

**ELEMENTS OF
RELIGION AND
RELIGIOUS TEACHING**

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Elements of Religion and Religious Teaching by E. T. Campagnac

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BY

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE last century has witnessed the loosening of many bonds, the undoing of many ties, the constraint of which men once accepted cheerfully, or without question or at least without complaint. Conventions of thought, of speech, of behaviour, which prevailed not long ago, have lost their force; relationships, which were lately definite and clearly understood, have been dissolved. The result of this tendency, of these changes, has been twofold; it has given a new liberty, and has quickened the desire for a liberty still wider; it has produced a new disorder, an unexampled chaos, and threatens us with the disintegration of society.

To-day men talk of "Reconstruction," of "Educational Reconstruction," and fastidious persons who dislike, must yet hear and even use, the language of their generation. But they may also ask what this language means. Does "reconstruction" mean putting together again the parts of a broken thing, the service which

a carpenter might render to a shattered cupboard, or a toy-maker to the *disjecta membra* of a favourite, but hard-used, doll? Or does it mean re-arrangement, a novel disposition of old materials for some fresh purpose? A handy man can make a linen-press into a book-case, or a kennel into a rabbit-hutch, to gratify his altered tastes. Or does it mean the importation of a new idea? An architect may, for better or for worse, "reconstruct" an ancient cottage or a church; not simply using over again the original materials, but perhaps discarding some of them, and adding new, and subduing new and old to an original, or an ancient conception, long-forgotten and now revived. It is unfortunate that those who have most freely spoken of reconstruction have not been generous in explanation, but on the contrary have withheld from the world the definition which would have made their speech intelligible.

Are we, when the war is over, simply to restore our educational system, disturbed and disarranged by the troubles of these times, to its former condition? Probably there are very few people who entertain such a purpose; and

it is enough to say that it cannot, by whomsoever entertained, be fulfilled. But there are many who want a re-arrangement; a new emphasis here or there; they will turn back to front, and inside out; they will have "*things*" and not *books*; "*practical*" work and not *ideas*; or again they will give to what they call "*science*" the prominence which they believe has been hitherto given to what they cannot quite easily bring themselves to call the "*humanities*"; or again they are for improving the status and increasing the salaries of teachers; or for lengthening the period of schooling, or for making the Universities as free as the Public Elementary Schools. These are proposals for re-arrangement, and they may be good, some or all of them.

But only upon a condition. These things and others which have been, or may be, proposed will be good only if they become parts of a coherent system, and are set in their proper places within it by a governing, an overmastering principle, by a pervasive and unifying idea. Particular obligations may be undone, without loss or with positive benefit

for us; but if, with the cancelling of particular obligations, the sense of obligation is dulled and destroyed, the changes through which we have passed and are yet passing, will have brought us no advantage, but sheer disaster.

What then, we must inquire, is to preserve, and even to strengthen for us the sense of obligation, the feeling of society, the consciousness of relationships? For without this sense, this feeling, this consciousness a national life cannot be maintained, and a national education cannot be established.

The idea of obligation, and especially as expressed in the subjection of the individual to the State, is not unnaturally distasteful to us at the present moment, when we have before our eyes the spectacle of a State which seems to have despoiled its members of their humanity, and has become an idol to ignorance and an instrument to cruel aggression.

But the idea may still take for itself another form, already drawn in a Divine allegory, already attempted by men who have yielded to its argument and its charm. It may take the form of a "Kingdom of Heaven" or of a