

the first who came out was covered all over with red hair like a shaggy fur, so that Esau would have resembled a young orangutan. The fact that the Edomites had more body-hair than the Israelites is suggested also in the story of Rebecca's stratagem in disguising Jacob, so that his father mistook him for Esau (Gen. xxvii. 16). The hairiness of the Edomites was no doubt much exaggerated in Israelitish legends.⁶⁸ We need not suppose that David's ancestors were completely coated with hair like our Miocene precursors, or that they were a hairy race like the Ainu of Japan; even the Ainu have not more body-hair than many Europeans, especially among the Russian peasantry; but the ancient Edomites may have had shaggy black hair covering the back and the chest.

The name *Edom* is explained in the story of Esau selling his birth-right for a lentil-soup, which we find in Gen. xxv. 29-34: Esau said to Jacob, Let me gulp down this red (or brown) stuff (Heb. *adóm*). A dish of lentils stewed with onions, rice, and oil, or small bits of meat and fat is still common in the East; the color of it is darkish-brown.⁶⁹ We may therefore conclude that the color of the Edomites was brown, and that David had an olive complexion and black hair.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE UNIMPORTANCE OF BEING CHRISTIAN.

BY JOHN DENMARK.

I TALKED not long ago with one of America's greatest Jewish leaders as he sat by the fireside with his family. His was an ideal home full of enlightenment and love. It was what we have learned to call a "Christian home." As we talked together of the problems of labor and social reform that confront us, I realized the true nobility and unselfishness of the man. Then the thought came to me, "How ridiculous it would seem for me to say that he was

(bean, German *Bohne*, apart). One of the men present thought this very clever; so, when he came home to dinner, he asked for some beans. He was told there were no beans, but he might have some peas. He said, All right, let me have some peas. He set one pea apart, and asked, What is this? When the family gave it up, he said triumphantly, Why, this is Napoleon!

⁶⁸ When we speak of some one *having been born in the purple* or *with a silver spoon in his mouth* or *on the wrong side of the blanket*, we do not expect a literal interpretation of these phrases.

⁶⁹ See Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 3, p. 95a; contrast Vol. 2, p. 28a.

damned for his unbelief while I was saved by my Christianity." He had more of love and patience and idealism than I would ever have. He could convert me to Judaism sooner than I could win him to Christianity.

But I did not try to convert him to Christianity because I realized the unimportance of being Christian.

What I felt has been tacitly agreed upon by most Christians for a long time. Proselyting for the Christian religion has become a lost art. I mean real proselyting. When young men and women who have been surrounded by church influences all their lives finally reach the age of decision, their entrance into organized Christianity is as automatic and inevitable as their entrance into society. In fact it is little else but an entrance into moral society under the careful guidance of anxious parents. Put the same kind of children with the same kind of parents into Arabia and the apples would fall as readily into Mohammedan baskets.

When Billy Sunday preaching in a Christian nation after Christianity has been on trial for nearly two thousand years succeeds in winning several thousand converts to Christianity he is hailed as a remarkable teacher. He is a remarkable teacher. His success stands out in striking contrast to the failure of almost every other evangelist who has had the courage to preach Christianity in all its nakedness.

It requires no special investigation to discover that most people in America are genuinely indifferent to all that conversion implies. They are quite heedless of the preachers' solemn question, "Where will you spend eternity?" They do not know where they will spend eternity and they are quite certain that Christianity will not enlighten them in the matter. In the South and especially among the foreign workingmen who operate many of our greatest industries, hundreds are buried without funerals, utterly scornful even in their grief of the churches' teaching concerning life and death.

In opposition to this wide-spread indifference there are two classes of preachers who are successful in their proselyting, modern and genial pastors who never preach Christianity, and the vaudeville evangelists who by their magnetic power shock people out of their normal littleness.

I belong to the first class. I have converted many people to my own conceptions of morality and religion with the help of Biblical phrases and the authority which the Church has given me, but I have never converted any one to the religion of Jesus Christ. For a long time I thought that I was a Christian evangelist. Now I

know that there are very few Christian evangelists, and that the astute businessmen and special pleaders who fill our city pulpits are converting men not to Christianity but to certain moral standards of optimism, honesty, self-confidence and ambition that will guarantee their success in the present social system. If I, as a city pastor, should suddenly declare that unless my congregation abandoned their earthly work, took no thought for the morrow, trusted in God so much that the food supply should be obtained by prayer to the Father who promised through his Son that every one who asked should receive, I would instantly be asked to resign.

Men would say that I was preaching insanity. The tragedy is that they would be right, and I would be Christian.

But the professional evangelists who are attempting to defend Christianity are a far more interesting study than the sensible city pastors. They are the true successors of St. Paul, earnest, enthusiastic, and successful, because they have reduced religion to a compact formula which even the most ignorant cannot mistake. How delightfully simple this formula is! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. For the rest, be good!

