

THE RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF A MODERN JAPANESE.

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[It will be interesting and instructive from both a psychological and a religious standpoint to read the autobiography of this Japanese Christian, who here addresses a Western audience. He has passed through the period of the Westernization of his country, and we notice that the influence of the former periods of its history is not obliterated. They are antagonized to a great extent by Western ideas, but after all they continue to exercise a powerful influence. Accordingly we must not expect that the Christianity of a Japanese convert should be our own Christianity. It has practically assumed a new form, just as the Christianity of Northern Europe, now known as Protestantism, is quite different from the religion of the old Roman empire known as Roman Catholicism. It will be noticed also that the Christianity of our Japanese writer has been considerably affected by science, whether we call it materialism or infidelity or rationalism.—ED.]

I AM the descendant of thirty-seven generations of Shinto priests. My father, who died a few years ago, was adopted from another old lineage of Shinto priests. So the hereditary blood flowing through my veins, destined me to worship the gods from my cradle

You will ask me what Shintoism is. *Shinto* is a Chinese word. In the Japanese language it is *Kami no michi*, which translated into English is "The Way of the Gods." Then what is Shintoism? This question is extremely complicated. Shintoism has a long history of at least twenty centuries. During this long period, both Confucianism and Buddhism have influenced it. It has changed and developed. Moreover its origin is veiled even at the present time. There are two widely separate opinions among scholars: one considers Shintoism as ancestor-worship, the other as nature-worship. From the evolutionary point of view we must agree with the latter. We cannot deny at the same time that Shintoism has more and more adopted elements of ancestor-worship during the later times. Fortunately, however, our purpose is neither to speculate upon the origin of Shintoism, nor to settle the philosophy of it. We shall be content to investigate what Shintoism is in modern Japanese minds and what relation it has to Japanese life at the present time. This is a vital question.

I was taught sacred dancing from my fifth or sixth year. I was taken to ceremonies and rituals by my father and was obliged to dance. On the other hand, I was taught the works of Confucius only by reading them aloud without any explanation. Unfortunately I was a skeptical youth. I came to dislike sacred dancing and the ritual. I asked the reason of the dancing and the worship at the shrines. My parents were glad to explain the origin of the dance and the worship of the gods. Their reasons were very simple: the gods created Japan; the gods were our ancestors; we are the sons and daughters of the gods; the gods guard and guide both people and country day and night. We must, therefore, worship the gods, love their country and be loyal to the Emperor who is the direct descendant of the gods.

Evolution, however, shows us evidence to the contrary. Men's ancestors were not gods but lower animals. Their conceptions of Shintoism and patriotism are curiously mingled. And the "essential fact in Shintoism is religious patriotism" and loyalty. Indeed their faith is very simple. They hold strictly to the traditions repeated from generation to generation. This is true not only of the Shinto priests, but also of the majority of the Japanese.

After the Russo-Japanese war, our Emperor went down to Ise, about 250 miles from Tokyo, the capital, where the sun-goddess has a shrine, and gave thanks to her for victory in the war. Princes, admirals, generals, and other officers did the same. This reminds us that Socrates often prayed to the sun.

You may have heard that the Japanese hold ideas about several things quite opposed to yours; for instance, we turn the page of a book from the right while you turn from the left. Your signal for "Good-bye" is ours for "come here." Then the sun is a male and the moon a female for you, but in Japan they are just the opposite, the sun is a female or goddess, and the moon is a male or a god. The sun-goddess is selected as the ancestor from whom the emperors derive their descent and authority. Thus "she is the most eminent of the Shinto deities" and the center of Shintoism, the state religion of Japan at present.

American and European writers has discussed the cause of the victory of Japan over Russia. Some said it was due to *Bushido*, the way of warriors, and some said to military drill; while the English thought that it was owing to national education. Therefore, the University of London invited Baron Kikuchi, who is now the President of the Kyoto Imperial University, to give lectures on the educational system of Japan. This may have been one of the factors,

