

*"Slowly the Bible of the race is writ:
Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it."*

THE PITH and MARROW *of some* SACRED WRITINGS

THE RELIGIONS OF CHINA

BY THE
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FOREWORD



IT will be seen from the following pages that scholars do not pretend to say anything about the aborigines of China who were conquered by tribes that are supposed to have entered China from the north or west at a very remote period. It will, therefore, be of interest to those who have not read H. P. Blavatsky's works to know what Theosophy has to say of the Chinese. In one of the first Theosophical handbooks, one of H. P. Blavatsky's Teachers says, speaking of the great age of Humanity:

What would you say, then, to our affirmation that the Chinese, —I now speak of the inland, the true Chinaman, and not the hybrid mixture between the Fourth and Fifth Races now occupying the throne—the aborigines who belong in their unallied nationality wholly to the highest and last branch of the Fourth Race, reached their highest civilization when the Fifth had hardly appeared in Asia.

Again the same Teacher says :

I told you before that the highest people now on Earth (spiritually) belong to the first sub-race of the Fifth Root Race, and those are the Aryan Asiatics; the highest race (physical intellectuality) is the last sub-race of the Fifth—yourselves, the white conquerors. The majority of mankind belongs to the seventh sub-race of the Fourth Root Race—the above-mentioned Chinamen and their offshoots and branchlets, Malayans, Mongolians, Tibetans, Javanese, etc., etc.—with remnants of other sub-races of the Fourth, and the seventh sub-race of the Third Race.

In *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. ii, there is added after Tibetans these words, “ Hungarians, Finns, and even the Esquimaux are all remnants of this last offshoot.” In a note upon the first quotation H. P. Blavatsky says :*

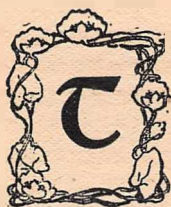
And this handful of the inland Chinese are all of a very high stature. Could the most ancient MSS. in the Lolo language (that of the aborigines of China) be got at and correctly translated, many a priceless piece of evidence would be found. But they are as rare as their language is unintelligible. So far, one or two European Archaeologists only have been able to procure such priceless works.

By the light of the ancient Wisdom-Religion, so far as it has been made known to us, one may understand many strange things in Chinese legend and teaching.

* *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II.

The symbol of the dragon; the references to the sacred island; the stories of men who had attained immortality; and other things: even the very great age which the Chinese claim, will demand our serious attention when we learn that they are the descendents of a race much older than ours, and that, therefore, it is quite probable that they have preserved some fragments of knowledge pertaining to a civilization which passed its zenith ages ago. The Chinese, while they have many things to learn from the West, may, in return, be able to repay us in ways we do not at present dream. Of one thing we may be sure, that in the great economy of Nature the various parts are mutually helpful, and the earlier and later races should co-operate as living parts of a living and progressive whole.

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THE Chinese Empire contains about one fourth of the human race, and for this reason alone the student of Comparative Religion must feel a deep interest in the religious beliefs of this vast Empire. But there are other reasons besides the vast number of its population why China possesses for us a special interest. Not long ago it was the fashion to speak of the "break-up of China," but a change has taken place, and China seems to be entering upon a new life. Some have even gone so far as to imagine that this nation, after having been peaceful for so many centuries, is likely to become a source of danger to Western nations. The vast numbers of the Chinese, and their many excellent qualities, such as

patience, endurance, frugality, make the awakening of China like the awakening of a sleeping giant.

In many respects China is unlike the rest of the world. Mr. Wingrove Cook speaks of it as the land

where the roses have no fragrance, and the women no petticoats ; where the laborer has no Sabbath, and the magistrate no sense of honor ; where the needle points to the south, and the sign of being puzzled is to scratch the antipodes of the head ; where the place of honor is the left hand, and the seat of intellect is in the stomach ; where to take off your hat is an insolent gesture and to wear white garments is to put yourself into mourning.

James Freeman Clarke says he heard a bad dinner thus described :

The meat was cold, the wine was hot, and everything was sour but the vinegar,

and adds :

that this would not so much displease the Chinese who carefully warm their wine, . . . and, though a Chinaman will not drink a drop of milk he will devour birds' nests, snails, and the fins of sharks with great relish.

But it is not only in such things as these that we find a sharp contrast between the Chinese and Western peoples. Most of us have been taught to believe

in the innate depravity of the human heart, but the Chinese have been taught to believe that man's nature is essentially good. The Western nations have been unable to get along without priests, but the Chinese have had no priests for more than two thousand years, if we leave out of account the imported religion of Buddhism, and also the fact that the Emperor acts on several important occasions as priest for the whole Nation. It is the custom in the West to exalt one's own religion by making little of other faiths, but not so in China. An old resident in China once told the writer that when he went to China the proper etiquette when strangers met was to say, "To what exalted religion do you belong?" and when the other had returned the compliment then each proceeded to praise the good points of the *other's* religion. Westernism may have changed all that, but this was the custom not so very long ago.

China has been known by various names, such as Sin, Chin, Sinae, Seres, Cathay, or Khitai; the latter is the name used in Russia and Central Asia. Sin was the name used among the Arabs, and the word Sinim used in *Isaiah* may be but another form of the same

ancient term. The name Cathay came into use in Europe during the Middle Ages. In Tennyson we find the lines,

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day :
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Ancient China

In a study of the Chinese religions it may be helpful to take a brief glance at the Chinese themselves, and their ancient history. From the specialists who have made a study of China, such as Sir Robert K. Douglas of the British Museum, Dr. Edkins, Professor Legge, Max von Brandt and others, we learn that the people known as the Chinese must have entered Northern China after long wanderings from the West or North-West. They found a native population which they gradually overcame. The new-comers seem to have already made some advance in astronomy, and in other branches of science. The earliest Chinese characters are *said* to be derived from the cuneiform writing. This, taken along with certain other facts, has led to the belief that the early

Chinese and the "Akkadians" must have been closely related.

How long ago this migration took place no one pretends to say. It must have been more than 2356 B.C., the time when the Chinese Book of History, the *Shu-King*, as edited by Confucius, begins. The new arrivals gradually drove the natives to the mountains. These natives are spoken of as black-haired, and as barbarians whose imperfect weapons, and lack of cohesion made them a prey to the invaders. But this is about all we are told concerning them. Who they were, and how long they had been in the country it is impossible to say. It would be very interesting to know what sort of life they led; what religious beliefs they had, and how much they influenced the language, religion, and life of the people we call the Chinese.

The accounts we have of China may be divided into the mythical, the legendary, and the historical. The mythical is said to cover about 2,267,000 years, or 3,276,000, according to a later writer. The first being was Pan ku, who sprang from Chaos as the embryo of an all-productive Cosmic egg. His de-

scendents in three families, were the rulers of Heaven, Earth, and Man. This period known as the Nine Rulers or Nine "Heads," was the first of ten such periods. The second was the period of the Five Dragons. These Dragons were known by names corresponding to the five notes of the Chinese musical scale, and also to the planets Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, the Moon, and Saturn.

After the mythical age is the legendary, dating from the time of Fu-hi. He is said to have taught the arts of hunting, fishing, and pasturage. He established marriage, and constructed musical instruments. His successors were Shen-nung the teacher of agriculture, and Huang-ti. These three were said to have been miraculously conceived. Taoist writers represent Huang-ti as a miraculous individual who succeeded in gaining immortality.

