

A YOUNG BUDDHIST'S IDEAS OF CHRISTIANITY.

A young Japanese Buddhist was sent to England ten years ago to study English literature, philosophy and religion. After some time thus occupied he set out to return to Japan by way of India, where he died. His English tutor was deeply interested in him, and has published some of the young man's thoughts concerning Christianity. The following extracts will give some idea of the conclusions he reached from his study of the Greek Testament:

"What," I once asked him, "should you consider the most essential and salient thought about Jesus the Christ, as you understand from study of the four Gospels, and how would you describe Christianity as a religion to your friends of the Buddhist monastery?" "I should say," he replied, "that the most essential and salient thought about Christ is that He is the manifold Life of mankind, and I should describe Christianity as the religion of the revealed fatherhood of God and the ideal oneness of humanity. I regard the Christ, and therefore Christianity, as a higher natural means for the moral and spiritual education of the world."

"You say, 'higher natural,'" I observed. "Will you explain what you mean by the expression?" "I mean," he answered, "that Christ and Christianity are not a human intuition, nor a development on the lower plan of ordinary nature, but a revelation made by the divine wisdom and power. The ideal life cannot be the conception of humanity in any stage of its progressive advancement, but must descend from the higher world. And this, I observe, is what the Christ said of Himself: 'I am from above,' 'I came down from heaven,' and He speaks of 'the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.' The ideal life of all intelligent and moral creatures must have existed in the divine mind from all eternity, and their normal life must have been conceived with divine complacency, and glorified with the Father in His divine contemplation and creative purpose. My Buddhist education and sympathies, and possibly my Oriental tinge of thought, quicken my perception of these utterances of the Christ, and excite my admiration of and confidence in them as the words of wisdom and truth."

"I have often wondered," he said one day, "when I used to be told in my country of the splendour of western civilization. . . . A people with such a divine religion as Christianity must be a great people and as good as they are great. Buddhist as I am, I cannot but hope that Christianity will come into Japan, and that it will be diffused through our whole empire. Our people ought to know the Christ of Christianity; and if it were preached everywhere that the Christ is the manifested and normal life of humanity, the people would be lifted up by the power of this beautiful and beneficent personality into a nobler and happier human life. When my brothers of the monastery know more about the Christ and Christianity, they will not be jealous of the diffusion and influence of your great western religion in their native land."

Reading on one occasion the chapter in John, recording the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and Jesus' affirmation "that He is the Resurrection and the Life," he remarked that Christianity had an immense advantage over Buddhism in its emphasis of every human individuality. "Our aspirations of the future are not so distinctively a faith as Christianity affords. To the Buddhist the future is a painfully vague hope. Buddhism seems to promise a future life; but when we think about it the future life seems to be such an absorption of our individuality that, to pure

thought, it is one and the same as personal annihilation. The Christ's promise of the resurrection of the dead personality in a higher organization of the human being speaks to the natural hopes of the whole human race. The Christian teaching on the resurrection would give a great advantage to Christianity over Buddhism among my countrymen."

Of St. Paul's argument in I Corinthians xv, he said, "That is enough and having as yet no experience of the transformation, we can know no more. The animal body of this life, and the higher natural (spiritual) body of the life to come is very satisfactory teaching. This doctrine of resurrection has a great advantage over our idea of Nirvana."

WATCHFUL PROVIDENCE.

(Psalm 91.)

By George W. Armstrong.

Almighty Shadow (Secret place),
In which the good shall ere abide;
For God a rock of refuge is,
A fortress where frail man may hide.

A Fowler with his guns may snare,
And noisome pestilence attack;
But in my God I'll ere confide,
And surely He will drive them back.

His feathers shall my covering be,
Under His wing be all my trust;
His truth, my buckler, sword and shield,—
Protection strong: for He is just.

Terrors by night may me invade,
And arrows fly in light of day;
Destruction waste at noontide hour:—
I'm not afraid—His arm can stay.

A thousand at my side shall fall,
Ten thousand fall at my right hand;
But nigh me fear can never come,
Firmly in God my feet shall stand.

