

**LAST ESSAYS ON
CHURCH
AND RELIGION**

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Last Essays on Church and Religion by Matthew Arnold

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MATTHEW ARNOLD

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CHURCH
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

LITERATURE AND DOGMA. AN
ESSAY TOWARDS A BETTER APPRE-
HENSION OF THE BIBLE. "

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THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION,
CHOSEN FROM THE WRITINGS OF
MATTHEW ARNOLD. EDITED BY
LEONARD HUXLEY.

LAST ESSAYS
ON
CHURCH AND RELIGION

Qu'on fonde la foi profonde!

LAST ESSAYS ON
CHURCH AND RELIGION

By MATTHEW ARNOLD

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PREFACE.

09-4-29
The present volume closes the series of my attempts to deal directly with questions concerning religion and the Church. Indirectly such questions must often, in all serious literary work, present themselves; but in this volume I make them my direct object for the last time. Assuredly it was not for my own pleasure that I entered upon them at first, and it is with anything but reluctance that I now part from them. Neither can I be ignorant what offence my handling of them has given to many whose good-will I value, and with what relief they will learn that the handling is now to cease. Personal considerations, however, ought not in a matter like this to bear sway; and they have not, in fact, determined me to bring to an end the work which I had been pursuing. But the thing which I proposed to myself to do has, so far as my powers enabled me to do it, been done. What I wished to say has been said. And in returning to devote to literature, more strictly so-called, what remains to me of life and strength and leisure, I am returning, after all, to a field where work of the most important kind has now to be done, though indirectly, for religion. I am persuaded that the transformation of religion, which is essential for its perpetuance, can be accomplished

only by carrying the qualities of flexibility, perceptiveness, and judgment, which are the best fruits of letters, to whole classes of the community which now know next to nothing of them, and by procuring the application of those qualities to matters where they are never applied now.

A survey of the forms and tendencies which religion exhibits at the present day in England has been made lately by a man of genius, energy, and sympathy,—Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Gladstone seems disposed to fix as the test of value, for those several forms, their greater or lesser adaptedness to the mind of masses of our people. It may be admitted that religion ought to be capable of reaching the mind of masses of men. It may be admitted that a religion not plain and simple, a religion of abstractions and intellectual refinements, cannot influence masses of men. But it is an error to imagine that the mind of our masses, or even the mind of our religious world, is something which may remain just as it now is, and that religion will have to adapt itself to that mind just as it now is. At least as much change is required, and will have to take place, in that mind as in religion. Gross of perception and materialising that mind is, at present, still disposed to be. Yet at the same time it is undeniable that the old anthropomorphic and miraculous religion, suited in many respects to such a mind, no longer reaches and rules it as it once did. A check and disturbance to religion thence arises. But let us impute the disturbance to the right cause. It is not to be imputed merely to the inadequacy of the old materialising religion, and to be remedied by giving to this religion a form still materialising, but more acceptable. It is to be imputed, in at least an equal degree,