

missions are regarded, on the other hand, is very evident. They have all along shown themselves the true friends of the people, and quite recently one of them was asked to make special inquiries during his travels into any causes of local complaint, and to report them at headquarters, a task which for obvious reasons he felt bound reluctantly to decline. While calling with a missionary on the Minister for the Interior, His Royal Highness brought up the question of a site for a new mission station in a distant province, about which the local authorities had raised difficulties, offering to personally secure the best available place on an approaching visit to that part. He then went on to express his opinion on the methods employed. "I think that a great many missionaries make the great mistake," he said, "of abusing the religion already existing. If instead of this they would bring their philanthropic and medical work more to the front, and show what the love of Christ has led them to do for the poor and suffering, they would not fail to gain the people's real esteem, and then would be the time for them to listen to the words of Jesus."

The religion already existing in this case is a corrupt inheritance of Buddhism mingled with a little Brahmanism and a good deal of spirit worship. It was said by one of the king's brothers that 80 per cent of the people were ignorant as to what Buddhism really was, for to begin with they make an idol of Buddha, presenting worldly petitions as to a god to one whose highest virtue was that he knew nothing of this world. Were they genuine Buddhists, they would at least make some attempts to follow the moral precepts of that creed, but of these they know next to nothing, having received it only as an ancestral legacy, and the grossest immorality prevails. Even the external observances of Buddhism are but imperfectly known, and the benumbing, deadening results of a religion which holds all affections and emotions

whatever to be of the nature of sin, regarding perfection as the destruction of every natural inclination, can easily be understood. Work among such people is like building in a swamp; there is no ground to go upon, no moral basis, no fulcrum. With many there is not even a belief in God, while Buddha himself is not considered as a personal influence. Sin is regarded as entailing its own punishment, and evil is only to be averted by the propitiation of controlling spirits. Even when a man has got so far as to believe in the sacrifice of Christ, it is difficult to make him see the necessity of a moral life, if not to work out his own salvation.

Though the more liberal education of the late king did not make him a Christian, it enabled him to see the folly of much that was bound up with Buddhism, and as its head in this country he instituted a reformed creed, closely approaching that of the modern Japanese and of Buddha's Western admirers. Its followers are practically atheists who acknowledge Buddha only as a great moral teacher, whose system of ethics they adopt, while they discard everything supernatural, and all the intermingled cult of spirits. But this has only affected the few, and superstition of every sort is as rampant as ever. The one prevailing idea is the necessity of "making merit" by erecting temples, feeding the priests, making pilgrimages, liberating captive animals, etc., but practical deeds of kindness and self-denial, or of provision for the sick and poor, as met with in China, seem hardly known. Ancestral worship forms no part of the Siamese creed, but its place is in some measure taken by the necessity under which sons are of making merit for their mothers. This is one of the real difficulties the missionaries have to meet, as men convinced of the truth of Christianity can see no hope for their mothers, especially if they are already dead, and some who have been convinced have yet refused baptism on this account. A feeling based on so noble a trait is