

II. DOCTRINES OF SHINTO. There are many that claim that Shinto is not a religion at all. It is certain that there is no attempt at any systematic statement of belief, and there is little to help the most careful student of the system in formulating what might be justly called a statement of the doctrines of Shinto. There is not even a moral code. The following may be considered a fair expression of what the Christian would call the doctrines of Shinto :

1. Creation. There is no real creation, only development. Here is a summary of the Shinto doctrine. In some unexplained way the universe was evolved from a germ which had remained hidden somewhere in chaos. Then came the Kami, or gods. These developed in pairs, very imperfect at first, but approaching perfection until the perfection of the creative principle was reached in Izanagi and Izanami, who were male and female respectively. Using his jewelled spear with which to stir the sea as he stood in heaven, Izanagi collected on its point some drops, which, as they fell, consolidated and formed an island, to which he and Izanami descended, and which they used as the base of operation in forming other islands.

Then came the separation of sun and earth. The daughter of the first pair, Amaterasu, became the ruler in the sun. Meanwhile, disturbances began on the earth, and anarchy prevailed until the sun-goddess sent her grandson, Ninigi-no-Mikoto, to restore order. This required a long series of violent struggles between the heavenly and the earthly powers, and resulted in Ninigi-no-Mikoto becoming the first Mikado of Japan.

2. God. According to the foregoing account of creation, it seems that the universe came into existence before the gods. It is held by many, on the other hand, that Shinto teaches that one supreme God, from whom all others sprung, had existed from eternity, and that he apparently came forth from between the heaven and the earth when they separated. A second and a third god followed. From these sprung Izanami and Izanagi, who were the progenitors of all beings. Thus it is evident that whether God is considered as eternally existent or as evolved from less perfect beings, the doctrines of creation and of God are intimately connected. Many scholars hold that both doctrines are evolution pure and simple.

It is true that the conception of a supreme, personal God is well-nigh lost. Many foreigners who have mingled with the people assert that Shinto is practically hero and ancestor-worship. While the sun-goddess is revered above all others, other gods and objects of nature are also worshipped. As the representative of this goddess, the Mikado practically occupies the chief place in the system. He exercises both temporal and spiritual power over the people. He is at once emperor and pope.

3. Prayer. There is a vague conception of a god of some kind who is interested in man's affairs. The prayer in the heart is heard. The Mikado prays daily for his subjects. Prayers are for temporal blessings. The dead as well as the living are prayed for. The following, quoted by Dr. Griffis, indicates that together with the belief in many gods there is a