Christianity and the Non Christian Religions in the Contemporary Era

CHARLES S. BRADEN

I

The Religions of China and Japan

BEFORE beginning the discussion of Christianity and the specific religions of China and Japan, something ought to be said concerning the changing attitudes toward non-Christian religions in general. How do Christians look upon these other faiths? Has there been any signficant change in this respect in recent times? Undoubtedly the whole forein missionary enterprise of the church is conditioned upon the way in which Christian people do regard the non-Christian religions. Probably it would be fruitful to distinguish here between the official view of the Missionary Boards and that of the general membership of the churches, for there may be a very real difference. It is difficult however to get at the facts. The final test is the support which the Boards can get for their policies from the mass membership of the churches, though here again it may be that the giving to missions is more influenced by humanitarian considerations than by any decided attitudes toward the followers of the non-Christian faiths as such. Here we can deal but briefly with what the articulate, more or less official leadership of the churches has to say.

It must first of all be said that Christianity as such has no one attitude toward them that anyone can set forth as universally held, simply because it is impossible to define Christianity in perfectly unequivocal terms. One must speak of Catholic Christianity, or Evangelical, or of Liberal, or of Conservative Christianity, and even here he will find difficulty. It can be said, however, that certain rather definite attitudes have been held within the Christian group as a whole, and for our present purpose it is not of primary interest to say which portion of the Christian world holds each. Also it is possible to say whether there have been any significant shifts in attitude by any important segment of the Christian church in the contemporary era.

First, then, there was the view that represented Christianity as all white and heathendom, as the non-Christian religions were once designated collectively, as all black. This was reflected to some degree in our missionary maps of the world. Christianity has all the truth, the others none. Christianity is the only way to salvation. All who fail to embrace it are lost. **Second,** there was the view that in every religion there is some good. This good must be recognized and built upon even though it be very little. Of course, this good already exists within Christianity, and usually in greater degree, but it is nonetheless to be laid to the credit of the religion in question and full use made of it in leading its followers into a fullness of faith as represented in Christianity. Christianity has all the truth. Nothing is lacking. It can only give. It need not take. **Third,** there arose at last the view that Christianity and other religions all represent a common search for truth. Christian missions became thus a shared quest for that truth. The Christian may contribute richly to those who have followed the way of other religions, but in the process he may himself

be enriched morally and spiritually. The principle of mutuality inheres in the process.

The first of the attitudes growing out of these differing views has never been better characterized than by Professor Hocking: It is **radical displacement** of the pagan by the Christian faith. This was the attitude of Christianity as it expanded into northern Europe and as it made its way into Central and South America. Ruthless destruction of the pagan cult was the usual rule. Break down their idols, destroy their temples, burn their writings that might serve to remind them of the old faith. If anything was found in the native faith that resembled what Christianity brought, it must be the work of the devil, thought the old Franciscan Fathers who first introduced Christianity to Mexico. Yet even here a careful look at the process of conversion reveals that they did not by any means achieve total displacement in anything more than name, and that actually much of the old remained and still remains under a new name as the faith and practice of the Mexican Indians.

Although less violent in its manifestation the same general attitude has remained in force down into our own time. The method of displacement is no longer that of violent coercion, but the same end is sought by the slower method of preaching, voluntary conversion, education, and even by the more indirect methods of healing, sanitation and the improvement of the social and economic status of people, though generally this latter approach is less used by those who hold the older view. Most, though not all, of their missionaries are evangelists. It is pleasing to be able to say, however, that some of the most conservative religious bodies do undertake high grade educational work, as for example the Seventh Day Adventists in their agricultural mission to the Indians of Bolivia. But the end is essentially the same: to eradicate the old faith and substitute for it the true faith which is Christianity (in the form in which this particular group conceives of it).

This is the attitude of so distinguished a Christian missionary leader as the late Robert E. Speer, secretary for more than a generation of the Presbyterian Board of foreign missions. He quotes approvingly the following programme set forth in J. A. Clarke, "A Study in Christian Missions": "Christianity proposes to win men away from other religions by bringing them something better, and to take the place of the other religions in the world. . . . The attitude is not one of compromise but one of conflict and of conquest. It proposes to displace other religions. . . . The intention to conquer is characteristic of the Gospel. . . . It cannot conquer except in love, but in love it intends to conquer. It means to fill the world." Writes Dr. Speer, "Christianity must unswervingly hold this ground."[1] Indeed in recent years, Dr. Speer has set Christianity off from all the ethnic religions, denying that it is a religion at all, but a unique revelation.

