

**A HANDBOOK OF
COMPARATIVE
RELIGION**

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A Handbook of Comparative Religion by S. H. Kellogg

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BY
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*"The Light of Asia and the Light of the World," "The Genesis and
Growth of Religion," "From Death to
Resurrection," etc., etc.*

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PREFACE.

It might perhaps seem as if such a brief and incomplete discussion of the question of Comparative Religion, as is given in the following pages, would be superfluous. Many of the ablest scholars and specialists in the world have published of late years elaborate discussions of the subject, which have laid all students under lasting obligations. It is to be regretted, however, that to a very great extent, the general result of the presentation of the subject, so far as it has hitherto been made popularly accessible, has been to create a widely spread impression that the difference between the various religions of the world has formerly been greatly exaggerated; and that, in particular, the teaching hitherto current in the Church as to the exclusive position held by Christianity as the one only divinely revealed system of saving truth, is as erroneous as uncharitable.

It seems to be imagined by many, that just as we ought to have charity toward our fellow-

Christians in various sections of the Church of Christ, who hold on many points religious beliefs different from those which we have been educated to receive, inasmuch as in all that is essential to true religion and acceptance with God, we are truly at one; even so ought we to regard those who are not even Christians in name, but followers of one or other of the great world-religions. It is strangely fancied that howsoever these may differ from us in many things, yet in all things which are essential to man's eternal well-being, they also are practically at one with Christians; so that, if they but carefully live up to the precepts and observances prescribed in their several religions, it is thought that it is only charitable to suppose that their prospects for the life to come may be, on the whole, as good as our own.

The practical bearing of opinions of this kind is only too obvious. When the Lord Jesus Christ was about to ascend into heaven, He gave unto His disciples orders, in the clearest possible terms, to preach His gospel in all the world, to every creature; and that with the object of making men who were disciples of Buddha or Confucius, or worshippers of Jupiter or other of the gods of Greece

and Rome, disciples to Himself, and worshipers of the one God and Father, whom He declared that He had come into the world to reveal unto men. If, however, the view of the other religions of the world which we have just indicated, be correct, then it certainly seems much of an impertinence that men should undertake a proselytizing work of this kind; and it is only natural that people who cherish such a view of the non-Christian religions, should withhold from Christian missions both their service, their means, and their sympathy. As a matter of fact, I have observed, during many years' residence in India, and an acquaintance more than usually extensive with missions and missionaries in every part of the world, that men and women who entertain so favorable views of the various ethnic religions, as all alike more or less perfect revelations of the mind and will of God, are very rarely found in the missionary ranks. But this is only what we should naturally expect.

If then the facts set forth in the following pages with regard to the most important of these religions in the world of to-day, shall prove helpful in enlightening any as to their actual teachings, or correct in any case the very radical and serious misconceptions on