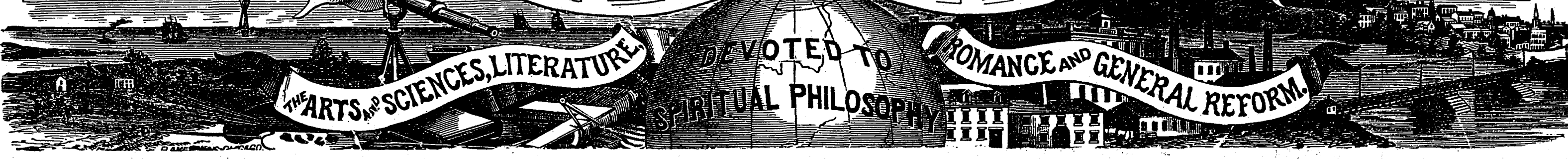


# RELIGIO PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNAL



Truth wears no mask, bows at no human shrine, seeks neither place nor applause: she only asks a hearing.

VOL. XLVII.

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No. 6

Readers of the JOURNAL are especially requested to send in items of news. Don't say "I can't write for the press." Send the facts, make plain what you want to say, and "cut it short." All such communications will be properly arranged for publication by the Editors. Notices of Meetings, information concerning the organization of new Societies or the condition of old ones; movements of lecturers and mediums, interesting incidents of spirit communion, and well authenticated accounts of spirit phenomena are always in place and will be published as soon as possible.

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### A NEEDED REVIVAL.

A Sermon by Reed Stuart at the First Congregational Unitarian Church at Detroit, Mich.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord. Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings; cease to do evil; learn to do well.—Isaiah.

These are the words of one who easily ranks as the greatest prophet of Judea, in those centuries lying beyond the arrival of Jesus. It is difficult, indeed, in any era of human history to find one capable of more sublime conceptions than this son of Amos. His soul was a harp of many tones. There is the deep tone of doom,—the muttering of distant thunder presaging the coming storm which was about to break upon his nation for its lack of righteousness. There is a plaintive, minor tone, at times, as he recounts the sorrows and misfortunes which are settling, like a dark cloud, upon his countrymen. There are loud tones of denunciation against Egypt and Tyre, Moab and Damascus; against all those cities and nations which were then full of a certain riotous splendor, but which have long since passed away from the fair face of the earth and are now only as the memory of a dream. At other times he hymns to joyous strains, and his message is a hymn of gladness. He was a herald of impending doom; he was, also, a prophet of unbounded hope. His voices of the night were promises of the dawn.

The times upon which his life had fallen were evil. From king to peasant the nation had turned away from the pursuit of righteousness. The forms of the ancient religion were observed, but their meaning had all been lost. Outward conformity to the appointments of religion was substituted for the inward spirit. Into the midst of this defection this earnest man came. He saw the uselessness of all religious rites, and how empty they were in transforming a life into the inner fullness of a nation. He saw the multitude of their sacrifices,—fasts and fasts, new moons and sabbath days without number, but with such things when they declare that God hates such things when they have lost their power to influence life.

Religion does not consist in these things, but in the practice of actual virtue. If they have been made to take the place of actual righteousness, then they have become the enemy of religion; and the cause of religion will be better served by a total neglect of them. He represents God as saying that their incoherence is an abomination; the sabbaths, the solemn assemblies, the holy days are an annoyance to him. "When ye spread forth your hands I will hide my eyes; when ye make many prayers I will not hear, because your hands are full of blood. Put away your evil doing; learn to do well; seek justice; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless.

Conditions are constantly repeated in the flowing course of events. The scenes upon which that prophet looked have been repeated many times since then. He was a revivalist,—one who had undertaken to bring back to life a church which seemed to be dying, or already dead. But churches are always liable to forget the high objects for which they were formed; their souls forsake them, and leave them helpless and forlorn,—unlovely remains of their original selves. Hence there is always need of revivals,—the awakening of institutions out of the death-like slumber which has settled over them. True evangelists,—those earnest men who carry a better message, a more energizing truth—must always be seen coming to the earth.