There can be little doubt that radical displacement is still the ideal of the greater part of the Protestant and Catholic missionary activity of our day, for it is the logical position of the conservative theological bodies of Christians. The liberals are still a minority and it is the conservatives who seem most vitally concerned about foreign missions. This is clearly shown by a paragraph which appeared recently in a church paper:

> A total of $32,829,804 was expended for overseas mission work during 1946 by 100 non-Roman mission boards of the United States and Canada. . . . Of this amount more than half was sent by seven churches as follows:[2]

[1] *Moslem World,* April, 1939.
[2] *Advance* (Chicago Episcopal Diocesan magazine) October, 1947. Vol. 60, p. 5.

Seventh Day Adventists	$4,570,096
Southern Baptist Conv.	4,498,413
Methodist	3,858,553
Presbyterian	3,334,934
Assemblies of God	1,351,318
Episcopal	1,204,144
Congregational Christian	937,518

Hocking's second way he calls synthesis, not to use the much more disturbing word, syncretism, but into it he reads mutuality. This seems to me to be a step further removed; at least conscious acceptance of anything on the part of Christianity is, though as a matter of fact there is an inevitable give and take which goes on when each party is least conscious of it, wherever two religions meet. The next logical step beyond radical displacement seems to me to be the recognition of a degree of preparation in the native faith which leads on to the embracing of Christianity, but which adds nothing to Christianity and changes it not at all. Everything that the native faith contains of good was already there in the Christian faith, which goes beyond and fulfills it. Thus, Christianity was thought of as the Crown of Hinduism, etc.

A good example of the second attitude is found in a recent article by F. S. Drake: "It may fairly be argued that Christianity sets the seal to the spiritual and ethical values of the ancient civilization of China; that God, intimately known and loved in Jesus Christ is the great Being dimly set forth in the Chinese classics; that Christ is the Perfect Man of Confucianism, but perfect through the cross; and that the Kingdom of God is the great world order of peace and harmony to which all things were thought to tend; that the moral sense recognized as deeply rooted in human nature is the voice of God: and that the original uncorrupted nature of man, so often emphasized in the Chinese book is none other than man's creation in the image of God. In the Christian consciousness the ancient humanistic teaching finds its fulfillment and its root; its meaning and moral power."[3]

Hocking's third way, that of reconception, of course involves mutuality. It recognizes a common core of good among the religions, then goes on through mutual effort to what may lie beyond any of them. Through the contact of religions there is an obvious broadening which is but a preliminary step toward a better grasp of the essence of one's own faith. Naturally, this clashes violently with those who hold the first attitude for it seems to deny the absoluteness of the revelation of Christ and therefore cuts sharply across their fundamental basis of belief.

It was this clash which was so evident at the Madras Conference in 1938. Kraemer, whose book, "The Message of Christianity to the Non-Christian World," was prepared as the basis for discussion at the conference, was a follower of Karl Barth, though critical of some of his views. He holds that there are just two fundamental positions that can be taken in reference to other religions, that of "Continuity between the essential tendencies and aspirations to be found in the ethnic religions and the essential gift of the Christian religion," and that of discontinuity which involves "the radical or the conditional rejection of all natural theology, and a vehement or more moderate abhorrence of terms such as fulfillment and general revelation."[4] His attitude is the second: radical discontinuity. This is a logical position to take as Barthian, though Kraemer, as Barth, does not deny that there are many good and noble and beautiful elements in the non-Christian religions. As a matter for fact, Kraemer in his own missionary work in Bali seems practically to have recognzied the values in the native faith and practice, and to have built upon them. But his theoreti-

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[3] "Christian Universities in China," *International Review of Missions*, July, 1947, p. 342.

