvious that—if they were made here Canada would reap the benefits that would arise out of having industrial centres set up all over the country—from the increased demand for farm products in markets near at hand, from lower cost of production resulting from smaller transportation charges and no duty. All of these benefits are now dealt out to other countries because Canada has failed to take full advantage of her opportunities.

WHEN His Honour D. C. Cameron, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba, on the occasion of laying the corner-stone of Winnipeg's new Hall of Industry, on Dec. 30, made reference to the importance of Canadian cities developing a patriotic spirit in purchasing the products of their own industries he sounded a national note of most vital importance to the industrial development of Western cities as a whole, which are striving to build up their manufacturing interests.