That religion should be subject to decline

and risings is what might reasonably be expected. All nature abounds in such phenomena. Rhythm, everywhere. The currents of air, the motions of the waves and tides, the tremors of the northern lights, the waving of a flag, the flutter of a leaf, the beating of the heart, the course of the planets, and the immense periods of geological history are all illustrations of the law of undulating, or rhythmic force. The course of human life upon the earth manifests the same tendency. The stream of civilization has not always been of equal depth. It has shown the effect of rains and droughts. Nor has it flowed in a right line; it has been a very crooked stream, and has followed the path of least resistance.

Thinking of the art of the world, a series of defections and revivals appear. Whether one thinks of painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, it is so. The mind seems to go in a given direction until it reaches a degree of excellence which is, for the time, its limit. It becomes stationary; then a period of decadence sets in. There will be many years of copying, imitation of certain forms growing weaker and weaker; when, suddenly, there will be an awakening, often in some unexpected quarter of the earth. New, original minds will appear, which, discarding the prevalent patterns and ideas, bend themselves to a study of the laws underlying all beauty and truth; and, as a result, a new world of the beautiful and the true will rise upon the ruins of the old.

Philosophy is another instance of the same thing. It predominates; then it declines; and, after a time, it revives. Politics shows an undulating surface. First there is a liberal, progressive policy, followed by a conservative, retrogressive period. Every life is an arena upon which the same scenes are displayed. The ebb and flow of the waves of the sea. First there is vivacity; then depression. One day thought comes in floods; another day the channels of the mind are dry and dusty. Now, work is a source of unending gladness; now, there is nothing so sweet as idleness. Here is action, reaction; supply, demand; flow, ebb; faith, denial; yea, nay, life, death; soul, body, each contending for the mastery:

"Eterne alternation  
Now follows, now flies  
Out under pain, pleasure,  
Under pleasure pain lies,  
Out of sleeping a waking  
Out of waking a sleep;  
Life, death overtaking,  
Deep underneath deep."

Finding so broad a base to support the theory that the movement of things is not along a level plain, room may be easily found to uphold the idea that religion has its natural periods of exaltation and depression. Nor is the conclusion dependent upon analogy, or the fitness of things for its support. What the philosophers, after comparing it with other things, would say is most probably true,—the historian would affirm is actually true,—that religion has not been a constant quantity in the world. There have been generations of indifference, or at best only the attempt to imitate, by some soulless round of customary worship, the noble, energizing, spiritual life of previous generations, and religion seemed to be slowly sinking into that tomb from which there can be no possible resurrection. Then, suddenly, it would throw off its old habits which held it like the ban of death; it would feel its old strength returning, and would stand forth as the avenger of wrong and the friend of goodness. The generation would appear with new aims and new courage. The spiritual virtues are grasped with the same earnestness that the facts of time and sense had been grasped. Then the impossible is accomplished; the invincible is conquered. To sacrifice, to do, to suffer, to become the agents of the highest and, without questioning, to go whither it commands, is deemed a sufficient end of existence. Then the present suffices. All past revelations are eclipsed by the glory that fills the present hour into which all the wonder and miracle of the sky have been poured.

In many times and in many forms have these revivals appeared. They come from the same source, but their shape is determined by circumstances, as the clouds around a sunset are created always by the same forces, but come with changing forms and ever varying hues. The memory easily recalls many such awakenings of the soul, and of society, in the past; a voice as of marvelous strength and command saying, "Awake, thou that sleepest; lo! the day is at hand, the time for thought and work and holy living" has often come, breaking the stillness and arousing all who slumbered in sin to begin life anew. The coming of Christianity itself was such a trumpet call. We recall the three thousand who were added to that movement in one day. The picture of the trembling Felix rises before us as Paul utters his burning words. The amazement of the elegant Pagan statesmen and orators appears when they saw the temples of Jupiter deserted and the new religion springing up everywhere, in the palace of the Caesars and the humble home of the slaves. We may see Savonarola appearing with his hot indignation against the vices of his day.

