

Heathenism

Our subject for this evening is entitled "Heathenism." In its broadest scope it includes an investigation into terms used in a derisive manner of another's religion, especially when that religion is vastly different from our. For instance, Jew, Christian and Mohammedan tolerate one another sufficient not to call each other "Heathen" or "Pagan" or "Kafir." Hindus grant to Buddha the right of Avatarship, and Buddhist grant a lesser divinity to many of the Hindu gods. But first let us see what these terms mean and let us investigate how they were used.

The word "Heathen" meant originally a dweller on the heath, a dweller in an open place. It had nothing to do with religion. But it derives its meaning from the similar Greek word "Ethnos," which greatly resembled the Gothic "Haithno," a heath dweller. In Greek "Ethno" meant two strangers. Originally an ethnos meant a group of people living together; a company; a body of men or flock of animals or birds; a race or nation; later a strange race, or a race of foreigners. Matt. XXI 43. Later on the word took the distinct meaning of foreigners; Matt VI 7.

John XI 48-53. Even the Christians were originally called "Ethnoi." Rom. 16. But Christ seems to have quite a different concept of this, a concept which is the only concept for a true believer to hold. John X 7-(5). Let us examine this concept. Let us examine this (6) Galatians II -II (7) Romans II 17 to end.

This passage reads "Thou that abhorrest idols." Let us examine this also. The word idol is derived from the Greek word "Eidolon" which meant a form. The correct translation would be, "Thou that abhorrest forms." In other words those who had a conception of God that it could not be one of forms. This is the only meaning consistent with the end of the passage. And this is exactly the message that the Sufis are giving to the World today. To worship God is spirit and not in form.

Christians sometimes use the word "Pagan." A Pagan was simply one who belonged to the country, a rustic. It was used in its present meaning. (Give history) In its original meaning it simply meant one who was fastened to a certain place, the opposite of a nomad, a farmer. Not entirely different from the original meaning of heathen.

The word "gentile" used by the Jews to mean a non-Jew originally meant one who belonged to the same family or tribe, or religion. It was used by the Jews to mean non-Israelitish Jews. The word Giur which is used by the Turks and Arabs to mean an infidel has quite an interesting history. The word Gur meaning a dwelling and Gir was a sojourner and later a proselyte like the character Ruth; originally it meant a newcomer. Thus it was used for all invaders of Palestine whether like the Samaritans they adopted Jewish at least in part or the Greeks who adopted it not at all. Goim meant a crowd of peoples or a mixed people. The Samaritans were decidedly such. Goim meant a proselyte, and only later it derived its meaning of decidedly a non-Jew. All those words have only taken on a derisive meaning when religion has become fanaticism. Nowhere is this better seen than with the Mohammedans.

Mohammed very beautifully expressed the difference between a believer and infidel. If we carefully examine this we shall find he is not so far off from Christ and Paul Chap IX. Now lest we judge Mohammed too harshly let us find what he says elsewhere I II Explanation. (Fire worshippers—History of their treatment and reason for changing.)

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The term Kafir used by the Moslems meant an ungrateful one, a renegade, a disbeliever. How could one be a disbeliever who had never been a believer? Mohammed did not use this term without knowing its meaning. And strange to say the particular race which received this appellation has today become Mohammedan. So, again we must be careful of the words we use and their possible meaning.

When we go further East to peoples with a different view of God, peoples who cannot hold the concept of disbeliever and therefore did not divide men by religion but by race and class, we can see more clearer the concept that should be held.

The Buddha carried this idea to an absolute conclusion in holding forth the doctrine of the Dharma and the Brotherhood and the Light. If we live the one correct way, treat our fellow man in the one correct way and seek steadily for the light—all distinctions and differences disappear.