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RELIGION IN CHINA

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RELIGION IN CHINA

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and

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PREFACE

WHEN we were invited by the editor to contribute to this series, the proposition which came to us was to write a book on the religions of China. Our response is a book on *Religion in China*. There seem to us good reasons for this. One is that after living in China for twenty-four years (mainly in South China but also in the north), we came away with the deep impression that the Chinese particular aptitude for religion was something which had taken on different forms in different parts of the country, and in different ways at different times. Further study in Oxford for sixteen years (one of us being in West China for two and a half years during the Japanese occupation) has only confirmed this impression. To use the old convention of marking out this practice and belief as Confucianism and that as Taoism and the other as Buddhism, useful as it is as a simple guide, yet in the last resort is misleading.

The Chinese, like other folks, have all along been some of them more religiously inclined and others of them less, some more orthodox, others more romantic in their working beliefs. The result is that when all these diverse temperaments got to work on the original Confucian tradition and the original Taoist tradition and the original Buddhist tradition from India, they did what other races have done, namely bring over elements from one tradition to another, until each of the three systems has become inextricably imbued with the other two, and you can seldom find in the living flesh any man or woman who is a pure Confucianist or Taoist or Buddhist. Add on to this that the three 'isms' did not exterminate the old autochthonous beliefs and practices, and these have continued down the ages with a bewildering variety of local names and colouring. It will then be clear that the subject of this book must be more 'religion in China' than 'the religions of China'. In other words, there is, as modern anthropological studies have shown with ever-

increasing force, a world phenomenon which takes on various forms in different ages among different peoples, and it is agreed to call this 'religion'. Let us therefore study this very human aptitude in its characteristic Chinese variations.

In our attempt to present as clear a picture as possible, we have found ourselves faced with the difficulty that modern Chinese intelligentsia are inclined to speak of Confucianism as not a religion at all but a philosophy of life which rules out religion as a superstition unworthy of the educated man. Our attitude to this claim is that we are aware of the grounds for this position, but they do not seem to us to add up to the conclusion drawn. Thus, it is quite true that along one line of China's great tradition there has been a well-sustained tendency to rule out 'God' and worship 'Nature', that is to say, get away from a very personal God and cleave to, indeed, worship and adore, the impersonal reality which is found in the processes of Nature. Very well then: let us take it at that. The anthropologist will then ask how this high faith in Nature expressed itself in educated Chinese minds. Did it take on form in rite and institution, in sacred books, in a generally approved moral code? The only answer possible is that it did. Not only so: these sacred books (commonly called the Chinese Classics) were universally acknowledged to have come from the hands of sages, men of supernormal intelligence and public devotion who by their labours came to see what Heaven had ordained as the laws of the good life for man. They wrote or collected together these very sacred scriptures, and they are recorded as having been inspired from 'Heaven'.

There is, therefore, that ineradicable, ineffably sublime 'Heaven' rooted and grounded in Confucianist teaching, and so, to our minds, that teaching comes within the category of a religion. Then there is this odd thing which happened: Taoism which started life as a sublime philosophy of the reality which is beyond all comprehension by human minds, nevertheless, in course of time, became impregnated with spirit worship. The same also happened to Buddhism, which started life in India as a technique of salvation from the tragic, endless delusion (*maya*) of sense and passion. In China it took on

the most profoundly religious forms. So, whichever way we approach China, we find evidence of what is called 'religion'. The only thing is that Western students are now compelled to enlarge the scope of their vocabulary and think in terms of naturalistic religion, humanistic religion, this worldly religion as well as other-worldly, God-centred, supernatural religion. There is no need to point the moral in relation to modern developments in Europe and America.

With regard to the innumerable local variations, we have attempted to show how some local cults spread all over the country, and we have drawn attention to certain common characteristics in many of the local cults. But we are conscious of not having done justice to this side, and especially to have given no satisfactory answer to the question of how far faith in the old-time religion still exists in China. As a matter of fact, any study of a county gazetteer—and there are thousands and thousands of them—will reveal enough material for a large size book on the local ancestral fanes, local deity shrines and Taoist and Buddhist temples, all there in addition to the temple in honour of Confucius. So far these gazetteers have been almost entirely neglected by Western scholars, and so long as this state of affairs exists, no one can speak with complete knowledge.

We have dealt with our subject chronologically, taking first the traces of primitive religion as they appear in the society before the time of Confucius, as far as it is possible to reconstruct that society from archæological discoveries and written records.

Second comes the beginnings of Confucianism and Taoism between the seventh and third centuries B.C., the earlier half of the classical period of Chinese philosophy and literature. The two trends were vastly different then; as one great critic about that time said of all the schools of thought, the one denied what the other affirmed.

Third comes religion in the Han era, when the empire became stabilized and Confucianism became the state religion. It came to be called *K'ung Chiao* (the teaching of Confucius), but it had roughly as much of Taoism in it as it had of Confucius' personal beliefs.

Fourth, there was the coming of Buddhism from India and the reactions to it in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Fifth, there was the revivification of Confucianism in Sung times and its subsequent crystalization, together with some account of popular religion as it functioned until the invasion of Western ideas, both scientific and religious, in the nineteenth century.

The coming and limited extension of Mohammedanism and the coming of Christianity at several different times through the centuries from the Nestorians to the Protestant missions of the nineteenth century have a different history from that of the other foreign religion, Buddhism. These two faiths did not become integrated into the life of the people. Two separate chapters, therefore, have been devoted to their story before the reader is brought to the final chapter with its appraisal of the present situation in post-war China.

In conclusion we would urge our readers to bear in mind the distinction which Henri Bergson brought out so clearly in his *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion.* There are the exclusive religions with their spheres of influence restricted to the tribe and their schemes of salvation and supernatural protection equally so restricted. And there are the inclusive religions, Christianity, Buddhism and Mohammedanism being examples *par excellence*, the religions which see all mankind, irrespective of race, as in equal need of being saved through the power of a unique revelation. The one class, says Bergson is static, the other dynamic; the one demands conformity, the other opens the door to an inward freedom of the soul. Yet both classes come equally in the category of religion, and this is nowhere more clearly seen than in the fact that there is no known case of a dynamic world-embracing religion in which the old, static, exclusive elements do not continue to some extent. In fact the old elements die very hard.

This is the case to some degree in current forms of organized Christianity, as it is in current forms of Buddhism and Mohammedanism. This leads us to see that whereas theology has its excellent and indispensable part to play in clearing the mists from our beclouded human eyes, yet the theologian's

intellectual conclusions are not the central facts in any religion. They are rationalizations, and as such partake of the nature of idealistic reconstructions. Religion is not primarily an ideal, but a fact, the supreme fact in the life of every individual and race. Its distinctive note is life, the ability to live in relation to all time and all space. It is in the last resort practical not theoretical, and in so far as the religious mind apprehends God, it approaches Him as a real and active, not just a theorizing God.

CHAPTER I

PRIMITIVE RELIGION

MUCH of the earliest beginnings of Chinese history are still wrapt in mystery, waiting for more light to be shed by the archæologists. The discovery of the 'Peking Man' (*Sinanthropus pekinensis*) in 1927 has, however, proved that *homo sapiens* existed in North China in early Palæolithic times. Skeletal remains and artifacts belonging to the successive ages of pre-history have been found in various other places. For the Neolithic Age there are quite a number of examples of pottery showing different stages of cultural development. That known as the Yang Shao painted pottery would seem to show that the Chinese genius for art began to develop early. This is seen even more impressively in the bronze sacrificial vessels which were produced in the Shang Age. These vessels are things of great beauty and must have been the product of a comparatively advanced civilization. Many of them are to-day the prized treasures of the world's most famous museums and art collections.

This Shang (or Yin) culture existed in North China around the basins of the Yellow and Wei rivers and is the first period of Chinese civilization about which we can really know something. Where these Shang people came from originally is one of the problems of modern ethnology, speculations concerning which need not concern us here. Chinese scholars until the rise of modern archæological investigations were content to accept the legendary history embodied in their classical tradition. This tells of 'Emperors' (*Ti*) each of whom reigned for a thousand years. Among other legendary figures are Yu Chao who taught men how to build houses; Sui Jen who discovered fire; Fu Hsi who invented the eight trigrams and pictographs and ideograms for writing instead of the old method of reckoning by knotted strings; Nü Kua, the empress who established the institution of marriage; and Shen Nung, the

father of agriculture. Coming nearer to historical times were the Three Emperors, Yao, Shun, and Yü, who may really have lived and become heroes to later generations. At any rate Yü is said to have founded the Hsia dynasty which preceded that of Shang. The dates given for these heroes and even for the Hsia dynasty (2205–1766 B.C.) are certainly untrustworthy; but it was probably between the sixteenth and fourteenth centuries that a certain super-chieftain built his capital, 'the great city Shang' near where Anyang stands to-day in the northern part of Honan Province. Here a powerful state existed until it was overthrown by the Chi clans from the north-west in the twelfth or eleventh centuries B.C.

The materials from which some idea can be got of the religion of this pre-historic period are the inscriptions on the bronze sacrificial vessels and on bones and tortoise shells used for divination (many thousands of fragments of which have been found on the Anyang site), and the writings of the classical period from the sixth century onwards. In studying these last, however, care must be taken to distinguish the ideas which the philosophers of those days thought should rightly be taught, and the ideas and customs which were already popular and which were really founded on earlier tradition. Reference to these latter are found in the folk songs of the *Shih Ching* (the Book of Odes). The oracles on the divining bones are the most reliable, since they were not carved with any other purpose than to make a record of the events for the people concerned. It is the inscriptions on the later Chou bronzes which alone give any real information, and what they do give is coloured by the desire to give honour to the hero or ancestor in whose honour the vessel was made.

These early inhabitants of North China were mainly engaged in agriculture, living in small villages, generally with one family or clan in each village. Their religion was, therefore, closely connected with Nature. The world was full of spirits of rain and cloud and thunder, of rivers and mountains, of trees and crops, and of the dead. There were the five household *shen* (gods or spirits), those of the outer and inner doors, the well, the hearth, and the inner court, to whom sacrifices were made.

Some of this has survived to this day, for as one goes down a village street at dawn or dusk one may see the incense sticks being lighted and stuck in the crack of the lintel, and every hearth has its picture of the kitchen god. Probably the most ancient cult of all was that of the *shê*, a mound representing Earth, in the centre of the village with a grove of trees around or on it. Wang Chung (A.D. 27) says: "It is customary to sacrifice to the *shê* which produces all things." The remnant of this cult can still be found in the small shrine under a tree at the entrance to a village at which offerings are made to the gods of the soil.

It is to be noted that 'Earth' and not 'Heaven' is regarded as the Giver, the source of life, from whom comes the abundance of crops and the fecundity of women. These two are closely associated. Thus grain was stored near the marital bed-chamber, and betrothal and marriage took place in relation to the spring and autumn festivals. The connection between the human body and the soil was also very close. It seems probable that corpses were deposited near the dwelling place during decomposition, thus fertilizing the family soil, and that each new member of the family was regarded as a reincarnation, not of any special ancestor but of the actual substance of all his ancestors.

In these agricultural communities the rhythm of life followed that of Nature, and from this sprang some of the basic ideas in *li* (ritual propriety) and *ho* (social harmony), two concepts deeply rooted in Chinese life. Customs, or taboos, must be followed with due propriety in order that the whole life of the community may be kept in harmony with Nature and thus the blessings of Nature be assured. Northern China had then, as now, a severe winter, and it seems that the life of the village was divided into two definite periods, a winter season when everyone kept indoors and carried on indoor occupations, spinning and weaving, net making, and so on, with no coming and going between different villages; and a summer period when everyone came out to work in the fields, to fish and to hunt, and to visit their neighbours.

The beginning and end of these periods were marked by

the great spring and autumn festivals which are still celebrated in some form throughout China. There are many references to these festivals in the *Book of Odes*. Probably some of the poems are survivals of songs sung on these occasions. The gatherings seem always to have been held on the banks of a river, or on a mountain overlooking a river; hills and water were essential. The young people from all the villages round met at the stated place for a grand picnic lasting for days, possibly weeks. Two kinds of contests are mentioned: the first connected with the river, the second with the mountain. The river had to be crossed either by swimming or wading or in some kind of boat. 'Crossing the ford' and 'picking up the skirts' are mentioned. The hill had to be climbed with the gathering of flowers of special kinds.

Then there were, most important of all, the ritual dances in which the youths and maidens formed opposite groups, and moving to music and song flung challenges and invitations from one group to another. These dances with their accompanying feasting ended with the pairing off of the couples, followed by betrothals between young people of different villages, the origin of the custom still observed in China that husband and wife must belong to different clans with different surnames. A recent visitor to the Communist area in Northern Shensi, part of the land occupied by these primitive people, has described the dances he found still being performed in the villages, and the way in which the Communists were introducing new propaganda ideas into them by means of new songs and dramas.

There is a reference in the *Analects* (Bk. XI, 25) to a festival of singing and dancing "among the rain altars" conducted by officials, each elder being accompanied by a young man. This may be a later development, but the importance attached to the rivers and mountains seems to point to a definite connection between the spring festival and the rainfall needed for the coming crops. The dragon, the national emblem, appears as hiding in the depths (of the marshes) during the dry, cold season and being summoned by the appropriate ceremonies, rising into the clouds to bring rain.

All this nature worship with its seasonal festivals, folk dances, and songs presents no very special aspects in which Chinese religion differs from the animism of other races in the same stage of development. The important thing in all cases is to find out what belief, if any, there was in a supreme deity and in spirits other than those associated with natural phenomena. When Christian missionaries came to China they naturally sought in the classical books for some name which could be applied to the Christian conception of 'God.' They found in the earliest books two terms: *Shang-ti*, the over-ruler, and *T'ien*, Heaven. After much discussion between the different orders of Roman Catholic missionaries in the seventeenth and later centuries, the term *T'ien Chu*, Lord of Heaven, was adopted and has continued to be used by the Roman Catholic Church. When Protestant missionaries came at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they felt the need of a different term and adopted *Shang-ti*. These early missionaries in their anxiety to find something in Chinese thought on which to build their teaching of a one, personal God no doubt read more into the classical references to *Shang-ti* than was really justifiable. Further investigation seems to prove that the being referred to as the 'over-ruler' or 'supreme ancestor' was in fact worshipped by the rulers of the Shang dynasty and by them only.[1]

Each local chieftain worshipped his own ancestors in his ancestral temple, and presumably the tribe or clan as a whole took part. There is no evidence for the worship of *Shang-ti* by the chieftains and their clans. For them, as for the super-chieftains at Anyang also, the ultimate authority behind ancestors and nature spirits was *T'ien*, an impersonal but by no means characterless 'Heaven'. In fact the relation of *Shang-ti* to the 'God' now worshipped by that name by thousands of Chinese Christians has less meaning than the relation of the Hebrew's *Yahweh* to the God and Father of Jesus Christ.[2]

[1]The two '*shangs*,' although having the same sound, are different characters, one meaning 'above,' the other being the name of the dynasty.

[2]It was, of course, necessary to have some Chinese character to correspond to the name of God for translation purposes, but it must not be thought that the mere adoption of the classical term has been enough to supply the Chinese Christian with the full meaning of the Western concept.

This consideration of the worship of a Supreme Deity brings us to the two fundamental ideas which have permeated chinese religious thought: the power and authority of Heaven and the relation between a man and his ancestors. The following quotations, from among many others, illustrate the thought of pre-Confucian ages about 'Heaven'.

"The deeds of High Heaven are without sound or smell." (*Shih Ching* iii, 1 i, 7.)

"Heaven sent down calamity . . . but now Heaven is guiding all minds, bringing them in humility to a mutual accord." (*Tso Chuan*, Legge's trans., p. 211.)

"Propriety is to express accordance with Heaven; it is the way (*tao*) of Heaven." (ibid., p. 272.)

"Stand in awe of the majesty of Heaven." (ibid., p. 272.)

"Heaven has done it. What then shall I say?" (*Shih Ching* i, 3.)

"Heaven protects and establishes thee
With the greatest security,
Makes thee entirely virtuous,
That thou mayest enjoy every happiness." (ibid., *II*, i, 6.)
(An ode in praise of the king, cp. Psalm 21.)

"Great Heaven, unjust,
Is sending down these great miseries." (ibid., *II*, iv, 7.)

"He is not ashamed before men:
He does not stand in awe of Heaven." (ibid, *II*, v, 5.)

"O bright and high Heaven,
Who enlightenest and rulest this lower world." (ibid., *II*, vi, 3.)

"Revere the anger of Heaven,
And presume not to make sport or to be idle,
Revere the changing moods of Heaven,
And presume not to drive about (at your pleasure)."
(ibid., *II*, ii, 10.)

"Great Heaven is intelligent
And is with you in all your goings:
Great Heaven is clear-seeing
And is with you in your wanderings and indulgences."
(ibid., *III*, ii, 10.)

"Heaven enlightens the people
As the bamboo flute responds to the porcelain whistle."
(ibid., *III*, ii, 6.)

"Heaven, in giving birth to the multitudes of the people,
To every faculty and relationship annexed its law."
(ibid., *III*, iii, 6.)

"(The way of) Heaven is evident
And its appointment is not easily preserved." (ibid., *IV*, i, 3.)

This last quotation has a reference to the 'appointment' or 'decree' of Heaven which all down the ages was the *sine qua non* for the establishment of a new dynasty. If it became evident that through misgovernment the Emperor had forfeited the decree of Heaven, the people were right to rebel and find a successor in one upon whom the choice of Heaven had fallen. Thus the rise and fall of dynasties is accounted for in traditional history.

We have then a supreme power whose ways are mysterious and who sometimes seems to afflict men unaccountably, but whose will on the whole makes for righteousness. This will of Heaven was sought by means of divination, either by throwing milfoil stalks on the ground, or by reference to the markings on tortoise shells and the bones of sacrificial animals after burning. From the inscriptions on the *Yin* bones which have been deciphered, and from references in the *Tso Chuan* history (dealing roughly with the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.), we learn that on almost every occasion, great or small, this divination was used: by the king anxious to know whether he would be successful in war, by the family about birth and marriage, by officials deciding whether to accept or refuse office. Even the arrangements for the entertainment of guests were regulated, as we are told that on one occasion a guest wished to prolong the feasting into the night, but his host replied: "I divined about the day, but I have not divined about the night. I dare not do it."

This belief in Heaven is, as we have said, one of the fundamental characteristics of Chinese religious thought. With regard to the actual worship of Heaven another strain of tradition seems to appear, perhaps a relic of the worship of a sky god of prehistoric times, which is connected with another concept, that of a composite Heaven-and-Earth, or order of the universe, which appears later in Taoist writings. The worship of Heaven

and Earth became in later ages, after the unification of China under one emperor, the supreme duty of the emperor, whose proudest title was Son of Heaven. On behalf of the people he offered sacrifices on the altar of Heaven in the southern suburb of the imperial city at the spring and winter solstice, and on the altar of Earth in the northern suburb also twice a year. These sacrifices continued to be offered until the fall of the empire in 1911, and the white marble altar of Heaven outside Peking remains as a ninth wonder of the world for its breath-taking beauty. Standing in its park, below the clear, North-China blue sky, there is about it a feeling of awe and sacredness such as one encounters on entering the great cathedrals of the West.

The second main element of religious thought which has come down from very early times and permeated Chinese society up to the present is that generally known as ancestor worship. This is perhaps the most unique element in Chinese religion. Other primitive races have reverenced and feared their dead, but in no other nation has the intimate connection between a man and the spirits of his forebears been developed with such an elaboration of ritual or had such an effect on society as a whole. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether even in Chou times there were sacrifices offered by the common people to their parents and immediate forebears as distinct from those of their superiors. If such sacrifices were offered they could hardly have been in small family temples. Only the rich could afford such luxuries, and the poor serf had to be content with a small share in his lord's observances.

It is easy to dismiss ancestor worship as a superstitious practice indulged in either from fear of the evils which the Spirits could send down, if they were displeased, or from the desire to propitiate the Spirits and induce them to send help and good fortune to their descendants. It is clear that both these motives were very much there, at least in early times, and like all other rituals more so with ignorant people than with educated, but a modern Christian Chinese scholar has claimed that the idea of seeking benefits through worship is either entirely absent or quite insignificant. Certainly neither the

attitude of fear nor that of seeking benefits would have been enough to produce the sense of continuity which has been such a stabilizing influence throughout Chinese history. A Chinese man is, not socially speaking, a separate individual in a community composed of members of different families, but a member of his family which includes all the living members of the clan and extends backwards to his ancestors and onwards to his descendants. Thus a great general or statesman receives honours not only for himself: his ancestors are also ennobled. The worship which a man offers before the spirit tablets on which the names of his ancestors are inscribed brings with it a sense of his place in the succession and the duties and responsibilities which that place entails.

In the pre-Confucian period worship of the ancestors seems to have taken a very important place in the duties of the heads of clans. The dukes consulted the Spirits before undertaking journeys, especially warlike expeditions, and reported themselves on their return. The Spirits are represented as concerned for the welfare of the people, i.e. those governed by the prince of that district. The pious moral sentiment is sometimes expressed that they are more concerned with virtue on the part of their worshippers than with the abundance of the offerings. Also they do not enjoy sacrifices from those who are not their kindred. On the first day of the month the duke announced the date to the ancestors and asked leave to carry out the duties of the month.

Sacrifices were offered to each member of the ancestral hierarchy on his special day (either of birth or death), and they seem to have received posthumous names according to the day of the week (ten days) and their relationship to the living descendant who was making the offering. This is in accordance with the widespread 'taboo' which made it disrespectful to use the personal names of the dead. In general sacrifices were made to the male ancestors in the direct line, but there are a few mentions of queens together with their husbands, and of a few separately. There are cases of women praying to the female ancestor for children, but the regular sacrifices were the duty of male descendants only, a fact which has affected Chinese

society very deeply. Women have tended to be regarded only of importance if they have produced male heirs, and polygamy and concubinage have been considered allowable if the first wife should be barren or have only daughters.

Sacrifices were also offered to the gods of the soil on the *shih chi* belonging to the capital. These altars were like the altars of the Baalim mentioned in the Old Testament; their capture by an enemy was the seal of the overthrow of the state. Now what were the victims offered in all these sacrifices? That is a question which has exercised the minds of scholars and to which there is no certain answer. Putting aside debatable passages it may be said that broadly speaking the sacrificial offerings were animals, sheep, oxen, pigs, and some birds; grain and liquor of some sort. The offerings were burnt as in other countries for 'a smell of a sweet savour', pleasing to the Spirits; and the liquor was poured out. But there is some evidence for victims being buried.

The sacrifices to the ancestors were no doubt partly intended to provide for their needs in some way. There is a story of an official who was particularly fond of water-chestnuts, so he directed that these were to be included in the offerings made to him during the first year after his decease. Offerings of animals were made also to the Spirits supposed to rule over famous mountains and rivers and to the gods of the soil, who would not seem to require nourishment.

It is a very vexed question whether human sacrifice was ever customary. There is no doubt that it took place sometimes, but on at least two occasions on which it is mentioned in the classical books it is with reproof: "Sacrifices are offered for the benefit of men. Men are the hosts of the Spirits at them. If you sacrifice a man, who will enjoy it?"

Closely connected with the question of sacrifices is the provision made for the comfort of the dead by the things which were buried with them. From the tomb sites which have been excavated there is ample evidence that many human beings were buried with a great man, both men and women. The latter were possibly wives, certainly concubines and servants. The former seem at least sometimes to have been prisoners of war,

possibly 'barbarians' from over the borders specially captured for this purpose. The women and servants may have been buried alive, but the captives were decapitated and the heads buried separately in rows or groups of ten, sometimes up to several hundred. Treasures of every kind were included, and from among them have come the famous bronzes and other art treasures now seen in museums. A survival of this custom exists to-day in the 'paper money' which is seen in every street in China waiting to be bought and burned for the use of the dead. We remember seeing a complete paper house which had been prepared by a specially devoted son for his aged mother. It was life-size with rooms completely furnished; with maidservants in attendance, food in the kitchen, even a gramophone, all made of paper and bamboo. It was no uncommon thing a few years ago to see funeral processions in Shanghai or Peking which included a full-sized paper automobile for the use of the deceased.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS OF CONFUCIANISM AND TAOISM

WE move on now to the next stage in Chinese history, the one in which the people of the northern half of China moved out on to the highway of civilization. In other words they laid their hands to the task of building up the Great Tradition which placed their culture among the civilized cultures of the world. It is remarkable that this great flowering age of Chinese thought corresponds in time very closely to the great days of Greece, of the Hebrew prophets, and of the Buddha.

The name chiefly associated with this stage is K'ung Chung-ni, 'Confucius' as the first Jesuit missionaries called him, latinizing the title K'ung Fu Tzŭ (K'ung the Master). He lived 551–479 B.C. To the Chinese people he came to be the greatest of their sages and teachers, the master mind whose teaching was inspired by Heaven and who led his people to know the path for man's well-being, the '*Tao*[1] of Heaven and Earth'. For a number of reasons, chiefly because *T'ien* (Heaven) came to have a strongly naturalistic significance and because Confucius' own recorded sayings are concerned with this world, nineteenth-century students of Confucianism came to regard this great cult as not a religion but a system of moral philosophy; and the markedly rationalistic minds of modern Chinese scholars have followed suit. But recently the pendulum has begun to swing over, and with the new data furnished by the science of comparative anthropology there seems to be no valid reason for denying that Confucius had a deeply religious

[1]*Tao:* originally meaning a road, or walking on a road, then used by the new thinkers to mean the Highway for man, and then the Great Way of Heaven, the order of the universe, to which it is essential for man to correspond. The word has become familiar to English readers, and we shall use it without attempting the impossible task of finding an exact translation.

mind, and that his influence on the peoples of the Far East has been at any rate in part a religious one.

Thus he undoubtedly believed in *T'ien* as the controlling spiritual power in the universe, as having a will, and ordering nature and the affairs of men in the interests of man's moral well-being. During his long life with its many vicissitudes of fortune he was sustained by a sense of a divine commission. He prayed to Heaven. He was conscious of failure, failure to carry out his inspired mission, failure also in himself to live up to the heights of Heaven's requirements. The cult which came in time to be called by his name contains all the marks of a functioning religion. It was a call from on high: it expressed itself in a great system of varied sacred rituals, many of them of a typically religious character: it had its saints, the 'Sage Kings' of old, and its sacred scriptures: and, although it had no priests ordained for special offices, yet the Son of Heaven had his priestly functions and his deputies throughout the country their religious duties. Above all, with its emphasis on family religion and worship of ancestors where the head of the family may be regarded as the priest, it maintained that above all the commands of the state lay the sacred duty to one's parents and ancestors.

