

## Overcoming the Old Order

Dr. Shelton's Preface to *Human Life: Its Philosophy & Laws*

by Dr. Herbert M. Shelton

Editor's note: In 1928 Dr. Herbert Shelton wrote his first major book, *Human Life: Its Philosophy and Laws*, a rarely seen masterpiece of 518 oversized pages in which he undertook his first effort to synthesize a true science of life and health from the works of the pioneers of Natural Hygiene. This excerpt from its powerful Preface rings as true today as it did nearly 87 years ago.

**T**he human mind is very largely a product of its environment. It absorbs its food from its surroundings, and digests and assimilates this, rejecting some portions of it and organizing the remainder into its own substance. It is for this reason that so few people ever get beyond the age in which they live, and why the vast majority never advance the community in which they reside.


We are prone to regard life as static and to look upon these conditions under which we grow up as the natural and eternal order of things. It is for this reason that we resist change and are often found foes of progress and enlightenment. To the ancients, slavery seemed to be the natural order of things, and within the lifetime of many now living there were advocates of slavery as a divine institution. The subjection of women was, and yet is, in many quarters, regarded as the natural order of existence. Kings were once thought to be natural institutions, and the advocates of the divine rights of kings are not all dead yet. The physician, no less than the layman, is a creature of his education and environment. He may be depended on in the majority of instances to rely upon the traditions and procedures he has been taught to employ, and to be antagonistic to change or innovate what he may regard as heresy. When education and training have caused a thought to crystalize into habit, its eradication is exceedingly difficult.

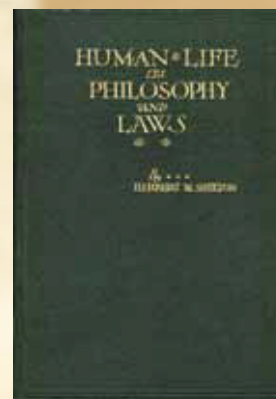
Every advance that the human race has made has had to meet and overcome the old order, and because the old order was part and parcel of the makeup of the minds of the period, advance could only come through a mental revolution. People had to be taught to see things differently. They had to learn that progress does not mean destruction of the universe. They had to acquire a new view of things.

Progress in living reform is no exception to this law of mental revolution. Before men and women can be persuad-

ed to reform their modes of living, they must acquire a new perspective of life. They have to acquire a new understanding of health, a revolutionary new conception of the essential nature of disease, a new view of the causes of disease, and of the conditions and requirements of recovery. Living reform must not be looked upon as a cure, which, having accomplished its work of restoring health, can be laid aside like a medicine bottle or a pill box until one becomes sick again. Living reform requires the individual understanding of the why and wherefore of reform, and can never depend on the obedience, by the patient, of his doctor or teacher.

Perhaps nowhere else is a revolution in our thinking more necessary than in our manner of viewing health and disease. Yet, so prone are men and women to regard their own ingrained prejudices as established first principles that it is difficult to attack and expose old error without offending those who hold to these. Men usually regard an attack upon their inherited beliefs and prepossessions as an attack upon their persons. The lapse of time invests old ideas with authority and sanctity, and history reveals that few ever escape the tyranny of these. This accounts for the persistence of many ancient, coarse, and grotesque speculations in what we are pleased to call *The Modern Science of Medicine*.

The philosophy of life, health, disease, and cure herein unfolded is either true or false. If true, no other book can equal this in importance; if false, no other book can equal it in potential evil. The book is not perfect. But I believe the principles herein unfolded are sound, and know from experience that they work in practice. I am, at the same time, well aware that many of the details of application yet remain to be fully worked out. 



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