

the lectures as the years passed. 'They may therefore be regarded as containing the substance of his lifelong study of, and thoughts concerning, Shakespeare.' These lectures have now been

published, according to his own desire, under the editorship of his daughter, Miss Rosaline Masson. The title is *Shakespeare Personally* (Smith, Elder & Co.; 6s. net).

The Christ of God and the Soul of Man.

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IF the beginning of the nineteenth century was marked by the awakening of the interest in foreign missions in the Christian Churches of Great Britain, the beginning of the twentieth century is marked by the acknowledgment of the greatness of the problem, both theoretical and practical, that this enterprise involves. We are at the present moment asking ourselves a great many questions about the motive, the message, and the method of foreign missions. We always want the doers; now we seem to need as never before the thinkers. The interest, without becoming less intense, needs to become more intelligent and instructed. The apparent arrest in this movement which we are so deploring may be regarded as a summons to do a good deal of hard thinking, so as to make sure that the work is being done in the best way, not only for the spread of the gospel and the growth of the Kingdom abroad, but even more to command the cordial sympathy and the generous support of the Churches at home. And these two objects are not incompatible, for surely the reason and the conscience of thoughtful men and women can be enlisted in this cause only as they are convinced that the work is being done not only most persuasively and effectively, but in the way most in accord with the character and content of the divine revelation, the intention and the spirit of the human redemption in Christ Jesus. We shall in the long run gain, and not lose, if we take time and trouble to answer some of the questions now pressing upon our minds.

I.

The question to which I invite attention at present is this, How can we convince ourselves, and persuade others, that Christ alone can satisfy the needs of the soul of man? I purposely put the question in this concrete form rather than the

abstract. What right has Christianity to make the effort to supersede every other religion?

(a) A generation ago such a question would have appeared to many supporters of missions unnecessary, so convinced were they of the absolute truth of the Christian faith, and the entire falsehood of other religions. There has been a marked change of attitude. That change is due on the one hand to wider knowledge of both Christianity and other religions; and on the other to a more generous, appreciative, and sympathetic spirit in our Christian theology. We are acquainted now with the sacred scriptures of other religions, with their beliefs, rites, and morals, as we were not before, and an unqualified condemnation possible to ignorance is inadmissible for knowledge; we can discover so much that is good, and true, and worthy in other faiths that we cannot judge them worthless.

Further, we are learning to distinguish in our own Christian theology the universal and permanent gospel, and the temporary and local forms in idea as well as phrase which it has assumed. Again, in face of materialism, rationalism, and agnosticism, we cannot defend the Christian religion as true, if we pronounce all other religions false; for against such enemies all religions must stand or fall together.

For such reasons we are reaching the conviction that in all religions there is a movement of the soul to God.

(b) A poet, who as a theological thinker was much in advance of his age, Walter C. Smith, more than a generation ago expressed the growing belief of to-day:

So in all faiths there is something true,
Even when bowing to stock or stone—
Something that keeps the Unseen in view
Beyond the stars, and beyond the blue,
And notes His gifts with the worship due.

For when the spirit of man has gone
 A-groping after the Spirit divine,
 Somewhere or other it touches the Throne
 And sees a light that is seen by none,
 But who seek Him that is sitting thereon.

If this be so, the spirit of intolerance to other religions must be exorcised from our foreign mission work; and many missionaries are the warmest advocates of this change. Let me quote the plea of a traveller who has tried to understand Islam, but has not lost his faith in Christ. 'The Christian message,' says Mr. S. M. Leeder, 'and all the moral splendour which has come from its advance, does not need, as a preparation for its conquest, anything of abuse or unfair depreciation towards Mohammed or his religion, or indeed towards any religion. These things occupy our time unprofitably and impede our progress. Our work is to *be* Christians, in the simple way of Christ, and then to say to men of other beliefs—'There is Jesus, what think ye of Him?' (*Veiled Mysteries of Egypt and the Religion of Islam*). The view of the European traveller is echoed by a Japanese scholar: 'It is not by mutual fault-finding, or by exaggerating each other's peculiarities, that we can arrive at understanding or appreciation. Not by antipathy, but by sympathy; not by hostility, but by hospitality; not by enmity, but by amity,—does one race come to know the heart of another' (*The Japanese Nation*, by Inazo Nitobe, p. 9). Any argument or appeal for foreign missions, to be acceptable generally, must be made in this spirit; and of this we need not complain; for this is the Christian spirit.