Alongside of Confucius, 'the Sage and First Teacher' as the inscription on his tomb describes him, there came in time to stand the other great name of Lao Tzŭ, the first of the Taoists. Lao Tan and K'ung Chung-ni appear in the records as contemporaries, and there came to be many who believed that Confucius learned the basic elements in his faith from Lao Tan. To-day critically minded scholars do not believe this, and the Lao Tan of the Taoists has become a much more legendary figure than Confucius, about whom there is more certain historical information and some, at least, of whose actual doings and sayings have been recorded. The stories about Lao Tzŭ have become so overlaid with legend that it is impossible to say even whether such a person really existed, and certainly modern scholars do not recognize him as the author of the *Tao Tê Ching*, the Testament of Taoism. There is, however, much in common between Taoism and Confucianism: the

truth-revealing power in the Confucianist creed owed much to the devotees of the Tao.

Here again there is the question whether Taoism is a philosophy or a religion. The distinction has been made between the early phase of Taoism as philosophical and the later development as religious. The distinction is an important one, and that for two very different reasons. On the one hand, Taoist philosophy with its sense of the ineffable majesty of the unknowable ultimate reality construed the life of man at its highest as one of contemplation and of being impregnated with the power of the Tao. It was, therefore, in a real sense other-worldly, construing life in terms of eternity. On the other hand, Taoist thinkers, having come to regard the very ordure as containing some element of the Tao, and being completely pacifist in the face of the evil in the world, were not moved to fight superstitions. In the last resort should not all knowledge be called superstition? Hence in time beliefs in magical qualities to things, in fairy men of prodigious age and magic power gathered about this sublime philosophy, and the name Taoist became degraded from its high philosophical estate. In both systems lie enshrined the dreams of the Chinese people about life in this world and life in the light of eternity, and because there is for them no rigid dividing line between the two, therefore both Confucianism and Taoism are at the same time religious cults and philosophical systems.

When Confucius was born, in 551 B.C., the semi-feudal, semi-tribal order of society over which the Chou kings ruled was being subjected to severe strains. The original hundred odd fiefs, both large and small, were rapidly becoming changed into a small number of independent states. There were some thirteen of these still acknowledging the Chou king as overlord, but paying only lip-service to him. This state of affairs lasted for another two centuries, with the weaker states being swallowed up by the more powerful. From the social and political point of view this meant an advance in agriculture and commerce, though the standard of craftsmanship became rather patchy. At any rate, China had definitely come into her iron age. But from the point of view of morals and religion,

the old sanctions came to have less weight. The new type of reigning duke could hardly hold his own against his competitors if he stuck scrupulously to the old code of honour, whilst ambitious and unscrupulous men from the lower orders in society could win their way into the higher ranks of the governing class. There were constant wars with their concomitant, a new class of professional fighters to lead the peasant levies, whilst the size of the states entailed new techniques of civil administration and officials trained in these techniques. The old personal relationship of lord and serf was fast disappearing. In these circumstances there was plenty of religion to be found in society, but it was religion on a very low level.

Confucius belonged to a class between the patricians and the plebeians. The men of his class could read and write and originally were mainly occupied with religious duties. They were the repositories of tradition as to sacrifices and all the rituals of the feudal order. But by Confucius' day the class furnished the new talent required for administration. We find the Confucius of the records figuring in both capacities. He was an expert in ritual. He was also an able administrator. In both fields he saw much which outraged his sense of right and wrong, and he became convinced that society must return to the old sanctions. In this he was a conservative maintaining a lost cause, but in what he has to say about the individual man, whether aristocrat or serf, he revealed the movement of his time. It was an age of marked individualism, individualism of the dangerous, egotistical kind, and Confucius' achievement was to point out to all who would listen that a man is not more of a man because he has fiercer appetites and more power to gratify them, but when he can recognize his fellow man as having equal rights with himself.

To what extent Confucius, with his sense of the value of the past, helped to start a movement for investing the heroes of antiquity with saintly virtues we do not know, but it was about his time that this idealization began. These 'Sage Kings', as they came to be called, may have had some foundation in history, but they became legendary figures, pegs on which to hang the Confucian virtues, notably that of *jen* (man-to-

man-ness). These saviours of the people in the time of their need, these inventors of the calendar, of marriage, of the plough, of markets, of the written characters, and, above all, of the institution of government, are individuals and yet all of one mould. They mediate the beneficent will of Heaven to the ignorant, helpless people: they teach men to help themselves and to help each other. The stories form a great cycle, constituting what the French sociologists call 'collective representations', so that they are not the fruit of one man's imagination, nor of one generation.

But they are essentially Confucian, in harmony with the spirit of the man who went into exile with his poor vanquished duke, and who later, when that duke's son and successor took to evil courses, resigned from his office and went into voluntary exile with his close disciples. They recorded afterwards that during those years of exile he was once in danger of his life from a suspicious border-guardian at a place called Kwang. He said to his disciples: "If Heaven will that the cause of truth should not perish what can the men of Kwang do to me?" On that occasion also one of his disciples fell behind to guard the rear. Afterwards the Master said to him: "I thought you were dead". The disciple replied: "Whilst you are alive, how could I die?"

Besides the movement for the glorification of the legendary age there were two other cults which began to appear about this time, and the traditional belief has been that the Master had a great deal to do with the refining of them both: one a new emphasis on filial piety, the other the development of a new naturalistic philosophy out of the pseudo-science of divining. Thus all down the ages it has been believed that Confucius attached a high religious importance to the three-year rites of mourning for parents, and at the same time insisted on the vital need for filial duty while parents were alive. Also it has been believed that the hexagrams which the diviners used contained in their permutations and combinations a reliable method for discerning the nature of the universe as well as the signs of the times. But to-day it seems doubtful whether Confucius was an all-out filial-pietist in the sense that his

famous disciple Tseng Ts'an was, whilst hardly any modern critic believes in his authorship of the *Ten Wings of the Classic of Changes* with all its pseudo-scientific jargon. Certainly in the centuries following Confucius ancestor worship became more general, and with it came greater emphasis on filial piety; but this may have been as much due to changing social conditions and the growth of something more approaching a 'middle class' than to definite teaching on Confucius' part.

Confucius is not to be regarded as a philosopher in the sense that Plato was, but as a prophet such as we find in the Old Testament. Like Isaiah he denounced the futility of vain oblations, and yet like Ezekiel he saw a mystic significance in all the ritual. In the *Analects*, which contain the record of conversations between him and his disciples and others, we see him showing his profound objection to many rites and practices which passed as reputable religion in his day. When asked whether it was more efficacious to pay court to the house god in the stove or to the one in the house shrine, he replied that the man who has put himself out of court with Heaven has nowhere where he can pray. When he was sick and his disciples wanted special prayers to be made for him, he said that he had already been praying, and on seeing his disciples dressed as retainers in order to impress Heaven with his importance, he asked if they thought they could deceive Heaven. In short, where his age saw worship of the manes and of the different deities as a good investment of money and labour, he revolted against this superstitious view and felt that whilst people ought to reverence these spirits, yet it was better not to concern themselves too much about them.

We may safely say that in his youth he went through a period of puzzlement over the evil that he saw, and that for this reason he set himself to learn all he could of the past. What he learnt reinforced his belief in a transcendent Heaven and alongside that taught him to see man as capable of the highest achievements in goodness. The real question for him was what was goodness. Here we find a double strand in his thinking: on the one hand, goodness is doing, correcting what you see is wrong in yourself and persisting in this course, fulfilling the

great demands of filial piety towards parents, of loyalty and good faith in society, whatever the cost to yourself in discomfort or ill-repute, and resting assured that Heaven knows you. On the other hand, the individual finds himself and his reason for existence in relation to other individuals, to his family, his friends and neighbours, the society in which his lot is cast. It is by the fulfilment of these relationships that he fulfils himself.

This was the emphasis, coming as it did when the old tribal morality was breaking down, which gave the new consciousness of individuality in a man a moral basis. Confucius' influence thus told in two ways. He made men see themselves as individuals, as they had never done before. He also made concrete Heaven-ordained relationships the basis of ethics: the relationship of parent and child, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, friend and friend, and king and subject. In this the Chinese sense of ethics differs, not entirely but very markedly, from the Western sense of ethics with its exaltation of moral ideals (cp. the 'Seven Cardinal Virtues').

It does not follow that no idealistic teaching came from Confucius. On the contrary, both in his mouth and in his disciples' mouths we find a noble list of ideals headed by *jen*, the virtue of man-to-man-ness, which is linked with the quality which Confucius is said to have described as the one linking all his ideas together, the quality of reciprocity. Thus beyond such virtues as uprightness, loyalty, trustworthiness, particularly in relating speech to action and in dealings between friend and friend, there is this basic principle: every relationship entails a high obligation of giving and receiving.

This appears with great force when applied by Confucius to the relationship of ruler and ruled. As we shall see later, an after generation came to see Confucius as primarily a political philosopher, a theory for which there is a good deal of evidence, for much of the *Analects* consists of moralizations on the state and the duties of king and subject. But here again we have to see this against the background of his religious faith in Heaven. Take for instance the following famous reply to the question of what was necessary for government: Tzŭ Kung asked about government. The Master said: "An adequate food supply,

adequate arms, and adequate confidence on the part of the people". When asked, if one of the three had to be dispensed with, which could be let go first, his reply was "adequacy of arms", and when asked which of the other two, he said: "Choose adequate food, for from of old in every case there has been death (and the people know it), but if the people have no confidence in the government it cannot stand".

Along, therefore, with faith in the dominance of ethical values in the order of the universe, there was a profound sense of realism. This appears in his ethic of relationships: the concrete reciprocal obligations of concrete given ties. Thus, for example, a man would not have been born were it not that his parents had given birth to him, and as a babe he would not have survived unless they had nourished him. From this sprang the son's obligation of life-long gratitude. The same religious realism is found in Confucius' call to his age to correct the current usage of terms. The only book which we can have any confidence that he actually put forth is one in which are given the main events year by year of his native state of Lu. In this he took special care that the moral connotation of events should be accurately recorded. When asked by a disciple why he regarded this rectification of the use of terms as of such vast importance, he gave the characteristic reply: "If the terms are incorrect, then the language does not conform to what is meant; and if that be the case, then the rituals and music cannot flourish; and if that be the case, then the punishments meted out cannot hit the mark. If that be the case, then the people are tied hand and foot". If this be a valid kind of logic, it is both a religious logic and a realistic logic.

Thus Confucius, the 'First Teacher', was in one sense a conservative, in another a revolutionary. He failed to accomplish any tangible results in his own lifetime, but he attracted disciples in that grossly materialistic age. He trained them in his principles, and after his death they began to write down what he had taught. The record has survived in books of varying authenticity, so that we cannot be sure of many of the details. But the power of his personality remains clear: the man of unimpeachable moral honour, true to death. It is significant

both as to his age and what he was that there is no systematic record of his teaching. He was not a philosopher with a carefully worked out system of thought, but rather a religious teacher, a prophet in the highest sense. In an age of great mental confusion he saw life steadily and saw it whole.

Amongst his disciples was his grandson, Tzŭ Ssŭ, and he was faithful to the new deposit of truth. He had a more systematic mind, and in the short book which he wrote, the *Chung Yung*, he brought together certain aspects of his grandfather's teaching. Ruling out the later amplifications in the present text we can see two main strands in Tzŭ Ssŭ's message. One was that the key to right action in the face of Heaven was a middle way, the way that hit the mark by avoiding the error of excess and the error of insufficiency. This 'doctrine of the mean' came to have a very powerful influence on Chinese minds. The other strand was that the 'categorical imperative' of the right and the good was one which the simple unlettered man and woman could understand in its simplest direct appeal, whilst in its higher, more recondite appeals it was something which went beyond the capacity of a man even of sagely wisdom to comprehend.

With regard to this 'mean in common action' (as it may be translated), it may appear to point in the direction of compromise in a this-worldly ethic, and the history of Confucianism shows how the doctrine could be so construed. There can, however, be no question but that to Tzŭ Ssŭ and the best Confucian minds the very essence of the idea is denoted by 'hitting the mark', with the corollary that any moral act may in the light of Heaven's perfection miss the mark in one way or the other. With regard to the simpleton and the sage, this classic pronouncement makes all under Heaven of the same clay with the same road of moral perfection to travel. But it also envisages an ultimate reality in the universe which even the sage cannot wholly embody. Again we find ourselves on the border line between philosophy and religion, or, more accurately, between metaphysical speculation and theological affirmation. It is doubtful whether Confucius saw as clearly in this as Tzŭ Ssŭ did, but the Master's teaching unquestionably

was in this direction, and the later amplifier of the *Chung Yung*, in dealing with this transcendent reality in yet more explicit language, was in good apostolic succession.

The Tzŭ Ssŭ tradition is recorded as having been reinforced by the famous disciple Mencius, a hundred odd years later; and perhaps in the main it was so. There were other schools of interpretation of 'the Master's divine words', some of them more interested in learning, others more concerned with the art of government. None of them left out ritual and filial piety. But in Tzŭ Ssŭ's time, or a generation later, there were two men, Mo Ti and Ch'en Hua-li, who, supposed to have started by being Confucian disciples, broke away and set up a philosophy of their own. These two men, prophets also in their own way, came to mistrust profoundly the Confucian disciples' particular emphasis on ritual, their excessive emphasis on family relationship, and their failure to denounce aggressive warfare. There is a big book, still extant to the extent of 55 chapters out of 71, in which the teaching of Mo Ti and his school is recorded. Their doctrines had great influence for some three centuries, and their followers were organized in groups which might almost be called 'churches'. Later their influence declined and these groups disappeared, but some of their teaching had become part of that amalgam which in Han times became the great Confucianist system.

Mo Ti is particularly interesting from the religious angle. He had an exceptionally logical mind, more so than Confucius, and he developed a highly dialectical style of argument which drove home his points with unprecedented logical force. He believed with equal intensity in the old gods and the old sanctions of immediate divine retribution for sins against Heaven and against man. To him it was certain that there was a will of Heaven that must be obeyed and that this will was a will of beneficent love which operated without distinction of class or country. The proof of this Mo Ti found in the fact that all down the ages in every country the people 'fed oxen and sheep, dogs and pigs . . . and prepared clean cakes and wine in order that they might sacrifice to the High God, to the hills and rivers, and the manes of the dead'. "Since Heaven accepts these

offerings from all the world, therefore I know that Heaven loves all the people in the world". Again: "in all the countries in the world, and amongst all the people who live on grain, the murder of an innocent man brings down calamity. Who is it that murders the innocent? It is man. Who is it that sends down the calamity? It is Heaven. If Heaven does not indeed love the people, why does Heaven send down calamities for the murder of the innocent?"

All this is not much removed from Confucius' own sense of High Heaven, but behind it lay a very different approach to moral values. To Mo Ti the right and the good were equivalent at every point to what was of profit to mankind, and for that matter of profit to Heaven too. Now Confucius, it was recorded, 'seldom spoke of profit in connection with man's lot or in connection with the virtue of *jen*". For him right was right whether it proved profitable to anyone or not. The Mohists were utilitarians, of a high type it is true, for they were famous for their sacrifice of their own comfort in order that they might profit mankind: but they were concerned with men's well-being in terms of food and clothing and the like. That being so, it is understandable that Mo Ti had a rooted objection to the display of filial piety in elaborate and costly funerals, to expenditure by the ducal courts on the maintenance of trained choirs and orchestras, on anything which did not operate for the material welfare of the common people. Whether in the end Chinese religion and culture would have been enhanced by the general practice of these puritan principles is another matter.

Another question of high religious importance was raised in Mo Ti's denunciation of fatalism. Confucius had, it would appear, a leaning towards the idea that a man's lot was ordained for him, whether of good or evil fortune. In Mo Ti's day the followers of Confucius were going further, affirming that if fate decrees a man to be rich and of high station, or to be poor and belong to the plebeian class, he will be so. The same applied to increase in population and the reverse, and to the prevalence of order and chaos. For Mo Ti this was profoundly illogical. Heaven can only will good to the people it loves: it follows that

the presence of evil implies a situation the remedy for which lies in man's own hands.

One of the most interesting characteristics of Mohism was its ability to create special bodies of believers who met at periodic intervals and recited their master's words. There is good evidence that these bodies were organized under appointed, or maybe elected, leaders. They were to be found in all the states and, alas, seem to have quarrelled over the details of their beliefs. The Confucianists were not organized in this way, the reason being that in so far as their minds went beyond the religion of tribal tradition they called for a religion of the family. Where the family met in house or in ancestral temple there was the divinely appointed group, and there was no need for any other. Mo Ti taught filial duty to a man's parents, but his doctrine of universal love emphasized that love must not be restricted to the family.

The next great Confucian was Meng O (Mencius), who lived in the middle of the fourth century B.C., and then, following him two generations later, Hsün Ch'ing. They saw the political struggle at its height, in Mencius' generation the King of Ch'i being the most likely to start a new order, in Hsün Ch'ing's time the King of Ch'in actually succeeding in abolishing the Chou court and setting himself up as the First Emperor. These events have their reflection in the teaching of these two men.

Mencius had a very strong political side to him and doubtless at first cherished the idea that he might guide the King of Ch'i to become a Confucian Sage King. It was not long before he learnt that he was mistaken. He found himself in the same position as his Master: no one except his disciples would pay attention to him. It is, therefore, to his honour that he refused to compromise his principles and set himself to make Confucius' teaching a message for the times. The book which he wrote at the end of his life contains a record of the controversies in which he was engaged. The two heresies he was chiefly concerned with were that of Mo Ti and that of another teacher, Yang Chu, who set forth the self-fulfilment of the individual as the only rational philosophy of life. To check

these trends to utilitarianism and Epicurianism, Mencius set forth his conviction that the right has nothing to do with immediate profit and in the end goodness must triumph. Some of the references in his book to 'Heaven' can only bear the interpretation that it was for him a high overruling, beneficent Will, continually operative in the affairs of men. But other references depict 'Heaven' as a kind of mechanical law from which sprang all the different lots of mankind. The connecting link between the two ideas is that Heaven's law is a law of righteousness.

The truth is that this was the first great age of reason, and the more men came to exercise their reason, the more they broke away from the blind acceptance of the old theist traditions and came to see in nature an impersonal force with which they must come to terms. Mencius never got as far as that, and the reason is to be found in the fact that he had great psychological perception. He wanted to know what it was in men that made them sometimes good and sometimes evil. The result of his investigations come under two headings. In the first place he came to the conclusion that man at birth has within him a Heaven-given power of goodness. Given that this disposition be not stultified by an overwhelmingly strong environment of evil, its power will assert itself. Thus Heaven has weighted the scales at the outset in favour of the right and the good, and any man, if he is prepared to try hard enough, has the power within him to reach the level of a sage.

Thus the Sage Kings themselves become very human persons, not merely numinous figures, endowed with superhuman wisdom. For Mencius the proof of man's inherent power of goodness lies in the fact that all men instinctively have sympathy with other men in their troubles, instinctively have feelings of shame and dislike, instinctively feel reverence and distinguish between what is true and what is false, and this is revealed respectively in the virtues of *jen*, of fair dealing, of good manners, and of intellectual understanding. These virtues are part of man's psychological make up, qualities possessed by his mind.

In the second place Mencius speaks of what he calls *hao jan*

chih ch'i (lit, flood-like energy), what the great nineteenth-century sinologue, James Legge, translated as 'vast-flowing passion nature'. Mencius found evidence in himself of an overflowing moral energy, a kind of superlative personal morale; tempered by long practice it gave him discernment in all great moral issues and the ability to follow the right course whatever the cost. There is no expression more directly indicative of this state than the slang one 'to be on top of oneself and the world'. The eminent historian of Chinese philosophy, Dr. Y. L. Fung, describes this as a mystic conviction, and he quotes Mencius' words: "All things are complete in me" (this 'I' of me), and designates this overflowing energy as the psychological application of this intuitive conviction.

Now this is not quite what the Western mind normally regards as mysticism, but when the student examines the Chinese data on religion he finds that this intuitive conviction, plus the attendant psychology of thought and feeling, has a profound religious meaning. That is so because the Chinese approach to this conviction is a realistic and not an idealistic one, and the conviction itself is shot through and through with moral implications, so that the 'I' in this state is not submerged in the world of nature, is not a pantheist's bogus 'I'. Mencius may, as Dr. Arthur Waley suggests, have got the rudimentary idea from the Ch'i State *shamans* (see Ch. III init.). If he did, then his achievement is all the more remarkable and helps us to see how even so naturalistic a thinker as Mencius had within him a deep vein of religious mysticism. Mencius himself, when asked to describe this superlative morale, replied that it was very difficult to do so; but he offered the suggestion that it is a phenomenon indicative of intrinsic strength, and that being nourished by consistent rectitude it fills up the space between heaven and earth. By this he clearly means that the distinction between two worlds, the idealistic and the realistic, the egoist's world and the world outside, is abolished. That is exactly what high religion demonstrates.

The fourth in time of the great Confucians is Hsün Ch'ing (mid. third century B.C.). His influence on the tradition is

immense; and yet his teachings come only on the fringe of our subject of Chinese religion. The reason for this is that he was the pure naturalistic philosopher. He recognized an observable entity called 'Heaven' and another called 'Earth', but the chief characteristic of these entities was that the heavenly signs could be relied on as 'keeping their times', and that the harvest grown from seed sown could be relied on to be 'according to the suitability of the soil'. As for man, the same constant law is to be found working in him: he inevitably seeks to satisfy his desires.

There can be no question but that Hsün Ch'ing reinforced that side of Confucianism which tended to rationalistic humanism. He was completely sceptical about such beings as gods or a Supreme Ruler of the universe. He insisted that men's good or bad fortune was the outcome of their own acts. If men act in such a way as to produce anarchy, then anarchy will be the result: the anarchy itself is the ill fortune. His attitude to the Sage Kings is in keeping with this. He made the statement which was quite shocking to ordinary Confucians that the sage man above all others does not concern himself with knowledge of 'Heaven', because 'Heaven' is a concept which only stands for the unknown element in natural processes. "The fixed stars revolve in their courses, the sun and moon give light, the four seasons succeed each other, the Yin and Yang (female and male forces in nature) make profound changes, the wind and rain are everywhere at work. Among all the creatures like combines with like, and there is birth; each gains its proper nourishment and thereby achieves maturity. We do not see the active process, but we see the outcome, and this is what is called 'divine'. We know that something has made them, but we are ignorant of what is without form, and that is what we describe by *T'ien*. In fact, sage men do not attempt to know Heaven."

Clearly there is a deep sceptical streak here. This same streak appears in his view of human nature and the nature of society. He would have none of Mencius' theory that man had an innate tendency to goodness. On the contrary, he says, man has an innate tendency to evil, and the only way to prevent this

tendency from ruining social co-operation is for there to be a strong government holding men's unruly desires in check. In this kind of teaching Hsün Ch'ing showed himself half a legalist, i.e. in agreement with the hard-headed statesmen of those days who aimed at, and for a time succeeded, in building a totalitarian state on pure compulsion. On the other hand, he surprises us by his intense conviction that man can be educated out of his suicidal selfishness.

His argument is that man is a creature of natural instincts and acquired habits, and in time, by accumulation of efforts, new habit can overcome old instinct. Here he brings in his delicate appreciation of beauty, chiefly beauty in ritual with its music and attendant harmony of poetic movement. He says: "Ritual at the outset is over elaborate (in ornamentation), then it becomes a product of art, and so eventually produces joy. The result is that in its perfection both man's emotions and sense of art are wholly expressed. On a lower level either emotion or the sense of art conquers the other. On the lowest level emotion comes back in full force and there is reversion to man's primitive state." Thus he saw man as being sensitive to spiritual issues, and it is in relation to this psychological discernment of his that he exercised an influence on men's minds which is closely connected with religion.

Hsün Ch'ing, like other thinkers of his day, betrays the influence of Taoism. This brings us back to that other stream of religious thought which was developing during these centuries. In Confucius' time already there were hermits, men who had become disgusted with society and retired from it, living a simple, semi-contemplative life. This phenomenon must be accepted as something latent in Chinese psychology, a mystical element in a people who have shown a markedly practical mind in their attitude to life and to religion. It appears at significant points in their history, and this is one of them. Nothing at all reliable is known about the philosophical and religious mind of these hermits, and since critical historians cannot accept the *Tao Tê Ching* as a book actually written by Confucius' senior contemporary, Lao Tan, there is no reliable evidence to work on till the end of the fourth century and the

beginning of the third century B.C. Then came Chuang Chou, the greatest of the Taoist thinkers. There have been few men in the world with so brilliant a mind as his, with such easy command of the basic problems of metaphysics and epistemology. But since philosophy is not our subject of inquiry we must leave out most of his theories and confine ourselves to his attitude to religion.

In the first place he was profoundly naturalistic. In the second place he could find no reality in the interminable changes in the visible world, in death following life and life following death. Yet to him it seemed necessary to suppose that somewhere apart from this unending change there must be an ultimate reality, some 'X' quality which is outside of time and space, from the existence of which time and space derive meaning. Further, knowledge in the ordinary sense is of mere externals and therefore not truly knowledge. True knowledge is knowledge of the actual and the real, and this no human language can express. At first sight this seems pure naturalistic agnosticism. But careful scrutiny of his writings shows that from time to time he found he could not avoid envisaging the idea of a *tsang tsao chê* (a being or force which can or has created the space-time universe).

Having envisaged the idea, he does not do anything with it, and the reason is clear: "Liking for and dislike of, sorrow and joy, planning and remorse, a state of sexual excitement[1] (?) and a state of sexual depression (?), alternations in observable demeanour, these are like music issuing from hollow (tubes), like mushrooms germinated by damp heat, like the alternation of day and night: but we are ignorant of what starts them acting. It is gone! It is gone! A temporary concretization in an event! (But the question is) by what process this came into existence; (and the only answer I can give is that) without these events there would be no I and without an I there would be nothing with which to catch hold of them. This is just an

[1]The texts have '*pien*' which does not make sense. A slight emendation of the *pien* graph gives *luan* (concupiscence, sexual excitement), from which the next graph meaning 'depression' acquires the connotation of a sexual depression.

approximation (of the truth), for we do not know what makes them come so. (It would appear) necessary that there be a True Director, but we can find no indication of such. It is to be believed that he can take form, although we do not see his form, that he has actuality but no material form."

To Chuang Chou ultimate reality was something entirely different from the material world and its creation. To this reality Taoists, and in time Chinese thinkers generally, gave the name 'Tao', the term we have already met in Confucianism. It was merely a symbol, for the very nature of the reality behind the name made it incommunicable. To the ordinary mind it was just *hsü*, emptiness, something about which nothing could be predicated. On the other hand, this Tao could come to abide effectually in a person in a special sense different from its presence in the largest of material entities, the heavens and the earth, or in the smallest, the tip of a hair. If a man reduced his passions to a minimum and possessed his soul in stillness, adapting himself to the creative and destructive forces in nature, selfless, unselfconscious, accepting death as he accepts life, this Tao could breed in him and make him 'perfect.'

