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WESTERN INFLUENCE AND MISSIONARY OPPORTUNITY IN THE ORIENT

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It would seem to be an effort put forth in vain to try to present any new phase of the missionary situation. The Church has envisaged the foreign fields with a breadth and completeness of view scarcely applied to any other part of church history. Nevertheless, a re-statement of conditions relating to the propagation of the Christian religion is always in order ; first, because the fields in which the propagandism is being conducted are passing through rapid and continuous change, and secondly, because our surveys are really very incomplete. There are forces at work too deep or subtle to be easily grasped. There is always promise of additional knowledge through a renewed study of the complex forces of human history. Our present aim is to seek to call attention to some aspects of the foreign fields which perchance may not have received that attention merited by their importance. Broadly speaking, the subject

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in mind bears upon the relation between western influence in oriental fields and the missionary opportunity.

If we go back to a date as early as 1835 for a point of departure, we shall be able to put ourselves in sympathetic touch with those who had to face, at that time, the question of the introduction of the English language and European learning into India. It was a controverted question. The controversy arose later in China and was agitated with strong partisan feeling. Not the faintest echo of these once hotly debated issues can now be heard. Time has solved problems which perplexed men at first and caused sharp divisions of opinion. We have selected the year 1835, for it was at this time that Lord Bentinck, supported by Mr Macaulay, offered his resolution favouring the introduction of European learning and the English language into the schools of India. It was to the credit of the man who was later to gain undying fame as an essayist that he read, as did Dr Duff, the lessons of times yet to come. The stand taken by Lord Macaulay on this question has been abundantly sustained by the course of subsequent events. Western learning, as if impelled by its own momentum rather than by the favouring influence of human opinion, and using the English language as its chief instrument, has invaded the life of India, China and Japan, and in fact almost every nook and corner of Asia. Still, it is not quite correct to speak of an 'invasion' in this connexion. The demand of the Asiatic peoples has had greater weight than the favourable opinion of Europeans in determining the place the English language should have in the schools. In Japan, for example, with greater zeal even than in India, the officials have promoted the study of the English language and of European learning in the national schools. An astonishing phase of this movement in Japan is the hearty support accorded to the teaching of English by the local tax-payers who for more than thirty years have favoured English instruction, though teachers of the English language have had to be paid the highest salaries in the

schools. In China, the missionaries long stood out against the teaching of English in the mission schools, though there were enthusiastic champions of the opposite policy. Every effort was put forth to make the Chinese vernacular the medium for transmitting the western learning which indeed was taught in all the schools. But with the breaking down of the traditional education of China and the adoption of European learning by the Government for the national schools, there arose a great demand for teachers of English and for textbooks in the English language. It may be said therefore that this chapter of history is closed.

There is one thing not contemplated by those who opposed the teaching of English and who sought to transmit western learning by means of the vernacular languages : they did not foresee the influence the English language was to have upon these vernaculars. The change produced in the Japanese language, for instance, through the wide study of the English language in Japanese schools, has been remarkable. Much time has been given to English translation in the courses of study. The two languages are thus brought together and their terms, idioms and constructions are made the constant subject of contrast and comparison. Outside the schools those who have mastered English give evidence of the influence of this language in their use of Japanese both in writing and in public speech. Under this process, the Japanese sentences have become shorter, honorifics have been dropped, syntax has been modified, and new idioms, metaphors and terms have been incorporated. In these changes there has been a gradual approach to the English language. In no respect has this been more marked than in the directness with which the Japanese of the present express themselves. The change which has taken place in the Japanese language has been similar to the change in the life of the people. The former style of writing and speaking was similar to the mannered and monotonous movement of a feudal procession, while the use of Japanese now resembles the nervous and con-

centrated energy with which the busy throngs move up and down the Ginza. The Japanese language is now a supple and capacious medium for reflecting European ideas.

This change applies not only to the Japanese language: evidences of it may be observed in the increased facility with which western books can be translated into Japanese. For instance, a book written in English can be translated with almost as little modification and adaptation as would be required in translating a French writing into English. Among the first translations of European writings into Japanese was the rendering of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* into the Japanese vernacular. The adaptation necessary was so great that the good bishop in the original turned out to be a Buddhist priest in the translation. In contrast to this, one will find in General Mori's rendering of Goethe's *Faust* in Japanese, five or six years ago, a literal following of the original, including angels and Satan and all other features of the language and plot. That such an enterprise has become possible speaks volumes as to the removal of barriers which at first beset the western approach to the Japanese mind. In truth, the process of which we are speaking has a deeper aspect still. Western ideas have been domesticated in Japan to a degree scarcely imagined by superficial observers of events in that country. As evidence of this we point to the scholarly works written by Japanese authors and published in the Japanese language. An examination of dictionaries and encyclopedias of recent date will show that the working ideas, conceptions and definitions of present-day scholarship in Japan are western in character and not oriental as one would naturally suppose. The elaboration of western ideas in the conscious (and subconscious) life of the nation from a sort of independent centre has gone on now for a generation. This new zone in the national consciousness has provided a broad point of contact with the current of western civilization.

