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1914.

549TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.

HELD IN THE ROOMS OF THE INSTITUTE, ON MONDAY,
JANUARY 19TH, 1914, AT 4.30 P.M.

PROFESSOR H. LANGHORNE ORCHARD, M.A., TOOK THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the preceding Meeting were read and confirmed, and the election was announced of Mr. W. H. Baxter and Mr. David A. F. Wetherfield as Members, and of Mr. John Sterry and the Rev. James Gossett-Tanner as Associates.

*JAPAN, AND SOME OF ITS PROBLEMS, RELIGIOUS
AND SOCIAL.* By the REV. PREBENDARY H. E. FOX,
M.A.

ANY attempt to construct a theory of racial evolution from apparent resemblances between the inhabitants of the British and Japanese Islands, arising from similar conditions, would at once be defeated by the evidences of larger and more numerous contrasts. Each nation represents a mixture of several races, each is protected by sea girdling barriers, each has long had a high civilization, each has maintained a strong patriotic spirit, and for many generations no hostile force has been allowed to set foot on the shores of either. But in religion and in art, and, till quite lately, in intellectual and scientific development, Great Britain and Japan lie far apart. Englishmen, though they have been leaders in world enterprise, and the discovery of new lands, are by nature cautious and not easily moved. The Japanese is emotional, and recently has shown himself quick to learn, and ready to absorb and assimilate everything that is new. Yet while Britain was sending her navies into every sea, and her travellers and traders into every land, and planting her flag in all parts of the world, Japan had shut herself up, and held no intercourse, except in some rare

instances, with any other people, and only since the great reaction in the present generation has she extended her possessions to Formosa, Corea and Saghalien. A feudal system, not unlike that which held rule in Western Europe in the middle ages, came to an end in Japan within the memory of old men still living. And, though she can build her own Dreadnoughts and has shown a military genius which startled the world, her representative government is still in its elementary stages. We are all familiar with the term "Bushido," or the spirit of Japan, more literally, the way of the Bushi or knight. But as it is a key to many of the problems, social and religious, which modern Japan presents, a brief reference to its origin and development may be useful. It has grown out of an earlier genius. About the seventh century of the Christian era, a warrior clan, inhabiting the central portion of the main Island, named Yamato, gained supremacy over its neighbour tribes, driving some to the North, and welding the rest into one kingdom under the rule of its own chief.

Dr. GRIFFIS, referring to this, says: "The spirit and prowess of these early conquerors have left an indelible impress upon the language and the mind of the nation in the phrase YAMATO-DAMASHII—the spirit of (Divine and Unconquerable) Japan . . . The Yamato men gradually advanced to conquest under the impulse, as they believed, of a divine command. . . . They claimed that their ancestors were from Heaven, that the Sun was their kinswoman, and that their chief, or Mikado, was vice-regent of the heavenly gods, but that those whom they conquered were earth-born or sprung from the terrestrial divinities.*

In successive generations this elementary spirit of race superiority crystallized into the narrower features of a feudal system, and the original religion which had been more or less animistic, or a worship of the wonderful in nature, added to it by degrees new worship in the reverence shown to the departed spirits of tribal chiefs, and this afterwards grew into an actual worship of their Lord, the Mikado, the living representative of his deified ancestors. This religion, if it can be so called as recognizing some link between the higher and lower world, has had little influence in the direction of morals. It has no ethical code and supplies no motive for the control of natural instincts. Naturally, any sense of a divine righteousness, and the need of salvation, is wholly absent from the purely Shinto mind. The

* *Religions of Japan*, p. 44.

loyalty and patriotism, which have from early times been so manifest among the Japanese, probably had their root, as the virtues of most non-Christian people have, in self interest, corporate and individual.

Buddhism, in its original form as taught by Sakyamuni, has still less claim than Shintoism to be counted as a religion. Monier Williams denies that it is such, and describes it as "a mere system of morality and philosophy founded on a pessimistic view of life."* But its later developments, known as Mahayana or Higher Buddhism, found in China and afterwards in Japan, give evidence of the invariable refusal of the religious instinct of mankind to be satisfied with negations, powerless precepts, and the absence of a concrete object of worship. The abstract Buddha is everywhere present, but has countless manifestations; one or many, sometimes a triad, are given the highest place in their pantheon. Images of these abound, from the gigantic figure at Kamakura to a tiny charm on a necklace. A spacious hall in a temple at Kyoto is filled with them.

