

THE RELIGION OF THE WORLD

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The religion of the world by H. Stone Leigh

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"Firmissimum hoc offerri videtur, cur deus esse credamus, quod nulla gens tam fera, nemo omnium tam sit inhumana, cujus mentem non inbuerit deorum opinio. Multi de diis prava sentiunt: id enim vitioso more effici solet: omnes tamen esse vim et naturam divinam arbitrantur. Nec vere id collocatio hominum, aut consensus efficit, non instituta opinio est confirmata, non legibus. Omni autem in re consensio omnium gentium, lex naturae putanda est."—Cicero, *Tuscul.* lib. i.



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TAYLOR AND CO., PRINTERS,
LITTLE QUENEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

PREFACE.



SOME apology is necessary for the pretentious title I have appended to a very slight and imperfect sketch of a science which, treated by hands equal to the task, would have expanded into volumes. But as my end was the pointing out in a simple and popular manner that the religion of England is not the only religion in the world; that other religions are not so elevated as the religion of England only because the people that generate them are not so civilized, but, that on the very account of their fitness for those peoples, they deserve a consideration at our hands when we treat of them that an extraneous religion could not command because it is extraneous,—this being my end I could find no title which more aptly and justly indicated it than the title I have chosen. And although as Prof. Max Müller very justly observes,

our own religion, like our own tongue, must ever be dearest to us and most spontaneous in us, still if we would act up to one of the highest Christian precepts, we should be very tender in our treatment of the religion of our neighbours when we recollect that it is as dear to them as ours is to us, and as are both, may be, in the eyes of that great Judge and dear Father whom we each and all in our different ways strive to seek, "lest haply we may feel after Him and find Him." There are some among us, perhaps, who are dissatisfied with the system of revelation in which they are indoctrinated, when they look around them and consider how many millions of human creatures have passed into eternity without that system, and how many more millions are daily and hourly passing away without it now. Seeing that they cannot believe Him who is Justice to be tacitly permitting injustice by favouring the few to the exclusion of the many, they may even be inclined to question the existence of that Just One altogether, or if they allow His entity, they must possess but a tarnished and deformed conception of Him, instead of the perfect image of pure justice, which indeed He is.

To such as these I would fain act as a primer, indicating the alphabet of a science which has been treated scientifically by many great men, but which, for want of such a primer, too many less-advanced students hardly know to exist: students who are sufficiently thoughtful to question, but not sufficiently thoughtful to answer, many dogmas which are great stumbling-blocks in all religions claiming revelation, foremost of which stumbling-blocks is the very matter of revelation itself. But to those who are satisfied with their own position as possessing a theology highly favoured of God, and are not at the same time dissatisfied with the position of their fellow-creatures whom God permits to be without that theology, I have not a word to say. He who is easy in his church, who bestows his Sunday alms towards the conversion of the heathen, and trembles not at the thought of his fellow-men with damnation hanging over their heads because God chose them to be ignorant, or—as the more charitable put it—living in darkness for a doubtful and gloomy future, which, if it be indeed without pain shall be equally without pleasure,—such as he can pass these pages by

without a glance, for they are unnecessary to him. They address themselves to the quieting of scruples which he has never felt, and to the answering of questions which he has never put; while they have no desire to disturb a confidence which cannot be misplaced as long as it is honest.

I cannot conclude without acknowledging the debt which this little pamphlet owes to Prof. Max Müller. His masterly introduction to the 'Chips from a German Workshop' gave rise to a line of thought which, later, sought utterance in these pages, and which, unworthy though they be of his genius and his knowledge, are yet, I trust, a step in that direction of universal acknowledgment of God which it is always the tenor of his works to advance. And poor though the means may be—and indeed are,—still the end is a high and a noble one, noble as regards God, because it seeks for and recognizes His presence in all ages and among all men; noble as regards humanity, because it would fain exalt all human creatures to God; and it is only the hope that that end may justify and exonerate these means, which emboldens me to commend this imperfect sketch to those who