

# RELIGION OF THE JAPANESE.

President of the University of Tokyo Addresses Americans On This Subject.

HE TELLS WHAT BUDDHISM IS.

Dharma's Teachings and Their Similarity to the Teachings of Joseph Smith

Special Correspondence.

Worcester, Mass., Nov. 14.—Yesterday Dr. G. Stanley Hall, at the close of an elaborate lecture on the psychology involved in the "Messianity of Christ," announced that he would undoubtedly be absent on the morrow, but was pleased to say that Dr. J. Tokura, president of the University of Tokyo, would lecture in his place.

In view of the large place Japan is filling in the thought and speculations of mankind the announcement aroused unusual interest among the 40-odd middle-aged men and women who are doing post graduate work in the Clark university. The fact that Dr. Tokura had been a student under Dr. Hall many years ago in Johns Hopkins, and was consequently familiar with occidental as well as oriental schools of

thought, coupled with the intimation that the Japanese professor would perhaps draw a parallel to show wherein the philosophy of the east might shed new light upon problems in the west, served to intensify the interest.

Dr. Tokura is a man of middle age, a little taller than the majority of Japanese, and has a high forehead, and a very intelligent face. He was dressed in a Prince Albert suit, and save for the characteristic hue of his skin, might have passed for the ordinary college professor. Ten or 12 years of absence from an English-speaking country had made his speech somewhat difficult, and his delivery was consequently slow, with pauses now and then in search of the right word. The following is a transcript from memory without notes, and is to be regarded rather as a free statement of my impressions, which I translate into a more popular phraseology than the lecturer used.

## DR. TOKURA'S LECTURE.

Japan, said Dr. Tokura, has never been distinguished for the originality of her thought. Our systems of religion and philosophy have in the remote past been imported from China and India; and during recent decades we have borrowed largely from Europe and America. If my country has any genius along thought lines, it is expressed in selecting and combining those ideas from all sources which are best adapted for strengthening and invigorating her own national life. Accordingly, we shall do well to consider first what China has given us, then what we have taken from the Hindoo, and lastly consider the effect of occidental importations.

Confucius can scarcely be said to have left a philosophy behind him, at least in the metaphysical sense of the word. His doctrines have reference to the duties and obligations of what he regarded as right living. Speculations respecting God, or the origin and destiny of the world, did not occur to him at all. He was concerned only with the present life, and at best his teachings attempt no higher flight than that of a practical ethics.

As such they have had a profound influence throughout China, and scarcely less in Japan. Mencius or Menctius, his most noted follower and inter-

preter, deepened them somewhat however, by raising the question as to whether man's nature is essentially good or bad. His own conclusion was that it is good; that the good is natural or normal to the human race. Badness is a disease that disappears when the causes are removed.

The question aroused profound discussion, however, and many of his disciples took the opposite view, viz., that man's nature is essentially bad; that it is only by constant and unremitting application of the law, that he retains any degree of goodness. These teachers, the lectures pointed out, had a strong support in those philosophers in Christianity who taught that man's nature is totally depraved; notably the English philosopher Hobbes.

Both schools of philosophy agreed, however, that the ethics of Confucius were the only means of preserving the good unperished in the race; the optimistic looking upon these rules of conduct as the means of restoring the good, the pessimists as the means of holding the evil in check.

In this teachers arose who hit upon a compromise between the two schools, and out of their reasoning grew our first metaphysical philosophy. They taught that both schools were right, and in order to justify such an attitude, maintained that man had a dual nature; an eternal nature, which was good, and an accidental nature which was bad. The first compares with the Christian idea of the soul or spirit, and the second with the mortal tabernacle or flesh. Hence arose endless speculations and variations of theory as to the origin of the soul and its final destiny.

## WHAT BUDDHISM IS.

Buddhism can scarcely be called a philosophy, since what passes under that name contains many contradictory systems of metaphysics. It is rather a history of the speculative thought of India. Hindoo philosophy divides the soul into eight aspects, five of these are represented by the senses, the others are respectively consciousness, self-ness (in the bad or selfish sense), and an eighth aspect for which we have no name, unless it be subcon-

sciousness. It is the aspect which holds all things that sink out of consciousness.

The variations of Buddhistic philosophy are almost endless. I may, however, divide them into two great schools—those which teach that the soul is dependent, and those which teach that it is independent.

Among the first there is a striking similarity in doctrine to that of Christianity. They believe in a supreme being that might stand for the Father and in a mediator that might stand for Jesus Christ.

## DHARMA'S TEACHINGS.

But it is of the second that I especially desire to speak. A great religious reformer named Dharma was the first to teach, not only that the soul is eternal and immortal, but also that it is the only supreme power in the universe. It follows directly from this that salvation is entirely an individual matter—something that each soul must work out for itself alone.

