

VOLUME XL

*Published by
Ontario, Can.*

NUMBER 9

THE MISSIONARY REVIEW *of the* WORLD

SEPTEMBER, 1917

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What Christianity Has Given Japan

From "THE JAPANESE CHRISTIAN WORLD"

\$2.50 A YEAR

25 CENTS A COPY

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Vol.
XL

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CHANGES IN THE RUSSIAN CHURCH

THE Commission headed by Hon. Elihu Root has returned to America with encouraging reports on the outlook for permanent progress and reform in Russia. Mr. Charles R. Crane, another member of the Commission, who is an authority on Slavic affairs, reports remarkable changes in the Russian Church as the result of the revolution. He says that since the Church has been separated from the State and is managing its own affairs, it is making more rapid progress toward adjusting itself to new conditions than the State. More changes were made in the Church during the month of May than in two centuries previous. The process has been one of democratization; every priest has had to have his position confirmed by a vote from the people of his parish. Twelve Bishops have been dismissed, including the bishop of Petrograd, and new bishops have been installed only after election by congregations.

The property of the churches has been transferred from the State and is to be administered by the congregations, the clergy and bishops occupying themselves solely with religious affairs. Two very significant assemblies of the Church have taken place at Moscow: One is that of "Old Believers," who include some 15,000,000 people representing the oldest and most uncompromising division of the Russian people. The other is that of the Orthodox Church, the former State Church, and is the first of the kind to meet in some 250 years. They are the most representative gatherings possible to have in Russia, and the delegates come from every corner of the empire, two priests and two laymen being elected to represent every 100 churches, the whole body numbering 1,268 delegates. The Russians are exceedingly religious, and may be expected to become more Christian as they are free from ecclesiasticism.

Buddhism's Fight for Life

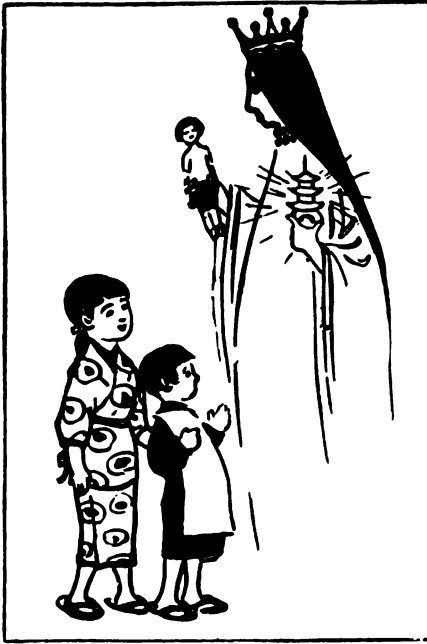
An Attempt at the Revival of Buddhism in Japan

BY REV. W. REGINALD WHEELER, HANKOW, CHINA

ONE of the by-products of Christian propaganda in foreign nations is the stimulus given to the native faiths. This reaction against Christianity is seen especially in Buddhist circles. The leaders of the various sects, many of which have become decadent, do not hesitate to borrow from their rival religion, Christianity. Young Men's Buddhist Associations are largely modeled after the Young Men's Christian Association "interdenominational" and with emphasis upon social service. The Buddhist liturgy of the Buddhist services has been influenced by that of the Christian Church. In Tokyo the resemblance between recent Buddhist hymns and standard Christian ones is almost ludicrous. An article in the *Japan Weekly Chronicle*, of Dec. 28, 1916, entitled, "The Reaction Against Christian Propaganda," by "Japanglo," summarizes the chief features of this attempted revival. It mentions the appearance of a new Buddhist magazine in Kobe, called "*Jiyu Bukkyo*" ("Free Buddhism"), which is the organ of the New Buddhist Association. The first number, which appeared last October, pointed out the necessity for reform. Editorially the paper spoke as follows:

"Buddhism is like an hotel near the railway but between stations. Once it was a famous hostelry, but the advent of the railway has left it stranded and the whole neighborhood suffers from neglect. Even should a wayfarer drop in he will find no comfort, for the place is not able to renew its furnishings and it has become worn out and obsolete. Just so is Japanese Buddhism—passed by and ignored by modern progress and unable to afford spiritual refreshment. True, there are still some intellectuals, people like University professors, who profess Buddhism, but they are very few, the great majority of Buddhists being but blind followers of tradition. They do as their fathers did, being too ignorant to know what changes science has wrought in the world, while their tradition is so dead that it has no influence on their lives.

"The people are not so much to blame as the priests. These indeed profess to be fighting the good fight, but their ancient weapons are useless in this Taisho era. Old-fashioned fortresses are a poor defence nowadays. Does it not humiliate one to observe the work of the professional Buddhists of Kobe? That is why we say that we must open a new way for Buddhism—and the new way is the old way of return to Buddha and a forsaking of sectarian paths. Not that all Buddhist sects should be destroyed. Each has its mission, and all are a safe refuge for the old folks who know nothing of progress. But by going back to



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"The Buddha is the Light and the
Light is Wisdom"

Buddha we may create a new Buddhism which shall enable religion to go hand in hand with science. This shall be our consistent aim."

This intention to modernize Buddhism, though by a different method, is expressed in an article on "Religious Reform," by Fujitani Shucho, in *Yuben* ("Eloquence") which is the same in substance as a speech he made at a meeting in Kyoto. Among other things he said:

"Bear in mind that religion is rather for this world than for the next. Some Buddhist sects declare that the world is a vale of tears. We believe it is a garden of pleasure and hope. Shinran, founder of the Shinshu sect, at nine years, wrote:

Forethought is vain,

In fairest hours

The sudden rain

Scatters amain

The cherry-flowers.