[4] *Authority of the Faith*, Madras Series, pp. 13-14.

cal position is clarified in the following statement which distinguishes between the revelation of God to individuals and that through religions: "This rejection of a 'nature theology' as affording the basic religious truths on which the realm of the Christian revelation rises as the fitting structure, does not, however, include denying that God has been working in the minds of men outside the sphere of Christian revelation, and that there have been, and may be now, acceptable men of faith who live under the sway of non-Christian religions, products, however, not of these non-Christian religions, but of the mysterious workings of God's Spirit. God forbid that we mortal men should be so irreverent as to dispose of how and where the sovereign God of grace and love has to act. Yet, to represent the religions of the world as somehow, however imperfect and crude it may be, a paidagogos, or schoolmaster to Christ, is a distorted presentation of these religions and their fundamental structure and tendencies, and misunderstanding of the Christian revelation."[5]

Henry Pitt Van Dusen, in his "World Christianity," declares that since the Madras conference there has been "no notable fresh light on the central issue or the achievement of a fuller consensus of Christian judgment."

Van Dusen holds that the younger Christian churches,having been brought up largely under British and American tutelage, are more akin to liberalism than to orthodoxy or neo-orthodoxy, and so far they have not been greatly impressed by the reaction toward traditionalism. It is his belief that the theology of the world Christian Mission is prevailingly that of liberal evangelicalism.[6] I am personally doubtful of this. It is true certainly of a few of the great Boards officially. If it is not true of a great number of individuals working under these Boards and not at all of many of the Conservative Church Boards and independent missionaries.

With this brief survey of the general attitudes of Christians toward the non-Christian faiths, we turn particularly to China and Japan to discover what are the relationships of Christianity to the religions of these lands. The sources upon which we are forced to depend are almost wholly Christian, with here and there some quoted material, or reported utterances from non-Christian sources. The reason for this is that for the period of the war and since very little published material from China or Japan has been issued, or at least has been able to reach us. The picture resulting may, therefore, be far more one-sided than we would desire. There has been nothing comparable from either of these regions to the magnificent book on the "Hindu Renaissance" by a distinguished Hindu writer concerning which Dr. Soper writes. Recent survey articles in the "Journal of Bible and Religion," by Earl Cressy, and on "Occupied and Unoccupied China," by Bishop Chen and Chester S. Miao in Henry S. Leiper's recent "Christianity Today,"[7] have furnished most of the material on China, while various articles by Charles Inglehart, T. T. Brumbaugh, and Walter Van Kirk, as well as the report of the deputation which visited Japan in the fall of 1945, and the new edition of D. C. Holton's "Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism," have provided most of the information coming out of Japan.

Christianity in China has undergone a prolonged period of war, civil or international, and has suffered very heavily in consequence. Yet, there has also been some gain. Bishop Chen says that there is a changed attitude toward the church on the part of the people as a result of the great and invaluable services rendered by Chinese Christians and missionaries who braved hardship and even death to carry on their helpful ministry, not alone to Christians, but to

[5] H. Kraemer, *The Authority of Faith,* p. 4.
[6] *World Christianity,* p. 200.
[7] Morehouse Gorham, N. Y., 1947.

all the Chinese people who were in need of their help. This has opened up doors of opportunity unprecedented in the whole history of missions in China.

Under the stress of the war years separated branches of the church in Free China, where there was no forced union, entered into cooperative enterprises as never before. In certain relief and literature projects even Catholics cooperated with Protestants. Churches which had remained aloof from the National Christian Council freely associated themselves with the Council's work. A plan of church union was drawn up, which, while not as yet adopted, points, thinks Bishop Chen, to a more effective working together, even if organic union is not achieved.

Even during the war when overwhelming burdens rested upon him, the Generalissimo, Chiang Kai - Chek, worked with a lawyer formerly a Methodist, but now Catholic, Mr. John Wu, on a new translation of the Bible, for, thinks the General, "the word of God must be rendered in the best form, not only intelligible to the Chinese, but also comparable to the great Chinese classics. If the Bible is to become the spring of the Chinese peoples' thought and action, its tone should not be tinged with an accent that is foreign to the Chinese mind and soul."[8]

