

## JAPANESE RELIGION OVERSEAS (1917)

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The opinion is unanimous in Japan that the nation must experience overseas development after the war. The world recognizes the military strength of Japan, but has little respect for her economic wealth. Since the outbreak of the European war, however, Japan has accumulated not a little wealth. Yet she can not escape the criticism that she is still strong in armaments and weak in wealth, as compared with the great Powers of the West. If the Germans have proved remarkably strong in the face of great odds in this war it is because of the wealth of the nation which has been proportionate to its military strength. Though the English are behind the Germans in military strength they have every confidence of victory because of their economic power. Such examples teach Japan that it is not sufficient to be strong in armaments; there must be wealth to support them. Japan's main aim after the war must be to develop her industries and resources and increase her wealth. Though this matter is engaging the mind of Japan at present there seem to be many different opinions as to how best to accomplish it. The general conviction is that commerce and industry should be expanded at all costs; but

there are other ways of strengthening and enriching a nation besides these. The extension of commerce and industry alone cannot make a nation rich and strong. There must be an extension and deepening of religion as well.

At present the Government authorities and people of Japan are quite indifferent to religion as a factor or necessity of national force. They do not regard religion as having anything to do with a nation's wealth and strength, and so it is invariably left out of consideration. But in my opinion, based on long study and the teaching of history, religion is the best fore-runner of national expansion and development overseas, as well as at home. Religion has always paved the way for extension of western nations overseas, and why should it not do the same for Japan? In Africa, India, China and the Islands of the South Pacific Christianity always preceded the flag and opened a way for the development of the nations preaching the new religion. We have imitated the occidentals in other ways; why not in this way? While Christianity is losing force in the home lands of its propagandists, it is gaining force and influence in the countries overseas. It looks as if it were the policy of western countries to take away from the forces of Christianity at home and apply the extra force to lands abroad to make way for the greater influence of the countries represented and this is especially true in the Orient.

Recently I made an extensive tour of China; and I saw how the English and American Christians were working hand in hand to win the Chinese to Christianity. These missions seemed to take on new strength after the outbreak of the war and to labour more than ever to extend their religion throughout the district at great outlay and trouble. These Christians are even building colleges with big dormitories, capable, it is said, of accommodating as many as 1,000 students. The building at Tsinan is reputed to cost about a million yen. Imagine what an influence so conspicuous a building will have on China! All this expense is borne from home. The fact that countries engaged in the biggest of all wars can still afford to give so much money for mission work in the orient is something that should give us orientals food for thought. It is clear that western nations, having a keen interest in China, consider it of great importance to tame the Chinese mind with western religion in order to further their national interests and fortunes in that country. And so as the first step in this direction they send out teachers and build schools at immense expense to carry on their religious propaganda.

The same thing is going on in the province of Shantung, where the missionaries are adding hospitals and medical school to their usual method of religious propaganda so as to get hold of the Chinese, influence their minds and so effect the national development of western countries in China. Now all this money spent by western nations in the erection of big schools and hospitals in China show how important western

countries think religion is in extending their power in foreign lands. No matter what foreign land you go to these Christian missions will be found; and always they afford facilities for the extension of their national interests in these lands. This is also true of even the uncivilized lands of the earth. No one cares to venture into an uncivilized land for purpose of trade or speculation. But the missionaries go first and prepare the way by accustoming the savage peoples to foreigners and making it easy for the merchant and the promoter to follow them. These pioneers acquire the language and customs of the unknown land and can thus render great aid to their countrymen in gaining influence over the country.

I was more especially convinced of the above facts during a trip I took in the Southern Hemisphere some years ago. It was not long in coming to the conclusion that America is no longer the new world. To America the western hemisphere is the old world, and now America's new world is the South. Hence forth the two main divisions of the world should be north of the equator and south of it. Until a few years ago but little was known of regions south of the equator. Although North and South America were discovered about the same time very little interest was taken in South America until 30 or 40 years ago. But the nations, having discovered the immense wealth and resources of that region, have now begun to concentrate their minds on it. Similarly Australia is a new country awaiting settlement and development. The same is true of Africa. There is no doubt that the Southern Hemisphere is the new world of to day. When one visits this new world he will not find the towns and cities and settled places that are found in the old world. But to his astonishment he will find churches, some of which are as big as in Europe. These fine and imposing structures influence the mind of the natives and prepare them for submission to the countries that built them. Thus it is clear that no foreign people can be made truly submissive by the power of the sword and the law, but religion and benevolence.

