

## The Kernel of False Religions.

BY S. C. MITCHELL.

Enmity is the kernel of false religions. This fact is not only attested by the evidences patent to-day among pagan peoples, but might also be inferred from what is known of the conditions of primitive society. To understand, however, the spirit that animated such religions, it is necessary, first of all, to rid our minds of the notion that there was any sort of connection in those early times between morality and religion. While it may not be correct to say that pagan religion antedated morality, it is beyond question that at first they stood apart from each other, not being associated in thought, much less in practice. Religion, so far from enforcing morality, did not even influence it. Bagehot thus characterizes the state of those early savages: "Not only had they no comfort, no convenience, not the very beginnings of an epicurean life, but their mind within was as painful to them as the world without. It was full of fear. They were afraid of everything; they were afraid of animals, of certain attacks by near tribes, and of possible inroads from far tribes. But, above all things, they were frightened of 'the-world'; the spectacle of nature filled them with dread. They fancied there were powers behind it which must be pleased, soothed, flattered, and this very often in a number of hideous ways."

### ENMITY BETWEEN MAN AND GOD.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God." This saying of Paul, twisted, to be sure, would have been seized by the savage as expressive of the very nerve of his relation to the higher powers, and vice versa. Witness the Hindu mother casting her babe into the Ganges in order to placate the gods, or the devotee holding his arms in a certain position for years until it withers, thinking thereby to win the favor of heaven. Such instances imply that between man and God there was a great gulf fixed.

Now, over against this enmity set the feeling of love which Jesus makes the core of his religion. "He felt himself," says Sabatier, "to be in a filial relation towards God, and he felt that God was in a paternal relation towards him. The name of Father that he gives to God continually, exclusively, unquely; the name of Son that he takes to himself; the nature of his adoration; the form of his prayer; the motive of his devoted obedience unto death; the way in which he works his cures, hails his first successes, accepts the apparent failure of his work, and explains the incredulity of his people—all announce, manifest, and confirm that intimate relation, that communion and union of spirit, by which a father prolongs his life in the life of his child, and the child feels himself to live by the life of his father. This was clearly the essential element in his consciousness, the distinctive and original feature of his piety; it is also the principle and essence of Christianity."

Twice within a single chapter does John, condensing into a sentence of three words his Master's spirit, declare: "God is love." The same truth Jesus pictured to man in the prodigal son—the most natural and human, as well as sublime, of all his parables. Have we not, however, even in this failed to understand the all-inclusiveness of God's love? We have dwelt upon the Father's love for the prodigal, but is not even more wonderful his love for the callous saint, the elder brother? Both were embraced within the bosom of the father, the one in spite of his stiffly-laced and self-complacent spirit, no less than the other, in spite of his overt wantonness. The command, "Love your enemies," is grounded on the largeness of God's love; "for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust"—words whose meaning, I fear, we have not yet begun to fathom.

### ENMITY BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE.

"The better religions," observes a suggestive writer, "have had a great physical advantage, if I may say so, over the worse. They have given what I may call a confidence in the universe. The savage, subjected to a mean superstition, is afraid to walk simply about the world; he cannot do this because it is ominous, or he must do that because it is lucky, or he cannot do anything at all till the gods have spoken and given him leave to begin. But under the higher religions there is no similar slavery and no similar terror."

All asceticism, whether pagan or puritan, has its root here—an inherited distrust of nature. Science in such an age was regarded as an impertinent attempt to pry into the secrets of the gods, which was rightly overtaken by the fate of Empedocles. The old geographies used to give a picture of the upstretched giant hand which the ancients supposed to be just beyond the Straits of Gibraltar, the limit of the known world. Greater than all the other obstacles which Columbus had to overcome—poverty, listlessness of princes, frail crafts, mutinous crews, and treacherous seas—was this dread, which, like an avenging angel, kept watch at the portal of the unknown in nature.