Bishop W. Y. Chen says: "During the war years, the spirit of Christianity in Free China has permeated gradually the thought life of the people like leaven. Biblical stories and characters have become themes for modern literature. An inspiring story of the life and death of Jesus was written by Mao-Tung, a famed non-Christian Chinese writer. In one Kuomintang magazine there was a series of articles advocating the building of a new culture for post-war China, on the basis of Dr. Sun's "Three People's Principles," but permeated by the spirit of Christianity. Apprehensive of moral disintegration in war as well as in peace, a noted Chinese scholar appealed for moral awakening and the revival of Confucianism, but he concluded that the only way to bring Confucianism to life is by invoking or assimilating the spirit of Christianity.[9] Bishop Chen further states: "An interfaith fellowship which has as its members Protestants, Catholics, Mohammedans, and Buddhists, was formed (in nationalist Free China) with the sole purpose of safeguarding religious liberty. Though freedom of faith is prescribed in the Chinese constitution, its application and practice depend on the kind of government China is going to have. . . . Among the four political parties, the Communist, the Democratic League, the Youth Party, and the Nationalist, most of the members of the first three are either indifferent or opposed to religion. . . . The United Front, as advocated by the Interfaith Fellowship, may become a tremendous force in the struggle for freedom of faith . . ."[10]

Chester S. Miao, writing on "Occupied China,"[11] says that of the one-half million Christians in China about 450,000 in 6,000 churches were in the provinces occupied by Japan. Of these, some 30,000 migrated into West China, but most remained and the churches carried on under great handicaps. These were several: (1) the loss of missionary workers, most of whom migrated, went home, or were interned. This threw a heavy burden upon native leaders which, while costly, was not an unmixed good, since it resulted in the development of a sense of responsibility and called out latent capacities for leadership which had not been suspected before; (2) financial problems were enormous; thrust back upon their own resources for support the members offered "an unprecedented challenge to assume a responsibility for trusteeship

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[8] *Christianity Today*, p. 302.
[9] H. S. Leiper, *Christianity Today*, p. 301.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 305.
[11] *Ibid.*

of which they were little conscious before the war" (p. 288), probably one of the best by-products of the whole experience; (3) Not a few leaders were lost through sickness, persecution, and, perhaps most of all, economic pressure, which led them to seek a living through other means. Partly because of the inflationary difficulties, but also because of an increasing interest in science, economics and politics, ministerial candidates have been all too few to meet the need for an adequate ministry.

Nevertheless, the situation is not hopeless. The Christian church stands higher in public esteem than ever before because of the great service it rendered through its missionaries, its workers and institutions during the long difficult years. The lay leadership of the churches is stronger than ever before and more conscious of its responsibilities. The churches forced into union by Japanese pressure have learned cooperation as never before, and while the union was broken soon after V-J day, as a rather natural reaction to the constraint under which they had operated, Mr. Miao thinks that the outlook for interdenominational cooperation, both regionally and nationally, particularly on a functional basis, if not organic union, is bright. Several cooperative enterprises, an outcome of the war, though not because of Japanese pressure, are flourishing and give promise of excellent results. Examples are the United Christian Publishers' Association, Student Evangelism in Government Universities, China Bible House and the North China Christian Rural Service Union (p. 292).

It still remains to be seen whether in the field of education concerted planning can be achieved so as to relocate and rehabilitate colleges and middle schools in a manner which will best serve the interests of the total field, when lack of sufficient funds and resources in money and personnel make it certain that not all of those which existed before the war can be restored. This will constitute a serious test of the spirit of cooperation among the churches. Mr. Earl Cressy, General Secretary of the National Christian Council, in an article, "Developments in Religions of China,"[12] says that the recent ministry of education has placed great emphasis on a "return to Confucian first principles as the essence of Chinese civilization. But in contrast to earlier unsuccessful attempts to make Confucianism the state religion, a plan for a state religion was recently proposed by a high military official which would include all five religions." Unfortunately, he gives no details as to how it was proposed to relate these various faiths. As a matter of fact, he says that many Confucianists see no conflict between Confucianism and Christianity. Evidently, they must think of Confucianism as limited to a core dealing with government and society and omitting the cosmic and specifically religious elements so frequently associated with it.

