

Japan's Religious Ferment

By Raymond Hammer (Christian Presence Series)
London: SCM Press Ltd., 1962, pp. 207

Japan's Religious Ferment is an excellent introduction to Japanese religions. Its main limitation is its brevity. Since less than one hundred fifty pages of this handy-size volume are devoted to the text, the discussion of each phase of the subject is necessarily very brief,— too brief in view of the author's knowledge of the field, but eminently satisfactory in view of the audience for which the book was written. Dr. Raymond Hammer, a

priest of the Church of England, has been a missionary in Japan of the Church Missionary Society, for the past decade. Moreover, he is also a careful scholar who seeks to understand not only the academic side of the religions about which he writes, but also the spirit of the leaders and adherents.

The reader of the volume is made aware at the outset that *Japan's Religious Fermit* is written for Christians, — probably for study

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groups composed of young people in the Church of England. The sub-title on the cover is: "Christian Presence Amid Faiths New and Old." Dr. Max Warren in the General Introduction makes it clear that this is a book for Christians and that it is concerned with the fundamental question of Christian attitudes to Japan's traditional and modern faiths. Readers, then, who are negatively predisposed towards a book of this nature should not buy it or read it. It is not intended for them. If, however, they do read it, they will discover how a Christian scholar, who is also a minister, can approach his subject with scholarly detachment, on the one hand, and sympathetic concern, on the other. Dr. Hammer seems to understand what the adherents find in the several faiths and he helps the reader to do the same.

Beginning with an introductory chapter entitled "The Ethos of the laboratory: fundamental attitudes," the author discusses in succeeding chapters Shinto as "The Basic Element" (Chap. II), Buddhism as "The Strong Intruder" (Chap III), and the coalescence of Buddhism

and Shinto in "The Transitional Compound" (Chap. IV). In Chapter V the Tokugawa era and Confucianism are treated under "Some Patterns of Behavior: a study in Japanese society and social relationships," and in Chapter VI, A Mingling and a Co-mingling: Japanese and Western culture," the reader is brought up to the Meiji era. Chapter VIII discusses Christianity, which is called the "Non-mixer," Chapter IX presents "The Aftermath of War: the reaction of Shinto and Buddhism," and Chapter X "The New Religions." Finally in Chapter XI, "The Philosopher's Stone," the author gives his own philosophy regarding the Christian and non-Christian faiths. At the end of the volume Appendix I gives statistical data as of 1957, Appendix II gives information on "Religion-State Relations," a brief religious chronology from 552 to 1959, a word list, and some valuable references; and it concludes with a carefully prepared index.

In spite of its limitation in size, *Japan's Religious Ferment* is the best introductory volume available on the total religious situation in

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Japan. It is scholarly and, except with five thousand members and for a few very minor errors, it is fifty established churches. Although reliable. As an example of the rare the Law did give Christianity official errors, the figure 500,000 (p. 96) is recognition along with Buddhism and Shinto, it did not recognize any too large for the number of Christians in the early 17th century; Catholic scholarship is agreed that religious bodies, and in implementing the Law the Ministry of Education declined to recognize more than the Catholic Church and the "The Religious Bodies Law . . . United Church of Christ in Japan. gave official recognition to all groups

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