

prayer is the means of exit, by a process long, elaborate, and involved, out of a conscious, sentient, and personal existence, which is conceived of as only evil, into the impersonal state of *Nirvana*, where all individuality is merged and sunk in infinite abstraction. The thought of prayer as a commerce of soul with a personal God does not enter into the calculation. Hence the mechanical character which the whole transaction assumes, which, albeit it trenches on the ground of *corrupted Christian systems*, has nothing in common with *spiritual Christianity*.

Another feature, strongly marked in the Thibetans, is their insatiable desire to read the future. The forms of divination among them are many, and the belief in these general. One of the leading forms of foretelling the future is by means of a sheep's shoulder-blade, which the diviner, after reciting a prayer puts in the embers to burn. When thoroughly charred it is carefully removed; the cracks in the bone are closely examined, the longitudinal cracks being taken to represent the journey and the transversal ones the events that are to befall. In addition to this a hazy form of divination is practised by prayer-beads, but this is only resorted to for light on minor matters, such as the recovery of a strayed horse or similar trifle. There are also fortune-telling books which adepts use, having a string attached to each leaf. These strings the performer twists together, and then asks his client to select one. The leaf is then read by the diviner, who, thus fortified, makes oracular reply. To get a daily peep into the future is almost as needful to the Thibetan as his necessary food.

The whole land of Thibet swarms with priests. According to the Chinese estimate, for every family in Thibet there are three *lamas*—an estimate which Mr. Rockhill accepts as approximately correct, for in a journey of 600 miles he passed "forty lamaserics, in the smallest of which there were 100 monks, and in five of them from 2000 to 4000." The wealth as well as the management of the country is largely in the hands of the *lamas*. These priests have a keen eye to business, discharge supreme legal functions, and are virtual rulers in the land; for though they do not bear direct rule in every province outside the kingdom of Lassa, yet in all parts they are *de facto* masters. "Their landed property is enormous, and their serfs (*mi-ser*) and bondsmen (*ts'c'-yo*) swarm."

Lassa, the capital of Thibet, is the acknowledged centre and headquarters of the priestly system. This applies to Mongolia and Manchuria also, as well as to the Kalmuks in Chinese Central Asia. Officially Thibet has no king, the office having been abolished by the Chinese in 1751 and a council of ministers appointed, over which a lama presides who is popularly known as King of Thibet, and whose actual rule is quite up to the level of the appellation. This office is elective, and the incumbent is chosen in turn from one of the three great lamaserics—Drebung, Gadān, or Séra. There are four Lamaist sects—the yellow, red, black, and white. The yellow bears the palm in number and influence, and the red serves as a good second. In ritual and dogma these sects differ little from one