

## MISCELLANEOUS.

### SHALL WE WELCOME BUDDHIST MISSIONARIES TO AMERICA?

Dr. Carus, the editor of *The Open Court*, in December last chronicled the arrival of two Shinshu priests in San Francisco and quoted them as follows :

" Our intention is to spread the Gospel of Buddha among the Americans . . . revealed by the enlightened Lord Buddha Sakya Muni some 2500 years ago. . . . I have a very strong conviction that Buddhism is naturally destined to become the universal religion in the future, for the reason that there is perhaps no other religion equal to Buddhism that would satisfy the refined minds of the twentieth century. I am most happy to say that I have a very pious belief in the boundless mercy of Amitabha Buddha. My only goal is to attain myself, and help others attain, the *Maha-Nirvana*, where the highest freedom and true happiness may be enjoyed, which our Lord Buddha has revealed for the first time to mankind, suffering constantly from their own passions and ignorance inherited from previous existences."

Dr. Carus thinks Christianity would be greatly benefited if missions from other religions were sent to Christian countries, and sums up the matter in the words : " We heartily welcome the two Buddhist missionaries who have recently arrived in San Francisco."

No one questions that Dr. Carus speaks this welcome in sincerity and of good purpose, but he ought to have known better than to give such a welcome. If he had known this Buddhism as we in Japan know it he would have cut out his tongue rather than bid its priests welcome to America. For what is the Buddhism represented by these priests?

#### I. *Its Teachings.*

Hear Prof. Max Müller of Oxford : " This Sutra (the *Scriptures* of this sect) sounds to us, no doubt, very different from the original teaching of Buddha. And so it is : ' Repeat the name of Amitabha as often as you can, repeat it particularly in the hour of death, and you will go straight to Sukhavati and be happy,' this is what Japanese Buddhists are asked to believe ; this is what they are told was the teaching of Buddha. Directly opposing the Buddhist doctrine that as a man sows so shall he reap this Sutra says ' No ; not by good works done on earth, but by a mere repetition of the name of Amitabha is an entrance gained into the land of bliss . .

It may be that in a lower stage of civilisation even such teaching has produced some kind of good. But Japan is surely ripe for better things.

"Is it not high time that the millions who live in Japan and profess a faith in Buddha should be told that this doctrine of Amitabha is a *secondary form of Buddhism, a corruption of the pure doctrine of the Royal Prince*, and that if they really mean to be Buddhists, they should return to the words of Buddha, as they are preserved to us in the older Sutras? But these older Sutras are evidently far less considered in Japan than the *degraded and degrading tracts, the silly and mischievous stories of Amitabha* and his paradise of which, I feel convinced, Buddha himself never knew even the names." (Abbreviated and slightly changed in form from *Chips from a German Workshop*, Vol. V., p. 234 ff.—Italics ours).

## II. In Practice.

In discussing this point we do not raise the question of the present moral condition of the Japanese people and its cause or causes; nor do we speak of individual lapses, which may occur anywhere. We speak of the priests as a class and especially of those in highest authority, and this we hold to be not unfair. And the circumstances call for plain statements of actual facts:

1. The chief-priest of this sect lives openly in concubinage. He has a large number of these women—somewhere between ten and twenty are figures usually given.

2. The devotees of the sect from the rural districts not infrequently take their daughters to Kyoto and offer them to this chief-priest as a religious act. Such incidents have been again and again reported in the Japanese newspapers, and intelligent Japanese say that in the province of Etchizen and elsewhere where the influence of this sect is most pervasive such an experience on the part of a woman is a recommendation rather than a hindrance to would-be husbands.

3. This chief-priest is not only the possessor of such a household, but over and above this is notoriously profligate. The houses of assignation are declared to be witnesses against him.

4. Two or three years ago a high official of their chief temple tried to marry the daughter of his concubine to the chief-priest and in this connexion the dishonesty and debauchery brought to light was a stench in the nostrils of even the Japanese. One of the Tokyo newspapers published a series of forty articles on the subject.

5. The chief-priest, and the leading officials being men of such lives it is not strange that Buddhist priests have the common reputation of being the most immoral class in the Empire. Records of hospitals which have been examined show that this rumor is not without solid foundation. The registers of the *Yoshiwara* show the same. So notorious is their conduct that government officials have repeatedly lectured them for their laziness and immorality.

6. As is mentioned in this article this sect has missionaries in Honolulu. Passing through that city last spring I was told that the chief patrons of the Buddhist missionaries there were those who traffic in the virtue, in the very life, of their sisters.

I do not assert that there are no priests who are sincere and upright men. There are doubtless those who greatly deplore the evils spoken of and I can believe the report that a few years ago one young reformer declared in the presence of the authorities that unless there was a reform he would cut off his right hand. What I claim is that a sect with such teaching and practice has no message of good to

America and that it is a dangerous sentimentality which bids them welcome to our shores. America, too, is "surely ripe for better things."

AUBURNDALE, MASS., April, 1900.

M. L. GORDON.

#### EDITORIAL REPLY.

I believe in liberty and free competition. The truth can only come to the front by giving a respectful hearing to every one who believes himself to be in possession of the truth. Even granting the indictments of Japanese Buddhism made by Mr. Gordon, we cannot see that they are worse than those which at one time or other could have been made against Christianity. Further, if the doctrine of the Shinshu is really as silly as represented by Mr. Gordon, I cannot understand how the Buddhist missionaries can be successful in this country. Accordingly they should not be considered dangerous.

Mr. Gordon omits to mention that the invocation of Amitabha's name has merit only according to Shinshu doctrines if made with a pure heart and in faith. It is practically the same as St. Paul's and Luther's doctrine of the saving power of faith. The *sola fide* is as much emphasised in Lutheran pulpits as by the founder of the Shinshu.

The Buddhist missionaries who have arrived from Japan are a kind of Buddhist Protestants. They belong to the Western Shinshu Sect whose leaders and members are known to be liberal as well as earnest in their religion. Their high priest Otani Koye is a noble-minded scholar of untarnished reputation, married to one wife, as are Protestant Christian bishops and highly respected in his country. His son, a promising youth, is sent out to study abroad; he is now in India and will soon go to Europe. Nothing but good is spoken of the family life of the Rt. Rev. Otani Koye, as well as other priests of this Shinshu sect.

The case is different with the Eastern Shinshu sect; but the Japanese missionaries of San Francisco have as little to do with them, as Mr. Gordon has with the polygamist Mormon Christians.

The present high-priest of the Eastern Shinshu, it is true, has been bitterly denounced by sincere Buddhists and a reform movement personally antagonising him has caused a split in his church; yet even his enemies grant that he is an uncommonly able man who in spite of all accusations is able to hold his own and remain in his influential position. His friends claim that the accusations are unfounded or are based upon misrepresentations. Mr. Gordon says the worst that ever has been said of him. Having no means nor time to find out the truth of the case, and having nothing whatever to do with the man, I propose to leave the matter in abeyance; for the question whether or not a religion should have a respectful hearing can not be disposed of by producing a black sheep from its fold. The fact cannot be doubted, and is least of all doubted by Prof. Max Müller whose views of Buddhism have undergone considerable change, that there are a great number of pure-hearted Buddhists, and I claim that the presence of Buddhist missionaries in this country will be beneficial to Christianity here as well as to Buddhism abroad. The evils which are caused by a friendly exchange of thought are transient but the blessings are permanent.

P. C.

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#### A BUDDHIST CONVERT TO CHRISTIANITY.

All those who attended the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 will remember the stir made by the speech of Kinza Hirai, a Japanese Buddhist, a modest