

**THOUGHTS ON THE
ORIGINAL UNITY OF
THE HUMAN RACE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649721139

Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race by Charles Caldwell

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CHARLES CALDWELL

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BY
CHARLES CALDWELL, M. D.

NEW-YORK:
E. BLISS, 128 BROADWAY.

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Robert J. Betts
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TO THE PUBLIC.

A disbelief in the hypothesis of the original unity of man, or even a doubt respecting it, has been hitherto identified, in public opinion, with a disbelief of the christian religion. Hence those writers who have opposed that hypothesis have been pronounced infidels. Whether the latter imputation be true or not, the sentiment accompanying it is certainly unfounded. If the individuals referred to were unbelievers, their infidelity was neither the cause, the effect, nor the indispensable concomitant of their opinion respecting the origin of man. Between a doubt whether all the races of men are descendants of a single pair, or even a conviction that they are not so, and unfriendliness to christianity, there is no necessary connexion. The one sentiment not only may, but actually does, exist without the other. How indeed can the case be otherwise? The sentiments belong to different departments of knowledge. Whether all men sprang from the same primitive

root, is a question pertaining exclusively to natural science, and concerns chiefly philosophers, and men of general knowledge. But far different are the nature and being of the other. The inquiry, whether religion be a reality of paramount importance, or a delusion practised by the few or the many, belongs to moral science, and concern the whole human race. As well may opinions in chemistry, mathematics, or astronomy, be pronounced unfriendly to christianity, as that which denies the unity of mankind.

No person thoroughly acquainted with human nature, and with the history and progress of civil society, can doubt, for a moment, the reality of religion. Nor can he be blind to its important bearing on the affairs of this world, were those of another even left out of the question. An enemy to religion, therefore, whatever may be his views and feelings on other subjects, is virtually a foe not only to man individually, but to the whole community. Were every one like himself, earth would be a moral chaos, the most revolting and destructive elements of which would be the human race.

A sentiment of religion enters, as an essential ingredient, into the constitution of man. It is as much a part of his moral nature, as a leg or an arm is of his organic. Deprive him of it, and he would be

rendered monstrous. Like the loss of any other indispensable portion of himself, the mutilation would unfit him to play his part in the drama of life. The sentiment of religion is adapted to the relation which man bears to his God, if it is not the immediate growth of it. It constitutes, therefore, an essential element of the law of his being. Without it, human nature would be an anomaly in creation, and an outcast from the scheme of benevolence and wisdom, which embraces every thing else.

The author of the following dissertation, then sincerely trusts that no religious scruples will interpose to prevent it from receiving a candid perusal. It will not be denied that the subject of it is curious and highly interesting; and the disclosure and establishment of truth is the only object for which it was written. But truth can never prove unfriendly to sound religion. On the contrary, it is auxiliary. The most dangerous enemies of religion are those persons who would make it an instrument to trammel the human intellect, and arrest the progress of knowledge, by preventing free and general discussion. Every new truth may be made to minister to religious feeling, by the light it throws on the beautiful and beneficent arrangement of nature, disclosing thus its aptitudes and harmonies, and by awakening

fresh gratitude to the "Giver of all good" for his bestowing the power and means to discover it.

Is any one inclined to say, that the theory which maintains that there are different species of men, some of them inferior to others, is calculated to awaken and foster, in the superior species, sentiments of pride, injustice, and unkindness toward those that are below them? The author replies, that he is not answerable for consequences, provided his representation of nature be correct. And if not correct, let error be shown, and he will instantly renounce it. If it be not wrong in the Deity to frame some species of men inferior to others, it cannot be wrong in him to declare and endeavour to prove it. The highest privilege of man is to examine the works of God, and his brightest glory to interpret them truly.

But the author denies that the theory referred to has the slightest tendency to harden, pervert, or, in any way deteriorate the feelings of enlightened man. It does not produce, in the superior, either injustice or cruelty toward the inferior, or induce him to inflict on him injury or wrong. The reverse of this is nearer being true. Inferior beings become objects of kindness, *because* they are inferior. That this is the case among the cultivated and the generous will not be denied. Man protects and cherishes woman, because she is feeble, and looks to him for protection.

Render her his equal and rival, and he will leave her to protect herself. It is only among the savage and the uncultivated that inferiority and feebleness invite aggression and suffer wrong. It is there alone that woman and other beings unable to cope with man are habitually degraded, and made to feel their weakness as an evil. And it is not with any reference to the principles and rules of action which prevail in such a state of society, that discussions like the present are engaged in. They are intended for those who are fitted by education for a more liberal and elevated sphere of action and thought.

It is not true, then, that the theory contended for favours injustice, oppression, and wrong, inflicted by the higher races of men on the lower. It gives no countenance, as it has been accused of doing, to cruelty or tyranny practised towards the Africans, or the aborigines of our country. Each race is entitled alike to all the rights it is fitted to enjoy. But each race is neither qualified, nor can ever become so, to enjoy and turn to proper account precisely the same rights, especially in the same degree, and has not therefore the same claim to all of them. The Caucasians are not justified in either enslaving the Africans or destroying the Indians, merely because their superiority in intellect and war enables them to do so. Such practices are an abuse of power; and where