

THE EXCELLENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

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As a science for systematic study in Christian schools. Comparative Religion is a thing of yesterday. The slowly acquired mastery of foreign languages, many of them dead, and the introduction thus gained to the sacred literature of many lands, have but recently enabled scholars to speak with authority upon the varied faiths of the world. Yet these faiths have been in active conflict with Christianity since a short time after the Ascension of its Divine Founder. He came to His own, and His own received Him not. To His trinitarian theology they opposed a unitarian system, and to His golden rule of practice, the ethics of pharisaism. His disciples and their successors, journeying to the ends of the habitable earth, met with like opposition from the priests and votaries of creeds which they roughly called heathen, and which few of them, so far as we can judge from their written remains, made any attempt adequately to understand. Christ had said: 'All that came before me were thieves and robbers,' and that sentence was enough to condemn all other masters. They did not reflect that so wholesale an application of the text would involve the Old Testament prophets in the same condemnation. There were some, however, who, bearing the Christian name, nevertheless made themselves acquainted with other religions, to the serious detriment of Christianity. Such were the Gnostics of many varying systems, who ransacked all the old mythologies for their aeons or subordinate deities, and the Manichees who added thereto the dualism of Persia. Many a form of Christianity even now bears traces of such contact with heathenism, and the spirit of pagan devotion lurks in souls that

would spurn the insinuation indignantly. The Flagellants as an order are extinct, but the same great error, which long before actuated the practice of the Phœnician priests of Baal and the Phrygian worshippers of the Mother Goddess, inspires a like attitude in thousands who profess to know and reverence the Christian God.

Christianity has ever been aggressive, even in its corrupt forms, so that other creeds, with the exception of Mahometanism during its brief proselytizing period, have simply stood upon the defensive against it. Now we are told that a change is taking place, so that our faith is to be put on its defence. A proselytizing movement, originating in India, has gained adherents to the old creeds of Zoroaster and Brahma, of Buddha and Confucius, and to the more modern one of Mahomet, in many Christian centres of thought. There are Mahometan converts in London and Liverpool, Buddhists in Paris, Brahman Theosophists in Boston. Whatever may be said concerning the moral motives of these people whom one is tempted to call perverts, concerning actual deceptions practised by some of their leaders, and that mysterious quality called enthusiasm which professes to account for much while it accounts for nothing, it must be confessed that those who have deserted nominal Christianity for the active profession of so-called pagan creeds, are very far from being unlearned or unthinking men and women. To class them along with spiritualists, and lay their strong delusion at the door of Satan, is by no means to solve the question, for the reason that the Arch Enemy is too conversant with human nature and himself too cunning to bait his hook with a palpable lie.