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THE RELIGION OF CONFUCIUS,
ESPECIALLY HIS BELIEF IN PROVIDENCE AND IN PRAYER

by

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INTRODUCTION

THE RELIGION OF CONFUCIUS,
ESPECIALLY HIS BELIEF IN PROVIDENCE AND IN PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

1. Title.

When Jeremiah and Ezekiel were prophets to Israel, when Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Parmenides were philosophers in Greece, and when Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was in India seeking enlightenment and salvation in Nirvana, Confucius flourished in China. His writings on philosophy, history, ethics, education, and religion have had a deep influence on the civilization not only of China, but also of Korea and Japan. Our subject is the Religion of Confucius, especially his belief in Providence and in Prayer. It would take volumes to consider adequately his writings in general, or even those parts that deal with religion. Our aim will be to investigate the personal religion of Confucius, and not the system or cult known as Confucianism with its development and historical changes. The original sources that deal directly with Confucius' practice of prayer and belief in providence are rather meagre, but they doubtless best reveal his personal religion.

2. Justification for the Thesis.

Why should a thesis be written on this subject? Since so many are followers of Confucius, we want to know

how to classify him from a religious point of view. Did he copy what antiquity had to say without any critical insight, and did he have no real religious convictions of his own? Or was he an agnostic in the sense in which that term is used of Darwin and Spencer? Or was he an animist on the road to theism, but not yet arrived? Or was he an ethical monotheist, comparable to Moses, Amos and Isaiah? Various scholars give varying answers to these questions. Why do they not agree?

One, Sinologue, finds Confucius to be a pure monotheist and his religion to be based upon a revelation from God to man.¹ Another authority states:

"Confucius was a teacher of morals, but not the founder of a religion. His doctrines constitute rather a system of philosophy in the department of morals and politics than any particular religious faith, (Davis). Arnould and other writers have broadly asserted that he did not recognize the existence of a God."²

A professor of Biblical literature writes:

"As Shun, the second of China's historic kings (2258-2206 B.C.) is said by the Shu King, the Historical Classic, to have sacrificed to Shang-ti, the Chinese would have attained monotheism at an early date, were the monotheistic claim true. Shun, at the time he sacrificed to Shang-ti, sacrificed also to six honored spirits, as well as to hills and rivers. He was accordingly not a monotheist. The people generally never worship Shang-ti so far as we know, and where Shang-ti

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1. See Herbert A. Giles, Professor of Chinese in the University of Cambridge, in "Confucianism and Its Rivals." Preface and p. 258.
2. From McClintock and Strong's Encyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. II, p. 471.

is mentioned in the Shu-King it is usually associated with Heaven, a spirit that seems equally powerful with Shang-ti. Although in one passage the impartation of moral ideas to men is attributed to Shang-ti, he is after all but a shadowy ruler, whose importance is soon overshadowed by Heaven. In one passage even the earthly monarch is associated with him. No Chinese monotheism can be made out."¹

A Scottish missionary "maintains that 'the original Chinese religion, though monotheistic, was not henotheistic. The Chinese believed in and worshipped a plurality of inferior deities of various grades subordinate to the Supreme God.'"²

An able Chinese priest, Pere Hoang, states:

"'Although Confucius taught the necessity of reverence and disinterested charity, he had no true belief in a self-existing Creator of an organized universe; no faith in promised grace to come, or in eternal life; no true love of God as a Perfect Being above and superior to all things; no true fear of God as the Supreme and Sole Ruler of the universe; and no true obedience to His commandments.' Professor Tiele, of Leyden, treats the worship of spirits and nature as though the ancient religion were not monotheistic; but Dr. Legge, in criticizing this view, defends Confucius from the charge of animism and fetichism in their most unfavorable sense."³

Confucius is thus in turn accused of being a monotheist, an indifferentist, an atheist, a polytheist, and an animist; and we shall note that one of the most recent writers finds him to be a father of Humanism:

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1. From G. A. Barton's "The Religions of the World," pp. 205-206.
2. From G. G. Atkins' "Procession of the Gods", p. 285, quoting John Ross' "The Original Religion of China."
3. From E. H. Parker's "Studies in Chinese Religion", p. 215.

"Confucius who gave his name and great force to that standardization of ethics which has been ever since the orthodox Chinese system, was not a churchman, though he had a sound feeling for authority. He was practical, socially minded and a lover of the full rounded life. He felt besides that Chinese quietism was leaving out one of the four cardinal virtues: that cultivation of the superior life which comes through wisdom. He founded a religion of Humanism."¹

Where experts differ so radically in their estimate of the religion of Confucius, we appreciate more fully the immensity, the delicate nature and the baffling character of the problem before us. As the Chinese proverb says: "The sea is without bounds, the river without bottom."² But the religious belief and practise of a man largely determine the secret springs of his life. Confucius is the most influential man in the history of China. To understand him is a key to understanding China. Although there are conflicting views, we shall endeavor with an open mind to investigate the evidence relating to Confucius' personal religion, and also to note how Confucianism, the state religion of China for many years, differs from Confucius' own beliefs.

How shall Christianity with its universal Gospel approach Confucianism? What bearing does the personal religion of Confucius have upon the relation of Confucianism to Christianity? What difficulties would Confucius

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1. From G. G. Atkins' "Procession of the Gods," p. 293.
2. Baller, p. 382.

have in accepting Christianity? Would a modern Confucianist have the same difficulties? In what respects, if any, has Confucius prepared the way for Christianity? How can the truths in the religious teaching of Confucius be harmonized with Christian teaching? Does Christianity have a contribution to make to Confucianism? Can a missionary have such a sympathy with Confucius and such a knowledge of his teachings as intelligently and efficiently to meet the difficulties in accepting Christianity which lie in the mind of a disciple of Confucius? How will the frank facing of these questions affect the Christian Movement in China?

3. Method.

We hope to find answers to the questions which we have raised, by investigating the personal religious beliefs and habits of Confucius. We shall first notice his spiritual and cultural inheritance. Time and space forbid a detailed review of ancient Chinese history. Then we shall examine the religious conditions in China in the time of Confucius. Next the details of the life of Confucius will be narrated, especially his religious experiences, as far as the meagre material at hand permits. The religion of Confucius will be compared with Christianity, and various criticisms of his religion will be given careful attention. Lastly we shall try to classify Confucius

from a religious point of view and see what relations his religion sustains to Christianity.

4. Sources.

The written sources for this investigation include the Analects, Mencius, the Sacred Edict and other documents, read in both the Chinese and in the English translation, usually with the help of commentaries. The Bibliography shows the books read and consulted. The author has had twenty-nine years' experience as a missionary in China, during which time he has had almost daily personal contact and discussion with Confucianists, and much of what is said will be based on this experience.

The canon associated with the name of Confucius has nine volumes, known as the Five Classics (King) and the Four Books (Shu). Confucius is the author of one King, the Spring and Autumn Classic, which contains the Annals of the State of Lu for several hundred years. He is credited with editing three, the Shu-King or Classic of History, the Shih-King or Classic of Odes, and the Yih-King or Classic of Natural Mutations. He and his disciples together compiled the Li-Ki or Classic of Memorials on Social Laws and Rites. The Four Books were written almost entirely by the disciples of the Sage, and contain the teachings and conversations of their master on various subjects, mostly of an ethical and political nature. The titles of

the Four Books are the Lun-Yu or Analects containing discourses and conversations, the Chung-Yung or Doctrine of the Mean, the Ta Hsioh or Great Learning, and the works of Mencius. Mencius is called the Saint Paul of Confucianism; he lived 372-289 B.C.

Commentators have criticized and expounded at great length every verse of the Confucian classics. Some books have been excluded from the canon on account of their legendary character. The historic evidence for the life and teachings of Confucius is probably greater than for any other ancient historic character with the exception of that of our Lord.

5. Classic of Natural Mutations.

The Yih-King or Classic of Natural Mutations is the volume most highly prized by Confucius. It is said that the Emperor Fu-Hsi from certain markings, revealed to him on the back of a tortoise, constructed a system of Eight Diagrams to use in divining. King Wen in the twelfth century B.C. was in prison two years under the tyrant then reigning, and is reputed to have increased the eight to sixty-four. Dr. Giles says:

"The foreign student is disappointed when he comes to a study of the Canon of Changes (Natural Mutations); partly because of the exaggerated value set upon its contents by Chinese scholars of all ages, and partly from an inability to penetrate its labyrinthine mysteries and seize the hidden spirit of the book. It has been alleged by Chinese enthusiasts that, if you

have only the wit to seek, you will find in the Canon of Changes the germs of all the great scientific discoveries; on the other hand it was reserved for two foreign students (Sir R. Douglas and Terrien de Lacouperie) to put their heads together and publicly announce that this work, regarded in China as based on a divine revelation, is nothing more than a vocabulary of an obscure Central Asian tribe--so obscure that to this day it remains unlocated and unknown."¹

In the Analects we find Confucius saying: "If some years were added to my life, I would give fifty to the study of the Classic of Natural Mutations, and then I might come to be without faults."² Having said this much it is only fair to give the Classic a chance to speak for itself. We read: "If Heaven and earth were to have no inter-communication, things would not grow and flourish as they do."³ Again it says: "The great attribute of Heaven and Earth is the giving and maintaining of life."⁴ The book had many philosophical, ethical and religious aphorisms, and these were used to interpret the tortoise-shell marks, or the marks made by throwing grain-stalks in a ceremonial manner, so as to predict the future. There is no evidence that Confucius himself used the book for fortune-telling.

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1. In "Confucianism and Its Rivals," p. 5.
2. In Analects, Book VII, chapter 16.
3. Appendix I, chapter 54, 1.
4. In Appendix III, chapter 1, 10.

CHAPTER I

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF CONFUCIUS

CHAPTER I

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF CONFUCIUS

No man can be properly appraised apart from a consideration of his times and his religious and cultural heritage. Where did Confucius live? What were the historical traditions of his people? Was he the product of an age-long and highly developed civilization? What were the ideals of government and religion which he learned from his nation's past?

1. Early Chinese Kings.

China, like ancient Israel, had its beginnings in desert wanderings and pastoral life. Dr. G. G. Atkins says in reference to Chinese early history:

"The map of China is the key to this history. The Yellow River, the Willow River and the Pearl River drain the roof of the world. If one draw a line due northeast by north from Mount Everest to the top of Manchuria, a line 2600 miles long, substantially every tributary to the three rivers rises east or southeast of it. Behind it is a territory of at least 1,700,000 square miles which has belonged to the Chinese Empire in its peak periods of sovereignty. The few rivers of this vast region never reach any sea; they lie across a map like broken threads, they are lost in arid reaches, empty into salt lakes. Such regions are always the nursery of nomad races; archaeologists, whose opinions carry weight, believe that the Desert of Gobi was the nursery of the human race."¹

Dr. Sun Yat-sen writes:

"The Valley of the Yellow River was the cradle of Chinese civilization. Since this region is afflicted

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1. Atkins, Dr. G. G.: Procession of the Gods, p. 279.

with storm and flood and is also very cold, since it would not naturally be the place to give birth to a civilization, how did China's ancient civilization happen to originate there? Because the dwellers upon the Yellow River banks came from other regions, such as, perhaps, Mesopotamia, whose civilization antedated China's by more than ten thousand years. Before the time of the Three Emperors and the Five Kings these progenitors of the Chinese race moved out of Mesopotamia into the Yellow River valley and began to develop the civilization of China. After driving out the poisonous reptiles and savage beasts they were faced with natural disasters of storm and flood. Naturally they would try to avert these disasters and to struggle against Nature. As protection against wind and rain, they had to build houses; as protection against cold they had to make clothes; when man had learned to do these things he was far advanced in civilization.

"But natural calamities did not come at regular times nor were they easily prevented: a storm would blow their houses down, a flood would overwhelm them, a fire would burn them to the ground, or a stroke of lightning would demolish them. These four disasters--flood, fire, storm, and lightning--the ancients could not understand. Their houses, moreover, were constructed of grass and wood and could not stand up against such catastrophes, so there was no way of preventing their destruction. In the age of warfare with the beasts man could use his own physical strength to fight, but mere fighting was of no value in the day of struggle against Nature. Mankind then suffered many hardships until some wise men came forth with schemes for the welfare of the people. Thus the Great Yu, 2205 B.C., reduced the waters to order and averted the calamity of flood for the people, and Yu Chao-shi, the Nest Builder, taught the people how to build houses in trees and avert the disasters from wind and storm.

"From this time on civilization slowly progressed, the people began to unite, and, as land was plentiful and the inhabitants were few, food was very easy to procure. The only problems were the catastrophes of Nature which could not be fought, as the wild beasts were, with bodily strength, and so there arose the idea of divine power. Men of deep wisdom began to advocate the doctrine of gods and divine teachings, and introduced prayers as a means of warding off evil and obtaining blessings. There was no way of telling at the time whether their praying was effective or not; however, since they were struggling against Heaven they had no

other plan, when in extremity, but to appeal for the power of the gods. A man of profound insight would be chosen as leader, like the chiefs of savage tribes in Africa today, whose special duty it was to offer prayers. In the same way Mongolians and Tibetans now make a 'Living Buddha' their ruler and are under a religious government. So the ancients used to say that the two great functions of the state were worship and war, praying and fighting."¹

Dr. Sun says further:

"The History Classic says of the days of Yao: 'He was able to demonstrate eminent virtue by loving the nine degrees of kindred; when these were on friendly terms, he pacified the hundred families; when they were enlightened, he united the myriad states; then the black-haired race entered upon an era of harmony.' His work of peaceful government also began with the family, gradually extended among the people until all the little states were united and the black-haired race enjoyed a period of unity."²

Of the ancient rulers, Dr. Sun says:

"Looking back through the millenniums of Chinese history, the only emperors who shouldered the responsibility of government for the welfare and happiness of the people were Yao, Shun, Yu, T'ang, Wen Wang, Wu Wang; no others were able to use their office for the blessing of the people. Of all China's emperors, only Yao, Shun, Yu, T'ang, Wen Wang, and Wu Wang so fulfilled their duties of government that they could stand 'unabashed before Heaven above and unashamed before men below.' They were able to reach this high ideal and to elicit paeans of praise from succeeding generations because of two special qualities which they possessed--fine native ability, which enabled them to establish good government and to seek the welfare of the people; and noble character, 'Mercy to the people and kindness to all creatures, regard for the people as for the wounded and suffering, love for the people as for their own children.'"³

These quotations give us an account of the origin

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1. San Min Chu I, pp. 160-163.
2. Ibid., p. 118.
3. Ibid., p. 301-302.

of the Chinese race, whether in the Gobi Desert or in Mesopotamia; a record of the beginnings of Chinese civilization; a recognition of the early development of Chinese religion, and a rationalistic explanation of how this religion commenced.

2. A Summary Outline of Early Chinese History.

1. Legendary. 4000-2852 B.C. Nomadic arts. Pastoral life.
2. The Five Rulers. 2852-2206 B.C.
 - Fu-Hsi, 2852-2738 B.C. Invention of writing and of musical instruments.
 - Shen-Nung, 2737-2705 B.C. Agriculture advanced. Medicinal plants used.
 - Hwang-Ti, 2704-2595 B.C. Silk clothing. Extended bounds of empire.
 - Yao, 2357-2258 B.C. Unified the people. Improved government.
 - Shun, 2258-2206 B.C. Canals to stop floods of Yellow River.
3. Hsia Dynasty. 2205-1766 B.C. Founded by the Great Yu, who developed astronomy.
4. Shang Dynasty. 1766-1122 B.C. Founded by T'ang, the Completer. Korea colonized.
5. Chou Dynasty. 1122-249 B.C. Founded by Wu-Wang and Wen-Wang. Schools and Civil government advanced.

