

Some good thing, some truth that appeals to the reasonable part of man, must lie in these ancient religions to account for the hold they have retained upon millions of minds for centuries, and secondly for their power to seduce from their faith some nominal Christians of to-day. In making such an allowance, we do not detract from the superlative excellence of Christianity, nor call in question its exclusive claim where its principles are properly understood, but we learn to appreciate the strength of that resistance which thinking millions have offered for ages to the herald of the cross whose cry is still 'O rock, rock, when will thou break?'

Down to the present day, Christianity has suffered one and only one great defeat. Under like conditions it may yet meet with another. That defeat was the almost universal apostacy which followed the Mahometan conquest through the centuries between the False Prophet and the settlement of the Ottoman Turk in Europe. When Mahomet arose, Christianity was dead save in name in the East. Theological disputes on the one hand, idolatry and will worship on the other, with gross deprivation of morals, had taken away her life's blood and left her a corrupting carcase. Her condition was that of the Church of Sardis, with the mere name of life. Therefore, when a vigorous young nation arose, fired with religious ardor, believing firmly in divine sovereignty, accepting the prophethood of Moses and Jesus, inculcating temperance, and hating idolatry, its moral force was more than the enfeebled strength of Christianity could withstand. From the Atlantic coast of Africa to India, and from the Caucasus to Aden, it went down, and great was the fall of it. There are many who question whether the world was not a gainer rather than a loser by the change, for it does not follow that everything which calls itself by the Christian name is 'ipso facto,' superior

to a non-Christian creed. The Christianity of many communities during the worst part of the middle ages was inferior in moral and spiritual character to the religion of Mahometan and Jew. The Abyssinian Church of to-day is Christian, but few would care to occupy the position of its apologist. A thing may call itself by the Christian name and even attribute divine honors to Christ, while its concepts of Godhead and of duty may be more un-Christlike than those of so-called heathen. Considering how often, and in how many places, the church has sunk thus low, it is a marvel that the defeats of Christianity have been so few. There must be something wonderfully strong and buoyant in a creed the adherents of which, all the world over have done their best to make shipwreck of. This they do by failing in various ways to realize that Christianity is the personality of Christ. The personality is twofold, to use the language of the Shorter Catechism, telling us what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.'

There was a time when the incomplete system of Christianity called Judaism, stood in opposition to but one other religious system, existing in various forms. This was Polytheism, essentially one in Syria and Egypt, in Arabia and Assyria, in India and in Greece. In these different lands the supreme and the subordinate deities bore diverse names and were clothed with diverse attributes, but their raison d'être was the same in every case. The religious people of these lands worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, and the creature served by them was no mere stock or stone, mountain or river, but a personality in which they took a personal, tribal, or national interest. The ancestor worship of the Chinese, the deification of Egyptian Pharaohs, the apotheosis of Roman emperors, like the canonization of Romish saints, are ex-