The Religion of the Future.

A Thesis.

For the Degree of B.S.

by

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The Religion of the Future: Mr. M. Stacy.

Religion is a very important subject and should much interest the student as one who is to lead society. It is an old theme, but concerns us all, and is ever fresh and attractive. We may perhaps do something toward solving the great problem which has perplexed so many.

Life is useless unless origin, being and destiny are clear. God, duty, faith, repentance and the hereafter forever haunt us. We must have religion to satisfy our nature and promote our well-being. Constant labor, excitement or self-promotion will not take its place.

Religions have always existed, but differed widely. All nations and ages have been religious. People, by nature, seem to have a certain measure of religion, which various systems intensify in different degrees. Lack of all faith has led to vice, revol-
revolution or despair. The rapid progress of Christianity among
civilized nations points to its universality, but the origin of dif-
ferent sects and the rise of infidelity destroys religions certain-
ty. And no more interesting question can arise than "What is
the future of religion. God and immortality as the two pillars
of religion. Other doctrines pertain to duty to God, and man and
present and future well being.

Man intuitively believes in a supreme being. He looks up to
him, yearns for his sympathy and aid, sighs for his presence and de-
sires to know his will to do it. He cannot help talking to him in joy,
danger and death. Many death beds prove atheistic sentiments unnatu-
ral. Education and surroundings cannot change man's nature.

Nature, be thou eis our guide.
While life's dark way we tread;
Nèrin don't can we abide
By thy perfect knowledge led.

Reason teaches that design in nature shows a designer. Man's mind proves an infinite mind. Man's weakness, imperfection and mortality, need a completing power. Nature, revelation and reason all point to a personal, revealed God. We could not live successfully, peacefully or happily without God. Like a lonely lost traveller we man without his presence. The Atheist secretly rejoices in the restraining, inspiring influence of God. And what is our state here? We have small bodies, imperfect minds and short lives. We are often troubled, anxious, in doubt, and rarely perfectly satisfied and happy. Wealth and friends leave us. How lawful to look to a personal father above, who grants sympathy and aid. Man's mind may often deny him through impartial knowledge or false logic, but his heart ever yearns for him. Man does not fully comprehend God, but ever acknowledges all of him that he
can understand. Atheism which denies God; Pantheism, which
confuses the building and builder; and Deism, which believes
in God but makes him utterly useless to man, as each founded
on imperfect reasoning, wild guessing, or impertinent science.
Man's nature and requirements are better than much specula-
tion or negation.

Man naturally hopes in immortality and nearly all nations
believe in it. Reason, nature and desire require it. This life is
too short and unsatisfactory; we need further development.
The eye has not seen as much or as far as it can. The ear has not
heard its sweetest sounds. Heaven's beauties and melodies lie just be-
fore us. Strong desire leads to realization here and shall the strong
rest of all longings be unsatisfied. The reasons before stated for be-
lief in God apply to immortality.

But why was man created? Was it to do good, to alleviate
miserly, to follow the golden rule? This is our earthly duty.
But with such a reason for creation, man was inexplicable. Misery was placed here that we might alleviate it, evil, that we might overcome it with our good! Sublime mission—
to set us our miserable little puppets to be knuckled over! Are
we for the use of some higher power, or to be experimented on? Perhaps. But reason says that God made us to have us share his future glory. Earth is a stepping stone, a preparation a place if rightly used, made blissful by anticipations of the future. But heaven is not compulsory on earth were needles. A force present is repulsive and pleasur would be joyles without choice.

God, immortality and heaven as fundamental, but such
les without expansion and fitting to man's needs. An abstract God, as often defined, does not reach us and a God known only through nature in itself. Could a child know and love his father
by looking over his accounts, or examining his bills of sale? God must show his care and love for us and reveal himself. Nature illustrates his power and wisdom but does not disclose fully his personality or fatherhood.

