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On: 16 February 2015, At: 06:18

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/urea20>

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Published online: 10 Jul 2006.

To cite this article: H. H. Lowry D. D. (1909) RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN CHINA, Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association, 4:5, 508-515, DOI: [10.1080/0034408090040523](https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408090040523)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0034408090040523>

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## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN CHINA.

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China furnishes the best illustration that has ever been given of the possible development of a great nation where religious instruction has been practically excluded from the education of the people. It is perfectly safe to affirm that in view of the progress of Christian Civilization among the nations of the world the experiment can never be repeated. The conditions have disappeared with no possibility of restoration. China reached, ages ago, a stage of civilization and a practical knowledge of the common arts and industries that have contributed to the prosperity and general welfare of the people, far in advance of any nation in history that has not had the incentives and inspiration introduced by Christianity. But her civilization, centuries old when modern nations which have so far outstripped her in progress were born, and with all the advantages of one of the potentially richest countries on the globe, wonderfully protected from external aggression by the natural barriers of mountains, deserts and oceans, her mountains, rivers and plains abounding in all that is necessary to supply the wants of her millions of homogeneous people, is a standing monument on a large scale of the arrested development of a great race whose intellectual activities were absolutely self-centered.

China's civilization, government, laws, institutions, customs, literature, language, and even her religions that have had any formative and enduring influence, are peculiarly her own. But her scholars and statesmen made the fatal mistake of taking their highest ideals from the remote past, failing to recognize that the attainment of one generation is but the stepping stone to the progress and achievement of the next, and not the ultimate limit of possible progress. The result has been that notwithstanding their use of the mariners compass, gunpowder, the art of printing, the loom, and the plow from ancient times, they have remained practically stationary, and have produced a conservatism that has crippled the intellectual powers of successive generations as though shackled with bands of steel.

The beginning of the twentieth century has witnessed a sud-

den and marvelous change. The western world has been startled by the sight of a nation of four hundred millions of people breaking away from the shackles that bound her to the sages and heroes of four thousand years ago, and the prejudices and ignorance that imposed such formidable barriers to progressive advancement.

Among the causes which have led to these surprising changes both well-informed foreigners and high Chinese officials agree that education has had a very prominent part, and it certainly is true that the place religious instruction is to occupy in the institutions of higher learning, either now existing or yet to be established, will largely determine the character of the future civilization of that vast empire. The old systems after twenty centuries of uninterrupted experiment have failed to produce the highest type of civilization. Now, do these recent changes suggest merely an attempt to add to the old some new element of power, or new scheme of ethics or morality, based like the past upon human authority or do they indicate one of the great crises of history where a matchless opportunity is given to change the intellectual life of a great nation by the leaven of the gospel, and thus endow them with the strength, virility and enthusiasm of perpetual youth? To settle this question is infinitely more important to humanity than to open the doors of a vast population to the markets of the world. To determine whether the future civilization of China shall be dominated by the teachings of Confucius, or by the doctrines of Jesus Christ is the supreme problem of education today.

To understand the intellectual revolution occurring in China—a revolution unparalleled in history—one must keep in mind the fact that their system of education has existed practically unchanged through nearly twenty centuries. Their text books, methods of instruction, examinations, and the ultimate results aimed at have remained the same during all these years. In the temples of Confucius there are great tablets with an inscription in hugh characters, often in the handwriting of one of China's greatest emperors, declaring that the great sage is "the equal of Heaven and Earth"; and in view of his control over the intellectual life of the people and nation the conceit is not without foundation, for the facts and phenomena of the physical universe

have found no place in their schools, the Confucian classics constituting the entire curriculum. To commit to memory every line of the Confucian classics and a large portion of the elaborate commentaries, to be able to write theses and poems on selected texts with faultless diction and penmanship, has constituted the course for all Chinese scholars, leading through the lowest degree of hsiutsai to that of senior wrangler of the Hanlin Academy, the highest in the Empire.

