

encyclical letter, that the Catholic Church had never maintained the absolute right of property. And Canon Moufang, another prelate of distinction, labored earnestly to devise some scheme by which workingmen might be delivered from dependence upon the current fluctuations of the market. This he would achieve by vastly enlarging the powers of the state, what we term 'state socialism.' In truth the group of Catholic socialists in Europe has been noted for ability and independence of thinking. The movement abroad goes a long way with the socialists in their cries of wrong, but only a short way in plans of redress. But the curious thing is that, in spite of encyclical letters, socialism as a scientific doctrine of industrial readjustment should have appealed with such force to many educated leaders of the Catholic Party."

Among American Roman Catholics there have been several priests who have shown marked sympathy with socialistic ideals. One of the most pronounced socialists in the United States is the Rev. Father McGrady, of Bellevue, Ky., whose book on "Socialism and the Labor Problem" takes the ground that in socialism the working classes find their only hope of freedom and equality. His novel, "Beyond the Black Ocean," is written from the same standpoint.

Exactly what effect the Pope's letter will have upon Roman Catholics who are intellectually convinced of the truth of socialism it is as yet too early to say. A papal encyclical, unless an *ex cathedra* utterance on a question of faith or morals, is not generally regarded as absolutely binding on the conscience of Roman Catholics, for according to Catholic theology a sovereign pontiff may err or possibly be in actual heresy in his ordinary letters. Yet it is probable that the solemn admonitions of Leo, conveyed in this formal guise, will have much weight with all except the class called "liberal Catholics."

THE COMING OF LENT.

THE fact that the observance of the penitential season of Lent (which began on February 20) is growing among Christians of almost all denominations is generally recognized at present. One need not go far for evidence of this, remarks *The Christian Work* (non-denom., February 21); for in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and other cities some of the least liturgical of the Protestant bodies, such as the Presbyterians, are uniting in holding Lenten services, and the movement extends westward also. The writer believes that these facts are proof that Lent meets a real want, such as had never been felt so strongly before. He says:

"And why should not this want be everywhere felt, and why should not Christians observe the Lenten period as the Christians before them have done for more than seventeen centuries?—altho the celebration of Lent was not introduced into the English church until the latter part of the eighth century. The truth is, all Christians need this period of rest and retirement from the round of pleasure, else unceasing, which enters into the life of society, and never so much as to-day. And is not change an essential principle of all growth? Do not the physicians tell us that change of atmosphere and environment is necessary to the maintenance of the general health, and do we not find change of occupation equally essential? And then consider what this Lenten season in its highest expression really is; for it is not a mere phase of a ritual, a mere ceremonial period of observance: it is not a phylactery or a robe, nor is it one other added method of expressing beauty in the service of the church. On the contrary, the Lenten period is something which takes hold of the daily life of the Christian. Lent lays its quiet finger upon the whirling wheels of the social life and teaches them rest. As the new year has been ushered in with festivities which continue through the long nights of winter, so Lent interposes when pleasure is on the throne, and declares that the time has come for 'holy calm and solitude'—for cessation from the endless round of social dissipation. The voice is heeded; even fashion owns its sway, for are not its votaries tired and dulled by this unceasing indulgence?

Do not their bodies, their minds, their very souls seek for rest, even if not the spiritual rest which Lent affords?"

The Catholic view of the season is thus presented by the New York *Catholic News* (Rom. Cath., February 23):

"While the church never ceases to warn her children against the allurements of the world, the flesh, and the devil, it is during the holy season of Lent particularly that Catholics are urged to meditate long and earnestly on the subjects which concern their eternal salvation, to draw apart from the careless, worldly, pleasure-seeking throngs and devote themselves to spiritual things, to the sacraments, to penitential practises, to frequent prayer and meditation upon Christ's passion.

"It is unnecessary to remark that Lent is not so 'strenuously' observed as formerly. The ecclesiastical law regarding fasting and abstinence has been so moderated that a very small proportion of native-born Catholics trouble themselves much about their diet during Lent. With those who come from the 'old sod' it is different. They were reared in a different atmosphere, where fasting of the genuine sort was rigidly observed by young and old from Ash Wednesday until Easter, and there was little fuss made over the hardship it entailed."

BRAHMANISM: A FAITH WITH TWO HUNDRED MILLION VOTARIES.

