

THE
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IS MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION POSSIBLE
AND DESIRABLE?

AT the present time the advisability of separating ethics from religion has become a burning question, since Societies for Ethical Culture are everywhere being formed independent of religious organizations. The latter, it is said, are no longer competent to undertake the moral education of the people; for although they have in the past played a part in the moral development of mankind, the world has reached the stage at which this aid is no longer required. Indeed, when the leading-strings of religion are dispensed with, a nobler and more firmly rooted morality will be established. Under present conditions religion is not only unable to afford any assistance in the development of a sound morality, but is a positive obstacle in the way.

We shall in the first place state and examine the objections which are urged against founding ethics on religion, and then seek to determine the value of the substitute which is offered. Should it prove to be the case (1) that the objections rest on misunderstanding (particularly on a confusion between the true essence of religion and its imperfectly developed forms), and (2) that the proffered substitute cannot afford a basis for a genuine and enduring morality, it would be evident that it is not necessary to separate religion and morality,—indeed that this is not possible. Finally, it must be pointed out that since the suggested ethical reform is proposed by men of high moral char-