The Shang Dynasty is sometimes called the Yin Dynasty. The Chou Dynasty had thirty-five sovereigns. During the Chou Dynasty flourished the three great sages of China:

- (a) Lao-tzu, born circ. 604 B.C., founder of Taoism.
- (b) Confucius, 551-479 B.C., the greatest of the sages.
- (c) Mencius, 372-289 B.C., the Saint Paul of Confucius.

3. Feudal Conditions of the Chou Dynasty.

The founders of the Chou Dynasty, feeling that they were fulfilling the mandate of God,¹ destroyed the unrighteous and despotic Chou-Sin, the last emperor of the Shang Dynasty. They consolidated the empire and gave fiefs to their relatives and adherents. In time feudalism arose and the empire was divided into more than one hundred and fifty states. The rulers quarrelled with each other about rank and position at court. The power of the bolder nobles often exceeded that of the emperor. They fought with each other in order to gain territory and wealth. Petty civil strife arose over succession to power. "The country was torn by discord and desolated by wars. Husbandry was neglected, the peace of households was destroyed, and plunder and rapine were the watchwords of the time."²


4. Civilization of Ancient China.

a. Stock-raising and Agriculture. The Chinese were originally shepherds and cattle raisers. The character for goat 𤝵 added to the character for big 大 makes the 美 combination character big-goat, meaning beautiful, thus revealing what looked good to their eyes. The char-

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1. Shu King, Part V, Book I, Section 1.

2. Douglas, R. K.: Confucianism and Taoism, p. 24.

acter for mine or I 我 added to the character for goat gives the combination character 義 for justice, showing that in the early days it was common to have law-suits over the ownership of goats or sheep, and that if the elders gave me my goat I received justice. Chinese dwellings  are built so that their roof line has a curve similar to what a tent would have. There are many evidences to show that the early Chinese were nomads. Sheep and bullocks were used as victims in sacrifices.

Agriculture flourished in these early days. The emperor was wont once a year to plow a furrow and to pray to heaven for bounteous harvests. "Husbandry and letters are the two chief professions," according to a popular proverb.¹

b. Silk and Linen for Clothes. From the earliest records, silk and linen cloth are mentioned. The empress patronized the art of raising silk-worms and of weaving the cocoons into thread. Embroidered robes were used at court. Ceremonial robes were required at public and clan rites, especially at funerals and at the Spring and Autumn worship of ancestors. The clothes were designed not only for comfort, style, protection from inclement weather and for general utility, but also to reveal the economic,

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1. Baller, F. W.: Mandarin Primer, p. 49.

social and political position of the wearer.

The Emperor Hwang-Ti's wife, Liu Tsu, was famous for her skill in the management of silk-worms. This art has endeared her to posterity. In the Wei-Ki she is celebrated: "Si-Ling-shi, the Empress of Hwang-Ti, began to rear silkworms: At this period Hwang-Ti invented the art of making clothing."¹

c. Household Arts. The household arts were early developed. Feasting and the articles used at feasts are mentioned in ancient documents. Rules restricting the consumption of wine are carefully laid down. Dishes, porcelain, cooking utensils, tables, beds, chairs, sun-dials and benches are sometimes described.

d. Literature and Ancient Prayer. In prehistoric times annals were kept by strings with knots of various kinds placed at intervals. Fu-Hsi invented a system of writing by hieroglyphs, from which the present Chinese written characters have been developed. History, odes, prayers are carefully preserved from more than two thousand years before Christ. The Classic of History begins with the reign of Yao, and records the sacrifices made by Shun in the year 2205 B.C., or thereabouts.

The Confucian Association of Peking has adopted

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1. Gowen, H.H.: Outline History of China, Part I, p. 28.

as its prayer the sacrificial Ode of the Chou Dynasty, which was probably composed in the eleventh century before Christ. It is given in the Classic of Odes as follows:

"Oh, Revere. Oh, Revere.
God is glorious.
His decree is not easily preserved.
Do not say that He is high aloft above us;
He ascends and descends about our doings;
And daily inspects us wherever we are.
As I am His little child,
I don't know how to revere my resting place.
But by daily accomplishments and monthly progress,
My learning may continue the light toward His brightness;
Help me to bear this burden on my shoulders,
And show me the glorious virtue and conduct."¹

This ancient sacrificial ode shows a recognition of God's majesty and fatherhood on the one hand, and man's imperfection and need of help on the other. It is compatible with high ethical monotheism.

e. Music and Morals. The Chinese are lovers of music. Musical instruments were probably invented back in the nomad days. Chinese music teachers assert that their music is marked by the following four characteristics: (1) It is pentatonic. (2) It emphasizes the minor key. (3) The theme strain is repeated many times. (4) It is played and sung in unison and not in harmony. It is of many kinds, martial for the soldiers, stately for use at court, ceremonial for funerals and worship, and gay for weddings and festivals.

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1. Quoted in A. W. Martin's "Seven Great Bibles," p. 129.

Confucius thought that music largely controlled the morals of a people. He made some reforms in the music of his state, and tried to abolish the lascivious songs of the dancing girls. The following quotations will illustrate the attitude of the Sage:

"Regarding the music of Woo, in the first scene, the pantomimes proceed towards the north to imitate the marching of Wu-Wang against the Shang dynasty. In the second scene, they show the extinction of Shang. In the third scene, they exhibit the victorious return to the south. In the fourth scene, they play the annexation of the southern states. In the fifth scene, they manifest the division of labor of the dukes of Chou and Shao, one on the left and the other on the right in charge of the empire. In the sixth scene, they return to the point of starting to show that the work of the emperor is complete and that the whole empire recognizes him as the supreme youth."¹

"In music the sages found pleasure and that it could be used to make the hearts of the people good. Because of the deep influence which it exerts on a man and the change which it produces in manners and customs, the ancient kings appointed it as one of the subjects of instruction."²

"The airs of Kang go to wild excess and debauch the mind; those of Sung speak of slothful indulgence and of women, and submerge the mind; those of Wei are strenuous and fast and perplex the mind; and those of Khi are violent and depraved and make the mind arrogant. The airs of these four states all stimulate libidinous desire and are injurious to virtue."³

"Whenever notes that are evil and depraved affect men, a corresponding evil spirit responds to them; and when this evil spirit accomplishes its manifestations, licentious music is the result. Whenever notes that are correct affect men, a corresponding good spirit

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1. Li Ki, book XVII, section III, 18.
2. Ibid., section II, 7.
2. Ibid., section III, 11.

responds to them; and when this good spirit accomplishes its manifestations, sublime music is the result."¹

"In an age of disorder, ceremonies and music are forgotten and neglected, and music becomes licentious."²

"The people of Ts'e sent to Loo a present of female musicians which Ke Hwan Tze accepted; and for three days no court was held. Confucius took his departure."³

"When one has mastered music completely and regulates his heart and mind accordingly, the natural, correct, gentle and sincere heart is easily developed and joy attends its development. This joy proceeds into a feeling of calm. This calm continues long. In this unbroken calm the man is Heaven within himself. Like unto Heaven, he is spiritual. Like unto Heaven, though he speak not, he is accepted. Spiritual, he commands awe, without displaying anger."⁴

5. Conclusion.

Space forbids treating the theme of this chapter with the thoroughness which it deserves. Confucius was the descendent of a nomadic people. They had been settled in China for probably more than 2500 years. He inherited a highly developed civilization, though the empire was in an unsettled state politically. His forbears were religious as shown in their cult, government institutions, literature and music; and this religion at times approached high ethical monotheism, in their prayers and music and sacrificial rites.

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1. Li Ki, book XVII, section II, 14.
2. Ibid., section II, 12.
3. Analects, book XVIII, ch. IV.
4. Li Ki, book XVII, section III, 23.

Dr. John Ross, an eminent missionary Sinologue, writing on the primitive religion of the Chinese, states the following among his conclusions:

"The terms Shang Ti, i.e. Supreme Ruler, and T'ien, i.e. Heaven, are used interchangeably throughout to denote the One God and Only Supreme Ruler over heaven and earth.

"The relation between the Supreme God and the inferior deities is practically that which was thought to exist in Canaan in the time of Abraham.

"During these twelve centuries, the religiosity of the Chinese is most pronounced. They appear to have lived under the unceasing consciousness of the presence and interference of an all-ruling Power, and under the protecting care of an intelligent, just, all-knowing, benevolent and almighty Providence.

"There was no image of any shape nor idol worship of any kind.

"There was no Temple to God or to Heaven. But anywhere and any time an altar could be erected on which to offer sacrifice to God. Hence we infer that God was believed to be everywhere present.

"No man was separated to be priest of the original religion.

"While wicked acts are always denounced, there is no indication of any consciousness of what corresponds to our idea of sinfulness; nor is there anything to imply a state of sinfulness or depravity. Sin in a spiritual sense is unnoted.

"Hence sacrifice was not offered as a pleading for the remission of sin, or as an acknowledgement of guilt. It was offered in gratitude for favors already received, or to avert threatened calamity, or to procure blessings in the future. It was a gift to secure the good will of the Being to whom it was offered. The idea of vicarious sacrifice is as completely absent as is the idea of holiness or sinfulness.

"To obtain restoration to the favor of God, Repentence, or a total change of the wicked life, is indispensable, and it is adequate.

"That goodness is, or shall be, rewarded; that wickedness is, or shall be, punished, whether in the person of king or peasant, high or low; is as emphatically taught as by the three friends of Job.

"The departed great and good are in 'Heaven' in the immediate presence of God, where the ancestral spirits abide. But they can come and go.

"Subordinate to God, and fulfilling the will of God, these ancestral spirits are actively interfering in the affairs of their descendants, to whom they are infinitely superior. But they show no partiality in favor of descendants who do evil, but will join in their chastisement."¹

When we take up in detail the personal religion of Confucius, we shall quote from original sources to substantiate the points made by Dr. Ross as far as they concern our subject. The religious and social inheritance which Confucius received was highly developed, incomparably better than the spiritual and moral traditions of early Greece and Rome, and similar to the faith of ancient Israel.

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1. Ross, John: The Original Religion of China. Quoted by Dr. C. H. Fenn in an unpublished manuscript.

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS IN THE TIME OF CONFUCIUS

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We have found what a rich religious and cultural heritage Confucius possessed, especially in the literature and traditions of the past. But what was the religious situation in his own time? Politically the country was sinking in war and anarchy. Were religious conditions chaotic? How many kinds of cult were in vogue? Were the six recognized kinds of cult congruous with each other and easily harmonized? Or were they mutually inconsistent and contradictory? With these questions in mind we shall examine these cults one by one. This will give us a background for appreciating and interpreting Confucius' personal religion.

1. Worship of Ancestors.

Much of the literature of ancient China is taken up with description of ancestral worship. The first two decades of odes are mostly prepared for ancestral worship by princes and officials.¹ This ritual has been handed down with almost no change, and is carried out as follows, as many residents in China have seen and known, including myself:

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1. Legge, James: Sacred Books of the East. Vol. III, pp. 300 ff.

At set times in the Spring and Autumn every clan has such services. The male members of the clan are all expected to be present and to take part. The services last several days, during which time clan business is transacted, such as writing up the family records, providing for management of the common property of the clan and its schools, discipline of unruly members, settling of quarrels between members of the clan, erection and upkeep of clan temples, care of the graveyard, and celebrating the clan ceremonial rites. Each grave is cleaned and decorated, bowls of meat and dainties are offered at each grave, and the spirits of the dead are invited to partake of the feast with the living.

How did such worship arise? Some think that after the death of a relative some one had a dream in which he saw the departed apparently alive and active. This dream, along with a desire for future life, led to a belief that the spirits of the dead were alive and present.

The prayers invoked the presence of the dead, praised them and sought their help in attaining prosperity and in averting disaster. Herbert A. Giles quotes a prayer offered by the Viceroy of Manchuria at a memorial service for Dr. Arthur Jackson, a devoted young medical missionary who lost his life fighting the plague in the year 1911 A.D., which ended thus:

"O Spirit of Dr. Jackson, we pray you intercede for the twenty million people of Manchuria, and ask the Lord of the Sky to take away this pestilence, so that we may once more lay our heads in peace upon our pillows. In life you were brave, now you are an exalted spirit. Noble Spirit, who sacrificed your life for us, still look down in kindness upon us all."¹

Though the above prayer is not offered to ancestors, yet its general style follows that of the prayers offered in ancestral worship.

Some Chinese, especially sophisticated modern students, do not look upon ancestral worship as religious ceremonial. I have read magazine articles in which Chinese writers hold that the ceremonies are merely memorial, that no one expects the dead to smell the savory steam of the meat or to partake in eating the feast, any more than an American would expect a departed friend to smell the fragrance of the flowers or to see their beauty when they are scattered on the grave. The prayers and the hymns are ritual art. In the early days of Catholic missions in China the Jesuits took a similar view, and the wording of the ancestral prayer was modified to be similar to the invocation of saints: but this view was over-ruled by the Pope. Protestant missionaries and Chinese church leaders have, almost without exception, found ancestral worship to be incompatible with Christianity.

In the last years of the Manchu Dynasty students

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1. Giles, Herbert A.: Confucianism and Its Rivals, p. 261.

in all government schools were required to worship Confucius, and Christian students asked to be excused on the ground that they worshipped only one God; the Board of Education replied that the ceremony merely involved honoring Confucius as a Sage and in no way recognized him as a god, even though he was canonized as the Equal of Heaven and Earth.

Confucius approved of worship of ancestors, as we shall consider more fully later. But it is almost certain that he did not recognize them as gods.

2. Worship of Spirits of Rivers and Mountains.

Belief in spirits is universal in China. Many of the prayers recorded in the ancient literature were offered to nature spirits, especially to spirits of rivers and of mountains. These spirits are considered to be agents of Heaven, and subordinate to the rule of Heaven. Fertility, famine, flood, and all natural phenomena are due to the activity of spirits. The spirits really are the laws or forces of nature. How did the belief in them as spiritual personalities arise? Is this belief a relic of primitive animism? Or was primitive religion originally theistic, and is belief in spirits a form of degradation?

The Chinese transact much of their business through middle-men in preference to direct negotiation. If they thought of the forces of nature as agents of Heaven

they would normally prefer to pray to Heaven through these forces personified than by direct prayer. Some of our Roman Catholic friends prefer to invoke the saints and the Virgin Mary rather than to pray direct to God. They feel a modest reluctance to enter the presence of the Almighty. Besides, it was permitted to the emperor alone to offer formal sacrifices to Heaven. The common citizen confined his prayers to his ancestors and to the spirits of natural forces, rather than to direct prayer to God.

Mencius, the most noted of Confucian scholars, writes:

"The people are of first importance; the spirits of the land and grain come next; the sovereign is of less account. If a prince abuses his position in regard to the spirits of the land and grain (that is, if he is a bad ruler), he is deposed and another is put in his place. On the other hand, if the sacrificial victims have been perfect, the sacrificial grain clean, and the sacrifices offered at the proper season, then if a drought should follow, or a flood, the spirits of the land and grain would be deposed and others put in their place."¹

At no time did the Chinese confuse the worship of these spirits with the worship of Heaven. They always believed, as far as their ancient literature shows, in one supreme god. R. K. Douglas writes:

"On the death of Yao, Shun, who had shared his throne for some years, succeeded as sole emperor. Like his predecessor, he was 'profound, wise, accomplished, and intelligent. He was mild, respectful, and quite sincere. The report of his mysterious virtue was heard

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1. Mencius: Book VII, Part II, Ch. XIV.

on high, and he was appointed to take the throne.' One of his first public acts, after having still further perfected the astronomical calculations of Yao, was to sacrifice to Shang-Ti, the Supreme Ruler or God. 'Thereafter,' we are told, 'he sacrificed specially, but with the ordinary forms, to Shang-Ti; sacrificed with purity and reverence to the six Honored Ones; offered appropriate sacrifices to the hills and rivers; and extended his worship to the host of spirits.'

