

PURE RELIGION AND PURE GOLD.

BY J. A. RUTH.

There is a striking similarity between pure religion and pure gold. Both are elemental—the immediate product of God's own laboratory. No alchemist or chemist can produce either from baser material. Nothing can be added to or taken from them, and nothing with which they may be combined changes their quality or their intrinsic value. They are incorruptible. Time effects no changes in them. They never grow old or out of date. They do not satiate. They are in the highest degree ductile and adaptable. Both are found with more or less admixture of dross, and must pass through an extracting and refining process; and both have been alloyed and are found in all grades from pure to seven-eighths alloy.

As gold is more serviceable when alloyed, so it may be that alloyed religion is of more service to man than pure religion. At least, religious organizations have found it expedient to add many forms and ceremonies to make pure religion more adaptable and inviting to the moods and peculiarities of humanity, and to give body and tangible substance to abstract principles—a sort of scaffolding by which man may attain to them, or wall by which he may be enclosed, or material foundation upon which he may rest,

There appears no serious objection to alloying religion to the extent and for the purpose indicated; indeed, until humanity has reached a much higher state of intellectual and spiritual development than at present it is desirable and profitable to do so, but, unfortunately, the alloying process has been carried much farther by the imposition of divers creeds and dogmas, rites and ceremonies, which all but submerge pure religion, and seriously impede its operation.

It has also come to pass that religion thus alloyed is regarded by many of its devotees as the pure article, and is defended as such when its purity is brought into question. On the other hand, alloyed religion is by many regarded as entirely spurious, because the prominence of the alloy hides the pure religion it contains. Thus there has been many an attack upon and defense of alloyed religion when the attacking party regarded it as spurious, and the defending party as pure religion; neither being able, or at least willing, to recognize the actual quality of the matter under attack and defense.

Pure religion is never attacked, and requires absolutely no defense. Even a motley fool will not attack pure religion as defined by the apostle: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world,"—nor as indicated by the prophet: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"—or by the Psalmist: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully."

When humanity learns to alloy religion to the extent only that is necessary and profitable, and to distinguish between pure religion and alloy—between the essential and the merely expedient and helpful—there will be little or no occasion for contention and controversy; and the time hitherto employed in attack upon and defense of religion can be exerted in a direction vastly more sane and profitable.