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Religious and Moral Education in Japan

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Japanese education before the restoration of 1868 was strongly ethical and religious. Ethical works were considered most worthy the attention of serious men. But in recent years the old classics have been read less and less, and although a good deal of ethics has been taught, the lack of faith on the part of pupils and of sincerity on the part of teachers has robbed it of much of its power. The chief authority of the teacher of ethics in the government schools is the Imperial Rescript on Education, which was issued fifteen years ago. It is a document of less than a page of an ordinary book, composed of Shinto and Confucian elements, exhorting subjects to loyalty toward their sovereign and to faithfulness toward their fellow countrymen and to readiness to sacrifice for the public good, and all for the sake of shedding still greater luster upon the eternal Imperial House and upon all ancestors. The teaching which is based upon this rescript naturally tends to bolster up the doctrine of the semi-divine nature of the Imperial House and of ancestors. This is, of course, done for patriotic and political reasons by not a few publicists and teachers, who themselves hold the doctrine with large reservations.

On the other hand, leading teachers are trying to put ethics on the purely utilitarian or narrowly rational basis, divorcing ethics entirely from religious sanctions. The result is that many young students are in distress, having been forced to distrust the old religions and being given nothing but stones for bread. This has given rise to widespread despondency and bewilderment. Only a few days ago the minister of education, Mr. Makino, the late minister to Austria, a serious-minded man, issued a special order, calling attention to the present unrest and immorality among students and urging teachers and parents to discourage such tendencies by every means in their power. One result of this present state of mind is an eagerness to grasp at any straw of hope. This has led to a remarkable popularity for the doctrines of Nietzsche and for mysticism, but their vogue is passing, for they have failed to satisfy men's cravings.

To aggravate the situation, the former reverence for teachers and for the authority of the classics has weakened, and with it the distinctive virtues of the educated man in former times—humility, gentleness, truthfulness and deference to authority, have noticeably declined. The inrush of modern civilization, with the accompanying study of science, economics and the work of Mill, Bentham, Huxley and Spencer, has given rise to liberalism in politics, utilitarianism in ethics, and irreverence or indifference toward religion. The slogans of the day are, accordingly, natural law, imperial expansion and trade. Financial success is a word to conjure with, and money-making without either the old contempt for wealth or the altruism of Christian faith is one of the greatest menaces of modern Japan.

The one ethical aim in which modern education is splendidly successful is in the cultivation of patriotism. The steady policy of the past thirty years has been to make every school boy and girl a fervent patriot. Readers, histories, songs, ceremonies, drills and excursions to famous places, have all been intended to kindle patriotism. The policy has succeeded. We must grant that patriotism has ethical and religious value, for it demands co-operation, sacrifice, a measure of brotherly sympathy and devotion to an invisible, unselfish object. The late war, by its exaltation of patriotism, no doubt strengthened these qualities in the hearts of the people. The loyalty felt toward the Imperial house, and the worship of ancestors also have some religious value by supplying supra-mundane sanctions for conduct. But patriotism and loyalty and filial piety are all lacking in some of the essential qualities of a religion that shall satisfy intelligent men, such as universality, and the conception of a supreme Person who seeks to win men by love and calls forth an answering love for Him and for all fellow-men.

But apart from the patriotic cult, a strong ally in meeting the religious needs of modern Japanese is the revival of some of the best features of old Japanese ethics in the shape of Bushidō, the code of Japanese knighthood. For although the classics themselves are so little read, Bushidō embodies much of their teaching. Present-day Bushidō is an attempt to perpetuate the teachings of medieval Japanese Confucian teaching and the spirit of the Japanese knight. Naturally, bereft of its old trellis, feudalism, modern Bushidō cannot be an exact reproduction of the old

code, and it is better so, for original Bushidō was lacking in the chivalrous attitude toward women and in a high regard for the value of human life. The modern classic on Bushidō is by Dr. I. Nitobe, but Dr. Nitobe is himself an earnest Christian, and he has softened and supplemented the old teaching by the spirit and teaching of Christ. So that while Bushidō is exerting a powerful and generally wholesome influence its revival is due in no small degree to those who have fallen under the spell of Christianity. What all friends of Japan must wish is to see such sages and heroes as Fujiwara Shōkwa, Nakae Tōju, Kumazawa Bansen, Muro Kyūsō, Ninomiya Sontoku, Hideyoshi, Sakura Sōgorō, Saigō Takamori and Yokoi Shōnan kept from being buried under the avalanche of present-day irreligion, irreverence and commercialism, for in them is the finest embodiment of the higher ethics of old Japan. Although some of them disavowed belief in any religion, yet they were controlled by religious ideals. A creed that could make such characters is woefully needed in modern life.

Bushidō, however, by itself is admittedly inadequate to modern demands. It is only indirectly religious. It must be supplemented by the Christian reverence for women, by a high appreciation of the sacredness of human life of whatever rank or race, and by a universal and eternal object of loyalty in a personal, holy, divine Father. It should be the last purpose, however, of the Christian, not less than of the Japanese patriot, to uproot and throw away this valuable indigenous growth. For Bushidō exemplifies a number of Christian virtues and enforces them by characters and teachings peculiar to Japan. While all the distinctive virtues of Bushidō are latent, if not active, in Christianity, yet Christianity as so far embodied in the West, has often slighted such virtues of Bushidō as reverence for the past and for the family line, masculine gentleness, stoical obedience to duty and to superiors, and contempt for ease and wealth. These are some of the offerings of Japanese Bushidō to a rounded interpretation of Christianity. It is such principles as these that are struggling for survival amidst the decadence of Buddhism and Shinto and the increasing materialization of modern life and education.

