The Bible definition of religion

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The Bible Definition of Religion
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BY THE

REV. GEORGE MATHESON, D. D.

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah vi. 8.

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Appreciation

By Marcus Dods, D. D.

Dr. Matheson's preaching is invariably profitable, full of suggestive and pregnant ideas, and enlivened by healthy optimism. This book is to all intents and purposes a sermon or sermons upon Micah's definition of religion, "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God." Dr. Matheson urges that in order to do justly a man must put himself in his neighbor's place, must pass out of himself and incarnate himself in the life of his brother. "There can be no justice without sympathy, and there can be no sympathy without substitution," the substitution of myself for my fellow-man in his circumstances. Mercy in the Christian sense Dr. Matheson distinguishes from pity which is instinctive and
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painful; from the philosophical mercy which springs from the love of calm, deprecating hatred and revenge because they disturb self-culture; from the scientific mercy which is built upon the notion that man is a mechanism, and that to visit crime with penalty is a survival of the child's instinct to smash the door when he is angry. This scientific mercy is contemptuous. "The very ground of its forgiveness paralyzes its power to aid. It says, 'This is a helpless creature, and therefore not to be helped.' It pardons on account of incompetency; on account of incompetency it also passes by. It can refuse to strike, but it is nerveless to redeem." The mercy of Christ is founded on the opposite basis—the possibilities of man. "Walking humbly with God" receives in Dr. Matthewson's hands a new interpretation. The humility in question is to be shown not toward God but toward man. A man is not to be proud of walking with God as a snob
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might be proud of walking with a duke; but as he walks with God he is also to carry himself humbly toward his fellow-man.