

of study. Parents place the old Greek mythologies in the hands of their children without hesitation.

By the same means should the mythologies of the Orient be disenchanting. They only need to be understood in order to render it impossible for Christian communities to be scared by any specious charms with which popular writers may clothe them.

Meanwhile the literatures in which the false religions have been preserved are not without instructiveness. The poetry and philosophy of Hinduism furnish fields of interesting research. The ethico-political system of Confucius and the lofty, though impracticable, ideals of the early Taoism are fruitful in suggestion even when they fail to win assent. Altogether the panorama of the world's religions, the spectacle of tireless and universal struggle with the great questions of man's origin and destiny, of the being, character and relations of deity, when well considered, cannot fail to expand all one's ideas of the solemn issues of human life. It reveals the scope and the real dignity and pathos of man's history, and enlists a broader and a warmer sympathy for those who dwell in utter darkness or grope in only a penumbral light.

But it is a mistake to suppose that a general or cursory knowledge of false systems is quite sufficient. A half knowledge is often positively misleading. Men who half understand Buddhism, for example, are exposed to many misapprehensions. They may conceive the erroneous notion that the system of to-day is identical with that of the early authorities; or that one-third of the race are its votaries, or they may confound the overwrought legends of the "Light of Asia" with the real history of Gautama.

There is danger also of drawing too dark a picture. It were a grave mistake to suppose that because heathen systems are false, it is impossible to do them injustice.

Skeptical writers in their advocacy of the Oriental faiths have made abundant use of the misrepresentations which Christian writers and preachers with more zeal than knowledge have unconsciously put upon heathenism.

Where the popular Christian idea has presented only a caricature amounting to little more than simple fetichism, the apologists have presented subtle and profound philosophies. Where well-meaning people have felt that they could scarcely speak too strongly and unqualifiedly of the debasement of heathenism, the apologists have surprised their readers with the reproduction of beautiful maxims of morality. Where the masses of Christians have credited whole nations with the stupidity of worshipping mere idols, some skilful defender has shown those idols to be only symbols of some indwelling conception of deity and has drawn skilful parallels between pagan idolatry and the image worship of the Christian Church.