"This is the first mention we have in Chinese history of religious worship, though the expressions used plainly imply that the worship of Shang-Ti at least had previously existed. It is to this Supreme Being that all the highest forms of adoration have been offered in all ages...In all probability there was a time when the worship of Shang-Ti was the expression of the pure monotheistic faith of the Chinese. By degrees, however, corruptions crept in, and though Shang-Ti always remained the supreme object of veneration, they saw no disloyalty to him in rendering homage to the powers of nature which they learnt to personify, and to the spirits of their departed ancestors, who were supposed to guard and watch over, in a subordinate manner, the welfare of their descendents."¹

There is probably as much evidence for primitive theism in China as for primitive animism, and some, like Douglas and Martin, would consider that theism was the original form and that animistic worship of spirits was a degenerate addition to the primitive faith. This high worship of the Supreme Ruler was later still further corrupted by the introduction of Buddhistic Polytheism and idolatrous superstitions.

The Old Testament represents the Israelites as many times forsaking their monotheistic worship to engage in lascivious, idolatrous rites. The Christian Church has

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1. Douglas, R.K.: Confucianism and Taoism, pp. 11-12.

had periods of decline into indifference, corruption, magical ritual and depravity, necessitating the rise of such reformers as Savonarola, Calvin, Luther, and Wesley. History thus shows that changes in religious belief are not always and necessarily for the better.

3. Human Sacrifice.

Human sacrifice in Chinese history has sometimes been identified with ancestral worship and with worship of nature spirits. It may have had some elements of mistaken worship, but political motives seem to have been dominant. As there has been some question as to the facts concerning this cruel custom, it will be well to quote Dr. Giles' excellent summary.

"Under B.C. 637 we read that the ruler of one feudal State insisted upon the ruler of another State offering up in sacrifice the ruler of a third State, in order, as we are told, to awe certain wild tribes which had been giving trouble. A minister, too late to save the victim, spoke as follows: 'Of old, the six domestic animals were not sacrificed indifferently, one for another; neither for small matters were large animals used. How much less, then, would human beings have been taken as victims? Sacrifices are offered for the benefit of men. Men are the hosts, and spirits are the guests. If you sacrifice a man, who will enjoy it? Our ruler, at his assembly of the feudal princes, has treated with oppression the rulers of two other States, and has further used one of them in sacrifice to a disgusting and unrecognized spirit. Will it not be difficult to secure the hegemony of the States in this way? Our ruler will be lucky if he dies in his bed.'

"A little more than one hundred years later, B.C. 529, we read that the prince of the Ch'u State succeeded in extinguishing the Ts'ai State, and sacrificed the eldest son of his vanquished rival. Even if the sacrifice of

human beings, in the usual acceptance of the term, was not widely practiced, we know that both men and women were often buried alive as companions to the dead. Under B.C. 590 we have an account of the burial of a feudal ruler, who had governed badly and had wasted the resources of his State upon improper objects. His two chief ministers gave him an extravagant funeral, using lime made from burnt oyster-shells (as extracted at the present day) for lining the inside of the grave, and having more than the usual number of carriages and horses, for which they were duly censured by the 'superior man,' who is here supposed to be none other than the writer of the commentary himself.

"When the Duke Mu, the ruler of the Ch'in State, died in B.C. 618, three brothers were buried alive with him. They were all good men, and their fellow-countrymen mourned their loss in the Ode called the Yellow Birds, which was specially composed to their memory.

"In another case, one of the feudal princes, seeing that some mess had been made in his court-yard, fell down in a fit of passion upon a charcoal brazier, and was so badly burnt that he died. Five chariots with their teams of horses, together with five men, were buried alive in his honor. The historian quaintly adds that his death was due, partly to his violent temper and partly to his love of cleanliness."¹

The Confucian doctrine is that Burial of the living with the dead is not in accordance with established rites. In modern China, houses, horses, money and companions, all made of paper, are burned at the funeral of the well to do. This custom may be a sublimation of the older custom of funerals for princes. In any case the burial of the living was not approved by Confucius or by any other one authorized to speak in behalf of ancestral worship, or in behalf of spirit worship.

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1. Giles, Herbert A.: Confucianism and Its Rivals, pp. 47-50.

4. Lao-Tzu, the Founder of Taoism.

Lao-Tzu is reputed to have been born in 604 B.C., about fifty years before the birth of Confucius. Historical evidence concerning him is scanty, but legends are many. He seems to have been a transcendental philosopher, and is credited with being the author of the Tao-Teh-Ching, which is a book of five thousand characters and has many interpolations. Lao-Tzu and Confucius met on one memorable occasion, and Confucius said that Lao-Tzu was like a dragon, i.e., a man of great ability and daring.¹

The Tao is the mystic way of life. In the Chinese version of the Christian New Testament in the first chapter of the Gospel of Saint John, Tao is used to translate 道, the Word. Two of many reputed sayings of Lao-Tzu should be noted here. Chuang-Tzu, a disciple of Lao Tzu, about 300 B.C., says: "A man looks upon God as his father, and loves him in like measure. Shall he, then, not love that which is greater than God?" He conceives God to be the father of men and Tao to be greater than God. He attempts to reconcile belief in a personal God with belief in the reign of law.²

In the Tao-Teh-Ching we read: "Recompense in-

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1. Plopper, C.H.: Chinese Religion Seen Through the Proverb, p. 52.
2. Giles, Herbert A.: Confucianism and Its Rivals, p. 136.

jury with kindness."¹ In the Confucian Analects we find: "Someone said, 'What do you say concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness?' The Master said: 'With what then will you recompense kindness? Recompense injury with justice and recompense kindness with kindness.'"² Confucius faced the problem of reconciling mercy with justice, and made justice dominant. Lao-Tzu anticipated the merciful spirit of Christ.

Present-day Taoists chant the Tao-Teh-Ching chiefly in incantations; and in popular life Taoism has degenerated into a system of magic to exercise evil spirits and to discover the pill of immortality!

5. Worship of Heaven By Emperor.

Twice a year, at the Winter and Summer solstices, the Emperor as high-priest of the nation, ascended the altar of Heaven and prostrated himself before the God of Heaven. He confessed the sins of himself and people, and prayed for bounteous harvests and the blessings of peace. The night before the sacrifice was spent in an adjoining hall in meditation and fasting. The chief object of sacrifice was a whole bullock. Music, the chanting of prayers, the burning of incense, marked the night. The prayers were written and read. A tray containing the blood and hair of

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1. Tao-Teh-Ching, Ch. 63.

2. Analects, Book IV, Ch. 3.

the bullock, soup, silk, wine, grain, and jade, was offered beneath the blue canopy of the far-reaching sky. All except the jade were burnt. This was probably the most ancient, well-attested form of theistic worship in the world.

When the Manchus abdicated, this worship ceased. But in 1913 the Chinese government requested the Christian Churches throughout the world to pray for the new Republic. Formerly prayer to the God of Heaven for the nation was restricted to the Emperor, the so-called Son of Heaven, not by birth, but by adoption by virtue of his office. So the way was opened for the humblest citizen to pray formally to God in behalf of the nation. The proverb says: "When you drink water, you think of the fountain,--be mindful of the source of your benefit."¹

Yuan Shih-kai in 1915 revived the worship of Heaven in most of its ancient splendor. This action was interpreted by many Chinese as an announcement that he would try to ascend the dragon throne. Later events showed that their interpretation was correct.²

Heaven as used in the ancient Chinese literature, is a more or less ambiguous term. It has at least three meanings. Primarily it means the sky. Then it is used to denote nature or natural law. Lastly Heaven has the idea

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1. Baller, F.W.: Mandarin Primer, p. 245.

2. Giles, Herbert A.: Op. cit., pp. 262-263.

of a Personal Being, who makes his home in the azure clouds that clothe the realms above, and rules the universe with grace and justice. This last idea is found in the earliest writings.¹

Wilder and Ingram state that T'ien, the character for Heaven, means "Heaven, the sky, a day, the weather, celestial; the Emperor, great, high, any superior over an inferior; moral superiority."²

Dr. Giles says: "A longer and closer acquaintance with the Confucian Canon has satisfied me that the proper equivalent of our word 'God' is T'ien; and that Shang-Ti, 'Supreme Ruler,' was originally a mere epithet of T'ien, but gradually came to be employed almost in the sense of another Being, yet not another Being."³ It is somewhat similar to the use of the names of Yah-weh and Elohim as names for God in the Old Testament. (See quotation from Dr. Soothill in the next section.)

6. Worship of Shang-Ti, the Supreme Ruler.

Shang-Ti literally means "The Emperor Above", and carries the thought that as the sky has only one sun and the earth only one emperor, so the universe has one supreme ruler. He is not merely moral law nor the personi-

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1. Fenn, C. H.: Five Thousand Dictionary, p. 460.

2. Wilder and Ingram: Analysis of Chinese Characters, p. 44.

3. Giles, Herbert A.: Op. cit., p. 12.

fication of Heaven, nor was he considered to be a person in the fullest sense of the word.

D. W. Lyon, D.D., in "Religious Values in Confucianism", quotes D. T. Suzuki as stating in "A Brief History of Early Chinese Philosophy": "The Chinese never caught a glimpse of their God. He was hidden far up in the azure skies, he could not be brought into personal touch with mortals. His presence could only be inferred through the manifestations of his power--that is, through extraordinary natural phenomena."¹ His worship was usually reserved for the emperor alone, as "Son of Heaven" and as high-priest of his nation. The common people worshipped the spirits of their ancestors and the spirits of nature.

W. E. Soothill says:

"We find in the History and the Odes, that to God, whether considered as the personal Shang-Ti, or the impersonal T'ien (Heaven), the following qualities are attributed: He hears and sees; He enjoys offerings; He has a heart or mind; He is aided by men, and deputes His work, especially to kings and their ministers; He can be honored and served; He is awe-inspiring, of dread majesty, and to be feared; He confers on men their moral sense, and makes retention of His favor dependent on character; His will is glorious, may be known, and must be complied with; a virtuous king is after His own heart, but he will have no regard to the ill-doer; with such a one He is angry; the virtuous king He will reward with ease and dignity; the appointment is contingent and He cannot be relied upon not to reverse it, for His favor may be lost; He protects,

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1. Suzuki, D. T.: A Brief History of Early Chinese Philosophy, quoted by D. W. Lyon in "Religious Values in Confucianism".

but may withdraw His protection; He warns, corrects, and punishes the evil king; even afflicts, ruins, and destroys him, and of this instances are clearly given. Such are the principal qualities attributed equally to Shang-Ti and T'ien.

"In addition, other qualities are ascribed both by History and the Odes to T'ien. T'ien gives birth to the people; It gives valor and wisdom to princes; It gives blessings to the good and woes to the evil; It ordains the social order, the religious and social ceremonies, and human virtues; It sends down rain; It is gracious to men and helps them; Its will is unerring; It does not shorten men's lives, they do that themselves; It is not bound to individuals by ties of biased affections; It commands men to rectify their character; It gives man his nature, compassionates him, and grants his desires; It is only moved by virtue, but men may cry and pray to It, for It will hear. In addition to many of the above, the Odes ascribe to Shang-Ti, that He is great; that He appoints grain for nourishment; that He gives comfort, but also hates; that He smells a sweet savor; that He spoke to King Wen; that He is an example or pattern, and, in a doubtful passage, that He left a toe-print on the earth. In reference to T'ien the Odes also speak of a visitant from Heaven; call T'ien pitying and just; say that It can be offended; call It our parent; invoke It; say that King Wen is in Heaven; describe It as enlightening the people; as intelligent and clear-seeing; as giving blessings and prosperity; and speak of God (Ti) as being in the great Heaven."¹

The above quotation from Dr. Soothill gives in a few words a remarkably clear summary of the teachings of the Chinese Canon of History and Book of Odes in regard to Shang-Ti and to T'ien (Heaven). One feels that Dr. Soothill is hardly warranted in suggesting a contrast between Shang-Ti and T'ien, making Shang-Ti personal and T'ien impersonal. This is probably due to the fact that T'ien

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1. Soothill, W. E.: The Three Religions of China.

is sometimes used for Sky, or for Nature, or for Natural Law, or for the abode of spiritual beings, as well as for God. But when T'ien means God, that God is certainly personal, as can be seen above.

The worship of Heaven by the Emperor dates from the time of Shun, the twenty-third century before Christ, as an established institution. The chief sacrifice was a red bullock as a burnt offering. The worship is frequently spoken of in a monotheistic manner, but as offerings were also made to Earth and to the spirits of the seasons, the monotheism is more or less obscure.¹

The regular worship of Heaven continued as the chief cult of the State Religion of China until the Manchu Dynasty abdicated in 1911. Yuan Shih-Kai revived it for one occasion in 1915, launching his unsuccessful effort to become Emperor and to found a new Dynasty. It has always been considered that the Emperor alone has the privilege of sacrificing publicly to Heaven, the Supreme Ruler, since the Emperor is looked on as the Son of Heaven by adoption and as the High Priest of the Nation.

We shall close this discussion about Shang-Ti with the following quotation from Dr. Legge:

"The Shih (Odes) does not speak of the worship which was paid to God, unless it be incidentally. There

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1. Barton, G. A.: The Religions of the World, pp.205-209.

were two grand occasions on which it was rendered by the sovereign--the summer and winter solstices. These two sacrifices were offered on different altars, that in winter being often described as offered to Heaven, and that in summer to Earth; but we have the testimony of Confucius, in the nineteenth chapter of the Doctrine of the Mean, that the object of them both was to serve Shang-Ti."¹

This last statement gives us a key that may help to unlock a large room of ambiguity. Heaven and Shang-Ti are identified as one god. Shang-Ti is God in his regal splendor, the Emperor of the universe. Heaven is God as manifested in the seasons and the harvests and the powers of nature. Even worship and sacrifices may be offered on an altar to Earth in serving and adoring Shang-Ti.

7. Recapitulation.

Little is said about the origin of the universe. Confucius does not teach creation by God, but implies that matter is eternal. In the Classic of Mutations we read: "First was Heaven and Earth, then all creatures were born."²

There may have been superstitious cults, such as witchcraft, fortune-telling, necromancy, magic, and the like; but, if so, such practices were not recognized

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1. Legge, James: Sacred Books of the East, Vol. III, p. 302.
2. Plopper, C. H.: Op. cit., No. 52.

as legitimate religion. Confucius disapproved of human sacrifice. He advocated ancestral worship, but with restraint, as we shall see later. He did not define his attitude to Taoism, though he condemned the teaching of Lao-Tzu that we should recompense injury with kindness.

If Confucius is to be viewed as a monotheist, it must be shown that he considered the spirits of nature and the ancestral spirits as subordinate to the one supreme God, and also that the names of Shang-Ti and Heaven refer to one and the same God. In the evidence already given there is some indication that the above view is correct. If we are properly to classify Confucius from a religious point of view, we shall need to keep these two points in mind in evaluating the argument.