Confucianism, in the chalice of Bushidō, has held its potency through the centuries in Japan, even among modern educated men, whereas Chinese students, like those in Tokyo to-day, are

apt to throw it away after the first strong draught of Western thought. The reason for this is that in China Confucianism emphasizes filial duty and the maintenance of political and social relations after the pattern of the ancients: whereas in Japan, these doctrines are largely overshadowed by loyalty and by practical economic and ethical teachings which are suited to any age. It is these distinctive characteristics of Japanese Confucian doctrine which enable it to survive radical changes in industry, education and government.

One of the reasons why Buddhism has almost entirely lost its grip upon educated circles is that it lacks satisfying teaching for the intelligent middle class. It does appeal still to the two extremes—to the ignorant by its promises of a happy deliverance out of all earth's sufferings and by appeals to superstition and material desires, and on the other hand, to the philosophical by the subtle metaphysic of esoteric Buddhism. For one thing, Buddhism lacks anything corresponding to the Christian Bible. True, a Japanese has recently compiled from various writings what is called a Buddhist Bible. It is printed and bound in exact imitation of the Christian Scriptures, but it lacks the note of reality, practicality and biographical appeal, let alone the irresistible attraction of the personality and teaching of Jesus. Japanese students, in my observation, know little and think less of Buddhism. The only Buddhist sects which seem to be influencing educated young men to any degree at present are Shinshu, or the "True Sect," and Zenshu, a form of mysticism. Shinshu appeals to them only by semi-Christianized doctrines, the leaders of the reform school having imbibed deeply of the thought of the West and incorporated many distinctively Christian ideas. So, to-day, it is not uncommon for them to hold preaching services, after the fashion of Christians, where humanity and universal brotherhood and benevolence and the harmony between science and religion are earnestly expounded. But even this school attracts only a relatively small and floating constituency. It leads to little missionary and philanthropic activity, and has not thus far established itself in the homes and hearts of the people.

The influence of Christianity, direct and indirect, is seen in many ways in modern education in Japan. In the early days of the present era, Christian missionaries exercised a dominant influence in the construction of the educational system. It was a

Christian educator who inspired the famous policy of the Emperor: that good was to be sought throughout all the earth and education was to be developed until no village should have an ignorant family and no family an ignorant member. Men like Verbeck, David Murray, McCartee, Dixon and Joseph Neesima have left an indelible impression upon modern schools. Perhaps the widest influence has been exerted by the graduates of some of the Christian schools, especially those from Doshisha, which was established by Dr. Neesima and Dr. J. D. Davis in 1875. For two decades woman's education was conducted entirely by Christians.

Another pervasive influence has been the Bible. Within a few years leaders of Japanese thought have openly urged the study of the Bible for its ethical as well as literary value. Many Japanese teachers are now studying the Bible either by themselves or under the direction of Christians. Furthermore, the government in seeking trustworthy teachers of English has of late years turned to the Young Men's Christian Association, which has sent to America, Canada and Great Britain for Christian college graduates. These teachers are freely allowed to give instruction in the Bible and to conduct Christian work in their homes and in the churches. The sale of the Bible has been steadily increasing until now hardly a secular bookshop dares to be without a stock of Bibles. In the army during the war over 200,000 portions of the Bible were distributed among the soldiers, who have carried them to every corner of the Empire. Recently, General Kodama, Chief of the General Staff, told me that he had read the whole Bible.

Another important avenue for the entrance of Christian influence and for the upbuilding of character has been the wide study of English literature. No student can read Ruskin, Tennyson, Carlyle, Lowell, Stevenson, Franklin, Gladstone and Burke, without coming constantly into intimate contact with the very well-springs of Christian thought. It is a notable fact that of the Japanese teachers of English throughout the country a large proportion have become Christians by the study of the English Bible, and a still larger number who do not publicly profess Christianity have adopted Christian standards because of their study of English literature. This is the case with a group of journalists on the staff of the Yorozu Chōhō, who have formed

the Risōdan, "the Ideal Society," which enrolls tens of thousands of members.

The objections to Christianity which prevailed a decade or so ago are now largely dispelled. Then it was charged with being anti-patriotic, individualistic and Western instead of universal. One of the chief opponents at that time was the distinguished professor of philosophy in the Imperial University, Dr. T. Inouye, but he has recently declared that the future religion of Japan must possess three characteristics: rationality, universality and ethical quality, and he does not appear to think that these characters are possessed by any of the old religions of Japan. One of the serious charges, however, still made against Christianity is that it has not sufficed to solve the grave industrial and moral problems of the West. It is said that Christianity is responsible for the extreme individualism of the Occident and that the communalism or family system of the Orient is far superior; but the deeper thinkers and the Christian leaders see clearly that although Europe has certainly carried individualism to an extreme, it is not the fault of Christianity, which has always protested vehemently against ultra-individualism. They are now beginning to realize, like Western thinkers, that in Christianity, and in Christianity alone, is a perfect guarantee of both individual and social liberty and welfare. It seems safe to say, with Mr. T. Harada, the special lecturer to India last spring, that the future religion of Japan will be either Christianity or irreligion.

The Religious Education of Girls in Turkey

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This is a very simple account of what we are trying to do in the American School for Girls at Brousa. This school was founded by one of the missionaries of the American Board for the education of Armenian girls. The pupils came both from the city, the ancient capital of Turkey, and from the surrounding villages. More than half of them came from Gregorian families. The Gregorians belong to the old Armenian church, which has become quite corrupt. Though a few of the girls are from strict Gregorian families, their parents do not seem afraid of Protestant teachings.