Contrast with this view of enmity existing between man and nature Jesus' conception and attitude. In the lilies he finds the lesson of calm trust which yields the beautiful and strong life. In God's care for the sparrows he learns the divine concern for man. Facing

death—that mystery of the universe which alone still inspires in us the self-same dread felt by the savage in presence of the cataclysms of nature—he was serene, "having loosed the pangs of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." Only gradually have we been able to enter into this spirit of love toward nature. But now it is beginning, as is newly acquired nature sense, to show its vital power, not in fruitful sciences alone, but also in literature, in education, and in philosophy. "The circle of my mental life, which opens with the conflict of these two terms—consciousness of the ego, experience of the world—is completed by a third, in which the other terms are harmonized; the sense of their common dependence upon God."

### ENMITY BETWEEN MAN AND MAN.

A hermit nation is to-day an anomaly; but in embryonic States, in the times before the national nucleus had reached consistency, everything depended upon tribal aloofness. Only by being a peculiar people, only by heeding the injunction, "Be ye separate," was it possible for saving custom to take shape and for a sense of solidarity to be awakened, upon which things the very existence, as well as the character, of the nation hinged. Commerce was then regarded as contamination, not to speak of closer bonds, such as intermarriage or political alliance. "As a matter of fact," writes one, "all great nations have been prepared in privacy and in secret. They have been composed far away from all distraction. Greece, Rome, and Judea were framed each by itself, and the antipathy of each to men of different race and different speech is one of their most marked peculiarities. Inter-course with foreigners then broke down in States the fixed rules which were forming their characters." A stranger was an enemy.

Primitive religions answered to this narrow conception. The gods not merely shared in the provincial prejudice, but they were the embodiment of the race hatreds. Hence it was that the idols were often placed in the van of an invading army, since it was believed that they would strike terror into the enemies of their chosen people. Deborah describes in her jubilant song the heathen practice: "They chose new gods; there was war in the gates;" just as Congress would now make an appropriation as a first step in preparing for war. To win over or to capture the gods of aliens was equivalent to turning the enemy's guns against him. This is evidently the underlying purpose of the Philistines in seizing the ark of God. The story of the Trojan horse turns likewise upon the self-same prevalent belief. On the Palatine, in Rome, today is seen the ancient altar dedicated by Calvulus to "The Unknown God," the name of the deity being unrevealed in order to keep the enemy from knowing him and thereby winning over his support.

Hatred of foreigners, however, did not exhaust the functions of false gods. As they protected the national custom against assaults from without, so they visited with wrath those within the State who sought to change or tamper with this custom, deemed as sacred to heaven as it was indispensable to tribal integrity. Hence a single man by disobedience, or by attempting innovations, might bring down the anger of the divinities upon the whole people. "The quaking bystanders in a superstitious age would have slain an isolated bold man in the beginning of his innovations." Socrates, in the most intellectual age of the most intellectual city of antiquity, fell a victim to this notion, that one man might attract the wrath of the gods upon all. The fatal allegation against him was that he sought to introduce new gods.

From these stygian depths into what a heaven do we emerge when we turn to the teachings of Jesus as to the true relations of man to man! "His filial piety became a fraternal piety. The first commandment, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,' necessarily gave birth to the second; 'And thy neighbor as thyself.' The Father, who lives in me, lives equally in my neighbor; he loves him as much as he loves me. I ought, therefore, to love him in my neighbor as well as in myself. This paternal presence of God in all human souls creates in them, not only a link, but a substantial and moral unity, which makes them members of one body, whatever may be the external and contingent differences which separate them. From the Fatherhood in heaven flows the brotherhood on earth. From a relation of righteousness and love towards God springs a similar relation between men."

Such is the supreme place which love holds in the religion of Jesus, negating the false feeling of hatred, or establishing rather its polar opposite. Here is the throb of Christ's power, which has regenerated the heart of man, which has transformed society, which has given us the mastery over nature, which pulsates in missionary enterprises to the remotest quarters of the earth. Truly "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."—Religious Herald.

