

CASUISTRY OF BUDDHISM.

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[This paper is designed by the author as an important addition to a former article.—EDITOR.]

In the article "Buddhism and Romanism," in the September, 1891, number of the REVIEW, Buddhism was said to be without any authorized system of casuistry by which vices are explained away. But if there is no authorized system of casuistry, certainly the spirit of Jesuitism pervades the moral writings of the Buddhists of Ceylon, as translated by Spence Hardy in his "Manual of Buddhism." In that very keen critique, which every missionary in the far East should read, "Edwin Arnold as Poetizer and as Paganizer," Professor W. C. Wilkinson quotes at length from Hardy. Many of the evasions and excuses framed by Buddhists for the evil-doer anticipate the very subterfuges planned by Roman Catholic moralists many centuries later. For example: "When a command is given to take the life of a particular person, and that person is killed, it is murder; but if another person be killed instead, it is not murder." This sounds quite like Liguori, the highest ethical authority of Romanism, who maintains that "he who kills A, meaning to kill B, is not bound to make compensation, because the homicide is casual and inadvertent as regards B;" and that if a man intends to burn the house of an enemy and by mistake burns that of a friend, the incendiarism is a very light offence. When time, place, method, and various circumstances must all be just as the evil-doer *intended* or else his act is not a crime, there will be plenty of loopholes through which the Buddhist or Romanist criminal may disappear.

Says Professor Wilkinson: "Christian morality at least does not confuse itself, defeat itself, first with absurd exaggerations and then with absurd extenuations of requirement, or perhaps with subtle qualifying clauses." But this is the Buddhist method. Among four things necessary to constitute a lie, "*there must be the discovery by the person deceived that what has been told him is not true.*" That is to say, it is not a lie unless you are found out! Authorized Roman Catholic teachers make similar terms for the expert liar. When a crime is "altogether hidden"—that is, known only to the criminal and one witness—the witness is not merely permitted, but is actually bound to say that the accused did not commit it (Liguori, Theologia Moralis, iv. 152 sq.). This low ethical aim—not to prevent sin, but to prevent its discovery—appears also in the discussion of theft. If one steals fifty dollars at one time it is "a grave sin," for it might be discovered; but if at many different times one steals small sums, amounting to fifty dollars in all, each single theft is "a light sin" (Theologia Moralis, iv. 54).

The more one studies Buddhism and Romanism, the more he sees the mongrel character of each system, each containing many elements in common, whose origin can be fairly traced only to the father of lies.