Another fact that indicates the tremendous importance of the revolution in Chinese Education is that it has been the basis of their system of competitive examinations for civil service for twelve hundred years. Through this door successful candidates have passed to all the official honors and emoluments in the Empire. Education has thus been reduced to a stereotyped formula and given a commercial value instead of furnishing the opportunity for a broad culture, mental development, and the incentives to independent thought and research offered by Western Methods. And yet one practical result has been that the Government has been able to secure officers with a high average of intelligence, and generally well-equipped to administer the affairs of state. The ability of educated Chinese has been conspicuous whenever they have had to deal with the best representatives of foreign nations either in commerce or diplomacy. In commercial integrity and ability they rank among the highest in the world, and they have proved themselves the equals in diplomacy and statecraft of the best-trained and most skilled diplomats of any nation. A system that has produced such results must deservedly hold a high place in the esteem of the whole people, and it is simply marvelous that a revolution has taken place by which the entire system has been abandoned in favor of modern schools, and with so little friction or disturbance of the social order. The significance of the movement, its suddenness, and far-reaching consequences can scarcely be appreciated by the people of the West. A gradual transformation from the old and introduction of the new after years of instruction and illustration of the superiority of the one over the other might be easily comprehended, but here suddenly, by a single stroke of the "vermillion pencil" has come a radical

change affecting the very foundation of a great nation such as has never occurred in the history of the world.

Notwithstanding whatever opposition may still exist in the minds of the literati, it is now the settled policy of the Government to establish modern schools all over the land as rapidly as possible. The writing of essays has been discontinued, and the examination halls have been abandoned. A Board of Education has been formed, now presided over by one of the greatest and most progressive mandarins—the former viceroy Chang Chih-tung. A complete system of schools is being organized, beginning with the primary and extending through the various grades to the Provincial colleges, and culminating with the Imperial University in Peking. But as a matter of fact in accordance with a peculiar Chinese characteristic they reversed the order and organized the University first, before they had either professors or students prepared to enter upon the advanced courses of study. A number of technical schools have also been established, including naval, military, law, medicine, normal, and engineering. In Peking several large buildings have been erected, two and three stories high, where less than a score of years ago buildings more than one story in height were prohibited by law. A limited number of foreign professors are employed, others have been secured from the Chinese students educated abroad, but there are more Japanese than of any other nation as teachers in the various colleges.

While the doors of the Government schools are being thrown wide open for the entrance of all branches of Western learning, they are, at the same time, effectually closed to the introduction of Christian teaching. There is no thought of substituting the new for the old. Confucianism must be preserved. Pupils and teachers are required to perform the prescribed ceremonies to the great Sage. This regulation is a bar to all Christian students. Christian teachers by special stipulation, are not required to take part in the Confucian worship, and a more enlightened and liberal policy seems to be indicated in the recent request to the Secretaries of the Young Men's Christian Association in North China to recommend teachers for Government institutions.

The Chinese Government has surely launched on a complete

system of reform, and it is the supreme duty of the Christian world to seize the opportunity to make the power of religious teaching felt in the education of the scholars and leaders of the new China. Dr. W. A. P. Martin, in a concluding paragraph in his latest book, "The Awakening of China," says, "All kinds of reform are involved in the new education, and to that China is irrevocably committed. Reinforced by railroad, telegraph and newspapers, the schoolmaster will dispel the stagnation of remote districts, giving to the whole people a horizon wider than the hamlet, and thoughts higher than the hearthstone. Animated by sound science and true religion it will not be many generations before China will take her place among the leading nations of the earth." (page 280.) The importance of "true religion as well as "sound science" cannot be too greatly emphasized in this connection. In fact if all that is intended by reform in China is to increase the material wealth of the country, to improve commerce so as to make it more profitable to the world at large, to reconstruct the Government so as to bring it into harmony with the civilization of the twentieth century, there would be little call for the work for which our Christian institutions stand. Education without the moral and spiritual forces of Christianity will never raise a nation to the high civilization of the great Powers of the West. Education will fail to render its highest service to China unless it produces a better type of men than their ancient system has produced; unless it inspires men with higher ideals of life, incites to nobler purposes, creates loftier desires, and extends their vision beyond the boundaries of the Middle Kingdom.

The Christian teacher has now the opportunity to point out that the highest civilizations of the world are founded on the principles of righteousness and truth. And it is because Christian education furnishes the absolutely necessary safeguard against the acquisition of knowledge proving a power for evil instead of good, that the Christian school occupies a deservedly high place among the missionary agencies in China. And this fact will make their maintenance necessary for many years to come, no matter how many schools the Government may establish. Christian schools were established in China long before a system of modern education was thought of by the Government,

and they have been largely influential in the adoption of the new policy. It has not been their aim to supplement the secular education of the Government institutions, but to introduce into the very foundation of the new civilization the true principles of education, to develop the physical, mental and spiritual life of the student, and to send him forth with a well established character to work out the destiny of a being who has been created in the image of God.