II.

The change of attitude does, however, involve a serious peril; and it is only by adapting our argument and appeal to the new situation that we can avoid the peril. It may be argued, and it is argued, that if all religions are true in some sense, there is no need of trying to replace the others by one only. To concede that other religions are not altogether false is very far, however, from asserting that they are all equally true, and that Christianity cannot claim any superiority over the others. Yet we must so exhibit the superiority of Christianity to other faiths as not to depreciate, but to appreciate, them.

This we can do by showing in how far they are a preparation for Christ, hold out a promise which

in Him finds fulfilment, awaken a need which He satisfies. This is in accord with the attitude of the New Testament, and of Jesus Himself. He came, not to destroy, but to fulfil the law and the prophets; and Paul recognized in the inward law of the Gentiles, the conscience which accused or excused a making ready for the revelation of God in Him. The Christian Church refused with Gnosticism to detach the gospel from the Old Testament; and the apologists found in Gentile philosophy a tutor who led them to Christ as the true teacher. This preparation may be regarded as twofold—*positive*, as the possession of beliefs and standards which Christ alone completes; and *negative*, as the discovery of needs which Christ alone can satisfy.

(a) All religions involve some belief in the divine, some dependence of man on deity, some intercourse of prayer and sacrifice between the human and the divine. At first sight there may appear to be only superstition and corruption, only the contradiction of Christian life and belief, but a closer scrutiny will show the missionary that there are *points of contact* between himself and his hearers which it will be wise for him to make as much use of as he can. That man has a moral conscience and a religious consciousness is a fact of inexhaustible significance and inestimable value, apart even from such closer points of contact as any particular faith may disclose to the sympathetic inquirer.

(b) But another feature in this preparation is still fuller of promise. There are earnest, anxious, inquiring souls that the conventional ordinances and the traditional doctrines do not satisfy. Take the case of Gautama, the Buddha. He was troubled with the riddle of the painful earth, and sought the solution of the problem in many ways—asceticism, meditation, and converse with the holy and the wise—and he was dissatisfied. A discovery of the secret at last came to him, and he made it his life-work to impart to others what he had found. But can we doubt that, had Christ's solution been offered to him, he would not have welcomed it?

Or again, had Mohammed known the gospel of Jesus Christ uncorrupted and undebased, and not in the degraded form with which alone he was acquainted, is it likely that in his earlier and better days he would have sought a revelation to supersede it?

Even in less notable instances there is a religious discontent, due to some problem of thought unsolved, or some need of life unmet, which may be regarded as a promise waiting fulfilment in Christ.

III.

Dr. Lindsay in his book on the Christian Ministry has testified to the help in dealing with the question given to him by his familiarity with the details of organization in newly-founded churches as Convener of the Foreign Missions Committee of his denomination. If the foreign missions of to-day throw light on the New Testament, is not the reverse equally true? Does not the New Testament offer us a light in which we can see clearly the way we should follow?

(a) Regarding the gracious invitation of Mt 11^{28, 30}, Dr. Bruce has offered an invaluable suggestion. In it, he maintains, Christ is expressing His desire for disciples, other than the babes who hitherto had alone responded to His call, the simple-minded fishermen of Galilee. He wanted to draw to Him men to whom the moral and religious life had become a load and a labour, and whom accordingly He could more richly bless with His rest than the babes. He was conscious that He had more to give than the babes could receive, and He wanted disciples who would fully receive what He was longing freely to give.

Should not the foreign missionary here learn of Christ? There are the babes, and with Christ let him thank God if they are given to him as fruits of his ministry. But let him also expect, and try to discover, the burdened and the labouring in the things of the soul, that he may bring them to Christ's rest.

(b) Just such a disciple as Jesus desired is revealed to us in Paul in the autobiographical passage in Ro 7⁷⁻²⁵. To his cry from the depths of human helplessness and hopelessness, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' the answer from the heights of divine truth and grace comes in the words, 'Come unto me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

What untoward circumstances kept Paul from Christ during His earthly ministry we know not; and yet surely there is the tragedy of the soul in the Master longing for such a disciple, and the seeker crying out for such a Helper. Can we assume that that tragedy is not being repeated to-day?