Later came Whitfield with his awful earnestness, with a voice which could be heard in the open air by twenty thousand people; with a faith unchecked by a single doubt; with a love for mankind which knew no limit, he became a kind of spiritual storm sweeping over England and America which nothing could resist. His converts were numbered by the thousand. By his persuasive eloquence the skeptic was made ashamed of his doubts.

At his command the miser unloosed his purse strings. His words struck the glass from the hand of the drunkard and led the libertine into paths of purity. The age into which he had come was irreligious, in the extreme. The church was formal and worldly. A Bishop said that religion had lost its hold upon the minds of the people of England. It was no better in America. But after this evangelist had moved about among the people for a few years, the whole scene was changed. Franklin gives this account of the results of his work in Philadelphia. "It was wonderful to see the changes made in our inhabitants. From being indifferent about religion it seemed as if all the world were glowing in piety."

Thus all the past shows traces of these moral disturbances, indications that some extraordinary forces have been present.

An examination of these upheavals in the past will show that while they have come in many forms, in substance they are one. Felix and George Fox were separated from each other by many hundreds of years,—an impassable gulf rolled between them; but they both trod at the same things—the thought that the pure in heart are blessed and all others unblessed.

They were no farther separated by time than they were in quality of their lives. The one was an elegant courtier, the other a humble shoemaker; the one a trifler the other a saint. But the same power that briefly took possession of the one and made him tremble while it stayed took permanent possession of the other and became the guide of his life.

In a world in which religion has become mere conformity to the established ritual, in which traditional belief takes the place of right doing, a revival always signifies an appeal to the incorruptible moral sentiment. Isaiah ridiculed the religious observances of his countrymen because they were separated from actual goodness. Obedience to the moral law, not sacrifice was the demand of God. When John came out of the wilderness his first words were "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When Christ came he demanded righteousness above that of mere orthodox conformity to the inherited doctrines and customs. Paul's thrilling address was of righteousness and temperance.

Christyosom, the golden mouthed, made the saying, "There is nothing sad but sin," the theme of his eloquent denunciations against the vices of his day; and so great was his power that he could draw the crowds from the theater and the circus to hear him. When Savonarola appeared, later in the world, he took up the same theme. The wrath of Luther was awakened by the sin of Rome; its first blasts were directed against indulgences—a religion which did not include the practice of goodness.

Thus if the whole catalogue of those who have stirred society to its depths were called, it would be seen that they all had a commanding purpose in view. They were not great theologians, but they were great lovers of righteousness. They were not skilled in drawing the line between predestination and foreknowledge; nor in defining the personality of God; nor in tracing the line of apostolic succession. They all soon passed beyond the boundaries of the sects. Their church was the world of mankind. Called by many names at heart they were all one—one in their stormy antagonism to sin; one in their love of reality; one in their faith in virtue to save the soul. Widely separated, appearing over the horizon at great intervals, each with an excellence peculiarly his own, they have, one by one, taken their place in the glorious constellation of those of whom it is said, "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever."

It is as true in morals as in nature that the stream will rise no higher than its fountain. The miller borrows his power from a source higher than his wheel. The same law should hold good in every church. Its ideal must be above it. It must receive its energy from a high motive. Organization cannot supply the lack of this downward streaming power. Undertaking to remodel society, this plain law has been too much neglected by the church. Its machinery seems to be complete; it is well furnished with officers; it has a multitude of boards and bureaus and agencies; of pastors, evangelists, bishops, doctors of divinity there seems to be no lack. But the kind of work it was built to do is not done. There is no current of enthusiasm, no stream of holy passion streaming down upon it from the heights of the moral sentiment.

What has been the chief business of the church organizations ever since we can remember? Self perpetuation. It has consumed all its energy defending itself. It has opposed society because its conclusions were fatal to inherited dogma. Synods and councils have reaffirmed their confidence in the establishment, and have shrieked their protest against every attempt to change it. They have built their defenses higher and higher; and their crowning satisfaction is reached when they are able to discover a plan by which they can in safety maintain some time honored absurdity for another term of years. Meanwhile it is currently reported that in order to perpetuate itself it encourages mental insincerity. It is a matter of common fame that its members have a belief different from that which they are expected to hold. They do not believe their doctrines as much as they pretend to believe them. It is said that many of the accredited teachers in these churches have private