Herein lies the necessity for religious reform. There may have been days when it was enough for religion to prepare the soul for the next world, but now we need a faith that will bear us up in worldly trouble.

"Similarly, religious teachers of the day must grasp our vital necessities. It is therefore a mistake to cry, 'Return to Shinran,' or 'Return to Nichiren,' or 'Return to Christ,' for the world is not as it was in their day. Gautama, Jesus, Shinran, and Nichiren had great messages for their own times, but none for ours. Buddhism declines because Buddhists do not understand this. We must not return to Nichiren or to Shinran, but be a new Nichiren or a new Shinran, and renew our faith in terms that suit the times."

In an article called "Human and Religious Progress," in the December number of *Seinem Yuben* ("Youthful Eloquence") Professor Kaneko Umaji, Ph.D., of Waseda University, speaks of the necessity for reform. Some of his phraseology is apparently borrowed boldly from Christianity:

"I am very glad to see that the long-wished-for Y. M. B. A. (Young Men's Buddhist Association) has come into being among the students of this University of Waseda. The times needed it, and I am glad that you have taken up the task of finding a new Buddhism which shall march hand in hand with the progress of civilization. Ancient, divided, and

often corrupt, the Buddhism we have known awaits your reforms to regain its influence. Among those whom I address may be Christians or adherents of other religions. I do not criticise them, but to me, Buddhism, with its profound philosophy and its spiritual power over men and women, is the best of all religions. Yet with sorrow I confess that it fails to serve the youth of today. It is a sun obscured in clouds. It has been left behind by a progressive world. Not a few young men having sought in it their spiritual sustenance, and sought in vain, have desperately flung their lives away in a deep cataract pool or before a running train. Buddhism must therefore be reformed.

"Religion should lead in social progress, otherwise it can never say, 'Come unto me all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' The reformer comes not to destroy, but to fulfill. It is useless to wait on the priesthood. They never reform. The task lies with you young men."

"Japanglo" comments thus on these questions:

"As may be seen from the quotations made, the New Buddhist movement has its main stream in the Young Men's Buddhist Associations of the middle and high schools, and manifests itself most effectively in the mass meetings of these bodies. Nearly all the universities and high schools have their Y. M. C. A., but the Y. M. B. A. has now caught up and spread over the middle schools as well, the Christian Association having found its way into but few of these institutions. Like its Christian prototype, the Y. M. B. A. is undenominational, and its members take themselves very seriously, and set before them as their goal the regeneration of the nation. They no longer waste their energies on the destructive criticism of Christianity. Usually they have monthly lecture meetings and occasionally mass meetings."

This may seem discouraging to some Christians, yet out of this very rivalry and frank comparison may come great benefits for those who are not afraid to trust such comparison between the True Light of Christ and the half lights of the religions of the East. Indeed Moku-shoko Shonin ("Word-Eating Priest") in the October number of the



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Used in Japan to counteract Christian
Sunday Schools

Shin Nippon ("New Japan") pays unconscious tribute to the superior zeal and devotion of the Christian missionaries. He says in part:

"Christian missionaries go into the remotest parts of the earth to increase their converts, braving all dangers and discomforts. But what do the Buddhist priests of Japan? Are men really alive who are content to exist upon the remuneration they receive for reading prayers they do not understand at funerals? So mechanical is their performance that they make prayers at piece-work rates. And as their spiritual life declines, their physical luxury increases. They drink and dissipate, to pay for which they resort to ways of getting money from which even laymen should shrink. There are black sheep, doubtless, in the Christian ministry, but in the bulk there is no comparison. Christian workers constantly strike for the amelioration of social conditions—to rescue women, to educate the poor, to succour orphans, and the Buddhist priests loiter far in their rear. We laugh at the Salvationists, but we admire their work. Christian workers are on fire with zeal for the improvement of mankind. Buddhist priests follow their example, but half-heartedly. Buddhist preachers appeal only to the old and uneducated whom they tell of the delights of paradise, but they have no message for this life. Their preaching places often remain closed for months at a time. While the Christians strive to save souls, the Buddhists flatter millionaires and magnates. There are 72,000 first-class Buddhist temples, 52,000 chief priests, 148,000 preachers, 52,000 probationary priests, and 12,000 students in Buddhist schools—an astonishing number of men to be doing nothing."

This tribute seems sincere and praiseworthy, but in his final sentence "Word-Eating Priest" gives a curious interpretation of the motives of foreign missionaries. This motive in his eyes is a commercial one. In a preceding article he states that the sayings, "commerce follows the Cross," and "trade follows the missionary," are very common in America, and that this motive is an influential one there in furthering missionary zeal. The Japanese government was following the same line of thought when in the twenty-one demands upon China in 1915, it requested the right of propagating Buddhism; the purpose, according to "Japanglo," was political and commercial rather than religious. "Word-Eating Priest" finishes his article thus: "We hope the Buddhist priests will make up and become pioneers of Japan's foreign trade, like the Christian workers, for otherwise they will remain only an encumbrance to the Empire."

"Japanglo" comments thus: "This is a very naïve way of putting the matter, but it is the foundation upon which much quasi-religious enthusiasm has been built up of late years in Asia."