but the majority of the Japanese believe that the victory depends on the guardianship of the gods, the ancestors. According to the popular idea, Japan is a divine land and the people are the descendants of the gods. The country is, therefore, far more important than individuals. This idea is interesting from the psychological point of view. The development of the race-consciousness is pre-eminent in Japanese minds. On the other hand, the idea of self-consciousness or personality is poorly developed. This fact is often found among people who are in lower stages of development. For this reason you may judge the Japanese people to be in a lower stage of development. Indeed Japan is populated by people of greatly different stages, ranging from one extreme to another. If one wants to study the history of civilization, he will find his raw materials in Japan. There is no doubt that this phenomenon is the effect of the caste system of old Japan according to which the people were divided into classes: warriors, peasants, artisans and merchants. The warrior class, which included the priests and comprised about one per cent of the people, was the only soul of Japan. The rest had scarcely any moral and mental culture. In new Japan for forty-two years these four classes have had equal rank. Jewels and pebbles are mixed together. It is not at all strange, therefore, that the American and European travelers and visitors take note of the pebbles that comprise 99 per cent, instead of the jewels that are only one per cent. They speak to their countrymen and write many books about the Japanese, maintaining that the Japanese are liars, dishonest people and so forth. Moreover, the Christian missionaries often report their poor and false observations consciously and unconsciously. Of course, I don't deny that the majority of the Japanese, who belonged to the last three classes, are by heredity inferior in moral and mental culture compared to the persons who belonged to the warrior class. We must discriminate, therefore, these conditions very carefully. In this sense, we Japanese may be primitive and uncultured people. Nevertheless the race-consciousness is equally developed throughout the higher and the lower classes. From the biological point of view, it is quite natural that the isolated location of Japan has favored this very much and we may say that this is the characteristic development of Japan. To my mind this psychological factor played a most important rôle in the Russo-Japanese war. You may easily understand from this reason why the Japanese often claim nationalism.

At any rate, the attitude of our people about Shintoism was all nonsense to me, even when I was only thirteen or fourteen years of

age, though of course I had no deep reason for the feeling. At this time I often escaped from the rituals, and at last when I was sixteen years of age I left home, not only because of my dislike for the Shinto priest, but from a certain family trouble. I had seen my elder sister, who is since deceased, and she had tried to persuade me to become a priest, because my mother, while alive, had been anxious for my future and ambitious for me to be a great Shinto priest. I am sorry to say that my ambition was far greater than hers.

By the way I must call attention to the motherhood of the Japanese woman. We have often heard Western people criticise the Japanese women, saying that they are restricted, and from your point of view it may be true. But it must not be forgotten that to the Japanese mind the country and the nation are far more important than an individual, either a man or a woman. If, however, you ask any of the Japanese about the influence of home, they will tell you about the great influence of their mothers without the slightest hesitation. You all know how the Spartan mothers took care of their children. In the background of every Japanese hero, great man or learned scholar, there stands a mother. If you open the biography of a hero, you cannot go far without finding some statements of the mother's influence upon him. Japanese mothers have their rich and honorable traditions. On this point we really do not know whether Japanese women are more restricted than American women.

Mrs. Motora, who is the wife of Dr. Motora, a professor of the Tokyo Imperial University, wrote me a letter dated last Oct. 7th. She is a highly educated, intellectual, Christian lady. I may also call attention to the fact that Dr. Motora was a pupil of President G. Stanley Hall at Johns Hopkins University about twenty years ago. In the letter she writes as follows: "The American fleet has not arrived as yet. The wives of the officers of the fleet have arrived already. They are welcomed here and there. If they were Japanese ladies they would stay at home, and by taking care of the old people and children would remove from their husbands all anxiety about home during their long trip abroad. There is a great difference between the customs of the East and the West. The American ladies are active and the Japanese are obedient!"

Now your people understand this as restriction, but the restriction is, as it were, the very life—a noble life—of the Japanese women. Your customs are very good for you, but not so good for us; our customs are good for us, but not for you. That is all. These customs are greatly influenced by the teachings of Confucius. I

mentioned before, however, that "the most eminent of the Shinto deities is the sun-goddess." And young women, especially virgins, shared the services at the Shinto shrines, and so it is at present at the big Shinto shrines. We see such customs in the ancient histories of Greece and Egypt.

A certain European writer says, "Women held a far more important and independent position in ancient Japan than they did at a later time when the Chinese ideas of their subjection became prevalent. Old Chinese books call Japan the 'Queen Country.' Women chieftains are frequently mentioned in the history of Japan." But I don't know what he means by subjection. In old Japan, empresses also have often governed the country. "Some of the most important monuments of the old literature were the works of women." Ancient Shintoism recognized the equality of man and woman. Where there is ancestor-worship, there is hero-worship. Sometimes we cannot distinguish which is the older. This is especially true of Shintoism. For instance the Japanese word *Kami*, in English "God" or "gods," means literally "above, superior," and is applied to many other things besides deified beings, such as nobles, the authorities, the hair of the head, the upper water of a river, etc. In the ancient Japanese mind the higher or superior qualities were the attributes of gods and goddesses and of the ancestors. There was no difference, therefore, between a god or a man, and a goddess or a woman. If there was a woman superior to a man, she was respected or even worshiped and *vice versa*. This was not only true in olden times but is also true in the present. The only standard of respect is the higher or superior quality of character, but not the sex.

