

"THE NEW RELIGION."

In the January number of the *Arena* we meet with a most remarkable article from the pen of Edwin D. Walker, entitled, "The New Religion." In short, it is a treatise, or pretends to be one, upon Theosophy and Theosophists. Evidently the writer desires to acquaint his readers with the principles of Theosophy and to so explain this "new religion," this "divine wisdom," so that each one may fathom the meaning and grasp the scope of his Oriental importation. Perhaps Mr. Walker has set forth his belief in a sufficiently clear manner to satisfy himself; but, unless our brain is very dull, we fail absolutely to find anything new in this "new religion." In all Mr. Walker's eight pages we have only been able to discover a goodly amount of blasphemy, a fearful confusion of Eastern beliefs, not a few falsehoods, and no real explanation or definition of this Theosophy. All we can glean from the whole paper is that Theosophy is an Indian invention, that it includes Parsees, Mohammedans, Brahmins, Buddhists and English Christians (of Mr. Walker's class, very likely), Roman Catholics (which cannot be) and Atheists. That all these are upon an equal footing with regard to this "universal religion," each considering the faith of his fathers as the most appropriate style of the truth for himself and his people, and all seeking its inner interpretation in Theosophy. Jews, Protestants, Roman Catholics, Spiritualists, Rationalists, Theists, Atheists and Pagans are in this "new religion," earnest students of truth, "which transcends and embraces all phases of thought—which can only be really tested by experience, and best taught by living."

Were it not that Mr. Walker's paper has been published in a magazine of the *Arena's* importance, decidedly we would have cast it aside at once as the effusion of a fevered brain; but, considering the channel through which it comes to us, we were tempted to re-read the article and to honestly try to fathom its meaning. We find that it evidently has no bottom; it is either too deep for our powers of comprehension, or else it is so shallow that it cannot float a feather-weight. After our first rapid glance at the article we thought that the writer might possibly be slightly "off" on the subject; after our second reading of it we no longer thought so, but were sure of it.

It seems to us that Mr. Walker desires to convey the idea that the soul is eternal—or rather the human being; that each one has passed through untold ages, from one form to another, and will so continue on, until finally by purification and constant perfecting, each individual becomes part of God. "What man reaps he has sown, and what he sows he shall reap;" "the newest religion is the oldest," because we are only now finding out the treasures of knowledge that the old East has hidden for centuries from the new West; and as the material world is being belted around and the civilization of the West is going back to the East, so in the spiritual world we are all evolving to that from which we came. This is about his theory in a nutshell, and he says that Theosophy is a "wisdom-religion;" its motto is, "There is no religion that is higher than Truth." "The basis of Theosophy is experience." "This doctrine is the grand corner-stone of all religions. It is, as well, the consummation of all philosophy, the crowning experience of mysticism and the teaching of common sense."

To the generality of men religion is a means whereby an end is to be obtained;

by religion we reach God. But this man claims that his "New Religion" is the end to be reached, and that the experience of individuals, who are all portions of God, constitutes the means whereby the end is to be attained. In order to reach this absurd conclusion, Mr. Walker sees proper to open by saying: "most thinking people unite in rejecting the largest portion of what the churches call religion—(this is assertion without proof), with their revolting ideas woven about a human Deity, total depravity, instantaneous salvation, vicarious atonement, a short earthly probation followed by a police-court judgment, and eternal bliss or misery, a heaven of harts and crowns, and a hell of fire and imps. The opposition to these tenacious dogma, however, has little or no organization." It is to establish such an organization, an opposition to the dogma that Mr. Walker blasphemously refers to, that he has undertaken to preach the "New Religion" or "Theosophy."

After speaking of the Mahatmas, or adepts in Theosophy, whose powers and wisdom are hidden away in the mountains of Thibet, or in some solitary hermitage, he gives a list of believers in their genuineness, but who do not desire to publish the fact. The list is a short one; as to five of the eminent personages named, we cannot speak, but with regard to the last and second last mentioned, we can emphatically tell Mr. Walker that he wrongs both individuals; one is F. Marion Crawford, author of "Mr. Isaacs," the other Lord Dufferin, ex-vice regent of India. Perhaps he read "The Witch of Prague," and concluded that Mr. Crawford was a mystic, or may be he has learned that Lord Dufferin took great delight, while in India, in visiting the different temples and learning the manners and customs of each cast, and thereby decided to include him in the Theosophists.