A central figure of superhuman proportions, seated in the well-known attitude, which irresistibly suggests the contrast with Him who "went about doing good," has on either hand 1,500 life-sized standing figures gilded, and each in some slight particular differing from the others. The popular Buddha is Amida, who is regarded as a real person, both Creator and Preserver, the Lord of life and the all Merciful Father. He is said to have lived a perfect life on earth, and when by labour and suffering he had acquired sufficient merit, he departed to the Western Paradise, where he will receive the faithful, till by further progress they reach the ultimate Nirvana. Connected with him are two other principal Buddhas, Kwannon the goddess of mercy and Seishi the god of might.

Though the conclusions which Dr. Richard draws from such facts in his recent book, which he calls "The New Testament of Higher Buddhism," are exaggerated and misleading, it is quite possible to find what seem to be traces of some Christian influence which had been carried, perhaps by Nestorians, to China in the fourth or fifth century after Christ. But it must have been a teaching either grievously defective on the part of those who gave it or as seriously mutilated by those who received it. Its doctrine is that of a tritheism, not of the Trinity. It has nothing to say of sin and its remedy, of atonement and reconciliation, still less of the work of the Divine Spirit as given in

* *Buddhism*, p. 539.

the Christian Scriptures. Buddhism has been quite ready to accommodate itself to Shintoism, and instead of opposing the earlier religion of the country, succeeded in persuading the people to believe that the two were the same under different names and forms.

It is common to hear an educated man say that he is just as much a Buddhist as a Shintoist, and can accept a good deal of Christianity as well. Conciliatory, however, as Buddhism shows itself to-day, it cannot repress the bitterness which prevails between the sects within it, and it certainly incited the rulers of Japan to the persecutions and terrible atrocities inflicted for many years on the first Christian Missionaries and their converts.

But all these things belong to the past. No other nation has passed through so great transitions in so short a time as those which living men have seen in Japan. The Mikado is no longer a mystery. Daimios and Samurai exist only in pictures and poetry. The last of the Shoguns died in obscurity a few weeks ago. In the lobby of the Y.M.C.A. house in Kyoto, the old capital of Japan, I saw hanging one of the old notice boards bearing the proclamation against Christianity, and offering high rewards for the capture of Christian priests and people, and side by side with it a frame containing an autograph letter from the late Emperor, in which he heartily thanked the Association for the services its members had rendered to the sick and wounded during the war and enclosed a contribution of £1,000 to its funds.

Changes of a less satisfactory character are increasing. The simple habits of life which have so long characterized Japan are giving place among the wealthier classes to the luxury which has been imported from other lands. The educational system, which has been highly developed by the government, is entirely secular.

The moral precepts inculcated in Imperial Rescripts are excellent, but are based on no religious principles.

The portrait of the Emperor, to which in every school at stated times the pupils are instructed to pay a reverence amounting almost to worship, is a surviving reminder of the old Yamato Damashii, or the later Bushido. And yet, notwithstanding the Materialism and Rationalism spreading rapidly under European and American influence, it must be admitted that the Japanese, as a whole, are still a religious people. The nature of their piety is not, perhaps, as intensive as that which we expect in ours, but it is certainly genuine. During the last few days

of the late Emperor's life I was staying at Nikko, a sacred centre, where many ancient shrines, both Shinto and Buddhist, side by side, recall a brilliant past. It was a touching sight to see the people of all degrees, and also classes of children led by their teachers, coming thither all day long, singly and in groups, to offer their prayers to the unknown spirits on behalf of the dying Mikado. From the roofs of some of the temples there hung long strips of white cotton, inscribed with prayers, so that each passer-by might pause for a moment and make the petitions his own.