AMONG the great living religions of the world, Brahmanism, it has been pointed out, alone can not be traced back to a single founder, such as Confucius, Zarathushtra, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, or Mohammed. Like the ancient Egyptian religion, it comes down from an immeasurably remote period, and is first definitely found in the utterances of certain semi-divine sages and in philosophic systems which, altho formulated several millenniums before our era, in their subtlety and breadth of thought make many of our present-day religions appear elementary and semi-barbaric. In *The North American Review* (December), Sir A. C. Lyall, a member of the Council of State for India and an accepted authority on Indian affairs, gives an extended account of this great religion, which numbers most of the teeming millions of Hindustan among its adherents, and is now sending missionaries to America and Europe, represented in New York by the Swamis of the Vedanta Society. He says:

"In the first place it is neither militant nor aggressively missionary: it does not openly attempt to make proselytes, in the sense of persuading them or compelling them to come in. Secondly, it is not historic; it has sacred books, but no sacred history. And, thirdly, it has never been defined by formal creeds, nor has it ever accepted a single personal Deity. The general character of Indian religion is that it is unlimited and comprehensive, up to the point of confusion; it is a boundless sea of divine beliefs and practises; it encourages the worship of innumerable gods by an infinite variety of rites; it permits every doctrine to be taught, every kind of mystery to be imagined, any sort of theory to be held as to the inner nature and visible operation of the divine power.

"Now, at first sight this is not unlike the old polytheism of Greece, Rome, and the pre-Christian world generally, with its multitude of divinities and multifarious ceremonials. There are passages in Augustine's 'Civitas Dei,' describing the worship of the unconverted folk among whom he lived, the deification of every natural object and even of physical functions, that might have been written yesterday by a Christian bishop in India. But then, one might ask, why was not all this paganism swept out from among such an intellectual people as the Indians, as it was out of the Western countries, by some superior and more highly organized faith? Undoubtedly, the permanent conditions and the course of events which contrive to stamp a particular form of religion upon any great people are complex and manifold; but into an analysis of these elements I can not go. It is sufficient for my present purpose to point out that the two sheet-anchors of Brahmanism are the institution of caste and the sacred books, both of which were unknown to European paganism. The effect of caste is to give all Hindu society a religious basis;

and the sacred books provide Brahmanism with a theology—that is, with a science or philosophy of religion. I believe I may say that the old polytheism of the Roman empire had neither of these two things. According to Greek ideas, the business of framing laws for all departments of human life, of laying down rules of conduct, belonged to politics; while the philosophers of Greece and Rome were rationalists and teachers of morals, they seem to have regarded the popular superstitions with good-natured contempt. They conformed to public worship that they might avoid odium and accusations of impiety, but they gave it no help or countenance; and in philosophic discussions they treated the ordinary polytheism as unworthy the notice of serious men. They never, or very rarely, gave an inner meaning to myths and fables, or read the minds of the people through their fanciful beliefs.

“But the Indian philosophy does not ignore or hold aloof from the religion of the masses; it underlies, supports, and interprets their polytheism. This may be accounted the keystone of the fabric of Brahmanism, which accepts and even encourages the rudest forms of idolatry, explaining everything by giving it a higher meaning. It treats all the worships as outward, visible signs of some spiritual truth, and is ready to show how each particular image or rite is the symbol of some aspect of universal divinity. The Hindus, like the pagans of antiquity, adore natural objects and forces—a mountain, a river, or an animal. The Brahman holds all nature to be the vesture or cloak of indwelling, divine energy, which inspires everything that produces awe or passes man's understanding. Again, it is very common in India, as it was in Greece and Rome, to deify extraordinary men, and the Brahman does not tell his disciples that this is absurd; he agrees that such persons must have been special embodiments of all-pervading divine power. In short, he accepts every variety of cult and objective worship as symbolical; it is merely the expression or emblem, suited to the common intelligence, of mysterious truths known to the philosophic theologian. In this manner, the gross idolatry of the people is defended and connected with the loftier ideas. It is maintained that God is a pure spirit, but to make Him wholly impersonal is to place Him beyond the reach of ordinary human interest and imagination; so it is well for the less advanced minds to be encouraged by forms and signs of His presence.

