

And your recommendation means that we should take care in time, so that the waves of the dissatisfied, raging masses may not disturb us at table. But the whole of this point of view is as false as it is nowadays universally liked and praised; this is why I make haste to put in a protest against it. It is _false_ that state, justice, and law cannot be maintained without the aid of religion and its articles of belief, and that justice and police regulations need religion as a complement in order to carry out legislative arrangements. It is _false_ if it were repeated a hundred times. For the ancients, and especially the Greeks, furnish us with striking _instantia in contrarium_ founded on fact. They had absolutely nothing of what we understand by religion. They had no sacred documents, no dogma to be learnt, and its acceptance advanced by every one, and its principles inculcated early in youth. The servants of religion preached just as little about morals, and the ministers concerned themselves very little about any kind of morality or in general about what the people either did or left undone. No such thing. But the duty of the priests was confined merely to temple ceremonies, prayers, songs, sacrifices, processions, lustrations, and the like, all of which aimed at anything but the moral improvement of the individual. The whole of their so-called religion consisted, and particularly in the towns, in some of the _deorum majorum gentium_ having temples here and there, in which the aforesaid worship was conducted as an affair of state, when in reality it was an affair of police. No one, except the functionaries engaged, was obliged in any way to be present, or even to believe in it. In the whole of antiquity there is no trace of any obligation to believe in any kind of dogma. It was merely any one who

openly denied the existence of the gods or calumniated them that was punished; because by so doing he insulted the state which served these gods; beyond this every one was allowed to think what he chose of them. If any one wished to win the favour of these gods privately by prayer or sacrifice he was free to do so at his own cost and risk; if he did not do it, no one had anything to say against it, and least of all the State. Every Roman had his own Lares and Penates at home, which were, however, at bottom nothing more than the revered portraits of his ancestors. The ancients had no kind of decisive, clear, and least of all dogmatically fixed ideas about the immortality of the soul and a life hereafter, but every one in his own way had lax, vacillating, and problematical ideas; and their ideas about the gods were just as various, individual, and vague. So that the ancients had really no _religion_ in our sense of the word. Was it for this reason that anarchy and lawlessness reigned among them? Is not law and civil order rather so much their work, that it still constitutes the foundation of ours? Was not property perfectly secure, although it consisted of slaves for the greater part? And did not this condition of things last longer than a thousand years?