In Japan the father of the family has been regarded as the incarnation of stern discipline and the mother the representative of tenderness for many generations. The strictness of paternal discipline is said to be like the fierce summer heat and the compassion of the mother like the soft winter sunshine; and so the children are properly brought up by being subject to these two influence. The same principles apply in nature. The sun with his great heat makes things grow but not without the fertilizing rain and dew; these two factors working together make growth possible. Just as neither the strictness of the father nor the tenderness of the mother alone can bring up a child properly, so the the sun alone or the rain alone would not succeed in causing development in nature. And the same principle is true of civilization and government. Military

power and government alone cannot produce a great people; there must be religion as well. If government is the father of civilization, religion is the mother thereof. Politics and laws are like the severe summer sun: necessary, but of themselves insufficient to produce a great people; they must be modified and helped by the tenderness, and compassion of religion, which is to the soul of man as the rain and the dew to the earth.

Hitherto Japan has made the mistake of depending altogether on her military power to subdue the natives of the her territories, and has neglected to make use of the potency of religion. It is a matter that requires the most serious consideration of the Authorities. No doubt some think that Japan has no such a religion as could thus influence foreign races to accept Japan's rule. I believe that we have a religion with this power. Both Shinto and Buddhism are powerful influences in the life of the nation. There is Christianity also, but it is out of the question, as it is being propagated in Japan. Shinto is a mighty factor in maintaining the nationalism of Japan, as it is based on our mythology, though much inconvenience will no doubt be experienced in propagating it as a religion among foreigners. Then arises the question whether Buddhism can meet the need. There are those who think that Buddhism has lost its effectiveness in Japan and that now it amounts to no more than a mere ceremonial for funerals and weddings and so on. I am free to admit that as a religion Buddhism displays little life and enthusiasm at present, nor am I unaware of its degeneration in some ways. Yet I believe that it could be used for the purposes above suggested. It is the only religion in Japan that is likely to prove a world religion and have a wide appeal. Its present inactivity is due to the neglect of it by the Government since the beginning of the Meiji period. Indeed much of the property of the Buddhist temples has been confiscated by the Government. Still, Buddhism has been able to manage to exist up to the present, which shows that it has some power to maintain its existence. When the Government recognizes the urgent necessity of using religion in its over sea expansion and is ready to use Buddhism in that way the religion will undoubtedly show renewed activity amid life. Men of wisdom and virtue will be found among the priests ready to organize great missions for overseas propaganda under the support of influential persons and temples can be erected at strategic points abroad.

No one doubts that it is the duty of Japan to develop her national power abroad, and that trade is the first step in that direction but the first step should be a campaign of religious propaganda as the best preparation for national advance. It is my conviction that our people should give every attention to the propagation of Buddhism in foreign lands to prepare the way for our national influence and as the first step for the empire's future enrichment.

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*Editor's Note:* The article reproduced above appeared December 1917 in *The Japan Magazine: A Representative Monthly of Things Japanese* (vol. 8, pp. 471–73). The author is referred to as "Enryo Inouye, D. Litt. (Ex-President of the Oriental University)." No translator is indicated. The text is a revised version of a Japanese language essay which was published by Enryō two months earlier in the magazine 『雄辯』 [Rhetoric] with the title 「海外発展の途」 [The course of overseas development] (October 1917, vol. 10, pp. 13–21). Comparing the English with the Japanese text, paragraphs one to four are freely translated with only a few summarized or shortened sentences. In the fifth paragraph, a couple of sentences that address how Christian churches served Western settlers are missing in the English translation. From paragraph six onward (seven in the English translation), the article was revised and abridged considerably for the English publication. The Japanese text is more severe in its criticism of the decadence of the Buddhist clergy. Enryō also puts more emphasis on the necessity of reforming Buddhism as well as on the indispensable role of the government to the same end. He proposes to establish an Imperial Overseas Missionary Society of Japan 日本帝国海外宣教会 and goes into detail about methods of fund raising. In the last paragraph, the Japanese as well as the English article close with a final appeal. In this case, however, the English version is not an adaption of the Japanese article, but appears to be a new text. All in all, the significance of the changes suggest that they were not made by a translator. The revisions made for the English publication are substantial to a degree that they were most likely done by the author himself. Although the English article was surely edited by a native speaker, Enryō had the necessary English language skills to translate and revise the text himself. He received English language training from the age of sixteen until graduating from Tokyo University at the age of twenty-seven and he took three world trips amounting to two and half years of overseas travel. The article reprinted here is the only English language publication of Inoue Enryō known so far.

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