Sometimes such mutual seekers do find one another, as the record of some conversions even in our own time shows; but who can tell how much unsatisfied longing there is still?

(c) We are invited to-day to compare Christianity with other faiths to prove its superiority as a warrant for our missionary endeavour. Such a comparison the New Testament offers us in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*; the writer seeks to show that the sacrifices of the old covenant could not bring peace of conscience, could not satisfy the need that they expressed.

We might at first consideration of the argument in this Epistle be tempted to urge that it is only from the Christian standpoint that the insufficiency of the old covenant is realized, and that the saints of the older dispensation found satisfaction in it, and did not desire a better. But on closer reflexion we are surely led to the conclusion that, while the full insufficiency is not discovered till the better provision for the soul's need is enjoyed, yet there is evidence even in the Old Testament of such dissatisfaction. Ps 51 and Is 53 both testify to necessities which animal sacrifice could not meet, and to aspirations which not only went beyond it, but which we now fully recognize Christ alone has fulfilled.

These instances from the New Testament may suffice to justify the expectation that, when the gospel is carried to other peoples, then too it will find the preparation of unsatisfied desire and unfulfilled aspiration. Such an expectation, it may be mentioned in passing, is the answer to the objection that we should first evangelize our slums before we go with the gospel abroad. We must not, and dare not withhold the Bread of Heaven and the Water of Life from any souls hungering and thirsting after God who are waiting its advent, until we have persuaded all these men and women, often hardened against the gospel, to give heed to it. It would be folly to cast all our seed on the wayside, the rock, and among the thorns at home, and have none for the good soil abroad.

IV.

It has just been suggested that only from his Christian standpoint could the writer of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* fully measure the insufficiency of the old covenant, while in some degree that insufficiency could be realized even by the saints of old. This leads us to a distinction of great

importance in connexion with our subject; we must distinguish the dissatisfaction the gospel finds, and the dissatisfaction the gospel brings. There may be a vague sense of need long before Christ is known as meeting that need, and on the other hand it is the knowledge of Christ which may first of all awaken the desire for the satisfaction He alone can give. We have evidence of dissatisfaction with ancestral faiths, even where the gospel has not been known at all. A new religion, such as Buddhism or Islam, is itself a judgment on the insufficiency of that which it supersedes. But even without any so violent a breach with the past as a new religion involves, the insufficiency of the old may be shown. (i.) The change in Buddhism itself from the *Hinayana* to the *Mahayana*, the Little to the Great Vehicle, shows that a monastic order, in which each man was left to work out his own salvation without any aid from any higher power, was not fitted to meet the common religious need, and that accordingly the Buddha himself, who had ignored man's need of God, or God's help to man, was deified as a Saviour, on whom the soul in its need and weakness might depend. Only so transformed did Buddhism spread widely beyond India. (ii.) It is seldom realized that the ancient religion of India has preserved itself only by constant adjustments and modifications; its hospitality to new movements is the explanation of the tenacity of its hold on the land. The bhakti type of Indian piety shows the inadequacy of the two older types. Devotion to one particular deity satisfies the soul of man as the observance of the complex Brahmanic ritual could not, or the absorption in the divine by the way of asceticism and meditation. The number of teachers India has welcomed, the number of sects which have been formed in it, the variety of devotions it can show—all are proofs of dissatisfaction of soul. (iii.) Even Islam exists in two main forms—the Sunnite or orthodox Arabian, and the Shiite or heretical Persian. In the latter there are ideas of incarnation and atonement entirely offensive to the former, yet pointing to needs of the soul for which no provision is made by the faith in its earlier form. The significance of these sects as a criticism within Islam itself of its insufficiency has not yet been adequately investigated. (iv.) The two names *China* and *Confucius* have been linked together for centuries; and yet Confucius has not satisfied the soul of China. Not only did Taoism, the

popular animistic, magical superstition, maintain its hold alongside of Confucianism; but both religions together have not proved an adequate provision for China, and so Buddhism has found a welcome in it. Here as elsewhere the history of religion has been their judgment also.

V.