This was the message of the *Lao Tzŭ Book* (i.e. *Tao Tê Ching*) which was beginning to take shape in Chuang Chou's time. It is the point of supreme interest and importance in early Taoist thinking, for it was held that being sprang from non-being and must go back to non-being. It would appear that there was nothing in such a belief which could attract and hold any kind of religious faith. Yet this did happen to some, at any rate, of these thinkers. They came to adore the Tao. Unconsciously they made it more than nothingness, indeed, something which was the very life and light of man. Thus they ridiculed the Confucianists and Mohists with their concern for this world, their constant busyness in order to benefit the world morally. They even made light of the Confucian Sage Kings as men enslaved by the material and the relative, as serving self most when they thought they were serving others. Chuang Chou even depicted Confucius as learning from Lao Tzŭ and so having an esoteric philosophy which was the very opposite to his public teaching.

While all this ferment of theorizing was going on among the learned, what of the religion of the common man? It is doubtful whether the ordinary peasant, illiterate as he was, paid much attention or got more than a vague idea that there was a great deal of talk going on and that the validity of the old rites was being called in question. We shall see that this had results in Han times several generations later, but the philosophers of the formative period never conducted a campaign against the old practices, and the common people and on occasions the kings, generals and even the philosophers themselves continued with the old rites, just to be on the safe side. The *Ju*, the class to which Confucius and most of the philosophers belonged, were the experts for these rites when they were conducted in the state capitals, but in the villages the old men were the repositories of tradition and saw to it that the right religious measures were taken according to the times and seasons, in special circumstances such as an eclipse of the sun or moon, in time of pestilence or famine, and in the ordinary course of family events.

There were also *shamans*, medicine men—a part of Ch'i State was famous for them—who claimed special powers for dealing with the unseen world. As has been shown in the first chapter the local gods, deities of the soil, river and mountain spirits, many of them nameless and very vaguely personified, were all reckoned as alive and potentially, if not actually, busy and needing to be placated. The elders in each family and clan could be trusted to deal with the spirits of their own dead, but there were all sorts of wandering spirits, both good and bad, to be met with at every turn; hence an abiding place in society for these experts in the numinous, with new tricks to their trade as well as old ones, who could help men to keep the precarious balance of accordance with the powers of the universe.

CHAPTER III

RELIGION IN THE HAN ERA

THE period we have been considering came to an end in the middle of the third century B.C. when the king of Ch'in, a state in the western part of the Chou country, warred down all his competitors and gave the *coup de grâce* to the effete Chou court. He took the title of Shih Huang Ti, 'First Emperor,' and was, indeed, the first ruler of a unified state which could claim to be an empire. The policy by which he obtained his ends was nothing less than totalitarianism, surprisingly like that of the Nazi regime.

The First Emperor's rule was a brutal one, though it was not merely repressive and evil. Its clearance of many old, outworn political institutions enabled the Chinese people to start their national existence on a new footing. Twenty years of civil war followed the death of the First Emperor, and then the Han regime came into being, destined to last for four centuries and to unify the country in a real and lasting way. In this process the chief unifying force was the Confucian way of thinking. Shih Huang Ti had put its vitality severely to the test, for he ordered all copies of the sacred books (except the *Book of Changes*) to be burnt. Also some outspoken scholars were buried alive.

Although the First Emperor objected strongly to the Confucians, he did not interfere with the religion of the common people. Indeed, we get glimpses of him as actually a superstitiously minded man himself. The same is true of the first Han emperor, by origin a village gangster, and his immediate successors. They wanted to fortify their imperial power, as the Chinese expression has it 'make a shield behind', and any god, demon, rite, or device of magic which served that end was welcome to them. One outcome of this temper of mind was the appearance at court, and therefore in the state records, of a

succession of what may be called 'vitality experts', successors of the *shamans* mentioned in the last chapter, whose 'magic' was mixed up with a good deal of semi-Taoistic 'patter'. They were also much influenced by the Yin-yang experts, a school of rudimentary scientists who had originated some two centuries earlier. These thinkers analysed the material universe into five *hsing*, physico-chemical forces of water, fire, wood, metal, and earth, with, working in all five, the Yin force of female receptivity and passivity, and the Yang force of male creative activity.

This idea of Yin and Yang was not new in Chinese thought; from early times it had been associated with the alternations of winter and summer, night and day, cold and heat. The simple yet discerning power of observation which was now applied to them was stimulated by the progression of the four seasons, the realization that heaven and earth are continually interacting. Now the Taoists in their speculations had tended to embroider their theories with stories of men so impregnated with the Tao that they were impervious to heat and cold, so adjusted to the order of the universe, that they were able to conserve the vital energies within them. To the *shamans* this idea was a veritable gold mine. They claimed that they could put men in possession of the power to extend the span of human life, not definitely but to a quite miraculous extent, and that this extension would mean freedom from the natural ills to which humanity is subject plus a general reinforcement of character-power leading to social dominance. All this, of course, was a pseudo-scientific survival of the old *mana* magic. That it was a prostitution of the high Taoist philosophy was of no concern to these vitality merchants.

This Five Hsing synthesis was interpreted symbolically. Thus, for example, the whole range of colour distinction was fitted into the scheme, as also the different tastes in food. Black was the symbol of water, red of fire, yellow of earth, and so on, and this colour symbolization was tacked on to a philosophy of history. Before the First Emperor's time this had been suggested and the whole course of history from the age of the first sage emperors rationalized on this basis. In Han times it

came to be generally accepted, and there was a great controversy as to whether the First Emperor had ruled by virtue (*tê-mana*) of fire which conquers water, or by virtue of earth which conquers metal. The general belief was that earth was the arch-force denoting government by moral power. Out of this sprang a sort of applied science in connection with the emperor and his court. In order that the imperial entourage should model itself on the underlying principles of nature's working, the implements, flags, clothes, carriages, etc., were made of the dominant colour, and a scheme of life was worked out so that in all essential respects of diet and housing the emperor's daily life symbolized the progress of the four seasons. The interesting thing is that whereas it would appear that some of the old gods tended to be forgotten, this highly rationalistic era produced a series of new deities. Thus on the Five Hsing basis, five *Ti* (rulers on high) came to be worshipped, rulers of the four quarters of the earth plus the centre.

This kind of god-making is in a real sense more politics than religion. But then, as the reader will have already realized, in primitive societies there is no dividing line between politics and religion. Religion is always impregnated with politics until it arrives at its higher forms, when it begins to look like philosophy. Then comes the struggle between the instinctively religious tendency of the peasant mind and the intuitive presuppositions of the philosophizers with their book knowledge. We find popular religion and high-brow religion in one society, sometimes living on easy terms with each other, at any rate the one having a subtle effect on the other. Always a political element is at work, for even if the individual cuts himself off from his society and cultivates his soul in hermit fashion, this is in protest against his society, and thus his protest is politically conditioned. However the critics of religion criticize, religion goes on, and its power in man is to be found in thought and word and deed, most distinctively in the last, whether it be ritual deed or individual moral action.

This is the key to Chinese religion in Han times. So far our picture has been a very blurred one, for the evidence for pre-Han times is so sketchy, particularly with regard to the common

people. But when we come to Han times certain main features are clearly decipherable. Thus, in spite of a thoroughly superstitious mind in the first Han emperors, there were men among the scholar class who tended the lamp of reason. On the other hand, with the spread of education, the religiously tinged philosophy of late Chou times penetrated more and more into the lower ranks of society. Along with this came a widespread veneration for Confucius, 'the Master', spoken of now as the greatest of teachers, as the man who 'knew Heaven' and 'knew men'. Confucianism as a distinctive cult and possessing a distinctive ethic emerged to view, in many ways different from what Confucius had taught, but nevertheless legitimately enough called the '*K'ung Chiao*', the system of teaching originated by Master K'ung.

It is in this era that the main characteristics of religion are to be seen in relation to Confucianism, and amongst these stand first homage paid to sacred books. At the end of the Chou era the character *ching*, which meant the primary warp of a pattern in weaving, was coming to be used as meaning a sacred scripture written by a highly revered teacher. In Han times and later, *ching* was used in this sense in connection not only with Confucian books, but also with Taoist and other writings. Yet a peculiar veneration was attached to the former, and Wu Ti, Emperor from 140–87 B.C., established five colleges in the capital for the study of five Confucianist writings, the *Scripture of Changes*, the *Scripture of Historical Documents*, the *Scripture of Odes*, the *Scripture of Ritual*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The most learned experts in these books were appointed to work in these colleges, being given an honourable title. From that time on right down to 1904 there existed, with but few and insignificant interludes, this central institution, membership of which was as high an honour as any subject of the Son of Heaven could reach. Its main function was to guard and expound the sacrosanct word of truth about Heaven and Earth and man. Along with the establishment of these colleges went the canonizing of Confucius and the building up of a ritual of worshipful remembrance in his honour. In course of time the number of the books thus made into a sacred canon was

increased until a total of thirteen was reached, including the *Analects*, (the record of Confucius' conversations with his disciples and others, also second generation sayings of the chief disciples) amplifications of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Scripture of Filial Piety*, and, finally, in the twelfth century, Mencius' book.

To the scholar the 'Thirteen Classics' (better termed scriptures) contain an infinity of problems, both historical and literary, and in the periodic enlargement of the canonical list is to be found the key to many of the cultural developments of the Chinese race. Here it must suffice to mention two features, of Han times. One is that the *Scripture of Changes* stands first on the list, and this one book of the original five was least connected with the pre-Han Confucians. Its original contents were entirely concerned with the practice of divination. Yet by the second century B.C. it had become amplified time and again by thinkers of one kind and another, moralizers, cosmologists, metaphysicians, and theorizers on the development of civilization; and all the later amplifications, some of them clearly dating from Han times, were attributed to Confucius as author. Yet critical scholarship to-day has every reason to doubt whether he paid any attention to the compilation as it was in his day, or had any particular interest in divination. The evidence of the enlarged book with its 'Ten Wings' proves, however, the inherent attraction which divining had not only for the simple peasant or the nervous emperor with fateful decisions to make, but also for a number of the scholar class who gave much thought to the problems of success and failure in the business of life. They were not content with the oracles to be extracted from the Scripture's original patterns of broken and unbroken lines (the hexagrams). Some of them came to see that failure in some affair could be redeemed by the right attitude of mind, or that the most promising success could be ruined by arrogance and licence.

Thus clearly marked ethical reflections came to be added to the text, and—here Confucius' influence showed itself—a *chun-tzŭ* was envisaged, a man of intellectual and moral discernment who could, with the help of these fixed patterns,

discover his right course in life and by his own integrity become master of his fate, at least to some degree. Others of these experimenters developed the idea that each unbroken line in the hexagram symbolized the Yang cosmic influence, each broken line the Yin, and so within the compass of the sixty-four hexagrams the riddle of nature's operations could be read. One symbolism was built in along with another symbolism, and a logic of numbers introduced so that this book, originally a handbook for fetish-minded diviners, skirted the borders of elementary science and became a metaphysical treatise. In Sung times, a thousand years after the end of the Han era, the best minds again got to work on it and carried its mathematical symbolism yet further.[1]

The other curious feature is the historical fact that two Confucian works, which were later products, so quickly won a place in the sacrosanct class. The *Ching of Filial Piety*, a work couched in terms of a conversation between Confucius and his disciple, Tseng Ts'an, is a poor book in style with a poor prudential religious outlook; and yet it became very popular. *The Record of Ritual*, a compendium of forty-six short works, most of which claim to contain Confucius' own words, is said to have been compiled in the first century B.C. Yet it also quickly achieved the position of a *ching*. The reason is not far to seek. Both these books illustrate the place which filial-piety religion had come to occupy in the Confucianism which from now on was to all intents and purposes the state religion.

With its inspired scriptures, its hallowed rituals, its accepted moral code, and all the prestige of the state behind it, it functioned as that. The only distinctive feature of religion which it lacked was a body of ordained priests, and that was because it was a family religion. In every family the older generation took the place of priests. Where it functioned on the national scale, the Son of Heaven was the high priest, ordained by Heaven. It is obvious that no emperor would tolerate an ecclesiastical power in rivalry with his own (as we shall see

[1]It is claimed to-day that Leibniz got his idea of functional numbers and the calculus from what his Jesuit missionary friends in China told him of this school of thought.

when we consider the controversy with Rome in the seventeenth century). Those high officials who had ritual duties performed them as representing the emperor, whilst the doctors in the imperial colleges as guardians of the sacred tradition performed some of the functions of priests and received semi-religious veneration.

This would seem to entail that the Chinese State was a theocratic one. It may be doubted whether at any time in the history of unified China there has not been a danger of this, and evidence is there to show how in Han times efforts were made by the court in this direction. But always filial piety blocked the way. The Son of Heaven and his ministers could not have it both ways. If they made use of filial piety to induce an obedient, tractable temper in the common people, their success depended on filial piety being believed to be the most high and holy obligation, one which it was man's life-long duty to discharge. That being so, in the last resort duty to the state came second. In fact the state existed primarily to create the conditions in which all the emperor's subjects could fulfil their filial duty. If the state did not create such conditions, if the times were such that a man could not nourish his parents in peace and comfort, then the state had defaulted: the Son of Heaven lost his commission from Heaven, and filial sons had the religious duty and political right to change their loyalty. The culture in which this article of belief occupied the central position in ethics could hardly succeed in developing a theocratic basis to its political structure. This would seem to be the plain truth about the Chinese Confucianist polity from Han times on.

Moreover, this filial-piety religion is clearly to be distinguished from ancestor worship such as is found in the cultures of other peoples, and this for two reasons. In the first place, it breaks the complex of religious fear of the dead which is so characteristic of most worship of the dead, and substitutes for it the higher religious motive of gratitude. In the second place, ordinary ancestor worship tends to marshal the gods on the side of the chiefs or the aristocratic families in a community.

Although this filial-piety religion of the Chinese emerged

from ancestor worship and never lost its connection with it, yet it gave the common people of China a religion which the poorest of them could practice as effectively and nobly as the Son of Heaven or any princely official. As the *Scripture of Filial Piety* put it in words which claimed to be those of Confucius himself:

"Filial piety is the root of moral power in a man. . . . His trunk and limbs, his hair and skin, are received from his father and mother, and the beginnings of filial piety consist in his not daring to injure them. To establish his moral character, to walk in the right way, and to extend his good name to later generations, thereby glorifying his father and mother, this is the final accomplishment of filial piety."

The note of a life-long gratitude is not explicitly stated there, but it is stressed again and again in the *Record of Rites*, and is a main feature in the stories of famous filial sons and devoted daughters-in-law which about this time began to be current in popular tradition. They are very simple stories, as for example that of the daughter-in-law whose aged mother-in-law was pining for fish to eat in the depth of winter. The young woman lay down on the ice of a pond, baring her breast to melt the ice, so that she might catch the fish which immediately swam up to the hole. These stories came to be classified as *hsiao kan*, instances of nature miraculously furthering grateful love and self-sacrificing devotion.

On the scholar level there is in addition a charm of refined feeling about filial piety in sacrificing. Thus in the *Record of Rites* (*Chi Yi* Chapter) stress is laid on the inward nature of the fasting to be done before sacrificing to dead parents and grandparents. There should be for three days a concentration on:

"where they used to sit, how they used to smile and talk, what their aims were. . . . Then when the filial pietist goes into the temple chamber, in his emotional state he will have a vision of the departed in the place where his tablet is. Then when (with the rites all duly observed) he goes round the chamber and reaches the door, with a sense of awe he will hear a rustle of movement: as he departs,

with his ear attentive, he will catch his breath as he hears the whisper of a sigh."

The *Chi T'ang* Chapter begins as follows:

"Of all the methods for the ordering of mankind there is none more emotionally stimulating than the ritual method, and of the five standard forms of ritual none is of such weight as sacrifice. Sacrifice is not something imposed from without, but springs from within, born in a man's heart. He engages in it under stress of painful emotion. The result is that only a man of real worth can express to the full the significance of sacrifice. His kind of sacrifice brings its own blessing, not what is vulgarly taught to be blessing, but the blessing of perfect performance, of obedience in every detail. And this obedience without any shortcoming means that the sacrificer has himself completely prepared, whilst in the external rite he conforms to what tradition lays down. By this means . . . the filial son serves his parents. In this kind of intelligent offering is found the mind of the filial son: he does not ask to gain anything thereby."

All this has authentic religious fervour going far beyond the prudential morality and the philosophical abstractions of social relationships. Historically it is highly characteristic of the new school of ritualists who arose in the first century B.C. under the leadership of Hou Ts'ang, one of the doctors of the imperial college and an ardent student of the old poetry as well as the old rituals. The movement drew much of its inspiration from the study of old manuscripts, or manuscripts which claimed to be old, collected from all over the country for preservation in the imperial library. It also carried Hsün Ch'ing's teaching a step further, discarding his cynical view of human nature in the raw, and re-stressing in more popular fashion the idea of beauty and poetic rhythm to be found in the common everyday ritual acts, and the educational value of their habitual performance. Here again the *Record of Rites* (*Nei Tsê* Chapter) is illuminating:

"Sons, in serving their parents, on the first crowing of the cock, should all wash their hands and rinse their mouths, comb their hair (here follow detailed instructions for careful dressing). Sons' wives should serve their parents-in-law as they served their own. . . .

Thus dressed they should go to their parents and parents-in-law. On getting to where they are, with bated breath and gentle voice they should ask if their clothes are too warm or too cold, whether they are ill or pained, or uncomfortable in any part; and if they be so, they should proceed reverently to stroke and scratch the place. They should in the same way, going before and following after, help and support their parents in quitting or entering the apartment. In bringing in the basin for them to wash, the younger will carry the stand and the elder the water. . . . They will ask whether they want anything and then respectfully bring it. All this they will do with an appearance of pleasure to make their parents feel at ease."

The study of religion in Han times cannot deal only with the Confucianist tradition. The situation is complicated by the geographical expansion of the Chinese State and its absorption of new cultural elements from outside the traditions of the Yellow River basin. The result was acquaintance with a whole medley of semi-primitive religious beliefs and practices. This coupled with the extraordinarily superstitious mind of most of the Han emperors produced a kind of free competition in occultism. In the long run it was in the nature of a free fight leading to the survival of the fittest, but for the time being it is truer to say that all of them had their chance. In the year 31 B.C. a census of temples in Ch'ang An, the capital, and elsewhere revealed that 683 of them were under imperial patronage. The deities worshipped in them were, for the most part, tribal and nature deities belonging to the tribes whom the Chinese had conquered in the west, south-west, and far south. Most of these deities gradually faded out of the Chinese pantheon; some of them are still to be found among the remains of the indigenous tribes, such as the Lolos and Miaos. Every class of *shaman*, magician, diviner, priest, and priestess seems to have been able to make a living. Some of them presumably were genuine believers in the efficacy of their techniques; others, like the notorious Luan Ta who imposed so successfully on the Emperor Wu Ti, were just plain money-making rogues.

By Wu Ti's time (140-86 B.C.) Han power extended over the whole of what is China to-day, and there was much coming and going with the tribes of Central Asia. The statesmen of the

empire had the task of unifying the motley of peoples either under their direct control or under their indirect influence. Their policy was to magnify the mystic power of the reigning house, correlating its activities with the march of the seasons and all the forces of nature, and enhancing its popular appeal by ocular demonstration of support by every kind of god, semi-deified ancestor, mythical or legendary sage king, and fairy or demon that came their way. They not only took the old gods that the Mohists, for instance, had believed in; they also established new deities with the well-rationalized function of protecting the emperor's domains. Whether they and the scholars generally and the common people believed in a supreme deity, Shang Ti, reigning over these multifarious godlings, it is difficult to say. It appears that some did and some did not, and amongst the scholars the tendency was to waver between two extremes of cosmic interpretation, the superstitiously religious and the naturalistic, and out of this came a kind of deistic attitude to the universe which reminds us of the eighteenth-century philosophers in England who saw God as the Creator, but saw Him as having sat back after setting the world machine going and allowing it to run itself on the basis of natural law.

Thus in mid-Han times there came to be a pseudo-science of history which had an immense vogue for several centuries. Evidence being found in the sacred Confucianist books that *T'ien* (or *Shang Ti*) sent omens of what was to come, a number of purblind thinkers set to work to classify all abnormal phenomena, ranging from comets to women growing beards, and to link these with the moral judgments on record. An extensive literature grew up, of which only a small part has survived, for the good sense of the Chinese people came to revolt against the plain absurdities in it. But that pagan idea of a heavenly accounting system working out man's relative merit never really lost hold on China, and along with it went a stubborn belief in rewards and punishments.

Two famous men of the Han era now claim attention: the one, Tung Chung-shu in Wu Ti's time, the other, Wang Ch'ung about a hundred years later (A.D. 27-*circ.* 97). Tung Chung-shu

was the man who seems to have influenced Wu Ti most in the establishment of Confucianism as the state religion, and there can be no question of his influence on his age. He was more than a little touched by the pseudo-science of which mention has just been made, and his great work, a compendium of Confucian doctrines, is illuminating in the way it combined Taoist and Confucian philosophies. He refused to accept Mencius' conviction about the innate goodness of human nature: to him man had two contradictory instincts at work in him, the one for covetousness, the other for goodness in the sense of acting for the public weal. It was by sound education alone that man's feet could be set on the right path, that man could adjust his actions to being in accord with the principle of harmony operating throughout all nature. In him appears the distinctive Chinese passion for harmony, harmony on the cosmic scale and *pari passu* in social relations. One feels that Tung Chung-shu loved Heaven for its paternal care for all creatures, and its kindly providence in deputing a Son of Heaven to order society so that the daily business of mankind may be transacted at the right time in the right way. When he tries to be profound and explore the mechanics of the Five Physical Forces he gets into difficulties, but in the more homely fields of inquiry centring on Heaven and Earth and man in collaboration he talks good pious sense, and the appeal which his teaching had is understandable.

Wang Ch'ung was a very different person. He had a hungry, questing mind, demanding the why and wherefore of every institution and denouncing every superstitious belief. In his famous collection of essays, the *Lun Heng*, with its eighty-five chapters, he brought every belief and practice current in his time to the bar of reason as served by observable fact. He could find no evidence for an easy anthropocentric universe under the government of a paternalist Heaven. His mind was not merely naturalistic in its working, but in its main conclusions materialistic. The heavens consisted of a tenuous form of matter, and the birth of a man was produced by the conjunction of various forms of matter including a bit of the heavenly form. Consequently when a man died and the body decomposed,

there was an end of him. There could be no such thing as a ghost: therefore Wang Ch'ung held up all current ghost stories to ridicule.

The length of a man's life depended on the amount of vital fluid (or gas) which he happened to have when he was conceived and began to take shape in the womb. If he had a good supply, he might reach old age; but this did not necessarily follow, because he might encounter a variety of unlucky conjunctions of physical events, such as war or fire or drowning. These conjunctions were literally physical conjunctions, to use modern language, one set of particles colliding with another set. Men could do nothing about this: good or bad fortune came or did not come, and there was no reason to suppose that good men, or even sages, could by their virtue arrange their lot in life.

By contrasting Tung Chung-shu and Wang Ch'ung it is possible to see at a glance how the more prevalent kind of Han Confucianism—or we may say the prevailing tradition of thought—did not go beyond a very limited degree of sceptical rationalism. It was only such keenly analytical minds as that of Wang Ch'ung which found themselves driven to that logical extreme of naturalism. Even Chuang Chou (cp. Ch. II, p. 40), for all his sense of the relativity of knowledge, had felt his way to something beyond the mechanism of nature's life-in-death and death-in-life. There was a mystic side to his naturalism. As a penetrating Han critic said of him: "His judgments went beyond the bounds of sense observation. . . . Although he did not blink the existence of the material world, all alone he went back and forth in the spiritual essence of the universe. . . . Above he roamed with that which creates the material world, and below he was the familiar friend of that which is beyond death and life and is without end or beginning."

On a considerably lower intellectual level Tung Ch'ung-shu with his homely pedestrian mind did the same. It is an attitude of mind and, indeed, an inward disposition which evades the Western theological categories except that loose and unsatisfactory one—'the mystic'. For a number of reasons it would be more satisfactory at the present day to recognize this kind of transcendentalism within the category of religion, blurred

though its attitude is to what is basic in the tradition of Western religion, namely the personality of God. After all, Han Confucianism at its best, deepened as it had become by the influence of the Taoist metaphysics and purified in its moral appeal by the influence of the Mohist ethic of love, was profoundly sensitive to the reality of supra-normal human personality.

It was more than a mere philosophy of the state or ethic based on ordinary human needs, for it had its tenaciously held two categories of thought dealing with will-action. There was *T'ien Tao*, the Way of Heaven, and there was *Jen Tao*, the Way of Man, and each involved the other, just as Confucius was revered because he not only 'knew Heaven' but also 'knew man', not only 'knew man' but also 'knew Heaven'. A new term came into use, claiming Confucius as its inventor, but having a far wider range of application than he ever envisaged. This term *Chung Yung Chih Tao* (cp. Ch. II, p. 32), the Way of the Common Mean-in-action, on the surface appears to mean very much what in the West has been called in ethical philosophy 'the doctrine of the mean', an ethical ideal which has not had any great inspirational force to it. In China the reverse has been the case as we can see from the following quotations from the *Chung Yung* book in the *Record of Rites*.[1]

"Thus it is that the true ruler must not fail to cultivate himself; and having in mind to do this, he must not fail to serve his parents; and having in mind to do this, he must not fail to have knowledge of men; and having in mind to have this knowledge, he must not fail to have knowledge of Heaven."

"Thus unless those in the higher ranks of society can capture the confidence of those in the lower ranks it is impossible for them to gain the support of the people for their administrative measures. But there is only one way by which this confidence may be captured; for, if friends cannot trust each other, there can be no confidence

[1]The first part of the *Chung Yung* has been referred to in Chapter II as written by Tzŭ Ssŭ. A very much amplified version of this work became current in Han times, and it is from the amplification that the quotations here are taken. In the twelfth century this book was regarded as one of four books in the Confucian Canon which contained the quintessence of Confucian doctrine. For a translation of the whole book see *The Great Learning* and the *Mean-in-action*. E. R. Hughes. Dent, 1942.

in the man in higher ranks. But there is only one way by which friends can come to trust each other; for if men are not dutiful to their parents, there can be no trust between them as friends. But there is only one way for men to be dutiful to their parents; for if in rounding in on themselves they are not true, they cannot be dutiful to their parents. But there is only one way for a man to have a true and real self; for if he does not understand the good, he cannot be true and real in himself."