CHAPTER III

LIFE OF CONFUCIUS

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Sze Ma Chien and other Chinese historians, piecing together bits of information, not only from the Confucian Canon, but also from other ancient sources, have worked out a biography of Confucius, including a chronology. For many centuries China's brightest scholars have labored on this theme, and the conclusions which they have reached are recognized by Western scholars to be reliable. The articles on Confucius in the standard Encyclopaedias agree on the dates and the general outline of the Sage's life as here given.

A man's religion does not depend entirely on his inherited cult and religious environment. His spiritual growth and ideals depend even more on his own experiences. The aim of this chapter is to review the general outline of Confucius' biography. We shall reserve for the following chapter his more intimate religious life.

1. Noble Ancestry.

The brief review which we have made of the history of China in ancient times and of the religious conditions in the time of Confucius give us an introduction to the study of the life of Confucius. Politically the country was divided into many small states and there were

constant civil wars. In spite of a high degree of civilization, the nation in many places was in anarchy. In religion there seems to be a fundamental ethical theism, but this was obscured by ancestral worship and diverse cults and beliefs.

The birth of Confucius is usually put in 551 B.C. His family has probably the longest authentic history of any family in the world, extending almost five thousand years. His father was Shuh-liang Heih of the Kung Clan. He was an official of excellent reputation, noted for his commanding stature, physical strength and unusual bravery. When seventy years old he wished to retire and to marry, and consulted a friend by the name of Yen who had three daughters. The youngest daughter thought that the father should help the old gentleman to find a bride. The father thereupon said: "And you shall be the bride." Thus the young Yen-Ching-tsai was married to the seventy-year old Heih. When Confucius was born there was great rejoicing.

Heih's genealogy went back to the early days of China, being traced through the Shang Dynasty to the Emperor Hwang-Ti. A descendent of the House of Shang was invested by the King Wu-Wang with the dukedom of Sung, which lay in the territory of the Province of Honan. There we find the Kung Clan flourishing in the Eighth Century before Christ. The Kung family furnished high officers in Sung.

In time, however, the chief representative of the Kung family, in order to better his position, moved from Sung to the state of Lu, the territory of which lay in the present Province of Shantung, and Heih, the father of Confucius was Commandant of the district of Tsow. The family settled in the present department of Yen-Chow, where Confucius was born. The senior descendent of Confucius has the title of Duke and represents the eightieth generation from the Sage. So the family has historic records from almost three thousand years before Christ to almost two thousand after Christ. It is said that of this long line of ancestors there is only one name that rests under a cloud. Most of the line were illustrious officials and scholars.

There are eight titles of nobility given in imperial China, corresponding roughly to the eight titles granted in England. But the title was not necessarily inherited by the oldest son, but went to the son whom the Clan thought most worthy. Also the son did not inherit the same title as his father, but one of lower degree, so that in a few generations the title became extinct. However, if the son did unusually meritorious service for the state or gained distinction as a scholar he might be raised one or two degrees in the titles of nobility. The fact that the Confucian family has had the title of duke for

many generations speaks well for the descendents of the Sage.¹ A popular proverb says: "When titles are fittingly given and speech fittingly used, anything may be accomplished."²

Dr. Sun Yat-sen says:

"Nature originally did not make man equal; but when autocracy developed among mankind, the despotic kings and princes pushed human differences to an extreme, and the result was an inequality far worse than Nature's inequality. The inequality created by kings and princes was an artificial inequality.

Diagram I. Inequality

"Emperor or King
Prince
Duke
Marquis
Earl
Viscount
Baron
People.

Diagram III. True Equality

"The Sage
The Superior Man
The Genius
The Wise Man
The Average Man
The Mediocre Man
The Dullard
The Inferior Man."³

The quotations given above illustrate three typical attitudes of the Chinese mind. First, that men are essen-

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1. In E. H. Parker's "Studies in Chinese Religion", pp.184-197, much interesting information is given about the hereditary Duke Confucius. The information about hereditary titles usually being made lower until they are extinguished, was given to me in conversation with Chinese scholars.
2. Baller, F. W.: Mandarin Primer, p. 369.
3. San Min Chu I, pp. 217, 218, 220.

tially unequal, just as trees are not of the same height, and, therefore, harmony can be secured only by the subordination of the young and low to the old and superior. Second, that titles to indicate position in the social scale are necessary to maintain peace and harmony. Third, that the Sage is naturally the highest, even above the emperor. Hereditary titles of royalty and nobility are makeshifts at the best, and often become sources of abominable injustice. No idea of caste is tolerated.

2. Poverty in Childhood.

When Confucius was three years old the father died, leaving to his family a good name and but little property. The lad learned to do the menial duties of a family in straightened circumstances. When he was only five or six years old the neighbors noticed that in his games he was fond of playing with his companions in carrying out sacrifices and ceremonial rites. At fifteen years of age his mind was set on learning. He had a healthy childhood of play, work and study.

3. Character of Mother.

Confucius is not noted for giving a high position to women. Once he wrote: "Of all people, girls and servants are the most difficult to behave to. If you are familiar with them, they lose their humility; if you maintain a

reserve toward them, they are discontented."¹ Confucius, however, always had the highest regard and reverence for his mother, and attributed to her his early high ideals and fondness for learning. During years of poverty she kept the family together and made it possible for the son to study. "He afterwards remembered gratefully this discipline of poverty. 'When I was young my condition was low, and therefore I acquired my ability in many things.'"²

In the Hsiao King, a book of high value in the Confucian Apocrypha, the Sage is reported to say: "As they serve their fathers, so they serve their mothers, and they love them equally."³ A common maxim is, "If one does not learn in youth, what will one do when old?"⁴

4. Marriage at Nineteen Years of Age.

In accordance with immemorial Chinese customs of marriage at an early age, Confucius was married at the age of nineteen. His wife came from his ancestral state of Sung. He had a son and two daughters. His wife was not exactly a Xantippe, but for some reason he did not live with her for a time. Some say that he divorced her so as to have more time to devote to his philosophical pursuits,

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1. Analects, Book XVII, ch. 25.
2. "Procession of the Gods", p. 295.
3. Hsiao King, ch. V.
4. Baller, F. W.: Mandarin Primer, p. 26.

but most authorities now state that he did not really divorce her. After his marriage he was employed by the Ki Clan near his home, first as keeper of stores, and then as superintendent of parks and herds. He took such subordinate offices because of his poverty. He distinguished himself by the efficiency which he displayed, and made no attempt to become rich.

5. Teaches School at Twenty-two Years of Age and Later.

In his twenty-second year we find Confucius busy teaching school. He probably began with a small group of enquiring youths who wished to learn the principles of right conduct and government. He accepted gifts from those who were able to give, but he did not refuse any because they were poor. He rejected all who did not show ability and zeal. He said: "When I have presented one corner of a subject to any one and he cannot learn from it the other three, I do not repeat my lesson."¹ "There are four things which the Master, Confucius, taught: letters, ethics, devotion of soul, and truthfulness."² On the other hand, "the subjects on which the Master did not talk were extraordinary things, feats of strength, disorder, and spiritual beings."³

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1. Analects, Book XII, ch. 8.
2. Ibid., Book VII, ch. 24.
2. Ibid., Book VII, ch. 20.

The course of study offered by Confucius emphasized history and literature. He attracted youth by his desire to reform. He hoped to restore the golden age. The course doubtless included the Chinese equivalent of the European Trivium of the Middle Ages--Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic. But the logic would be not the formal logic of our Western science, but just as convincing and relentless as the best that our Occident offers.

As the young men were hoping to enter public service, the courses would include accounting and law, and the rules for ceremonial etiquette. The old line Confucian schools, in vogue in China until the year 1906, taught such subjects in preparing their students for the civil service examinations. Confucius is represented as austere in demeanor, and strict in discipline. But his enthusiasm, patriotism, and sincere love for his pupils, won their unswerving loyalty.

He taught: "When you know a thing, to hold that you know it, and when you do not know a thing, to acknowledge that you do not know it--this is knowledge."¹ Also, "In the Book of Poetry are three hundred pieces, but the design of them all may be embraced in one sentence: 'Have no depraved thoughts.'"² And, "They who know the truth are not

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1. Analects, Book II, ch. XVII.

2. Ibid., Book II, ch. II.

equal to them that love it, and they who love it are not equal to them that find pleasure in it."1

Again, "There are four things from which the Master was entirely free: He had no foregone conclusions, no arbitrary predeterminations, no obstinacy, and no egoism."2

Moreover, "Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous."3

"The Duke of She asked Tsze-Loo about Confucius and Tsze-Loo did not answer him. The Master said, 'Why did you not say to him: He is simply a man who in his eager pursuit of knowledge forgets his food, who in the joy of attaining it, forgets his sorrows, and who does not perceive that old age is coming on?'"4

Confucius not only coveted an impartial search after truth wherever it might lead him, and found an ecstatic joy in the pursuit of knowledge, but he believed that truth is in order to goodness. The practical results of education in the development of character was his chief concern. He says: "Teaching should be directed to develop that in which the pupil excels, and correct the defects to which he is prone."5

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1. Analects, Book VI, ch. XVIII.
2. Ibid., Book IX, ch. IV.
3. Ibid., Book II, ch. XV.
4. Ibid., Book VII, ch. XVIII.
5. Li Ki, Book XVI, 14.

He taught that "Men possess a moral nature; but if they are well fed, warmly clad, and comfortably lodged, without at the same time being instructed, they become like unto beasts."¹

Living with young men, he retained his own youthful ideals. He entered old age imperceptibly and gracefully. He recognized the unity of man, and that true education must provide not only for intellectual advancement, but even more for moral and spiritual development. Man is not merely a high-class animal. In a real sense he is a child of God, as the sacrificial Ode of the Chou Dynasty shows.

6. Death of Confucius' Mother.

When the Sage was twenty-four years old his mother died. He buried her in the same grave with his father. Confucius is considered to be the father of die-hard conservatives. Yet he did not hesitate to strike out on new paths when he thought it wise to do so. To commemorate his mother he raised a mound over her grave, which was not in accord with the custom of antiquity. This innovation later became the recognized practice throughout China. He expected to travel and wished to be able to find his mother's grave whenever he returned. After the funeral he left his disciples to finish the work of building the mound. Their work was delayed by a rain. When Confucius

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1. Mencius, Book III, part I, ch. IV, v. 8; also *Ante* p. 18.

heard of it, he exclaimed, "Ah, they did not raise mounds over their graves in antiquity," and wept for the loss of his mother and for the change which he was making in the ancient customs.

He observed the rules for mourning for the usual twenty-seven months. He allowed five more days to elapse before he would take up the lute, of which he was very fond. And it was some time after that before he could sing. He showed signal affection and honor for his mother.

It is sometimes said that the death of loved ones makes a man either more deeply religious or else it makes him cynical. When Confucius saw his mother pass through the valley of the shadow of death, it deepened his love and reverence.

7. His System of Philosophy Established.

In Analects, Confucius says: "At fifteen I had my mind bent on learning. At thirty I stood firm. At forty I was free from doubt. At fifty I knew the decrees of Heaven. At sixty my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth. At seventy I could follow what my heart desired without transgressing what was right."¹ Such is the brief autobiography of the Sage. It is thought that when he was thirty years of age his life-plan was

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1. Analects, Book II, ch. 4.

fixed and his philosophy was established.

We moderns believe in standardization of goods and in mass production. Confucius also believed in standardization and mass production, not only of perishable goods, but also of morals. In the Doctrine of the Mean we read: "Now throughout the empire carriages all have wheels with the same tread, all writing is with the same characters, and for conduct there are the same rules."¹

A recurring note in his teachings is found in the Great Learning: "In a state, gain is not to be considered prosperity, but prosperity is found in righteousness."²

One author states:

"In the writings of Confucius, the duties of husband and wife were slightly dwelt upon; the duties and implicit obedience of children to their parents were most rigidly inculcated. Upon this wide principle of filial obedience the whole of his system, moral and political, is founded. A family is the prototype of the nation; and, instead of the notions of independence and equality among men, he enforces the principles of dependence and subordination--as of children to parents, the younger to the elder. By an easy fiction, the Emperor stands as the father of all his subjects, and is thus entitled to their passive obedience; and, as Dr. Morrison observes, it is probably (he might say certainly) this feature of his doctrines which has made Confucius such a favorite with all the governments of China. . . .

"At the same time it should be observed that this fundamental doctrine has rendered the Chinese people slavish, deceitful, and pusillanimous, and has fostered the growth of a national character that cannot be redeemed by gentleness of deportment and orderliness of conduct."³

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1. Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 28, v. 3.
2. The Great Learning, ch. 10, v. 23.
3. McClintock and Strong's Encyclopaedia, Vol. II, p. 471.

The author above condemns the central feature of Confucius' philosophy, filial obedience, and finds the Chinese character almost beyond redemption on account of this obedience. I need hardly add that many critics, on the other hand, find this doctrine to be in general a wholesome teaching, somewhat similar to the Fifth Commandment of the Mosaic Decalogue. It is, however, admitted by some leaders of the Nationalist Party that this doctrine is sometimes carried so far as to hinder progress and hamper the development of the individual.

Dr. Cleland B. McAfee finds the centre of Confucius' philosophy to be "the belief in a moral order of the universe and consequent insistence on moral conduct,"¹ quoting the attitude of the Jerusalem Conference.

8. Distinguished Pupils and Travel.

When the Sage was thirty-four years old, two descendents of one of the principal families in Lu joined the group of his disciples. The marquis of the State gave him funds and he took the two distinguished youth to visit the capital of the kingdom. Here he inspected the royal library and studied the music which was highly developed at the court. It was at this time that he is reported to have had several visits with Lao-tse, the father of Taoism.²

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1. "The Uncut Nerve of Missions," p. 55.
2. Plopper, C. H.: Op. cit., p. 52.

Confucius had a high regard for the educational possibilities of travel. This was his first extended journey and he was greatly impressed with what he saw and learned. One of the most famous of the Confucian proverbs is: "All within the four seas are brethren."¹

In the Classic of Ceremonies, the Sage says: "In music the sages found pleasure and that it could be used to make the hearts of the people good."² And, "Music springs from the inner motions of the soul; ceremonies are the outward motions of the body. Therefore do men make ceremonies as few and short as possible, but give free range to music."³ And, "The sages made music in response to Heaven and framed ceremonies in correspondence with earth."⁴

Confucius was pre-eminently a teacher. His educational methods were successful. He had seventy famous pupils in the more than three thousand that studied under him. He has been revered as the ideal school teacher for two thousand five hundred years. His wide insight and catholic sympathies have given the Chinese scholars a wonderful stability and poise in a changing world.

9. Governor of Chung-Tu.

An aphorism says: "When the government is good,

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1. Plopper, C. H.: Op. cit., No. 2.
2. Classic of Ceremonies, Book XVII, sec. ii. 7.
3. Ibid., sec. iii, v. 26.
4. Ibid., sec. i, v. 29.

heaven is favorable; when officials are incorruptible, the people are in peace."¹

At fifty-two years of age the Sage was appointed Governor of the city and county of Chung-Tu, which is now in Shantung Province. The manners of the people were transformed. People did not need to lock their houses. If a purse were dropped in the middle of the street it would be returned to the owner. Thieves and robbers either repented or fled.

10. Minister of Justice.

The marquis of Lu heard of the Sage's reputation and called him to a higher office, appointing him to be the Minister of Crime for the State of Lu. And lo, there was no crime. With the help of two of his former pupils who now held high office, he was able to punish a high officer, whom none hitherto had dared to convict. Some of the powers of the marquis had been usurped by various ministers: Confucius restored the full authority of the marquis, by defeating in turn the various families that had seized authority.

