

church or to chapel on Sundays." If you were to ask any intelligent and unsophisticated Hindu peasant the same question, he would answer in almost the self-same spirit, "Oh, it is doing poojah regularly, and paying your dues every day to Mahadeo." If you were to ask any simple-minded African savage, he would similarly reply, "It is giving the gods flour, and oil, and native beer, and goat-mutton." And finally if you were to ask a devout Italian contadino, he would instantly say, "It is offering up candles and prayers to the Madonna, attending mass, and remembering the saints on every festa."

And they would all be quite right. This, in its essence, is precisely what we call religion. Apart from the special refinements of the higher minds in particular creeds, which strive to import into it all, according to their special tastes or fancies, a larger or smaller dose of philosophy, or of metaphysics, or of ethics, or of mysticism, this is just what religion means and has always meant to the vast majority of the human species. What is common to it throughout is Custom or Practice : a certain set of more or less similar Observances : propitiation, prayer, praise, offerings : the request for divine favours, the deprecation of divine anger or other misfortunes : and as the outward and visible adjuncts of all these, the altar, the sacrifice, the temple, the church ; priesthood, services, vestments, ceremonial.

What is not at all essential to religion in its wider aspect—taking the world round, both past and present, Pagan, Buddhist, Mohammadan, Christian, savage, and civilised—is the ethical element, properly so called. And what is very little essential indeed is the philosophical element, theology or mythology, the abstract theory of spiritual existences. This theory, to be sure, is in each country or race closely related with religion under certain aspects ; and the stories told about the gods or God are much mixed up with the cult itself in the minds of worshippers ; but they are no proper part of religion, strictly so called. In a single word, I contend that religion, as such, is essen-