

would be pressed tightly on my neck, and at another time as the downcast barber swayed to and fro they would not be touching it. He took a solid grip on my hair to prevent himself from falling.

Finally the ordeal was over and I breathed freely again. I attempted to get up but he shoved me back and said I needed to get my neck shaved. A few wild strokes of the brush covered me with lather. He carefully picked up the razor and in two swishes he announced that the operation was over. I had a wish to ask him for a glass of water to see if my neck leaked.

The barber washed the soap off my face and neck. He then politely asked me if I preferred to have my hair combed wet or dry. To my request that he comb it dry, he replied by placidly pouring a generous quantity of brillantine on it. As I began to get up he said: "Just a minute friend, I forgot a couple of hairs." He picked up the clippers and snipped at them. When this was finished he seemed to have forgotten that he had shaved me for I had to go through the agony of it once again. Again he asked "Wet or dry?" "Dry," I replied. And promptly he poured on still more brillantine and followed through with a brisk head-rub. When he combed my hair he told me to wait a minute. He went into a small room—perhaps for more Bay Rum—and I made a quick exit.

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## CHINA AND MODERN SCIENCE

Ronald J. MacDonald, '41

China invented the printing press, gun powder, and probably the mariner's compass. For centuries the culture of this so-called backward nation was equal, and, in some respects, superior to that of western nations. She was envied for her political organizations, literature, art, flood control, and soil conservation. Until two centuries ago her system of public sanitation was equal to that of Great Britain. Why, then, did not China instead of Europe give birth to modern science?

One reason why China did not give birth to modern science was her civil service examination system. For about two thousand years before the decline of the last imperial dynasty, the emperors, who were regarded as the vice-regents of heaven as well as the rulers of men, instilled



into the minds of their subjects the idea that the classics were ultimately authoritative. The civil service examinations thus became the road to officialdom in the imperial capital and in the provinces, and indeed, to any form of social prestige. Thus one may easily realize why capable men were content to study Confucian Classics to the exclusion of other studies. There was no occasion for the investigation of natural phenomena for its own sake.

The scientific awakening in Europe began as one aspect of a general awakening from the unexperimental way of thinking of the Middle Ages. It did not seek to fathom the attributes of God and the human soul or the divine purpose of creation. It aimed at searching out by careful observation the manner of operation of things: for example, the rate of acceleration of a ball rolling down an inclined plane.

This increased interest in knowledge of observed facts, however, was not the whole secret of the scientific awakening. It stressed also the fact that nature is orderly, and that without this conviction natural science is impossible. We should not underestimate the number of items of information acquired by the ancient Chinese. They were able to foretell eclipses and measure the length of a year, and they knew the value of medicinal herbs and many other important items of information. But the natural knowledge of the Chinese never developed into an organized whole, where one discovery would point to others beyond itself and so permit a far-sighted, effective control of nature.

The scientists of the western world had inherited the conviction of the orderliness of nature from their forefathers. Every event happened according to some law of nature. The puzzle was to find which laws; and this could be done by watching. When the laws were unravelled there was no end to the predictions which could be made, to the information about the past, and to many other things hitherto unknown.

The Chinese might have given birth to science if they had been familiar with the exact orderliness of the world. But unfortunately, they were not, and, as a result, their observations and experiments led nowhere. Another reason, perhaps, for China's not giving birth to science is that the Chinese scholar was an ultra-practical and very dignified man. He would have been ashamed to roll balls



down an inclined plane merely to measure their acceleration, as did Galileo. He would think that a mature man would be better concerned with the serious problems of state, moral training, and history.

One would think that this practical tendency would be good soil for the development of science in China. But many of the great discoveries of scientists have been the fruit of "art for art's sake," as is Roentgen's discovery of the X-Ray.

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### COMMENDATION

The following are to be commended on the good quality of the material they submitted for this section:

The Nation's Bread and Butter (essay)—Jack Coyle.

How do you Laugh ? (essay)—G. Harold Hennessey.

Brother Can You Spare a Dime ? (short story)—Gerard Connolley.

To a Cow (poem)—Kenneth Mooney.

Cape Breton Island (essay)—Peter Proncho.

The Looking Glass (essay)—Ray MacKinnon.



"Whether one be as inactive as the Hermits, or as active as the Doctors and Apostles, action triumphs over time only in so far as it descends from contemplation, which unites the spirit to eternity."—*Jacques Maritain*.

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"Perfect schools are the result not so much of good methods as of good teachers."—*Christian Education of Youth*.