The changes of this kind belong to the accidents of outward history which have no part in the inherent nature

of the Christian experience itself. What relation therefore can they have to the missionary opportunity? If the Christian religion is divine in origin and relates itself to man's spiritual nature, to that human capacity which transcends the finite, can there be any difference effected by the introduction of western civilization? Of course the answer to this question, in its deeper aspect, is in the Incarnation. To deny that these things have a bearing would be tantamount to a complete separation between Christianity and the historic conditions in which it takes its rise. It may be readily admitted that undue emphasis may be attached to the natural conditions contributing to the progress of the Gospel. In truth, the tendency at the present time is to see too much in a 'situation,' either favourable or unfavourable to the progress of missionary work. It has been our observation, after many years of experience in Japan, that the secular changes in that country, the recent history of which has been replete with stirring events, have not had the weight of influence we are inclined to attach to them either in impeding or furthering the Gospel. Preaching has made its constant appeal to the people alike in time of war and peace and during many changes in the temper of the national mind.

However, there is a point of contact between the secular and the spiritual. There is a 'fullness of time' by which the preparation is made complete for Christ's coming. The Master did not encourage His disciples to seek signs, but He rebuked them for not knowing the signs of the times. It is doubtful whether St Paul ever named so discouraging an obstacle to the progress of the Gospel, though he enumerated many, as when, in writing to the Corinthian Church, he said that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.' It is as much as to say that man himself is the chief obstacle to the success of preaching, not his language or his customs or his social institutions. But there are obstacles other than the human heart itself, just as there are things that facilitate the work of the missionary.

We never deal with man in the abstract, nor in absolute isolation. At first, the gatekeeper barred the evangelist from even entering upon the premises, and later pretexts or excuses were given, courteously enough, at the door. But now the greatest barrier of all, the heart of the man approached, remains to be overcome. In speaking of the changes due to the study of English, though the comparison is not perfect, we have in mind these outer hindrances and their removal. The comparison is not perfect, for without a change in the personal bias of the master of the house neither the doors nor the outer gates would be thrown open. If we should characterize the missions of the nineteenth century, we might say that their chief problem was the breaking-down of the outer defences. If we should undertake to sum up in a word the task which confronts the twentieth century, we would say that it is the overcoming of the human heart itself. Everywhere, throughout all mission fields, there is direct access to the heart of man. It is an opportunity with which it would be difficult to find a parallel.

This leads to a consideration of the question of the effect of western learning, and one might include western influences in general, upon the nations of Asia. In some of the discussions belonging to an earlier date, it was said that the effect of western education was to demolish the false religions and to produce a temporary state of atheism. Being a rejection of that which was contrary to reason, this atheism was carefully distinguished from the infidelity of the West, more culpable in character because it was a disavowal of the Christian revelation. This atheism was a state of unbelief therefore in no wise hostile to religion. Indeed there was something virtuous in such a state of mind, resulting as it did from the exercise of newly enlightened faculties.

A more discriminating analysis than this is necessary, if we are to understand the state of mind produced among Orientals through western education and through a know-

ledge of western science. There can be no question that much has been demolished. The deification of nature, not to speak of other crude forms of native belief, received a severe shock as a result of the introduction of modern science. About the broadest generalization that can be made with reference to the state of mind produced as the first result of western education is to characterize it as a state of dissatisfaction. To say that the old religious beliefs were demolished or rejected is to use language unduly sweeping. The old beliefs and practices, like the temple structures, have fallen into neglect. The atheism of neglect is far more widely prevalent than the atheism which rejects religion. The rejection of a religion presupposes a voluntary relation to religion more in keeping with the West, where Christianity has had influence, than with the East. Men have not repudiated, by a definite act, the traditional beliefs of their fathers.