With the year 2356 B. C. we begin to find something like history proper. It is with this date that the *Shu-King*, or *Book of History*, commences. This work was edited by Confucius, who says: "Anciently there was an Emperor Yao, all-informed, intelligent, accomplished and thoughtful." He made the virtuous

rulers; encouraged learning; and appointed astronomers. He adopted the calendar which is still used in China. Yao is said to have accomplished the very important task of creating harmony and unity among the different States of the country; and especially between the new-comers and the black-haired original inhabitants of China. This wise King did not choose his own son as his successor, but selected Shun who had been, for some years "associated with him in the sovereignty." Shun is said to have been "profound, wise, accomplished, and intelligent." He perfected the astronomical calculations, and

sacrificed specially, but with the ordinary forms, to God (Shang-Ti); sacrificed purely to the six objects of Honor;* offered their appropriate sacrifices to the hills and rivers, and extended his worship to the host of spirits.†

This is said to be the first account of an act of worship which we find in Chinese writings; and it plainly indicates that it was no new thing, but in accordance with the "ordinary forms." During the reign of this monarch "the Empire was divided into 12 provinces, and ministers of agriculture, crime,

* Or, the "Six honored Ones."

† *Shu-King II*, 1, 6.

works, forests, religious worship, and music were appointed."

It may be here noted that nine was the perfect number in China, hence we find in the *Shu-King* that the nine virtues enumerated in the time of the Emperor Shun are :

Affability combined with dignity; mildness combined with firmness; bluntness combined with respectfulness; aptness for government combined with reverence; docility combined with boldness; straightforwardness combined with gentleness; easiness combined with discrimination; vigor combined with sincerity; valor combined with righteousness.

It was during the time of Shun that the country suffered from a great inundation, and it took eighteen years to drain off the waters by the Great Yu.

The times of Yao and Shun were referred to by Confucius as the golden age of China. This golden age did not last. After many years of gradual decay, evil and vice of every form reached a climax in the reign of the tyrant K'ee Wang, "injurer of men and destroyer of many." This was about 1818 B. C. At the instigation of T'ang the people rose against the Emperor K'ee, whose army was routed and himself

made a prisoner. It is one of the strange things which we find existing from time immemorial in China, the belief that the Emperor is the vicegerent of heaven, and yet the sacred right of insurrection against him, should he violate the duties of his high position. "Heaven has commanded me to destroy him," said King T'ang, as recorded in the *Shu-King*. After the accession of T'ang all went well for a time; but by degrees his successors degenerated more and more, until in 1401 B. C. P'an-K'ang ascended the throne, and restored the prosperity of the country. This prosperity was short lived, and during the next and following centuries the evils increased very much, till a culmination was reached in the reign of Show (1154-1122 B. C.). As in the case of the evil K'ee whom T'ang deposed, so now a reformer arose in the person of the King of Chow. In his address to the people to rise and depose the evil ruler, King Chow, among other things, said of Emperor Show:

He has burnt and roasted the loyal and the good . . . not serving Shang-ti, or the Spirits of Heaven and Earth, neglecting also the temple of his ancestors, and not sacrificing in it. . . . I have received charge from my deceased father Wan; I have offered

special sacrifice to God ; I have performed the due service to the great Earth, and I lead the multitude of you to execute the punishment appointed by Heaven.

The account here given not only affords us a view of the political changes of those times, it also helps us to get some insight of the elements of the religious life then prevailing. This dynasty of the State of Chow is worthy of special notice because it lasted until the time of Confucius. According to Sir Robert Douglas it was during the reign of the king of Chow, above mentioned, whose name was Wu Wang, that "we have the first recorded instance of the worship of ancestors." But ancestral worship in some form must have been much older than this, for one of the accusations made against the former king (Shou) was, "neglecting the temple of his ancestors, and not sacrificing in it."

After King Wu Wang died, his brother the Duke of Chow became king, and addressed the people in words that remind us of the brief sketches of history attributed to Moses, or some of the old leaders of the Hebrews:

I have heard the saying, Shang-ti leads man to tranquil security ;

but the sovereign of Hea would not move to such security, there-upon God sent down correction, indicating his mind to him. Kee, however, would not be warned by God, but proceeded to greater dissoluteness, and sloth, and excuses for himself. Then Heaven no longer heard him or regarded him, but disallowed his great appointment.

The account continues as one might read in the *Book of Kings*:

He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord . . . and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

This ancient speech of the Duke of Chow has the same strong moral ring about it in which we find the Hebrew writer. The supreme government of the world is a moral government. Evil doers will not go unpunished though they join hand in hand. According to the ancient Chinese teaching a king's rule could be established only in righteousness. When the ruler ceased to walk in the paths of justice and righteousness he thereby, *ipso facto*, ceased to be king. This was in China more than a thousand years B. C.

To Confucius this Duke of Chow was an ideal ruler; and the sage paid the greatest reverence to his memory. The happy condition did not last, however; and one ruler after another rose and departed

leaving the country more and more wretched. Such was the course of events that preceded the time of Confucius and of Lao-tsze. For more than two thousand years the course had been downward, with, now and then, a short-lived movement towards reform. Lao-tsze and Confucius, therefore, came during evil times, and the wail of the celebrated monk of Cluny

The world is very evil,
The times are waxing late;
Be sober and keep vigil;
The Judge is at the gate,

might be an echo of the laments of Confucius and Lao-tsze five hundred years B. C. Nor were the efforts of these Chinese reformers crowned with success during the century in which they lived. "Despised and rejected of men," might have been their epitaph, as it has been of so many reformers since then. Their lives seemed to be a failure. Lao-tsze retired in disgust, and Confucius died almost in despair—so it is said. The evils continued, the worthless or the bad triumphed. It is one of the lessons which history has to teach us, but which men are slow to learn, that when causes have been in

motion for a time they cannot be stopped suddenly. The seed of Truth and Reformation must be in the earth for sometime before it springs up. As someone has said :

We are but hasty builders, incomplete ; Our Master follows after, far more slow and far more sure than we.

The writer of the book of *Hebrews* voices a great truth when he says :

All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, etc.

Yet, for the last two thousand years and more, Confucius has been a guiding light to nearly one fourth of the human race.

Early Traces of Religious Thought in China

Before entering upon an examination of the teachings of Lao-tsze and Confucius it may be well to note a few things about the religious ideas, or customs which existed before their time in China. Confucius himself claims to be only a "transmitter." His words as given in the Confucian *Analects* (vii, i, 19)

are that he was "a transmitter, and not a maker, *believing in and loving the ancients.*"

The moral and religious teaching which existed before the time of Confucius, and of which he claimed to be a transmitter, cannot now be known very fully and clearly, except from what we learn through Confucius himself; and perhaps, we should also add, Lao-tsze. For, though Lao-tsze was in some respect the antithesis of Confucius, and on one occasion, it is said, reproved him for his slavish following of men who had long been in their graves, yet, it is almost certain by the analogies of history, that the teaching of Lao-tsze had the same considerable basis in the ancient religion, and was not a new creation of his own.