Cressy reports that the Confucian system continues to be strongly entrenched in education, and in government. Taoism, he finds to be decreasing in influence. "Its shrines and monasteries are tending to disappear" (p. 77). Buddhism has experienced a considerable increase of Tibetan influence in recent years. Buddhist seminaries give increasing attention to Tibetan studies, and Tibetan scholars have been invited to lecture in Buddhist centers. Some linkage has also been made with the Buddhism of Ceylon, thru Chinese students going to Ceylon and Ceylonese teachers coming to China. He reports also considerable friendliness toward Christians (p. 78). But recent surveys reveal that Buddhist monasteries are decreasing in number. Many of their properties are rented or occupied by soldiers. There are but few schools and almost no modern trained scholars,

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12 *Journal of Bible and Religion*, vol. 15, p. 76.

though some work is being done in the textual criticism of Buddhist literature.

Islam, he thinks, is becoming increasingly self-conscious (p. 78). They talk in terms of 50,000,000 Moslems in China, though no one knows for certain how many there are. Estimates vary from 6 to 20 million by non-Moslem observers. Their influence is felt more in the political and military realm than in the scholarly or specifically religious. They are friendlier to Christians in China than anywhere else where they are in contact. He reports that a group of Islamic leaders recently approached Protestant leaders with a proposal for a "united front for certain political ends. The Protestants felt unable to enter into such an arrangement. When it was suggested that Buddhists be approached the Moslems replied that they had no strength to contribute" (p. 78). But we have seen that in another part of China the Moslems did unite in an interfaith movement in seeking to protect their religious liberty. Though Bishop Chen asserts that this union of Buddhists, Moslems, Protestants and Catholics was solely to protect their religious freedom, Cressy declares that it was also to promote understanding and fellowship. The membership was individual, not institutional. Several meetings were held and a series of lectures arranged, and it was all on a very cordial basis. It was first formed on Buddhist initiative (p. 79).

But another project was instituted by the Council of Christian universities which involves also cooperative action among representatives of various religions. It was the formation of the "Institute for Research in Religion in China." Its work has been delayed by the war but one conference has been held and a start made upon a most ambitious project to "gather into source books all reference to religion in the twenty-four dynastic histories which constitute the bone of Chinese culture and contain 40 million words." It is planned to enlist scholars of all lands and religions in this important project. Already, four Buddhist graduate students have been sent to a Christian university to be trained as research workers. The aim of the Institute is to "build up a body of scientific knowledge in the field of Chinese religion" (p. 79).

Two Chinese Christian leaders have recently written on China's religions, including, of course, Christianity. Y. C. Yang wrote "China's Religious Heritage" (Abingdon Cokesbury, N. Y., 1943), and Francis C. M. Wei wrote "The Spirit of Chinese Culture" (Charles Scribner's Sons, N. Y., 1947).

Y. C. Yang illustrates the second attitude toward other religions mentioned earlier in the paper. "There is very little in the teachings of Confucius which is contradictory to the teachings of Jesus Christ. But Christianity deals with the problems of life much more fully and much better. The proper Christian attitude is therefore one of 'fulfillment' and not one of 'destruction.' Confucius may be conceived as the voice of a prophet crying in the Far East: 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, etc.' . . . Confucianism, however, has much to learn from Christianity. It is good, but in itself is not good enough and not complete enough to satisfy the full needs of man."

Dr. Wei is insistent that in China the way is not what he calls the religious eclecticism of Prof. Hocking, "but a new interpretation of Christianity in terms of every civilization with which it comes in contact. In this way the special strength and virtue of all the religious traditions may be brought into the Christian church, each as a new emphasis to supplement 'empirical' Christianity which we at present recognize as predominately western, and we may have an entirely fresh vision of the glory of our faith. In this light, our study of the other religions and cultures should not lessen in any way our sense of urgency in taking our Good

News to peoples with cultures different from those of the West, but enhance it, for we see clearly that not only do those peoples need the faith of the Christian Church, but also the Christian Church needs their cultures in order to give it a fuller expression that it may become more ecumenical."[13] Thus he thinks may "arise a Chinese theology as we have had a Greek theology, and Latin theology, and European theology and American theology, each according to the genius of the people, not to divide the Church in China from the church in other lands, but to give a fuller expression to the Church of God in the World."[14]

I asked Mr. Hsu, a Chinese who teaches this year at Northwestern University, if in his contact with Chinese students and teachers or intellectual leaders he had noted any particular attitude toward Christianity. He thought a moment, then replied that among the non-Christians in the Chinese universities, and among intellectuals outside them, he could recall no attitude at all save the completely negative one of entirely ignoring it. It just is not a topic of conversation among them at the present time, he said. Evidently it is not a matter of importance in a day of such bitter internal struggle between Communism and Chinese Nationalism. Christianity just seems to them not to be relevant to the pressing affairs of the time. To be sure, this is but one man's opinion. But it was thoughtfully given, and may, whether we like it or not, be characteristic of that portion of the Chinese community. It may also be of tremendous significance that this is so.