Underneath their light-hearted manner, it cannot be doubted that still in the heart of many a Japanese there is a yearning for something higher and better than he can find on earth. The patch of paper on which he has written his name, and sticks upon the wayside image, or the little grove beside some country temple with hundreds of tiny paper flags covering the ground, on each of which has been written a name, perhaps of some loved one lost, all speak of souls groping in the dark after some unknown good, and are a silent challenge to Christians who can tell those who put them there what they so need to know. The problems which face the Japanese and their friends are very complex, but one or two facts stand out which, from the Christian point of view, are absolutely certain. (1) It is not a new Gospel, a message accommodated to the prejudices of the non-Christian mind, but it is the same message that once conquered Pagan Britain which alone will save Japan. There are, however, grave dangers arising from the defective way in which the Christian message is often given and taken. A Christ, who is little more than another Buddha, a Christ without the cross or the resurrection, without the promise of eternal life, will never enter deeply into any human heart. A Bible, dissected by however skilful a critic, will never become food for hungry souls. A Missionary of many years wide experience writes that he has "never seen or heard of any individual, or any body of Christians, brought nearer to Christ, and made more earnest or intelligent workers in His Kingdom through the influence of Modern Criticism. On the contrary—it is the consensus of opinion among the most earnest workers that, wherever it comes, it brings blight and paralysis into the Churches. The present condition of weakness and lack of evangelistic zeal and devotion can unquestionably be traced in some large degree to its desolating influences."*

* *Missionary Joys in Japan*, by Paget Wilkes, p. 318.

(2) It is also certain that the Christianizing of Japan must depend increasingly on her own sons and daughters and therefore that the efforts of the Missionary should be more and more directed to lead up to this object. That there are weak points in the Japanese character none are more willing to admit than the most thoughtful among them. But that many of them possess high qualities of leadership and loyalty, and that they can appeal to the hearts of their own people in a way that no foreigner can, is beyond question. Nothing can develop these qualities so much as the opportunity of responsibility.

For her social problems Japan needs similar methods. If the moral condition of her towns is to be purified; if the standard of her literature is to be raised, if the honour of her business men is to become above suspicion, reforms must be induced by the Christian people of Japan. Non-Christianity can never rise, or raise men, above its own level. Though democratic tendencies have developed in Japan far less than in America or Europe, there are many signs of movement in that direction, and there is therefore the greater need of witnesses to that righteousness, God-given only, which can exalt a nation; and that witness must be given by the consistent lives and the constant teaching of her own people.

English Christians have still a duty to fulfil towards a nation allied to their own by political ties, and they can best discharge it by earnestly endeavouring to encourage and strengthen those with whom they are already in Christian fellowship, to bring their Islands which they proudly call the Land of the Rising Sun, together with their increasing possessions in Formosa and on the main land, into the full light and liberty of the Gospel of Christ.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN, after moving a very hearty vote of thanks to the Lecturer for his valuable paper, declared the Meeting open for discussion.

Mr. M. L. ROUSE asked the Lecturer whether the sect of Shin, which as he understood, offered the nearest analogy to the Evangelical School, proved more or less open to accept Christianity than did the other sects. The conception of Amida as having lived a life of beneficence on the Earth was doubtless borrowed from early Christian teachers, but that of a single Creator of men, if it existed, would be primeval, if it could be shown that he bore a name

peculiar to Japan. He quoted, on the authority of Mr. Ijima, an old-time tradition that "Izanami no Mikoto came down from heaven, divided heaven from earth, and created everything." He considered that mediæval Europeans adopted decorated altar tables, rosaries and the like from the Buddhists and other Asiatic pagans, rather than the other way about. He had watched the ritual of the Kalmucks, who derived their Buddhism from Thibet, at their show encampment in Dresden, and in Chinese temples, one image constantly recurs, that of the queen of heaven with her infant in her arms. (N. Wright and H. Allom, *Illustrated China*, I, p. 40, and II, pp. 52 *et passim*.)

Lt.-Col. MACKINLAY said: As an instance of the great and rapid changes that had taken place in Japan, I may mention that 50 years ago, dissection of the human dead body was not practised, as it was thought to be improper. On the other hand, in their recent war with Russia, the Japanese led the way in sound scientific regulations for the sanitation of armies in the field; their losses from typhoid being far less than ours in the South African campaign.

The Japanese do not now oppose Christianity with bitterness, and they have no very strong attachment to their own religions, but a peculiar difficulty exists. The Japanese, under a guise of very great politeness, practise a reticence which renders it difficult to know their real thoughts. You seem to know a Japanese to whom you may be introduced, almost at once, but in most cases after many years' friendship little advance seems to be made in real knowledge of his character. As an example of a Christian Japanese I may mention a friend of mine, who came to England some years ago, for education at Cambridge as an undergraduate; he lived at the house of one of the tutors, whose wife read the Bible with the young foreigner every day. He was converted and baptised in Cambridge, some months before his return to Japan. What opportunities there are for reaching non-Christian foreigners with the Gospel, during their stay in England! During the Russo-Japanese war a Christian Japanese officer, when dying, showed his change of heart by leaving a large bequest to needy Russians, the enemies of his country.

