

*The Japanese should not
bow down to Christian ethics*



Abstract and train of thoughts

The rise and triumph of Christianity, and its general spread in the West, were due originally to a purely political exigency.

The greatest materialist of Japan advocates that Chinese ethics must be replaced by Christian ethics. 3

Still, a President of the Imperial University laments the lack of religious feeling and sentiment in his countrymen and argues that, instead of talking about adopting a foreign religion, Japanese should go abroad and preach their religion of reason to foreign countries. 4

In the matter of ethics and common morality, European nations are undeniably below the level, not only of Japan, but of India and every other “uncivilized” country. It is a boast of Church and “civilization” that Christian grace has softened the hearts of men and reformed barbarous customs. 4

As the Indian spirit of patriotism and independence has been numbed, Colonel Olcott called upon the Japanese not to prostrate themselves at the shrine of foreign “civilization.” 6



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While remaining to his death a devoted heathen, Constantine enforced the creed of the Nazarene sect upon his army and people. The fall and decadence of Christianity will be due as Karmic effect to the same cause, and Christian Sovereigns will soon make away with priests and churches for the same political reasons as those which guided the wily Constantine.¹

History repeats itself. The rise and triumph of Christianity and its general spread in the West were due originally to a purely political exigency. While remaining to his death a devoted heathen, Constantine enforced the creed of the Nazarene sect upon his army and people, and made of it a state religion. The fall and decadence of Christianity will be due, as Karmic effect, to the same cause, and Christian constitutional Sovereigns will have perhaps at no distant day to make away with priests and Churches for the same political reasons as those which guided the wily Constantine. The hands of the great Law of Retribution is already at work. How low the fundamental idea that underlies the teachings of Christ has now fallen is instanced in what is going on at the present moment in Japan. Christianity is advocated there, not because of its ethics, not because it is regarded as the *one revealed religion*, or even the best; but the conversion — in this case *perversion*, surely — of a whole nation is contemplated simply as a trade commodity, the price paid for the right of standing in the same rank as the European nations. It is by such a *suicidal* step that this misguided and truly benighted, though clever and good, people hope to reach the same level of civilization as we have attained. That they would reach at the same time all the moral degradation of our centres of civilization does not seem to have entered their dazed minds. The real motive that [107] prompts some of their leaders is confessed with praiseworthy sincerity by some Japanese *literati* and publicists, and the slap on the face of Christianity is received by the servants of Christ with rapturous joy. “Is it advisable to embrace the religion of Europe and America?” ask some politicians. *It is*, answer the greatest Materialists of Japan.

The greatest materialist of Japan advocates that Chinese ethics must be replaced by Christian ethics.

The whole question is in a nutshell, and we find it stated in a small paragraph of a *Daily*:

Those connected with the movement say that Christian dogmas are a bitter pill to swallow, but advise that it be swallowed promptly for the sake of the after-effects. Mr. Fukuzawa, a well-known writer, urges this course, although he says

¹ [Cf. “. . . probably beatified because he killed his son with his own hands, boiled monks in pitch, disembowelled his wife, and made himself as miserably famous as Nero.” *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (REPLY TO THE MISTAKEN CONCEPTIONS OF ABBÉ ROCA) IX p. 230]

he takes no personal interest whatever in religion, and knows nothing of the teaching of Christianity; but he sees that it is the creed of the most highly civilized nations. To him religion is only a garment, to be put on or taken off at pleasure, but he thinks it prudent that Japan should wear the same dress as her neighbours, with whom she desires to stand well. Professor Toyama, of the Imperial University, has published a work to support this view. He holds that Chinese ethics must be replaced by Christian ethics, and that the benefits to be derived from the introduction of Christianity are:

- 1 The improvement of music;
- 2 Union of sentiment and feeling, leading to harmonious co-operation; and
- 3 The furnishing a medium of intercourse between men and women.

Still, a President of the Imperial University laments the lack of religious feeling and sentiment in his countrymen and argues that, instead of talking about adopting a foreign religion, Japanese should go abroad and preach their religion of reason to foreign countries.

Oh, poor purblind Japs! But:

Mr. Kato, the late President of the Imperial University who says that religion is not needed for the educated, and confesses his dislike to all religions equally, urges the introduction of religious teaching into the Government schools, on the ground that the unlearned in Japan have had their faith in old moral standards shaken, and that there is now a serious lack of moral sentiment among the masses. Among the replies to this is one by a Mr. Sugiura, who is described as “a diligent student of Western philosophy for many years.” He speaks of the specially marked lack of religious feeling and sentiment in his countrymen: The Japanese, he says, have no taste for religion whatever, and it is impossible that they should ever become a religious people. The youth of Japan, he argues, being free from the thralldom of creeds, and free to act according to reason, are so far in advance of Europeans, and instead of talking about adopting a foreign religion Japanese should go abroad and preach their religion of reason to foreign countries. Other writers urge the same views.

In the matter of ethics and common morality, European nations are undeniably below the level, not only of Japan, but of India and every other “uncivilized” country. It is a boast of Church and “civilization” that Christian grace has softened the hearts of men and reformed barbarous customs.

