

THE DIVINE CHALLENGE

religious condition of these great peoples, what the conclusions of the intellect on religious subjects which they had reached and accepted?

The answer may be given in a single sentence; in each case religion had totally broken down.

For the Jew religion had become narrower and narrower until it was a mere piece of gorgeous and empty ritual. Its theory of the divine government of the universe had become incredible. Amid the millions of men and women in the world who vaguely felt after the secret of virtue, it would appear that God cared only for the Jew. To be a son of Abraham was to have an inalienable claim on heaven, and, according to the Pharisee's view of the case, quite apart from any righteousness of conduct. God was thus merely a tribal God, and the whole universe was administered in the special interest of the Jew. A great religion when it was enunciated on Sinai, a powerful religion when it gripped the mind and conscience of a fugitive race in their early struggles, a true religion when it was sincerely believed; it had now lost all its saving salt of sincerity, had become a fetish, and ministered less to human virtue than to human impiety, arrogance, and exclusiveness.

Among the Greeks also religion had totally broken down. The worship of mere physical beauty was universal, and when Socrates prayed that the Gods would give him "beauty of soul," he was not under-