

The *Kokkai* does not seem to stand on solid ground than this gentleman did. Like him, it has a vague idea that missionaries should always be preaching among cannibals or savages, and that the intervals of their propagandism should be devoted to self-torment of some kind or other.

But though this quaint conception provokes only laughter, we do not find it so easy to treat lightly our Tokyo contemporary's attempt to discredit the educational efforts of the missionaries. What they have accomplished in this line, what they are yearly accomplishing, deserves to be kept in grateful remembrance by Japan for all time. It is true that the curricula of missionary schools do not always include scientific training of a high character. But it is also true that by means of missionary schools a sound and sufficient education has been given to thousands and tens of thousands of Japanese youths who would otherwise have been condemned to comparative ignorance. We did not suppose it possible that any thoughtful Japanese, above all the editor of a journal like the *Kokkai*, could be at once so ungrateful and so unjust as to sneer at the admirable record of missionary educational work in this country.

The Religious Development of Korea.

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The religious development of Korea presents certain phenomena which are worthy of notice. Demonolatry, Buddhism, and ancestral worship share, in common with the same manifestations in other nations, certain genus-marks which declare their common source or similarity of origin; but outside of these they have distinct characteristics which are the outgrowth of the centuries of their development on the peninsula, and which mark them as the peculiar property of Korea.

These present us with what are really three cults, all distinct and well defined, and existing close together, yet not inharmonious. With true pagan tolerance a Korean may identify himself, as far as the great mass of the people are expected to identify themselves, with all three and not stand in danger of excommunication from any one of them. In no country do we find a better exemplification of that so much lauded "pagan toleration" than in Korea. No mighty strife for religious supremacy has, as far as is known, marked the history of the nation. The overthrow of Buddhism, which would seem to controvert this, was on political grounds and because of its identification with an overthrown régime, and not because of any religious agitation. Whatever may be the theories, practices, or tenets of any one of these three cults, history seems to teach that no great truth was held in such a manner as to lead one to look upon the presence of the other cults as incompatible with its own existence. As a result the native takes his religious ceremonies from ancestral worship, seeks the efficacy of Buddhist prayers, devoutly bows his head at the shrine of some mountain demon, and

his conscience will not even suggest to him that he has been guilty of heresy.

In considering the diversified religious phenomena of Korea it should be born in mind that only the first of the three mentioned cults can be regarded as peculiarly native. Buddhism was introduced centuries ago, either from India direct or from Thibet. Ancestral worship was derived probably from the same source which gave it to Japan, China, and other nations of the East. We have, then, first, what has been called by Roman Catholic writers demonolatry, but which is known among the people as

THE SUPERSTITIONS.

The term is apparently not a derogatory one, but refers to an immense body of traditionary belief which lies outside the systematized cults, though the arrogant Confucianist will apply the same expression to Buddhism and the almost obsolete Taoism. The "Superstitions" comprise a vast number of gods, demons, and demi-gods, the legacy of centuries of nature worship. A distorted and tainted imagination has peopled earth, air, and sea with supernatural beings whose multiplicity makes them ubiquitous, and whose power for good or evil demands worship. To these darkened souls the whispering of the wind through a tree becomes the voice of the spirit dwelling in the branches; the black depths of a pool or lake conceal the dragon forms of water-sprites, powerful for weal or woe; while on the mountain summits dwell the office-bearing gods of a populous pantheon, who dictate the fortunes of mortals and immortals alike.

Trees are a favorite place of residence for the local deities, and sacred trees are found every-where. Along the road-sides, and especially near cities and villages, they may be seen, indicated by the strips of cloth and paper fluttering from their branches, and the great pile of stones about the trunk. The method of honoring the resident deity is to place one or two new stones on the pile at the trunk, or to tie some token to the branches. What the true significance of these acts is the writer has been unable to learn, the almost invariable answer being, "it was so from the beginning." When the special aid of the spirit is desired the ceremonial is more pretentious. A party, usually of women, gathers beneath the tree and worships; a sacrifice of rice and choice food is placed on the great pile of stones; and while the deity feasts on the essence or spiritual element of the food, lighted paper is kept burning beneath the branches and prayer offered for the desired blessing.

The worship of mountain spirits is universal. Shrines, ranging from pretentious temples to mere piles of stones, at the foot of trees, crown the tops of mountain passes, and exact homage from passers-by. The sanctuary of one of these mountain temples will be draped with white and red cloth, and contain a picture of the deity. The latter is represented usually as an elderly man, of high rank, clad in official robes and surrounded by attendants. This picture is the object of reverence, and before it incense is burned at the time of worship.

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Where the shrine is simply a pile of stones the scenes at the sacred trees are repeated, the suppliant, however, always spitting before adding his offering to the stone-heap. This is said to be a relic of some old snake fetish which has long since disappeared.