"It is only the man who is entirely real in this world of experience who has the power to give full development to his own nature. If he has that power, it follows that he has the power to give full development to other men's natures. If he has that power, it follows that he has the power to give full development to the natures of all creatures. Thus it is possible for him to be assisting the transforming, nourishing work of Heaven and Earth. That being so, it is possible for him to be part of a trinity of power. (Heaven, Earth, and man.) For in the second place, with regard to the lop-sided man, there is some measure of realness in him. Assuming there is realness, the inference is that it takes on form. If it takes on form, then it is conspicuous. If conspicuous, then full of light; if full of light, then stirring things; if stirring things, then changing them; if changing them, then transforming them. Thus it is only the man who is entirely real in the world of experience who has the capacity to transform."

"It is only the man who is entirely real in his world of men who can make the warp and woof of the great fabric of civilized life, who can establish the great foundations of civilized society, and who can understand the nourishing processes of Heaven and Earth. Can there be any variableness in him? His human-heartedness how insistent! His depth how unfathomable! His superhumanness how overwhelming! Who is there who can comprehend this, unless he possess acute intelligence and sage-like wisdom, unless he reach out to the spiritual power of Heaven?"

The Christian reader of these words may feel genuinely shocked at the way in which man—idealized man, but none the less man—is put as it were on a par with God. James Legge, the great Protestant missionary scholar of the nineteenth century, was thus shocked. In his comment on the last quotation he quotes a Chinese commentator:

"Heaven and man are not properly two, and man is separate

from Heaven only by his having this body. Of their seeing and hearing, their thinking and revolving, their moving and acting, men all say: 'It is from ME'. Everyone thus brings out his SELF, and his smallness becomes known. But let the body be taken away and all would be Heaven. How can the body be taken away? Simply by subduing and removing that self-having of the ego. This is the taking it away. That being done, so wide and great as Heaven is, my mind is also wide and great, and production and transformation cannot be separated from me. Hence it is said: 'How vast is his Heaven'."

To this Legge adds the stricture:

"Into such wandering mazes of mysterious speculation are Chinese thinkers conducted by the text: only to be lost in them. As it is said that only the sage can know the sage, we may be glad to leave him."

But the student of comparative religion cannot leave the matter just there, nor can the student of the philosophy of religion, particularly in view of the central witness of the Christian religion to the Incarnation. Rather must we appreciate the *Chung Yung* authors' insistence on saintly personality in action, on its functional range as illimitable within the scope of 'Heaven and Earth'. It is this dogma of Confucianism which makes that cult essentially one imbued with the power of religion.

On the other hand, the term 'religion' includes every sort of racial cult from the most crudely fetishistic and localized to the most spiritually refined and universalized, and, since one characteristic of religion is its power of binding men together in groups, we must take into consideration the less reputable side of Han religion as well as its more reputable side. Here, as we have seen, there is ample evidence of what Western religious terminology would call the 'pagan element' in the religion practised at the top of the social scale, namely in the imperial court, as well as at the lower end among simple peasants. Much of the evidence comes from the pages of Wang Ch'ung's book, where he denounces so continually the contemporary diviners for aligning the Powers-above on the side of man and his desires for worldly prosperity.

He attacked four prevalent ideas about possible sources of bad luck: "to build an annexe on the west side of a house for one who has suffered corporal punishment at the hands of the authorities, to ascend a mound (?particularly a burial mound), for a man to come within range of a woman within a month of her giving birth to a child, to rear children born in the first or fifth months, all these are to be avoided because they bring bad luck," in the last case because they are sure to kill their parents. Then he deals with all the traditional sacrifices, those "to Heaven, to Earth, to the Mountains and Rivers, to the Spirits of the Land, Soil, and Grain, to the Six *Tsung* (?Powers in the Heavens), to the Seasons, to Heat and Cold, to the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars . . . to the Four Points of the Compass: to the Five Genii of the home (the outer door, inner door, the well, the hearth, and the inner hall), to ancestors, and to the dead who had worked great achievements when alive and so might be held to have power when dead."

In his opening words on the subject Wang Ch'ung says: "Everyone believes in sacrificing, that he who sacrifices is sure to get worldly prosperity, and he who does not sacrifice is sure to suffer worldly disaster." Not only so: from divining had come the theory that unless special precautions were taken noxious influences might at any time be generated, from which would come sickness, action in law courts, meeting with malicious spirits, etc. To avoid this it was felt necessary to divine on every occasion where public or private interests were at stake. "Hence the *Scripture of Historical Documents* specifies seven forms of divination and the *Changes Scripture* has its Eight Trigrams," thus showing that even the sages were at fault (according to Wang Ch'ung's bold criticism) in "wishing to get all the people to believe and practice divination without feeling any doubt." Again he says: "deceitful and cozening books are constantly being made, great cunning is displayed in commending their ideas as wisdom, when the writers are really seeking profit for themselves, terrifying and misleading stupid, ignorant people, enticing the rich and robbing the poor."

Here are the heights and depths of this great era in Chinese history, an era in which the Yellow River people and their

culture came to dominate all East Asia and to spread their prestige to the far west even to the borders of the Roman Empire. Taking it by and large, the prizes of wealth and domination were dangled before the nation's eyes as never before, and the nation as a whole fell to the temptation. Thus it was largely a materialistic age, so materialistically minded that its professional philosophizers failed to understand the transcendent Taoist metaphysic and unconsciously interpreted it in material terms. Yet it was the era which took the simple words of the 'cotton-gowned saint of Lu' as a revelation from Heaven and worshipped him, the man who had failed in his mission. It made a religion of his teaching, and its scholars all over the empire taught the peasants' sons to read in order that in the families of the people the daily round might be touched with the poetry of high religious aspiration. In far away Szechwan, on the borders of Tibet, a small group of devoted scholars worked a miracle of "revealing illustrious power of personality, of renovating the people and living for the highest good."

CHAPTER IV

THE INFILTRATION OF BUDDHISM AND THE REACTION IN T'ANG TIMES

IN the next stage of our inquiry we have to deal with a China subjected to the most powerful foreign religious and intellectual influences which she encountered in the course of her history down to the nineteenth century. In this connection we have first to assail that idol of western writers on China, the idea that the country of China is geographically isolated from the rest of the world, and that in consequence the people of China have from the early days of their national existence always shown a temper of aloofness, if not of actual hatred of foreigners. That there was such a temper in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is true enough. The mistake has been in regarding this as characteristic of earlier ages and in confusing the difficulty of communication between East Asia and Europe with the much smaller difficulty of intercommunication between China and Japan and the Southern Islands and India.

If East Asia was isolated from Western Europe, it is well to remember that Western Europe was equally isolated from East Asia. On the western borders of China there was not in earlier times such a barrier as the desert regions of Central Asia have since brought about. It is likely that there was a rather bigger population and more coming and going between China and Central Asia and India than has been the case in the last few centuries. In Han times the records tell of communication with India both by land and sea.

True the Chinese came early to distinguish their culture from the cultures of the other surrounding tribes, and, like the Greeks, tended to think of them as less civilized. In the earliest records there is evidence of violent periodic conflicts with tribes in the north and north-west, and the spread of Chou civilization could only have been at the expense of weaker

peoples. But this is not hatred of foreigners as such, and there is good evidence in late Chou times of there being no hard and fast distinction between the Yellow River basin Chinese and their southern neighbours, the tribes who lived in the Yangtse basin and beyond it. Their customs are cited respectfully enough, and the very existence of the common term *t'ien hsia* (all below Heaven) points to the consciousness of a great society of states and peoples in which common moral principles could be expected to bring about a basic unity. In early Confucian works there is the advocacy of strangers being treated courteously and furthered in their lawful business. There is also the statement, often quoted by Western writers: 'Within the four seas all are brothers'.

In Han times came, as we have seen, the great expansive movements, and with this came the rise of statesmanship on the grand scale, keeping itself posted in Central Asian affairs and ready to make alliances with friendly peoples. There was the imperialistic spirit at work, but peaceful penetration and reasonable give-and-take was more the order of the day. The Hsiung Nu of the north and north-west were the only people with whom there could be no peace. Their ingrainedly nomadic habits of life could not fit in with an agriculturally minded society, and the Hsiung Nu had the marauding instinct very strongly developed.

After the fall of the Han and the division of greater China into area states, there came to be a marked infiltration of Central Asian peoples into the Yellow River basin, and that area came for a long period under the rule of the Tobas, a people whose race affiliation we cannot yet place. In spite of marked cultural differences between them, they and the indigenous Chinese managed to live alongside each other and to develop a distinctive, conservative Confucianist ideology, one contrasting with the more romantic form developing in the southern areas. When the great reunification of China came about in the seventh century, it was the northern cultural strain which was first dominant, but at the same time in the T'ang Dynasty capital, a converging centre to far-reaching lines of communication, there was just as much hospitality for

foreign cults as there had been in the Han Dynasty capital. The city was filled with temples in honour of foreign deities and every form of religion was practised, including that vigorous branch of Christianity, Nestorianism. All this points in the directly opposite direction to the Chinese having had a continuous bias against foreign influences. This is also clear from the developments in art forms; both in Han and T'ang times foreign art forms had a revolutionary effect.

With this wider background to the understanding of the Chinese mind we are in a better position to survey the influence of the Buddhist religion. The bare historical facts are that even in pre-Han times some news of Indian Buddhism seems to have penetrated to China, and by the first century A.D. propagation of the faith had clearly started. The traditional account of its introduction is associated with Ming Ti (emperor from 38–75). According to the record, he had a dream of a golden image in the West and in consequence sent emissaries to India asking for Buddhist teachers. The story is a little dubious, but it is clear that about that time Buddhist missionaries did arrive by the land route and were welcomed at court. By that time this great religion which grew out of Hinduism, and which eventually the Indian people were to reject, had been in existence for five centuries or more.

The original message of Sakyamuni, with its teaching of salvation from pain and the unending cycle of rebirth, had spread through India to surrounding countries, and had engaged the faith of a number of talented religious minds, which could also appreciate Sakyamuni's highly philosophical bent. Thus they accepted the logic of his philosophy, namely that the ultimate reality behind the universe and man's life must be the negation of all appearance, and, appearance being linked in man to his senses, he is caught in a net of unending cause and effect. It is man's fate to be attached to his individuality and its concomitant self-consciousness. Thus in his world of deceptive appearance, his individual existence, his personal grabbing, his private love for individuals, his restless activity, and with these his ignorance or knowledge which is not real knowledge, leave him no avenue of escape from misery

in life after life: no avenue, *unless* he gain the knowledge which is real knowledge. With that he no longer has the itch for activity, no longer seeks personal fulfilment in love of this or that fellow victim, has no use for what he can get by grabbing, is content not to have an individual existence. Thus the Gordian knot is cut, and man is free from cause and effect.

This was the illumination which came to Sakyamuni, son of a prince in North India. It came after prolonged meditation under a certain *bodhi* tree; but before that he had spent years in weaning himself from all the entanglements of his princely station and becoming just a man among men, subject like the poorest to the pangs of physical privation. Whether in doing this he was primarily a philosopher seeking a solution to a problem, or primarily a lover of mankind seeking a way of salvation for all, is not certain. At any rate, when he did achieve illumination, he did not attribute it to the intervention of any deity or transcendent natural influence.

Having learnt himself the way and destroyed the seed of corruption in himself, he was able to teach others and open to them the door of escape. According to the records he spent the remaining years of his life doing this, thus creating a band of devoted disciples vowed to the practice of this method of salvation. As a solution to a problem it is a simple one, though costly in its call for the abandonment of all this-worldly desires and attachments. As a method of salvation it was not so simple, for the rule of daily life entailed quickly became hedged about with a mass of injunctions couched in highly symbolic language.

There was a practical complication to the post-enlightenment period of Sakyamuni's life. Since by his illumination he had attained *nirvana*, the passing out of the self into the whole, how was it that the Enlightened One's body was still there for his disciples to see, and his voice for them to hear? To one set of believers the answer was that whatever might appear to the contrary, their master had achieved *nirvana* and from that time on he was in a state of *nirvana*. The southern type of Buddhism, to be known afterwards as the Hinayana (Smaller Vehicle), adhered to this view. The northern type, to be known afterwards as the Mahayana (Greater Vehicle), developed a very different

view. For them Sakyamuni, having earned the bliss of *nirvana*, renounced it in order that he might remain in touch with all poor, sin-stained, wheel-bound humanity and continue his beneficent work of salvation. With him were a number of other beings called Bodhisattvas, semi-human beings who are found in Mahayana literature to qualify as *divas*, active deities, with power to save those who call on them trusting in their power. In other words, here is that distinctive feature in the higher religions of the world, trust on the part of an individual in some superhuman Being or Power able to help him save his soul in a way which he cannot do for himself alone. This feature crept into the original Buddhist tradition and became more and more the central power of appeal in it.

This is why mention was made above of 'talented religious minds' in connection with the northern expansion of Buddhism. The names 'Greater Vehicle' and 'Smaller Vehicle' were invented by these northern thinkers in criticism of the southern tradition. They maintained that before he died, Sakyamuni, in addition to what he taught on the Tiger Rock—this being what the Hinayanists emphasized—also expounded to an inner ring a number of secret truths which they, the Mahayanists, had inherited. Why this distinction between 'Greater' or more all-embracing, and 'Smaller' or less all-embracing? Because the northern Buddhists, some of them Hindus and others men of other blood stocks in Western and Central Asia, discovered a fatal weakness in the southern believer. These latter were concerned each with his own salvation in following the path the Buddha had trodden; the objective was thereby guaranteed as attainable, provided there was rigorous adhesion to the sacred *Dharma* (law) in every detail. The northern believers were concerned with the salvation of the world: pity for all creatures was for them not only one of the practical devices for achieving personal salvation, but the essential transcendent power which made salvation possible. The Southern Buddhists demonstrated the zeal of the convert in spreading the good tidings of the Law, but their motive tended to be that of achieving personal merit, while to the Northern Buddhists missionary fervour was a compelling inner law of the soul

which was on its way to becoming another Boddhisattva and so sharing in the task of saving the world.

Hinayana Buddhism as it developed in India, Ceylon, and Burma, could not isolate itself from the animistic atmosphere in which it lived. The result was a mass of stories in which demons of every kind tempted the faithful and were overcome by miraculous demonstrations of power over nature. The Indian mind seems to have had a peculiarly prolific power of imagination in this direction, with the result that in time there came to be the eminently superstitious combination of Buddhism and Tantraism, in which Sakyamuni's objective of individual salvation was debased to the level of a magical device for defeating the demons who were set on upsetting the order of society.

Mahayana Buddhism, on the other hand, developing in the same religious atmosphere at first, had a prophylactic which enabled it to put up a better fight against this age-old disease of devil worship. That prophylactic was the worship of the more spiritual class of beings, the Boddhisattvas. Belief in their existence and help gave the religious imagination a new field to work in, namely the paradise in which these sublime beings lived and moved and had their being whilst at the same time extending divine help to suffering mortals. More than this; the Mahayana imagination, working on a more philosophical level, conceived of an eternal Buddha principle in the universe. From this sprang a special kind of messianic faith by which men looked for the coming into the space-time universe of the Buddha of the future.

Both types of Buddhism were alike in two important aspects. First, both stressed the importance of the contemplative life and committed the guardianship of the faith to communities of monks whose vows entailed separation from all worldly ties and daily practice of ascetic rules. Second, in these monastic communities there was immense industry in regard to the production of books; to begin with, the recording of Sakyamuni's teaching, later the amplifying of that teaching, exploring every possible implication of it, philosophical and practical alike. To illustrate the extent of this industry, we may take the

corpus of Buddhist canonical writings known as the *Tripitaka*. This with its three main divisions, the *sutras*, containing what claim to be Sakyamuni's own words, the *vinayas*, giving the monastic rules, and the *sastras*, dialectical essays and dialogues by famous early teachers, achieves a bulk which is simply stupendous, so that the whole Christian Bible plus the writings of the Fathers cannot compare in size.

When, therefore, Buddhism came to be actively preached in China in the first century A.D., the tradition had already been subject to many vicissitudes and had developed in a variety of ways, some of them native to the Indian mind, some of them traceable to the influence of other cultures, among which the Hellenic influence is to be noted. The absence of literary remains in West Asia has given the modern historian an almost impossible task so far, but there is some literary data from early Arab and other sources, and what is much more illuminating, a good deal of archæological material. The great monastic system enabled Buddhism to retain its relative identity through all these vicissitudes. Wherever it came the people of the country saw it before their eyes not as a mass of theoretical doctrines, but as above all a religion of monks, of holy men who had taken severely ascetic vows and lived up to them, and who, when numbers allowed of communities being formed, conducted services of stately ritual and ordered their activities at the command of holy abbots. As elsewhere so in China: the two first accredited missionaries, Gobharana and Matanga, were monks who came from India, and, whatever may have been the part played by merchants and trade envoys, it was primarily through the settling down of monks to life-long service in China that this extremely foreign religion was able eventually to take root and become part of the indigenous culture of the Chinese people.

There is little that can be told of the first two hundred years. Contemporary non-Buddhist Chinese literature contains only the scantiest of references, whilst the more detailed stories in later Chinese Buddhist works are obviously the product of pious monkish imaginations. The truth is that for a considerable time the missionaries were not able to make themselves very

intelligible. The translation of their sacred scriptures, which they so industriously made, contained a number of transliterations of Indian sounds into the nearest Chinese character sounds; and a would-be convert could not, with the best will in the world, make any connected sense of these weird combinations of sounds. Also the Indian mind revels in metaphysical abstractions, and many of these were alien to the ordinary this-worldly Confucianist mind.

On the other hand, the Taoist system of thought contained much that was similar in grain to the Buddhist system, and after some three generations there began to be a real exchange of ideas between the foreigners and the Taoist mystics, an exchange destined in time to go to great lengths. For the time being Buddhism survived in China because successive emperors were willing to extend a patronizing support to one or two monasteries in or near their capital. Their reason for doing this seems to have been partly because the rituals and prayers of these holy foreigners might help to enlist divine protection for the throne, partly because the monks possessed books of ancient wisdom. In a nation so impregnated with veneration for book knowledge it added to the imperial prestige to have such books on view in the imperial court. Also, one may suggest, the ennui of a dull day at court might be enlivened by having the monks in to talk, or by turning the court scholars on to investigating the new doctrines. It is significant that one of the earliest evidences of the new religion being taken seriously is the record in A.D. 166 of a shrine having been set up in the palace in combined honour to the Taoist saints, Huang Ti (the Yellow Emperor) and Lao Tzŭ, and to the Buddha.

There are two outstanding figures in the second century, one the monk, Lokaraksha, from India, the other the monk, Arsaces, a son of the royal house of Parthia. Both of them had great natural gifts, and both were ardent supporters of the Mahayana form. From that time on it is this form which was the main force, as is clear from the rapid popularity which the *Pan-jo Hsin Ching* achieved (the *sutra* of the heart of *prajma*, wisdom gained through illumination). But it was not the only

force. By the end of the fourth century there began the practice of Chinese believers making pilgrimages to India. Some of them went by the sea route and so came in touch with the monks in Ceylon with their Hinayana form. This they propagated on their return home.

On the other hand, the most famous of these pilgrims, Fa Hsien, went by the Gobi Desert, and the scriptures he brought back with him were chiefly Mahayana writings. He was a contemporary of the famous Kumarajiva, an Indian monk who, according to one account, was brought into China as a prisoner from Tibet. Fa Hsien became his disciple and under his orders wrote the story of his experiences on the road and in India as a means of popularizing the faith by his impressive stories of kings who were heart and soul in the service of the Buddha. Kumarajiva himself was a literary genius, or at least had a genius for clarifying the minds of some good scholars whom the emperor of his day lent to him for translation work. Between them the members of this group succeeded in giving a real Chinese content to ideas which had hitherto been only nebulous and elusive. That this could be done was largely due to the way in which the Taoist terminology had become built into the language of the scholars. Nevertheless, it would be mistaken to suppose that the result in Kumarajiva's age was merely to see Buddhism as a sort of foreign off-shoot of Taoism. That idea had been started in the second half of the second century, and later it had become common to say that Lao Tzŭ, when he disappeared into the Gobi Desert, went to India and became re-incarnate as Sakyamuni. Kumarajiva's distinctive work was to enable Buddhism to stand on its own feet in China, and claim with some success to be a universal religion and the one and only means of salvation for the individual.

The most influential of the many works translated by Kumarajiva and his collaborators was the *Lotus Flower Scripture of the Mysterious Law* (the *Fa Hua Ching*). There had been three or four translations of it before, but not apparently with any great success. This time it got home, as well it might. It is an amazing work, a drama of time and eternity, the scenes set on an idealized earth in which gods and demons are

portrayed in fabulous terms of years. Who the author of this vast Wagnerian dream was we do not know. He has remained anonymous in the Buddhist tradition for the simple reason that Sakyamuni himself is claimed as the fountain head from which this dramatization of his message came. But it is a Sakyamuni who has broken all bounds of time and space and has become an Infinite-Eternal Buddha (the Amita Buddha). He is made to speak to all men, past, present, and future, of whatever race and creed, and the response to his words comes from innumerable Boddhisattvas and kings and princes, as well as gods and demons, new as well as old. As the scenes in the different chapters shift they come forward and acclaim with rapturous joy the supreme miracle of the Buddha's achievement. The crowning point of the vision is that faith in the eternal Buddha, as distinct from mere achievement of merit, is proclaimed as the one condition of salvation; faith which is possible for the humblest man or woman to attain. They have only to cry to their Saviour in their consciousness of need, and he answers them, giving the one grace which they need, his own Buddha nature.

The historian must insist, however, that, for all the religious and imaginative appeal the book has, it is plainly a propagandist work. The Hinayana devotees are denounced as ignorant of the deeper truths in Sakyamuni's message, and they are represented as unbelievers, turning away and condemning themselves to the penalties of unbelief. Also, this new interpretation as contained in this scripture is so exalted that even the reading of one line of it is claimed to be enough for opening the door of salvation. What shocked conservative minds in India, but did not shock the Central Asian peoples nor the Chinese, was the assertion that women were equally able with men to be saved here and now in their present incarnation. On the other hand, what did shock the more philosophically minded was that the book described in profuse detail the paradise to which the saved would be transported at their death. It seemed to them, and with good reason, that the heart of the Buddhist dogma, the idea of *nirvana*, was being assailed. To this those who supported the idea of an all-embracing vehicle of salvation replied that

when the Infinite and Eternal Buddha's work was accomplished, then the ultimate state of *nirvana* would be attained by all.

So Buddhism took shape in China. It was something which in the first place was shared with the peoples of Central and Western Asia. But once it began to become indigenized this Buddhism developed new powers of appeal. As has already been indicated, the Greater Vehicle was in certain important respects an adaptation of a highly philosophical creed to the level of popular understanding. The result was converts from all classes of society. High officials became interested and gave land for new monasteries and nunneries, and more and more people were prepared to take the vows. In the fifth and sixth centuries times were almost continuously bad, and both in the barbarian kingdoms in the north and the native Chinese ones in the south, the desire for peace, if not in this world then in another, became a passion. Scholars as much as the illiterate lost their faith in the efficacy of Confucianism, found themselves unable to discharge the sacred family obligations because of the evilness of the times, and so were happy to take refuge in the protected calm of monastic life.

The result was that a considerable section of the population became removed from the ordinary avocations which made wealth for the community as a whole. In the eyes of the emperor's ministers there was an *imperium* within an *imperium*, and the country was thronged with sturdy beggars wearing the monkish yellow robe and holding a begging bowl, having official permits from their abbots, to whom they paid over the contributions they received. Thus the interests of Church and State clashed, and for all the influence exercised by diplomatic abbots and their friends at court, hostile councils prevailed from time to time. Twice in the fourth and fifth centuries, both in the northern and southern kingdoms, quite fierce persecutions took place. Monastery lands were confiscated, the monks and nuns forbidden to wear their robes or conduct their services, and although the loss of life seems to have been small, tens of thousands of these monks and nuns and their lay followers were driven back into ordinary life. In the T'ang era (A.D. 618–907), when the power of the Buddhists reached its height,

there were again periodical persecutions, and the same occurred in later eras right down to the eighteenth century. But none of them were pressed home with continuous rigour, and on the earlier occasions it appears that the religious authority of Buddhism was in no way affected. There was a vitality about it in those days which made it impervious to the attacks of its enemies.

This vitality was shown in the rise of various sects; the earliest and most important of which were the *Ch'ing-Tu*, the *T'ien-T'ai*, the *Ch'an*, and the *Wei-Shih*. All four were schools of highly distinctive religious thought and practice, and owe their special features to the intellectual initiative and spiritual zeal of Chinese monks. Their beginnings date from the fifth and sixth centuries, and in the minds of their founders can be traced the strength and weakness of the Confucianist-Taoist great tradition.

The *Ch'ing-Tu* (pure land) movement started in the Kiangsi Hills, some three hundred miles up the Yangtse River. Hui Yüan (died 416), the founder, started his career by being an ardent Taoist, and when he embraced Buddhism he took with him the true Taoist's combination of passion for communion with the Absolute, and belief in simple unsophisticated human nature being able to attain to this communion. He was not much interested in an historical Sakyamuni. It was the principle of absolute Buddha existence outside space and time which attracted him, so that he worshipped an Infinite Eternal Buddha, but at the same time a Buddha who subjected himself to mortal flesh and all its ills in order that he might open the door of salvation to the common man and woman. He had also the Taoist's conviction that communion with the Absolute did not entail the negation of individual personality but, on the contrary, the consummation of it, and that the peace of emancipation being obtainable here and now, death would only carry that peace to a higher power. This brought him to a quite natural acceptance of the Mahayana theory of a paradise, a 'pure land', indeed, a whole series of pure lands, where the joys of the spirit might be enjoyed in the company of the immortals. With this message

of hope it is easily understandable that the *Ch'ing-T'u* sect attracted the unlettered masses, more and more as time went on, for subsequent prophets of the school emphasized that the only necessary condition of salvation was to believe and send out a cry to the Infinite-Eternal Buddha, or his two chief partners in mercy, the Boddhisattva Ta Shih-chih (the One of Supreme Might) and Kuan Yin (the One who watches for the Cry of the World).

The *T'ien T'ai* movement may be said to have sprung from the desire to bring order out of the maze of doctrines in the Buddhist Scriptures. Indeed, the passion for acquiring the sacred books and for translating whatever had the stamp of antiquity resulted in a completely bewildering state of affairs, so that the good honest believer hardly knew what he ought to believe or not to believe; hence the *T'ien T'ai* classification of gospels as given by Sakyamuni at different stages of his life. In the fifth and final class was the gospel within the gospel, namely salvation for all as proclaimed in the *Lotus Scripture*.