The Bible reveals God, is an absolute necessity and will stand till another divine message takes its place. Our Father would do wrong to leave us in doubt and despair by not explaining our mission, salvation, and destiny. We are another Bible. Naturally, we seek the springs of religious truth, but our nature often becomes dwarfed and false and needs the completion and guidance of an inspired word. The Bible is not a universal textbook but treat of moral and religious truths. It is, however, much more important than all other books combined. The words, of course, are human but the thoughts, truths, and effects are inspired. We do not know all its authors, dates and circumstances.
We have perhaps, never seen the original manuscript. We do not know fully why certain books were rejected, nor how we all read its first Hebrew and Greek. But it agrees with us. We can feel and act out its truths. As the root to the tree, so the bitt to the great heart of humanity. It satisfies our cravings, calms our fears and rejoices our hearts. Its adaptability to our wants and nature is a higher test of its truth than seeing fall from heaven. Why tinker with a clock when it keeps good time?

God has done much to draw us toward him. He sent the prophets and Jesus, his own substance, to make us his friends. Jesus, human though divine, living the life of a man, bound earth to heaven. Man is made God-like and his being lifted toward divine perfection when he looks at Christ. We know love and obey God through him. The teacher, to cause his pupils
to learn well, must she have a personal interest in them. Blackboard exercises, charts and books without personal supervision and explanation and individual magnetism, are worthless. So the great school teacher, our common father is ever with us to aid and instruct. His lectures appear in nature and illumined by his divine personality and present spirit, become clear and practical. As the teacher shares the tasks and troubles of his pupils, so God in Christ assisted us in toil and want and is still with us. As the teacher talks with the pupil and directs his course, so God guides and speaks sweet words of comfort and encouragement.

God lets us talk to him. Some scoff at prayer never having tried it. But though they oppose it in theory, they, too, pray when trouble comes. And how natural for us to begin that fellowship with God here which is to last always. As the
child carries its trials and wants to its father, as should we seek for wisdom and comfort from the father of mercies. Why not talk to God just as we do to earthly friends. We may carry our joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, pain and pleasures all to him. Whatever may be said about prayer changing nature's laws, it does effect our happiness, peace, energy and action.

God in nature, God in art,
God within the human heart,
Greatest teacher, father too,
Comforts, aids and speaks with you.

When we realize God's love and care for us, we will love him in return and therefore do his will. Some would substitute duty for love. "Do right because it is right, an illogical position, is their best impetus to right action. They make morality a reason for itself; religion makes God the reason and love to him the
motiv power. He has spoken to us, bless us, given us nature, the
bless and Christ. He made us to share his future glory. This grace
gives us heaven and we need only to accept the free gift. How
we love him, when we think of his undeserved presents! How we
are impelled to do his will. Love is our strongest passion, the mir-
al maker. Many a wayward child has been rescued by a
mother's love, and many a wicked sinner changed by the love
of Christ. A preacher, educated, scientific and logical, will do
little good unless he speaks of God's love, not stern morality,
duty and philosophy but love moves to action.

So a personal, revealed, sympathizing God, immortality, hero,
Christ, faith, prayer, love and its attendant morality will be the
foundation of the future religion. These doctrines are the sub-
stance of Christianity, and, as a whole, in no other system
so a practical reasonable, experimental Christianity will satisfy.
The future. Its progress, civilizing tendencies, naturalness, reasonableness, adaptability and missionary spirit, all point to its success. Other religions pose somewhat of the theory of Christianity, but little of the practice. Experiment is better than dogma. Christianity has made men better, happier, more active; nations more advanced, prosperous and strong. Other religions as partial, Christianity is complete. Other religions quailed and fell before Christianity's ever aggressive assault. What Buddhist, Mohammedan or pagan ever made converts in a Christian land.

Among the many different beliefs, which will triumph? Christianity has done most good and made most rapid progress. It is better better than infidelity because it satisfies our natures, points out origin, destiny and duty and inspires us to do right: better than no belief because it gives something to live and die for.

