

**RELIGIO
POETÆ ETC.**

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Religio Poetæ Etc. by Coventry Patmore

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BY

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UNIFORM EDITION

LONDON

GEORGE BELL AND SONS

1907

MND

PREFACE

"SOME of these Essays have already appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* or elsewhere."

In the original issue the author had noted that "thoughts had sometimes been repeated, almost in the same words." In the rearrangement here adopted no attempt has been made to obviate this repetition, which may be even more conspicuous than in the original order; but, "as these thoughts are mostly unfamiliar and significant, readers will be none the worse for encountering them twice or even thrice."

Shortly before his death, Mr. Patmore had suggested a rearrangement for a new issue,

which has been adopted and completed for this edition. A few corrections and omissions have also been made, the greater number of which were either marked or sanctioned by the author himself. The alterations not actually his own are few and of small importance.

Some obvious mistakes in matters of fact, and some errors of punctuation, have been corrected; here and there a word has been transposed where the original order was imperfect; and one or two passages which seemed to have been written for an immediate purpose rather than for more permanent effect have been omitted.

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I

RELIGIO POETÆ

NO one, probably, has ever found his life permanently affected by any truth whereof he has been unable to obtain a *real apprehension*, which, as I have elsewhere shown, is quite a different thing from *real comprehension*. Intellectual assent to truths of faith, founded on what the reason regards as sufficient authority for, at least, experimental assent, must, of course, precede real apprehension of them, as also must action, in a sort experimental, on faith of truths so assented to; but such faith and action have little effective life, and are likely soon to cease, or to become mere formalities, unless they produce some degree of vital *knowledge* or *perception*. I do not see what is to become of popular Religion, parodied and discredited as Christianity is by the "Religions" of Atheists, Moralists, Formalists, Philan-

thropists, Scientists, and Sentimentalists, unless there can be infused into it some increased longing and capacity for real apprehension.

Coleridge, at one time, proposed to write a "Religio Poetæ," with the view, I suppose, of correcting the imperceptive character of modern faith. The Poet is, *par excellence*, the *perceiver*, nothing having any interest for him, unless he can, as it were, see and touch it with the spiritual senses, with which he is pre-eminently endowed. The Saints, indeed, seem, for the most part, to have had these senses greatly developed by their holiness and their habitual suppression of the corporeal senses. But, as a rule, they do not speak, perhaps from the fear of being too implicitly believed; or, if they do, they are careful

"To make Truth look as near a lie
As can comport with her divinity,"

in order to adapt it to the public capacity. But the Poet has this advantage, that none, save the few whose ears are opened to the teaching which would be ridiculed or profaned to their own destruction by the many, will think that he is in earnest, or that his flights into regions of perception, in which they can perceive nothing, are other than flights of fancy. He occupies a quite peculiar position—somewhere between that of a