Dogmatically the *T'ien T'ai* synthesis was a forced one, an attempt to combine elements which would not combine in a rational system of thought. The founders, Hui Ssŭ and Chih Yi, in the great monasteries of the T'ien T'ai Hills near the coast, south of the mouth of the Yangtse River, aimed at a working policy of agreements: a typical instance of Chinese common sense in relation to family life. The same spirit is found in the emphasis on the need for combining mystic meditation and *yoga* with daily study of the scriptures and strict conformity to the rules of asceticism and benevolent practice. No man could afford to neglect any of these three means of spiritual progress if he was to achieve the Buddha nature and be saved. Whether salvation meant something after death of a life in paradise was not made quite clear, though on its scholarly, philosophical side the *T'ien T'ai* position was clear: *nirvana* was the ultimate end of it all.

The *Ch'an* movement in its essence was a revolt against all ideas of gaining merit by good works or of gaining enlightenment by book knowledge. Hui Neng, one of the chief moving spirits in the movement, was himself an unlettered man, distinguished

by a gift of logical common sense which enabled him to pierce his way through to the heart of things. For him there was only one way to achieve salvation and that was by meditation, by concentration of all a man's powers on reaching illumination. Once you were illumined, salvation was accomplished, and nothing could undo it. If you were not illumined, you were not saved, however learned in the scriptures you might be, and however much you had acquired the filthy rags of a bogus righteousness.

Hui Neng's common sense took him so far that he saw the psychological danger in consciously and deliberately seeking to be illumined. He also maintained that once a man was illumined he could not put the experience into words. Thus the teacher who reckoned he could teach a disciple was *ipso facto* deceiving himself and the disciple: the root of the matter was not in him. Also there was nothing to be gained by becoming a monk and isolating oneself from humdrum duties. Special robes and special activities only aggravated the diseases of self-consciousness. Wear your clothes without knowing that they are clothes: eat without knowing that you are eating: carry on with hewing wood and drawing water without thinking of these as worldly occupations. Then suddenly the moment will come, and whereas you were dead you will be alive, your whole being imbued with the Buddha nature. Common sense though this was in one way, it was in another way so paradoxical that it became nonsense to many. Hence *Ch'an* devotees never became very numerous in China,[1] although their teaching exercised a far-reaching influence. To the really mystically inclined it was profoundly attractive, for it based everything on experience. Whether the illumined were apt to be a little smug is another matter; at any rate one feature of their public discussions was their exquisite sense of humour. By laughter they aimed to explode all the shams of selfish religion.

The *Wei-Shih* movement originated with Hsüan Chuang, the famous pilgrim to India in the seventh century. He came back with a great store of books and relics, among them a bone

[1]Buddhism spread to Japan in the sixth century and the Ch'an, or Zen as the Japanese called it, became very prevalent there.

from Sakyamuni's body. In the years that followed he translated seventy-five works of one sort and another, gaining high praise from his gratified patron, the Emperor T'ao Tsung. There was no popularizing strain in Hsuan Chuang, and the type of Buddhist dogma which he and his disciple, Kuei-chi, fathered was primarily a philosophical theory.

To them, as to the thinkers of the Tantra school in India, the logical corollary to the traditional dogma of illusion (*maya*) was what is known in Western philosophy as subjective idealism. Things have no existence apart from their existence in the minds of the people who sense them. But then the corollary they set up to this was that since in the Buddha mind all reality was found, that mind could control all the things of sense. That being so, there was no miracle he could not work, and those imbued with his mind also participated in this power. In practice it came down to using spells by written formulæ and passes with the hands. In this way philosophy became the handmaid of superstition, though this fact to be sure did not prejudice the philosophy in the eyes of the emperors of that time. It did, however, create disgust in the minds of some of the Confucianists, and in the long run the school lost its supporters and died out.

Mention has been made of Kuan Yin, often referred to in the West as the 'Goddess of Mercy', as being one of the two chief partners of the Infinite-Eternal Buddha in the work of saving men. This Boddhisattva came originally from India as a male divinity, Avalokitesvara, but in China he gradually assumed a female form, probably because of the special association with mercy and kindness. Kuan Yin was, and is, particularly beloved by women worshippers, specially childless ones. As time went on many legends and stories arose about her origin and her incarnation in various forms for the saving of mankind. Probably her cult has absorbed quite a number of goddesses known and dear to the Chinese people from ancient times.

These various movements flourished throughout the T'ang era. This was the time when with ample funds at their command the great monasteries, containing thousands of monks in any

one of them, were able to build up impressive rituals of various kinds. Visitors could see at fixed times of day and night processions of monks swinging solemnly through the courts clad in their yellow robes, fingering their prayer beads, their heads shaven, showing their ordination scars. They could watch 'masses' for the dead being sung in the presence of the great image of Buddha, with its look of imperturbable peace, one hand upraised in blessing and one open downward in giving, and around him a company of supporting saints. They could go into the lecture halls and hear the doctors discussing some knotty point of faith or order. They could go into the libraries and mark the labour of copying and translating and commentating. They could penetrate into out-of-the-way corners and see devotees entranced in meditation. There were the kitchens and vegetable gardens with monks and lay brothers at work in them; and at the centre of all this ordered activity was the abbot, administering the great community, with his messengers coming and going to other abbots and high court officials: and all this going on in the name of religion, in order that men's unruly passions might be exorcized by divine pity and the peace of eternity flow into their souls. It could not fail to impress, whether the visitor came from the court or the great *yamen* with its arrogant display of worldly pomp and circumstance, or whether he was a humble peasant, or artisan, or merchant, fleeced by the tax collector and government monopolist, rack rented for his holding, with his aged parents and children dying of malnutrition and actual hunger. Happiness in this world was, indeed, a delusion for the majority, and it was the devotees of the mysterious law who knew the secret of finding eternal happiness, freed from man's oppression and the calamities of drought and flood and disease.

This is not to say there was not another side to the picture. The monasteries might dispense alms on a great scale, but they became great landowners as lands were given to them by the devout, and they knew how to charge high rents as well as the ordinary landlord. The monks claimed the right to ignore all courtesies to elders and could be fiercely self-assertive for the honour and safety of their community. The abbots cultivated

prestige in court and *yamen*, and by their claims of exemption from dues made taxes all the heavier for the ordinary citizen. Also the scandals incidental to community living at close quarters and to the practice of celibacy were unavoidable. The whole situation was comparable to that in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages.

To the essentially family minded Confucianist scholar the whole business was unhealthy to the last degree, in fact a negation of the laws of Heaven and Earth, flagrant impiety and flouting of the emperor's beneficent sway. As the minister Fu Yi of the first T'ang emperor said in a famous memorial to the throne:

"In Han times these barbarian writings were translated (the government) being led astray by their specious hypotheses. Thus people were made disloyal and unfilial, shaving their heads and discarding their sovereign and parents, becoming men without occupation and without means of subsistence, by which means they avoided the payment of rents and taxes. . . . I maintain that poverty and wealth, high station and low, are the products of a man's own efforts, but these ignorant Buddhist monks deceive people, saying with one voice that these things come from the Buddha. Thus they defraud the sovereign of his authority and usurp his power of reforming the people."

The truth would appear to be that as an institution Buddhism became too powerful in society, and that in the days of its popularity it succumbed to that temptation which lies in wait for all high religions: it compromised with the age-old instinct to look for a magical formula and rite by which protection for one's family and happiness in this world may be guaranteed. Add on to that the terror of hell created by vivid portrayals in sacred writings and on temple frescoes, and we can appreciate the disgust felt by high-minded as well as worldly minded Confucianists.

Take, for example, the most eminent scholar of the T'ang Dynasty, Han Yü. He was confronted with news that his emperor (Hsien Tsung, 806–824) had sent high officers of state to welcome the approach to the capital of a finger bone from Sakyamuni's body, and that the Son of Heaven himself

had had a platform erected from which he could view the procession. In utter disgust Han Yü sat down and wrote a scorching memorial to the throne in which he described the sacred relic as a 'rotten, filthy object', and expressed his utter amazement that the emperor should have had a pagoda built for it and call the pagoda 'The pagoda of the True Body for the Protection of the State'. He then made a survey of history and demonstrated how in high antiquity before the Buddha existed, the sage kings reigned each for a hundred years or more, but since the taint of this foreign heresy came into China many of the emperors, notably those who welcomed the Buddhist teachings, had only reigned for a few years. The instance he chiefly stressed was that of the Emperor Wu (502–549) of the Liang Dynasty. He said:

"Wu of Liang was the only one of those who favoured Buddhism who reigned for forty-eight years. From first to last three times he gave himself up to the Buddhist life of contemplation. In his sacrifices in the ancestral temple he used no flesh offerings; he had only one meal a day and this was only vegetables and fruit. But in the end he was starved to death in his capital by Hou Ching, and thereafter his line soon came to an end."

Han Yü was right as to the bare facts, but he left out one important thing. Wu was really a saintly person who found peace only in the contemplative life, and yet, with true Confucianist devotion to public duty, he gave up his private desires and lived only for the good of his people. The record of his reign shows that he was no weakling or bigot, but had a good brain and attended to practical problems. His reign produced notable scholars and literary works of enduring fame. All this Han Yü knew perfectly well. In his denouncement of Wu, therefore, in spite of his fearless honesty, he showed himself a shallow thinker, content, without giving weight to other considerations, to use Wu's fate as an object lesson of the falseness of Buddhist promises of protection and blessings. In this he was typical of T'ang Confucianism.

It failed intellectually and spiritually to hold its own with the best that was in Buddhism. This is clear from the fact that

at one point an attempt was made to reinforce the appeal of the indigenous faith by making Confucius into a god such as the Buddha was held to be. Images of him were put in his commemorative temples all over the empire, which till then had held only an inscribed tablet; and the people were encouraged to pray to these images as they did to those of Buddha. It is a highly significant fact in China's religious history that this attempt to 'get one back' on the Buddhists was a complete failure, and was never tried again.[1] If Confucianism was to hold its own against Buddhism in the minds and souls of the Chinese people it could only do so by strengthening its own intrinsic appeal.

Besides Buddhism there were in T'ang times two other foreign religions, claiming to be world religions, which became known in China. These were Mohammedanism and Christianity. The one seems to have made no great impact on Chinese minds at that time; it will be dealt with in its later development in another chapter. Christianity also must be dealt with in relation to its more permanent impression in later centuries. But the first appearance of that faith in its Nestorian form had an influence on Buddhist practice: just how considerable an influence it is hard to say,[2] but it is fairly clear that the Buddhist monks marked in the Christian monks that one of their most solemn services was that of masses for the dead. These were chanted on fixed occasions and intercession made for all the Christian souls in purgatory. (Cp. the Roman Catholic 'Mass for All Souls'.) There were also special masses for special persons recently departed. To the Chinese there was something essentially pious in this rite. It was something a man could do for his parents and relatives, and on the grand scale it fitted in with the old idea of hungry ghosts being appeased by concern for their comfort. About this time Buddhist monks also began to offer masses for the dead, and the practice grew to be exceedingly popular and continued as an integral part of

[1]We have seen one image of Confucius still existent in the temple in the city of Nengfa in Fukien, and were told there that it was one of three in all China.

[2]It is to be hoped that further excavations in Central Asia may give more light on this problem.

Buddhist worship after Nestorian Christianity had disappeared.

As we have seen, the worship of Kuan Yin, the female partner of the Buddha in his response to the cry for mercy and pity, became very popular in T'ang times. It is easy to find resemblances between this worship and that offered by Christians to the Virgin Mary, and some authorities would suggest a definite connection with and influence from the Christian story. This may have been so, but the need of suffering humanity for a compassionate 'Mother of Heaven' is so natural that it does not seem necessary to assume that she did not exist in Buddhist thought, without it coming in contact with the Nestorian tradition.

In two other respects Nestorianism and Buddhism were alike and made the same appeal, one differing from that of Confucianism. Prayer in the Confucian tradition consisted of informing Heaven, or the ancestors, of what had happened in the state or the family. It expressed grateful recognition of benefits received, acknowledgment of wrong done, and vows to do well in future; but there was no actual petitioning for concrete blessings. The ancestral sacrifices offered were not in expiation of sin committed, although there lurked in the background the real fear lest the spirits being deprived of the savoury meats might turn to acts of malice against their ungrateful descendants. In Mahayana Buddhism, on the other hand, as in Christianity, petitionary prayer was the basic act of faith. Day and night the cry of helpless humanity in its misery went up to the Buddha and to Kuan Yin, just as the Nestorians repeated their Paternosters and their Aves.

Secondly, the Confucianist tradition in ritual came to be that the higher the rite the more austere its form should be. The tendency in Buddhism, as in Christianity of the Nestorian form, was to build up impressive and ornate services. These rituals appealed to something in the Chinese soul which was, perhaps unconsciously, starved of light and colour in religious worship. This had scope too in the Buddhist temples which, in contrast to the stately simplicity of the Confucianist shrines, were filled with sculpture and richly painted frescoes after the Indian fashion.

The T'ang period was the great flowering period of Chinese history, comparable to the Italian Renaissance. The centuries immediately preceding it could not compare with it in developments in art and literature. But those centuries were the womb from which the T'ang cultural advances sprang. In spite of the disturbed state of society the spirit and mind of the scholar class was awake. There were great poets and great prose writers, more particularly the *fu* writers, masters of the art of description in semi-poetical, semi-prose style. The tendency in the south was to romanticism, the free expression of the individual's mood. In the great families who migrated to the Yangtse basin education was maintained at a high level, so that the young men became scholars as well as fighters. We find an air of robustness in their attitude to life: many of the most popular stories of adventure come from these centuries. Men were not caught in the net of a dead orthodoxy, but were out to savour all experiences. Some would be beaten and frustrated and take refuge in Buddhist monasteries. But others would turn inquirer in the grand aristocratic manner, ready to explore what the new faith had to teach, prepared to argue this way and that. So in T'ang times the lamp of learning was well alight and a Yen Shih-ku could make his painstaking historical researches, a K'ung Yin-ta and his helpers write a hard-thinking commentary on the five main Confucianist scriptures.

On the poetical side there never were such poets before or since as Li Po, Tu Fu, and Po Chü-yi, who, along with a hundred others, have survived in literature. Some were painters as well as poets, as in the case of Wang Wei. But painting developed in its own way, in landscape and portraiture, in grouping of dramatically conceived figures, and in the free gestures of the beloved horse. Both in poetry and representational art there was no restriction of outlook: Confucianist, Taoist, and Buddhist influences are all clearly discernible. In the history of Europe there have been periods when art was the handmaid of religion; in T'ang China art made free with religion, and religion, particularly the Buddhist forms of religion, was a source of living inspiration to art.

CHAPTER V

SUNG NEO-CONFUCIANISM AND LATER DEVELOPMENTS

THE last chapter has shown the changes in Chinese religious thought under the impact of foreign influences: influences so far-reaching that staunch Confucianists like Han Yü feared lest the heart of the nation was being vitally corrupted by these foreign ideologies. To the outside observer, particularly one of to-day, it appears that the Chinese people of a thousand and more years ago were needing something which neither Confucianism with its austerity and restricted outlook on eternity, nor the hotch-potch of low-level animistic beliefs and practices called Taoist religion, could give. Hence the attraction which Mahayana Buddhism in particular had, with its claim to create peace in the soul, and its heavens beyond heavens of purity and brightness and infinite compassion. It presented a picture of happiness which had more colour and vitality, and which made the devotee immune from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

Contemporary Confucianism confessedly failed in one respect. For all its rationality about the natural order of the universe, for all its poetry of filial piety and family, 'the loving concord of parents and children, like the harmony of music', its 'one family abounding in *jen*, and so the whole state and nation abounding in *jen*', nevertheless, the action of *yang* and *yin* forces in the world made life in the last resort an uncertain deal for the family and nation. The family could be crushed by misfortune, however good and learned and forethoughtful its members might be. History was as full of cases of unmerited bad luck as it was of virtue being rewarded with wealth and high estate. It was the weakness as well as the merit of Confucianist religion that it could only say, do your duty by your family and carry on.

Nevertheless, after the T'ang era came the Sung (960–1279), and during those three centuries something new was born in China, something which sent its people forward in renewed loyalty to their own great tradition. That 'something' was what is called Neo-Confucianism, a development from the matrix of the Confucianist tradition, but showing how deeply the minds and souls of the Sung Confucianists had been affected by Taoism and Buddhism. Being primarily a scholar-class movement, it has appeared to the world as essentially a school of thought, or rather two competing schools of thought, which were concerned only with the things of the mind, employing their energies over metaphysical and epistemological problems. To a high degree this was so, and in consequence the list towards intellectualism in the established religion was considerably enhanced. But the question arises: why, if Buddhism was so able to win the hearts of literate and illiterate alike in earlier days, was it that these Neo-Confucianist philosophies could overcome the drift towards other-worldliness and a mystic salvation?

The modern Chinese intelligentsia answer to this question is that Neo-Confucianism proves that the Chinese people have no genius for religion as the Indians and other peoples have, and, indeed, that religiously-based thinking is in the last resort irrational and so intellectually disreputable. This answer, weighty as it is, is not by any means a completely satisfying one. It obscures two vital facts, one that although Buddhism declined somewhat, it still continued to exercise a great influence; the other that Neo-Confucianism was avowedly a reaffirmation of the sacred dogmas of an original Confucian revelation, and this with a new emphasis on the importance of the contemplative life. We see in it, therefore, something comparable to Stoicism in the days of the Roman Empire, which began as a set of philosophical theories and ended by becoming a religion.

Han Yü and his disciple and friend Li Ao in their writings gave the first sign that a new directive force was about to emerge in Confucianism. This was particularly so with Li Ao, who was much exercised over the psychology of man's inherent nature in relation to man's emotions and passions. The solution

to him lay in the attainment of an inner quietude of spirit. From that his mind travelled on to this quietude being an objectification of the mind which made the man one with the transforming reality underlying the order of nature. All this showed Buddhist influence, but the important thing to note is that Li Ao couched his reflections in Confucianist phraseology, particularly that of the *Chung Yung Scripture* (cp. Ch. III).

In Sung times, however, the first movements of thought were along a different line. They were not concerned with psychology, but with the nature of reality in the world 'in front of man's eyebrows'. These thinkers went out to prove that the Buddhists were wrong in their affirmation that everything which was subject to causation was outside the sphere of reality, indeed, was by reason of its everchanging condition incompatible with the eternally real. Neither would they allow, in spite of their appreciation of Chuang Chou's philosophy, that ultimate reality was purely negative. They followed up a clue which the *T'ien T'ai* Buddhist school afforded in its concession to the world that by the mere fact of its temporary existence it had some connection with ultimate reality. They went back to the old *Scripture of Changes* (*I Ching*) with its *Amplifications* and there found: "Change entails a supreme limit, and from this supreme limit sprang the two modes (of existence), and from this sprang the four symbols (of existence), and from this sprang the eight trigrams. . . ."

To give the gist of their two distinguishable arguments, they fastened on this 'supreme limit'—to them it meant both the fact of cosmic beginning and the mind able to conceive the fact—and they affirmed that it was *wu chi* (without limit). But, given the universe as a going concern, this limitless ultimate limit of beginning to existence both in fact and theory entails movement plus stillness. It also entails some sort of material on which and in which movement and stillness can work. This material was found in the ancient theory of *ch'i*, a gaseous substance which was held to be omnipresent. Without movement, without activity of some sort in relation to this *ch'i*, there could be no universe; but without receptivity and acquiescence of some sort activity cannot but be undirected.

From this they went on to movement and stillness as combining in relative strengths: a greater power of movement with a greater power of stillness, a lesser power of movement with a lesser power of acquiescence, and so on through all the possible permutations and combinations. From this they came to the ancient categories of the *Five Hsing* (cp. p. 44), fire and water, wood and metal, and earth. But they found more illuminating the other ancient system of categories, the natural forces symbolized by the Eight Trigrams: sky and earth, thunder and wind, water and fire, high ground and low ground. All the phenomena of physical nature were comprised in these four pairs in which movement and stillness were to be found in relative proportions. From this angle they saw in new perspective the Sixty-four Trigrams, as symbolizing all further possibilities of patternization within the limits of movement-in-co-operation-with-stillness.

We are reminded of Newton and his first law of motion, action and reaction are equal and opposite. But this Chinese synthesis goes further. Its universe is not in the last resort a dead mechanism, but a living body in which every particular component part is recognizable by its functioning in relation to the other component parts. Again we are reminded, this time of the Western psychologists' concept of symbiosis, reciprocity of function as between different organisms. This feature of the universe had already been noted by the T'ang commentators on the *Scripture of Changes*, who saw all entities in nature adapting their forms to their specific environments. On the other hand, it is significant that the new thinkers were not satisfied unless they could submit their various syntheses to the test of diagrammatic expression. This strengthened their consciousness of the distinction between the mathematical abstractions which to them were 'above-form' (*shing-erh shang*), and the particular phenomena in nature which were 'below-form' (*shing-erh hsia*).

Here we are reminded of Plato and his patterns in the heavens, though the comparison must not be pressed too far. It is more to the point to realize that this dualistic universe which they tested out in their observations was not a dualism

in the final sense, but a unity. Chang Heng-chü gave an alternative expression to the *t'ai-ch'i* (supreme limit); he also called it the 'supreme harmony', a very typical Chinese affirmation and one coming very logically from him, since he realized so much better than his contemporaries the part which the gaseous substance must play in their cosmology. Also there was no gap in their explanation of how the universe started, and of how it unceasingly reproduces itself in time and space. What is natural now was natural in the beginning, and what was natural in the beginning is natural now.

From numerous biographical references it is clear that this solid explanation of the universe, giving due weight to the metaphysical as well as to the physical, and thereby linking the temporal and changing with the eternal and unchanging, came as a great relief to the men of that time who were bothered by the Buddhist logic of eternity and reality in one water-tight compartment, and this world and its evanescent show in another. The mind of the age was released. Men could think now without the carking doubt that the very 'I' that was thinking was an illusion. They could relate themselves to the world without. This release appears in the later and more famous thinkers of the Sung age. In the two brothers, Cheng I-chuan and Cheng Ming-tao, and then more markedly in Chu Hsi with his disciples and Lŭ Hsiang-shan with his, the impetus given follows two divergent lines.

The Chu Hsi school became the most influential of the two, both intellectually and politically, though the fact of its later adoption by the state as the one orthodox interpretation of Confucianism should not be taken as the index of its intellectual power. Two basic concepts appear in the school's philosophy, *ch'i* (gaseous substance), which it took over from Chang Heng-chü, and *li* (structural principle), which the brothers Cheng were the first to discuss. I-chuan in particular laid down that everything in the physical universe had its *li*. As he said: "where a thing exists it must have a pattern": a particular thing of necessity has a particular structural principle. He instanced a tree in which he saw the whole as more than its parts: it contained the *li* of its true entity. The same applies

to all phenomena, e.g. the sage king Yao embodied the *li* of universal entity. Thus there are innumerable *li* corresponding to every thing and class of thing, and these *li* are not affected by the relative growth and decay of the phenomena of which they are the essence. They are not of the same sense world at all. In other words, they are not physical but metaphysical; and true knowledge consists of knowledge of the *li*.

This line of reasoning was what attracted Chu Hsi after he had made a searching examination of Taoist and Buddhist tenets. He had a mind for metaphysics and a liking for positive judgments not negative ones. Thus he took his predecessor's 'limitless supreme-limit' to space time existence, and denied on the one hand that it was merely void, nothing, and on the other hand that it was substantial in the sense that *ch'i* or any other thing was. Yet it had its *li*, though it would seem that the meaning of the term changed somewhat and in Chu Hsi's mind expressed the idea of rational principle. The Chu Hsi school maintained that Reason, transcendent but at the same time operating through rational observation and synthesis, informed the whole mass of particular phenomena which constituted the space-time universe (*yü-chou*). And this Reason was understandable by man, for the race of man also had its structural and rational principle, and that consisted above all in the power to know.

With regard to *ch'i*, the gaseous substance from which emerged heaven and earth and all that in them is, it was for Chu Hsi exactly what Chang Heng-chü had made it, the medium in which movement and stillness operated. But he approached the idea of matter with a new clarity of analysis. It being agreed that the heavier kind of *ch'i* sank down and made the earth, he saw the earth as *chih* (raw material), divisible into five classes of chemical elements, the water, fire, wood, metal, and soil, which figured in a vague sense in the earlier philosophers as physical forces. Whether Chu Hsi was awake to the implications of this in relation to his cosmological synthesis it is difficult to say. He still took *ch'i* as present in the process by which a new species of thing came into being, so that the assumption is that *ch'i* and *chih* worked together.

Their relation to *li* lay, of course, in the conclusion that in any particular entity there must be both its particular content of *ch'i-chih*[1] and its particular *li*.

For Chu Hsi, while the *li* of a thing cannot be anything but perfect, the *ch'i-chih* in it can diverge from the norm, from what he described as the *hsing* (inherent nature) of the thing. From this emerged a naturalistic explanation of good and evil, namely, when a thing functions according to its nature, it is in a state of goodness; when it does not so function, either by defect or excess, it is in a state of evil. For man with his *li* and his composition, *ch'i-chih*, his nature is to have the mind (*hsin*)[2] in control of every feeling and passion. Thus goodness in man is equivalent to the mind being in control, evil in man to the reverse; and since in practice there is the danger of the mind giving wrong direction to a man, this danger is avoided by him extending his knowledge to the utmost. When he does that unremittingly, there comes a day when suddenly he becomes illumined. All the objects in nature with their respective *li* become clear to him as an ordered whole, as also the relation of his mind to the whole.

In this way rationality in the world without is married to rationality in the mind within. To Chu Hsi and his school this is the more cogently true because the mind can and does act as a natural monitor all along the line of moral endeavour. It knows by instinctive human sympathy that an act of humanity is right. It knows by instinctive shame for injustice done that an act of justice is right. It knows by instinctive appreciation of social etiquette that respect is due to one's superiors and kindness to one's inferiors. It knows by instinctive understanding what is true and what is false. In all human relationships, therefore, the mind is the perfect guide—provided it holds to its natural course to be still when it should be still, to act when it ought to act.

[1]The combination of *ch'i* and *chih* came in Chang Heng-chü's and Cheng I-chuan's systems, but Chu Hsi developed it—whether with advantage is another question.

[2]*Hsin* is pictographically a representation of the heart, but in Chinese thought it is the *hsin* which thinks. Emotions are not specially associated with the *hsin*.