The written characters of the Chinese language form a series of hieroglyphs; and it is quite possible that some of the ideas contained in these complex characters may have been lost in the course of ages. Dr. Legge believes that by applying to the Chinese language the same method of research applied to the Aryan languages by Max Müller and others, we may reach a long way into the past and discover some of

the primitive religious conceptions of the early inhabitants of China. The word for Heaven, which is *t'ien*, is taken for an illustration. It is composed of two characters: 大 *tā*, meaning great, and 一 *yī* meaning one, or unity, placed over it 天. It gives the ideas of unity and "greatness," rather than "brightness," which the Aryan *dyu* (God) has been supposed to represent. The word *t'ien* is often used for the Supreme, just as we are in the habit of using "Heaven." But there is a special character, 帝 *ti*, used for God. This is a very complex character, and Chinese scholars, both European and Oriental, cannot tell us for certain what it signifies fully. A Chinese writer says it is the "honorable designation of lordship and government." Perhaps the day will come when an expounder will arise who will be both a Chinese scholar and a student of the Wisdom-Religion; to such an one the ancient symbols of the Chinese language may reveal or confirm, many occult teachings. Looking at the Symbol for 天 it is not difficult to imagine that it may have indicated, to those who knew, not only the septenary nature of man and of

the universe, but the higher Three, and the union of the lower principles with the higher. At any rate, seeing the character for *t'ien*, however, is so simple, and the character for *Ti* so complex, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the complex form had a correspondingly complex signification. The word *Shang* is often used along with *Ti*. *Shang* means supreme. In the oldest books of the Chinese the three words seem to be used indiscriminately for the Supreme, *t'ien*, *Ti*, or *Shang-Ti*. Dr. Legge says that:

Since its earliest formation, *Ti* has properly been the personal name of Heaven. *T'ien* has had much of the force of the name Jahve, as explained by God Himself to Moses; *Ti* has presented that Absolute Deity in the relation to men of their lord and governor.

At a very early period the Chinese believed not only in Deity, but also in Spirits of several kinds. Heavenly spirits were called *Shan*. Spirits of the Earth were called *Ch'i*; while the spirits of departed men were called *Kwei*. No satisfactory explanation has been given of the elements in the Chinese characters for these different words. Pronounced *Shih*

(*Cb'i*) the upper part of the character is the same as that for God (*Ti*), but the lower part of it is said by Hsü Shan to represent "the sun, moon, and stars." It is worthy of note that in the character for the *manes*, or spirits of departed men, the three symbols forming the character stand for a ghost's head, a man's legs, and maliciousness. It has been thought by some that the religion of ancient China was a star worship; and by others that it was animism. Professor Teile of Leiden says:

The religion of the old Chinese Empire, as it existed certainly from the twelfth century B. C., and probably at a much earlier period, is best described as a purified and organized worship of spirits, with a predominant fetishist tendency, combined into a system before it was possible for a regular mythology to develop out of it. The sole objects of worship are the spirits (*Shan*), which are divided into heavenly, earthly, and human, and, as a rule, are still closely connected with objects of nature.*

Dr. Legge has shown that this is not correct, for *Ti* was the supreme object of worship from the earliest times. Furthermore, all powers of nature, whether spirits of heaven (*Shan*) or spirits of earth (*Cb'i*) were but servants of *Ti*. This may be seen

* *Outlines of the History of Religion.*

from the ancient prayer to the Cloud-Master, and lords of the Wind, the Rain, and the Thunder.

It is your office, O Spirits, to superintend the clouds and the rain, and to raise and send abroad the wind, as ministers assisting *Shang-ti*.

Dr. Legge says that Professor Teile may have had in his mind the "spirit tablet" which is still such a prominent feature in Chinese worship. But this tablet is regarded as being the habitation, or "lodging-place of the Spirit," *only during the time the worship lasts*. And at other times it is not an idol, nor is it looked upon as more sacred than any other object. He thinks this strange notion tended to prevent idolatry in China, as the religion of that country has existed since the time of Confucius. Another strange thing developed at an early date and still persists, *viz.*, the worship of Deity (*Ti*) and of the great spirits by the Emperor, and the worship of Ancestors by the mass of the people. In the most ancient times there is no evidence that this was so, but in the course of ages the Supreme Worship became an act of the Emperor on behalf of the nation; while, for the

people generally, nothing was left but ancestor worship ; which, as is well known, has been a very widespread form of religion. Not only did the Emperor assume the position of supreme or only priest, worshipping *Ti* or *Shang-ti* for the whole nation, but he took on his shoulders all praise for good events, and all blame for evil things that happened to the Empire.

In the *Shu-King*, about 1766 a. c., the Emperor T'ang says :

When guilt is found anywhere in you who occupy the myriad regions, let it rest on me the One man. When guilt is found in me the One man, it shall not attach to you who occupy the myriad regions.

In the reign of this Emperor there was a great famine, and when a human victim was spoken of as a sacrifice to be offered up, the Emperor said : "If a man must be the victim, I will be he." He prepared himself as a victim, and prayed to know what he had done wrong to cause the great drought ; whereupon it began to rain, and the drought came to an end. Dr. Legge does not agree with Dr. Edkins in calling this action of the Emperor that of a high priest ; he

prefers to look upon it rather as the act of the head of the family. But when the Emperor as head of the family or nation, assumes the sacred function of worshipping Deity for the whole people, the action is what we commonly regard as a priestly one. With this exception the standard religion of China does not know, and never has known a priesthood. Of course, in the later Taoism, and in Buddhism, China has become acquainted with a priesthood, to a limited extent; but it is said that few persons of culture in China will *confess* to be either Taoists or Buddhists; they profess Confucianism, which abjures both idolatry and a priesthood.

There are many other points about the ancient religion of China, which space does not permit to mention, such as the worship of heaven at the round altar, at the winter solstice, and the worship of the earth at the square altar, on midsummer day. This, which was the worship at the beginning of the Ch'ao dynasty (a. c. 1122) is still the practice in China. For those who wish to study more fully this part of the subject, Dr. Legge's *Religions of China*, and *Religion in China* by Dr. Edkins may be consulted.

Confucius and His Teaching

Confucius (K'ung-fu-tsze) was born in the state of Lu in the year 551 B. C. His father Shuh-leang-Heih was a military officer of great stature, strength and skill. His mother's name was Yen Ching-tsai. The birth of Confucius took place when his father was over seventy years of age. At the early age of three years the future sage was left an orphan, and mother and child had to struggle with poverty. Very soon the boy gave promise of what the tenor of his life was to be when he grew up, by playing at ceremonies.

At the age of fifteen "he bent his mind to learning." At the age of nineteen he married. A year after his only son, named Li, was born. According to Sir R. Douglas, Confucius divorced his wife; but Dr. Legge says this is based on an incorrect understanding of the book called the *Record of Rites*. Confucius being poor was obliged to accept the office of keeper of the stores of grain, either to the State, or one of the Ministers. Shortly after he was promoted

to be guardian of public lands. At the age of twenty-two Confucius gave up the cares of office and began to teach. He would not have anything to do with the dull or stupid. He said :

When I have presented one corner of the subject, and the listener cannot learn from it the other three, I do not repeat the lesson.