The war brought tragedy to the church in Japan. Never very numerous, its membership dropped to approximately a third. A census in 1945 showed 70,000 instead of the former 210,000. Nearly a fourth of her churches were destroyed; many of her schools were closed or very badly damaged. During the war Christians were persecuted. Often they were thought to be quislings. Ministers were drafted into military service or obliged to work in factories. Walter Van Kirk reports that both Shinto and Buddhism thought they saw in the situation the opportunity to rid Japan of an alien faith. He was told that in one city, Nagoya, temple priests had plastered on the doors of churches the slogan: "Now is the time to be rid of Christianity."[15]

Christianity was said to "weaken the will to conquest of a people destined through ages eternal to rule the world."[16] Christians who held that the Christian God was the creator were guilty of both heresy and treason. Particularly the millenialists, who looked for the end of the world and the second coming of Christ in power, were regarded as traitorous, for to speak of a nation which was believed to have an eternal existence and rule the world, as ending, was to slander the imperial dynasty — coeval with heaven and earth. Toward the end of the war it was rumored that in the event of the loss of the war Kagawa would be made prime minister. This was damaging to the Christian community.

Yet there were some positive gains during the period. For one thing the churches, whether willing or not, were forced into a united church — only a few refusing to enter it. But while this was done under pressure it gave them a standing with the government which they had not before enjoyed. They were now on the same footing as Buddhism and sect Shinto for the first time. They were obliged to support the war, at least to the extent of providing theological rationalizations for the war, but in this they were not markedly different from the Christian church in other lands. Christian ministers in considerable numbers were sent to occupied

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[13] *The Spirit of Chinese Culture*, p. 27.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
[15] *Christian Century*, Vol. 62, p. 1409.
[16] *Ibid.*

countries, particularly China, with the evident hope that they would render the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere welcome to the invaded lands. They had little success, and many had little heart in it. A young Japanese minister on his return from China reported, "the only worthwhile thing a Japanese could do in China was to wash Chinese feet."[17] As early as 1941 it was recognized that "Japan could never win the souls of conquered peoples by such obvious perversions of the high and holy purpose of religion."[18]

When the sudden collapse of Japanese arms came, followed by swift occupation, the question at once arose of resuming missionary operations in Japan. A thoughtful former missionary to Japan, T. T. Brumbaugh, reflecting on the fact of Japan's trying to use the religious groups to pacify its conquered peoples, rather naturally asked if we were really in a different situation if we at once sent out missionaries. Certainly they must not be sent under any appearance of governmental support, was his conclusion, but only if the missionaries should dissociate themselves from the support of gunboats and the state department and "fully renounce the political prerogatives of nationality and, possibly, embrace citizenship in the land of their adoption."[19]

Actually, the first emissaries of the western churches did carefully dissociate themselves from any semblance of official government protection or aid, though they were warmly welcomed by General MacArthur. And the earliest missionaries, so far from getting any help from the government, were subjected to exactly the same conditions of travel and purchase of food and residence as natives — and as a result had rather a difficult time. The rigor of their treatment was later somewhat relaxed.

One of the first acts of the new government was to rescind the old law of religious bodies which had required the union of the churches, but Kyodan, the United Church, still goes on with only a very few having availed themselves of the right to withdraw. The church was relieved of all censorship, and stands on exact equality with all other religions. The people have been surprisingly cordial in their welcome to returning missionaries, the few who have gone back.