The so-called restriction does not mean non-respect at least in the Japanese minds. I am proud to say that Japanese mothers, especially educated Japanese mothers, are very anxious to educate their children and make them great. They do not concern themselves about external affairs so much as you do, but about domestic matters. The mothers' greatness and strength, and also their reputation, appear through their children. The child is the only crucible to test the mother. I was only ten years old when my mother died, but I still feel her great influence upon me.

In this connection I will say a few words on the education of Japan, especially that of the girls. The school system is chiefly adopted from the German—primary schools for six years, middle schools for five years, high schools for three years and colleges for three or four years. This makes a seventeen or eighteen years'

course. But the private schools of the missionaries are one or two years less in length than those of the government. Girls' education is somewhat low. After the graduation from primary schools girls go to girls' high schools for a five years' course which corresponds to the boys' middle schools. At present about 87% of Japanese children go to primary schools, while this is true of only 70.26% of American children. Besides these we have normal schools of four years for both boys and girls after graduation from primary schools. The graduates of normal schools become primary school-teachers, and we have higher normal courses of four years for both sexes. Their students are generally the graduates of normal schools, and of middle schools. They are selected by an entrance examination. This course is in preparation for teachers of the middle schools, normal schools, and girls' higher schools. There are several industrial schools and technical colleges, but very few girls' colleges. Two higher normal schools for girls—one founded 19 years ago and the other about to start this coming April—are supported by the government. Besides these, there are private girls' colleges, most of them founded by Christian missionary enterprise. The greatest institution for girls in Tokyo is organized by Mr. Naruso who was a student of Clark University for a short time. This includes a kindergarten, primary school, girls' high school and college.

In Japan they strongly disapprove of co-education, which is confined to the primary schools only. They even announce that they will soon abolish the co-educational system in the primary schools also. One of the most characteristic ideals for the education of Japanese girls over the whole country, is to bring up each girl to become a "good wife and wise mother." In other words, wisdom and a good character are a girl's preparation for becoming a wife and mother.

When Japanese girls marry, they must enter their husbands' family as a new member of it. There the husband's parents, sisters and brothers, and even grandparents may all live together. They watch every deed and word of the bride, the new member of their family, with keen eyes. They severely criticise her whenever she is absent. She must assimilate the customs of the new family as soon as possible. If she fails, there sometimes occurs the tragedy of divorce, even though there may be warm affection between her and her husband. None the less, every Japanese girl, educated or uneducated, has to marry. Thus you will see that in Japan family, race and country are far more important than individuals.

Next I would like to speak to you very briefly of my religious

experience as a Christian. I left my home when I was sixteen years old and experienced much that is bitter in human life. At the age of eighteen I spent about one month at a certain Catholic monastery at Nagasaki, but did not become a convert. Nevertheless, my relatives and friends persecuted me as a Christian. After four years of hard and unpleasant experiences I became a Christian. I was baptized by Dr. J. C. C. Newton, who was one of the students of President Hall at Johns Hopkins University. I then entered a missionary school of the Southern Methodists of America at Kobe, which has two courses, academic and collegiate. I was the oldest of the pupils, because most of my own age had graduated from the academic course. At any rate, I studied for six years there, without receiving any help from others. I worked for my living and studied for my ambition. During the first four or five years at the school, however, my studying was but secondary, because I devoted most of my time to my religious struggle. I was already a Christian, but without knowing what true Christianity is. I began to feel my inner experiences different from the missionaries' interpretation of Christianity. First, I doubted the doctrine of salvation. They taught us that if we believe in Jesus Christ we are saved, but according to my inner experiences, I was not quite free from my sinful feelings so called. If I am saved by Jesus's blood, I felt at that time, I must be entirely free from my sinful feelings. I questioned, therefore, several missionaries and native ministers about my skepticism. None of them could give me any satisfactory explanation at all; they only repeated, "Believe, then you are saved." I tried, of course, to believe so, but all in vain. I asked earnestly, but I was not given any satisfaction. I sought with thirst, but I could not find any enlightenment. I ate the fruit of knowledge. It troubled me very much. At last, I came to a conclusion.