He never refused a pupil on account of poverty. At twenty-eight he studied archery ; at twenty-nine, music under the celebrated teacher Seang. At the age of thirty, he says "he stood firm." Gradually it became known that a man of more than ordinary ability had arisen in the State, and before long he had several thousand pupils. It is supposed these disciples did not gather round Confucius but followed their ordinary avocations, coming to the Sage when there was need. About this time Confucius visited the Capital to study certain matters of ritual, and also to confer with Lao-tsze. Little is said by Confucian writers about the interviews which took place between these two great men, but Taoist writers say that Confucius was very roughly handled by Lao-tsze. The two men were a perfect contrast. From the

accounts handed down it appears that Confucius made a great point of externals, ritual, and the like. Sir Robert Douglas says :

It is only natural that Lao-tsze, who preached that stillness and self-emptiness were the highest attainable objects, should be ready to assail a man whose whole being was wrapt up in ceremonial and conscious well-doing. The very measured tones and considered movements of Confucius with a certain admixture of pride that apes humility, must have been very irritating to the metaphysically-minded treasurer, [or keeper of the archives, Lao-tsze].

At another meeting long after this, when Confucius was about fifty-one, he poured out his sorrows to the old philosopher, telling him of his zeal for reform, and how all had ended in failure. Then, according to Chuang-tsze, Lao-tsze replied :

If it be known that he who talks errs by excess in arguing, and that he who hears is confused by too much talk, the Way can never be forgotten.

Again, when Confucius had been speaking of the greatness of the ancients, Lao-tsze replied :

The men of whom you speak, Sir, have with their bones already mouldered into dust, and only their words remain . . . Put away, Sir, your haughty airs and many desires, your flashy manner, and extravagant will; these are all unprofitable to you. This is all I have to say to you.

To the credit of Confucius it must be said that he bore with great meekness all such reproofs ; and said to his disciples :

I know how birds can fly, how fishes can swim, and how beasts can run. The runner, however, may be snared, the swimmer may be hooked, and the flyer may be shot with an arrow. But there is the dragon ; I cannot tell how he mounts on the wind through the clouds, and rises to heaven. Today I have seen Lao-tsze, and can only compare him to the dragon.

Shortly after this it is recorded of Confucius that he went to the State of T'se, attracted probably by his love of music ; for he had heard that the "music of the Emperor Shun was still preserved at court." The Duke of T'se sent for the Sage and offered him as a present the city of Lin-k'ew with its revenues. Confucius would not accept the gift, and explained his reason to his disciples :

A superior man will not receive rewards except for services done. I have given advice to the Duke King, but he has not followed it as yet, and now he would endow me with this place. Very far is he from understanding me.

These remarkable words give us a high opinion of the man. In his early years he taught that

A Sage will not enter a tottering state nor dwell in a disorgan-

ized one. When right principles of government prevail he shows himself, but when they are prostrated he remains concealed ;

yet in his later years he was fain to enter a declining state more than once. Confucius failed to influence the Duke of T'se and returned to his own state where he composed the *The Book of Odes* and the *Book of History*.

It would appear that the different states or provinces of China at this time were in a condition of great disorder. The Duke, or chief ruler, was often beset by a number of turbulent heads of families, as were the Kings of England or of the various states of Europe by their barons in feudal times. So Confucius devoted his energies to literature until some degree of order and quiet had been restored to the State. After this he again accepted office, being made chief magistrate of the town of Chung-tū. He was now fifty-one years old; and this epoch forms the brightest spot in his whole life. Now he had an opportunity to put in practice the principles of government he had been teaching. The result was a great success for a time. He framed rules for the living, and established rites for the departed. He even arranged the food for old

and young. The result was surprising. The Duke made Confucius Assistant Superintendent of Works and also Minister of Crime. It is said that crime ceased; there was no need for penal laws; fraud ceased; honor and honesty prevailed; dealers did not charge two prices; there were no "rebates," and coffins were made the proper thickness! The result was to strengthen the hands of the Chief Ruler, and to reduce the power of the heads of clans, or nobles. There was also another result. The fame of Confucius reached the neighboring states, and they became afraid that the Duke of Lü, with such a wise helper, might extend his influence over other states; so a plan was laid to bring to naught the counsels of the Sage. Beautiful women and fine horses were sent as a present to the Duke; and the result was that soon the counsels of Confucius were neglected, and he felt that he could no longer retain office. He left in his fifty-sixth year, and wandered from one state to another for seventeen years, seeking rest and finding none. For, though he was often received with distinction by rulers of various courts, none was ready to adopt his teachings. Often he was in great straits; in poverty,

and in peril of his life ; but unfailing courage and great perseverance never forsook him. He had an unbounded confidence in the power of example, and this, perhaps, is why he took such infinite pains with ceremonies and the like. When he had to carry the scepter he stooped as if to make believe that he bent under its weight. Sir R. Douglas says :

In every act of his life, whether at home or abroad, whether at table or in bed, whether at study or in movements of relaxation, he did all with the avowed object of being seen of men and of influencing them by his conduct. And to a certain extent he gained his end.

In times of greatest penury Confucius would tune his lute and sing. All through his life he loved music and ceremonies. We are told that even while on a journey he would halt under a tree and practise ceremonies. He declared that he was content with a little coarse rice and water for food, and his bended arm for a pillow. He was particular as to the colors he wore ; azure, yellow, carnation, white and black ; red he avoided. In eating he was moderate, but was particular as to the manner in which food was placed on the table, how it was cut, and that it

had the proper sauce. It is said that he fixed the quantity of his rice and meat. He was always moderate and frugal. He was so particular in his ways that he was careful to avoid all appearance of haste, and "when out driving, he never turned his head quite round."

These few outlines of the character of Confucius are given chiefly from the works of Dr. Legge and Sir Robert Douglas, who have gleaned from the *Confucian Analects*, *The Record of Rites*, and other ancient Chinese writings. It is important to form some estimate of the character of Confucius if we are to judge correctly the system which goes by his name. Two things must be well considered. Confucius was a "transmitter." Dr. Legge speaks with great certainty that Confucius did not change or modify the ancient religion of China, nor did he alter the records which he edited: "nor did he even digest them in their present form." Indeed, he says, the labors of Confucius on the ancient classics "were not so extensive as has been generally supposed." Again, Confucius did not give out many teachings that could be distinctly called his own. What did he do then?

What was his position or function, which has made him one of the greatest characters in all history? It is plain to anyone who looks beneath the surface of things that while Lao-tsze was a great thinker and teacher, and had an insight into the esoteric side of religion, Confucius, on the other hand, was rather a moralist, and a student of politics or of government, than a teacher of religion, and his influence upon China has been very much greater than that of Lao-tsze. How is this to be explained?

The explanation, it seems, must be found in the peculiar character of the Chinese people. The Chinese mind or life has kept the religious strata, so to speak, of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism almost distinct. As in their written characters, and in their language, word or sign is added to words and signs without any modification. So has it been in their religions: they have simply added one to another as one character is added to another in their language to add a new idea, or to define the one already given. The chief element of the national mind being conventional, the influence of Confucius aptly met it and satisfied it. But, as this was not the whole of the

Chinese nature, as it had, like other parts of the human family, deeper longings and aspirations, all those in whom these were very marked reached out for something which Confucianism did not give (at least openly)—did not pretend to give; and this was found in the abstruse teachings of Lao-tsze, and still further (with much ritual added) in the new teaching from the West, Buddhism. And the Chinese were quite ready to add a fourth and a fifth element, for Nestorian Christianity in the seventh century was fostered by the Court, and perhaps had a fair chance of becoming one of the several religions of China, as the monument at Si-ngau-Fu, the capital of Chen-si, shows. Mohammedanism, also, still claims a large number in some parts of China. Then, still further, in the founders of religions, the mystic element of the *personal influence* of the founder is an unknown quantity which after-ages may write about at great length, but which can never be fully explained. It was this unknown something, the character, the personality, of Confucius which gave the teachings that had been handed down in the Chinese Classics a new lease of life. These teachings existed before Confucius came,

but they had become in a great measure inoperative. He by his personal influence, and by his manner of presenting these teachings gave them a certain impulse which lasts to this day. But he also, in so doing, stereotyped them, and the unprogressiveness of the Chinese people as a whole has, in no small degree, been the result of this fixedness of certain teachings, partly religious, but chiefly moral and political. Something of the same thing has taken place in the case of every great religion, but perhaps never on such a large scale as in China.

