

THE PAGAN CONCEPTION OF SIN.

To the Editor of The Open Court:

In the last issue of *The Open Court* the Christian missionary is compared unfavorably with the native whom he has set himself to convert from the error of his ways.

I am sure the writer did not mean to be unfair or to cloud the facts of the case but he has exposed himself nevertheless to the suspicion of lack of the chivalrous spirit.

He seems to rejoice somewhat in the fact that the Hindu has no word for sin, or at least has "no systematized statement on this matter," and he seems to think that this absence of a definite terminology is a distinct evidence of superiority both in their ethical standards and in their national character. Now the fact that such a systematized statement is absent from their Upanishads might to some minds suggest that the Hindu mind was weak in its ability to draw clear distinctions and mark out clearly defined lines between sin and holiness. Some people might feel justified in drawing such a conclusion.

But in the New Testament there is no one word for sin! There are some eight words, each with its own angle of observation and definition of the notion—sin.

For instance *παράπτωμα*, "trespass," Matt. vi. 14. Rom. v. 15; *ἀγνόημα*, "error," Hebr. ix. 7; *ἥττημα*, "defect," Rom. xi. 12; *ὀφείλημα*, "debt"; *ἀνομία*, "iniquity," Rom. vi. 19, and xi. 12; *ἀμαρτία*, (sin) "missing the mark," Rom. vii. 13; *παράβασις*, "transgression," Rom. iv. 15; *παράκοῦω*, "disobedience," Rom. v. 19. All of these words, yet no one separate word, taking up the idea into itself with full power of complete expression. It might be inferred that a people who could so parcel out the idea and mark out its diversities and relativities and associations, and show how it touched life at so many points, were a people with a highly organized ethical system and a highly organized moral standard, and therefore among them might be found many men and women of well developed moral characters, and that among such people we might reasonably expect many subjects of actual spiritual regeneration.

I have lived in southern East India, in Cannanore and in Madras, but in three years observation of the Hindu character and from a standpoint prejudiced in their favor, I always felt the difference in the atmosphere of the Hindu and the Christian. (I speak of the ideal life in both European and Hindu). I liked the Hindu, and I have never seen cause to change my opinion or shift my regard, but there was always something lacking in the Hindu which I felt, and sometimes saw, that the Christian only could supply.

Now, I do not think it quite fair to take the "revivalist" as a fair sample of Christian intelligence, indeed I never met the species in India, although I met many earnest catechists and pastors of all sorts.

Before the calm of the Hindu mind the revivalist is more likely to excite amused comment than interested remark, and no missionary society selects men because of their renown as revivalists. They select their men for far other qualities.

As to the gibe about the widow's mite, perhaps Mr. Rumball thinks Professor Deussen's remark final, "The widow's mite is never anything more than a mite." If either Professor Deussen or Mr. Rumball had kept the

good company of standard exegetes they would have heard of the life behind the mite, and have learned even in my humble Sunday-school that the "mite" was an expression of a subjective life, and an evidence of subjective worth of character; surely these gentlemen must recall the comment on the widow's action made at the time, "she hath cast in more than they all." Did the mite remain always the mite? Nay brethren, but from the first it was not so.

I value your paper. I take it, read it, pay for it, keep it, bind it, lend it, when I move all back numbers move with me, I furnish lists of likely subscribers, etc., and I do this because it instructs and informs me and helps to keep me out of certain ruts of thought; but give us a square deal in *The Open Court* before the ever enlarging tribunal of your select readers.

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P. S. On page 612 it is stated that the word *ἐκθυμία* is often found in the New Testament,—never, the word is *ἐπιθυμία*.

IN ANSWER TO MR. EVALT.

To the Editor of The Open Court:

I thank you for the opportunity of placing beside the criticism of Mr. Evalt, my reply, which I trust will to some extent make clearer the points which he raises.

In so far as my critic has given a side of the subject which I did not propose to myself to touch, all must feel grateful. The great difference between us seems chiefly to be one of emphasis. One important part, however, has either not been clearly expressed on my part or misunderstood by him. He says of me that I seem to think the "absence of a definite terminology is a distinct evidence of the superiority both in their ethical standards and national character" of the Hindu compared to the Christian. My words were really as follows: "Christian critics who narrowly desire to make all non-Christian nations conform to their own moral standard must here be reminded that the ethical standard of the Upanishads *if not the same is by no means inferior to their own.*" This is not quite the same as saying that it is "superior."

My mention of the Christian revivalist who covers sea and land to bring about "cases" of conviction of sin, was not intended as only having reference to his peculiar type of religion. Rather, do I receive him as an extreme and therefore clearly defined example of a rather large class of Christian teachers, who make much ado about the "sins" of an age, that is already—thanks to a more natural view of this strange thing we call life—modifying its views about sin and inquiring with Burns "why they do it." I yet think that it is significant of much between the Christian religion and the religion of the Upanishads that this latter draws our attention far more to the individual determinism and potentiality for godliness than does the religion that yet speaks of us as "miserable sinners."

As for the question of the "widow's mite," I fail to see how my critic could have so misunderstood me. Whatever acquaintance Professor Deussen and myself have had with "standard exegetes," it is certain that neither of us is ignorant of the subjective value of an action. The confusion may have arisen in consequence of my not distinguishing more clearly between what