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THE FUTURE OF MISSIONS [45].
 century, thousands of men of our own race and was forced to get up by blows from
 race, living in the miraculous, believing the whip or a stab from a bayonet,
 how with a blind faith in marvels which they ever little strength the loss of
 blood,
 declare they have seen and touched .. streaming down all his limbs, still left

There is already a whole literature to him, he started dancing and crying with demonstrate the harmony of Mormonism renewed enthusiasm : ' In truth we are and science; what is better is that this God's, and unto him we return ! ' Some religion, based on silly impostures, has of the children expired in the course of ,

been capable of achieving prodigies of the journey. The executioners cast their

patience and abnegation ; in another dead bodies under the feet of their five hundred years doctors will be prov- fathers and sisters, who trod proudly ing its divinity by the wonders of its over them, and did not give them a foundation. Babism in Persia has been second glance. When the place of execuca phenomenon important in another tion was reached, the victims were again way. A man of mild disposition and of offered their lives for their recantation.

no pretensions, a sort of pious and One executioner took it into his head to modest Spinoza, found himself, almost say to a father that, if he did not give in spite of himself, raised to the rank of a way, he would cut the throats of his two

thaumaturgist of divine incarnation, and sons on his breast. These were two became the leader of a numerous sect, little boys, the elder of whom was fourfervent and fanatical, which almost teen, and who, red with their own blood,

brought about a revolution comparable their flesh charred, coldly listened to this

with that of Islam. For his sake, colloquy; the father replied, lying down thousands of martyrs flocked to their on the ground, that he was ready, and death. A day unparalleled perhaps in the elder of the children, eagerly claimthe world's history was that of the great ing his right of birth, asked to be slain

massacre of the Babis at Teheran. first. At last all was finished; the night "On that day was to be seen in the fell upon a formless heap of flesh; the streets and bazaars of Teheran," says a heads were hung in bundles on the stake narrator, who has first-hand knowledge,1 of justice, and the dogs of the suburbs

"a spectacle which it does not seem that slunk in troops to the spot."

the population can ever forget. When This happened in 1852. The sect of

conversation, even to-day, turns on the Mazdak, under Chosroes Nushirvan, was matter, one can judge of the admiration stifled i_na similar bath of blood.

Absomingle with horror, which the multi- lute devotion is for simple natures the

tude experienced, and which the lapse of most exquisite of delights and a sort of

years has not diminished. Women and necessity. In the affair of the Babis, children were to be seen advancing people who scarce belonged to the sect between the ranks of executioners, their were seen coming forward to make self•

flesh slashed all over the body, with accusation, that they might be added to flaming matches thrust in the wounds. the victims. It is so sweet to man to suffer

The victims were dragged along by ropes, for something, that in many cases the and forced to walk with blows of the bait of martyrdom suffices to cause belief.

whip. Women and children advanced, A disciple, who was the comrade in singing a verse, which says : 'In truth suffering of the Bab, hanging by his side

we come from God, and unto him we on the ramparts of Tabriz and awaiting return !' Their voices swelled loud death, had but one word in his mouth : above the profound stillness of the "Are you satisfied with me, master?"

crowd. When one of the victims fell Persons who regard as miraculous or chimerical what in history transcends

'J. A. de Gobineau: Les Religions et /esPhilo- the calculations of ordinary common

n.,M.1~,dan.r l'.d,ie Cmtrale, p. 304 et seq. sense must n.u.li

S'll<.:.\\fa.<.:.ts

inexplicable,

(45] THE FUTURE OF ,JfISSIONS

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, The fundamental condition of criticism respects our betters. It is not thus at

' is ability to understand the diverse con- epochs and in countries where each is

ditions of the human spirit. Absolute whole-heartedly of his own communion, faith is for us an utterly alien pheno- his own race, his own political school ;

menon. Outside the positive sciences, and that is why all the great religious which are of a certitude in some measure creations have taken place in societies,

material, every opinion is in our eyes the prevailing spirit of which was more only an approximation, implying both or less analogous to that of the East. an element of truth and an element of Up till now, in fact, absolute faith has error. The element of error may be alone succeeded in imposing itself upon small as you will ; it is never reduced to others. A good servant-maid of Lyons,

zero when we are dealing with moral Blandina, who went to her death for her things, implicating a question of art, faith seventeen hundred years ago, a language, literary form, and personalities. brutal tribal chief, Clovis, who saw good,

Such is not the manner of seeing of nearly fourteen centuries ago, to embrace narrow and stubborn minds-of Orientals, Catholicism, still make the law for us. for instance. The eye of such people is Who has not paused, in passing through

Germans, the English, are in many little, and finally to disaQQe.atli.k.e.

~Q,~\~n

THE FUTURE OF MISSIONS

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[45]

errors about magic and sorcery and man would be transcendently religious, spirits? Assuredly not. Religion is not plunged in an eternal adoration, passing ;

a popular error; it is a great instinctive from ecstasy to ecstasy, being born, truth, perceived by the people, expressed living, and dying in a torrent of rapturous

by the people. All the creeds which delight. Egoism, in fact, which denotes serve to give a form to religious feeling the measure of the inferiority of beings,

are defective, and it is their fate to be decreases in proportion as the animal is

cast aside one after the other. But noth- left behind. A perfect being would be ing can be falser than the dream of no longer egoistic ; he would be abso• certain persons, who, seeking to conceive lutely religious. Progress, then, will

a perfect humanity, conceive it lacking have as its effect the augmentation of religion. It is the reverse which must religion, not its destruction or diminution.

be said. China, which presents an But it is time to return to the three

inferior humanity, has scarce any reli- missionaries, Paul, Barnabas, and John

gion. On the contrary, let us suppose a ; Mark, whom we have left at the moment planet inhabited by a humanity whose ' of their leaving Antioch by the gate intellectual, moral, and physical power I which leads to Seleucia. In my third is double that of earthly humanity ; that i Book I shall attempt to follow the track

humanity would be at least twice as of those messengers of good tidings over religious as ours. I say "at least," for it sea and land, in calm and tempest,

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is probable that the augmentation of the through good and evil days. I am religious faculties would proceed in more impatient to tell again that unparalleled

rapid progression than the augmentation epic, to depict those roads stretching of the intellectual capacity, and would infinitely through Asia and Europe, not be in simple, direct proportion. Let along which they sowed the seed of the us suppose a humanity ten times stronger Gospel, those waves over which they than ours ; that humanity would be in- fared so often under conditions so finitely more religious. It is even prob- diverse. The great Christian Odyssey is

able that, at that pitch of sublimity, about to begin. Already the apostolic untrammelled by all material cares and bark has shaken forth her sails; the wind

all egoism, invested with perfect disci- is blowing, and aspires for nought
save
mination and divinely subtle taste, seeing to bear upon its wings the words of
the baseness and vacuity of all that is Jesus.
not truth and goodness and beauty,

— The Apostles (Used by permission of the curator)