

**RELIGION,
AGNOSTICISM
AND EDUCATION**

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Religion, agnosticism and education by J. L. Spalding

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RELIGION, AGNOSTICISM AND EDUCATION

BY

J. L. SPALDING

Bishop of Georgia



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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. RELIGION	7
II. AGNOSTICISM	58
III. AGNOSTICISM (<i>Continued</i>)	101
IV. GOD IN THE CONSTITUTION — A REPLY TO COLONEL INGERSOLL	126
V. EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF RELI- GION	147
VI. PROGRESS IN EDUCATION	193
VII. THE VICTORY OF LOVE	237

RELIGION, AGNOSTICISM, AND EDUCATION.



I.

RELIGION.

WHAT we call matter is known to us only when it has been sublimated in the soul's alembic, and so the visible universe is a symbol of the Infinite Spirit. Reason springs from conscious communion with the Eternal, the Absolute, the Perfect. Its roots are in the real and permanent, as distinguished from the apparent and transitory. Where there is no self-consciousness there is no truth, no goodness, no beauty. Self-consciousness is born of the union of subject and object. When we view the external world what we perceive is the impressions it makes on us. The self, then, being at once subject and object, grows in power and dignity in proportion to the worth of the things it habitually contemplates, and to the intimacy and completeness of its communion with them. Hence the value of life for each one is deter-

8 *RELIGION, AGNOSTICISM, EDUCATION.*

mined by the self, which makes him what he is; and the self is fed and fashioned by what he ponders, admires, loves, and does. If he lives for what is material merely, he has no true self, since the self is essentially spiritual. If he lives subservient to instinct and appetite he has but an animal, an apparent self. The element of the true self is moral freedom, which is born of obedience to reason and conscience, which exists for those alone who live in conscious communion with the Eternal Creative Spirit. When we think God we think ourselves in and with Him; are made conscious of the self as formed and nourished by the ideas of absolute truth, goodness, and beauty. Our first and deepest certainty is of the existence of this self, springing from the communion of the soul with God. We can know only what is akin to ourselves. Hence our knowledge is necessarily anthropomorphic; and our progress is a process of self-realization and of self-revelation. If we could attain perfection, we should find ourselves at one with God and whatever He creates. Were it possible to conceive a mode of being higher than the personal, it would be necessary to ascribe it to God, who is a person, but in a way infinitely above anything we can know. He transcends man so unimaginably, that, though we must say we are like Him, it seems little