In negotiations with the State of Ts'i, Confucius was able to uphold the rights of Lu. It is said: "He strengthened the ruler and repressed the barons. A transforming government went abroad. Dishonesty and dissolute-

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1. Baller, G. A.: Op. cit., p. 336

ness hid their heads. Loyalty and good faith became the characteristics of the men, and chastity and docility those of the women. He was the idol of the people, and flew in songs through their mouths."¹

The marquis of Ts'i plotted to overthrow the influence of Confucius and so to weaken the power of Lu. He presented the marquis of Lu with a number of beautiful women, trained in music and in dancing, and with a troop of fine horses. The plot succeeded. The marquis of Lu spent so much of his time in his harem and in hunting, that he neglected the duties of state. Confucius felt that he must have the support of the marquis or else he must resign his high office. He resigned and gradually withdrew to the borders of the state, hoping that the marquis would recall him. Indulging in personal pleasures and listening to rival officials, the marquis lost his one loyal minister, and the State of Lu began to decline. The Chinese, instead of eyeing gifts brought by the Greeks, say: "He gave a good prescription, but sold bad medicine."²

Confucius was an active official only a few years. But in that short time he was remarkably successful in establishing and maintaining order. The methods were recog-

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1. See Dr. Legge's article on Confucius in Encyclopedia Britannica, eleventh edition.
2. Baller, F. W.: Op. cit., p. 379.

nized by all that studied them to be correct. But his prince was weak, and his fellow officials were jealous and corrupt, which so thwarted his efforts at reformation that he felt compelled to resign. His record has been an inspiration to all that have tried to govern honestly and righteously ever since.

11. Confucius, a Pilgrim.

When the Sage was fifty-six years old he resigned from his high office in his native State of Lu and began a long series of travels, which lasted for thirteen years. He visited many States and rulers, accompanied by a few of his most faithful disciples. His hope was that some ruler would invite him to office and authorize him to govern in accordance with his philosophy, which was now famous and widely admired by the common people and by idealistic youth. In most States he was received with distinction and had interviews with the rulers and scholars, but he did not again hold office.

It was during these travels that he was several times put in great danger. The civil wars and anarchic conditions in many places made travel dangerous. Owing to poverty he was at times in extreme want. Tze-Lu, one of his bravest disciples, asked him: "Has the superior man, indeed, to endure in this way?" The Sage replied: "The superior man may have to endure want, but he is still the

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superior man. The small man in the same circumstances loses his self-command."¹

12. The Evening of Confucius' Life.

When the Sage was sixty-nine years old, he returned to his home in the State of Lu. One of his former pupils was now influential in the government and a plan was made to recall Confucius to high office. But the Sage declined, feeling that he should retire from active life and devote himself to literary pursuits. For four years he worked at his writings and gave lectures to his disciples. The common saying is: "There is wealth in books."²

During these years he was saddened by the death of his son and of his favorite disciple, Yan Hwui, and then his disciple next beloved, Tze-Lu, perished. The Sage himself died in 478 B.C. His last recorded words were: "No intelligent ruler arises to take me as his master. My time has come to die." Austere, impressive, sad, his hopes of political reform unfulfilled, with no wife nor son to comfort his last days, with no certain expectation of another life, he passed away from the living, at seventy-three years of age.

Such is the bare chronicle of some of the lead-

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1. Analects, Book XV, ch. I, v. 3.
2. Baller, F. W.: Op. cit. 346

ing scenes in the Sage's life. With this introduction to give us background and atmosphere, we shall take up in the next chapter, the Religious Life of Confucius.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGIOUS LIFE OF CONFUCIUS

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In the preceding chapter we reviewed the biography of Confucius in order to get a more adequate background for investigating his religion. We were impressed with the wide scope of his studies--literature, history, ethics, philosophy, and religion, and how he strenuously maintained an open mind to truth from whatever source. He put a high value on mental freedom and intellectual integrity.

He lived a full life with many activities, and knew his world. He was no recluse idly dreaming. His versatile activities led him to serve in turn as clerk, teacher, traveler, official, historian, literary critic and writer, and philosopher. At all times he manifested a good-will, self-sacrificing patriotism and a desire to reform the evils of his time. Living with young people, he maintained his youthful ideals, refusing to have them sophisticated and "debunked."

He endured poverty, ridicule, suffering, and peril, rather than attain riches and official rank by compromising his high personal integrity. He had a deep-felt conviction that he was entrusted by God with a mission to teach and reform, and that God would open his way and protect his life until that mission was accomplished.

Now we shall consider more directly his personal, intimate religious teachings. It should be borne in mind that religion is treated only incidentally in the sources. Consequently on some important points there is a paucity of material. But an incidental statement carries more weight than would the same words in a systematic treatise.

1. Writings of Confucius.

The Sage edited the ancient literature of China. Of the many poems from antiquity he selected what should go into the Classic of Odes. His controlling hand is discernable in the arrangement and in the choice of worth while material in most of the Chinese Classics. Fact and fiction are carefully separated. He is no purveyor of wanton gossip. The style is clear, chaste and lofty. "Read good books, speak good words."¹

The Spring and Autumn Classic is the only book written entirely by the Sage. It contains the annals of the State of Lu, and the details given are meagre. Later commentators have enriched the text with much additional information, mitigating the blame and taking away the meed of praise given to some of the characters.

2. Confucius, a Transmitter.

An Oriental maxim states: "Hurried men lack

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1. Baller, F. W.: Op. cit., p. 6.

wisdom."¹ Confucius took time for a broad view. His eyes were on the golden age of the legendary kings, and on King Wen and Duke Chow, the founders of the Chow Dynasty. He seemed to view society as static, and desired to restore the golden age. He did not realize that life demands growth and constant change, either for the better or for the worse. He was a conservative rather than a progressive. But he was a discerning, philosophical conservative. He recognized that men and customs when they become depraved must be deposed or abolished.

"Confucius frankly admits, 'I am not one born in the possession of knowledge; I am one who is fond of antiquity, and earnest in seeking it there. A transmitter, and not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients.'"²

3. Ancient Prayers.

The text of many prayers is preserved in the Classic of History. The Sage approved the prayer of Tang, the founder of the Shang Dynasty: "I make bold to proclaim before Thee, Almighty Lord, that I dare not forgive sin, nor hold down Thy servants. Search them, O Lord, in Thine heart. Visit not my sins on the ten thousand hamlets: the sins of the ten thousand hamlets visit upon my head."

This prayer dates from the twelfth century before Christ. It is the prayer of a high priest for his people.

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1. Baller, F.W.: Op. cit., p. 6.

2. Plopper, C. H.: Op. cit., p. 17.

It involves the recognition of one supreme god, a confession of sin on the part of both the ruler and the people, a consciousness that sin is heinous and cannot be lightly passed over or forgiven, and a willingness to suffer vicariously in behalf of others. It is inspiring to know that at the early dawn of clear history, men believed in a righteous, prayer-hearing, almighty god. It is to be noted that there is nothing to indicate that the theology or ideas of this prayer are new. In fact there are recorded prayers much earlier than this.¹ If the people lost their keen sense of the underlying beliefs back of this prayer, it shows their declension from an early ethical monotheism. It is not safe to assume that the presence later of idolatry and many superstitious altars is evidence that ethical monotheism was unknown and must have gradually later arisen by a process of evolution, slow and painful.

4. Prayer for the Sick.

In the Analects we read:

"The Master being very sick, Tsze-Loo asked leave to pray for him. He said: 'May such a thing be done?' Tsze-Loo replied: 'It may. In the Prayers it is said: "Prayer has been made to the spirits of the upper and lower worlds."' The Master said: "My prayer has been for a long time.'"2

Why is this prayer made to the spirits instead of

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1. Sacred Books of the East, Vol. III, pp. 304 ff.
2. Analects, Book VII, ch. 34.

to God? This question has been discussed above in Chapter II, section 2. God is thought of as the supreme ruler of the universe: the spirits as His agents. If we wish to have a letter weighed for mailing, we do not go to the Postmaster General, much less to the President of the United States. We go to the local agent of the post office. The idea prevailed in China that prayer to God should be offered only by the emperor or king. The common people made their wants known through the spirits as subordinate agents of God. They thought of God as infinite in power, but did not think of Him as infinite in thought, taking care for the least of his creatures individually, even the flowers and the birds. It was reserved for One with clearer insight into spiritual truth, the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep and calls them by name, to teach us the loving care of the Good Father.

These spirits, or inferior deities, "were worshipped as the servants of God, holding much the same rank as 'saints' in Roman Catholic devotion."¹

5. Confucius Not a Polytheist.

"Man proposes, Heaven disposes" is a popular Chinese aphorism.² Confucius is sometimes thought of as

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1. John Ross, quoted in "Procession of the Gods", p. 285.

2. Baller, F. W.: Op. cit., p. 232.

a polytheist, because he does not condemn the worship of spirits and perpetuates ancestral worship. We must remember that Confucius is primarily a philosopher, a teacher and a political reformer. He is a theologian only incidentally. He would consider both the spirits of the forces of nature and the ancestral spirits alike to be subordinate to the supreme God. There is nothing to show that he believed in a number of gods of equal rank. Nor was he really a henotheist, for the lesser spiritual beings were not essentially gods, but were inferior beings of one kind or another.

The nature spirits have been compared to the angelic beings of the Bible. But the angelic beings in no case were objects of worship. Their subordination to God was more clearly defined than that of the spirits in the Confucian literature. Confucius is in the border line between monotheism and henotheism. By not clearly defining them, he left his position to be ambiguous. But there is reason to believe that fundamentally he is a monotheist.

In the first Decade of the Odes, Ode 7 is of special interest as showing how subordinate spiritual beings are sometimes associated with the worship of God. The Ode reads:

"I have brought my offerings, a ram and a bull. May Heaven accept them.

"I imitate and follow and observe the statutes of King

Wan, Seeking daily to secure the tranquility of the kingdom. King Wan, the Blessor, has descended on the right, and accepted the offerings.

"Do I not, night and day, Revere the majesty of Heaven,
Thus to preserve its favor?"

Dr. Legge comments on this ode:

"There is, happily, an agreement among the critics as to the occasion to which this piece is referred. It took place in the last month of autumn, in the Hall of Audience, called also 'the Brilliant Hall,' and 'the Hall of Light.' We must suppose that the princes are all assembled at court, and that the king receives them in this hall. A sacrifice is then presented to God, and with him is associated King Wan, the two being the fountain from which, and the channel through which, the sovereignty had come to Chou.

"This is a prayer. The worshipper, it is said, in view of the majesty of Heaven, shrank from assuming that God would certainly accept his sacrifice. He assumes, below, that King Wan does so."¹

King Wan is the founder of the Chou Dynasty. The ode combines ancestral worship with worship of God. It represents King Wan, who founded the Dynasty at the command of God, as sitting at God's right hand, and as accepting the offering on behalf of God. King Wan here approaches the position of the saints that are invoked in Roman Catholic worship.

Of the quotations from the Classic of Odes which have become popular proverbs, one says: "Shang-Ti is not invariable; on the one who does good He sends down many blessings, and on the one who commits evil He sends down

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1. Legge, James: Sacred Books of the East, Vol. III, p. 317.

many miseries."¹ Men are morally responsible to God.

6. Prayer to the One Supreme God.

Heaven and Shang-Ti, Supreme Ruler, are names used for the one God. What is His character? How is He approached in prayer?

Confucius worshipped and prayed to the one Supreme Power in Nature, Heaven, Lord Almighty. In the Li-Ki, we read: "It is only the sage who can sacrifice to God."² Like Socrates, he longed for the day when the sage, or philosopher, would be the prince of the land, one who would understand the demands of God.

In the Classic of Odes it says: "What Heaven confers, when once lost, will not be regained."³ In the Classic of History, it is written: "Calamities sent by Heaven may be avoided, but from calamities brought on by one's self there is no escape,"⁴ which means that by keeping the law of Heaven we avoid divine punishments. In the Analects, the Sage says: "He who offends against Heaven, has none to whom he can pray,"⁵ or in other words, God will not hear prayer if there is iniquity in the heart. Of the spirits it is said in the Classic of History: "The

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1. Plopper, C. H.: Op. cit., No. 300.
2. Book XXI, section 1, v. 6: *also Ante pp 38-39.*
3. Minor Odes, decade V, Ode 2.
4. Part IV, Book V, Section 2, v. 2.
5. Book III, ch. 13, v. 2.

spirits do not always accept sacrifice; they accept only the sacrifices of the sincere."1 Heaven is just, and prayer is not magic to avert the punishment of our sins.

We shall close this section with three short quotations further from the Classic of History. "Good and evil do not wrongly befall men, but Heaven sends down misery or happiness according to their conduct."2 "The way of Heaven is to bless the good and make the bad miserable."3 "Heaven gives length of days to the just and to the intelligent."4

7. The Future Life.

Confucius is considered to be agnostic as to the future life. At the death of his favorite pupil, he said: "I am undone of Heaven." In the Li-Ki we read: "The body and the animal soul go downwards; and the intelligent spirit is on high."5 The Analects states of Confucius: "He sacrificed to the dead as if they were present. He sacrificed to the spirits, as if the spirits were present."6 In the Li-Ki it is written: "The object of all ceremonies is to bring down the spirits from above, even their ancestors."7

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1. Part IV, Book V, Section 3, v. 1.
2. Part IV, Book VI, 2.
3. Part IV, Book III, 2.
4. Part V, Book XVI, 2.
5. Li-Ki, Book VII, section 1, v. 7.
6. Analects, Book III, ch. 12.
7. Li-Ki, Book VII, section 1, v. 10.

A disciple asked Confucius a question about how to serve the spirits of the dead. The Sage replied: "Until you are able to serve men, how can you expect to serve their spirits?" When asked his views on death, the Sage said: "Until you understand life, how can you possibly understand death?"¹

These incidents show that the question of immortality of the soul was being discussed by the disciples of Confucius. The Sage parried these questions with other questions. The duty to the living must not be neglected. If it is asserted dogmatically that the dead live again, men would spend all their time worshipping the spirits of the dead and thus neglect their duties to the living. The Sage taught: "When you know a thing, to hold that you know it, and when you do not know a thing, to acknowledge that you do not know it--this is knowledge."² Yet in characteristic Chinese fashion he took a social attitude towards questions rather than a scientific interest. In the Li-Ki we read: "In dealing with the dead, if we treat them as if they were entirely dead, that would show want of affection and should not be done; if we treat them as if they were entirely living, that would show want of wisdom and should not be done."³

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1. Analects, Book XI, ch. XI. Quoted in "Confucianism and Its Rivals", p. 74.
2. Book II, ch. 17.
3. Li-Ki, Book II, section 1, part 3, v. 3.

He did not greatly care about the objective truth, whether man really lives again or not, but he was vitally concerned with how man's belief about this question affected man's actions and attitude to his fellows. Doubtless the Sage had no clear revelation in regard to the future life, and doubtless he shared the popular belief that there is a future life. On the other hand he did not wish to encourage undue worship of ancestral spirits so as to interfere with man's duty to the living. Many superstitions had arisen in connection with the worship of spirits, and Confucius probably purposely emphasized an agnostic attitude as a means of combating the superstitious customs.

