

THE LITERARY DIGEST

March 23, 1912

NEEDLESS "NEW RELIGIONS"

A WORD OF CAUTION against "all new schemes of religion or semi-religion, various forms of imagination called 'Thought' for advertising purposes, resurrections of ancient Asiatic dreams and allegories and similar delusions," appears in the current number of *The Christian Advocate* (New York). These religions come to naught in the end, declares Dr. Buckley, "frequently leaving the deceived with spots upon their reputations." Why should any one "wish to find or found another religion"? he asks, and sees "a ready answer always applicable to the second member of the question," namely: "Many would like to found a new religion, in order to fleece the unwary." Most of those who wish to find another religion, thinks this irrepressible foe of religious charlatany, are influenced by curiosity. The others, he thinks, could find a "religion to their liking if they remembered that 'one who thinks for himself imagines that no one ever traveled that road before. But if he looks about him, he will find the footprints of others all along the way.'" So why, to-day, "should any human being wish for another form of religion"? Dr. Buckley's survey of our present riches displays a trenchant pen as much as, perhaps more than, a sympathetic understanding. He writes:

"If you are a believer in extreme Calvinism you may still find branches of Presbyterianism whose tenets will satisfy you. If you believe in the doctrines of the Baptists, that denomination is everywhere, and commendably ready to expound them. If you do not wish to hear the doctrines of the regular Baptists, there is the great and growing body called Christians (or Disciples) which will provide the sacraments according to your belief and wish, and other and different doctrines.

"There are several divisions of Presbyterians, as also of Congregationalists, and churches in those bodies differ greatly from one another in their doctrinal beliefs and general spirit.

"If you would prefer the Roman Catholic Church, it is al-

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most everywhere. If you do not wish to be under its iron control; but differ from it only in few points, the extreme high-church Protestant Episcopalians can be found in every large city, and frequently in the country districts. If you do not agree entirely with their views you can find a middle class, and here and there an old-time evangelical Protestant Episcopal Church. There is also the broad-church view among Protestant Episcopalians.

"If you wish zeal, there are still Methodist churches to be found that will meet your desires. If you would prefer a church of that order which can not be identified as a church except by the hymnal, it can be found. The Methodist churches are very numerous and they vary in spirit more than they did formerly. You can find the calmest and most unemotional church, if you wish it, in all cities; and others whose characteristics resemble those of a century ago.

"But if you can not make up your mind to join any of these, the Universalists are ready to disperse the gloom that sometimes rests upon the mind and heart of an evangelically brought-up Christian who is not living in the spirit and letter of that form of religion. If you can not be satisfied with that, you find here and there throughout the country, often far apart, the Unitarian churches. That small but highly respectable body exhibits remarkable differences. There remain a very few with the old Channing spirit and doctrines, and more that have glided or rushed so far to the outer circle of religion that were it not for a few forms of religious worship all the signs of Christianity would disappear.

"There remains also that ancient Society of Friends who sing no hymns, administer no sacraments, and preach not till the Spirit moves them. These are the orthodox branch; the Hicksites are practically Unitarians without the embellishments of music, painted windows, organs, and choirs.

"In our country all the religions of all the Christian nations, so called, are represented, and services are conducted in English and in all languages of the millions immigrating here."

If any one is looking for a further choice, he is directed to Dr. Carroll's annual census, with its list of eighty different religions and forms of religion.