

Again: View religion as an *Art*, and in this light too, its compatibility with a busy and active life in the world, it will not be difficult to perceive. For religion as an art differs from secular arts in this respect that it may be practised simultaneously with other arts—with all other work and occupation in which we may be engaged. A man cannot be studying architecture and law at the same time. The medical practitioner cannot be engaged with his patients, and at the same time planning houses or building bridges,—practising, in other words, both medicine and engineering at one and the same moment. The practice of one secular art excludes for the time the practice of other secular arts. But not so with the art of religion. This is the universal art, the common, all-embracing profession. It belongs to no one set of functionaries, to no special class of men. Statesman, soldier, lawyer, physician, poet, painter, tradesman, farmer,—men of every craft and calling in life—may, while in the actual discharge of the duties of their varied avocations, be yet at the same moment, discharging the duties of a higher and nobler vocation—practising the art of a Christian. Secular arts, in most cases, demand of him who would attain to eminence in any one of them, an almost exclusive devotion of time, and thought, and toil. The most versatile genius can seldom be master of more than one art; and for the great majority the only calling must be that by which they earn their daily bread. Demand of the poor tradesman or peasant, whose every hour is absorbed in the struggle to earn a competency for himself and his family, that he shall be also a thorough proficient in the art of the physician, or lawyer, or sculptor, and you demand an impossibility. If religion were an art such as these, few indeed could learn it. The two admonitions, “Be diligent in business,” and “Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,” would be reciprocally destructive.

But religion is no such art; for it is the *art of being, and of doing good*; to be an adept in it, is to become just, truthful, sincere, self-denied, gentle, forbearing, pure in word, in thought, and deed. And the school for learning this art is not the closet, but the world,—not some hallowed spot where religion is taught, and proficient when duly trained, are sent forth into the world,—but the world itself—the coarse, profane, common world, with its cares and temptations, its rivalries and competitions, its hourly, ever-recurring trials of temper and character. This is, therefore, an art, which all can practise, and for which every profession and calling, the busiest and most absorbing, afford scope and discipline.