The character of these evangelists betrays them. Even the laity is beginning to be suspicious of that character. I have met many evangelists and heard many more give forth the sound and fury of gospel heat, and I have never yet discovered an effective evangelist who had a good education coupled with sane and careful judgment. The foremost representatives of proselyting Christianity are emotional calliopes who play upon the ignorance and emotional hunger of their audiences. Some of them are sincere with the sincerity created by personal power and exciting success—it is hard for successful men to disbelieve in themselves and their mission. Some of them are sincere with the sincerity of unadulterated ignorance. Many of them are emotionally and morally rotten, afraid to face the simplest doubt with candid analysis.

The character of the revivalists throws suspicion upon the value of their message. It is not the falsehood of that message which impresses the observer so much as the unimportance of it. That unimportance is due at least partially to the remoteness of the message of the Bible.

The Bible is not only incomprehensible to the average man: it is incomprehensible to most scholars. This is not because of any unusual depth of reasoning but because it is the work of contradictory, untrained minds, speaking a language which we do not completely understand, and setting forth a view of life which we can

appreciate only by the systematic stretching of a trained imagination. We cannot understand the Bible unless we can "put ourselves back" into Palestine and catch a glimpse of the world as it appeared to Jewish prophets and priests. And when, after years of special training, the scholar succeeds in realizing something of the real Biblical view-point, he sees how little vitality there is in the message which ancient Jewish sages bring to us.

Let me make my own confession in regard to the Bible. I have never enjoyed reading it until there was placed in my hands a modern English version that put in clear, twentieth-century phrases the chapters that in the old King James version had regularly put me to sleep on Sunday afternoon. The enjoyment then was short-lived. The effect of this modern-speech version was startling. When compared with the works of almost any successful writer of my experience, the Bible stood out as ineffably dull not only in its subject-matter but in its style. How pedantic were the epigrams of Jesus! How easily the American preacher could equal the letters of St. Paul if he chose to write letters to his flock! How puerile were the rhapsodies of Revelation!

When I saw how outworn superstition was freely mixed with mystical epigram, I was tempted to throw the whole thing away. But the deep, bass voice of my professor of homiletics kept ringing in my ears: "Young men, use the Scriptures! No book in the world has such power over the thoughts and imagination of men as the Bible. If you want to convince men of your opinions, use the Bible."

So I have used the Bible, although I have used it with an increasing sense of its real unimportance. I have seen many lives transformed by faith in the Bible but I have never yet seen a life transformed by the Bible. The distinction is important. The bones of St. Anna have never yet killed a germ or straightened a muscle, but the absolute conviction of scores of people that the straightening and germ-killing would be accomplished by the bones has sent back many an invalid to his home healed and jubilant.

When a careful study is made of these people to whom the Bible is preeminently important, it will be found in almost every case that they are either professionals who must use the Bible in the development of their careers or ignorant people whose range of reading is so limited that the narratives and exhortations of the Bible are interesting. In so many thousands of the homes of our grandfathers the Bible was the only serious and vital literature that it became for them a genuinely sacred book. It contained the only philosophy and

poetry they ever read. In a life of endless monotony and commonplaceness, it was the only thing that demanded their reverence.

But with expanding knowledge, the Bible is gradually taking its more natural place with the other dust-covered articles on the parlor table or the bottom shelf of the family bookcase. Nehemiah, Jehoshaphat, and their kind are described in the Sunday school and then promptly forgotten. In the life of America the Bible has already become an unimportant symbol, like a literary rosary, to be purchased and occasionally thumbed over but seldom to be read.

There is another and much more significant indication of the unimportance of Christianity in our time. The moral ideas of the race when frankly examined show practically no dependence upon the maintenance of Christianity.

Even in the questions of personal morals we do not follow distinctively Christian standards. The reason is that there are no Christian standards that can be effectively used in solving our ordinary moral problems.

If I consult the teachings of Jesus in regard to wine-drinking, I cannot discover whether I should be a total abstainer or not. Jesus did not know anything about American saloons. If I am anxious to know whether a divorced person can be married again, I find that the teachings of Jesus are ambiguous. Jesus was never married and he knew nothing of syphilis, low wages for working girls, or the feminist movement. If I hesitate before entering the army and ask myself, "Is it possible for a Christian to be a soldier?" I find that Jesus can readily be made into a Quaker pacifist or a terrible fighter for all just causes. If I turn to the teachings of Jesus to find standards for honesty while earning a living, I find nothing beyond vague moral generalizations. Jesus know nothing of modern trusts, cut-throat competition, and business honesty.

In the absence of definite Christian standards of morality, Christianity becomes merely a label for the particular moral system we want to endorse. No one can tell the world what Christianity really is, so everybody's religious business becomes nobody's religious business. What Christianity really is becomes of no importance. What the moral habits of the race are becomes all important.

The thing we call Christianity will live for many centuries because it has succeeded in gathering unto itself the greatest moral qualities of the race and in using those qualities to bolster up an antiquated analysis of life and an institution which still dominates our moral life. So it has become a mixture of the most practical and noble truths with the most ridiculous deceptions. In the same

breath we are asked to believe that we should love our neighbors, and that a certain fish swallowed Jonah and kept him in the submarine stateroom for three days. We are asked to accept the gospel of peace, and to believe that peace can come only through the belief by all humanity that God became completely incarnate in a certain Jewish prophet who lived many centuries ago.