Although many different sects exist, they all agree in these facts.
dation principles and differ not in understanding and appreciation but in statement of beliefs. The imperfection of language and intellect has led to different creeds, which hearts feel to be the same.

A feeling of duty, devotion and inspiration is common to the active members of all churches.

What changes will occur in this religion and what is this progress of which we hear? It is simply a restatement of some non-essential beliefs. The useful doctrines, which we can experience, have always been understood in their true meaning. The same heart beliefs will produce the same morality. The only progress will be of greater extension and more perfect application. The theory of Christianity is perfectly settled in man's mind and heart and the nature of things as well as in the book. But men cannot accept it until they hear of it now feel it until they accept it. While there are some who do not accept it, can they
get the full benefits of its teaching. So there is progress but it
does not consist in making man reason nature, or science the
only religion.

First, Christianity will be more practical although Carlyle
thought that perhaps it would dissipate in metaphysics. But
speculation of philosophy do not satisfy us or do no good.
They end in doubt, disagreement or despair. Christianity will
grow because it can be applied to every day life and is for
all classes.

It will be purified of its wildliness. We shall think less
of this little half way station and more of our permanent
residence beyond. Through faith, heaven is much nearer. This state
will not cause suicide or inactivity, but will increase energy, ac-
tivity, enthusiasm.
The walls of separation will be torn down. Real religion opens hear
and natures and kinds men closes. People will not allow a mere statement to separate them when heart beliefs are the same. Class distinctions will disappear. A more complete faith in a common father and heaven will end strife, envy, malice and disagreement. Experiment will supplant dogma. Professor Living says that the useful, essential doctrines can be tested by experiment. Among many tenets, only those will live which our nature requires and whose utility trial proves. Such as the doctrines before discussed. That cannot be felt and lived will be wanting.

Conservatism will predominate. Too much liberality questions everything, decides nothing. Man without a positive belief is like a ship without an anchor. Better a wrong belief than none. It is better to hold to an old stand-by until a moderately long experience proves something better. Every nation must
hat its doubting age, but once past, they give up with reluc-
tance the certainty, peace and happiness of belief for the new
pens of doubt and despair.

There will be more trust in God and resignation than
will. We cannot afford to mourn and complain over what cannot
be helped. "Do our best and be resigned" is the motto.

Future Christianity will be reasonable, of course. Reason
will be subjective as well as objective. But it goes not fa-
ser. Many things must be received on nature, faith, feeling
and revelation. Our reason is finite and applies only to what is
of direct or indirect practical use to us.

Mind culture will be closely connected with Christiani-
ity, not to theorize or build up class distinctions but to make
men good symmetrical and God-like; for God is all-wise.

True education should be physical, mental, and religious. The chu
now values and supports it, but laments its lack of spiritual and moral culture. The intensely real of this world will not take the place of the invisible but more important realm of spirit. The man with faith in the invisible is often more practical and certainly more satisfied and happy. Education without religions and moral culture will only educate a race of doubters, egotists and criminals. Of for years, the mind is crowded with only one class of facts, no room or desire is left for others. The Catholic idea of religious state education, modified somewhat, will obtain in the future.

Dhar said nothing about the conflict between religion and science, because they occupy different spheres. The only conflict is with a few allegorical stories in the bible. Nature, man and the bible agree perfectly. Science as far as it benefits man, will advance with religion, but...
after vain theories wilt cease.

Christianity wilt sometime be universal. As men are essentially alike, there is no reason why they should not all be benefitted. They wilt all become religions when they hear and truly understand the doctrine. Men cannot have perfect fellowship and feel their brotherhood until they have a common religion.

We cannot wholly lift the veil which hides the future but the outcome wilt be for the best. God who rules above loves his creatures and regards their welfare. And, as the signs of the times point to a common religions faith as a necessity to prevent selfishness and lust, each one should try to hasten the time when men wilt cease to hate and contend, but be bound together by a common hope, faith and charity, wilt work for the common good and mutually respect and love each other.

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W. D. W. May 14th 1881.