And what are some of the things to which Confucius gave impulse, or form and fixity? The family, and the government were the two chief subjects upon which Confucius spoke and wrote. The duty of filial piety, and the duty of the subject to the sovereign were themes continually upon the lips of the Sage. The word "reciprocity" is often quoted in connexion with Confucius. The ancient writings, it is said, did not contain this thought in such a condensed form. When Tsze-kung asked the sage to state in one word the rule for the conduct of life, Confucius replied :

Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.

This is the Golden Rule in a negative form at least. When a disciple once asked him,

What do you say concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness?

The reply was,

With what then will you recompense kindness? Recompense injury with justice, and recompense kindness with kindness.

In regard to the relation of father and son, Confucius made the right government of the State to rest upon the perfection of home life. The home is the little seed that grows into the great tree of State. Loyalty, sincerity, faithfulness, reverence, these are some of the virtues upon which he chiefly insisted. In harmony with the ancient teaching he held that virtue is natural to man. The following words from the book called *The Great Learning* will give some idea of the teaching of Confucius.

The ancients . . . wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being

complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole empire was made tranquil and happy.

This gives in a nutshell the teaching of Confucius.

When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it; this is knowledge — said Confucius.

Some have denied that Confucianism is a religion, because it has so very little to say of "God," or of the spiritual. Except in one or two places Confucius does not mention the proper name for Deity, *Ti*, and makes use of the word Heaven instead. The memorial services addressed to ancestors was perhaps the chief element in the system taught by Confucius. Next to that was the method of right government. To make the people contented was the great aim that the ruler should have before him continually. This was to be achieved more by proper example than by anything else. "Honor thy father and thy mother," summed up the heart and soul of the Law. Confucius, believing that ancestors could be "worshipped,"

must have believed that they existed, yet he fought very shy of all reference to "spirit."

The spirits were to be respected, but kept at a distance! he wisely taught. About death and about the future he had little or nothing to say. "While you do not know life, how do you know about death?" was his answer to one who questioned him. Confucius was not speculative. In the *Lun yü*, xv, 30, he declares that knowledge is not to be gotten by day-dreaming.

I have been the whole day without eating, and the whole night without sleeping, occupied with thinking. But it was of no use. The better plan is to learn.

To learn was to study the lives of the great men of antiquity, Yao and Shun: but *self-examination* was also necessary, in order that one's faults might be known and removed. Virtue must be added to knowledge, else the knowledge will not be retained. These words of Confucius are very important:

A man's knowledge may be sufficient to attain, but if he has not virtue enough to enable him to hold, he will lose whatever he may have gained.

A man should avoid self-deception; and should be

most careful to guard his thoughts and desires when alone. Virtue is to be maintained by a constant devotion to duty. It was thus that the great Wan "reverently served God with complete intelligence" (*Shu-King*).

The words of the wise man must be sincere words, and must be carefully weighed. He must be cautious and slow of speech, for, as said in the *Shu-King*, "Fine words and an insinuating appearance are seldom associated with true virtue." Confucius described virtue as consisting of "Knowledge, humanity, and valor" * Benevolence is also a characteristic of perfect virtue; and it is the root of righteousness. Family, friends, the state, and the whole race should be objects of our benevolence. *The great enemy is selfishness.* But benevolence should be exercised with discretion. Reciprocity, loyalty, reverence, faithfulness, these four enter into the nature of benevolence. "To put oneself in the place of another is reciprocity, and to devote oneself entirely [to duty] is loyalty." † The perfection of the State was the great goal; and to reach this the family must be perfect; and for the

* *Chung-yung*, xx, 8.

† *Kung-tze Kea yü*.

family to be perfect each component part must be full of virtue.

The duties of filial piety were dwelt upon at great length by Confucius, and he gave an extension to the term "filial" that surprises us now-a-days. In the *Le ke* he says :

Every tree has its appointed time to perish, and every beast its appointed time to die, and he who cuts down a tree or kills an animal before their time is guilty of *unfilial* conduct.

After this the words of Confucius about capital punishment will not come as a surprise, when he said to the Chief of the Ke clan:

In carrying on your government why should you employ capital punishment at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good.

The position of woman in Confucianism is peculiar. It is only when the woman is a mother that she has a high position granted her: then, it is said, if a mother requests a visit from her son who is a soldier, no officer in the army will think of refusing the request. "Women and servants are difficult to manage," said

Confucius. The Sage sanctioned seven reasons for divorce :

Disobedience to her father-in-law or her mother-in-law. Barrenness. Lewdness. Jealousy. Leprosy. Garrulousness; and Stealing.

It is difficult to understand the anomalous position of marriage in the Confucian system, seeing that according to this very philosophy the marriage of man and woman is based on the divine marriage of Heaven and Earth. Sir R. Douglas points out the similarity existing between the laws of the Old Testament, and the moral teachings of Confucius, and says: "The code of Confucius compares favourably with that promulgated by the Hebrew lawgiver."

There is one matter that deserves notice in the teachings of Confucius, and that is, his use of the words "superior man," and "Sage." The "Sage" was what we might call an Adept, one who was born so. The "superior man" is an idea that seems peculiar to Confucius, and is not found (under that term) in the earlier books. The "Sage" could do no evil, and could not be tempted. Not so with the "superior man." He was subject to failings, but

gradually overcame them, and his "way became identical with that of Heaven and Earth and of all things." Confucius did not claim to be a Sage, though he was raised to that rank in subsequent ages. He did not claim to have reached the level of the "superior man" even. In this connexion much has been made of the saying attributed to Confucius, that while he himself was not a Sage, a Sage would arise in the West. James Freeman Clarke in his *Ten Great Religions* (p. 58) says:

Confucius is a Star in the East to lead the people to Christ. [!] One of the most authentic of his sayings is this, that "in the West the true Saint must be looked for and found."

On this Dr. Legge has a learned note in his work on *The Religions of China* (p. 154). The tenor of Dr. Legge's long note is that the only words like the above are words written by the philosopher Lieh, a Taoist writer long *posterior* to Confucius. The words which this writer says were used by Confucius are :

Among the people of the Western regions there is a Sage. Without exercising any government, he secures that there is no disorder ; without his speaking, faith is reposed in him as a matter

of course; without his transforming, transformation naturally goes on. How vast (his merit)! The people can find no name for it. But I doubt whether (even) he be a Sage; I do not know whether he is truly a Sage, or truly not a Sage.

Dr. Legge says:

The whole story is from a Taoist mint, and intended to exalt Tao in the first place. We may safely conclude that Confucius never said anything of the kind.

