

Butsudan comes from the fact that there is an image or picture enshrined in it. Thus, if we take these away, we cannot call it a Butsudan. Therefore we have only to return these to the original temple with some offering money. Next we must consider the '*ihai*.' The Buddhist names of the deceased being written on the front side, these must be removed and the '*ihai*' turned around, so that we can see the other side on which are written the dates of the dead. If we go further and remodel the inside of the Butsudan by setting up a cross and a Bible there we can have a fine Christian holy place. Thus the spirit of Christianity can be breathed into Japanese Buddhists who have made Buddha images but neglected to put a real spirit in them."

What is the objective here? To achieve a sort of syncretism between pagan and Christian symbols, to make the difference between the two seem less apparent? Such a motive is an unworthy one and the method unjustifiable. Hope for unbelievers lies in their recognition of the uniqueness of Christianity, and a complete break with those objects which were the very symbols of their substitution of the worship of the spirits of deceased creaturely men for the living Creator. The idea that the presence of a Christian symbol, like a cross, in a pagan idol box can sanctify it is reminiscent of the Israelitish superstition that they could make God serve their purposes by taking out the Ark on to the battlefield. The call in 2 Cor 6 is for complete separation from such things. Paul's warning in 1 Cor 10:22 needs to be heeded, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"

A somewhat similar recommendation to that given by the Kyodan pastor came from a missionary in Japan concerning another matter, the Obon Festival. (This is a Buddhist festival held each summer in which the spirits of the dead are welcomed back to their homes for a few days.) Christians in Japan are under great pressure to participate in this pagan religious observance to show their filial piety. Thus this missionary recommended that the Obon Festival be declared a Christian "All Saints Day" so that Christians too could observe the day. He wrote:

The process of adjusting Christian religious practices to Japanese culture is already taking place. Because of the desire to pay respects to the dead, it would be an easy matter for the Christian Church to develop an *obon* (Festival of the dead) observance. Many Christians have to return to their native place at this time, help clean up the cemetery and participate in a Buddhist service or they will not be considered filial by their relatives ... Japanese people will adjust their Christian worship and practices to their old faiths.

Such an adjustment between polytheistic faith and Christian faith is syncretism. How will the heathen learn the distinctive nature of the Christian faith, as the one true revealed religion of the Living God, who alone is worthy of worship this way? God forbids all efforts to communicate with the souls of deceased men, whose destinies he holds in the palm of his hand. If such schemes are worked out to lessen the antithesis between Christianity and polytheism, how can non-Christians learn of God's uniqueness? The commands of God in the Scriptures forbidding any attempt to contact the spirits of the dead for any purpose are very explicit (Lev 19:31; Deut 18:10-12; and Isa 19:3) referring to those who "resort to