Mr. SCHWARTZ said: Our author suggests that what good there may be in Buddhism had been carried by Nestorians to China. Max Müller and other scholars have pointed out the many similarities

between the two religions, and I think there is no doubt whatever that Buddhist missionaries visited Western Asia, Greece and Egypt, before the Christian Era. The Japanese do not admit their moral inferiority; they came over to Europe to learn and adopt western methods, and have assimilated our arts and sciences, but our religious, moral and social practices do not appeal to them. Our author alludes to the fanaticism displayed in the persecutions and atrocities inflicted on the first Christian missionaries in Japan. These persecutions were political, for these first missionaries were Jesuits, who fomented revolution and national disintegration. Teyasu realised the danger and put them down with a strong hand. I am sorry to learn that our author has so poor an opinion of the value of broad views, for they alone have any chance of success in heathen countries possessing any culture, except among the moral and intellectual dregs and children.* Thus Dr. Nitobe says: "I trust my attitude towards Christianity itself will not be questioned. It is with ecclesiastical methods and with the forms that obscure the teaching of Christ that I have little sympathy." At the World's Parliament of Religions, Mr. Kishimite said: "Christianity will ultimately become the religion of the land; it is so pliable that it can adapt itself to any environment. We do not want Catholic or Protestant, but the Christianity of the Bible, nay of Christ. Indeed the time is coming when God shall be worshipped, not by rites and ceremonies, but in spirit and in truth!"

Capt. MCNEILE asked if the similarity between the Japanese and mediæval forms of worship may not have arisen from the influence of the Jesuit missions of bygone centuries. About 35 years ago the Church Missionary Society in Hong Kong were debating what Chinese word to take to represent the idea, "the Almighty," there being no equivalent expression in Chinese; and difficulties arose

* But are such "broad views" Christianity? Christianity, like Christ, comes to save the lost. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and was accused of being the Friend of publicans and sinners, *i.e.*, of "the moral and intellectual dregs." The people of "culture" said, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" But the sinners and the little children came to Him and He received them, and said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." While the men of "culture,"—the scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests and rulers of the Jews,—rejected Him and crucified Him.—EDITOR.

because there was a Jesuit word for this already existing, which was not acceptable to the C.M.S.

The Rev. MURRAY WALTON said that we had to remember that Buddhism in Japan to-day was a very powerful religion, and indeed the most strongly entrenched foe of Christianity. Of the Buddhist sects, the Shin was the most powerful; this was largely because of their conception of Amida as a Saviour, in many ways similar to our ideas of Christ, but their teaching as to sin was entirely different; whereas we look to Christ to save us *from* sin, the Japanese look to Amida to save them *in* sin. Further, Amida never existed—he was pure myth—he had no historical basis. The Shin priests at the present time were carefully trained, and ignorant and immoral priests were certainly the exception. It must be remembered that 80 per cent. of the population of Japan was rural, and was largely unaffected by intercourse with Europe. Buddhism had all the strength of this 80 per cent. behind it. In the towns things were different, and even sadder. Materialism and agnosticism had made great advances amongst the educated classes; western science was shattering their faith. In the Tokyo University of some 4,600 students a religious census recently was taken, in which 3,000 of them declared themselves agnostics, 1,500 atheists, 60 were Buddhist, 50 Shintoists and 8 Christians.

Gen. HALLIDAY asked the lecturer if he would kindly tell them what Nirvana really meant.

Bishop THORNTON asked if any explanation could be given of the unfavourable opinion amongst business men as to the integrity of the Japanese. He had heard it said in Australia that Japanese men of business were unsatisfactory as regards commercial honour, and presented an unfavourable contrast to the Chinese in this respect. Is honesty insisted upon in the Imperial Rescripts? Does not love of truth, for its own sake, lie at the base of a good character?