And further Dr. Legge says that the verbs may be read in either the present tense or in the past, but cannot be construed in the future.

The influence of Confucius has been owing in no small degree to the fact that the works he edited have for many centuries been the text-books which all must study who keep office in China. Apart from the Chinese Classics which he edited, we owe what may be called "Confucianism" to disjointed sayings of Confucius, recorded by his disciples; and to the writings of later disciples such as Mencius. Nearly all the writers about Confucius in China have joined in a chorus of laudation, Wang Ch'ung (19-90 A.D.) being a notable exception. Sir R. Douglas says:

The doctrines of Confucius were so plainly contradicted by events

within his own experience that it is difficult to understand how they can have been sustained by Confucianists of later ages. The explanation of the difficulty probably is that the sayings of the Sage have been formulated by his disciples into a system of which he was entirely innocent.

Confucius died at the age of seventy-two, complaining that his "life had been a failure, that no sovereign would take him for a master." But his name has become part of the very life of China for over two thousand years, and though spoken of as a man, he has been worshipped as a God.

Taoism

We now come to speak of that other religion which is native to China, Taoism. As a religion, Dr. Legge says Taoism did not exist till sometime after the first century A. D. But the *Tao-tih-king* belongs to the sixth century B. C., and in it is "nothing either of religion or superstition." Taoism is associated with the name of Lao-tsze who was born about fifty years before Confucius, but of whose birth, death, and life we know almost nothing. Some have held him to be a legendary character. Legends grew

up round his name. His mother, it was said, conceived from beholding a falling star. Lao-tsze was said to be eighty-one years in the womb before birth. When born he had grey hair, hence his name Lao-tsze, or the Old Youth. At his birth he could speak, and had his mind fully developed. Also, it was said that he leaped into the air, and pointing with one hand to heaven and the other to earth (the form of the svastika!) declared "In heaven above and on earth beneath *Tao* alone is worthy of honor." We have noticed that nine is the sacred number in China; also three and five are sacred numbers, as seven is a sacred number in other parts of the world. So here the later Chinese make Lao-tsze to have taken nine steps in the air, according to the *Fa Lun King*, which recalls legends of Buddha, who was said to have taken seven steps up in the air. The name Lao-tsze, which has stuck to him, is only a nickname, meaning the "Old Boy," yet it appears to have been in use as early as the later years of Confucius. His real name was *Lî R*, according to Dr. Legge, or *Le Urb* as written by Sir R. Douglas. *Urb* means ear and *Le* (or *Lî*) means a plum. For it was said that

he was born beneath a plum-tree, and that immediately after his birth he turned, and pointing to the tree said, "*Lî* (or *Le*) shall be my surname." Dr. Legge, who tries to give the most favorable construction possible to things pertaining to the religions of China, says, "*Lao-tsze*" probably meant the "venerable philosopher." He also says that the name *R* (or *Urû*), gave place to "*Tan*," which means flattered. The meaning of some Chinese words is said to depend upon minute differences in the tone of pronunciation.

In connexion with this it may be noted that, according to Dr. Edkins, "*Le* means REASON, the principle that underlies all existences"; and by some later writers this was used instead of *Sbang-ti*. It has become the fashion with a certain class of writers to doubt the existence of the great characters of past ages, and *Lao-tsze* is said not to have been a real person, but only a mythical character. The place of his birth, says Sir R. Douglas, was

Keuh-jin, or "oppressed benevolence," in the parish of *Le*, or "cruelty," in the district of *K'oo*, or "bitterness," in the State of *T'soo*, or "suffering."

According to writers after the advent of Buddhism in China, Lao-tsze was an incarnation of the LOGOS out of TAO. He was overshadowed by the CAUSELESS CAUSE; the ORIGINAL BREATH; having no beginning, no descendants; the SUBSTANCE, or TRUTH itself. The incarnation, if it could be really called an incarnation and not simply a theophany, in the time of Confucius, was said to be the eleventh. This is the view held by prominent Taoists today. Dr. Edkins when at Shanghai a few years ago, asked the present Head of Taoism when the Chang became deified as Yu Ti, and Yü Hwang Shang Ti first received that title, and the Head of Taoism replied: "From the beginning of the Universe."

But if Lao-tsze and Confucius have had great honors paid them since their death, during their lifetime they *appeared* to be powerless to stem the tide of wickedness in the land. Lao-tsze according to his biographer Sze-ma Ts'een, was "Keeper of the Archives" at the Court of Chow. This post he resigned, being disgusted with the evils then existing; and not finding any safe place of retreat left the country by the Hankoo Pass, in the Province of

Honan. He left a son named Tsung, who became a general, and five generations have been recorded in the Province of T'se. Whether or not the supposed descendants of Lao-tsze merged in the "Changs," or "Heavenly Masters," the "Popes" of Taoism, it is impossible to say. Dr. Legge says that when he went to China, over forty years ago, he heard a common saying which very much puzzled him:—"However the empire be disordered and convulsed, the Changs and the K'ungs have no occasion to be troubled." He knew the K'ungs were the descendants of Confucius, but it was some time before he found out that "the Changs were the Popes of Taoism." To this day the head of the family of Confucius has the title of Duke: and the line of descent is traced right back to Confucius. No family on earth, perhaps, can at all compare with it, for Confucius traced his descent back about two thousand years B. C.

When Lao-tsze came to the Pass of Hankoo the Keeper of the Pass persuaded the Sage to become his guest for a time. Before leaving, Lao-tsze at the request of Yin He, Keeper of the Pass, wrote down in a book an outline of his philosophy, in which Yin

He had, for a time, been his pupil. This writing is now known as the *Tao-tih-king*—*Tao* the way, *tih* virtue, *king* meaning book. It contains 5330 characters, and is about twice the length of the "Sermon on the Mount." This is our chief source of information in regard to Taoism. *Then Lao-tsze went westward*, and nothing more is known of him. In personal appearance he was said to be remarkable, having large flat ears, large eyes, ragged teeth, a square mouth, a doubled-ridged nose, handsome eyebrows, and ten toes on each foot, and ten lines on each hand. Before starting it is told that he was delayed owing to a dispute with his servant, who had served him for two hundred years, and was an equal number of years in arrears of his wages, amounting to 72,000 ounces of silver. The matter was settled at 20,000 ounces, but not before Lao-tsze had made the servant Seu Kea give up the talisman of life, upon which he became a heap of dry bones. At the earnest request of the Keeper of the Pass the Sage restored the servant to life again, and then "mounting on a cloud disappeared into space."

What we are most concerned about, however, is

the philosophy of Lao-tsze, and not the legends about his life. Confucius and Lao-tsze were as different from each other as two men could possibly be if the stories about them are to be followed. The former was (apparently) devoted to rites and ceremonies, to the outward and the conventional; and the latter was utterly opposed to all externals, all "seeming." When men talked much of virtues, they were, said Lao-tsze, deluding themselves with names, with shadows. It was a sure sign that the real thing was not there when men talked much about it. According to the rendering of Julien, Lao-tsze on one occasion said to Confucius:

If you cultivate Tao, if you throw yourself towards it with all your soul, you will arrive at it. To what good is humanity and justice? You are like a man who beats a drum while searching for a truant sheep. Master, you only trouble man's nature.

After this interview it is said Confucius was silent for three days.