Leaving the Chu Hsi system with this outline exposition, we turn to the Lu Hsiang-shan system. Whilst for Chu Hsi primary emphasis was on a long discipline of absorption in discovering the *li* of the world without, for Lu the first step was realization that man could know nothing but what his mind taught him. As he said: "the space-time universe is in my mind; my mind is the space-time universe." To put the matter in a Western way, he adopted an idealist position comparable to that of Hume. As Lu's disciple Yang Tzŭ-lu (*ob.* 1226) said: "To speak of 'signs in the heavens and forms on the earth' is what I make of the heavens and the earth"; and again: "to regard change as transformation in the heavens and the earth, and not as transformation in myself, is logically impermissible." The only facts for these thinkers were what the mind recognized to be facts: there could be no other because man could not get outside his mind.

From this position it followed for the Lu school (though not for Hume in the West) that they were not interested in elaborate investigations into the nature of the universe. For these epistemological idealists the more important sphere of inquiry was what man was more intimately qualified to understand, namely, psychological and ethical facts. This tendency was reinforced later by Wang Yang-ming (*ob.* 1528), the most vigorous and original thinker of the Ming era. He was not only a pungent critic of Chu Hsi's *li*, which he maintained were a figment of his imagination, but he also added weight to the Lu school argument by his theory of *liang chih* (intuitive knowledge).

According to him there was a vital distinction to be drawn between the man of commanding intelligence and the pettifogging thinker. The former had grasped by intuition that 'heaven and earth and all creatures are one body'; the latter saw things as entities in opposition to each other and in the last resort was concerned only with himself. The first was the true knowledge. Wang added that the criterion of knowledge was action: knowledge which did not lead to action was not knowledge at all, but empty opinion. Here again the emphasis came to be laid on ethics and that kind of social conduct which

plainly commended itself as for the good of all. It may be said that where Chu Hsi was an empiricist in exploring the nature of the universe, Wang Yang-ming was an empiricist in the field of human nature. For him man was the measure of the universe.

Whilst all this may appear to be pure naturalistic philosophy and to have nothing to do with religion, particularly the religion of the common man, yet there was religion to be found in it, and through the teaching of the scholars that religion came into the common thought of the community. First, the basic emphasis on reason in the world wedded to reason in man within is by no means alien to the religious mind. Taking an example in the history of Christian theology, it is well known what part was played by Thomas Aquinas, that arch devotee of reason, in the shaping of Christian dogma. Second, the Neo-Confucianists, again like Thomas Aquinas, sought for illumination through revelation by means of study of the Scriptures. They revolted against Buddhist and Taoist claims to empty the world here-and-now of any claim to reality or substantial rationality. They all went back to the Confucianist Scriptures, finding there the light for which they were seeking.

Chu Hsi was speaking from his own experience when he claimed that after long intellectual search suddenly the mind was illumined. That experience came to him from putting in practice as best he could the truth which came to him from the lips of the Master, the Sage above all Sages, in the words "the extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things." The same applies to Wang Yang-ming and his 'intuitive knowledge' and 'knowledge entails action'. The same passage in the Scriptures gave him "the great way of learning consists in the revelation of intelligent moral power, in renovating the people, in dwelling in the highest good."

This is not to say that the Neo-Confucianists took it on trust that because a saying came in the Confucian Scriptures therefore it must be true. That would be entirely to misunderstand the texture of their minds. Whatever later generations made of Chu Hsi's conclusions as dogmas to be

accepted blindly on his authority, the genius of Neo-Confucianism lay in its being a quest for ultimate truth. It is a somewhat startling fact that the Neo-Confucianists, having explored all other paths, then came back to the books which had come to be regarded as rather antiquated and too simple to contain the whole truth. And yet this is fresh evidence for what was found in Confucius himself and in Han Confucianism, a refusal to believe that the supreme power in the universe is an anthropomorphic deity or set of deities whose favour can be won by magical devices or ritual performances or fervent expressions of belief.

It reminds one of the Christian philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, and his emphasis on a 'categorical imperative', on the moral law and conscience in the individual as the final evidence for the existence of God. In some respects it reminds one also of the Jewish Stoic philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, in whose mind the 'living God' of the Jewish and Christian ways of thought became a pure abstraction. But whereas the Christian or Jewish theologian thinks in terms of the law of God and the laws of his universe, and these are the mysteries on which he ponders, the Chinese theologian—if he may be called so—thinks in terms of the *tzŭ jan*, the self-so, the universe that comes of itself and reproduces itself, and he is content to ponder and adore that mystery. To both there is something beyond space and time and the material universe, but this ultimate reality in which they both believe is not in disjunction from the here and now, it is both transcendent and imminent.

This was the Confucianism which asserted itself over the religion from India with its denial of reality in the here and now, and which now became more than ever the state religion. In Ming times the examinations on which entry to official life depended were standardized on a new intellectual level. Candidates had to show by their knowledge of the Scriptures that they could 'speak for the Sages', i.e. expound their doctrines. Chu Hsi's was the authorized commentary and the required form was the 'eight-legged essay', which ultimately cramped Confucianist learning into stylized bonds. This was

what the Jesuit missionaries called the 'scholars' religion' when they came to know the China of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They were attracted by it, saw in it something which contained elements of truth.

With their respect for the authoritative sacraments of institutional religion, they found the Chinese rituals which they saw in the capital and all over the country to be eminently impressive. There was the solemn rite of the emperor's worship of Heaven, when as the representative of his people he presented himself at the great Altar of Heaven. After due fasting and with his great officials in their gorgeous robes to support him, the greatest monarch on earth prostrated himself before something which was not represented by any image, something which was above him and his people as the blue sky was above the white marble altar, something without whose providence in the ordering of the seasons the people could not live, and by whose commission he held his throne. There was also the worship at the Altar of Earth at the height of summer, and the rite when the emperor turned the first sod for the spring sowing and so ensured a favourable harvest.

All over the country in every large town there was a temple to Confucius, and here (as also in the temple dedicated to the 'Guardian of the City') the officials as representing the emperor, together with the leading scholars of the place, met on special days to celebrate solemn rites with music and sacrificial offerings. The temples of Confucius contained, as has been stated, no images of the Sage, but a tablet inscribed with his title. Here was none of the florescence of sculpture and painting to be found in the Buddhist temples, but the numinous austerity of spirit tablets[1] standing on altars of rugged stone. In every family the duties of filial piety were impressed by precept and example, and the head of the family officiated in a priestly manner before the tablets of the ancestors. Family occasions, births, marriages, and funerals, were all marked by solemn ceremonies carried out with dignity and according to

[1]Confucius' personal disciples had tablets in these temples, and from time to time by imperial decree the tablets of other great Confucianists were added.

tradition, and at such times the ancestors were never forgotten; their presence was essential.

Neo-Confucianism with its richer and more systematic explanation of man's place in the universe brought new life and meaning into the old rituals, and it did this by taking over from Buddhism and Taoism their insistence that intensive personal discipline, the nourishment of the individual's higher nature, is the *sine qua non* of enlightened understanding And it is at least open to suggestion that, as the Buddhist monks and Taoist priests had been accorded great reverence as guardians and exponents of the mystery of their religions, so the Confucianist scholars of the later ages, with their orthodoxy guaranteed by Chu Hsi—'Culture's Duke' as he came to be called on his tablet in the Confucian temples—these men had much the standing of ordained priests.

Confucianism having thus achieved a higher moral and intellectual prestige in the state and nation, Buddhism lost its more public and reputable appeal, and became a private cult, an outlet for those whose particular kind of religious mind required that sort of stimulus. It is a sign that there were still many such people in the community that a number of monasteries were able to carry on and even receive fresh endowments from the faithful. But no striking new movements came from the Buddhist Church, and the chief way in which the monks were recognized by the general public was in their services as celebrants of masses for the dead.

On the other hand, Taoism in its religious form had quite a revival in the Sung era. It was a more reputable form of Taoism than that which had flourished in Han times. It had, for example, taken a leaf out of the Buddhists' book and had organized its local centres as priestly communities who served in the Taoist fanes. Some of them practised celibacy; but this was not required, and the level of asceticism tended to be lower than that of the Buddhist monks. These priests practised contemplation in various ways and claimed thereby to obtain revealed knowledge of higher mysteries; for instance the secret of the prolongation of human life to hundreds of years.

A notable figure towards the end of the Han era was one

Chang Tao-ling, who claimed to have had a special revelation from Lao Tzŭ, and who at a very great age, so his followers claimed, ascended into the heavens with his wife. He lived and taught in the far west (modern Szechwan). In some respects what he taught was the cult of health, but it went further than that. Some account of Persian Mazdaism seems to have reached him, and he had worship paid to Heaven and Earth and Water and created a pantheon of angelic beings. In time the cult spread from the Yangtse valley to the coast, and some emperors and high officials believed in it during the Six Dynasties era. Taoist records claim that there was a direct line of descendants from Chang Tao-ling with the official title of *T'ien Shih* (Heavenly Teacher),[1] one of them having been recognized in this way by a Sung emperor in the eleventh century. The temple on the Dragon-Tiger Mountain in Kiangsi Province was their official residence for a thousand years. This form of Taoism became very popular, and in time its chief deity, among a host of minor deities or genii, came to be the Yü Ti (Jade Emperor or God), whose imposing image holds the central place in Taoist temples to-day. It has not yet become clear just from what this cult developed.

The Chang Tao-ling movement was not the only one. In the north one K'ou Chien-chih started a reformed Taoism on the basis of a special revelation from a deified Lao Tzŭ. This movement also was partly a health cult, but strengthened its appeal by producing a sacred book in which were formulas for summoning spirits to one's aid. The disturbed period of the third century had also produced the beginnings of another cult, that of Kuan Ti (the Emperor or God Kuan). One Kuan Yü took an active part as a military leader in the great border campaigns between the Three Kingdoms: a colourful figure in an age associated with martial exploits. Shrines came to be erected to his memory, and his protection was sought at the beginning of campaigns. More and more the custom grew for the military arm of the government to have 'martial holy temples' where formal homage was paid to this great patron of

[1]Sometimes called by westerners the Taoist Pope, but this nomenclature is misleading.

war. In Sung times this worship was recognized by the state, though the actual title of '*ti*' was not granted him till the sixteenth century. To-day his virile image is to be found in Taoist shrines throughout the country. Even candidates for civil examinations burnt incense to him, for he was counted as having the miraculous power of the pen. Also, like many other deified spirits, he was found useful in cases of demon possession.

Other instances could be cited showing a latent power in men's hearts, north, south, east, and west, in any age, to acclaim new saints or new gods—whichever they should be called—who could fortify those who called on them in some special need. The prevalence of this 'god-making' arises from a deep-rooted attitude of the Chinese mind towards the unseen world. It is shown in their consciousness of the ancestral spirits as being still concerned for and united with the family, and it is shown by the ease with which these new gods are adopted into the pantheon. They may be the spirits of departed men or women of renown as in the case of Kuan Ti, but sometimes they are re-incarnations of earlier gods who appear again on earth for some special purpose and continue to be worshipped under this new aspect.

This instinct of myth-making is reinforced by the power of the pen and the power of the artist. Among the Chinese people, so conscious of these two powers, this was inevitable. In the first place, the *Tao shih*, experts of the mystic Tao, were stirred to imitation of the Buddhists, both in literary composition and in temple building and in the making of images. The Sung era was the greatest in the history of Chinese painting and many, if not all, scholar artists were deeply influenced by Taoist mysticism. In the second place, the Taoist experts broke away from the Buddhist traditions. The literature which grew up, by Sung times a matter of something like 4,000 rolls, consisted in large measure of fairy stories, as we might call them, in which there was less of the stained-glass window spirit, and more of the riot of occult fancy. So also with image making: the Taoist craftsmen were less trammelled by Indian traditions, and were free to let their fancy roam, with results which, if cruder than some of the Buddhist images and with less spiritual

significance, were, nevertheless, intensely alive. This fresh development in native Chinese art reacted on Buddhist temple art, quite naturally, for there was no fixed dividing line or animosity between them, and on the famous sacred mountains Buddhist and Taoist monasteries in many cases came to be within easy reach of each other.

The border line between Taoist and Buddhist practices and beliefs is often hard to distinguish. The same difficulty is found in relation to Confucianism and Taoism.[1] Ancestor worship, which is so much part and parcel of the former, was reinforced not only by the Buddhist masses for the dead, but also by Taoist occultism. Taoist priests as well as Buddhists built up elaborate services through which the spirits of the dead could not only be propitiated, but could also be comforted and released from the tortures of hell. Perhaps the most striking example of this syncretism is in relation to the deity known as the Ruling God of Literature.

Here again it was the prolific centre of religious legend and myth, Szechwan Province in the far west, which gave birth to a new cult. It traces back to one Chang Ya Tzŭ of the fourth century, a native of Tzŭ T'ung, of which he is often called the guardian spirit. A scholar of considerable local distinction, he was finally killed in battle. In T'ang times a special temple was built in his honour, and in Sung and Yüan times he came to a position of nation-wide importance. Particularly was he worshipped by scholars, for, by some inexplicable metamorphosis, he was identified with a particular star, the brilliance of which was regarded as having a special influence on the advance of literature. Also alongside the biography of the original Chang Ya Tzŭ grew up stories of seventeen incarnations in different ages.

To the outside observer the whole business is at first sight a source of profound astonishment, for it was emperors and officials of state who fostered the cult, men trained in the nature philosophy of Neo-Confucianism and its later developments,

[1] The famous novel of the sixteenth century, *Hsi Yu Chi*, partly translated by Dr. Arthur Waley in *Monkey* illustrates the jumble of Confucianist, Taoist and Buddhist myths and legends common at that time.

not ignorant peasants. Yet there we must pause, for high officials may well have come from country homes, and at any rate at one period of their lives had been nervous students approaching the test of the imperial examinations. Further, the emperors were partly the product of their early surroundings with idle, superstitious women and time-serving eunuchs ever ready to excite their interest by fantastic tales. There is only too much evidence of a low level of intelligence there. And if their master called the tune with some new cult, his ministers and secretaries might easily feel that no harm was done by following his lead. It was, after all, only adding another pageant to the yearly round.

There is, however, more to it than that. As has been shown in earlier chapters, on the simple level of folk-lore there were stories enough of men's souls inhabiting animals, and of fairies masquerading as women of fatal beauty. On a higher level was the Mahayana belief in the Buddha of various incarnations, and the Taoists' emulation of their rivals with the myth of Lao Tzŭ being reincarnated as Sakyamuni. The Chang Ya Tzŭ myth, after all, only goes one step further than that, applying the logic of the reincarnation idea to a man of several hundred years back as against one of nearly two thousand years. The Chang Ya Tzŭ cult is an outstanding example, but not by any means the only one, of the way in which the Chinese mind wrestled with the problem of the relation between the visible and invisible worlds.

We emphasize this matter, not feeling that we can offer any adequate explanation of it, but at the same time conscious that, before the coming of modern science in Europe, there were phases of medieval Christianity which constitute much the same problem for our twentieth-century sense of reason. Again it was not only ignorant peasants, but also kings and learned priests, in whose minds there still lingered belief in fairies and witches and magic potions. Pilgrimages to the shrines of saints were blessed and encouraged by the Christian Church, but how many of those sacred spots were originally connected with some older tradition of mysterious happenings and good or bad fortune?

CHAPTER VI

MOHAMMEDANISM

BUDDHISM, as has been shown in Chapters IV and V, came into China from a foreign land, but remained to become integrated into the religious life and thought of the whole nation, being itself modified into something very different from what it was originally, and at the same time affecting in subtle ways the indigenous system with which it mingled. In the history of China two other religions have come in from outside, Mohammedanism and Christianity, and these must now be considered in relation to the whole picture.

Mohammedanism is not, however, an important constituent part of Chinese religious life. It is confined to a comparatively small section of the population, and has been to some extent modified by the surrounding indigenous faiths and practices, without in turn influencing them. The most noticeable thing is that, compared with adherents of Islam in other countries, the Mohammedans of China seem always to have been content to be a community apart, living among the Chinese, and marrying Chinese women, but keeping their own faith and customs, without apparently any urge to extend their faith and political influence by the warlike methods usually associated with their creed. Can it have been that the original Arab temperament was affected by the prevailing Confucianist atmosphere of peace-loving compromise?

Mohammedanism originated in Arabia, being founded by the prophet Mohammed, who was born in Mecca about A.D. 570. He lived quietly until his fortieth year, when, after a period of retirement and meditation, he began to preach the revelations which he claimed to have received from the 'one true God'. The Arabs at that time were polytheists, and their social and religious life was very corrupt. Mohammed probably had had contact with both Jews and Christians, if the tradition is correct

that he was a camel driver in merchant caravans. At any rate the gospel which he preached was the unity of God (Allah) and the sin of idolatry. Hence came the Mohammedan creed: "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his prophet." After ten years preaching in Mecca opposition became so strong that he was forced to flee to Medina, where he became a military and autocratic leader, inaugurating the Mohammedan era with the Hegira, the date of his leaving Mecca, 622. From Medina he extended his power until he had conquered the whole of Arabia. Although he claimed to be restoring the original religion of the Arabs given by their father Abraham and his son, Ishmael, he came to hate the Jews, and exterminated the Jewish communities in Arabia. Christians on the other hand he spared if they became tributary, and at that time did not enforce conversion at the point of the sword. He returned to Mecca in triumph and established it as the sacred capital, with the Kabah, the shrine containing the Black Stone, traditionally associated with Abraham, the kissing of which became in later times the peak moment of the sacred pilgrimage.

Mohammed left a sacred book, the *Koran*, in which were inscribed the revelations which he received from time to time while in a state of trance. The religion he founded came to be known as Islam, the Arabic word for submission or resignation of oneself, i.e. the acceptance of the way of life ordained by God through his Prophet. The followers of Islam became known as Moslems, i.e. those who come under the order of God.

Before his death Mohammed sent letters to the rulers of all the surrounding countries promising them freedom from attack if they embraced Islam. This was the beginning of the propagation of Islam by the sword. After Mohammed's death the military power which he had built up was strong enough to attack the neighbouring kingdom of Persia in the east as well as sweeping northward into Syria and Palestine and westward to Africa. The conquest of Persia began in A.D. 637, that is to say at the same time that the T'ang power in China was extending westward. At that time there was, as there had been for centuries before, considerable trading activity across Central Asia. The T'ang emperors had, therefore, before long

to take notice of this new power which was threatening their old neighbours, the Persians.

From the official T'ang history we learn that the Persians were defeated and fled eastwards, the last ruler taking refuge among the Turkish tribes of Central Asia. From there he sent an embassy appealing for the aid of the Emperor T'ai T'sung. He was, however, betrayed by the Turks and perished without reaching China. His son sent another appeal to the Emperor Kao Tsung. This ruler apparently wished to be sure of his ground before espousing the cause of the Persians in face of the growing power of Islam. So he sent an embassy to the Caliph Othman, whose envoy bearing his reply was received with high honours at the T'ang capital, Ch'ang An, in 651.

The Persian prince was given refuge in the city, but no encouragement to try and retrieve his fortunes by force of arms. So the Arab power grew unchecked, and by 713 was threatening both India and Tibet, who appealed to China for aid. This time the emperor realized the gravity of the situation and sent an army; only to suffer defeat. The Mohammedan general then sent an embassy whose attitude was so haughty and threatening that the emperor met them with every token of favour and sent them away with messages of friendship. This move gave time during which internal dissensions within the Arab empire developed. These were followed by the overthrow of the caliphate and the curbing of Mohammedan power for a time. Thus China was saved from attack.

The actual entry into China proper of a settled body of Mohammedans came about a generation later and in a different way, according to the tradition current among Chinese Moslems. In 755 a terrible rebellion broke out in North-west China led by a Tartar chief named An Lu-shan, who had been given command of the north-west frontier. He proclaimed his independence and marched on the capital, whereupon the emperor called in help from the Arab and Uigur troops on the borders of Turkestan. An army of several thousand men came over and helped to recover the capital and suppress the rebellion.

There is a strong tradition that some thousands of these troops settled down near Chang-an (modern Sian) and married

Chinese wives, so founding the Mohammedan population which has been in that part of China ever since. There is no mention of this in the official history, and moreover the description of the capital at that period, while describing the shrines of foreign religions such as Nestorianism and Zoroastrianism, does not mention any Mohammedan mosque. There is, however, in the present mosque at Sian a monument which claims that the first mosque was built in 742. Some thirty or forty years later Arab troops were again co-operating with Chinese, this time in the south-west against Tibet. Through this campaign came the settlement of Mohammedans in Yunnan Province.

During the T'ang era and even earlier China not only had communication with Persia through the Central Asian trade routes, but also by sea from Canton to the Persian Gulf. This trade is mentioned in the Han Dynasty history as early as A.D. 166, so that by the time of the rise of the Mohammedan power it was some centuries old, and there may have been quite a colony of foreign traders already settled in Canton. That this trade was not all peaceable is shown by a record in the T'ang history that in 758 "Persians and Arabs together ravaged Kwangchow (Canton), plundering granaries and stores, burning houses and dwellings, after which they departed by sea."

But the T'ang emperors away in the north were not greatly interested in these traders in the south. Much more information about them is available from Arabic sources. The most interesting of these are to be found in a work which was made known to seventeenth-century Europe through its translation into French by Eusebius Renaudot; the English translation (1733) is entitled: *Ancient Accounts of India and China by Two Mohammedan Travellers who went to those parts in the ninth century*. Renaudot dates the manuscript from which he worked as 1173, and accepts the dates given there for these travels as 851 and 878. The book consists of two parts: the first by an unnamed traveller to India (851) which includes notes on China from other travellers including one Soliman. The second part is by one Aḅu Zaid and contains an account given to him

by an earlier traveller, Ibn Wahab (815), whom he met as an old man. It also gives his own notes on China and the Arab trade at the end of the century.

In the first part we are told:

"Soliman the merchant relates that at Canfu (either Canton or Hangchow), which is the principal Scale for Merchants, there is a Mohammedan appointed Judge over those of his religion by the authority of the Emperor of China; and that he is Judge of all the Mohammedans who resort to those parts. Upon Festival Days he performs the public service with the Mohammedans, and pronounces the Sermon or Kothat which he concludes in the usual form with prayers for the Sultan of the Moslems. The Merchants of Irak who trade hither are in no way dissatisfied with his conduct or his administration in the Post he is invested with; because his Actions and the Judgments he gives are just and equitable and conformable to the Koran and according to the Mohammedan Jurisprudence." (Renaudot, p. 7.)

This account seems to relate to a considerable trading colony at some point on the coast. Authorities differ as to whether Canfu is Canton or Hangchow, the geographical details might apply to either, but most likely it refers to Canton, where as we have seen there was a trading colony from very early times.

In the second part of Renaudot's book there is an account of the siege of Canfu during a rebellion against the emperor:

"there are persons fully acquainted with the affairs of China who assure us that besides the Chinese who were massacred upon this occasion there perished one hundred and twenty thousand Mohammedans, Jews, Christians, and Parsees, who were there on account of trade."

In Ibn Wahab's story he related how he penetrated to the capital of China and had an interview with the emperor. His account of this interview throws some light on the knowledge of Mohammedanism current in the capital at that time:

"He (Ibn Wahab) had the curiosity to travel to the Emperor's Court. He stayed a long time and presented several petitions wherein

he signified that he was of the family of the Prophet of the Arabs. . . . The Emperor asked him many questions about the Arabs and particularly how they had destroyed the Kingdom of the Persians."

After further questions on political matters, the discussion turned to religion:

"He ordered the interpreter to ask me if I knew my Master and my Lord, and if I had seen him. I made answer: 'How should I have seen him who is with God?' . . . Then he called for a great box and opening it took out another contained therein which he set before him, and said to the interpreter: 'Show him his Master and his Lord.' And I saw in the box the images of the prophets. . . . I saw the image (? picture) of Mohammed riding on a camel and his companions about him on their camels, with shoes of the Arabesque mode on their feet and leathern girdles about their loins."

This amazing collection of 'images', presumably painted scrolls, also included pictures of Noah in the ark, of Moses with his rod and the Children of Israel, and of Jesus upon an ass, together with a great number of other prophets, "some of them stretching forth their right hand and with their three fingers bent down between the thumb and forefinger (the Buddhist gesture of blessing). . . . The interpreter took them to be the figures of their prophets and those of the Indians." It is not surprising that such a collection should have been found in the Imperial Library when we remember the hospitality shown by the T'ang emperors to foreigners of all kinds, including Buddhists and Nestorians. What is surprising is that although Ibn Wahab had an interpreter who spoke Arabic, he makes no mention of a Mohammedan colony or of a mosque.

One last quotation is interesting:

"The Chinese worship Idols, pray to them, and fall down before them; and they have books which explain the Articles of their Religion. . . . Both the Chinese and the Indians imagine the Idols they worship speak to them and give them answers. . . . The Chinese have no Science and their religion and most of their Laws are derived from the Indians; nay, they are of opinion that the Indians

taught them the Worship of Idols and consider them as a very religious nation. . . . I know not that there is any one of either nation that has embraced Mohammedanism."

Under the Mongols (1260–1368) there was infiltration of a different kind. The armies of Genghis Khan spread westwards over country occupied by Moslems, even to the borders of Europe. Many of the Moslem population were massacred, but Genghis Khan spared scholars and craftsmen and brought many of them back to China. The records of the Yüan Dynasty mention distinguished officials both military and civil who were Mohammedans. These people brought with them some part of Arab science, e.g. Kublai Khan was presented with seven astronomical instruments, and two Arabs are mentioned as experts in the manufacture of catapults for use in siege warfare. The first Ming emperor found Arabic books on science in the Imperial Library, and employed scholars to translate them.

There was no large influx of Mohammedans later than the Mongol period, and it was about this time that the distinctive name of *Hui-hui*, by which they are still known in China, came into use. The origin of the name is a matter of considerable controversy. The ideograph (doubled) is the common Chinese word for 'return', but it is not clear whether *hui-hui* is an attempt to transliterate the Arabic *Islam*, or whether there is a real meaning. It might allude to the custom of 'turning' to Mecca in prayer (possibly also returning in pilgrimage), or, as some Chinese writers, possibly influenced by Taoism, suggest, the return of the body to its true place in death and the return of the mind to the path of truth. Quite another theory derives the name from the *Hui-ho* or Uigurs, who were powerful in Mongolia during the T'ang period.