## Odds and Ends of Missionary Life in India.

Were it not for the unspeakably sad side of many things that take place in the experience of every missionary he would have many amusing things of which to write. But with the awful condition that the people are

now in and the awful doom that awaits them beyond facing us, the temptation to jest about these things is driven far from any breast which feels in any way the woes of his fellows. The comical side is sometimes seen, but it is only for a moment, for one glimpse of the future of these people erases the smile from the face and dries up the well of mirth in the heart.

We came here about two weeks ago and have been holding up, before these sin-cursed people, a crucified Saviour that they may look and live. It was our intention when coming here to visit the villages twice daily. For the first few days we went out in the morning but the people gathered around us so in the afternoon and evening that we had all we could do to preach to those who came to us. For a while we hoped that the truth was really taking hold of their hearts. One day we were told that eighteen people of this village were coming for baptism. You can imagine better than I can write what hopes arose in our hearts. We labored to show them that baptism was not going to take away sin. Knowing as we do the confidence they put in the ceremonies of their own religion, with a good deal of hope we labored to lead, as we thought, their willing minds into the truth. How short-lived were our hopes destined to be! Yet since they were false hopes we rejoice in the brevity of their existence.

The revelation came about in this way. Their spokesman told us that they were all coming but as their folks would caste them off they wanted me to give them rupees two hundred or about \$67 and suggested that we pay it at once. This was enough to show us the cause of their show of interest. Our hopes disappeared and our hearts grew sick. They were as disappointed as we were when we told them that we did not and could not buy souls for the Kingdom of Heaven. They are accustomed to bantering and so they thought they would try it on in this case. They thought the amount they asked was very small for so many people. After trying to persuade us to pay over the money and also after several reductions in the price, followed each time on our part with an exhortation to repent of their sins, they finally offered themselves for rupees 15 or about \$5. When told that I would not give one piece (one-sixth part of a cent) they were highly indignant that we should count them of no value and decided that it was not worth while to become Christians. To this we replied that it was not worth being Christians in name unless they had repented of their sins and believed in Jesus. They were also assured that it was not only worth while but that it was impossible to be Christians without the New Birth. As soon as they found that their cunningly devised plan to get money was exploded their interest and friendship turned to hate and abuse.

Scene No. II opens by a Canadian and a few Indian fellow Christians with lantern in hand going to a street. We are soon there. We open a gospel cannonade against the forts of darkness by singing a hymn. One brother tries to speak but the opposition is so strong that not much headway is made. A verse or two of another hymn is sung when your humble servant undertakes to warn them to flee from the wrath to come and point them to the "Lamb of God," by weaving the story of his own salvation into the gospel message for them. For a time all goes well to all appearance. The people seem to listen and some heard the message. However, the adversary all the while is gathering his forces. This time he has planned to make his attack with a noiseless gun and smokeless powder and from the rear. So it came to pass while all was still but for the joyful sound of the gospel, a stone from the enemy found a stopping place against the back of your missionary. It was so small and came with such little force that no attention was paid to it. In a few minutes more another stone much larger and with a force that left an impression, struck me in the back. This time I turned my head to find out what it meant, and in doing so saw the devil's catapult in flight. By running he published his guilt. But as we had come on the Lord's business we had no time to attend to anything else. Those who would hear must hear. The devil must not side track us. When our message was delivered we started for our stopping place, followed by a howling mob but no more stones.

On the following Sunday I was speaking to a man from that street and told him about being stoned. He asked me if I knew the man, and when told that I did, he asked me why I did not have him put in jail. Then followed the story of wicked men abusing and smiting the Son of God, and how he not only did not put them in jail and have them punished, but that when he was dying by their wicked hands he prayed that God would forgive them, and what he had done he left us commandment to do likewise. This was to them a great surprise and wonder. They never heard the like before, and admitted that a man who did this must be God and that his teachings must be the true religion.

This morning was the last time, for this tour, that we were to go to these villages and so felt perhaps more than ever the necessity of going to the right place. After prayer we felt led to go to two villages. To one of which I had never been and to the other we had gone but once. On the way I was especially anxious that God would