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IS CHRISTIANITY PART OF THE LAW?

Some years ago some observations were offered in this journal under the above caption (see vol. 46, p. 81), and it seems, in view of a recent decision, an opportune time to recur to the subject. In the article above referred to, it was pointed out that of recent years there had been a gradual change in the attitude of the Courts to those who denied or impugned the Christian faith, and the conclusion then arrived at, was that, though the law would not actively assist in any way the impugning or denial of the Christian religion, it would no longer condemn persons as criminal who published books or spoke against Christianity, provided they observed a decent regard for morality and the feelings of others; and that, in consequence, though contracts for the purpose of spreading teaching inimical to the Christian religion would not be enforced by a Court of law, yet arguments against the Christian religion would no longer be punished as blasphemous so long as the language employed was not indecent or intemperate.

The policy of the law as then understood was in accord with those principles of toleration which have come to be generally accepted by English speaking people, but it was also conservative of that which was regarded as the animating principle which lies at the root of our institutions, viz., the Christian religion. We were professedly a Christian people, our civilization has its most salutary foundations in our recognition of Christian principles in all relations of life, political and domestic. At the same time those principles are to be enforced and promoted, not by persecution or prosecution of those who dissent from them, but by reason and persuasion. But, while those who seek to undermine those principles were to be tolerated, they could not, accord-