

communications, table rappings, magnetism, mesmerism, and mahatmas. Out of common animal worship they rushed into mystery more unfathomable than any Christianity ever pretended to, and more unsatisfying than the apples of Sodom, and now-a-days they call this rubbish by the high-sounding name of Theosophy. Christianity has nothing to fear from Theosophy. Cicero said that there is nothing so absurd but what some philosopher had said it. And so it may be that there is nothing too ridiculous for some nominal Christian to make himself a fool over. Yet, remember, polytheism in its old form, is the worship of man by man.

Can the worship of man by his fellow go farther than, let us say, in Brahma, India? Yes, it can go, and has gone very much farther. About 500 B.C. there arose, it is supposed in North-Eastern India, a prince prophesied Sidhartha, whom men called Gotama or the honorable master, and he taught a new religion or revived one that had been long dead. Morally, it was a good religion, that called the internecine warriors of India to peace, and asserted the sanctity of human life, a doctrine which Buddhist China and Japan are now honoring in the breach rather than in the observance. It did not at first rebuke the taking of animal life nor the eating of animal food, for Gotama lost his life in his eightieth year by a too full meal of pork. But its motto was peace on earth, and for a time its moral victories were marvellous. It was a clean religion too, reproving the sensual orgies of the creeds that went to make up Brahmanism, so that Asoka, the Buddhist Constantine, in his pillar and rock edicts, tells how, blushing, he repented his former years of uncleanness and bloodshed. Yet, as Max Muller says, 'The purest morality next to that of the Bible, was taught by an atheistical sect.' The Buddhists are atheists; they do not believe in God. This was

the result of a revolt against Brahman pretensions, for Gotama was no Brahman; he was of the warrior caste, a Kshattriya. He said very sensibly—'You Brahmans worship your ancestors and great men of the past, as if great men belong only to the past. I believe in the continuance of true greatness in all ages. Whatever man has been, man can be. The truly great man is the moral man, the man of merit. Such were some of your ancestors, and by virtue of merit they became what you call gods, and what we call Buddhas. Any man who will enter the path of life, and through endless transmigration will continue to acquire merit, may become a Buddha, or, as you say, a god.' The Brahmans were conservative. They had several thousand gods already, and saw no necessity for increasing the Pantheon with the names of modern saints. Hence, they and the Buddhists fought until Ceylon became the last refuge of the logical atheists in India. The Buddhists believe in penance and in purgatory, in indulgences which money may buy, and in other side roads to heaven, but their creed is that every man who has the desire and the moral strength to persevere in the path of life, may acquire in course of time sufficient merit to become divine. As a matter of course all men do not become gods. Many become devils, and others less active fill the various chambers of the Buddhist hell.

If the essential principles of Buddhism were operative, there would be no war between Buddhist China and Buddhist Japan, for peace is the chief essential. What has Christianity to fear from Buddhism? She has to fear that the nominally Christian fool who says in his heart there is no God, may become a nominally Buddhist fool, and ask the world to watch him in the evolution of his divinity. This is weak, but, on the theoretically moral side, as distinguished from the theological, the Buddhist is strong. His morals are al-