If, before the gospel is known, there is this religious unrest in the other faiths, still more does the presentation of Christ awaken the sense of need of Him, and desire for Him. This is surely according to the analogy of nature. It is the environment which develops the organism; to give one special instance, it is light which stimulates the growth of sight in the eye. (i.) If Christ were not adapted to meet the need of man, the preaching of Him would not stimulate the conscience to greater sensitiveness, or the consciousness to keener aspiration. That, when suspicion, prejudice, and hostility are overcome, Christ does stimulate and then satisfy the soul's desire for Him is an evidence that man was made to find his rest in God in Him. Conversions are proof of a need which He either finds or brings, and then meets. (ii.) The satisfaction He brings is so much fuller, surer, and more enduring than anything that the soul till then had experienced, that if dissatisfaction had been at all felt before, the reason for it becomes clear; and even if it had been unfelt, the insufficiency of the former faith discloses itself even more fully to increase the sense of the satisfaction which at last has been found in Christ. This analysis is based on the data offered to Commission IV. of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in the answers of converts about their own experience. We have not as abundant and adequate data as we could desire, for several reasons. It takes some training in the art of self-observation to be able to give an account of a moral and religious change, its content, character, and causes; and most converts who have told their story are lacking in that qualification. Secondly, there is always the peril that the convert will quite unconsciously to himself express his experience in the terms of the teaching of the missionary, with which he has become familiar, rather than in the language which would more clearly and fully express the reality of that experience. Lastly, it is difficult, almost impossible, so to eliminate the 'present equation,' that is, the influence of present states of mind, as

to recollect accurately the thoughts and feelings of the past. With these qualifications we may accept the broad conclusion that vague desires become defined by Christ, as fresh desires are awakened, which He then satisfies. (iii.) A very significant fact is the influence that the gospel exercises on the religions with which it comes into contact, even when there is rejection and resistance. Neo-Hinduism in India and Neo-Buddhism in China and Japan are testimonies to the authority, moral and religious, of Jesus Christ. In these varied attempts to purify and vivify the old religions so that they may not be supplanted by the new, there is the admiration of imitation. There are beliefs, rites, and customs in Hinduism which are so offensive to any conscience which has been at all enlightened or quickened by Christian influences that in these new versions of it all these are carefully excluded, and as far as possible explained away. The newer sects of Buddhism seek to offer to the soul a salvation as satisfying as that which Christ offers. Keen-witted and far-sighted men are discovering that it would be a forlorn hope to oppose an unpurged, unelevated Hinduism or Buddhism to Christianity, and so in all these new sects a revision is taking place, which, while assimilating the old religions to Christianity, hopes thus to arrest its progress. Here is the testimony of a Japanese professor, not, as far as I can judge from his tone and treatment, a Christian, M. Anesaki, who in 1908 gave an account at a meeting in Boulogne of *The Religious Sentiment among the Japanese*. 'Our spirit is opening itself to the influence of Christian civilization, and our ideas, our fashions of thinking, are approaching more and more closely to Western mentality. Whether he knows it or not, wishes it or not, there is not a contemporary Japanese who is not touched or influenced by this or that aspect of Western civilization, whether from the religious, the moral, or the social standpoint. . . . Another example significant of this phenomenon in modern Japan consists in the reciprocal influence and the mutual attraction which exists between Buddhist and Christian beliefs.' After ascribing to Buddhist influence what he calls a Christianization of Christianity, for which we should find a more probable cause, this writer goes on to show how Christianity has affected Japanese Buddhism. 'As for the efforts,' he says, 'made by the "young Buddhists" to return to their faith in the person of Buddha, and to purify their religion from its

sacerdotalism, one can discover here, at least in certain measure, the origin in the influence of Protestant piety. Similarly, not only do the practical methods of Christian propaganda lead the Buddhists to analogous practices, but still more the spirit and the methods of historical criticism may one day be used in favour of Buddhism, and may stimulate a renaissance among the Buddhists, who are now divided into innumerable sects, in making them aware of the essential unity of their religion' (*First Report of the Association Concordia of Japan*, pp. 112-113). Just such was the endeavour of expiring Græco-Roman paganism in Neo-Platonism to arrest the advance of Christianity, and its ineffectiveness is surely a token for good to-day.

