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Religion's Ebb and Flow

NOT long ago a man expressed the belief that within the next twenty-five years an amazing religious revival would come in the United States that would make profound changes in the life of this country; that it was bound to come but if men would meet the changes as honorable men, "holding to what was good and eliminating the evil, they would not suffer. The man is a brewer and the last sentence evidently refers to the effects on business which such a revival would bring about. Now Dr. Elwood Worcester has published a book on "Religion and Life" and in a review of it we find this paragraph:

"Two generations ago Abraham Lincoln foretold the downfall of human slavery or the downfall of this Republic on the ground that a house so deeply divided against itself could not stand. Today the same prediction may be made of modern society and the Christian religion. They cannot continue to coexist and to enjoy free expression, because in so many respects one is the flagrant contradiction of the other."

The zeal of Dr. Worcester has evidently caused his steady judgment to waver a little. His comparison is far fetched. What Mr. Lincoln, or rather Mr. Seward, referred to was a moral question but it grew out of industrial and financial conditions in the south and even before the invention of the cotton gin the ablest statesmen of the south, including Mr. Jefferson, predicted that it would some day shatter the Union and precipitate all kinds of sorrows upon the nation, because when men grow up under an institution and are the beneficiaries of it, they are prone to find reasons to justify it, and to hold that men who do not approve are either ignorant of the facts, or envious of the results.

But religion is a native instinct in the hearts of most men and women. It is found in savage tribes, in one or another form; when men began to become enlightened, not knowing the true God they invented gods, to pray to when in distress, to thank when blessings were vouchsafed.

About three score years ago men generally revolted from any belief in a material hell, but they did not thereby reject religion. Rather they read their new testament with increasing interest, for they found in it that the creed the Master taught was merely to love God and their neighbor.

The great influx of wealth to the few, who were not strong enough to resist its intoxication, with the news of their exploits wired to the world every morning, has led many people to believe that religion is losing its hold upon the whole nation. But that does not follow. Sudden wealth has always been received that way, but the evidences are all around us that such wealth is not altogether bad. Never were bequests to churches, schools, hospitals and missions so great as now; about the only relieving picture that has shown out from Mexico during the past year has been the light from the Red Cross flag; it was the same in the Balkan war; never were Easter anthems sung with more fervor and in fuller

volume than they were last Sunday; never was the struggle to stamp out diseases and to make the race happier so great as at present; never were so many men and women striving to imitate the Master by going about doing good as right now.

We anticipate a great revival of religion soon, but the tyrannies and bigotry of the past will be eliminated. The ministers will beseech men to forsake what is wrong in their lives; not to escape a hell hereafter, but to put out the fires of the hell in their own hearts.

About twice in a century the waters in the lakes in the arid belt in the United States recede, in some lakes disappear; but they return in fuller volume a year or two later. Our nation often wanders away from the right, but it returns again, and hence we look for a great revival in religion with more love and charity than were ever manifested before.

Other causes are at work to further this expected movement. When geology becomes an established study, some of its devotees could not reconcile its revelations with the Scriptures. In his despair over the seeming contradictions between his scientific and his Bible studies, Hugh Miller killed himself. The thought apparently never came to him that, great as were his acquirements, it was possible that he had been exploring only the outcrop—so to speak—of science; that the deeper chambers would reveal a different formation than was visible on the surface—that, maybe, the days of Omnipotence were periods or ages to men.

We suspect—so limited is human vision—that had Galileo required any large sum to build his telescope, that he might find new wonders off in space; his friends would have called him an impractical dreamer to imagine that other worlds floated in space beyond human vision.

When Franklin called down the lightning, had some one whispered to him that what he was playing with in the clouds was really the moving spring of life on earth and in the heavens; that it would become man's obedient servant, so soon as man attained to the wisdom of how to call it to him and control it; even he, philosopher that he was, would have been startled.

When the farmer who saw clover grow luxuriantly on his soil, though that soil would not raise wheat, and asked the chemist to analyze the soil and discover what special property in it caused the clover to grow, and when, baffled, the chemist turned to the air and discovered that the clover drew the nitrogen from it which the wheat could not, but that the nitrogen not only caused the clover to grow, but at the same time enriched the soil; that even the air was loaded with blessings for man; then a new idea of the beneficence of God was realized, for all that had been planned ages before the first man appeared on this planet.

The invention of a little prism made clear how the rainbow was but rain drops falling through sunbeams, and then the light itself was divided into rays and their properties investigated and new mercies to man were made clear by the investigation, and when electricity was better understood it was found that the light it gave out

was the very same that made the sublime coronas of the sun and far away fixed stars.

The telephone revealed to man as much as did the telescope. It brought to men the voices of other men on a small wire. They came clear and distinct, no matter what storms may have raged around them while they came. The telescope brought new worlds into view; the other made clear that possibly all around us are voices and music that we may not hear, that possibly the morning stars are all attuned and make celestial music as on golden axles they roll on their mighty rounds.

Then came the wireless, and man at last understood that the air has invisible currents, even as has the deep sea, and following this came the instant conviction that those currents must have come from some source, and a new realization was born that a power omnipotent and divine had planned the universe, and included in it were a thousand agencies all intended for man's use and benefit when at last he should attain to the full dominion that had been promised him.

Those who formerly expressed the belief that science would in its fullness make clear that the religion which men cling to came of myths and superstitions, are already seeing that when science shall be more and more explored, it will be made clear that earth and air and all their elements are ministers of mercy to man; that such was the design that grew into form in the mind of God before the foundations of the world we live in were laid. When this shall be fully realized, the reverence for the Creator will be increased; man, while humbled before the majestic manifestations, will at the same time take on the thought that he must be more worthy and putting aside his vices and evil thoughts will seek to be more worthy of the splendid inheritance that is his; more and more will he strive to put aside his ignorance, more and more will he strain toward the divine light and all that was ever sweet and comforting and high in religion will be his.

After centuries of darkness and suffering had wrapped Europe round like a shroud, the Renaissance came with its sculpture, painting, architecture and divine music and the new world was found.

As To Mexico

IT seems the threatened war with Mexico was a flareback. It really looked threatening three days ago for Huerta has done several things of late which looked as though he wanted intervention.

Villa has won three important victories and while he is yet a long way from Huerta's capital, doubtless that chief has considered how volatile are the men around him and the danger of their betraying him to gain favor with the victorious bandit. It began to look as though he wanted a diversion to arouse and consolidate the mighty public opinion of his countrymen, or if that failed to surrender to the Americans rather than to Villa. So it looked serious for a little while and the more so because, doubtless, the near friends of President Wilson have pointed out to him that the New Jersey election was a significant straw, that under his pet free trade law exports are falling off, imports are increasing, prices are not falling, and despite the clamor business is not in good form anywhere in the