Church Christianity caused only the outward bearing of the physical man to assume a more polished and therefore less sincere demeanour than shown by the barbarian of old; and civilization, while putting on the mask of Christian humility, has led the European nations back to all the moral dissolution, sensuality, crime, and cruelty of the polished Roman, but to none of the virtues of the rude Spartan.

The second proposition is an improved notion and we hope it will pass. The voyage of our President to Japan may yet become fruitful of events and help in this later [108] amendment. In the matter of ethics and common morality, European nations are undeniably below the level, not only of Japan, but of India and every other *uncivilized* country. It is a boast of Church and civilization that Christian grace has softened the hearts of men and reformed barbarous customs. Facts and centuries of experience prove this to be a boast *truly*, and nothing else. Ideal Christianity or the Gnosticism of a Marcion or Valentinus would have softened the rude customs of barbarous ages and have been an improvement of the *inner* man, such as he was during the period of the decadence of Rome. Church Christianity, however, helped by the fatal law of *reversion* to original types, caused only the outward bearing of the physical man to assume a more polished and therefore less sincere demeanour than shown by the barbarian of old; and civilization, while putting on the mask of Christian humility, has led the European nations back to all the moral dissolution, sensuality, crime, and cruelty of the polished Roman, but to none of the virtues of the rude Spartan. Outward leprosy has disappeared from the surface to work the more actively inwardly. The combination of pagan¹ rites and metaphysical ideas (now transformed into the Church dogmas and symbolism) with Gnostic Christianity euhemerized, has justified fully the wisdom of the reply to the disciples of John the Baptist, namely, that

. . . neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out.

The pagan bottles of the Churches have broken, and shown their true origin thereby; and the wine of Christ is running out and spilling as fast as it can. Christianity has now become purely geographical; and the worst animal, bestial instincts in man seem to strengthen with every new step we take in civilization. Let us, then, have the Japs come to Europe by all means, and preach to it Buddhist morality. Any *ism* is better than all the licentiousness of the centuries of Caligula, Nero, and Messalina under the mask of mock Christianity and *cant*² — that sickening Pecksniffianism³ of our modern day!



¹ See article “The Roots of Ritualism in Church and Masonry.”

[The full text of this article can be found under the title “Blavatsky on Ritualism in Church and Masonry,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [Singing in a whining way, from the Latin *cantare*, to sing. Cant was at first a beggar’s whine, hence hypocritical and sanctimonious talk, typically of a moral, religious, or political nature. Cf. W.W. Skeat’s *Etymological Dictionary of English*, 1835-1912. — ED. PHIL.]

³ [Unbridled hypocrisy, after Seth Pecksniff, a character in Charles Dickens’ *Martin Chuzzlewit*.]

As the Indian spirit of patriotism and independence has been numbed, Colonel Olcott called upon the Japanese not to prostrate themselves at the shrine of foreign “civilization.”

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Esoteric Buddhism is decidedly on the brain of our journalists. This is what we read in the *Times* of the 8th instant. Take out the qualification, and you will have some truth in this:

ESOTERIC BUDDHISM IN JAPAN. — Colonel Olcott, whose connection with *Esoteric Buddhism* is well known, is at present making a tour in Japan. He has been well received by the Buddhist priesthood, and is delivering lectures all over the country, advising the people to maintain [299] the principles of the Buddhist faith and not to change for western doctrines of any kind. At a lecture in Tokyo on the necessity of a religious basis for education, he began by comparing the free and upright bearing of the Japanese with that of the natives of India, who seemed to have lost the sentiment of nationality. Living in an atmosphere of disregard, if not contempt, for their old traditions and customs, taught to value only foreign systems and philosophies, the Indian spirit of patriotism and independence had been numbed. Their men had become submissive and cringing. But the Japanese bore themselves as free men, and in congratulating them heartily upon it, Colonel Olcott called upon them not to prostrate themselves at the shrine of foreign civilization. He added that the Theosophical Society had done much in India and Ceylon to direct men’s attention to the faith of their forefathers and to the past of their country, and he warned his hearers not to judge Western civilization by its superficial aspects, for beneath these lay enormous misery and distress.

Colonel H.S. Olcott is decidedly a Buddhist of the Southern school, and a very convinced and earnest one; but why should the *Times* make of him a follower of Mr. Sinnett’s *Esoteric Buddhism* instead of Gautama the Buddha’s Dharma? This is a trifle, however, and the above extract does give some faint idea of the really great work which our President has been doing in Japan. Of course a *Times* writer cannot be expected to fully understand what Col. Olcott’s real mission has been, and he forgets entirely to mention that the main idea was to weld together the Buddhists of India and Japan by showing them that the true fundamental character underlying all the Buddhist religious schools is the same, and by making Theosophy the connecting link. In a letter just received from Col. Olcott he says that he has delivered 49 lectures, and expects before he leaves to give a dozen more — that his travels have extended over 900 miles of territory, and that his addresses have caused a deep and permanent excitement. The students of the Tokyo Imperial University Higher Schools of the Metropolis have formed a Young Men’s Buddhist Association *à la* the Y.M.C. Associations of the West. Several magazines have sprung up, and to his horror, one is called *Olcotti!* . . .

¹ [Consult full text of this article under the title “The Religio-Philosophical Journal is neither religious nor philosophical,” in the same Series. — ED. PHIL.]