views upon many of the doctrines which they do not utter in public. There is a lack of the courage of conviction. Moral infidelities pass unrebuked. Conformity has been made a cardinal virtue. Religion has been made a public performance rather than the private attitude of the spirit toward God and man. The outward performance is substituted for the inward inspiration. To be in good and regular standing in some organization has been made of more importance than true living. Not christian character, but doctrinal conformity has been made the ground of salvation. Wrong doing does not disqualify one for taking an active part in all public expressions of religion. The moral sight has become dim. The great end for which the church stands has been lost sight of. It is no more religious. It stands upon expediency, not upon virtue. It is commercial, it is social, it is respectable; but religious it is not. Its energy is not divine; it is not poured into it from above. It is not built upon the stream which swept through the soul of Isaiah, of Paul, of Wesley,—that cleansing current on one bank of which truth on the other, righteousness upspring;—those noble trees bearing all manner of fruit and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

Then a revival of true religion, there is nothing our age needs more. For many years there has been none. There have been many sporadic attempts, within the last quarter of a century, to have made to order what are called revivals of religion. Each winter effuses such an attempt. But all such efforts have failed, and must fail in the nature of the case. There have appeared many so called revivalists, some of whom are earnest and devoted men, and whose zeal is balanced by their good sense. But many more have appeared who have taken up revivalism as a business, whose main object consists in an unlimited amount of natural, or artificial eccentricity and bad grammar. It may be there are those in the community who can better understand the plan of salvation when it is stated in bad English.

Slang may be a means of grace to some. If so, one may withdraw his objection to it. But it would seem as if simple pure speech could be utilized in leading a soul away from sin. Pure speech is only another form of pure thought. People love good speech as they love good music. The leveling process need not all be done by reducing the heights; part of it can be done by raising the depressions. Religion need not be brought all the way down to what is called the masses; the masses can be brought partly up to religion. Our revivalists would be of more service to the community if they would think their best thoughts and state them in their purest words, remembering that religion is only another name for excellence that includes all of life, thought, speech and behavior, and that their mission, in so far as it is valuable, consists in leading all toward that which is highest and best here, as well as hereafter.

It could not be expected that those attempts at revivals which depended upon the recurrence of the weak prayer for the opportune time, which manufactured the interest in religion by much advertising, and measured the success of the attempt by counting the converts and the number of those who joined the church at the end of the season—it could not be expected that such revivals would have much influence upon a community. They are only a ripple disturbing the stagnant surface of the churches for a few weeks in the winter time; an inch deep enthusiasm, subsiding as suddenly as it arose. A revival of religion, in the true sense, we have not seen. If we only could see such a sight in our beloved land!

Whither shall we look for the coming of that Evangelist which will do for our soul what it has done for the great Evangelist of the past? Did for them? It is evident, judgment must begin at the house of God. Thither must this prophet repair first when he comes. Like the son of Amos he may ask, to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? Your vain oblations, your calling of meetings, your midwinter revivals, your weeks of prayer, your weeks of lent, are a trouble unto me. I am weary of them, saith the Lord. When you make many prayers I will not hear, because your hands are stained with dishonesty. Love the truth. Cease to do evil. Seek justice. Love mercy. Obedience is better than worship. If ye obey the law of righteousness ye shall live, and your American Zion shall be redeemed and her future shall be glorious; but if ye refuse she shall pass away and be forgotten.

A revival of religion is what we need. Learning we have; riches we have; power we have; churches, colossal denominations we have in abundance. Religion, in any proper sense of that word, alas! we do not have. For lack of that we suffer. We need all to be converted. We need a powerful influence to sweep through society in all its branches. We need to become more conscious of our relation to God and all that that implies. The coming of a powerful influence, or agent of a Holy Spirit which shall win, or scourge society away from its dishonesty and moral cowardice. Not something to play upon the surface of the emotions alone and win a transient belief in some theory of salvation which reason will dissipate when the emotions are stilled, but that thrilling of the whole life which sets free all its best energies and turns the whole drift of thought and deed toward moral aims, is the revival for which all should labor and pray. When it comes in its direction. It will win the consent of the intellect and the emotions. It will require honesty in every department

of life. It will mediate between money and toil. Society will be readjusted so that justice will be more nearly done. Under its guidance, politics would learn that right is better than majorities. It will enter the market place and show that conscience should be master there. It will invade the temple of religion and ask that all who assemble there shall be true to their deepest convictions. It will be the meeting of beauty and use in our worship, of prayer and thought, of enthusiasm and good sense; and all who feel its influence will celebrate their confidence in the matchless One who hath framed the world and is guiding it toward its high destiny.