(iv.) From these movements there are two important lessons to be learned, however. (a) In the first place, Christianity has come to these lands, associated with varied activities of the nations of Christendom which provoke antagonism, arousing national or racial feelings against European arrogance or aggression, and their existence is a protest against the unchristian character of Christendom. Christ Himself would have found a less impeded way to the heart of India, China, and Japan, were it not for the hostility provoked by nations bearing His name. (b) Secondly, this clinging to a native faith is a summons to the Christian Church to present its gospel in as universally human a form as possible. The gospel is neither of the East nor of the West; Christ is neither Occidental nor Oriental; but these reactions of national and racial sentiment against the full influence of Christ and His gospel show that we have failed to present Him as He is, appealing to the soul of man.

VI.

The discussion up to this point warrants the conclusion, *firstly*, that, so far from each nation or race having the religion which suits it so well that it would be unwise and unkind to disturb its satisfaction, the many changes which these religions have undergone show that in none of them has the spirit of man found a final rest and home; and *secondly*, that as Christianity, not only by missions, but by commerce, conquest, colonization, culture, comes into contact with other religions, it deepens that dissatisfaction where it already is, or awakens it where it is not, and, even when it does not convert, compels a modification of the religion

hitherto held. This being the situation, can we think it is desirable that Neo-Hinduism or Neo-Buddhism should be encouraged to exist alongside of the Christian Church into which the converts of missions are gathered, or must we press on to win these too for Christ?

(i.) What racial unity demands as the goal of the course of religious history is surely one common faith for all mankind. The day of particularism is past, the day of universalism has dawned. The world is becoming one in commerce, culture, civilization, science, even morals. Shall religion be the one exception? What can give so great a moral value or spiritual significance to the unifying of the world as a common faith? What can restrain the antagonisms and rivalries that this closer contact of nations and races must result in, except a common human ideal, inspired by a common divine reality, transcending all these differences.

(ii.) Scientific research is proving most conclusively what Christianity in its missionary endeavour assumes as self-evident—that these are not naturally inferior and superior races, but that all have a common human nature, which by a common mental, moral, and religious nurture can be raised to a common development in knowledge, morals, and religion. The notion that different races need,

because adapted to, different religions is a long-exploded fallacy.

(iii.) The one human race needs and waits for one religion. Is it to be the Christian, or, as some fondly dream, an amalgam or mosaic of many faiths? That Christianity as we present it to other peoples may need, and will undergo, modifications, in which the influence of other faiths will be felt, who can or would desire to doubt? India, China, Japan, and other lands will contribute something to the common world-faith in qualifying our European one-sidedness. For we must not forget that our Western Christianity has been affected by the genius and ethos of Greece and Rome. And let no Western prejudice or pride on our part hinder that process. But I do not believe that the gospel itself, as our modern scholarship is now enabling us to apprehend and appreciate it, purged of all accretions, needs either supplementing or correcting from other faiths; nor do I believe that there are needed such national or racial adaptations as would reproduce the sectarian differences of the past; but the one Christ, known as He is, will satisfy the one humanity. This is the task entrusted to us; are we as enthusiastic, generous, and faithful as its surpassing greatness may demand of us?

In the Study.

Literature for the Pulpit.

OFTEN have sermons been preached on the questions that were put to Christ by others, and again on the questions that were put to others by Christ. The Rev. H. W. Morrow, M.A., has preached both series, and has issued both in one volume entitled *Questions Asked and Answered by our Lord* (Allenson; 3s. 6d.). The book has already reached a second edition.

To his volume of sermons on *The Seriousness of Life* (James Clarke & Co.; 2s. 6d. net), the Rev. J. S. Rutherford, M.A., has prefixed an essay on 'The Choice of Subjects for Sermons.' The essay is better than the sermons. To tell how to do it is often easier than to do it. Yet the sermons are good—clear, honest, practical—always

having the solemn words of our Lord ringing through them: 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.'

The Rev. James Burns, M.A., of Stoke Newington Presbyterian Church, London, has prepared *A Pulpit Manual*, containing forms of Prayers used in the Conduct of Public Worship; Suggestive Summaries; Orders of Service for Celebration of the Sacraments, Marriage, Admission to Communion, Church Festivals, and other Public Occasions (James Clarke & Co.; 2s. 6d. net).

One day a happy thought came to the Rev. John Reid, M.A., of Inverness, and he proceeded forthwith to translate it into deed. What are sermons for? They are for conversion—that first and chiefly. Tell men to send a sermon which