

emit a real radiance, which proves helpful to men as they stumble in the darkness, because that radiance is borrowed from Him who is the world's true and universal Light. "He lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" and so, there is some truth to be found in all religions, because in the heart of every man there is a lamp placed, which is watched over and guarded by God. Men tell us sometimes, that the maxims and precepts of the Bible can be culled from the Vedic hymns and from the writings of Confucius. Well, what of it? Certainly, Christ did not borrow from India or from China. The great world lay in the light of His teaching just as in that of the teachings of Confucius and Socrates. No man claims that he introduced any change in the constituents of moral law or government. It was the substitution of the light of the sun for that of the moon, or of an Oriental lamp. Other religions than Christianity have taught the immortality of the soul, and probably the finest philosophical argument ever evolved was evolved more than two thousand years ago by the most spiritual of all Grecian philosophers—Plato. The belief in the immortality of humanity is wrought into man's being, and he believes it for the same reason as the heart beats and the lungs expand by action of the air—because he cannot help it. And yet the faith was only tentative and shadowy until the Lord Jesus Christ came, with the true Light burning on His lips, and shining from His form. The doctrine of immortality has been taught by many in the ages that have passed away, but Jesus Christ was the only one who so taught it that men were compelled to hear and believe. It seems to me that we are forced to go one step further; for when we come to analyse the idea of authority we find that true authority lies in the ability of the teacher to quicken the intelligence, and to awake a responsive echo to the idea he is endeavouring to impart. And so with our Lord Jesus Christ. The fundamental fact of all moral and spiritual life is the vital and indestructible relation that every human heart sustains to Jesus Christ. He "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." He lighteth every man because He is the true Light, from whom all reason, everywhere and always, derives its energy and radiance. He "lighteth every man that cometh into the world," so that we are bound to assume that no man has ever lived who has not had sufficient light whereby he might have walked in safety. Every man has the light of reason and conscience, which, however unsatisfactory, is that which is given to him from God; and however unsatisfactory and fragmentary its guidance may be, man cannot afford to ignore it altogether. There are some lands where the gospel never has been heard; else why does this Society exist? else why do we distribute Bibles? But there is nevertheless sin in these places; and where there is sin there is a knowledge of right and wrong. In other words, everywhere there is a recognition of the supremacy of moral law, and because the word of God cannot be broken, because His government is always one and the same, therefore we insist and conclude that where moral law exists, there grace is present. Therefore we conclude that no wrong has been done to those who lived and passed away before Christ came into the world, and all those who have lived and passed away since His advent, without hearing the blessed message of His ministry to men, because so much of light as is essential to responsibility belongs to every man even by virtue of the creative act of God which makes him man. But if it be true, that personal accountability is not dependent upon that knowledge of God which is taught in the Scriptures, some of you may ask the question—"why support our missionary organizations?" You may argue that it would be just as well to leave men as they are and to disband our missionary and our Bible societies. I would reply that we should continue the efforts we are making for the same reason that we avail ourselves of the privileges and advantages offered us by railways, and since their introduction have dispensed with the old-fashioned stage-coach that we were wont to use in years that are passed; or, for the same reason that we snuff out our candles when the sun rises; because the radiance of the sun is infinitely better than that of the