The popular belief in the Old Testament as reflected in witch-craft, in burnings for deceased kings, and in such expressions as "he was gathered to his fathers," indicates a firm faith in the future life, yet a powerful school of Jews in our Lord's time denied the resurrection from the dead. Christ's argument that God is not the God of the dead but of the living, as well as his personal testimony and resurrection, carried conviction. We may conclude that Confucius really believed in a future life, but owing to lack of definite knowledge about details he is cautious in his statements, and also he does not wish to encourage superstitious practices, just as the Old Testa-

ment writers discouraged witch-craft and necromancy, by omitting almost all reference to the future life.

As indicating the Sage's view on the supernatural world we shall quote Dr. Giles:

"We have, however, some interesting remarks, which Confucius himself volunteered without any pressure from an inquirer. 'How abundantly,' he said, 'do spiritual beings make their presence manifest among us. We look for them, but do not see them; we listen for them, but do not hear them; yet they enter into all things, and there is nowhere where they are not. They cause all the people in the world to fast, and to put on their best clothes, in order to take part in the sacrifices. Then they seem to pass in waves, now over the heads, now at the very sides of the worshippers.'

"In support of this, Confucius here quotes three lines from the Odes, his hearers being, of course, able to supply the context from memory. They are taken from an ode which was written about the close of the ninth century B.C., by one of the feudal princes, and which was, quaintly enough, addressed to himself, as a means of keeping before his eyes the right conduct expected from one in his high station. Some of the lines which lead to the quotation used by Confucius run as follows:

"'Shall not those of whom Almighty God does not approve,
Surely as water flows down from a spring,
Sink down together to ruin?
Rise early and go to bed late;
Sprinkle and sweep your courtyard,
So as to be a pattern to your people.
Have in good order your chariots and horses,
Your bows and arrows, your weapons of war,
So as to be prepared for warlike action.
Be cautious in what you say;
Be careful in what you do.
A flaw in a piece of white jade
May be ground away;
But for a flaw in speech
Nothing can be done.
As seen in your friendship with good men,
Your expression is conciliatory and kindly;
You are anxious to do no wrong.
As seen in your private chamber,
You should also be free from shame.

Do not say, "This place is not public;
No one can see me here.'

"And now come the three lines quoted by Confucius:

"The advent of spiritual beings
Cannot be known beforehand;
All the less then should they be slighted.'"¹

Though Confucius aspires to the stars and to the
heaven of heavens, yet his feet are firmly planted in the
earth, and his main concern is in the daily duties of man
to man. He believes that truth is in order to goodness.

8. The Golden Rule.

In the writings concerning Confucius' teaching,
the Golden Rule is stated six times negatively: "What you
do not want done to yourself, do not do unto others."² It
is sometimes asserted that the negative form is not so com-
prehensive as the positive form used by our Lord. Chinese
teachers for the most part think there is no essential dif-
ference in the meaning, that the negative form is more in
accordance with Chinese literary style, and that the rule
embraces every kind of relationship. With two exceptions
the Commandments of the Mosaic Decalogue are given in
negative form, yet in the Westminster Shorter Catechism
they are treated the same as though given in positive form.

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1. Giles, Dr. Herbert A.: Confucianism and Its Rivals,
pp. 74-75.
2. Analects, Book XV, 23; Doctrine of the Mean, Ch. XIII,
v. 3; Li Ki 28:1:32; Great Learning 10:2; Analects 5:11
and 12:2.

The fact that the rule is given six times, shows how central it was to the teaching of the Sage, and what a strong impression it must have made on his disciples. It was the unifying principle about which the teachings of the Sage could be systematized. As we shall see later, it was not applied so fully as should have been done. The conscience of the Sage must truly have been the voice of God when he grasped this great moral principle.

9. The Five Relationships.

Confucius defined the duties of man in his doctrine of the Five Relationships:

- (1) Prince and Minister.
- (2) Father and Son.
- (3) Elder Brother and Younger Brother.
- (4) Husband and Wife.
- (5) Friend and Friend

In the first four relationships the second member named is naturally subordinate to the first. The duties of the first are to protect and look after the interests of the second, and the duties of the second are to obey and to be loyal to the first. Only in the fifth relationship is equality recognized.

Questions in casuistry constantly arose and in discussing them we see more clearly what is meant by these five rules. In Analects we read:

"The Duke of She informed Confucius, saying, 'Among us here are those who may be styled upright in conduct. If their father have stolen a sheep, they will bear

witness to the fact.' Confucius said, 'Among us, in our part of the country, those who are upright are different from this. The father conceals the misconduct of his son and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this.'¹

Where there is a clash of loyalties, as between duties of father and son and duties to neighbors, the loyalty is to be to those in the family. This rule has had a good effect in making the clan strict in disciplining its members so as to maintain its own good name. It has also had a bad effect in making it hard to secure justice where members of different clans are involved. The Sage evidently considered that peace inside the family circle is more important than justice to those outside the family.

But the Sage disapproves the stealing of a sheep. It is written: "A boy should never be permitted to see an instance of deceit."² Immediate and full repentance of all wrong doing is insisted upon. In Mencius it is written:

"Mencius said, 'Here is a man who every day appropriates some of his neighbor's strayed fowls. Some one says to him: "Such is not the way of a good man." He replies: "With your leave, I will diminish my appropriations, and will take but one fowl per month until next year, when I will make an end of the practice." If you know the thing to be wrong, hasten to get rid of it. Why wait until next year?'"³

Personal responsibility is emphasized in many ways. One common maxim in China is: "If two men keep a

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1. Analects, Book XIII, ch. 18.
2. Li-Ki, Book I, section 1, part 2, ch. 5, v. 17.
3. Mencius, Book III, part 2, ch. 8.

horse, it gets thin; if two men keep a boat, it leaks."¹

Confucius sought the harmony of society and co-operation, rather than abstract justice and individual liberty. Dr. Lin Yu-tang writes:

"Law in China has a philosophical basis, which is half Taoistic and half Confucianistic. Dr. John C. Wu, former President of the Shanghai Provisional Court, once pointed out in a paper on 'Distinctions Between Eastern and Western Conceptions of Law' that the Western conception is based on the ideas of individualism and conflict of interests, whereas the Chinese conception is based on the idea of social harmony. The very notion of people's 'rights' presupposes a limitation on the power of the ruler, whose 'natural depravity' (to use Hume's phrase) needs to be checked. The Magna Charta was wrung from King John by the English people, and constituted a 'victory' of the people in their 'struggle' with the king.

"The Confucianist philosophy regards the ruler as a moral gentleman, a 'parent' of the people, and never conceives of such a struggle. It has been said that western people assume every ruler to be a crook, and proceed to prevent him from carrying out his crooked intentions. The Chinese people assume every ruler to be a gentleman, and even actually treat him as such. We allow our diplomats to negotiate treaties without our knowledge, our finance ministers to apportion the national funds without rendering public accounts, and our local military chiefs to tax us according to their conscience. And if they fall victim to the temptations which we thus put in their way, we do not send them to prison. Han Fei, the greatest political philosopher of the Chou Dynasty, long ago pointed out the danger of this form of government, and advocated a government by law, but his warning went unheeded, because every ruler found it more convenient to be treated as a gentleman than as a crook.

"In so far as this proposed change represented a substitution of government by law for government by

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1. Baller, F. W.: Mandarin Primer, p. 365.

moralization, we may say it was Confucianistic. In so far as the Chinese people have a supreme contempt for law and the law-courts, they are Taoistic. With Herbert Spencer, they believe that that government governs best which governs least. The much vaunted Chinese local self-government really means no government, or *laissez-faire* on the part of the authorities."¹

10. Confucius' Sense of Mission.

We shall quote Dr. Giles for a summary of the evidence that Confucius believed himself endowed with a mission from God:

"He was conscious, and expressed his consciousness openly, that in his teachings he was working under divine guidance. Thus when, on his wanderings, he found himself in danger of violence and his disciples were afraid, he reassured them, saying: 'King Wen being dead, has not his message been confided to me?'

"In another and similar case of danger, Confucius said: 'God implanted the virtue that is in me; what can this man do to me?'

"Again, in reply to a disciple who asked what he meant by declaring that nobody knew him, Confucius said, 'I do not murmur against God, nor do I grumble against man. My studies lie low, but they reach high; and there is God--He knows me. If my doctrines are to prevail, it is so ordered of God; if they are to fail, it is so ordered of God,'

"Nor was it only Confucius himself who held this view as to the divine character of his mission. On arriving at the frontier of the Wei State, the warden in charge of the gate expressed a wish to meet the renowned sage, urging that when men of mark passed that way he was never denied the privilege of seeing them. He was accordingly introduced by the disciples; and when he came out he said, 'My friends, why are you distressed by your Master's loss of office? The world has long been without right doctrines; now God is going to use him as a bell.'"²

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1. China Christian Year Book, 1931, pp. 56-57.
2. Giles, Herbert A.: Confucianism and Its Rivals, pp.67-68.

We are taught that "God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions." Confucius may not have been acquainted with the Westminster Shorter Catechism, but there is no doubt but that he believed in Providence, and had a consciousness of God's entrusting him with a work to do, and guiding and protecting him in the carrying out of that work.

Confucius taught that "the superior man is grave and calm, waiting for the appointments of Heaven, while the inferior man walks in dangerous paths, looking for lucky occurrences."¹ In the appointments of Heaven each man is held to be responsible to God, and God assigns him his work.

11. How to Learn the Will of God.

Much is said about the Will of Heaven, but truly how is that will to be known? The divining on stalks and tortoise-shell markings though done prayerfully, still fails to satisfy the inquiring mind. Does God speak direct to man? In the Classic of Odes we read: "God said to King Wen: 'Be not like them who reject this and cling to that. Be not like them who are ruled by their likes and desires.'"²

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1. Doctrine of the Mean, ch. XIV, v. 4.
2. Minor Odes, decade 1, ode 8.

How the King heard the voice of God we do not know, but he must have had a deep religious experience and was conscious of hearing God's voice.

It is written: "Without recognizing the ordinances of Heaven, it is impossible to be a superior man."¹ Mencius was asked how it could be known, for instance, that the ruler was appointed by God; he replied that they should observe whether the ruler executed justice, maintained peace and was recognized by the people. He depended on what we would call providential signs for finding out the will of God.

Mencius says:

"When Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man, it first disciplines his mind with suffering and his bones and sinews with toil. It exposes him to and subjects him to extreme poverty. It confounds his undertakings. By all these methods it stimulates his mind, hardens him, and supplies his shortcomings."²

In the Doctrine of the Mean we read:

"It is only the individual possessed of the most entire sincerity that can exist under Heaven, who can adjust the great, unvarying relations of mankind, establish the great fundamental virtues of humanity, and comprehend the transforming and nourishing processes of Heaven and Earth. Shall such an one have any being or anything beyond himself on which he depends?"³

Sincerity, absolute honesty in facing life, is the first step in understanding God.

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1. Analects, Book XX, ch. 3, v. 1.
2. Mencius, Book VI, Part 2, ch. 15, v. 2.
3. Doctrine of the Mean, ch. XXXII, v. 1.

It is said:

"When the personal character is pure and clean, the spirit and mind are like those of a spiritual being. When what such an one desires is about to come to pass, he is sure to have premonitions of it, as when Heaven sends down the rains in due season and the hills condense the vapours into clouds."¹

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," is Jesus' beatitude for those who seek spiritual insight in all sincerity and purity. Mencius says: "There is no greater delight than to be conscious of sincerity upon self-examination,"² and "The great man is he who does not lose his child's heart."³

12. Confucius' Sense of Sin.

The Sage was called holy, but he himself did not claim to be holy in any absolute meaning of the word. He wished for fifty years for further study of the Classic of Natural Mutations so that he might be free from gross sin.⁴

In the Classic of History we read: "Do not be ashamed of mistakes and so proceed to make them crimes."⁵ In the Analects it is written: "The inferior man is sure to gloss his faults."⁶ The Analects states: "The faults of the superior man are like the sun and moon. He has

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1. Li-Ki, Book XXVI, ch. 8.
2. Mencius, Book VII, Part I, ch. IV, v. 2.
3. Ibid., Book IV, Part II, ch. XII.
4. Analects, Book VII, ch. 26: *also Ante p. 9.*
5. Classic of History, Part IV, Book VIII, section 2, v. 1.
6. Analects, Book XIX, ch. 21.

faults and all men see them. He changes again and all men look up to him."¹ And we noted the saying: "He who offends against Heaven, has none to whom he can pray."²

In the light of the quotations in the preceding paragraph we see that Confucius had a sense of sin. He felt that sin separates from God, putting a man beyond the reach of prayer, and should be repented of. But sin is one of the minor notes in Confucian teaching. The Sage seems to think that one can repent and keep God's law by a mere act of human will. Apparently he never felt the bondage of a sinful nature, and the need of divine grace if one is to live acceptably in the presence of God.

At times mere education is depended on to promote virtue. "When a man of high station is well instructed, he loves men; when the man of low station is well instructed, he is easily ruled."³ Mencius says: "If pulse and grain were as abundant as water and fire, should the people be otherwise than virtuous?"⁴ But we know that sin is too deep-seated to be removed by mere education and prosperity. "If the will be set on virtue, there will be no practice of wickedness," we read in the Analects.⁵ But who can set his will on virtue? "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?"

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1. Analects, Book XIX, ch. 21.
2. Ibid., section 6.
3. Ibid., Book XVII, ch. IV, v. 3.
4. Mencius, Book VII, Part I, ch. XXIII, v. 3.
5. Analects, Book IV, ch. IV.

13. Confucius Takes An Oath.

In his travels the Sage was once given an audience by a dowager ruler who was infamous for her cruel and wicked life. His disciples were scandalized, and acted as though they suspected him of wrong doing. He took an oath, "If there were sin in me, may Heaven forsake me." In the Analects it is written: "My master is anxious to make his faults few, but has not yet succeeded."¹

Confucius was a man of sterling character, but he did not claim to be without sin, nor did his disciples make any such claim for him.

14. Confucius' Teaching As Elaborated By Mencius.

Mencius was born about a hundred years after the death of the great Sage, and is the most famous exponent of the views of Confucius. His writings are considered to be an authentic elaboration of the teachings of Confucius. An inner circle, composed of the descendents and influential pupils of the Sage, kept the teachings true to the original lectures and strongly opposed innovations and heresies.

His forte is the discussion of questions of political economy.

"Mencius taught the single tax twenty centuries before Henry George and free trade equally long before Richard

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1. Analects, Book XIV, ch. 26.

Cobden. He also shared with Bryan the somewhat dubious confidence that a strong and prosperous state can organize its defences over night and with Henry of Navarre the not to be debated confidence that a contented people are the sure support of any throne."¹

If there is any difference in the tone of Mencius from that of Confucius, it is that Mencius stressed more lightly the literary, musical, and religious ideals and emphasized more strongly the political and secular aspects of Confucius' philosophy. He does not neglect religion, however.

"Giles finds in Mencius a sustained faith in a God in whose image man is created, through whom right prevails and wrong is punished, whose gifts are love and peace-- 'Charity of heart is the noblest gift of God; it is a house, so to speak, in which a man may live in peace,'-- and whose service is the chief end of man. 'To waste no thoughts upon length of life, but to cultivate rectitude--that is to do the will of God.'"²

15. Chu-Hsi, The Commentator.

Chu Fu-Tzu, or more properly, Chu-Hsi, the Commentator, flourished in the middle of the twelfth century after Christ. He is considered the most important and influential of all the writers who have commented on the Confucian texts. He is a historical critic and put forth many new interpretations so as to explain away the supernatural references in the ancient literature. Under his hand, the idea of a personal God, the supreme ruler of the

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1. Atkins, G. G.: Procession of the Gods, p. 307.
2. Ibid., pp. 310-311.

universe, was taken away from the later Confucianism. He could find no materialistic proof for the existence of such a Being, and so he explained away all references to a personal God or Heaven as being given to Nature or the Laws of Nature. As Chu Hsi is the official and authorized interpreter of Confucius, it is not surprising that many say that Confucianism is not a religion, but merely a system of ethics.

