

before the individual conscience in that bluntness for which Mr. Crooker's *Plea for Sincerity* is the proper answer.

We have discussed the problem in an editorial¹ in *The Monist*, and it is not impossible that the writer in the *Outlook* has read it. Being bent upon explaining the nature of progress and the way in which mankind and human institutions grow, we have perhaps not insisted enough upon the fact that although we advise a liberal man to remain in the church even though he may outgrow the current interpretation of the dogmas, we do not mean thereby to foster insincerity, and in this respect we hail Mr. Crooker's *Plea for Sincerity in Religious Thought* as a splendid companion article, and hope that it will contribute its share toward the abolition of the burdens on the consciences of the clergy which pledge them to defend some special antiquated dogma, while the living present (as we suggested) would simply demand that they be pledged to the service of the truth, to speak the truth, and to live the truth.

When the ideals of liberty and brotherhood first dawned upon the French and when they saw that outrageous suppression permeated their institutions, they overthrew the government, abrogated the entire order of things and started life from the beginning. How differently did the English behave. They proceeded more considerably and slowly without a sudden rupture with the past, and in the long run they succeeded better. Evolution is better than revolution.

The various churches are of an historical growth, and there is no need of undoing the work of past ages. Freedom of conscience can most easily be introduced without enslaving the conscience of the representatives of a special church by a frank confession that the dogmas of the church are not the formulation of absolute truth, but historical documents of the evolution of the Church in its conception of the truth. There is no need of tampering with the various confessions; let them stand as they are, for they are witnesses as to what our ancestors believed to be absolutely true. But the fact that a certain confession of faith was moved and carried by a majority of the bishops of the Christian church, assembled at Nice, more than fifteen centuries ago, is no reason that at present, with fifteen centuries of progress and so much more light in our comprehension of the truth, we should be bound to formulate our religious truths in the same words.

We must remember that we are now living in a time of transition. We hope that the ordination vows will be either entirely abolished or so modified that the conscience of a progressive man will not be oppressed; and Mr. Crooker's *Plea for Sincerity* will help to open the eyes of those conservative leaders who do not see the situation in the same light.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM.

To the Editor of The Open Court:

Mr. Bonney's brief article in the September *Open Court* entitled "A Basis for Reform" pleases me exceedingly. It seems very strange that the people of this country have allowed their legislative bodies to remain practically in the same condition that they were in over a hundred years ago.

Last winter there was published a work entitled *Democracy*, written by Prof. Jas. H. Hyslop of Columbia University, which book I perused with deep interest

I wrote a letter to Professor Hyslop in which I detailed a plan for the creation

¹ "The Clergy's Duty of Allegiance to Dogma and the Struggle between World-Conceptions." *The Monist*. Vol. II, No. 2, pages 278-286.

of a commission to frame laws for the State of New York. I proposed to him that this commission should consist of from six to nine members, each of whom should be appointed for not less than twelve, nor more than fifteen, years; that their report should be issued to the legislature within one month of the opening of each session, and that their deliberations should be private.

Professor Hyslop had suggested in his work that there should be five commissions, each commission having charge of some special subject. I suggested that there ought to be but one commission and said in reference thereto as follows: "The Supreme Court at Washington is composed of nine judges; and these men have had to pass upon questions of most diverse character, for instance: validity and construction of letters patent for inventions, collisions at sea and other nice points of admiralty jurisprudence, questions of real estate law, of equity, of commercial law, and of practice not only under the Common Law, but also under the Civil Law and under the Codes of many of our States, besides the grave constitutional questions which from time to time have come before it."

"The Court of Appeals of this State consists of seven judges, elected for fourteen years. These, too, have a large variety of matters to adjudicate on every year."

I further remarked that the members of the commission should be required to devote all their time and attention to their official duties, and should be precluded from engaging in any profession or business while holding office. The commission should be required to hold sessions open to the public during at least four consecutive days in each month, except during the summer, and these sessions should be held not only at Albany, but also in this City and in Buffalo. Citizens should be privileged to appear before it under suitable restrictions, and argue upon the merits and demerits of bills before it for consideration. It should have power to employ experts on certain subjects to assist in determining questions involving expert knowledge; and for this purpose adequate funds should be placed at its disposal.

The value of such a commission to the people of this State would depend largely upon the character and ability of its members. But it is reasonable to expect that many men of integrity and good judgment would serve on such a commission.

All proposals for new legislation should be made to the commission, who should draw up laws containing such suggestions as may be deemed valuable.

Any member of the legislature should be allowed to introduce a bill, even if the commission is adverse to it; but no such bill should be passed except by a two-third vote.

A great advantage to be derived from the commission would be that our laws would be couched in language more apt than the language now used which gives rise to questions requiring judicial construction.

Allow me to add in addition to what I wrote Professor Hyslop, that no person should be a member of the commission who is not thirty-five years of age at the time of his being chosen to the office, and who is not qualified by knowledge and experience to fill the position. They should be paid salaries equivalent to those of the judges of the highest court of judicature in the State.

It seems to me of no consequence whether the body that drafts legislation is called a commission or a senate; and it might be better to abolish the present senate, as now organised in this State, and reorganised it on the plan above mentioned for the commission.

Of course, nominating conventions can, if they see fit, select for the commis-

sion men who are mere politicians ; but there is certainly every reason to suppose that we would have better men on the commission of nine, than we have now in the Senate composed of fifty.

I approve of Mr. Bonney's plan of having a Civil Service Academy, except that it might be as well to have professors in each large university throughout the country, who should give instruction such as would tend to qualify men to hold Civil Service commissions.

I wrote Professor Hyslop that the members of the Commission should be appointed. On reflection, I have come to the conclusion that they should be elected by the people of the entire State. This is, however, a matter of detail which does not require any especial attention at this moment.

M. R. KURSHEEDT.

NEW YORK CITY.

A COLLECTION OF JAPANESE PAINTINGS.

The Art Institute, of Chicago, has had on exhibition for three weeks a collection of modern Japanese water color paintings which belong to The Open Court Publishing Company, illustrating scenes from the life of Buddha. The artist is Keichyu Yamada, who at the time of the execution of the pictures was professor at



KEICHYU YAMADA.

the Imperial Institute of Tokyo. In the meantime, he has accepted a call as president of the Art Institute of Kanazawa, which is one of the most prominent art institutions of his country.

We here reproduce one of the paintings, which represents King Bimbisâra's meeting with Bôdhisativa.