

**THE SUBSTANCE OF
FAITH ALLIED
WITH SCIENCE**

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The substance of faith allied with science by Sir Oliver Lodge

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SIR OLIVER LODGE

**THE SUBSTANCE OF
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Relig.

THE SUBSTANCE OF FAITH

ALLIED WITH SCIENCE

A CATECHISM FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

BY

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Gloriam quaesivit scientiarum, invenit Dei.

PREFACE

EVERYONE who has to do with children at the present day, directly or indirectly, must in some form or another have felt the difficulty of instructing them in the details of religious faith, without leaving them open to the assaults of doubt hereafter, when they encounter the results of scientific inquiry.

Sometimes the old truths and the new truths seem to conflict; and though everyone must be aware that such internecine warfare between truths can be an appearance only, the reconciliation is not easily perceived: nor is the task simplified by the hostile attitude adopted towards each other by some of the upholders of orthodox Christianity.

It is sometimes said to be impossible for a teacher to educate a class subject to compulsory attendance, in a spirit of wealth, peace, and godliness, without infringing the legitimate demands of somebody; but the difficulty is caused chiefly by sectarian animosity, which may take a variety of forms.

These religious and educational disputes would be of small consequence, and might even be stimulating

to thought and fervour, were it not that one danger is imminent:—a danger lest the nation, in despair of a happier settlement, should consent to a system of *compulsory* secularism; and forbid, in the public part of the curriculum of elementary schools, not only any form of worship, but any mention of a Supreme Being, and any quotation from the literature left us by the Saints, Apostles, Prophets, of all ages.

If so excentric a negation is brought about by the warfare of denominations, they will surely all regard it as a lamentable result.

Meanwhile, in the hope and belief that the great bulk of the teachers of this country are eager and anxious to do their duty, and lead the children committed to their care along the ways of righteousness,—being deterred therefrom in some cases only by the difficulty of following out their ideals amid the turmoil of voices, and in other cases by their uncertainty of how far the "old paths" can still be pursued in the light of modern knowledge,—I have attempted the task of formulating the fundamentals, or substance,¹ of religious faith in terms of Divine Immanence,² in such a way as to assimilate sufficiently all the results of existing knowledge, and still to be in harmony with the teachings of the poets and inspired writers of all ages. The state-

¹ "By Substance I understand that which exists in and by itself." (Spinoza.)

² "We may say much, yet not attain; and the sum of our words is, He is all." (Ecclesiasticus xliii. 27.)

ment is intended to deny nothing which can reasonably be held by any specific Denomination, and it seeks to affirm nothing but what is consistent with universal Christian experience.

Our knowledge of the Christian religion is admittedly derived from information verbally communicated, and from documents; and, in the interpretation of these sources, mistakes have been made. At one time, not long ago, it was the duty of serious students of all kinds to point out some of these mistakes, wherever they ran counter to sense and knowledge. That cleaning and sweetening work has been done vigorously, and done well: at the present time comparatively little sweeping remains to be done, save in holes and corners: most of the lost simplicity has now been found. A positive or constructive statement of religious doctrine, not indeed deduced from present knowledge, but in harmony with all that bears upon the subject, is now more useful. Such a statement might be called *New Light on Old Paths*; for the "old paths" remain, and are more brightly illuminated than ever: even the old Genesis story of man's early experience shines out as a brilliant inspiration. Truth always grows in light and beauty the more it is uncovered.

There are still people who endeavour to deny or disbelieve the discoveries of science. They are setting themselves athwart the stream, and trying