As we confront this queer, impossible mixture, we cannot feel that it is important for any man to be a Christian. Obviously, the one important task of our time is to work for that society based upon more equal opportunity which is the ideal of all men whose faces "are turned toward the light." When we have glimpsed this larger vision, we cannot help but recognize the real irrelevancy of Christian proselyting.

But the unimportance of being Christian does not include the unimportance of having churches. Quite apart from its function as an agent for the Christian Gospel the church is an organization of human beings met together for the purpose of reflection, service, and fellowship. In the vast, arid desert of our unorganized life any church that brings the people together in fellowship is doing much for human life.

The old village tavern taught the people of the countryside what they knew of gossip, manners, and politics. That social function was connected with the flowing bowl, but even the temperance reformer must recognize that the old tavern supplied a fundamental social need of the community. It brought men from loneliness into comradeship at a time when no other institution served the purpose. It taught men to know each other and to know themselves. It laid the basis of democracy.

So the church is helping the cause of democracy by bringing men under one roof who think and talk together of the common moral problems of the race. It is often dominated by class interests and unspeakably hypocritical, but to the man who observes *all*, life is dominated by class interests and unspeakably hypocritical. The church is no worse and probably a little better than most of our institutions. It is the only moral forum in thousands of communities; it is the most natural meeting-ground for those who are striving to do good. Until we have a better forum for the development of a people's philosophy and ethics, blessed be the church!

It is upon this rock that the enemy of the church most often founders. He denounces the church and praises what he calls "real Christianity." If he had studied the situation, his attitude would be just the reverse.

I have become an enemy of the Christian church but not an enemy of the church. I believe in the church but deny Christianity. I believe in the church not because of what it is to-day but because of the possibilities of a great temple of religious aspiration and moral reflection in the midst of a community whose thoughts are bent on petty things.

Ostensibly the church was built on Christianity, but it is now built upon something far more profound. Its real foundation is the craving for fellowship and the universal desire of men to know the secrets of life. The real basis of the public school is not White's *Arithmetic* or any other particular text-book, but the desire of the people for general learning.

Likewise the church. Eject Christianity (as it has already been partially ejected), substitute the religion and morals which each community works out for itself and you have a church more powerful than ever. The demand for such an institution will never die. Humanity must always go to church to learn more of the great mysteries of life, death, and conduct. When the unimportance of Christianity and the importance of the churches have been realized, then the church will reshape itself to meet the needs of a wiser and a frankly un-Christian world.

But what of the importance of the clergy?

The average clergyman is attacked by his critics for being lazy and generally useless. He is maligned as a parasite and ridiculed as a sexless goody-goody. But he is what the people want him to be. So long as the people believe in Christianity, the preacher will be what he is.

The preacher is a professional friend. He aims to give advice and counsel concerning those puzzling personal problems that trouble us all. As the doctor specializes in the problems of the body and the lawyer in the diseases of the business system, so the preacher specializes in the problems of goodness. He is often as bunglesome in his treatment as the doctor and lawyer, but he will continue in his place until society obtains a substitute for him.

Philosophers and parents are the two classes of people who must be trained to take the preacher's place. And what a task! Our philosophy has entangled itself in such endless masses of verbiage that it does not even exist for the untrained thinker. Our family life is so completely broken up that the moral teachings of the home concern themselves only with traditional rudiments.

The preacher will be with us for a good many centuries to come. He gives to the masses of the people, especially in rural

regions, the only philosophy they ever get. He stands out in many communities as the sole representative of education applied to moral life. His philosophy may be, probably is, a lie, but the people will cling to it until they find some one else who is intelligent enough and interested enough to give them a superior analysis of life in a way that they can understand. To them the preacher will be important until they become intelligent enough to see how little of life's secret he knows and how imperfectly human he is.

WHAT THEOLOGUES DISCOVERED IN NEW YORK CITY.

BY THE REV. AMOS I. DUSHAW.

HARRY, the favorite student of the Semitic department, had one absorbing passion, and that was to become a professor of textual criticism. But occasionally he would also take his canoe and paddle out into the ocean of higher criticism, so that he could not only reconstruct the text from a grammatical point of view, but could also rearrange the books of the Bible from a historical point of view.

He knew far better than did the Hebrews of 2500 years ago, who wrote the Song of Moses, the Ten Commandments, or for that matter any of the books, chapters, and verses of the Old Testament. To become thoroughly proficient along his line, he not only studied Hebrew grammar, but he also studied most faithfully Syriac, Chaldaic, and Aramaic.

Many a night he burned the "mid-night oil" in ciphering out the hieroglyphics on some newly dug-up Tell-el-Amarna clay tablet. He was one of the seminary's idols. He expected to continue his studies for a season at the great universities abroad, the Sorbonne, Leipsic, and Berlin.

He was destined for a professorial chair.

William, or Bill, as he was called by his classmates, was an entirely different kind of a student. He was a favorite of the president of the seminary, and particularly of the wives of the professors.

Harry was a worker; Bill was a shirker. Harry loved his work; Bill wanted to get through as quickly and as easily as possible. He never aimed high in scholarship. Harry was working his