After this piece of gratuitous falsehood, the writer tells us: "but the corps of theosophical leaders is not confined to Thibet, Theosophy enrolls the founders of all religions—Jesus, Gautama, Confucius, Zoroaster, and Mahomet. It includes the great religious spirits of every age—like Swedenborg, Madame Guyon, Saint Martin and Jacob Bohme. Especially notable is the theosophical trend of those seers of all times—the poets. Conspicuous examples just now are Browning, Swinburne, Tennyson, Aldrich, Whitman. The great philosophers too run in the same direction—not only such as Plato, Pythagoras, Paracelsus, Emerson, but even Kant, Leibnitz, Lotze, Schopenhaver and Spencer."

We quote this paragraph to give our readers an idea of how far a man—blinded by a little knowledge—can go on the road of blasphemy, and how ridiculous he can make himself in the eyes of the world. Pick out any fifty names of poets, statesmen, warriors philosophers, in the different ages, jumble them all together and say they all supported this "New Religion," and you will be no more absurd than is Mr. Walker in his would be philosophical article. The only Theosophy that is really ever new and ever old is the Catholic Theology, which is the same in the unreckoned cycles of the past and down the future's eternity. If Mr. Walker's Oriental "New Religion" is to be obtained simply by experience, we say heaven protect us from the experience of the last two thousand years in the Eastern lands, and save us from the Theosophy that would be the outcome of such barbarism.

We are surprised that the *Arena* would publish such a sample of irreverent nonsense.

LEO XIII. AS HE IS.

In several of our American Catholic exchanges we find a very vivid Character sketch of Pope Leo XIII. It is drawn from life and gives the impressions received at the Vatican by a Lutheran Missionary. It would be impossible for us to give the account of that visit in all its details, but there are two points upon which we would ask our readers to kindly reflect. The first is the humble and abstemious life of the Sovereign Pontiff, as noticed by this Protestant African Missionary; the second is the wonderfully universal knowledge of Leo XIII, and the authoritative manner in which he decides questions of the greatest moment—indicative of infallibility—and yet the spell of his marvellous personality that causes you to accept a decision against you with the feeling that it is a blessing in disguise. The minister in question had arrived from the South of Africa, with credentials signed by the redoubtable—now late—Cardinal Lavigerie, and the business which let him to seek an interview with the Pope had some relation to an attempted settlement of the differences between the Catholic and English Protestant missionaries in Uganda and other territories of the Dark Continent.

There is abroad an idea that the Pope lives in luxury in the Vatican. Speaking of the Holy Father's private room, where in he almost entirely lives, the Lutheran clergyman says:

"The room I was ushered into was, as I afterwards learned, Leo XIII's living apartment. It is uncommonly small, having but one window; the scanty furniture is draped with red silk damask, and but for a large crucifix over the mantle there is not even an attempt at decoration."

"The Pope was sitting in a high-backed armchair on a sort of dias at the window, looking out into the gardens, as I thought."

"Before I had entered upon this visit I had well mastered the 'Avertenze Al Vaticano,' that is the book of etiquette appertaining to Papal audiences, and, remaining standing on the threshold, made an initiatory low bow."

"Then I proceeded to the middle of the room, repeating the obedience, while the Pontiff, with a mild smile, slightly raised himself, as if preparing to come towards his visitor."

"Observing this sign, I quickly stepped forward and knelt with one knee down on the edge of the dias to kiss reverently the hand of the grand old primate."

"At this moment I was fairly overcome by an ineffable sense of the extraordinary, and if his Holiness had not attempted to raise me I think I would have remained for minutes in this speechless attitude."

As to the great administrative ability and the regal genius of the Vicar of Christ, just take the following:—

"He spoke authoritatively, after a somewhat commanding fashion, and in a voice that, despite his years, echoed the force of unimpaired lungs."