My idea was this: If I am saved, I must have a pure character; if I have it not, I am not saved. In other words, by building up my character better and nobler, I am saved. This is not done suddenly, but by gradual training. To do so, therefore, I must imitate a greater character and follow his steps: then I need Jesus as well as all other great teachers. This is salvation by character, but not by faith. For this purpose, Jesus is one of the greatest teachers and leaders, but not a fantastic divine person.

Later I found I was a Unitarian, but I did not know that there was such a thought as mine at that time and did not read any of Emerson's or Channing's works. I read the Bible over and over again and thought on. The Bible taught me my Unitarianism!

I have been a member of the Japanese Unitarian church in Tokyo for about seven years, but still my Unitarianism is different from yours. It sounds better to say Humanitarianism; or, if you like, you might call it Materialism.

For four years I have been studying Buddhism,—I mean the teaching of Buddha, the greatest sage of ancient India. I am very glad to say that Buddhism gives me satisfactory explanations which Christianity could not give. It never teaches venerable myths such as the existence of a personal God and the immortality of an immaterial soul. It seems to me at least that Buddhism is far greater, more comprehensive, and more scientific than Christianity. Nevertheless, I am neither a Buddhist, nor a Christian, nor a Confucianist, nor a Shintoist. I have outgrown every one of them. My religion is the unity of Shintoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and science. I lay most stress on science.

To avoid misunderstanding, let us consider the relations among Shintoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity. It is reasonable to think that Japanese patriotism is greatly influenced by Confucianism in a moral sense. In other words, the moral ideas of Shintoism are enriched by Confucianism, because Shintoism is too simple in its moral teaching; on the other hand Confucianism is strong in its moral teaching and weak as a religion, and therefore, the two are easily combined. But it is a very striking fact that Shintoism, the way of the gods, and Buddhism or Butsudo, the way of the Buddhas, are related to each other. The believers in Shintoism are at the same time believers in Buddhism, especially among the common people. There was a time when Shintoists and Buddhists fought against each other severely. After a while wise Buddhists tried to reconcile Buddhism with Shintoism and also Confucianism, accepting the three. At last Buddhism with its religious meaning won the Japanese hearts, while Shintoism became more and more the religion of patriotism and loyalty combined or joined with Confucianism. So the Japanese worship gods at the Shinto shrines and Buddhas at Buddhistic temples.

I must call attention to the fact that the three religions—Shintoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism—are mingled or interwoven in the Japanese mind. Moreover we now have Christianity, and Christianity has found a fertile soil in the Japanese mind, but it is doubtful whether it can grow up as such.

Let us take an illustration. Your people are fond of tea which is imported from Japan and China or home made. When you drink it, you put some sugar and milk in it. It seems to be quite

natural to you, because when you drink coffee and cocoa you have the same habit, and, in doing so, it will taste better to you. But the Japanese never do so. To us it thereby loses the pure taste. Tea is the same thing, but the esthetic tastes of the Americans and Japanese are different. Now then, we Japanese import Christianity from your country and Europe. When we take it as our religion, we put Shintoism, Confucianism and Buddhism into it. Your people are, however, quite satisfied with Christianity alone, as we are in the case of tea. But we are not satisfied without putting Shintoism, Confucianism and Buddhism into Christianity, as you are in the case of tea. Are we to be blamed?

We often hear missionaries complain that the Japanese are defective in religious instinct. Poor missionaries! When I left the missionary college, I called on one of my teachers, a missionary who is now a Methodist minister in St. Louis. He said to me: "You have degraded yourself." My answer was: "No, I have greatly improved myself."

This reminds me of a very interesting story about a hen. The hen hatched the eggs of a duck. She loved the duck-chicks very much. One day, when they grew strong enough, all of them went into a near pond. Looking at them swim happily there, the poor mother-hen on the shore was very anxious for them and wanted to get them out, but they never minded her anxiety at all. The hen could not understand the hereditary tendency of the duck-chicks. The missionaries and the Japanese Christians are exactly in the same condition. The missionaries hatched the eggs of a duck just as the hen did.

This is a very interesting psychological problem. If missionaries understood this secret thoroughly, they could surely do more fruitful work for Japanese Christianity. But please do not misunderstand me. We Japanese, of course, never forget the missionaries' contribution to the education of both men and women in our country. About their attitude of religion, however, I can not quite agree with them. They are too narrow-minded. Suppose again that I tried to propagate Shintoism as such in this country. Would you become a convert? No? Then am I right in saying that your people are not religious? The Japanese have a mind to taste the sweetness of religion, but not creeds and dogmas.

Are we wrong to assume that the result of the mixture of these four religions—Shintoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity will produce something new?