How we will welcome the coming of that Evangelist of the future who will help our community to such an awakening! He will teach us to look with open eyes upon the law of God revealed in our own lives. Here, he will say, is the scripture which you dare not disobey.

It is not subject to the vote of councils. Reading it you will learn the significance of life. Here are all needed sanctions for holiness; here all needed rebukes for sin. There you may read what dreadful, what benign possibilities are entailed in every young soul. There is revealed the plan of salvation. It is allegiance, like that which was in the heart of Christ, to the will of God.

Such an awakening we trust will come to earth again. God has surely not lost his interest in our planet.

While we are waiting for the arrival of that mighty spirit to disturb the church at large and start it away from its apathy, we here can improve the time. A revival may begin in each soul. An hour's thought upon holy themes will do much to cure our skepticism and give us faith in a divine Father. You may hold some special services in your own souls. You may ask your reason, your conscience, your emotions all to assemble,—your reason which ponders the deep things of life, your conscience which passes its decree upon all acts, your emotions which are always ready like an April day with its rain or sunshine, to manifest themselves in tears or smiles,—and there within the sanctuary of your own souls may the thrilling subject of religion have its hearing and accomplish its work. The reason may survey this amazing life and all the possibilities which belong to it. The conscience can make its report. What the reason sees and the conscience approves, the will may make into deeds and the emotions may turn into prayers or praise. Thinking more of sacred things will make them more real. Little by little you will hold more lightly the temporal and vanishing, and you will, at last, grasp the eternal with a hold which neither life nor death can weaken.

A Prayerful Campaign.

The government of France has deprecated if it has not forbidden the participation of the clergy in the general election now pending. This, in a so-called republic, smacks strongly of absolutism. The clerics themselves differ greatly in opinion, but the prevailing sentiment among them inclines to the full exercise of their right as French citizens. The bishop of Autun has adopted a plan of election campaign which would prove highly objectionable to many of the agencies active in American elections. He directs that as a preparation for vote-casting the faithful of his diocese engage in nine days of prayer. Whatever his objective effect there is no doubt of the subjective effect of prayer devoutly made. No answer may come from on high, but the mind attuned sincerely to religious prayer is itself strengthened and ennobled. Its resolve is higher, its moral vision clearer; it is soothed, sustained, invigorated. This may not be the result on the mind of a petitioner who mumbles his prayer mechanically, but one who thinks as he prays is exalted.

Imagine an ante-election novena in the great republic of the United States! To meet people active in politics the occasion is one with which prayer has nothing to do. It is a harvest-time with saloons. Beer-drinking and devotion do not go well together. The elector who would give nine days to prayerful consideration of his duty as such would not be in a frame of mind to do what the dramshop keeper regards as his whole duty to the liquor interest. If voters were conscientious where would the Dudleys come in? Their blocks-of-five method would be inoperative. Men who sincerely look for divine guidance in their walk as citizens would scorn corruptionists unless the Hebrew notion that the Egyptian may be spoiled prevail. What would become of the campaign orator? His eloquence would be wafted across empty benches and would hardly reach the faithful wrestling in their closets with the problems of government. The brass band, the barbecue and the torch-light procession would be impossible with electors who think seriously of the issues involved in an election and ask for divine light and not for tin-canned polemics.

The novelty of a political campaign based on nine days of solemn prayer would astound the great Christian republic of North America.—Chicago Times.

A native of India, in London, wished lately to send by parcel post to India the ashes of his cremated brother, to be dropped into the sacred Ganges. He was told that unless he could limit the weight of the parcel to eleven pounds the postoffice could not send it; and he sadly withdrew.











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