Mencius says:

"He who with a great State serves a small is one who delights in Heaven; and he who with a small State serves a great is one who fears Heaven. He who delights in Heaven will affect with his love and protection all under the sky; and he who fears Heaven will so affect his own State."¹

In commenting on the above quotation from Mencius,

Dr. Legge says:

"Chu Hsi says on the word 'Heaven' here, 'Heaven is just principle, i.e. the reason of things, and nothing more.' The instance is a good one of the way in which he and others try to expunge the idea of a governing power and a personal God from their classics. Heaven is here evidently the loving and directing power of the universe, or the will of that power as indicated in the course of its Providence."²

16. Influence of Confucianism As a Religion Today.

The teachings of Confucius, whether considered as a system of ethics or as a religion, have nominally lost much of their influence in modern China. The militant

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1. Mencius, Book I, Part II, ch. III, v. 2.
2. Legge, James: The Life and Works of Mencius, p. 142.

atheism of the third International Communist Party and the agnostic science of Huxley and Spencer have seriously undermined belief in the supernatural. Confucius as a religious teacher is too reserved and ambiguous to exert an aggressive religious effect at the present time. Stanley High is reported to have said, after a recent visit to Chinese student centers, that the struggle in China from now on will be between Communistic atheism and Christianity. Nevertheless, the religious ideas underlying the Confucian Classics are a heritage that has molded all Chinese literature, has survived political persecution and Buddhist attacks, and will not be quickly nor completely put aside.¹

17. Concluding View.

There is not the space here to review all that is said of Confucius' belief and teachings, but an endeavor has been made to set forth the main facts as they bear upon our problem. The apparent contradictions and inadequacies of his faith, as far as incidental references in his writings reveal, are perplexing.

But in a time of sudden and great danger we lay aside the polite fictions of social life and act ourselves. In anticipation of death, men speak the truth without sham

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1. Post., Ch. V, Part 3, section h, p. 103.

or pretense--if the truth is in them. The heart of Confucius' personal religion may be found in his courageous sense of mission in time of peril, and in his belief in the power of prayer in time of serious sickness and approaching death. The sources here are brief and incidental.

Only one ray of light in the prism is needed, however, in order to read the spectroscope. Does not the spectrum of Confucius shine with bright bands of a strong faith in God, the one supreme God, a righteous and loving and fatherly God, who assigns to man his duties, and who hears and answers prayer? Is not such a man essentially a monotheist, an ethical monotheist, even though he seem to believe that matter is eternal, and though he advocate worship of nature spirits and of ancestral spirits?¹

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1. See preceding sections, especially Nos. 3, 4, 6, and 10 for source material.

CHAPTER V

RECAPITULATION AND CONCLUSIONS

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In the preceding chapter we considered the personal religious beliefs and experiences of Confucius, and placed especial emphasis on his faith in divine providence in his times of peril and his prayer in times of dangerous sickness. It was stated that in such times of unusual strain man's religious expression was more apt to be spontaneous than in normal times. In this chapter we shall attempt four things.

First, we shall tentatively classify Confucius from a theological point of view, a task that is far from easy.

Second, the findings in Chapter IV concerning Confucius' personal religious belief will be compared with the teachings of Christ. The sources will not be referred to again here, since they have been given previously.

Third, some objections and criticisms made against the teachings of Confucius will be considered.

Fourth, our final conclusions, especially in regard to the relation between Confucianism and Christianity will be stated.

1. Confucius Classified from a Theological Point of View.

a. Sources. The source material for the study of the religion of Confucius is not systematically arranged. Religion was not the primary aim of his teaching. In his historical writings he records the long and rich and varied religious past of his people. Sometimes it is not clear what is mere history and what has his own personal approval.

b. Local Coloring. The Oriental approach to religious beliefs is more personal and concrete than our Western abstract philosophy with its metaphysical definitions. Where we insist on systematizing and generalizing, the Chinese prefer the concrete and picturesque. Confucius would probably find difficulty in recognizing some of the doctrines imputed to him by his Western admirers and commentators. Perhaps even Christ would hesitate to adopt as children of His religious teaching all the elaborate creeds of Christendom, valuable as they are to our Occidental analytical minds. We must not do Confucius the injustice of making his views fit exactly into our Western theological strait-jackets. He should not be judged apart from the land and the time in which he lived.

Confucius had a long and active life. There must have been mental and psychological growth in his

personality. We cannot expect that all his views will be mechanically uniform and consistent. Life is more varied than our explanations and philosophies, and views are modified by new experiences.

c. Chinese Cosmogony. The Chinese taught that the earth was evolved from the interaction of the two great primeval principles, the Positive Yang and the Negative Yin, with the original chaos. The beginning of matter and its metaphysical definition were not exhaustively discussed. One of their paradoxical questions is: "Which came first, the chicken or the egg"? If Confucius seems to think that matter is eternal, it does not mean that he would necessarily deny the creation of the universe by an eternal God. In view of his clear statements concerning divine supremacy it would seem unwarranted to classify Confucius as a pantheist, much less as an atheist.

d. Names for God. In his worship of Heaven and of Shang-Ti it might be said that Confucius believed in two gods. But scholars assert that these are two names for one and the same God. This is a reasonable theory and may be tentatively adopted.¹

e. Spirit Worship. The worship of nature spirits and

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1. Ante., p. 21.

of ancestors is alleged as evidence that Confucius was a polytheist. Polytheism implies the worship of a number of gods of equal rank, and involves the possibility of struggle between these divinities. But Confucius insists on the solidarity of the universe and of moral law, which is inconsistent with polytheism. The worship of spirits may be explained as veneration and respect, without involving the recognition of the spirits as gods.¹

f. Henotheism. It has been suggested that the religion of Confucius is henotheism, the belief in one supreme god ruling over minor deities. But when King Wan sits in Heaven at the right hand of God, he is not called God, and there is nothing to show that he considered himself to be other than a servant of God. Whatever may have been the origin of the worship of nature spirits, whether in primitive animism or in early man's instinct to personify animals and things as in fables, they seem to be mere personifications and to do nothing implying personality, such as thinking, speaking, willing, etc. They also as personifications of natural forces are mere agents to carry out the will of God.²

The emperor reserved to himself the formal worship of God, and left the common people to worship the

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1. Ante., pp. 28-29, 66-68.

2. Ante., pp. 68-70.

lesser spirits. The theory that the worship of these subordinate spirits is akin, though not exactly similar, to the veneration of saints in the Roman Catholic Church, together with the Chinese natural impulse to transact all important business through a middle man, would leave it possible for Confucius to be considered essentially a monotheist.¹

g. Humanism. The teachings of Confucius are so centered in the duties of man to man that one writer, Dr. Atkins, would view him as a Humanist.² But is Man the God of Confucian adoration? It is readily recognized that the subject of human relationships and human welfare form the bulk of Confucian teaching. Yet who can read the Confucian literature without realizing that the worship of God is a necessary and fundamental part of man's nature and of the personal life of Confucius himself? It would seem that crass humanism is inadequate as an explanation of the religion of China's great Sage.

h. Did Confucius Depersonalize God? Dr. R. E. Hume says:

"Confucius used the personal name for the Supreme Being only once, in Analects 20: 1: 3, and that only in the course of a poetic quotation. The evidence is ample

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1. Ante., p.28.

2. Procession of the Gods, p. 308.

and explicit that the ethico-religious system which Confucius organized included belief in and worship of a Supreme Deity, but that his own influence was to depersonalize that faith and to secularize its ethics."¹

In regard to a personal name for God, it is to be noted that such Sinologues as Legge, Giles, Dawson, Soothill, and Ross, consider Heaven to be best translated into English by the word God. If Confucius used Shang-Ti only once, it would still not show that he did not believe in a personal God.

Confucius approved prayers being offered to God, and he himself prayed long. In times of peril, not once or twice, but on at least three recorded occasions, showing an habitual attitude of mind, he asserted that he was carrying out a commission of God to teach virtue and that he believed God would providentially protect his life until his mission was fulfilled. Would he expect an impersonal God to hear and answer prayer? Would he assert that an impersonal God assigns duties to men and providentially protects them? Would an impersonal God establish a moral order, blessing the good and punishing the evil? Perhaps Confucius does not describe God as personal according to the definitions of Western theology and philosophy. But Confucius believed in a God that has established a moral order, that loves men enough to send a Sage to teach them virtue, that

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1. Hume, Dr. R. E.: The World's Living Religions, p. 120.

providentially protects his messenger until his work is done, that hears and answers prayer! How can the teaching and example of such a man depersonalize China's faith in God? I have found no ample evidence for such a statement.¹

i. An Approach to Ethical Monotheism. It may be concluded that Confucius is a monotheist in so far as he reserves his highest adoration and worship for the one supreme God. But it must be admitted that his monotheism would have difficulty to pass muster according to the strict definitions of Christian theology and metaphysics. Images were not used in worship in his day in China, so he could not be accused of breaking the second Mosaic command, even though he did "venerate" spirits. Monotheism more nearly expresses his position than any other of our Western terms, though it is not entirely appropriate owing to the various ambiguities and interpretations, which we have considered.

The God of Confucius is not despotic, arbitrary majesty. He is righteous, and rules men with equity, rewarding the just and punishing the unjust. For our purposes and with the reservations suggested, his religion may therefore be called ethical-monotheism.

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1. Ante., pp. 74 and 78-79.

2. The Religion of Confucius Compared With Christianity.

a. Both Believe in Providence. God has a plan for each life, and controls events and circumstances for man's moral welfare, rewarding the good and punishing the evil.¹

b. Both Teach Personal Responsibility to the Supreme Power. This follows from belief in Providence. Confucius felt that he had a mission from God and that he was accountable to God and not to men. In presenting God as our Heavenly Father, Christ made men accountable to Him, not only in a legal impersonal way, but also in a warm, biological relationship.²

c. Both Believe in Confession of Sin to God Almighty. Confucius recognized his imperfections and approved prayer for forgiveness. With Christ sin is a much more important matter, deeper and more difficult to dispose of. He did not recognize any personal sin on His own part, nor did His disciples find in Him any sin. The accusations on which He was condemned to death were looked upon as fictitious by the Roman judge in charge of the case. Christ claimed authority to forgive sin, and taught His disciples to confess to Him.³

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1. Ante., pp. 68-69 and 78-79.

2. Ante., p. 18.

3. Ante., pp. 64 and 69-70.

d. Both Teach the Golden Rule. It is recorded six times that Confucius taught the Golden Rule in a negative form. Christ taught it in a positive form. As a general principle of conduct it cannot be said that there is any serious difference between the two forms. In the application, Christ is more insistent on justice and truth, taking both in the objective sense.¹

e. Both Believe in Sacrifice. When Confucius was asked the meaning of the great sacrifices at the Summer and Winter solstices, he said: "I do not know." Sacrifice to him seemed necessary, but it was a mystery. With Christ sacrifice is not fully explained, but we see that it involves a propitiation for sin, a suffering by the just for the unjust. Christ's view of sin is deeper and more radical than Confucius' view.²

f. Prayer for Sinners. Confucius taught that sin against Heaven is past praying for. Christ teaches that sinners should pray for forgiveness and for the grace of repentance. Perhaps Confucius means that a man must repent, must have no iniquity in his heart, in order to pray acceptably. Confucius does not seem to feel the need for a gift of divine grace in order truly to repent and to be cleansed from sin.³

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1. Ante., pp. 74-75.

2. Ante., pp. 67 and 81-82.

3. Ante., p. 64, section 3, *and* p. 81.

g. Prayer in Sickness. Confucius approved of prayer through the spirits in case of sickness. Christ teaches to pray direct to God as to a loving Heavenly Father.¹

h. Confucius Presents God as Supreme Power. Confucius pictures God as the supreme power in Nature. Heaven is his favorite name for God. Christ emphasizes that God is Creator and Heavenly Father, in close and loving relationship with men.²

i. Five Relations of Confucius. Confucius emphasized the Five Relations, or the duties of man to man, so exclusively that his religion is called the Religion of the Five Relations. Christ taught that the first and great commandment is to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself. Christianity in China is sometimes called the Religion of the Six Relations, adding the relationship to God to the five relations involved in the duties of man to man.³

j. Worship of Spirits of Nature. Confucius condoned, if he did not actually inculcate, the worship of the spirits of hills and streams. For this reason his religion has sometimes been called henotheistic, I would prefer to call

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1. Ante., p. 65.
2. Ante., pp. 69-70.
3. Ante., p. 75.

him a near-monotheist. Christ, of course, is a strict monotheist.¹

k. Worship of Spirits of the Deceased. Confucius by invoking the spirits of the deceased as though they were living, conscious and present, showed a belief in a future life, but it was ill-defined. Christ taught clearly personal resurrection from the dead, and future rewards and punishments. Considering the context--a discussion about the worship of the spirits of the departed--Confucius' so-called agnosticism about future life may refer only to the presence of ancestral spirits at the sacrifices in their honor, and not to the larger question of the immortality of the soul.²

3. Criticism of Confucius.

The teachings of Confucius are so challenging that they have been criticised from many standpoints in every age. In this chapter we shall notice some of the criticisms made of his teaching by Chinese, who presumably understand his teaching better than foreigners, and by certain foreign writers.

a. Confucian Prayer. Wang Chung, who lived in the first century of the Christian Era, did not believe in

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1. Ante., pp. 65-66.

2. Ante., pp. 70-72.

prayer. Dr. Giles quotes Wang as saying:

"That the Emperor personally prayed in the mulberry-grove, that his self-indictment was mentioned, that he cut off his hair and bound his hands, thus offering himself as a victim, and that he implored God--all this may be true; but the statement that rain fell in consequence seems to be a fable. . . . It is probable that, as the drought had been lasting a long time, rain fell as a matter of course, directly after the Emperor had been accusing himself of being the cause of the drought; and that the people of that day, noticing the coincidence, thought that the rain had come in answer to prayer."¹

It is doubtful if Mr. Wang would believe in any answer to prayer. He rules out any personal God that hears and answers prayer, and governs men by Providence. The methods by which he explains away the providential and the miraculous in the Confucian texts, remind one strongly of some modern humanistically inclined commentators on the Bible.

b. Position of Woman. Mencius states that of the three great sins against filial piety, the greatest is not to have a son to worship the ancestors. When sons are not born within several years after marriage, the husband is urged by the family to take a concubine. Polygamy is tolerated, and under certain circumstances is considered a religious duty. Education was reserved almost entirely for the sons, since they will continue to belong to the father's family and since they were eligible to become

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1. Confucianism and Its Rivals, p. 159.

officials. All this combined to degrade the position of woman. In the last few years the Chinese government has made laws, penalizing concubinage, and giving women equal rights with men.

c. Divination. Confucius has been attacked by young China for tolerating divination by means of stalks and tortoise-shells. These cults are considered to be mere superstition. Modern Confucianists go in for the planchette, when they wish to consult the spirits, which they consider to be a scientific procedure. But in his recorded conversations, the Sage does not directly refer to divination.

d. Lack of Progressive Spirit. Confucius has been blamed for lacking originality, for being a mere transmitter of the past. He looked backward to the heroic Kings of the Legendary Age rather than forward to a progressive future. Much of China's arrested development is charged against the Sage. A favorite proverb, however, is: "Do not be afraid of going slowly, but of standing still."¹

e. Love Versus Justice. One of the men whom Mencius called a heretic was the philosopher, Meh-Tzu. This philosopher advocated love for all men, in opposition to

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1. Baller, F. W.: Mandarin Primer, p. 35.

