

## WHY CHRISTIANITY HAS TRIUMPHED.

In estimating the population of the world at fifteen hundred millions, a fraction less than one-third, including Greek and Roman Catholics, Protestants, Armenians, Jews, and Abyssinians, are catalogued as followers of Christianity. Of the thousand millions remaining, about three hundred millions, chiefly Chinese, profess Confucianism and Taoism, one hundred and forty millions are classified as devotees of Hindooism and Buddhism, one hundred and eighty millions of Mohammedanism, and fourteen millions, principally Japanese, of Shintoism; the rest are Polytheists in various degrees of barbarism.

Worship is thus instinctive, inherent, and universal in the human race. Every religion has its own God, its code, and its creed.

As nations advance in intelligence and morals, gods are dethroned, codes modified, and creeds abandoned.

The God of the Puritans, Who was a consuming fire, Who hated sinners and condemned them to eternal torment in a hell of fire and brimstone, has gone with Jove and the other mythological monsters of antiquity to the lumber-room of history. In His place we have now the paternal reign of a constitutional Monarch, a wise and benevolent Legislator, Who is subject to the limitations of the statutes which He himself has made.

Sermons that congregations heard a century ago with awe and reverence would now excite indignation and abhorrence. Doctrines once deemed indispensable to personal salvation are rejected as an insult to the Supreme Being.

The clergyman who should announce his belief in the predestination of sinners to perdition, or the eternal damnation of unbaptized infants, would be an ecclesiastical outlaw. Man has outgrown these horrible fictions and has invested God with higher and nobler attributes.

Some philosopher has said that everyone's idea of God is an indefinitely enlarged conception of himself, and that we make our heaven and hell.

In any event, the human element prevails largely in all the great religions of the earth. They are imperfect and defective. They are disappointing in their results. If of divine origin, they do not accomplish what might be expected. Revelation discloses too much and not enough. Inspiration leaves unsaid what we most desire to know.

Vice, crime, sin, and evil are rampant. Miserable multitudes everywhere are sunken in poverty, ignorance, and unspeakable degradation. To assume, therefore, as many that those who do not accept the social and political ideal of Christendom are pagans, and that all who reject our and theology are heathen, is, perhaps, the most impudent exhibition of that intellectual arrogance which is the characteristic of our race.

In considering the relative rank and value of the four great religious systems, they must be judged by their effect upon society and their relations to the history of mankind. The spiritual element must be eliminated, because this concerns the individual exclusively, and is a matter where the stranger

intermeddleth not. It is a vast theme of stupendous proportions, of which the wisest must speak with diffidence.

One of the promises of the Decalogue is length of days "in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," and national longevity is evidence of the smiles of approving Providence.

The believers in Confucius have no reason to distrust their faith in his teachings.

The history of China goes back into the twilight of time. That vast empire has resisted the vicissitudes of destiny and the fatigues of the centuries. It has witnessed the birth and growth and decay of historic kingdoms, and survives in venerable grandeur to tempt the cupidity and injustice of nations that were unborn when China was in the maturity of its power.

The Hindoo has perhaps reached loftier heights of abstract metaphysical speculation; but neither Buddhism, nor Confucianism, nor Mohammedanism, nor Judaism, has set up the ideal standard for mankind to follow.

It is claimed by the followers of Christianity that no other religion has exerted such immense influence upon government, society, and civilization. Its sanction rests entirely on the life, example, teachings, and death of Jesus of Nazareth, for whom theologians claim much more than He ever claimed Himself. He was poor, ignorant, and of dubious origin. He had no learning. It is not known that He could read or write. He left no manuscripts. His life to the age of thirty was passed in manual labor as a carpenter. His associates, male and female, were illiterate and obscure. He had no home, nor any domestic relations. He lived on alms, and led a harmlessly vagrant life, sometimes in solitude, and then wandering about in the fields among the mountains and by the sea, talking familiarly to His companions, to chance acquaintances,

and delivering informal discourses to the crowds of rustics that gathered occasionally at the reports of His miracles. He healed the sick and raised the dead.

He seemed to have special hatred for shams, pretenders, and hypocrites, and denounced them with violence; but to other sinners He was gentle and lenient. His public career was less than three years, and His recorded deeds and words would not fill two pages of a newspaper. They were repeated by word of mouth, and not permanently collected till nearly a century after His death.

His life was pure and blameless, and He was crucified rather as the victim of political prejudice than as a martyr for His religious opinions.

Whatever view may be held as to His divinity, He is the central character of human destiny, the one colossal figure of human history. Caesar and Herod and Pilate, the kings, conquerors, and philosophers of that day, are names. No one cares that they lived or died, but Christ remains the living and most potential force in modern society.

When He announced the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and the immeasurable value of the humblest human soul, He made kings and despots and tyrants impossible.

He laid the foundation of democratic self-government and the sovereignty of the people. From His teachings have come the emancipation of childhood, the elevation of woman, and our rich and splendid heritage of religious, civil, and constitutional liberty.

Indeed, without disparaging Confucius, Buddha, or Mohammed, it may be safe to assert that through Christianity alone has civilization come into the world. On the contin-

ued activity of its beneficent forces we must depend for its preservation; for the completion of man's conquest over Nature; for the realization of the dream of the universal Republic.