“Above and beyond the miscellaneous crowd of things and persons, living or inanimate, unseen or embodied, that are worshiped as possessed by divine power, we have the great deities of Brahmanism, from whom all this divine power proceeds, and in whom the principal energies and the fundamental laws of nature are personified. Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva are the realistic abstractions of the understanding from objects of sense. They denote creation, preservation, and destruction, the constant succession of birth and death throughout all existence, the process of destroying to produce, and of producing to destroy. Here we perceive that, as soon as we pass upward through the disorderly mass of ordinary paganism, we come upon polytheism backed by philosophy; we may scatter the irregular levies, and are confronted by the outworks of disciplined theology. The great Brahmanic trinity are adored with various rites and sacrifices; they have innumerable temples, images, and personified attributes. Yet to all the more intellectual worshippers, Vishnu and Siva represent the course and constitution of nature. And, if you inquire further about these things, you will learn that all phenomenal existence is a kind of illusion, to be gradually dissipated by the acquisition of knowledge; for the reality becomes intelligible only to those whose souls have been strengthened and clarified by long meditation, by ascetic exercises, by casting out all worldly thoughts and desires. To the eye of inner illumination, those who know God only by delusive appearances see no more than the shadow of divinity. And conversely, to the empirical or naturalistic mind the whole religion is intelligible as a kind of reflection or mystical transformation of human experience, the vast shadow of the earth projected upon the sky.”

Science, we are further told, troubles the Eastern Mystic no more than a fresh religion; for science may be understood as merely a symbolical language, shadowing forth the truths of divinity. The Indians would accept Coleridge's view that the development theory—a theory of progress as regards the physical

being—is typical of the progress of man as a spiritual being; that the living soul, springing from an unknown eternity, is capable of endless improvement, ever rising higher and higher through numberless cycles of existence.

OUTLOOK FOR PRESBYTERIAN CREED REVISION.

THE meeting of the Presbyterian Creed-Revision Committee, held at Washington on February 12 to formulate a report to be submitted to the General Assembly this spring, has resulted in the following statement, given out officially for publication:

“The Committee on the Revision of the Creed came to the following conclusions, thirteen members out of sixteen being present:

“1. It was unanimously agreed that some change in the creedal statement was necessary.

“2. A majority of the members present agreed to recommend to the General Assembly that a change should be made by a supplemental explanatory statement, to cover certain points in the Confession of Faith, and also to include statements as to the doctrines of the Holy Spirit, missions, and the love of God for all men.”

The Presbyterian (Philadelphia, February 20), which represents the conservative wing in the church, thus explains the outlook:

“It is given out in the secular papers that there will be a minority report in the line of a new creed, or, as it is more plausibly put, ‘a supplementary statement of doctrine, without being restricted to specific and limited points in the Confession, but in entire harmony with the system of doctrine contained in the creed.’ As yet, we understand, the dissenting members have not taken formal action, but have the matter under advisement, and so there is no official mention of their purpose or recommendation. But from what we hear and know of these brethren, there does not seem to be any question but what they will lay their views formally before the assembly and rally their forces upon the clean-cut issue which they shall present. They represent the more radical wing of our doctrinal formulators.

“The majority report stands for the more conservative element of the committee, and appears to favor only what is more popularly known as a declaratory statement respecting the meaning of the Confession of Faith on specific and misunderstood clauses. As far as we are able to gather the nature and extent of its recommendation, it simply means an explanatory confessional statement, similar to that adopted by the Free Presbyterian churches of Scotland, when the question of revising the Westminster document was before them. In view of the committee's conferences and conclusions, it is quite apparent that a revision of the text of our creed is a dead issue. The movement has lost its force. The committee has nothing to say in its favor. Some of the members favored it at first, but the more it was canvassed *pro* and *con*, the less practical and politic it appeared to be. Gradually ‘the explanatory statement’ took form and shape and became a rallying center. . . . It strikes us, in the light of the committee's report, that the ‘new creed’ is also in a dying state. The minority may try to galvanize it into some sort of life, but we believe it will not survive the hard blows which it will receive from devoted friends of a distinct Calvinistic theology, whether in the ranks of moderate revisionists or of those who want our standards to remain unchanged. Our church, as a body, is thoroughly sound, and does not, in our judgment, desire any substitute for it, nor any statement covering doctrines which it does not traverse. She may possibly favor some explanations respecting points about which difficulties exist, in order to obtain a better and clearer understanding of them, but she will not permit any formulations that will weaken, alter, or modify her distinctive doctrinal testimony.”

The New York *Evangelist* (Presb.) says:

“Whatever the immediate decision of the coming assembly, therefore, the individual minister may now with good conscience