Water-sprites are said to frequent all springs, falls, lakes, and rivers. Among the most famous is the Dragon of Lake Yenan, near the Yellow Sea. This imaginary being is supposed to control the food supply of that portion of the country, and to grant fruitful or disastrous years as it pleases him. Wonderful stories are related of him, and to propitiate him, especially in the time of drought, elaborate sacrifices are offered, generally under official supervision.

While the dualism which underlies all Korean thought and philosophy causes a well-defined distinction to be drawn between the gross, material subjects thus sanctified and a supposed inner spiritual presence which the Korean claims is the object of worship, the dreadful effects of that unmooring of the soul from its anchorage on the eternal God is seen in this prostitution of the noblest faculty of that soul to render homage to material and sensual objects. But not only does nature-worship dwarf and abase the moral nature of the Korean, but the dread espionage of creations of his imagination fills his heart with fear at times, and leads him into grotesque methods of exorcism. The gods of sicknesses cast their foul shadows on the floor of his pantheon, the deifications of astrology disfigure its ceiling, and the ghosts and specters of evil deeds perch on the heads of its idols or flap their wings against its walls. Of demi-gods there is no small number. The apotheosis of humanity is a well-known doctrine to the Korean. Heroes of great wars, sages of distant antiquity, the benefactors of the people in times of disaster, all have their niches and reverent homage.

Turning from these native creations in the religious world, we have

BUDDHISM.

Introduced in the time of the three kingdoms, it has maintained a foothold among the people for nearly fifteen hundred years, and now, in an effete old age, appears to be gradually sinking into its own Nirvana of nothingness and non-existence. Its history is suggestive. In its early days, when conviction was sufficiently strong to inspire its devotees with missionary ardor and zeal, it came in its career of propagation to the peninsula, and attempted to spread its doctrines in Shilla, the southernmost of the three kingdoms. Met with opposition, proscribed and persecuted, exposed to all the vicissitudes of a hunted existence, it even found a martyr whose blood, if we are to believe the legend concerning him, proved a seed of propagation. Succeeding at last in securing an entrance among the people, it gradually extended its sway until in the later years of the last dynasty it reached the summit of its prosperity. At that time the power and influence of Buddhism were paramount and the nation was priest-ridden to the verge of anarchy. Not only were these celebrities potent in

the ordinary life and affairs of the nation, but casting aside their religious character they entered the world of politics and became dominant there. Priests thronged the courts and council halls of the monarchs, administered the great offices of the realm, marshaled armies in time of war, and eventually placed the offspring of a priest on the throne.

The effect of this worse than secularized priesthood upon the people was demoralizing in the extreme. History describes the public morals as at the lowest ebb; even pagan moral sense is shocked at the iniquity, the violence, the shameful practices of that period. The Buddhist priesthood in the height of their prosperity were simply immorality personified. The tenets of their cult which impose chastity, abstinence, and self-abnegation were flagrantly and universally violated. The monasteries became great sores upon society and the body politic, leavening the whole with a moral rotteness which threatened final dissolution. But that was 500 years ago. A change came, and the nation in self-defense was compelled to put an end to such a state of affairs. As Buddhism had exchanged its religious field for a political one, so the reformation which nearly annihilated it in Korea was primarily a political reformation. The great founder of the present dynasty, himself a sagacious and an able statesman of the time, undertook to clean out the Augean stable, and before him guilty royalty and criminal priestcraft alike fell. Since then Buddhism has been in disgrace, its priests exiled from the capital city, and forming a caste in society only a remove from butchers, slaves, headsmen, etc.

The tenets of Korean Buddhism are much the same as in other nations, though its millennium and a half of residence on the peninsula has given it peculiar features of its own. It has its images, saints, prayer-books, chants, rosaries, fasts, and other paraphernalia. There are many monasteries built among the mountains, and the total number of priests is variously estimated at from ten to thirty thousand. The monasteries are often sought by the childless and unfortunate to pray for a rectification of their unblest state, but this is about the only support given this once powerful cult. Public propagation is not permitted, and the ranks of the priesthood are recruited to a large extent by chance. In summing up the present status and work of Buddhism in Korea, whatever inherent power or energy it may possess, apparently, the priests alone study the doctrines, long for Nirvana, and gladly accept any stray copper, while the people confine themselves to the cold, expressionless face of the idol.

We now turn to the last and most powerful of the three mentioned cults,

ANCESTRAL WORSHIP.