Christian institutions of collegiate and university grade have grown by the natural process of evolution from the primary and higher schools which have been a part of missionary work from the beginning. They now occupy many strategic centers in the Empire, such as the colleges at Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo, Hangchow, Wuchang, Weihsien and other cities, and the universities at Soochow, Shanghai, Nanking, Changsha, Chentu, Tungchou and Peking.

As an illustration of what has been already accomplished of the work outlined and some of the problems encountered by these institutions of higher learning in China, it may be in place to make a brief reference to one that may serve for all. In the book already quoted, Dr. Martin says, "The Peking University is not unworthy the name it bears." Rev. B. L. Whitman, LL. D., Ex-President of Columbia University in this city (Washington, D. C.), after looking over the institutions, said, "The Peking University is the dream of my life." Bishop I. W. Bashford in a recent article, says, "The Peking University now leads the educational work of the Empire, and probably will do more to cast the new civilization of China into Christian molds than any other single agency on earth." And Prof. David Eugene Smith, LL. D., of Columbia University, New York, in an address to the students of Peking University, said, "You have an opportunity and an attendant responsibility the like of which come to few men in all this world in which it is our lot and our privilege to labor for humanity."

The Peking University is favorably located in the capital of the Empire on a campus of over eighteen acres. Three substantial buildings have been erected; two are dormitories and will accommodate about four hundred students, the other is a four story structure used at present for administration and

class work. The Medical College, located on the premises of the London Mission, is the Union Medical College of all the missionaries of the north. It has a faculty of ten professors, thirteen lecturers, and an examining board of six other physicians. By an Imperial decree it has authority to confer degrees on its graduates.

The college of Liberal Arts has a teaching force of eight Americans and fifteen Chinese. The total enrollment in all departments last year was five hundred three. Its work has been recognized by several of the leading state universities in the United States such as California, Michigan and Minnesota. Graduates are received for post-graduate work without examination.

The College of Theology is only partially organized, and Colleges of Dentistry, Engineering and a Teachers College are included in the scheme of the university, and will be opened as soon as the necessary funds can be provided.

A larger proportion of the students have chosen Christian work than from any other institution not specially designed to prepare candidates for the ministry. Several of the graduates have secured influential positions in official and commercial appointments beside those who have devoted their lives to the spiritual development of their countrymen.

In view of the fact that religious instruction has no place in the new education, and Christian students are barred by the idolatrous ceremonies from attendance in the government schools, who can estimate the great importance of the opportunity now presented to the Christian schools which have been established throughout the country to prepare leaders for all departments of progress? Leaders there must be, and well will it be for China if she secures men raised above mere utilitarianism, who shall prove themselves worthy of the great responsibilities of the exalted positions that will be theirs. A Christian Chinese student in a recent letter says, "Our country has done much toward material reforms, but the rulers and statesmen have thus far neglected the true foundation of a nation's strength and power." It is the privilege of Christian schools to teach China that the desirable things she sees in Western civilization are the outgrowth of years of patient cultivation and toil, and the mere



external possession of these things without the foundation from which they spring and upon which they rest, will not make a nation permanently strong. Through Christian guidance the sincere searcher after truth in any of the wide fields of learning will find God. And to find God is to find all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all that is worthy in civilization, all that is valuable in education, and all that is honorable in conduct.

A single statement in conclusion—The solution of the problems of religious education in China, assuming, of course, the positive Christian character of the institutions, is to provide for the adequate endowment of the Christian colleges already existing, or to be established, in the Eighteen Provinces. Thus endowed the Christian schools would be able to leaven the new education in all branches of learning with religious truth, and to counteract the agnostic and atheistic tendencies of secular education. Christian schools can only maintain their position and prominent influence by the superiority of their work, and that necessitates a liberal support for at least another generation. If the churches of the Christian world would, within the next ten years, place one hundred million dollars in this work, it would do more for the civilization and Christianization of that great empire than ten times that amount spent on armies, navies, and the industrial and commercial exploitation of the country. The mere suggestion of such an immense sum may seem chimerical and visionary, but it is only one-half the amount given to educational establishments in the United States in a single year, and even so vast a sum thus bestowed in the cause of humanity, would cripple no worthy enterprise in these favored lands where such accumulations of wealth have made the accomplishment of great things possible. An immediate endowment of the Christian colleges in China in this the greatest crisis in her wonderful history would hasten the coming of the Kingdom of Christ in that great empire, and insure the perpetuity and predominance of religious instruction among the four hundred millions of the most brainy, industrious and economical race on the globe.