

# **"Philosophy of human and civilization When Hocking "**

**Prepared by the researcher /**

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**Abstract in English**

*William Ernest Hocking is still another Harvard Square contributor to our evolving conception of God, a conception which enables us to cope with and relate creatively to reality rather than to retreat to an otherworldly, utterly transcendent God of illusion. Born in Cleveland in 1873, he received his A.B., A.M., and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard. The minister of the First Parish in Cambridge, Samuel Mc Chord Crothers, officiated at his marriage to Agnes Boyle O'Reilly in the home of the bride's father, John Boyle O'Reilly, the Irish-born poet. Richard Hocking, the son of William and Agnes, and a teacher of philosophy in his own right, was one of my own teachers of philosophy at the University of Chicago. When I later presented to him the idea of the Harvard Square God to which his father had contributed, he encouraged me to develop these thoughts.*

*William Ernest Hocking, professor of philosophy at Harvard from 1914 to 1943, except for his service at the front during WWI, was a member of the Society of Mayflower Descendants and the American Society of Puritan Descendants. His publications represent a Puritan-like range of concern. Consider some of the books by him: *The Meaning of God in Human Experience, Human Nature and Its Remaking, The Lasting Elements of Individualism, Rethinking Missions, Types of Philosophy, A Free and Responsible Press, Science and the Idea of God, The Coming World Civilization, The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience.**

*In 1960 it was my privilege during annual meetings of the American Unitarian Association to introduce Dr. Hocking when he delivered, in the Harvard Square Meeting House of the First Parish in Cambridge, the inaugural address in an annual series entitled the Colloquium on God and the Modern World. Hocking, then 86, spoke with the vigor of a commander in chief of ideas. Note how he meets head on the major doubts of the modern scientific mind in the following words: The "Modern World" is a distinct period of time only because it is a distinct state of mind.*

*This state of mind begins in western Europe, but becomes world-wide. There begins to be a world civilization; and there can be no such thing without mental world-contemporaneity; we are all moderns together. The distinctive note of the epoch is human self-reliance, technically implemented. A human know-how is everywhere in demand; and therefore the underlying sciences universally claimed.*

*Human self-reliance naturally displaces reliance on God, so far as God is called on to meet human need. The word "Humanism" stands for the principle of displacement. The Modern World extends its human self-help by degrees; but it knows its method. We may look on the entire period as a progressive experiment in getting on without God, in all important practical matters.*

*Modernity begins with this method, at first a method of thought and then a method of tools. Its principle is very simple; purposes and wishes play no part in Nature; mathematics tells the full and exact story; causes are equal to effects, and therefore are alike in kind. The equation is the perfect language for describing what happens; and also the perfect instrument for prediction and techniques. The playroom for divine operation closes: God's purposes are simply irrelevant.*

*The Modern World thus moves towards a practical atheism, not by intention, but by default. Nietzsche's startling "God is dead!" is only a more violent statement of the mild words of Laplace: "I have no need of that hypothesis." A superfluous hypothesis becomes quietly and rightly a disregarded hypothesis. In a world in which human beings are willing and able to do the hard thinking essential to scientific mastery, God has nothing in particular to do.*

*We must, I believe, be wholly in accord with this loyalty of the Modern World to the scientific method which has been the source of its power. We have only two notes of criticism: the "religion" it denounces is not religion; the "God" it gets along without is not God.*

*Certainly, a person like Albert Schweitzer, who brings to Lambarene the full equipment of scientific medicine, has not found the meaning of his religion or his God impoverished by his science. Nor did Mahatma Gandhi find his own sense of God impaired by his work at Sabarmati, using modern veterinary methods in his hospital for ailing cattle.*

*What I wish to make clear is this: that the wide modern drift toward an implicit atheism—toward a naturalism which negates supernature, a secularism which coddles the human wish, a *Laique* conception of the good life and of politics—that drift is based upon a valid denial of a false idea of God.*

*For whatever God means, God is not a substitute for, nor a competitor with, the sciences and arts of modernity. God is not an object among objects; nor a power among powers; nor a cause among causes; nor a medicine among medicines.*

*But if God is none of these things, what is God?*

*I say that the only genuine atheist is the person who holds that there are gulfs between right people and wrong people over which no bridge can be thrown. For God is that underlying unity of Being which is the permanent possibility of bridge making, for the Modern World as for all others, and without any sacrifice of its triumphs.*

*The Modern World has only to learn that, since there are no closed sciences, there are no economic solutions on economic grounds alone, no military solutions on military grounds alone, and what is harder, no legal solutions on legal grounds alone. Nor are conflict and competition to be abolished; but to be held within an all-human solidarity, in which the 'million masks of God' find dignity, respect, reverence.*