The wicked shall have their reward,
Without a refuge in their need;
But I shall find defence is sure,
And from all anxious cares be freed.

No evil shall molest my way,
No plague nigh to my dwelling come,
God the Most High has sent a watch—
An angel band to guard my home.
London, January 31st, 1909.

THE PERIL OF SAFETY.

There is always danger when we are so well safeguarded as to think we are beyond danger. In other words, whenever we cease to be alert against danger, we increase our risk from it. One who has had ample time to catch a train or keep an appointment, for example, has more than once failed to arrive on time simply because he thought there was plenty of time, and the minutes slipped away faster than they were noticed. That same person will keep an appointment punctually, over and over again, when he has allowed only just enough minutes and seconds to get there "on the dot." The trouble in the first instance lay, not in allowing plenty of time, for that is a good thing to do, but in supposing that plenty of time meant no further need of watchfulness. And the reason why the appointments were kept oftener when time was scantiest was because the whole man was then awake and alert to the danger of failure. This is simply another illustration of the old warning, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed"—It is well to allow broad margins between ourselves and failure; but it is courting failure to think that the margin insures success.—Sunday School Times.

Humboldt says: "Only what we have wrought into our character during life, can we take away with us."

THE DOCTRINE AND "THE MAN."

Editor Dominion Presbyterian.—About sixteen years ago was there not a widely-reported discussion on the question of the relative value of good men and good doctrine? One party asked for the former saying the latter could be done without; the other valued good men, but stated that, if either had to be chosen, he would choose good doctrine, and his reason was that good men left to themselves would degenerate, but from good doctrine (the Bible was under discussion) evil men would be made good.

I have just read in your issue of the 6th inst. words which are reported to be from the Rev. Wm. McIntosh which have recalled the above to my mind. Mr. McIntosh puts a man as being above his religion,—in one sense he is right, but in a more important one he is wrong, and there is a great divide between true Romanism and true Protestantism, and the difference produces a different class of men; and with all my heart, let me say that Protestantism is much more in accordance with the Bible than Romanism. Protestantism is doctrine according to the revelation of God head and shoulders above Romanism, not to say anything of the unscriptural doctrines that Romanism has incorporated in its beliefs.

I write to balance off such one-sided teaching as that credited to Mr. McIntosh and to say that whilst there is one truth in Mr. McIntosh's words, "the important point is the man," there is still more important truth in the fact that Protestantism is in advance of Romanism as much as the true worship of God for which Moses had great zeal was ahead of the false worship that Aaron and the multitude were practising at the base of Mount Sinai.

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"PURE NONSENSE."

Editor Dominion Presbyterian:

One great evil of our day is the constant effort to invent new meanings for the Gospel narrative. This striving after effect leads men from the Bible, instead of to it, with the result that among teachers, and even those who proclaim the Word, there is a haziness in regard to, if not absolute ignorance of, the original. How many can tell about the Bible—alas, how few know accurately the Bible itself.

In a missionary periodical I read of a "Right Reverend" contributor to a New York paper who "deduces some very beautiful missionary lessons from the circumstances of the birth of Christ." He says that the Angel of the Lord was the "first missionary of the new dispensation; that the shepherds were the first earthly bearers of the message. With them missions was an instinct, and eagerness to tell was inseparable from the glad tidings—and more of the same sort, which I humbly submit is pure nonsense, but upon which a sympathetic writer comments: "So true is it that this old Christmas story ever comes to us with a fresh message."

This straining for new meanings so foreign to the simple, straightforward narrative of the evangelists is unwholesome, and I believe arises mainly from the desire to make the Gospel story "fit in" to the traditions and superstitions of the observance of "days, and months and seasons, and years," all of which tend to bondage—the more so that few of those who read and admire these "fresh messages" themselves "search the scriptures" in which they think they have eternal life, and which truly testify of Christ.

ULSTER PAT.

"Don't look for much growth in grace as long as you keep your hands in your pockets."