

became objects of worship under the more ancient Roman polity, after the pattern of which the Roman Catholic Church has been so largely fashioned.

Then, these ancient systems differ from the modern cult in another particular: The objects of worship which they presented to the people were not mere abstractions, but real men and women. Humanity is an abstraction, but a man is a reality; and it was the latter, not the former, that was held to be a proper object of worship. These deified human beings, too, were not ordinary men, but extraordinary persons, who had distinguished themselves by what, to the apprehension of the people of the age in which they lived, appeared to be God-like qualities. It was the worship of the greatest, if not, in every instance, the best of the race.

The apotheosis of humanity, whether the idea originated with M. Auguste Comte or not, is evidently an achievement of our age. It was reserved for the audacity of the Nineteenth Century to place this abstraction on the throne of God, and to offer to it the worship which is due to God. According to this novel system, humanity is not to be contemplated as a representation of the Deity, the worship of which is to be subordinated to that of the Supreme; but it is the substitute for God, which is to usurp His prerogatives and to receive the homage and the honors which are His due. The appalling assumption that underlies it is either blank Atheism or Agnosticism, which practically amounts to the same thing. It is either that there is no God, or that if there be such a being, we have no means of knowing anything about Him; and that our wisdom lies in getting rid of the idea of Him as quickly as we can.

The logical consequence of such a conclusion would seem to be to make a clean sweep of religion of every kind; but before this can be done the nature and necessities of the individual soul and of society must be reckoned with. The religious sentiment is too deeply rooted in human nature to be ignored. Man is a religious being, and as such he must have a religion. He must have some Being to look up to, to reverence, to trust, to obey. Society itself is rooted and grounded in religion. The civilization of the Nineteenth Century about which the