What is this *Tao-tih-king*, "Le Livre de la Voie, et de la Vertu," as Julien renders it? Did Lao-tsze get the teaching from the Classics; or did he get it orally from the Masters of the Hidden Wisdom; or

did he himself originate it? Plainly it was not to be found in the existing writings, by the unaided reader. He may have had it either from Teachers of the Hidden Wisdom, or from within himself, or partly from the one and partly from the other. At any rate, the obscurity of the writing makes it impossible for even the best scholars to be confident that they know it perfectly, or have reached more than the "general sense" of the treatise. For the same reason the *Tao-ist-king* has had all sorts of meanings read into it, according to the fancy of the reader. Rémusat, Amiot, Montucci, could find in it the doctrine of the Trinity (!), and generally, a forecast of Christianity. As the passage in the fourteenth chapter has become such a notable one, it is here given first according to Amiot, and then by Dr. Legge. Amiot translates:

He who is as it were visible and cannot be seen is called *Kbi* [should be ?]; he whom we cannot hear, and who does not speak to the ears is called *Hi*; and he who is as it were tangible, but whom we cannot touch is called *Wei*.

The I. H. W. was thought to be a proof that the Holy Name of the Jews had been known in China

centuries before the advent of Christian teachers. Dr. Legge gives the whole chapter thus :

We look at it, and do not see it ; it is named the colourless. We listen for it, and do not hear it ; it is named the soundless. We (try to) grasp it, and do not get hold of it ; it is named the incorporeal. With these three qualities it cannot be investigated and defined ; and hence we blend them together and form a unity.

Its upper part is not bright ; its lower part is not obscure. Ceaseless in its action, it (yet) cannot be named. (Finally) it returns, and again becomes nothing. This is what is called the form of the formless, the image of the invisible. This is what is called being incapable of determination.

We meet it but we do not see its front ; we follow it but we do not see its back parts. When we grasp the Tao that was of old so as to deal with the existences of the present, and are able to know the old beginnings, this is what is called having the clue of Tao.

In his fourth lecture on *The Science of Religion*, Professor Max Müller refers to the famous twenty-fifth chapter, and the words, "There is an infinite Being before Heaven and Earth." Dr. Legge says Max Müller is giving a rendering from Julien's translation, "Il est un être confus," and that "confus" cannot be exchanged for "infinite." Dr. Chalmers renders the original : "There was something chaotic in Nature which existed before Heaven and Earth."

It will be interesting to have the translation of this whole famous chapter according to Dr. Legge.

There was something chaotic and complete before the birth of heaven and earth. How still it was and formless, standing alone, and undergoing no change; proceeding everywhere, and in no danger (of being exhausted)! It may be regarded as the mother of all things.

I do not know its name, but designate it Tao (the Way); and forcing myself to frame a name for it, I call it the Great.

Great, it passes on, in constant flux; so passing on, it becomes remote; when remote it comes back.

Therefore Tao is great; heaven is great; earth is great; the (sage) King is also great. In the circle of being there are four that are great, and the (sage) King is one of them.

The (sage) man has for his law the earth; the earth has heaven for its law; heaven has Tao for its law; and the law of Tao is its own spontaneity.

Such is this famous twenty-fifth chapter of the *Tao-tib-king*.

Very much, in the right understanding of the *Tao-tib-king* and therefore in the understanding of the genuine or original Taoism, depends upon what Tao really means. The passage in Sir R. Douglas's work is often quoted, and it is perhaps one of the best attempts to bring home to our understanding what

Tao signifies. He says the word primarily means "the way," from which it comes to signify the proper "course of conduct"; "reason"; and it also signifies "the word" (Logos).

But it is more than the way. It is the way and the waygoer. It is an eternal road; along it all beings and things walk; but no being made it, for it is Being itself; it is everything and nothing, and the cause and effect of all. All things originate from Taou, conform to Taou, and to Taou at last they return.

The same writer gives it as his judgment that Taoism sprang from the Vedānta School of Indian philosophy. James Freeman Clarke says that Lao-tsze in his *Tao-tih-king* anticipated Hegel by twenty-three centuries, for both teach that in the Absolute, being and non-being are identical, both originate in the Absolute. Mr. Clarke thus sums up the fortieth chapter of the *Tao-tih-king*.

Being is Essence, non-being is existence. The first is the noumenal, the last the phenomenal. As being is the source of non-being, by identifying one's self with being one attains to all that is non-being, *i.e.*, to all that exists.

He also finds a strong similarity between the teaching of Lao-tsze and Hindu philosophy; and between

the doctrine of opposites as given in Plato* and the *Tao-tih-king*.

The following are some of the principal points in the teaching of Lao-tsze. We should try to get back to the primitive condition, for, he says,

When the world has many prohibitory enactments, the people become more and more poor.

The more craft and ingenuity men have, the greater the number of fantastic things that come out.

He held that in much talk there was much folly. The Confucians he looked upon as Pharisees, and scourged them thus :

Renounce your philanthropy, and throw aside your justice, and the people will return to filial piety and fatherly compassion. . . . appear in your unadorned simplicity, preserve your purity, curb your selfishness, and curtail your ambitious desires. †

Modesty and self-emptiness were among his favorite virtues. Do not try to "make the people clever, but to make them simple." "Compassion, economy, and humility," he said, were the "three things which he held fast and prized." "When Heaven would save a man, it encircles him with compassion."

* *Phaedo*

† *Tao-tih-king* chapter xix.

There is a passage in the twenty-eighth chapter which strongly reminds one of the words in the Theosophical work, *The Voice of the Silence* :

Step out from sunlight into shade, to make more room for others.

It is thus rendered by Sir R. Douglas :

He that knows the light, and at the same time keeps the shade, will be the whole world's model. Being the whole world's model, eternal virtue will not miss him, and he will return home to the Absolute. He who knows the glory, and at the same time keeps to shame, will be the whole world's valley. Being the whole world's valley, eternal virtue will fill him, and he will return home to Tao.

To rest in an inner calm ; to be simple, and therefore in harmony with Nature ; to put one's self last, these were some of the things the true Sage practised. Restless striving, feverish effort, like a violent wind, do not endure. In passivity is the highest energy. "Not to act is the secret of power," is a thought to be met with all through the *Tao-tih-king*. If Lao-tsze did not utter the words, "The meek shall inherit the Earth," he certainly said what was very similar.

By too many laws and enactments, and too much meddling, rulers produced the very evils they sought to avert.

If the ruler do but love quietness, avoid law-making, and be free from lusts, everything will spontaneously submit to him; heaven and earth will combine to send down upon him refreshing dew, and the people will of themselves harmonize together.*

To interfere with the freedom of the people is to deny the existence of *Tao* in their midst, and to make them the slaves of rules rather than the freemen of principles.

Sir R. Douglas says that many of the teachings of Lao-tsze are words of wisdom for all time, and for all nations; what he says about wars especially.

The good general never lightly engages in a war, for he knows well that there is no surer way of losing one's treasure than this. And therefore it is that the compassionate is always the conqueror.†

The display of armor and all that tends to provoke war should be avoided.

To know others is to be wise, but he who knows himself is enlightened.

Out of weakness comes strength, the tender things overcome the hard.

* *Tao-tih-king*, chapter xxxii.

† *Ibid*, chapter lxix.