If we are to judge by conditions in Japan, one might say that a state of indifference has taken possession of many minds. This was the first effect produced by the new learning. Science seemed to be so secure within itself that old horizons were narrowed to the exclusion of the realm of faith and desire and fear. The method of the sciences was so successful in commanding assent and obtaining results that no other foundation was felt to be needed for human welfare and the new civilization. The Japanese came under the spell of science, and there can be no doubt in the mind of any one familiar with Japan that science was very destructive to the old faiths, not only in the secular limits its methods fixed for things of human interest, but in the application of the historical method to the study of records and traditions. The ground was cut from under many a structure thought to be secure. Science induced a state of mind averse to the supernatural or sceptical with reference to it. The study and application of science evoked the secular hope, the worldly optimism, so characteristic of the century just past. The study of science crowded into the background the

courses of the old Confucian education founded upon literature and history, and imparted a utilitarian bent to the minds of the educated classes, a bent to which the traditional training was very averse. The study of science had its effect in rendering the past to Japanese minds desolate and dreary, and devoid of fruitfulness, as they looked back upon its monotonies, and it made the future attractive by the bow of promise it threw upon the sky. There need be no surprise that western learning was responsible for the prevalence of atheism, if we mean by this term a state of indifference to the supernatural.

But to say that indifference to the traditional religions, and to all religions, characterizes the state of mind produced by western influences is to leave out of account much that needs to be said. Withholding belief from the prevailing religion may have been innocent enough, when the first recoil of the Asiatic mind took place from the superstitions and false philosophies which had been handed down from the past. But irreligion as a prevailing state has been productive of its own peculiar consequences. The trend has been to confirm men in their own indifference, to increase their inaptitude for religious faith. Asiatic peoples have become increasingly preoccupied with the production of wealth. The prospect of gaining a fortune through industrial production is a new vision. In truth, material civilization has advanced in Asiatic countries with such momentous power that many have been like the man who said he lost the sense of God when he stood by Niagara Falls, so great was the overwhelming impression of power made upon his mind by the cataract.

While on this aspect of the subject, a word may be said with respect to the false expectations of young missionaries preparing to go to the foreign fields. They picture to themselves their work as being primarily and essentially a conflict with the false systems of belief ruling in the minds of the peoples to whom they are sent. As a matter of fact, they will find a deeper struggle to be the agelong

conflict between Christianity and worldliness; a worldliness determined as to its forms by the materialistic forces of western civilization, a worldliness the influence of which is to inhibit and oppress any natural tendency of the religious impulses of man to assert themselves and to expand, a worldliness before the bewildering energy of which systems like Buddhism and Confucianism exhibit the greatest perplexity and confusion.

But there are more positive attitudes of mind with reference to religion. The term deism was used in describing the state of mind first produced by the European learning. If by deism we are to understand a school or sect, the term would be misleading. The Brama Samaj in India might indeed be called a deistic movement. Certainly it was not atheistic. But if by deism be meant the attitude of very many individuals scattered through society, the term would not be altogether inappropriate. Deism in English history rejected revelation and held to belief in the existence of God. Something very similar to this has taken place in India, China and Japan. Very many have turned away from the systems coming down out of the past in the sense that they no longer recognize the authority, revealed or otherwise, on which these systems rest. At the same time, they will tell you that they still adhere to the substance of the traditional faiths, to a sort of extract of their virtues. Not infrequently, this substance of the religions of the past, to which they profess to hold, shows a distinct Christian colouring. Sometimes this attitude of mind expresses recognition of unity in all religions. Baron Shibusawa of Japan promoted an organization called the Concordia Association, the object of which was to 'return to the common truth running through all religions.' The lack of agreement among those who attended the meetings of this association gave evidence of the difficulty of discovering any common denominator for all positive forms of religion. Sometimes the attitude of mind we are discussing expresses itself as a new

statement of the old religions. Fukuzawa was an ardent advocate, in his time, of a reformed Confucianism. Numerous types of New Buddhism have made their appearance, while a man like Professor Kakehi, of the Tokio Imperial University, has sought diligently to rehabilitate Shintoism with the Hegelian philosophy. In this list may be included those who are favourable to Christianity but who do not accept the positive doctrines of the Christian religion. Count Okuma in a recent speech expressed the feeling of many Japanese besides himself, when he declared that 'Christianity formed the very substance of his life.' We were present and heard this remark, and we are convinced that the venerable statesman spoke with perfect sincerity and seriousness. And yet it is doubtful whether he accepts a single distinctive tenet of the Christian faith. There is not a little danger that a Christianity of an Arian type may possibly take its rise out of a soil so favourable to its growth. This aspect of the religious trend is broad and liberal and in sharp contrast to the type of which men like Professor Kakehi are exponents. The former occupy a position, though their opinions are less developed, similar to that of the Brahmo Samaj in India. The latter, with Shintoism as a background, are orthodox nationalists, and their position may be compared to that of the Arya Samaj. The views held by Japanese of the Neo-Shintoist type are as pronounced as the doctrines of the Hindu nationalists, though without a definite organization.