This is the State creed. Its chief adherent is his majesty, and law and custom unite in imposing its obligations upon all people. It has an elaborate ceremonial, an ancient and honored code of ethics, and some

doctrines. It teaches not only the immortality of the human spirit, but its multiplicity, assigning to each man three souls. After death one of these souls enters the ancestral tablet, the second occupies the grave, and the third goes to the final destination of the deceased. The obsequies to the dead are thus full of a deep religious signification to the Korean, leading him to exercise a faculty which is among his noblest characteristics—that of reverence and worship. Immediately after death the dead body is placed in an inner room, with its head toward the east, and the immediate relatives gather about, with disordered clothing and disheveled hair, to mourn; this mourning is maintained for three days. On the night of death a curious custom, derived from Buddhism, is observed; it is known as the "calling of the souls." A coat worn by the deceased is taken outside by relatives, who, calling him three times by his clan name, advise him to come back and get his garment. According to popular belief his three souls are held in chains by three spirits—constables who have come from the lower depths to conduct them before the Judge of all the dead. Throwing the coat on the roof, the relatives enter the house quickly, but immediately reappear with a sacrifice to the visitors from beneath—three bowls of food for their refreshment, and three piles of money for their traveling expenses. After three days the body is temporarily interred beneath the floor of the house, or just outside the door, where it is left for a period ranging from two to six months, according to the social position of the dead. The children then assume the somber garb of mourners, and withdraw themselves—theoretically, at least—from all active life for three years. At the proper time the corpse is dug up and buried in its final resting place, the sacred tablet is inscribed and enshrined, and from that time tablet and grave become the scenes of reverential worship and homage.

The underlying principle of ancestor-worship is filial piety. The human heart longs for a father, and the Korean, knowing nothing of the divine Father, turns to satisfy his own soul-aspirations in the one who held that tender relation to him in life. It is his way of not forgetting the dead; doomed by his own false system to a life circumscribed by time, he strives to maintain the sacred ties of the past even after death has broken them. But when judged by the sum of all light and truth ancestral worship stands out in its true character, a blighting curse. Dreary and cheerless, exposing the warmth and tenderness of heart affection to the chills of death, it sends that dread chill into the very soul itself. A creed without a priesthood, its sanctuary is shrouded in the darkness of death, its altar is the grave, its homage the grief of bereaved hearts. Surely nowhere does the unbalance of the heathen mind betray itself more unmistakably than in this cult, which, under the specious pretext of exalting filial piety, robs the soul of God. Here extremes meet and become entangled. Its ethics the Confucian Code, it theorizes about God and worships man. The Romans apotheo-

sized only their emperors; with a consistency which is startling, the ancestor-worshiper carries the principle to its conclusion and exalts the entire male population.

THE OUTLOOK.

Korea is a pagan country—pagan in its life, its religion, its morals. We cannot express the actual condition in better words than those chosen by an honored missionary who has traveled the world over. He said: "Heathenism in India is vile, in China defiant, in Japan desperate, in Korea indifferent, in Africa triumphant." No better term describes Korea than "indifferent." While fervor, zeal, and conviction may be found in the monasteries, the great mass of the people seem skeptical and indifferent. The old systems have lost their hold on the masses, morality is held at a commercial value, and a Korean always finds himself able to adapt himself to circumstances. The pool of heathenism is stagnant, while from it rises a moral miasma of death. To describe the present condition of morals would be to quote Paul's description of the heathen world. A whited sepulcher may be fair without, but inwardly it is full of rottenness and dead men's bones.

A nation without a religion is Christianity's opportunity. In spite of law, custom, tradition, or belief the Korean's soul has remained untouched by the exercises in which he engages. To him, then, the truth as it is in Christ Jesus comes as a most glorious experience—it is his first taste of religion. It sinks through his mind into his heart and soul and fills him with the ineffable delight of peace above understanding and joy unspeakable. We thank God this has already been the experience of some, but the hard facts of the present stare us in the face. However enthusiastic we may be—and faith senses a glorious future for the peninsular kingdom—heathenism is intrenched here; it is intrenched in habit, custom, and law, in tradition, thought, and purpose. It is the basis of social, domestic, and political organization; it touches life in its widest circumference, and controls while it blights it. But it has lost much of its energy. The day of its greatest power is past, its most golden opportunities are gone, and after having fooled the people for so long it is ready for eviction. When Christianity enters the field moral stagnation ends; the air of indifference cannot be maintained perpetually, and whatever may be the travail and sorrow which shall lead to triumph, or however long the final result may be delayed, the time will surely come when even the Korean will behold in the benefits and blessings of the Gospel the soul's true heritage, and in its propositions the solution of all his difficulties.

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"The language of the people of Korea is intermediate between Mongolo-Tartar and Japanese, and an alphabetical system of writing is used to some extent; but in all official writing, and in the correspondence of the upper classes, the Chinese characters are used exclusively. Religion holds a low place in the kingdom."