These Hui-hui spread into every province of China, but, as might be expected from the story of their arrival, the largest groups were and are to be found in the north-west and west, in the provinces of Kansu, Szechwan, and Yunnan. The next largest groups are in the north-east, in Manchuria and Hopei, with smaller groups in the central provinces and fewest of all

on the coast in Chekiang and Fukien Provinces. Failing any official census figures it is very difficult to make any accurate estimate of the extent of the present population; very large numbers perished during the rebellions which occurred in the nineteenth century, so that no doubt there was a much larger population at one time. Moslem authorities outside China give a figure of 30 to 70 millions; missionary writers, who have tried to collect figures on the spot, say between 5 and 10 millions, which is probably nearly correct. Even taking the higher, but unlikely, estimate, it will be seen that the Mohammedans of to-day are but a small proportion of China's 400 odd millions.

They never seem to have made any attempt to propagate their religion, but have been content to live in their own communities with their own mosques and schools. They have kept something of a martial tradition, serving in the imperial armies, and there have been a number of distinguished Mohammedan generals. They have also kept a tradition of horse dealing, and much of the transport trade, especially in the west, is in their hands. On the whole they live peaceably with their Chinese neighbours, but during the nineteenth century there were fierce conflicts which must have had some racial though not specifically religious basis, and which have left considerable racial feeling in some parts.

Rebellions broke out in Yunnan Province in 1818 and again in 1826 and 1834. These were suppressed by the imperial troops with terrible massacres in retaliation for the Moslem treatment of Chinese. The ill-feeling between the Mohammedans and the government officials continued and reached a climax in the great rebellion which lasted from 1855–78. In these twenty-three years of civil war whole districts were devastated, many thousands of men, women, and children were massacred and their cities burned. For a time the Mohammedans gained the upper hand and, establishing their headquarters at Tali on the Burmese border, came near to setting up an independent régime. But their success had been largely due to the Imperial Government being embarrassed by the Taiping rebellion and the Second Opium War. Divisions arose too among the

Mohammedan leaders, and when the imperial armies were free to engage them, the rebellion was suppressed.

During these same years trouble of the same sort was going on in the extreme north-west, known to history as the Tungan Rebellion. Here again for a time there was the rise of a Mohammedan power, which was eventually defeated with terrible slaughter. It was not the Moslems who were to overthrow the Manchu Dynasty: there was no second Genghis Khan available. The importance of these rebellions from the point of view of our study of religion is that they devastated the provinces in which there had been the most numerous and most vigorous Mohammedan population, and left a legacy of race hatred which has imposed restrictions on Mohammedan liberty of residence and trade, consequently reducing to a minimum any possibilities there might have been of extending the religion of Islam.

That religion as practised to-day in their own communities has no very marked differences from that of the rest of the Moslem world. Chinese Mohammedanism, unlike Buddhism, has produced no special sects or prophets. There is some division between the 'Old Sect', or more strict and conservative party, and the 'New Sect', who are more liberal and apt to compromise with their surroundings in such matters as the growing of opium, and even in contributing to local idol-worshipping festivals. It is said that Chinese pilgrims to Mecca are rather cold-shouldered by their more orthodox Turkish and Arab co-religionists, and that occasional inspectors visiting China criticize the laxity of observance which they have found in some places.

Each Moslem group has its one or more mosques, which conform on the whole to the Chinese style of architecture of the locality, except in Turkestan where the style is more distinctive. The Chinese mosques do not have the typical Moslem dome, nor as a rule minarets. The roof is generally of the Chinese tiled pattern, but tapering to a point, and where there are towers for the call to prayer these are small pagoda-like buildings. The Chinese pagoda is, of course, closely connected with *feng shui*, the wind-and-water influences which affect a

town or dwelling-house; so probably the minarets had to be avoided so as not to clash with local prejudices.

There is considerable rivalry as to the claims to be the most ancient of all the mosques, those at Canton and Sian having the best titles. There are five mosques at Canton, one of which claims to be on the site of the earliest mosque built by Mohammed's uncle, whose tomb is shown near by. How much truth there is in this tradition it is impossible to say, but the spot is one of the holy places of Chinese Mohammedanism and is visited yearly by thousands of pilgrims.

The Sian mosque contains an inscribed monument which states that the first mosque was built there in 742. It also states that the faith of Islam entered China in the reign of the Emperor Kai Huang of the Sui Dynasty (581–601). Seeing that Mohammed only began his career as a prophet in 610, this date is obviously false, and this throws doubt on the truth of the other statements on the inscription. Local Chinese records mention the repairing of the mosques at several dates between 1100 and 1400, and most likely this monument was erected on one of these occasions. The text of the inscription has an interesting comparison between Mohammed and Confucius:

> "Sages have one mind and the same truth, so they convince each other without leaving a shadow of doubt even through a hundred generations. In all parts of the world Sages arise who possess this uniformity of mind and truth. Mohammed was the great Sage of the West who lived in Arabia long after Confucius, the Sage of China. Though separated by ages and countries, their doctrines coincide one with another. Why? Because they had the same mind and truth."

The services in the mosques are conducted in Arabic by the Ahong, or teacher, and follow the usual Mohammedan form of prayers recited facing towards Mecca with the customary ritual prostrations. Also there is the usual emphasis on bathing or at least washing the face and hands before worship—provision for this is made in the mosque—and the putting off of shoes on entering. It is questionable how much of the service is understood by the congregation. The Ahongs conduct schools where

a certain amount of Arabic is taught, but the average man cannot read the Koran in Arabic. It has only recently been translated into Chinese. Everyone knows in Chinese the great Islamic slogan 'There is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet', but the scrolls which decorate the houses after the Chinese fashion are in Arabic.

In general the Chinese followers of Islam observe the five pillars of the faith:

1. Recognition: i.e. bearing witness to the one and only true God by the repetition of the creed.

2. Rites and their observances: the daily prayers are kept by few except the mullahs and ahongs, and then usually in the mosques. Occasionally in the more predominantly Mohammedan parts may be seen the sight, so common in other Moslem lands, of the ordinary man pausing in his work to spread his prayer mat and recite his prayers full in the public view.

3. Fasting: the Fast of Ramadan is kept more or less strictly for the month. Where there are no minarets, or the population is scattered, messengers go round calling out the times for observing and breaking the fast.

4. Almsgiving: a fixed sum proportionate to income is supposed to be given in alms. They look after their own poor, and it is rare to find a Moslem beggar. At funerals and other occasions alms are given freely to the crowds of Chinese beggars who always congregate at such times.

5. Pilgrimage: some hundreds every year from all parts make the pilgrimage to Mecca and also to other sacred places like the tomb of the Prophet's Uncle at Canton.

The position of women is somewhat different from that in other Mohammedan countries. There are no 'harems', though Mohammedans may, as the Chinese do, take a second wife if the first is childless. The women, as well as the men, dress like their Chinese neighbours, and in the country the farmers' wives go into the fields, carry water, etc. unveiled. In the towns the better class women, as among the Chinese, were seldom seen on the streets until the recent changes in Chinese customs. Sometimes the women attend the mosque services, although this is unusual.

Although the Mohammedan population was very much diminished by the wars during the nineteenth century, they are by no means dying out, and the north-western provinces where there are many Moslems were practically untouched by the Sino-Japanese War. There are signs that new life may be coming to the Mohammedans in China and that they are going to take an active part in future developments. One of the most prominent of the military leaders during the war was General Pai Chung-hsi, who has recently, among other things done for the benefit of his co-religionists, opened an Arabic Language College in Kwangsi for the better training of ahongs.

An Islamic Theological Seminary also has been established in Chungking, and in other ways they are trying to bring all their education into line with modern Chinese Government requirements. A Mohammedan was recently appointed to a professorship in the National Central University at Nanking, and efforts are being made to increase the number of students in government universities in order to provide much needed teachers for the schools. Thirteen Chinese Moslem graduates from the great Azhar University in Cairo, who returned in 1946, will also help in this direction, and will strengthen the ties between Chinese Moslems and the rest of the Moslem world. An attempt was made by the Sultan in 1908 to have Mohammedan consuls appointed, but the Imperial Government of that time refused to recognize the Mohammedan population as anything but Chinese subjects, and the enthusiastic patriotism which they have shown during the late war proves that they have no desire to be anything else.

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA

THE first introduction of Christianity into China came at an early date and was connected with that branch of the Christian Church which came to be associated with the name of Nestorius (died *circ.* 451). This Nestorian Church is of little interest now except to students of church history, but for centuries it existed and exercised considerable influence from Syria to China, and from Mongolia to India.

The chief peculiar doctrine of Nestorius' teaching was the existence in Jesus of the divine and human nature as two distinct persons. Gradually, however, as the rise of the Moslem power and disorders in Europe cut it off from Byzantium and Rome, the Nestorian Church seems to have taken on a good deal of the colour of its surroundings. For some time its headquarters were at Baghdad when that was the capital of the Abbasis Caliphs, so that it had to come to terms with the Moslem authorities. Its members were not only tolerated, but even held high office there. This is significant of the position which was in the end the weakness of the Nestorians.

While they spread widely over Central Asia and China and won many scattered groups of converts, they were always under rulers of another faith, and so continued to be minorities, never attaining to dominant power. Also the centuries during which the Nestorian Church existed were the very centuries during which the Buddhists were spreading their teaching over very much the same area. As has already been noticed (cp. p. 79) some resemblances can be found between Mahayana Buddhism and Catholic Christianity, and efforts have been made to prove that the peculiar development of Mahayana Buddhism in Central Asia and China was due in some part to its contact with Nestorian Christianity. Unless archæological researches in the future bring fresh evidence to light it is impossible to dogmatize

on this point. All that can be said with any certainty is that the two religions were active over much the same area at the same period, that Nestorian manuscripts have been found among the collections of Buddhist and other scrolls in the Tun-huang caves, and that there are references to Buddhists and Nestorians working together on the translations of their sacred books into Chinese.

With Nestorian communities all over Central Asia, and intercourse going on between those parts and the Chinese capital at Ch'ang-an under the T'ang Dynasty, it was to be expected that Nestorianism would become known amongst the other foreign religions which were given a hearing at that time. The proof of this came to light in 1625 when masons excavating for foundations of a new building in Sian (Ch'ang-an) uncovered a large stone monument which stands to-day in the grounds of the Confucian temple. The inscription states that it is 'a monument of the spread throughout the Middle Kingdom of the Brilliant Teaching of Ta-ch'in' (the name by which Syria or Rome were known to the T'ang era) and that it was erected in 781. It goes on to say that the first teacher of this doctrine was a monk, A-lo-pen, who arrived at the capital in 635 and was welcomed by the emperor, who ordered translations of his sacred books to be placed in the Imperial Library. Another name which appears is that of I-ssu, a native of Balkh, who held high office at the court and was a generous supporter of the Church: possibly the monument was erected at his expense. Reference is made to the establishment of monasteries, and there is a long list of monks and dignitaries who shared in the erection.

It is impossible to say how widely the Nestorian Church spread or what the numbers of its adherents were at any given time. For the question of extent, there are references to Christians at the ports on the east coast who were probably connected with the Syrian Church, founded according to tradition by St. Thomas in Malabar, and closely allied in the beginning with the Nestorians. There is, in fact, a tradition that St. Thomas himself reached China. Also small bronze crosses and stone carvings of the Nestorian 'figure of ten'

(i.e. a vertical and a horizontal as in the character for ten) have been found in different parts of central and east China. Foreign trading communities were very widely scattered during the T'ang era, and it was among these that the adherents of Nestorianism were found. It is doubtful whether many of them were pure Chinese, for after some two and a half centuries the Nestorian Church disappeared with a completeness which could hardly have been possible if there had been a strong body of Chinese members and Chinese priests.

After having been encouraged for two centuries by the Imperial Court Nestorians fell into disfavour along with Buddhists under the rule of the strongly Taoist Emperor, Wu Tsung. This persecution had little cruelty, nothing comparable to that suffered by the Christian Church under the Roman Emperors; but the monasteries were closed, and the monks ordered to return to lay life. That after this time the Church gradually disappeared was probably due not only to this persecution but also to the disturbed state of the country before and after the fall of the T'ang Dynasty.

The foreign traders who, as has been suggested, probably made up the bulk of the membership must have left the country. The parent church in Western Asia was also involved in difficulties, and there was no strong missionary organization which could send help to such Chinese converts as might be left. So the first introduction of Christianity to China failed to achieve any lasting impression. Although it came at a time when the Chinese were open to foreign influences, it was also a time when Buddhism was already well established in China, and had provided, as we have seen, that gospel of salvation and hope for the future life which was lacking in Confucianism. Whatever the Buddhists may have taken from their contact with Nestorianism, the ordinary Chinese, whether scholar or peasant, was not feeling in need of another new religion.

When the Mongol rule brought unity again to China and restored trade with Central Asia, there were still some Nestorians left. In pursuance of their policy of employing the best brains wherever they found them, the Mongol emperors had some Christians among their officials. In the capital of

Cambaluc there is mention of a Christian bishop, and in 1289 Kublai Khan established an office for the supervision of Christians. These were probably still mainly to be found among the trading communities. At this time, however, a new development came. The Roman Catholic Church in Europe was now brought in touch with the Mongol empire. A Franciscan monk reached the court of the Khan at Karakorum in 1246. A few years later one William of Rubruck was sent by St. Louis of France to explore the possibilities of Christian expansion, in a mission which was half political, half evangelistic. William wrote a detailed account of his travels, and reported how the Khan had attended a Nestorian service and listened to a debate between representatives of Christianity, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism.

Some twenty years later the Polo brothers, Venetian merchants, uncle and father of the more famous Marco Polo, travelled to Cambaluc and returned with letters from Kublai Khan asking the Pope to send one hundred teachers of Western learning. Unfortunately this message reached Europe at a time when the Papacy was divided with quarrels, and nothing was done in reply until thirty years later. Then a Franciscan mission was headed by John of Montecorvino; but it consisted of a very small company, not the hundred asked for. Other parties joined John in time, though some of those sent fell by the way on the long and arduous journey. However, John was appointed Archbishop in Cambaluc and had under him two other bishops in the north and one in the south at Zaitun (modern Chuanchow), the great trading port of Fukien.

By the time of Archbishop John's death, *circ.* 1333, the Roman Catholic Church appeared to be strongly established in the capital, at Zaitun, Hangchow, and several other places. Among its adherents were some remnants of the Nestorian Church, also Armenians and Alans, members of a Caucasian tribe who originally belonged to the Eastern Orthodox Church. Thus the membership of the Church was again among foreigners. But the bishops were in favour at court, and no doubt a considerable number of Chinese were baptized. Once again, however, the Christian Church was wiped out, not

through any fault on its part but through political events. On the one hand, in Europe the Black Death seriously affected the numbers and resources of the Franciscan and other orders. On the other hand, China itself again went through the inevitable disturbances attendant on a change of dynasty.

The Mongol empire broke up and after a stormy period was replaced by the purely Chinese Ming Dynasty under whom an anti-foreign reaction set in. The foreign officials and traders encouraged by the Mongols were driven out, and the foreign religious teachers had to go too. As with Nestorianism, so in this second attempt to plant Christianity in China, it failed because no Chinese priests had been ordained to carry on the Church after the foreigners left. It must be remembered that these early missionaries had to work at an immense distance from their home base. The actual journeys took as much as three years, and letters of course the same time. It was a tragedy that so much heroic effort and saintly devotion achieved so little of lasting effect.

The next episode, while it also had its tragic side, had much more real success, and at last Christianity began to be a force which actually affected the religious life of the Chinese people. This time the initiative came from the Jesuits, members of the Society of Jesus, an order characterized by a high degree of ability and learning, a very efficient organization with a strong missionary zeal. It took its rise in Spain and Portugal, the two countries which led in the expansion of Europe which followed the Renaissance. The Jesuits, as well as members of the other Orders, followed the explorers with the same spirit of high adventure which sent Columbus to America and the Portuguese eastward to India and China. One of the most notable of these early pioneers was Francis Xavier, who worked for some years as head of the Society in India, and then visited the successful mission already established in Japan. From there he cast longing eyes at the great unopened country of China.

The China of that day, however, was not the China of the T'angs or the Mongols; the Ming Dynasty with all its growth of purely Chinese culture was definitely hostile to foreign influences. The Portuguese merchants had with difficulty

established a trading centre on a peninsula near Canton. The Portuguese authorities were not encouraging to Xavier's plans for entering China, fearing to jeopardize their hard-won foothold. In spite of this Francis Xavier persevered in his efforts and at last set sail for the coast of China with the object of landing further north. On the way he became ill and was put ashore on a small desolate island, to die there, alone except for one Chinese servant (1552).

But Francis Xavier's enthusiasm fired the Society in Europe, and before long another mission was sent out headed by Matteo Ricci, the first of the famous Jesuit priests in China. Before he died in 1610 Ricci had made his way first to Canton, then to Nanking, and finally to Peking. He had won the favour of the Imperial Court and founded a Christian community which included high officials, members of the Hanlin Academy, and at least one member of the Imperial family itself. How was this miracle achieved? To answer this question it is necessary to understand something of the peculiar characteristics of the Society of Jesus. It was a body filled with missionary zeal, but not of a blind fanatic kind.

The adjective 'jesuitical' has become unpleasantly associated with a casuistry which held that the end justified the means and endeavoured to be all things to all men, but this hardly does justice to the liberal, humanistic philosophy which animated the missionary members of the Society. They held that learning of every kind should be used in the service of the Church, and while not neglecting the care of the poor and needy, they sought particularly to attract the educated classes. Wherever they went they were prepared to give thoughtful attention to the beliefs of the peoples of the countries they entered, whether they were those of the Indians of North America or of the Confucianist scholars of China. They took with them all the scientific knowledge then available in Europe, and by the reports which they brought back to Europe they widened the outlook of the learned in the West and were pioneers in the task of bringing together the cultures of all nations.

In accordance with this attitude, Ricci and his companions

set themselves from their first entrance into China to gain a friendly footing among the officials and scholars. They learnt the official Mandarin language and adopted the dress of Chinese scholars, although at first they had worn the robes of Buddhist priests. Finding that these priests were often despised by the scholars, they decided on the change in order to make themselves more acceptable to those who believed what the Jesuits called 'the scholars' religion', namely Confucianism. Their scientific knowledge made them of special interest to scholarly people in Peking and at the Imperial Court, and so they gradually won their way.

In 1629 one of Ricci's successors, Adam Schall, was appointed, together with a Chinese convert of high official rank, Hsü Kuang-ch'i, to be a member of the Bureau of Astronomy, charged with the particular task of reforming the official calendar. This was a document of the greatest importance which went out to every part of the empire with the imperial imprimatur, settling the dates of all important events for the year, such as the spring and autumn festivals. That a task of this high importance should be entrusted to a foreigner showed the respect with which the Jesuits' learning came to be regarded.

During the last years of the Ming Dynasty they were also called upon to help with the manufacture of cannon to repel the onslaughts of the Manchus. The fathers remained in Peking during all the disturbances attending the change of dynasty, thus showing that they identified themselves with the Chinese people, not with the court alone. So they came to the height of their influence under the Manchu emperors. One of the fathers, Verbiest, was tutor to the young prince who became the famous Emperor K'ang Hsi. He was greatly interested in matters of astronomy, mechanics, and hydraulics, in all of which the Jesuits assisted him. With this imperial favour the Catholic Church became firmly established in Peking, and spread throughout almost every province. The finding of the Nestorian monument in 1625 added to their prestige by proving that Christianity was an ancient religion which had been approved by the T'ang emperors. During the seventeenth century the power of the Society grew in Europe so

that the mission had behind it a powerful and wealthy and well-disciplined organization, able to send a constant stream of recruits, who were able to make the journeys to and fro with relative speed and safety as compared to the journeys of the Franciscans across Central Asia.

In two other respects the missionaries of the seventeenth century were better able than their predecessors to provide for the firm establishment of their churches. They trained Chinese and ordained them not only as priests, but, in at least one case as bishop. Secondly, not only were they able to write extensively in good Chinese and so commend their teachings to the scholars, but also it was now possible to print their literature and so distribute it widely. One of the Jesuit fathers writing to a high ecclesiastic at home on the progress of the Chinese Church says:

"They have a very curious and compleat catechism, wherein the entire and compleat body of the doctrine of christianity, the life and miracles and death of our blessed Lord, the commandments of God and the Church are clearly explained."

The same writer, Father Le Comte, in his *Memoirs of Ten Years' Travels in China*, has some useful remarks to make on the way in which the Chinese accepted Christian teaching. He says:

"They are specially most taken with comparisons, parables, and histories, and albeit they are not acquainted nor accustomed to that vehement and sometimes passionate action of our preachers, yet for all that, they are moved and wrought upon when they speak to them with earnestness and concern."

And again:

"The Chinese are of that temper that they have need of something sensible to heighten their devotion: sumptuous and magnificent ornaments, singing, pompous processions, the noise of bells and instruments, and the ceremonies of the Church are very taking with them and allure them to divine service.

"They bear a particular veneration for the Virgin Mary. . . . They call her the Holy Mother and do invoke her in all their straits and exigencies. The experience they have had of her protection and

the benefits they receive daily from her persuade them she is acceptable to God. . . . The passionate love that the Christians have for Jesus Christ makes them really devout. . . . They continually repeat these following words: 'Jesus, the Master of Heaven, who shed his blood for us; Jesus who died to save us'."

These descriptions may suggest that to the uneducated Chinese there was not very much difference between this new teaching and that of Buddhism. Seeing that these foreigners were in such high favour at court, there might be a good deal to be gained from adherence to them, while at the same time receiving the same kind of protection from evil spirits, healing of disease, assurance of eternal salvation, and deliverance from hell that was promised by the Buddhist priests, and at considerably less pecuniary outlay. With this somewhat cynical suggestion we should not, however, deny that there were many genuine conversions and much real devotion. With regard to 'persons of quality and those who would be thought wise', Father Le Comte says they:

"objected chiefly against the mysteries: their hearts rose against the Trinity and Incarnation; a God that was penetrable, a God that could die was no less in respect of them than of the Jews, a stumbling-block and a piece of folly. The existence of God, eternal, supreme, infinitely just, infinitely powerful, went down easily with them."

This is, of course, just what might be expected with scholars bred in the Confucianist tradition.

Although the Catholic Church was thus firmly and widely founded, it was not without opposition. From the beginning there was frequent persecution in the provinces and even in the capital. At one time Adam Schall himself, imperial favourite as he was, was imprisoned and sentenced to a horrible death, from which he was rescued as much by an opportune earthquake as by the efforts of friendly officials. But it was not the persecution from without which brought about the downfall of the Roman Catholic Church. This, when it came, was due to internal quarrels which created the prolonged dissension known as the Rites controversy. In the first place these quarrels arose between the different Orders.

While the Jesuits were developing their work in Peking and North China, the Franciscans and Dominicans were making their approach in the south. These Orders had their base in the Philippine Islands, which had been conquered by Spain, and their methods were very different from those of Ricci and the Jesuits. This is shown in a document which was sent to Philip II of Spain in 1586 by the Governor of the Philippines and the Superior of the Orders there. This document outlined a plan for the conquest of China by an army of Spaniards, Japanese, and Filipinos: the conquest to be followed by compulsory mass conversion to the Christian faith. Fortunately for the future of the Christian faith in China Philip of Spain was too preoccupied with invasions nearer home to attempt that of China. The Franciscans and Dominicans did, however, enter China at various points, and so eventually came into contact with the work of the Jesuits. Moreover, a national complication came in through the establishment in Peking itself of a house of French Jesuits.

National jealousies and ecclesiastical differences came to centre round two points of controversy: first, what Chinese term was to be used for the name of God, and second, whether Christians should be allowed to participate in the worship offered to Confucius and to the family ancestors. The first of these points was settled without too much difficulty by the decision to use the term *T'ien Chu* (Heavenly Lord); but the second argument dragged along for nearly a century and finally led to the prohibition of Christian teaching throughout the empire. The Jesuits, as we have seen, found much to admire in the classical Confucian writings, and tried to show that the monotheism which they found in Confucius' own teaching was not inconsistent with the further revelation of the Christian God. They also realized that ancestor worship was not mere superstitious idolatry, but a very vital part of the whole Chinese social system, giving a man a sense of continuity and of solidarity in the community which it would be unwise to take away from their converts. Their opponents, however, would admit no compromise with what they regarded as idolatry and the wiles of the devil.

The really unfortunate thing was that both parties, belonging to the Roman Church, recognized the Pope as the final authority in such matters. The controversy could not be settled on the spot by people who knew something at least of Chinese customs and thought, but had to be referred to higher authorities in the East and in Europe. At last a Papal Legate, De Tournon, was sent by the Pope in 1705 with instructions to make a final decision. But though the foreign priests recognized the Pope as the final arbiter, the emperor unfortunately did not. The Son of Heaven had the last word on matters spiritual as well as material within his empire, and K'ang Hsi had already expressed his view that Christian worship could be allowed only if it did not interfere with due reverence to Confucius and the ancestors.

After five years in the capital De Tournon left Peking, and as he did so published his ultimatum. He forbade all participation in Confucian and ancestral rites and the placing of ancestral tablets in Christian homes. He forbade any liberty of interpretation of this decreee and threatened the disobedient with excommunication. Then the fat was in the fire indeed. Furious at this defiance of his imperial authority K'ang Hsi ordered the arrest of De Tournon on his way south. He was kept in captivity for a time, but finally, being a sick man, was allowed to go to Macao, where he died. K'ang Hsi then issued *his* ultimatum. Only those missionaries who were prepared to allow their converts to use the Confucianist rite were to receive the official permission, without which they could not live or travel in the country. The Pope replied by ratifying De Tournon's decision by the Papal Bull of 1742, and prescribed an oath to be taken by all missionaries in China by which they swore never to allow the rites and ceremonies of the Chinese to be put into practice by their converts.

During the rest of the eighteenth century the Catholic Church fell increasingly on evil days. This was not solely due to the Rites controversy. It is, of course, conceivable that if this controversy had not arisen, the Jesuits might have succeeded in their dream of winning K'ang Hsi as a convert; but even so he might not have been a Constantine. For one thing, his empire

covered a much larger area than that of Constantine, and could never have been brought under a foreign religion just by imperial edict. But the force of the Catholic enterprise also suffered from events in Europe. The Jesuits had become increasingly unpopular and were suppressed as an Order in 1773. The power of Spain and Portugal had declined, and with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars Catholic missions throughout the world suffered severely from lack of support.

This is not to say that the Church in China disappeared, or even that all foreign missionaries left the country. In spite of edicts and papal bulls a number of priests remained, though in many parts of the country they were forced into hiding and administered the sacraments in secrecy. There were still some, however, even in Peking during the reign of Ch'ien Lung (1736–96), and that emperor, while issuing edicts against Christianity which gave rise to riots and persecutions throughout the country, did not hesitate to make use of the skill of the foreigners in the capital. Until it was destroyed in 1860 the buildings in the Yüan Ming Yüan outside Peking, modelled on the pattern of Versailles, remained a monument to the architectural ability of some of the French fathers.