The vexed question as to whether Lao-tsze believed in Deity or not, upon which Sir R. Douglas and Dr. Legge differ, must be left to Chinese experts. The fourth chapter is that upon which the dispute rests chiefly. Speaking of Tao it reads:

I know not whose son it is. It might appear to have been before God (Ti).

Dr. Legge's translation of part of chapter sixty-seven is here given as it contains the celebrated passage about returning good for evil.

(It is the way of Tao) not to act from personal motive; to conduct affairs without feeling the trouble of them; to taste without being aware of the flavor; to account the great as small, and the small as great; TO RECOMPENSE INJURY WITH KINDNESS. (The follower of Tao) anticipates things that would become difficult while they are easy, and does things that would become great while they are little. The difficult things in the world arise from what are easy, and the great things from what are small. Thus it is that the Sage never does what is great, and therefore can accomplish the greatest things.

Dr. Edkins regards the position of Confucianism as speaking to the *moral* nature. Taoism he regards as *materialistic*, (!) making the soul only a finer form

of matter, which gains immortality by a physical discipline, a sort of chemical process !! But Dr. Edkins seems to speak rather of what *at present* goes by the name of Taoism, than of the teachings of Lao-tsze as given in the *Tao-tib-king*.

Other Religions in China

It would far exceed the scope of this essay to trace the growth of these two religions of China. For a time the lives of both teachers seemed a failure, but gradually disciples arose, and spread the teachings. As has so often been the case before in other countries, when the adherents of one form of religion happened to be in power they favored that form chiefly, even to the persecution of other forms. Says Dr. Edkins :

For some centuries, however, the dominant party has ceased to persecute the other two national religions. It has fallen into the habit of toleration, and contented itself with condemnatory protests on public occasions.

Sir R. Douglas says that while

Buddhism and Taoism are to be found almost entirely among the

uneducated classes, even these reject all doctrines inconsistent with the teachings of Confucius. No educated man would admit for a moment that he was a follower of either religion [Buddhism or Taoism].

All writers agree that the Taoism of the present day has little in common with the profound teachings of Lao-tsze. It has degenerated into a sort of magic or legerdemain. Of the other forms of religion in China, Buddhism has the larger number of adherents, and Mohammedanism comes next. In some of the northern districts fully one third of the people are Mohammedans. The large number of Buddhists said to be in the world is arrived at by supposing that the Chinese are Buddhists; or, at any rate, a large number of them—one hundred and eighty millions being put down to China. This number Dr. Edkins says is “arrived at by the conveniently short process of halving the population, a process far from giving a true view of the case.” The fact that Buddhism entered China, at the invitation of the Emperor, and found a field for its teachings although two other religions held the ground before its coming, would appear to indicate that it supplied something which Confucianism and

Taoism lacked. This was probably due to its clearer teaching as to the nature of man, and the tenets of Karma and Reincarnation. The Buddhism of the Chinese Empire does not differ *materially* from the Buddhism which is known to us through India or Ceylon; and may be fitly treated under the class of "Indian Religions."

Before closing it will be well to mention two small books which have taken the place of the work of Lao-tsze among the mass of the people in China. These are the *Book of Rewards and Punishments*, and the *Book of Secret Blessings*. The first consists of two hundred and twelve maxims, such as :

Do not expose the faults of others.
Prevent the evil, and exalt the good.
Be humane to animals.
Rectify yourself and convert men.
Don't seek your own advantage at the expense of others.
Don't let new things make you forget the old.
Don't give alms and afterwards regret having done so.
Etc., etc.

In the *Book of Secret Blessings* there are found teachings of great moral purity; and it is read by Buddhists and Confucianists as well as Taoists. It

contains only five hundred and forty-one words, but according to Sir R. Douglas, it "exercises an influence out of all proportion to its bulk." One or two sentences may be given to show its nature.

One should purify the heart as a preparation for right doing.

Be upright, be straight-forward.

Renew your heart.

Be compassionate and loving.

Use just weights and measures, and do not over-tax the people.

Hide your neighbors' faults and speak only of their good deeds, and let your mouth utter the true sentiments of your heart.

It is not the intention of this short sketch to picture the sad declination from the moral teachings of Confucius; nor the still greater declension from the original Taoism which has taken place in China during the course of two thousand years. It is ever the case that the waters of Truth become less and less pure as the distance from the source becomes greater. It is more in harmony with the Great Soul of the Universe, which ever renews, which causes "that which is beautiful to abide, that which is base to die,"—it is more in harmony with this, to dwell on the good points shown in the teachings of Confucius and of Lao-tsze. And,

if we give to these teachings a careful study we cannot fail to feel a profound respect for these two systems of religion or philosophy. Nor can we fail to cherish worthier sentiments towards the people of this great nation whose teachers for so many ages, Confucius and Lao-tsze have been. Still further, to the student of religions who knows something of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion, Theosophy, it must be evident that Lao-tsze and Confucius drew inspiration in some way from that great Enlightenment which precedes and transcends all existing molds of religion. If, by the aid which THE UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD AND THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY is intended to supply to all peoples, Western nations can be brought to cherish towards the great nations of the East kindlier feelings; sentiments of respect and trust, and true brotherliness, great dangers in the future will be averted; and we need not fear that the good seed thus sown will fail to produce a harvest to make the whole world glad.

And there are not a few things in which China claims our respect, such as its universal system of education; its attempt to get the best educated men for the offices of State; the order and peace, which as

a rule, are to be found in the country. A well-known writer, Mr. Meadows, says that in China a man

can hold and sell landed property with a facility, certainty, and security which is absolute perfection compared with English dealings of the same kind. A man can traverse the country for two thousand miles unquestioned by any official . . . he can enter, leave, and re-enter without a passport.

The sacred literature of China is free from everything impure. In

the religions of China . . . no cruelty or sensuality are encouraged. No human victim has ever been offered on its altars, and those licentious rites which have appeared in so many religions have never disgraced its pure worship.

A nation which has made good and not evil the radical element in man must claim our respect.

One lesson stands out prominently as we study the religions of China, and that is this: the sharper the tool the more quickly is the edge made blunt. As is well known, China is now awakening through its forced contact with the West. Men of lofty ideals, and filled with true love for the nation, are rising up.

The Viceroy of Leang-hu has circulated several million copies of a pamphlet containing such advice as this :

United hearts for the protection of the Empire, religion, and race. Let not the bad obscure the good. The establishment of schools — rouse the stupid! Comparative study. Religious toleration. Reform of methods. Attending to what is vital.

Like the nations of the West who have departed from true Christianity, the Chinese have largely departed from the purity that once characterized their religions. It is the work of Theosophy to assist both East and West. As we trace our religions to their ancient and common source, and especially as we put in practice what is vital in all religions — justice, compassion, respect for others, brotherliness, mutual helpfulness — we shall work in harmony with the Divine Purpose; TAO will be in the midst of us, and we shall attain to that LIGHT which is beyond all darkness.

Each human being has a definite character different from every other human being, and masses of beings aggregated into nations show as wholes that the national force and distinguishing peculiarities go to make up a definite and separate national character. These differences, both individual and national, are due to essential character and not to education. Even the doctrine of the survival of the fittest should show this, for the fitness cannot come from nothing but must at last show itself from the coming to the surface of the actual inner character. And as both individuals and nations among those who are ahead in the struggle with nature exhibit an immense force in their character, we must find a place and time where the force was evolved.—WILLIAM Q. JUDGE



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