Rev. T. H. DARLOW said: It was hardly possible to decide how far early Christianity had acted upon Buddhism, and how far Buddhism had modified Christianity. When the Jesuits landed in India, and saw the Buddhist ritual, they concluded that Satan must have been before them to caricature Christianity. One great obstacle to the Gospel in Japan to-day was the hold that Buddhism had on the rural districts. The Japanese use the religious machinery that we use—tracts, Sunday schools, Young Men's and

Young Women's Buddhist Associations—and they build costly new temples. The revolution in Japan during the last sixty years had been extraordinary. Men who fought Russia with magazine rifles, had grandfathers who had fought in chain armour. The *Standard* war correspondent could not discover an illiterate soldier among the Japanese troops, and the standard of popular education was now much higher than in Italy or Portugal. But the war with Russia had burdened Japan with debt, involving crushing taxation. Factories were springing up, but the Japanese had, as yet, no factory laws, and child labour was used ruthlessly. From her intercourse with Europe, Japan had assimilated most things, except the Gospel. Our hope for Japan lay in an indigenous Christian Church, which would not be copied from any western model.

Lt.-Col. M. A. ALVES, R.E., said that he feared there was no reason to expect that Japan would become a Christian nation. There had recently been a great revival in downtrodden Korea, and there was a strong and vigorous Church in China; but the Japanese were too self-satisfied for the nation to accept Christianity.

The CHAIRMAN moved a vote of thanks to the author of the paper and to the speakers in the discussion, which was carried by acclamation. He thought that they were all of opinion that it is "the same message that once conquered pagan Britain that alone will save Japan." In the religions of Japan there is no atonement for sin, and therefore no salvation from it. The forgiveness of sins, and the peace of conscience flowing therefrom, are unknown to them. Unknown to them also are the birth from above, and eternal life, with its aim of holiness, sanctifying thought and desire in harmony with the will of our Father,—God. We have been reminded that though higher Buddhism has a doctrine of a tritheism, it has none of a Trinity; and, while inculcating excellent moral precepts, it does not supply the motive power to carry them out successfully. We, who are Christians, have a great responsibility towards these, our allies, to convey to them the message of infinite love, speaking in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and this Gospel preaching should be especially the work of native Christians, since these are in touch with the minds and hearts of their countrymen. Thus Japan may become, in a sense that she is not now, "the land of the Rising Sun."

The LECTURER thanked the Meeting for the very kind reception

which they had given him. He must admit that his knowledge of Japan was largely second-hand; he had stayed there for four months in 1912, and had then enjoyed exceptional facilities for getting to know the country and people. His daughter had resided there for eighteen years and knew the language thoroughly, but most of his information he had derived from others. In reply to the questions that had been asked him: it was the fact that English business men, whom he had asked, trusted Chinamen rather than Japanese. With regard to education in Japan, he did not know of the New Testament being used as a text-book in any Japanese Government school, and English was not usually taught there. But at Osaka, and in other Church Missionary schools, English was taught, and the knowledge of English is spreading. In most of the shops at Tokyo, English is spoken. The similarity between Buddhist and Roman Catholic rites might possibly have been derived from the Jesuit missions, images and books being preserved in secret from the time of the persecution. He knew that this had happened in some places, but, in view of the fierceness of that persecution, it was not likely that much of the resemblance had been brought about in that way. What Japan needed was the pure Christianity of the Bible, not deteriorated by ecclesiasticism or rationalism. An English bishop had told him that it was quite possible that the whole of Japan might at some time rapidly adopt Christianity. This would come about if a great leader arose, like the religious reformers that Japan had had in the past, who should commend Christianity to them. But, in that case, it would be a national adoption of Christianity, not a personal acceptance of Christ. As to the meaning of Nirvana, that was a very difficult question to answer. The nearest way by which one could express it was to say that Nirvana meant "nothingness." In conclusion, he would say that it took a very long time for the European to learn and understand the Asiatic. They ought, therefore, to take care not to judge the Japanese too hastily and too harshly.

The LECTURER subsequently added the following remarks in reply to Mr. Schwartz:

The writer of the paper is not aware that he made any disparaging remarks on "broad views." If he did so, he much regrets it; for he always avoids the term "broad" in the sense that Mr. Schwartz seems to attach to it; just as much as he also avoids

the terms "high" and "low," as applied to Church views. They are all misleading words. He believes with the Psalmist that the commandment of the Lord is "exceeding broad," and also with the teaching of Jesus Christ that "broad is the way that leadeth to destruction." He has also noticed that many who claim to have special breadth of view unconsciously narrow the scope of their outlook by limitations and prejudices which are, to say the least, unscientific, and therefore the opposite of "broad." On the other hand the true Christian view is really broad.