The emperor himself, former head of the Shinto faith, indeed a divinity, personally talked with the members of the deputation of four who in the fall of 1945 visited Japan. Shaking hands and speaking with them seated (an innovation), he "hoped the Christians the world over would cooperate in the effort to restore peace and good will among peoples. He described the deputation as a means of cementing the ties of friendship between Japan and the U. S." He expressed appreciation of what the churches have done for Japan and went on to state his hope that the Christian schools would be speedily rebuilt and their work carried forward.[20]

An editorial in the "Nippon Times," Nov. 1, 1945, a propos of the visit of the American delegation, said in part: "Entirely apart from sectarian or doctrinal considerations, Japan needs the presence of vigorous religious and political minorities of all kinds within her society to keep alive the tolerance and freedom which the nation must have in order to enjoy healthy balance and perspective. It is an essential requisite of democracy."

It seems to be a time of genuine receptiveness on the part of the Japanese people. The Roman Catholic church, which has about the same number of members as the Protestant churches, is actively seeking to renew and increase

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17 Brumbaugh, T. T., *Christian Century,* Vol. 63, p. 1233.
18 *Ibid.*
19 Brumbaugh, T. T., *Christian Century,* Vol. 63, p. 1232.
20 Douglas Horton, *The Return to Japan,* p. 124.

its missionary activities there. According to the "Christian Century," Bishop Ready of the Roman Catholic church visited Japan with Bishop O'Hara of Buffalo and travelled all over it in 1946. "There can be no doubt that the conversion of Emperor Hirohito is a part of their plans," it is declared. Roman Catholic papers at one time headlined the story that "the emperor and some 20 members of the imperial household received instructions in the history and beliefs of the Roman Catholic church in April," given by a former Protestant, Dr. Tanaka, minister of education in the current cabinet. The Bishop, according to their report, sees "in Japan the opportunity of its greatest expansion since the 15th century."[21]

The "Christian Century," in an editorial January 30, 1946, pp. 135-7, asserted that it was a time of unprecedented opportunity to make Japan a Christian nation. Shinto and Buddhism are inadequate, they say. Roman Catholicism will not do. Protestants should, therefore, send to Japan a mission of the most eminent Americans from the fields of education, industry, politics, and science, known for their Christian faith, to press upon Japanese leaders the claims of Christianity. They should seek conversion of the Emperor, and through radio and press speak to the whole people, not under government auspices, of course, but independently. This is to be followed, of course, by longer term efforts by well trained missionaries.

The "Christian Century" of January 16, 1946, Vol. 63, thinks that with the Japanese Emperor abdicating his divine prerogative, Shinto can hardly survive long. "It is unlikely," it is said, "that animistic Shintoism can long survive as the most influential faith in Japan. . . . At best, all Buddhism can offer is a world renouncing gospel of personal escape at a time when every circumstance demands that individual Japanese confront their responsibilities with courage and conviction. Buddhism's most optimistic exponents would hardly claim that it has much to offer Japan in the desperate situation in which it finds itself."[22]

But are Japan's religions in a hopeless condition? Of course, State Shinto as a state-supported cult, is gone. When the emperor on January 1, 1946, declared over the radio, "The Emperor is not a living God," and that emperor worship was based on "a false conception," and further that it was untrue that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world," he effectively destroyed the basis of State Shinto. And of course the directive of General MacArthur completely disestablished it as the officially supported religion of the state. But as a religion it still exists on a plane of exact equality with all other faiths, and its shrines are still in existence. Even the emperor is permitted as a private individual to take part in the worship at the former state sanctuaries, as are also all other officials of government. The only difference is that all the shrines and institutions of the former state cult must now be supported as other religious faiths are, and that no one can be forced to support them or worship at them. It has become essentially just another sect "thrown out," says Holtom, "into the national life without discrimination against it or special favor to encourage it, to find a place entirely on its own merits. Though deprived of the special legal privileges of the old regime, it still has much left: extensive properties, sanctuaries, festivals, rituals, priesthood, literature, a long history, the prestige of former rank and a large group of adherents whose loyalty could be counted on to become effective in proportion as those who had been held in line by ex-

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[21] *Christian Century,* Vol. 63, p. 1004.

[22] p. 70.

ternal compulsion withdrew."[23] And what of Sect Shinto and of Buddhism? Are they in so bad a condition as the "Christian Century" seems to think?