Confucius' dictum of returning kindness with kindness and injury with justice. Meh-Tsu had followers in all ages in China.

f. Clan Power. Confucius found that most of the control exercised over a man from his birth to his grave was in the hands of the Clan. His emphasis on the Five Relations still further entrenched the Clan in power. The student wing of the Nationalist Party believe that the control by the Clan has unduly hampered the development of individual life, reduced the sense of personal responsibility and more or less paralyzed initiative.

g. Distrust of Religion. Confucius says: "To give oneself earnestly to the duties due to men; and, while respecting spiritual beings, to keep aloof from them, may be called wisdom."¹ Dr. Giles criticises this translation of Dr. Legge, and thinks it better to translate, "to maintain a due reserve" in place of "to keep aloof." In the Li-Ki we read: "Do not take liberties with, or weary, spiritual beings."² Dr. W. A. P. Martin says:

"Disgusted at the superstitions of the vulgar, and desirous of guarding his followers against similar excesses, Confucius led them into the opposite extreme of scepticism. He ignored, if he did not deny, those cardinal doctrines of all religion, the immortality of

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1. Analects, Book VI, ch. 20.
2. Li-Ki, Book XV, ch. 22.

the soul, and the personal existence of God, both of which were currently received in his day."¹

Religion is a great force, the greatest force in the universe, and like all great forces, its use involves the danger of misuse and abuse. In order to prevent misuse and abuse, Confucius in his natural conservatism would restrain the use of religion to narrow bounds. What a different history China might have had, if Confucius had had a strong and intimate faith in God.

h. Confucianism. Commenting on the system of belief called Confucianism, and not so directly on the personal religious views of Confucius, Professor T. C. Chao in 1931 writes:

"Very few young people now pay much attention to Confucianism either as an ethical culture or as a religious cult. Those who are inclined to take Marx as their guide, and reform their country by bloody revolution and terror, are by logical necessity absolutely opposed to the teachings of Confucius and to Chinese culture at large. For many others, Confucius seems to have been an advocate of imperialism, of inequality between men and women, of the abominable old family system, and of the obnoxious doctrine of filial piety. Confucius, at any rate, will have to wait for a better day.

"Two years ago the Ministry of Education ordered the cessation of annual sacrifices to Confucius, but more than a year ago the Ministry again authorized the 27th of August as a day for offering sacrifices to the sage. It has been reported that the Government will preserve the Confucian Temple in Nanking and make it into a memorial hall for Confucius. It is to be under the administration of the Ministry of Education of the

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1. Martin, Dr. W. A. P.: The Lore of Cathay, p. 176.

Central Government, with the stipulation that it shall not be used for other purposes. Thus Confucius will receive at least the same kind of respect as the two other gods, Kuan Yu and Yo Fei.

"As a result of the emphasis on educational reforms, and the victory of the Kuomintang (the Nationalist Party) over its enemies, especially the Communists, Dr. Sun's doctrines might become more popular. With the spread of Dr. Sun's doctrines, Confucianism might secure another lease of life in China, inasmuch as Dr. Sun advocated that knowledge, benevolence, and courage should be the foundation of the nation, and that the aim of the nation should be to absorb the teachings of Confucius. What possibilities there are for Confucianism to become a religion may be left to the imagination of the reader. Very few people who have formed small families still offer sacrifices to their ancestors; still less to heaven and earth, or to Confucius as a sage.

"In the last few years Confucian temples have been deserted, and even if the customary sacrifices are still carried on, they are attended by very few people who show very little religious spirit. Confucianism may more easily become a sort of secularism, which may either borrow from Christianity and Buddhism a dynamic for its own existence, or ignore its allies by identifying itself with a sort of bottomless humanism, different from that which China possessed in the past, viz., cosmic humanism."¹

4. Conclusions.

a. Preliminary Observations on the Evidence. The Confucian Classics have such a large text that it is almost impossible for one man to cover the text thoroughly. Much of the text is ambiguous on religious questions, since it is not written chiefly for religious instruction and has no systematic nor logical arrangement. Most writers

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1. China Christian Year Book, 1931. Pp. 68-69: *also Ante p. 85.*

emphasize some parts of the material and omit or ignore other parts, since it is difficult to cover all thoroughly. It is easy to confuse Confucius' record of history with his own personal religious convictions, and these in turn with the views of his commentators. It is not surprising that there are such varied estimates of his religious views.

b. Contemporary Conditions. We shall not review the religious conditions of Confucius' day, except to call attention to the darkest blot, the human sacrifices at the funerals of princes, and to note one bright spot, the fact that idolatry had not been introduced. Gautama was a contemporary of Confucius, and the Buddhist religion did not enter China in any influential way until the first century of the Christian Era.

c. Christian Criticism of the God-Idea in Confucianism.

Z K. Zia, as quoted by Dr. Lyon, says:

"No one in Chinese history has ever had a clear conception of God. The Chinese were more concerned with Tao (the mystic way of life) than with God. . . . Confucius did not know what kind of God he believed in. He stopped before he reached the highest good. He educated his pupils to the highest moral and held them there, without attaching them to the highest Person. This is the greatest shortcoming of Confucius, and perhaps he knew it himself. . . . There has been no Jesus in China to reveal God unmistakably and distinctly. . . . If only Confucius had known God a little better, the history of China would have been totally different, and perhaps much more encouraging."¹

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1. Religious Values in Confucianism.

d. Difficulties Which a Confucianist Has in Accepting Christ. The Confucianist has many obstacles in his path when he attempts to examine Christianity impartially and to embrace its tenets. In the first place is the foreign origin and propaganda. The Christian Church in China is still called the foreign religion. Then the exclusive claims of Christ; many would be willing to add Christ to their objects of worship, but to yield to him the supreme self-surrender is hard to understand and still harder to do. The social ideals of Christ demanding a fight against concubinage, opium, vice, graft, and kindred evils, are hard to comply with. The doctrine of universal sin, of the resurrection of Christ and other Bible miracles, and the deity of Christ, all are stumbling blocks.

e. Contribution of Christianity to Confucianism.

Y. K. Woo in an interview with Dr. Lyon says:

"Christianity can give content to Confucianism in that it can supply dynamic force to its cold principles and can make everything in its philosophy more vital. Christianity can introduce life and activity for social betterment. It can also give to the Confucianist its conception of God."¹

Dr. Sun Yat-Sen writes:

"The ancients applied the principle of love to government, saying, 'Love the people as your children,' and 'Be kind to all the people and love all creatures.' Love was used to embrace all duties, from which we can see how well they put kindness and love into effect.

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"Since our foreign intercourse began, some people have thought that the Chinese ideal of kindness was inferior to the foreigners' because foreigners in China, by establishing schools and carrying on hospitals to teach and relieve the Chinese, have been practising kindness and love. In the practical expression of the fine qualities of kindness and love, it does seem as though China were far behind other countries, and the reason is that the Chinese have been less active in performance. Yet Kindness and Love are old qualities of Chinese character, and as we study other countries, let us learn their practical methods, revive our own kindness and love, and the spirit of ancient China, and make them shine with greater glory."¹

Christianity has stimulated a revival in Confucianism of its old ideals of kindness and love, and the better practical expression of these ideals. By a generous recognition of what is good in the teachings of Confucius, his followers may be led to find in Christianity not only a high technique in expressing kindness and love, but also a strong motive-power due to faith in a living Christ dwelling in the heart.

f. How Can Confucianism Prepare the Way for Christ?

C. S. Miao, in an unpublished manuscript, is quoted by Dr. Lyon as follows:

"Confucianism has a distinct place and function in religious education for the Chinese. Its religious philosophy has been the religious philosophy of intellectuals for all ages. Its teachings have defined the attitudes and values of the people, educated as well as uneducated. Its ethics has molded all the social customs and institutions of the people. . . . Although Confucianism cannot solve the problems of

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1. San Min Chu I, p. 129.

modern China, it can at least give to the religious educator a social background, and also a key to re-directing the attitudes already possessed by the people and the activities already going on."¹

Confucius and Christ should not be made to appear as rivals. Much of what Confucius taught is of permanent religious value, and in a form easily grasped by Chinese. These can be used as stepping stones to the final revelation of the Father in Christ.

Dr. Sun Yat-Sen says:

"As for China's old moral standards, they are not yet lost sight of by the people of China. First come Loyalty and Filial Devotion, then Kindness and Love, then Faithfulness and Justice, then Harmony and Peace. The Chinese still speak of these ancient qualities of character. But since our domination by alien races and since the invasion of foreign culture which has spread its influence all over China, a group intoxicated with the new culture have begun to reject the old morality, saying that the former makes the latter unnecessary. They do not understand that we ought to preserve what is good in our past and throw away only the bad. China now is in a period of conflict between old and new currents and a large number of our people have nothing to follow after."²

The Spirit of God works when and where and how He wills, with or without the usual means of grace, and without arbitrary distinction of race or nation. Christ came, not to destroy, but to fulfil whatever of good there is, in the ancient religion of China as well as elsewhere.

The high ideals which Confucius taught make men divinely restless when they find that in their own strength

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1. Religious Values in Confucianism, p. 33.
2. San Min Chu I, p. 126.

they cannot measurably and satisfactorily attain these ideals. The teachings of the Sage not only make men proud in their high endeavor, but also make men humble by their failure in achieving these lofty aims. The law of Confucius may verily be a school teacher leading men to Christ.

W. Gilbert Walshe says:

"The failure of Confucianism to satisfy the cravings of man's spiritual nature, its attitude of reserve on questions affecting the unseen world, its silence with regard to sin and its remedy . . . have had the effect of paving the way for Christianity. Here it will find a place and a welcome, and the true Sage whom Confucius dimly outlined . . . will be recognized in Jesus Christ, in whom alone the highest definition of brotherhood is exhibited, and in whom alone fatherhood, in the ultimate sense, is propounded--the Fatherhood of God, whose offspring is not limited to the confines of the four seas, but who embraces 'all nations of men' who 'dwell on all the face of the earth,' in whom also is found that motive power which can compensate for the weaknesses and disabilities of a corrupted human nature, and can enable man to attain to the highest perfection--a standard for transcending that which Confucius had in mind when he enunciated his great axiom, 'Rest in the Highest Excellence.'"¹

Dr. Robert E. Speer, writing of the present system of Confucianism, states that it

" . . . is pure humanism, agnostic with regard to religious ideas, socially and ethically worthy, but static. For a time the type of mind generated by Confucianism was both the hope and despair of Christianity in China, but the processes of classical training which formed that mind have broken down and Christian institutions have done more than the institutions of the Government to preserve its real values."²

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1. Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. IV, p. 19.
2. The Finality of Jesus Christ, pp. 332-333.

The theism of China's ancient religion as endorsed by Confucius, together with Confucius' own prayer life, trust in the providential protection of God, conviction that God had given him a message for his people, and belief in the moral order of the universe, gives Christianity an approach to the Chinese mind on the psychological theory of proceeding from the known to the unknown. Christianity thus keeps alive the true value of Confucius' teachings and shows their perfect realization in the full-orbed Christian faith.¹

We may quote further from Dr. Martin:

"It is not surprising that when missionaries attempt to direct their attention to the Saviour, the Chinese point to Confucius and challenge comparison; nor that they should sometimes fail to be satisfied with the arguments employed to establish the superiority of Jesus Christ. But the thoughtful Christian who has studied the canonical books of China can hardly return to the perusal of the New Testament without a deeper conviction of its divine authority. In the Confucian Classics he detects none of that impurity which defiles the pages of Greek and Roman authors, and none of that monstrous mythology which constitutes so large a portion of the sacred books of the Hindoos, but he discovers enough defects to make him turn with gratitude to the Revelations of a 'Greater Teacher.'"²

g. What Challenge Does Christianity Offer To Confucianism? Dr. T. C. Chao, of Yen-Ching University, Peiping, in a letter quoted by Dr. Lyon, says:

"We have been hearing, not perhaps without a measure of patience, that we must interpret Christianity in terms

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1. Ante., p. 5, on Confucius as a Humanist.
2. Lore of Cathay, p. 176.

of Chinese culture. There is a good deal in it. But what we really need is a thorough understanding of the teachings of Jesus, and a direct experience of Christ, through a living of his kind of life. The Christian message is clearly far above what Confucius can offer and what his followers can give. Mankind wants God. My personal opinion is that God can be found in clear expression only in the Lord incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ. The greatest task ahead, it seems to me, is the creating of the direct experience of God through our faith in Christ. The Christian message lies clearly in the definite faith in God as Father, with whom his believing children can have personal communion through the living of a life as exemplified in Jesus, a life of moving and conquering love. It is clear that Confucius has not given us a Gospel, a simple, yet magnificent gospel, of the love of God the Father, who wants us all to be like Christ, and to have the most abundant life, that contains in it a wonderful peace and joy and a contact with everlasting reality."¹

The Chinese heart, as well as every human heart, was made for communion with God in Christ, and will be restless until it find rest in Christ.

The record shows that Confucius was imperfect in spiritual vision and ambiguous in stating his religious views and experiences, especially in regard to hope of a future life. We cannot trace in an orderly way the psychological development and organization of the Sage's personality and growth in grace. There is, however, evidence to show that Confucius believed in one God, as supreme in heaven and on earth, who gives or withholds rain, who is all righteous, and the only one able to forgive sin, who punishes the evil and rewards the righteous, who reveals

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His will to man, who hears and answers prayer, who providentially controls man and nature, and to whom sacrifice is to be made. He is at heart a believer in ethical monotheism, loosely interpreted, and exemplifies the highest religion of which we know, outside of Christianity and of the Old Testament prophetic teachings.

But Christianity is much more than ethical monotheism. The law of God, whether in the conscience or in the Holy Scripture, shows us our sins and moral weakness. Only with a God of Covenant, Incarnation and Redemption can man achieve his highest spiritual ideals. Salvation comes not from mere human striving, weak and fitful as it is, but from the grace of God, and is received by faith. Christianity gives us a God of yearning love that becomes incarnate in an historical person, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who lived a life of perfect love and purity; who went consciously and willingly to his cruel death, not merely as a martyr for a cause, but as a sacrifice, a propitiation for sin, a ransom for many; who conquered death, rose a victor from the grave, and in His Spirit makes His home in the hearts of His people. This living faith in a living Christ is the power of God to regenerate individuals and society.

Dr. Fenn asks:

"Why did the Chinese fail to progress in the knowledge of the Supreme God? There has never been any theistic propaganda. God has not had any real connection with

the life of the people. He has not been an individual experience. His worship has been the prerogative of one man, the emperor. He is not in their educational system. Other objects of worship have been substituted or have intervened."1

A Chinese proverb says: "If men are not informed, they do not know; if wood is not bored, it is not pierced through."2

Let us lead "lives of Love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us to be a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." May we do all we can to make Jesus Christ adequately known to Confucianists and to all non-Christian peoples. Shall we not share what is most precious in our own life and experience? It is our joyous privilege and duty at home and abroad to introduce our fellowmen to Jesus, our divine Friend and Saviour.

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1. An unpublished manuscript on "The Religions of China," p. 35.
2. Baller, F. W.: Mandarin Primer, p. 305.

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