"While listening to my preamble, briefly made, in accordance with the advice I had received in the ante-chamber, his small brown eyes shone with a kindling glance, but as soon as he himself commenced talking these eyes became vivid with the fire of intelligence and ardor."

"During the time of his discourse he appeared almost rejuvenated and soon began demanding seemingly unimportant details, while he furnished dates and incidents of distant subjects appertaining to the case, that were at once surprising and new to me."

"The Pope's memory, his faculty to recall remote circumstances astonished me beyond expression. I was prepared to meet a mild old man and, instead, encountered an accomplished debater, handling his didactics with the skill and warmth of a youthful enthusiast."

"His familiarity with the subject under discussion was the more noteworthy, as the Pope had had no time for special preparation; he commanded me to an audience almost immediately upon re-

ceiving my petition and none of his councillors present at the Vatican were particularly able to enlighten him on the subject."

In presence of these wonderful remarks comment would be superfluous. Let the minister, however, tell how Leo XIII. decides a question, and how every one feels obliged to bow to a heaven-inspired decision. He continues:

"The moment I got through the aged primate pronounced judgment with a precision and stability of purpose that absolutely forestalled further argument."

"His decision was exactly contrary to my expectations, but the feeling of disappointment never entered my mind, seeing that the weight of the authoritative power expressed was so overwhelming as to render all objections useless."

"This, at least, was the initial impression received. I, the Lutheran, unconsciously submitted to the dogma of infallibility the first time the Pope expressed an opinion to me."

"The official business being at an end, the Pope encouraged me to speak to him on general matters concerning my country, and he who, a quarter of an hour ago, had displayed a truly wonderful knowledge of the geography of the dark continent, appearing to know Togoland, Kamerun and Zanzibar almost as thoroughly as if he had been a traveller in those remote parts, now exhibited a like intimacy with the politics of Germany."

Two more quotations and we have done with this interesting account—written by Henry W. Fischer—and certainly pregnant with grand suggestions. He tells how the Pope spends each day:

"The lack of exercise in the open air and his aversion to the pleasures of the table are very evident in Leo's appearance."

"I was told the Pope manages to live on a lesser amount of food than would suffice for a 2 year-old baby. He rises between 6 and 7 o'clock, and, after devotions, buries himself in the contemplation of hundreds of newspapers from all parts of the world, Italian, French, Spanish and English."

"While reading he sips a demitasse of black coffee, which constitutes his breakfast, year in year out."

"At 10 o'clock his councillors and visitors begin to arrive, and the rest of the day is devoted to affairs of the Church, with the exception of the dinner hour beginning at 2."

"Like the Sultan, Leo always dines alone, probably because of a feeling that he must not ask any of his officials and friends to share so poor a meal as the papal board offers, consisting, as it does, of a plate of strong bouillon, a roast or steak with vegetables and salad and a glass of old Rhine wine. In the evening the Pope partakes of bouillon and toast, and only very occasionally does he add a little Maderia or Tokay."

"The room in which the Pope received me serves both as his private audience and living chamber. Aside from it he used only two other apartments, a small bed and dining-room very simply furnished and devoid of all decorative features."

Thus does he tell of the closing part of a memorable interview:

"When talking on German subjects the Pope pronounced such words as 'Kulturkampf,' which English and American orators are in the habit of distorting beyond recognition, perfectly correctly, which is indeed marvellous in a native of Italy, and an evidence of the the Pontiff's great thoroughness and studious habits."

"I omitted to state that our conversation had been carried on in French, by the Pope's initiative. I had been in the room nearly a full hour when the Pope, by a polite turn in the conversation, indicated that my audience was at an end."

"Again I remember the rules of prevailing etiquette, and, bending my knee reverently, kissed the Pontiff's right hand, which he held out to me, at the same time wishing him a long life."

"Leo XIII. quickly withdrew his hand, and resting it for a few seconds on the top of my head pronounced the pontifical benediction, in a voice full of tenderness and fatherly compassion."

"Je te benis,"—never had French words sounded more beautiful to me."

"I stood in the ante-chamber before I knew what I was doing. The room was full of people."