Charles Inglehart notes two facts with reference to current Japanese attitudes which may have genuine significance for Japan's future religious life. He says: "For their final resting place all the spirits of the war dead are believed to assemble at the Yasukini Shrine in a solemn Shinto ceremony, and hither people come on pilgrimages from all over the country. The occupation has not quite known what to do with this national phenomenon. If ashes had been interred there it could be recognized as a national cemetery, such as Arlington, and as such it could be regulated. But there is nothing there except the souls of the honored war dead, now raised to a semi-pantheon; and no American army officer cares to take the consequences of disturbing them . . . until it is effectively dealt with it will stand as a powerful force in the religious life of Japan, and possibly a center of danger in case of a return of the nationalistic mood to this defeated people."[24] "Then, too," continues Inglehart, "the personal prestige of the emperor, too, is now at an all-time high. The new policy of fraternization with his people has brought this legendary figure into actual life and proven him to be a man of ability and character. So the national center of cohesion still remains in the institution of the throne, and the throne has always been deeply identified with Shinto faith and system."[25]

But even if the official, public practice of State Shinto has been brought to an end, no directive can deal with the world of "the life cycle, the family round, the food circle, the village concerns, all orchestrated to the pitch and control of religion, and using the same shrines and same ceremonies. . . . So with all the perplexities over defeat and all the dislocations of living, the people are still turning to their ancient local deities with their age old ceremonies, praying for a meager subsistence from the land and sea, and waiting for the return of the old days, when the victors shall no longer be polluting the sacred soil of the beloved fatherland with their iron jeeps," writes Inglehart.[26]

Earliest reports indicated a considerable falling off of attendance at the shrines, but will this continue? Holtom's conclusion after an examination of the permanent values in Shinto, is that "in Shinto survives the oldest institutional life of the Japanese people—older even than the emperor system. In spite of all the changes of fortune that have come to it, Shinto lives on. . . . The Japanese people are possessed by a powerful determination to keep Shinto alive and significant. Its will to live is as strong as is the will to live on the part of the nation itself. It may change, but it will not die."[27]

Concerning Buddhism, Inglehart writes: "Buddhism suffered deeply during the war. The Buddhists of Japan have already throughout a long history made repeated accommodations to local interests, tribal wars, and national objectives. No great degree of moral strain was recorded during this last national crisis. But the inner genius of Buddhism is one of peace, and the years of silence in the area of this witness, and of unquestioning support of war, with all its inflicted cruelties and suffering, must have wrought profound damage to the Buddhist movement in

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[23] *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism,* 2nd ed., p. 197.

[24] C. W. Iglehart, "Current Religious Trends in Japan," *Journal of Bible and Religion,* Vol. 15, p. 83. Also Holtom, *op. cit.,* pp. 205-6.

[25] *Ibid.,* p. 82.

[26] *Op. cit.,* p. 83.

[27] Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism,* 2nd Ed., 1947, p. 212.

Japan."[28]

He says that most of the temples report large attendance and a turning of the people toward them for a ministry of consolation and hope.[29] But Buddhists are also active in public affairs. Several Buddhist priests have won seats in the Diet, and an organization of socialist Buddhists recently "issued a manifesto disclaiming 'superstition and priest craft' and proposing the reorganization of society upon Buddhist ethical principles." How significant a role Buddhism will play it is too soon to be able to say, but it does not appear that they are by any means an inconsequential factor in the religious life of Japan.

Undoubtedly, Christianity occupies a strategic position in Japan at the present time. Kagawa was called in as counsellor to Prince Higashikuni when he was premier. He also instructed the emperor's brother in the principles of democracy and has lectured several times before a group of fifteen princes.[30] At least three members of the cabinet in 1946 were Christians as were three prefectural governors, and, declares Brumbaugh, "Many officials who do not profess any religious affiliation nevertheless frankly espouse the spiritual and moral principles which underlie all Christian activity."[31]

It is devoutly to be hoped that the wisdom and good judgment of the Christian forces of the west may prove equal to the opportunity that is theirs in this day of rebuilding the broken structure of Japan's national life.

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[28] Charles W. Iglehart, "Current Religious Trends in Japan," *Journal of Bible and Religion,* Vol. 15, p. 83.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Christian Century,* Vol. 63, p. 1532.

[31] *Christian Century,* Nov. 27, 1946, Vol. 63, p. 435.