Picture if you can the opposition this teacher would meet in China where for centuries men, so far from individualizing their efforts, have blindly imitated the copy set for them by Confucius! Dharma taught that there was no virtue or saving grace in letters, art, knowledge, or education, as then carried out; for none of those cultures reached or reached upon the soul.

Of course, the new gospel never became popular; that it lived at all, resulted only from the fact that the sect became esoteric; that is, it was taught here and there to the chosen few, who gradually congregated into monasteries, and this is where the doctrine is taught today.

It was in one of these that I became acquainted with the doctrine. After I had been initiated, the priest asked me this question—meaningless, apparently, as you will no doubt agree. "Have you heard what your right hand says?"

Each neophyte or beginner had a similarly senseless question given him to wrestle with during the day, and at night we were closeted with the teacher to give our answers. Day after day I conjured up now this significance, now that, as the language of my right hand; that my teacher never let me proceed very far before stopping me with some

remark about "that being irrelevant, or extraneous, or superficial, or laid on," and so forth. On the seventh night I had nothing to say—there was nothing. Strangely enough, this was the very answer my teacher wanted. "He desired to introduce me, not to some activity of my soul, some individual superficiality—but to my soul itself; which he taught was, not like a sheet of white paper, for that has form and limitation, but like a formless void, which is nothing, and which yet gives unity to everything."

## FICHTE'S DOCTRINE.

The only doctrine among occidental philosophers that compares with it is that of Fichte, who teaches that the ego or soul is eternal, self-existent, and absolute. Schopenhauer's ultimate reality is expressed as will and representation; but these are themselves externalities, and imply the ego of Fichte, as underlying them. From this tendency to center all responsibility in the soul itself has grown the doctrine in the Orient that there is no real knowledge which does not involve both knowing and doing. To know only, may touch the soul, but it does not stir any reaction; to do only, that is, to do without knowing, is mere imitation and does not touch the soul at all. (At this point in the lecture I could not help reflecting that in this very doctrine of silence about what the right hand says, and of doing as well as knowing, may be the origin of the valor accompanying the absence of brag which distinguishes the Japanese army.)

If I should offer one criticism upon the thought of the western world, continued Mr. Tokura, it is the tendency to forget what this priest made me so graphically remember. Kant speaks of the pure reason, of the practical reason, and of the practical judgment, which evidently constitute his idea of the soul. One philosopher holds up the ultimate notion of the universe as identical, as will. Even your best psychologists analyze conscious power as the intellect, the feelings and the will; but by oriental philosophy the soul is none of these. It is the silent eternal, something that makes these superficial, finite things possible.

Perhaps I can make it plain by a comparison with natural phenomena.

We say that water is composed of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen, or as the chemist puts it H<sub>2</sub>O. But H<sub>2</sub>O is not water—unless there be also present a certain amount of heat. Take away that heat, and we have quite something else—ice, increase that heat, and we have still another force—vapor. Here, the one thing that remains constant is the combination H<sub>2</sub>O.

## A COMPARISON.

Now I am going to compare the less aspect to the intellect, because of its crystalline clearness and coldness the water-aspect to the feelings which have much mobility and the vapor-aspect to the will, which has the most mobility of all. But the soul is not one of these aspects, nor yet is it all of them, it is the something in us which makes these states possible. Now can we suppose that the soul, any more than H<sub>2</sub>O, can pass from one state to another without some form of energy—perhaps infinite energy—accompanying and causing the change?

The lecturer was warmly applauded as he took his seat and afterward the students crowded about him to congratulate him on the clearness and directness of his presentation. We are frequently overwhelmed in these occult courses by unnecessarily abstruse and technical phraseology.

## TAUGHT BY JOSEPH SMITH.

When it became my privilege to shake his hand, I told him that the doctrines inculcated by Dharma were in at least two aspects, the same as doctrines taught by Joseph Smith. The first was the doctrine that the spirit of man is eternal and self-existent or co-eternal with God; the second is the doctrine that it requires both knowing and doing to constitute real knowledge, which, however, we speak of under another name—intelligence.

At this point one of the professors called attention in complimentary terms to the "Scientific Aspects of Mormonism," where, he said, our visitor would find those co-incidences very clearly worked out. I thanked the professor, not a little gratified to learn thus indirectly that my humble de-

fense of Mormonism is being read by such a class of men.

Dr. Tokura expressed himself as much interested, whereupon, I presented him a copy with my compliments. I hope it will help our missionaries in the land of the rising sun. Afterward I had a pleasant talk with the gentleman about our people. He had been at Salt Lake City recently, and had attended a meeting in the Tabernacle. He was aware of our mission in his country and seemed much interested in what I had to tell him concerning the Elders laboring there.

N. L. NELSON.



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