

fore, the acceptance of the essence of Christian teaching was seen to be consistent with utter doubt of the Divine origin of that teaching, these ethical persons were shrewd enough to perceive that it would seem a concession on their part to orthodoxy if they should declare for the rule of Christ. In order to maintain the prestige of dauntless radicalism which had nearly disappeared from the consciousness of the community, they saw that it would be necessary to adopt the Hindu faith as furnishing a rule of conduct which could be made to conform to that smug respectability of decorum to which they were accustomed, and at the same time restore them to the category of a marked deviation from the normal type. This is the outcome either of a persistent and incorrigible intellectual insincerity or the symptom of religious degeneracy. Does any one believe that these converts to Buddhism, to whose delicate mental perceptions the faith of Christian believers was an offense, are sincere in their new professions? No one will make the mistake of ascribing the adoption of this new perversity to a disinterested love of truth when it is clearly due to a pernicious craving for notoriety.

And what a painful exposure of intellectual nakedness it is! They reject miracles in order to be able to swallow fables with more convenience. They repudiate the most vigorous moral teaching which ever swayed the consciences of men and accept with solemn satisfaction the flabbiest, most inconsequential, and emasculating dogma which ever blighted the destiny of a great people. And they do these things in order to horrify their neighbors and convince a civilized community of their absolute freedom from superstition! How chagrined these fine-grained philosophers, men and women, must have felt that the sacred image of Buddha had failed to arise in time to receive their homage. And yet if Buddha were reasonable, would not a Chinese doll have served? In place of Christ, superstitiously regarded as the Son of God, there was Buddha, who lay claim to no such supernal origin—Buddha, who merely dropped out of the sky in a casual sort of way, entered his mother's womb, and, on being born, walked three paces and proclaimed not his divinity, but his greatness, in a voice of thunder! Imagine the delighted surprise which the jaded skeptics of the Brooklyn Ethical Society must have evinced on discovering so rational a substitute for the utterly incredible story of the nativity of Christ! And how much more worthy of that pious use which has its firm basis in the untrammelled reason is the spool of yellow silk thread, the sacred relic actually blessed by Buddha, the dreadfully sanctified lemonade, the crackers, the bunch of incense sticks with which these solemn-visaged dupes now play at religious observances! How superior these to those irritating sacramental accessories around which the common crowd has centred so much religious affection and which have altogether lost their attractiveness and importance to people who have been accustomed to soaring in the clarified air of the highest and freest intellectuality!

JOHN LINCOLN BLAUSS.  
New York, May 19, 1897.

## DROPPING INTO BUDDHISM.

How Members of the Brooklyn Ethical Society Came to It.

To the Editor of *The New York Times*:

The report in *THE NEW YORK TIMES* on Monday of the initial performance of Buddhist rites in Brooklyn, in which novices, many of them members of the Brooklyn Ethical Society, took part, deserves some consideration as indicating a possible example of that "variation from the type" in the sense in which that term is used in Mr. Miller's article in the current Forum discussing the question of the degeneracy of the Senate. These eminently respectable converts, who have now been infected with the moral black plague of India, began in the pride of intellectuality to reject the comparatively simple traditions and maxims of the Christian religion as being mere childish fabrications; and they now end, it seems, in accepting quite complacently a most astonishing perversity in the way of religious and philosophical teaching, whose vaporous tergiversations seem to soothe their vexed spiritual sensibilities.

The Brooklyn Ethical Society is an attempt on the part of women and men of respectable mental endowments to substitute for supernatural authority a purely scientific basis for the sanctions of moral conduct. Orthodox teaching, they felt, was no longer credible, and should be superseded by something which would satisfy the untrammelled intellect. As a result they accepted tentatively as final the philosophical scheme of Mr. Spencer and proceeded diligently to retail to the community in bi-weekly dilutions the outgivings of their celebrated master, applying the doctrine of evolutionary science to all current religious, economic, social, and political problems with that self-complacency and cocksureness which are attributes of infallibility. This, it should be noticed, was the first slip in that remarkable descent into the slough of fatuous credulity which a number of these astonishing beings have now achieved. The plunge was facilitated after the advent on our shores of that learned philosophical quack Swami Virikauanda, who represented Buddhism at the Congress of Religions at Chicago. This remarkable genius was induced to expound the dogmas of his religion to the members of the Ethical Society.

The writer was present at several of these meetings, and had occasion to note how receptive the field of credulity had already become and with what solemn emotion these superior persons listened to the meaningless circumlocutions of the fat and invariably smiling priest of Buddha. The situation demanded a strong blast of withering common-sense such as that which I have heard delivered from the pulpit of the Second Unitarian Church. But everybody appeared to have been hypnotized into that prelitivie state of mind which regards with awe what it does not understand. Had the place of this exotic priest been occupied by some earnest and faithful teacher of Christian ethics I venture to say that his auditors would have had upon their faces, instead of the afflatus of stirred sensibility a look of bored and patronizing contempt. To them the teaching of Christ and the fruits of that teaching had become commonplace and vapid.

As the spirit of liberal religious teaching spread even among believers it was no longer possible to greatly wound orthodox affections by flouting the supernatural origin of Christianity. Thus it happened that many members of the Ethical Society began to feel that they had lost the distinction of singularity. Where there was so much liberalism the original radicals began to perceive that they were rapidly losing their identity in the crowd. While, there-