The positive phase of mind with reference to religion exhibits itself in a still different aspect. With the first introduction of western civilization into Japan, the people were stirred as never before by visions of progress. A new experience of optimism accompanied the widened and more buoyant national consciousness. Later, there appeared signs of social unrest and menacing evils, the product of the new conditions. It was discovered that the heart without religious faith was desolate indeed. Intimations became frequent, in literature and in conversation, of the

need of something higher and more satisfying than civilization. Aspirations were as a light shining in a dark place. There was an ominous restlessness and an indefinite longing, widely diffused, and which expressed itself for what was termed, in current discussion, 'spiritual civilization.' There was much misgiving felt with reference to the various proposals for new religions and for new forms of the old religions. There was no uncertainty in the insistent demand that Japan was in need of a religion. The European war came on, and, as an untimely flood sweeps away the first beginnings which have in them the promise of a harvest, so the wave of material prosperity the war sent to Japan had the effect of suppressing these awakening impulses in the souls of the people. The world struggle resulted in a set-back to what promised to be a very hopeful period of religious progress. Conditions after the war have not been so favourable. The present state of Japan, however, presents aspects growing out of the war which are favourable to Christian preaching. Individualism, for example, as never before is being sounded as a keynote. There has been a loosening of social and family ties in Japan as elsewhere which renders personal choice an easier matter, in fact almost a necessity, so great has been the weakening of the power of custom and tradition.

We therefore believe that the external order has been shaped and the inner experience of Japan has undergone changes, though the account we have given is very inadequate. In some respects we are facing conditions unique in the history of the Church. Early apostolic missions were differently circumstanced in that the first apostles, looked upon as illiterate Galileans and as proceeding from among a subject people and from a province in the Roman Empire whose condition was similar to that of Korea to-day, went forth relying upon no other power than that of the Gospel itself. What prestige they had was due to the power of the Gospel, which was everywhere spoken against. There is a closer resemblance between

the modern period and the medieval missions. In the conquest of Europe in the Middle Ages, it was difficult to distinguish between the Church and the Empire. The power of the Church rested upon its prestige, as much as its prestige did upon its power. Modern missions are likewise associated with the dominant civilization of the world. But in two respects their position differs from that of medieval missions : first, missions are church enterprises, originating and maintained as voluntary associations, with no relation to states ; and, secondly, modern missions, in Asia at least, are seeking to establish the Christian religion on historic ground where civilizations have flourished for centuries. Their task, therefore, is different from that of medieval missions, the work of which was a conquest of vigorous tribes still immature in the development of culture and social institutions. There is significance, therefore, in the signs everywhere apparent that the ancient civilizations of the East are beginning to yield to the determining influences of the West. A modern Hindu may have been right, though by us the nations of Asia are supposed to be senile, when he declared, ' I see that India is a young and living organism.' He may have been equally correct when he said further that ' Neither Europe nor India has arrived at such a stage of development that we can safely criticize its institutions.' We may even admit that both alike are ' two great experiments.' The sudden awakening of Japan into a life of vigour and energy points to the reasonableness of this claim. The import of such statements, however, is in the quality of vitality inherent in India and Europe alike which they presuppose, and in the ground for hope that the civilizations of the East, though old, are capable of being cast in fresh moulds after the type and power of a new life.

But what of the inward tendencies of mind and heart by which these living forces are to be shaped and directed toward ideal ends ? If we distinguish, after the fashion of psychologists, between focal and marginal fields of conscious-

ness and between these and those mysterious and residual powers that seem to operate from beneath the plane of consciousness, the first important observation—to which reference has already been made—deserving of our attention in a study of the situation in Japan, is that religious impulses have been thrust into the margin of the national mind as a result of the war. As regards those reserve forces stored up in the depth of the human mind, modern influences are at work upon the mind of Japan in a profound sense and in a manner certain to give rise to great changes in the future. Our duty with reference to the situation is plain. As we have already said, there is unrest and a reaching-out after something. But aspirations are not convictions. A yearning after God, even an anguished pursuit of the Infinite, is not a sufficient basis for the spiritual life. To adopt beliefs because the need of them is felt, or because the alternate state of confusion and wandering gives distress, or because it is imagined that belief itself without reference to objective fact is sufficient, is to disregard those conditions of a sound and wholesome faith without the recognition of which men can scarcely avoid falling back into superstition. We may safely assume that the feeling of vagueness and uncertainty will once again force its way into a focal position in the national consciousness. What Japan needs is that definiteness which finds in Christ, and in Him alone, a new creative centre of redemptive power.

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