

The question proposed by Mr. H. L. Latham is legitimate and ought not to be passed by unanswered. The difficulty of the answer consists in the fact that the religious conviction which constitutes the faith of The Open Court Publishing Company would not preach to its followers a definite policy as to their church affiliations. It is true that there is no church in existence which would exactly correspond to that faith, but the editor feels no hostility for that reason to any one of the established churches and religious congregations, Christian, Jewish, or Pagan. He has been invited from time to time to speak in churches, sometimes by clergymen who belonged to the ranks of the so-called orthodox and is in friendly relation with representatives and orthodox members of all religions and creeds.

Whenever there is in one town a sufficient number holding convictions similar to ours, who desire to band themselves together in a church congregation, the editor would advise them to found what in a former article, in the January number of *The Open Court*, 1903, has been defined as "the Lay Church." It recommends itself for several reasons. It makes it possible for people of different views to associate in a religious fellowship, if they have but the one purpose in view, to seek the truth and to respect sincerity of conviction.

Wherever it seems unadvisable or premature to found such a lay church, the religious interest should be kept alive within the circle of the family. Parents ought to watch over the religious development of their children with a reverent but critical tendency, allowing the growing generation to familiarize itself with all forms of faith in a friendly way, which can be done by visiting different churches, and becoming acquainted with the doctrines, rituals and practices of each.

The article on "The Lay Church" will be reprinted in the advertising pages of this number.

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#### INDEPENDENT CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN.

*To the Editor of The Open Court:*

My attention has just been called to an article in the January number of *The Open Court*, headed "Christianity in Japan" which speaks of the recent notable movement of the Japanese Kumiai Churches toward self-direction and self-support. The fact reported is one of great significance and marks a decided step in advance among those churches. There is one statement, however, which I most respectfully ask permission to correct. This is summed up in the declaration, "The inference throughout is clear that the missionaries maintain a dictatorship in church matters which results in establishing a competition against the native church rather than a helpful support and alliance." I cannot speak officially for other Missions, but I can speak with authority for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, under whose work the Kumiai Churches were organized and which has been conducting mission operations in Japan since 1869. As the work of this Board has been perhaps most conspicuous there of any Board, because of the prominence of the Doshisha University and Kobe College for Girls, and because of the aggressiveness of the Kumiai Churches and the prominence of many of their Japanese leaders, the remark above quoted would naturally be interpreted as criticising this Board and its methods of work in Japan.

It is sufficient in reply but to refer to the methods of the American Board and its policy in all of its Mission work over the world, to correct whatever mistaken impression the article may have given.

The American Board always aims to make the churches its missionaries are instrumental in organizing, self-governing and self-supporting. No missionary is expected to be pastor of any native church in any country, and each church is expected to call its own native pastor and direct its own ecclesiastical affairs. Missionaries have even hesitated to become members of native churches for fear some might charge them with dominating the churches of which they were members. This is the policy all over the world. At the present time there are between 200 and 300 independent, self-directing and self-supporting native churches organized by the missionaries of this Board in various countries. In a word, this Board has no churches anywhere and desires none.

There are yet many native churches which are receiving some financial aid from the Board, but whose self-support we constantly encourage. Even in these churches the missionaries exercise no ecclesiastical control. In all cases the missionaries are co-workers with the native pastors and leaders, in building up churches and in organizing new ones.

In Japan the missionaries of this Board and the leaders of the Kumiai Churches have been of one mind in this respect. Up to the current year there were some 54 Kumiai Churches receiving no aid from this Board and as independent of the mission as any churches in America. To show that the missionaries were in favor of this recent step it is sufficient to state that the suggestion that the remaining 45 Kumiai Churches should become independent and self-supporting with the beginning of the current year, was made by the missionaries to the Kumiai leaders and has the hearty approval of the American Board Mission in Japan as well as the officers of the Board at home.

In the National Meeting of the Kumiai Churches in Japan as well as in similar meetings of the Churches organized by this Board in Turkey, India, and other countries, the missionaries are not even members of the ecclesiastical organizations and so cannot vote or control. The purpose of the American Board in every instance is to rear up native institutions and organizations of every kind that shall be, in every particular, self-controlling, self-propagating and self-supporting.

I am not sure that we differ in this respect from the other leading Foreign Missionary Boards. I am aware that these things so familiar to us, are not generally understood, as the statement in the article referred to would show, hence this statement of fact, for which I crave the same publicity that was given to the criticism.

JAMES L. BARTON.

Foreign Secretary, American Board of  
Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

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#### TENDENCY OF PRESENT BANKING METHODS.

While traveling in Europe I had frequent opportunities to appreciate, by way of contrast, the superiority of the American check system, which renders possible quick business dealings in small amounts throughout the length and breadth of the country. I have repeatedly called attention to the fact that the