With the death of Ch'ien Lung the Manchu Dynasty entered on the period of slow decline which ended in the establishment of the Republic in 1911: indeed, during the last years of Ch'ien Lung's long reign there were already signs of discontent and rebellion. This condition of the country reacted adversely on the Christian Church. Some of the secret societies which in China always spring up to foster rebellion, had a religious or semi-religious basis, and the Christian Church came under the same suspicion with the additional evil of being mixed up with foreigners. Christians were regarded as spies of the Western Powers, at that time beginning to seek an entrance into China for purposes of trade. So from early in the eighteenth century down to the first treaties following the Opium War of 1839–42 the Christian Church suffered bitter and cruel persecution. Towards the end there were hardly any, if indeed any at all, foreign priests left. Their activities had to

be so completely in secret that it is difficult to find any reliable records, but it would seem that contact with Europe never entirely ceased, and that there were thousands of Chinese Christians with a few Chinese priests who kept the Faith alive.

With the beginning of the nineteenth century we come to the arrival of Protestant missionaries for the first time. Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society arrived in South China in 1807. The Protestant countries of north-western Europe had not shared in the impulse to expansion which sent out the Roman Catholic pioneers. Such expansion as there was was towards the West in the settlement of North America. It was only later and more gradually that English and Dutch trade began to creep eastwards, first to India and the East Indies, and at last to China. This is the first point to notice about the beginnings of Protestant missions: they were inseparably connected both at home and abroad with the trade expansion which followed the Industrial Revolution. The trade which brought the British to South China came to be bound up with the opium traffic from India; for the Chinese did not at first show any interest in the manufactured goods which the British wished to exchange for silk, tea, etc. They were, however, willing to pay heavily for opium, the sale of which both made British provision of bullion unnecessary and enriched the revenues of the Indian Government. The rights and wrongs of the traffic cannot be discussed in detail here, e.g. how far the Chinese were already addicted to the habit, but there is no doubt that the introduction of Indian opium gave rise to a very great increase in opium smoking and that for that reason it was objected to by the Chinese authorities. This, whatever, the immediate incidents, was the basic cause of the Opium War.

It was in the so-called Treaty ports, opened after the treaties which ended that war, that the Protestant missionaries found their first footing, and it was not unreasonable of the Chinese to feel that the foreigners came to them offering opium with one hand and the Bible with the other, and both backed up by guns. Throughout the nineteenth century there were heroic men and women from England, the Protestant

countries of Europe, and the United States of America who, at the risk of their lives, penetrated into the country ahead of consuls and merchants. Yet always there was in the background the warships and growing political power of their governments. So for the first half of the century the results of missionary work were small and won only at the cost of slow and patient effort in the face of much opposition, which caused suffering and loss of life to both missionaries and converts.

About the middle of the century there happened one of those strange opportunities which, like the possibility of the conversion of the emperor by the Jesuits, might have resulted in a rapid and widespread adoption of Christianity. This was the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion, the most serious of the rebellions which were beginning to shake the Manchu throne. Its leader, Hung Hsiu-ch'üan, came in touch with missionary literature in his early twenties: later he began to have visions which he connected with the Christian God. The sect which he founded was at first purely religious, and only later joined with a revolutionary society and sought by force of arms to bring in a new era which was to be called the *T'ai P'ing* (Great Peace) era.

The movement swept the country from Canton to Nanking, where Hung set up his capital in 1853, and where he ruled for ten years till at last he was overthrown by the imperial armies with the help of the Western Powers, who saw in the movement a threat to their growing power in Shanghai and the Yangtse basin. Hung himself was a fanatical and eventually mentally unbalanced visionary who called himself the younger brother of Jesus Christ, and expected to be treated with almost divine honour. In the earlier phases of the movement it had much in common with Christianity: the Bible was widely read and idolatry forbidden. One of the reasons for the failure of the movement may have been the unpopularity roused by wholesale destruction of idols, as also by the way in which the T'ai P'ing forces devastated the country through which they passed, in particular destroying libraries and centres of scholarship. Although they claimed to found their teaching on the classical books, they had no reverence for them. Some missionaries

visited them and were inclined to believe in the possibility of bringing them fully into Christianity, but in the end the extravagant claims of Hung and the ill-disciplined thinking and behaviour of his troops proved fatal to this hope.

From 1860 on there was increasing freedom for missionary effort. The country was gradually opened to foreign intercourse, this synchronizing with the deterioration of the Manchu Court and the growth among the Chinese themselves of the realization that China must make terms with the new life of the West if she was to keep her place in the modern world. In two special ways the Christian Church contributed to this awakening, through education and through medical work. In the early days the greater number of converts were illiterates, and the missionaries had schools for men and women and boys and girls. These schools were mainly concerned with the teaching of doctrine and as much knowledge of Chinese script as was necessary for the reading of the Bible, catechism, and hymn books.

By degrees, as the desire for Western knowledge grew, non-Christians were anxious to send their sons and, in time, their daughters to the foreign schools, at that time the only schools teaching English, science, and Western mathematics. These schools in the ports and large cities, especially those backed by American money, were able to seize the opportunity and develop a system of education leading to a standard which enabled the missions to establish colleges, and to send men and women abroad for university education. The same thing happened with hospitals. In spite of deep suspicion and prejudice at first the unquestionable benefits of Western medicine came to be recognized, and Chinese not only attended the foreign hospitals as patients, but also were anxious to be trained as doctors and nurses. The result of both these developments was that when the revolutionary movement came in the first decade of the twentieth century, many of the leaders at that time were men and women who had passed through Christian schools and colleges: among them Sun Yat-sen, the father of the revolution.

It will be seen that the approach made by the Protestant

missionaries differed very much from that of the Jesuits. While the Jesuits as soon as possible pushed through to Peking, and made it their aim to contact officials and scholars and to gain the favour of the Imperial Court, Protestant missionaries made their entry through the Treaty Ports and did not reach Peking till a comparatively late date. Thus the Jesuit fathers, like the Buddhist missionaries a thousand years before, came as men bringing cultural gifts, not as part of a political invasion. When the Protestant missionaries came there was a commercial and political invasion of China going on, and they were willy-nilly part of it.

Thus the preachers of the Christian faith in the nineteenth century, whether Protestant or Catholic, could seldom get a patient and unprejudiced hearing. Wherever they went they met with suspicion and hostility, not the courtesy and intelligent interest which are characteristic of the Chinese gentleman. It was in fact a bad time in China, both culturally and economically, and the scholars' own uneasiness about themselves and the state of the country made them the more arrogant and critical towards these confident foreigners. The better informed knew well enough that their Government failed both in dignity and competence in their relations with the Powers, and they were frightened about what might happen in the future. The less informed were only too ready to accept secret suggestions from official quarters that the more the intruders were blocked the more Peking would be pleased.

Nevertheless, during the last four decades of the century, although there were continual squabbles over Treaty rights and Treaty infringements, there were, on both sides, broad-minded men who wanted to get in touch with each other. Tseng Kuo-fang, who had done so much to save the Manchu Dynasty from the T'ai-p'ing menace, set up a translation bureau in the Shanghai area in which Chinese and foreigners, some of them missionaries, worked together in translating standard Western scientific works. In the twenty years of production some one hundred and thirty works were published and 83,000 volumes put into circulation. One of the translators, John Fryer, put himself on record that China was willing to

learn from the West, "but she must do this of her own accord and in her own way or not at all."

About the same time a religious publishing house was established in Shanghai, and from it came books and periodicals in which scholarly people on the Christian side set themselves to speak more intelligibly to scholarly people on the Confucian side. Thus feelings of fierce mutual opposition began to subside. James Legge and his friend, Robert Chalmers, in Hong Kong by their devoted study and translation of the Confucian Classics, Samuel Edkins in Shanghai with his great learning in the Buddhist field, and Alexander Wylie, Bible Society agent and mathematician, learned in Chinese literature, these were able to converse with the scholars in their own religious idiom. The saintly Timothy Richards, less learned perhaps, but quick to appreciate what he read, was able to get great viceroys to listen to him and his schemes for the country's welfare.

Among the scholars, K'ang Yu-wei, the most brilliant classical student of his day, gave himself to the study of Western science and religion, and soon had attracted other minds to join him in his search for the secret of Western learning. One of his disciples, T'an Ssu-tung, scion of a famous family in Hunan, a centre of anti-foreign feeling in the 80s, found that in the 90s everywhere in the province the younger scholars were prepared to listen to his appeal for better understanding. He wrote a book called *Jen Hsüeh* (*The School of Love*) in which the influence of the Christian ethic is most marked. In 1898, when the Empress Dowager suppressed the reform movement in Peking, he was warned that his arrest was imminent, but he refused to escape. He said: "No country has achieved reform without the shedding of blood. I have not heard of anyone doing this for our cause to-day." He and five others with him calmly awaited their arrest and went to their death without a murmur. They were not Christians in any sense of confession of faith, but they showed a spirit after the pattern of Jesus Christ.

These movements in men's minds and souls come outside the narrow scope of mission history, but the account of them is necessary for an understanding of later developments. Broadly

speaking, Chinese scholars being presented with Western religion and Western secular culture showed more appreciation of the latter. Before the final collapse of the Manchu régime very few educated men responded to the challenge of the Christian faith, and those who did respond were attracted more by the vigour of benevolence displayed by individual missionaries than by the sublimity of Christian dogma. It was amongst small traders and peasant farmers that the main bulk of the converts were gained. They formed the nucleus of the Christian Church in China, and their children and grand-children became in a large measure the ministry of that Church.

Having been educated in Christian schools and colleges, they were in many ways the forerunners of Westernization in the country. Yet this has shown itself in distinctive practical ways rather than in matters of theology. Even to this day the Chinese Church has produced only one or two philosophers and theologians. When the popular antagonism began to subside the way became open for more good works, and to this expression of their faith Chinese Christians have devoted themselves with great ardour. Under this heading come the teaching of illiterates, the establishment of hospitals, orphanages, schools for the blind, even one or two mental hospitals. But education has been their chief love, and the honourable task of training the young to know the world in which they live.

Under the Republican régime the expansion of the Church went ahead with great speed, so that when the Nationalist Revolution brought again a period of unpopularity and suspicion there were all over the country well-established congregations of Christians who were able to weather the storm. That revolution, however, emphasized the need for Christians drawing together and learning to live their religious life under their own Chinese leaders. In this direction there have been remarkable developments. There are now both Protestant and Roman Catholic Chinese bishops, and the number of ordained priests and ministers has risen by leaps and bounds.

Further, Western denominationalism has begun to be overcome. The episcopal churches have drawn together in one

organization, so have the Wesleyan and Methodist congregations, while Presbyterians and Congregationalists and some others are united as the Church of Christ in China. In these bodies missionaries serve on the same footing as their Chinese colleagues, subject to the orders of the bishop or synod. Amongst Roman Catholics the same tendency is shown; there are orders of monks and nuns in which Chinese and foreigners work together without distinction of race. The two Catholic universities have Chinese presidents, and the Chinese professors have more and more weight on their councils. The same applies to the Protestant universities, before the war with Japan fourteen in number, now by process of amalgamation on the way to being ten.

Christianity, in its modern strength and weakness, has only been in China a little more than a century. The Christians, both Protestants and Roman Catholics, still number only about one per cent of the population. Thus it is early yet to say in what way Christianity will enter into the religious life and thought of the Chinese people as a whole; all we dare to say now is that it certainly is in China to stay, even if circumstances should arise in which every missionary had to leave the country.

CHAPTER VIII

RELIGION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

THE foregoing chapters have covered a great stretch of history, and have shown the old constituent race stocks of China as having much the same deep-rooted instinct for religion as any other race and people. They have also shown that different ages reacted seriously to the challenge of foreign mission-inculcated faiths, on the one hand studying them and their fruits and rejecting or accepting them, on the other hand, in the case of Indian Buddhism, revolutionizing it, adding to it new philosophies and consolidating its appeal with new forms of ritual. Since no force, physical or spiritual, acts in a vacuum, we come to see how the particular Chinese sensitivity to the claims of the transcendent and the eternal is a vital factor to be reckoned with in the field of religion. It is a fact just as much in modern China as in the China of the more remote past.

Now we come to post-imperial times, the last years of the Manchu Dynasty, and then Republican China after 1911, with its first revolution followed sixteen years later by another, and that followed by the upheaval of war with Japan, and now the civil war between the National Government and the Communists. There can be no question but that the China of to-day is a 'modern' China, one which has been stirred and changed and in some ways revolutionized by new kinds of un-Chinese forces. So then, what about religion in this modern China?

To this question no clear and at the same time convincingly reliable answer can be given. As in Europe and America, there is much of the spiritual tradition which is in the melting pot, and it is just as impossible to draw valid conclusions about religion in China as it is to do so about religion in Europe and America. A superficial view, for instance, of much of life in the

West, might easily produce the judgment that Christianity is an out-moded superstition which has ceased to affect the life of the mass of ordinary people. Yet the Bible has become such a part of literature, and its teachings are so welded into the whole structure and thought of society, that it would seem impossible to separate them out and discard them. But if Christian teaching is not given in home or school, and children are not trained in church attendance, it may be only a generation before Bible references become as unintelligible to the man in the street as references to Greek or Roman mythology. Already it was shown during the war that there were men who did not know what was commemorated at Easter or Christmas. The situation is the same in China. The classical tradition is part of the blood and bones of the nation: but if its place in education is taken by modern science, how can the tradition survive?

The twentieth century opened with the last and most disastrous of the collisions between the Manchu Government and the Western Powers. The Boxer incident made a profound impression in the West because of the death of more than two hundred foreign missionaries and several thousand Chinese Christians. It has generally been assumed that the motive behind the rising was a religious one, that is to say definitely anti-Christian. Actually it was anti-foreign rather than anti-Christian.

In the beginning the secret society called Boxers was one of those which existed all over the country owing to dissatisfaction with the corrupt Manchu régime. It was a stroke of Machiavellian genius on the part of the Dowager Empress and her advisers to blame the country's misfortunes on the aggression of the Western Powers and to turn the Boxers' patriotic enthusiasm against them. The missionary body suffered more than other foreigners because in their inland stations they were more open to attack than in the Treaty Ports; the Chinese Christians suffered because they 'ate the foreigners' rice' as much as for their religious views. The results, however, were of the greatest importance, not only for Christianity but for all religion throughout the country.

After the Allied forces had taken Peking and forced the Dowager Empress and her advisers to accept the humiliating terms of the Protocol of 1901, the entire country was thrown open to foreign trade and foreign teaching. During the next twenty years there was a phenomenal expansion of missionary activity, especially of missionary schools and colleges, whilst at the same time government-controlled education was gradually brought into line with Western methods and ideas. Science and mathematics, with the study of foreign languages, especially English, began to take a prominent place in the curricula of these new schools.

The reading and writing of Chinese were taught for practical purposes, and the study of classical literature was largely relegated to university courses, apart from such famous passages as found a place in the new Readers which were substituted for the Four Books and Five Scriptures as the medium of instruction. So there has grown up, a new generation for whom the mysteries of the physical universe are explained not by Yin and Yang influences but by modern science. Although the making of railways and roads and the development of China's vast mineral resources have progressed slowly because of the wars which have ravaged the country, they are no longer hindered by fears of disturbing the dragons or interfering with wind-and-water influences.

Among the changes of the last fifty years, not least important from the point of view of religion has been the emancipation of women. This has come with incredible swiftness. The way had been prepared by the Christian missionaries' education of girls and women and their agitation against foot-binding, concubinage, and child slavery. The leaders of the Revolution of 1911 were men who had been to Europe and America and seen the position of women in the West, so that under the Republic women were declared to be free and equal with men. The education of girls has been stressed by the Government so that now in the primary stage boys and girls study together, in the secondary stage they are generally separated, and then come together again in one institution for college grades.

This state of affairs has led naturally to more economic independence for women who can earn their own living as teachers, doctors, nurses, in fact in any profession. It has also struck at the root of the old system of arranged marriages. The modern young man and woman, educated together, choose their own partners and set up house together in the Western way, perhaps working together in the same profession or each carrying on their own work. Because, also, modern conditions of employment, both business and professional, necessitate men living away from their ancestral homes these 'small families' are on the way, some think, to becoming the unit of society instead of the 'large family' or clan with all its religious associations.

These changes, of course, come slowly in inland towns and villages, though even there one boy or girl here and there who breaks away from tradition starts the new ideas fermenting. It is the grandmothers and mothers of the present generation who keep alive the old customs, who burn the daily incense in the home, and who are still willing to make laborious pilgrimages to distant mountain shrines to implore blessings for this life and that to come. The younger generation makes the pilgrimages too, but as a 'hike' and not for religious reasons. The boys and girls race up the stone steps where their grandmothers toil on bound feet, and when they reach the top they are more interested in the view than in the images inside the temple.

Another change affecting the whole of Chinese society, and family life in particular, is the coming of industrialization in the modern mass-produced way. This began before the war with Japan and will be speeded up again as soon as possible. During the first three decades of this century the process advanced rapidly in the ports and a few large cities up the Yangtse River. The opening up of the interior through railways and motor roads, river steamers and launches, has not only provided markets for new goods but made travelling easier. Both men and women from peasant families have been moving into the cities, away from the ancestral homes and the village festivals, away from the teachings and duties of filial piety, into urbanized life. It might too often prove to be mainly twelve or more hours

of monotonous mechanical drudgery under the worst conditions, week in, week out, with a bowl of rice eaten at a street stall and a space in a doss-house dormitory for a bed. But it had its garish attractions.

On a higher class level there were new openings for boys with some modern education, some knowledge of English, and some technical ability to make their way in a new world where money was power. Thus there were other roads to success than the time-honoured one of Government service. For girls, too, there were new ways of life as typists, shop assistants, and the like, so that not only on the level of university graduates, but in all walks of life there has been a setting up of small families living a more or less Westernized urban life which, unless they are Christians, is practically divorced from religion.

Alongside of these secularizing tendencies must be viewed two other features of these momentous years. One is the Renaissance Movement which gave the new youth new modes of literary expression. This again was an emancipation, regarded as emancipation from the dead hand of the past. In many ways it was so, and the vitality and pungency of the new colloquial literature is sufficient evidence of the clamant need for some such movement. With it came the public discussion through the printed word of every topic in heaven and earth, in new daily papers and weekly and monthly journals. Thus although the Renaissance did not start by being specifically anti-religious, the 'problem of religion' was one of the many problems which came up for reconsideration. Those were the days when Natural Science was the newest god to the intelligentsia, so that for the most part the new writings favoured the rationalistic arguments against religion, the more so because the students who returned from America and England had an exciting tale to tell of how there Protestantism and Catholicism were being discarded by scholars of enlightenment.

Meanwhile the paradox of the educational system was that the missionary schools and colleges were never so popular as at this time. This was the other feature. Whereas before 1911 there were only a few Sino-Western schools, and they rather struggling for existence, after that year there were openings for

them in every province throughout China. Schools developed into colleges and colleges into universities, north, south, east, and west. By 1924 there were 3,900 students in Protestant colleges as against 267 in 1910, and it was estimated that about one-ninth of all the students of college grade in China were in these institutions. In all of them and in the schools Christian teaching was given methodically as part of the curriculum, and attendance at Christian worship was more or less rigorously exacted. Under these enthusiastic circumstances the number of converts among students was considerable; and although many of these did not in after life become active Church members, yet it is a striking fact that the latest edition of China's *Who's Who* shows one in six of the men and women listed to be Christians, and half of the total number to have had at least part of their education in Christian schools or colleges.[1]

Nevertheless, the twenties saw the rise of an anti-Christian movement in university circles, and by the time the Nationalist Revolution got under weigh there was a strong feeling of disapprobation against the foreign schools amongst government professors and teachers. For one thing, the Christian colleges and schools, with one exception, did not register themselves with the Ministry of Education, maintaining their independence under the legal privilege of extra-territoriality. This aroused the hostility of ardent Nationalists. For another thing, there were some schools where, so it was alleged, more attention was paid to making converts than to giving a first-class education. The upshot of this revulsion of feeling was that the new Nationalist Government issued orders that all Christian educational institutions except theological colleges must be registered with the Ministry of Education and obey its regulations, one of which was that no religious teaching should be given within school hours and no pupil be required to attend religious services.

It might be thought that this campaign must indicate a

[1]In specifically Church circles Chinese delegates to the two œcumenical conferences of 1928 and 1938 won golden opinions for their wise handling of doctrinal and administrative problems.

profoundly anti-religious mind throughout China. For the time being, while the Nationalist Revolution was brewing, there was evidence enough of this in revolutionary circles. Comrade Borodin from Russia was in Kwantung as a guest, invited to train Kuomintang propagandists. But once Marshal Chiang Kai-shek was securely in the saddle, things began to change. The Christian institutions, now registered, did not suffer the discriminating measures they had feared, and were soon in full working order again, this time under Chinese principals and with voluntary attendance at religious teaching and worship proving more satisfactory than the former enforced attendance. Local public opinion for the most part appreciated the help given from abroad, and the statement was frequently heard that the Christian schools gave better training in character formation. This was a straw in the wind. In the beginning of the Republican era very few of the new educators had realized quite what secularization meant, and when an influential group of old-fashioned scholars tried to persuade the country that Confucianism ought to be retained as the established religion of the Chinese people and therefore be taught in the schools, their efforts were in vain. The Government educational system was completely secularized.

As the years went on, however, more and more responsibly minded people became concerned to strengthen the moral appeal in schools and colleges. There has been in consequence a definite swing in the official and public attitude to the Great Tradition of the past. Iconoclasm, whether in great scholars and historians or amongst humble primary school teachers, has become unpopular: the pendulum has swung from materialist radicalism to cultural conservatism. This is to be seen in regulations coming from the educational offices and in the speeches of the nation's leaders from the Generalissimo downwards. Thus reference is constantly made to one of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's famous speeches in which he pleaded for a revival of the ancient virtues. Along with this has come something of a sentimental attachment to the Sage Kings of old, and attempts are made to reinstate their idealized régimes as actual historical fact.

The same spirit of revival of the past underlies the New Life Movement which Generalissimo Chiang launched soon after his unification of the country. The guiding principle behind it was, as expressed by Madame Chiang, "to provide something spiritual and practical for the masses to hold to when needing help to recover; to awaken people to a full sense of their collective and individual responsibilities as citizens, by re-emphasis on the fundamentals of the nation's spiritual heritage and the practical application of them to daily living." The fundamentals chosen for this re-emphasis were the cardinal Confucian virtues of propriety, loyalty, integrity, and honour. A system of nation-wide propaganda was set on foot by means of posters and leaflets and exhortations from trained personnel. To emphasize propriety people were urged to walk more carefully on the streets, not to push and barge their way through barriers at railway and bus stations, to wear their coats decorously, buttoning up their collars, not to smoke and throw cigarette ends about on the streets. Propaganda talks were also given in schools and colleges and wherever other opportunities occurred of gathering an audience. Perhaps it is hardly fair to say that the movement failed to achieve its purpose, for very soon after it was launched the clouds of war began to gather, and men's minds were turned to resistance to the Japanese menace.

From the above picture of the changes in people's outlook it is clear that this generation, in which the youth of the '20s is now the experienced age of to-day, is an acutely self-conscious generation. People have become self-conscious about themselves in relation to their families, about their country in relation to other countries, about their past in relation to their present and future, about the new knowledge in relation to the old. Add to this the nervous tensions caused by the war with Japan, the collapse of one's livelihood and scattering of one's social circle, the uncertainty as to where one will be and in what circumstances a year or even a month hence, the sight of armies on the march and soldiers dropping out and dying by the roadside, the uncertainty of currency depreciation and

commodity prices changing from week to week. The strain of carrying on, whether in Occupied or Free China, was enough to drive the nation distracted.

It is well to recognize that the toll taken of the nation in death, physical debility, and sheer insanity has been a heavy one: tens of millions are reckoned to have died. Yet the main conclusion to be drawn from these excruciating years is that the Chinese people have amazing powers of endurance. To some this may mean only the existence of toughness of physical fibre in them, a will to biological survival. To those who have eyes for something more there is evidence here of a basic moral stability, of an indestructible faith in the moral order of the universe; something in the Chinese people which is of their hearts and minds as well as in their blood and bones. It is that something which the Taoist knew when he found freedom in submission to the universe as it is, together with that other something which Confucius initiated, the assurance that man can only survive if goodness, man-to-man-ness, rules his daily behaviour.

It may be thought that this opens the door for Christianity to lay hold of the religiously minded at any rate, at this time of uncertainty and physical and mental distress; for the Christian religion is ingrainedly ethical, and at the same time sees man travelling by way of a Cross to a peace which passes understanding. Also Christianity has had to go through a severe testing from the hands of the natural sciences and has learnt to discard many of its ancient superstitions: it can, therefore, speak more cogently to the modern mind. Certainly from missionary sources come estimates of a great new opportunity for the spread of Christianity. Much of the prejudice against it as a foreign religion has been overcome. Not only is there more real interest in Christianity in mission schools and colleges, but from Government-controlled institutions come invitations to organize groups for religious study and to send Christian men and women on to the staff. The way in which foreign missionaries and Chinese leaders stayed by when the Japanese invasion came, and kept their hospitals open and organized churches as relief centres for refugees, has proved

to many the ultimate truth of the Christian doctrine of love of neighbour.

China has its share of natural mystics, and a few of them are attracted to Christianity, men like Mons. Lou, at one time ambassador to Belgium and other countries and then for a short period Minister of Foreign Affairs in Peking. By training an earnest Confucian, he has become a devoted Benedictine monk. But on the whole neither Catholicism nor Protestantism seems to attract contemplatives as Buddhism has done. On the other side of the picture we may place a saintly member of the Academia Sinica who in his boyhood broke away from the old tradition in education and gave the greater part of his life to the promotion of heavy industries. Now in his old age he finds his satisfaction in the Buddhist contemplative philosophy.

The presentation of Christianity as the perfect religion with a final and infallible revelation to guarantee it has made the Christian's neighbours quick to criticize. There is not merely the gibe of the sophisticated intelligentsia that the Christian expects his God to give him preferential treatment in this world, but, at the other end of the scale, the jeer of the illiterate farmer that the Christian's fields for all his praying do not produce better crops than the pagan's fields. In all this there is more than captious criticism.

In the early days of the first Taoist philosophers there was criticism of the Confucianist scholars on the ground that for all their profession of noble principles of conduct and the saving of society by the force of moral example, they were in reality presupposing that they should be put in high places and receive the grateful laudations of the saved. Thus there is, along with all the realism and even cynicism of a predominantly worldly society, a strong sense of idealism. A sensitive Chinese conscience functions on a very high level of spiritual discernment and only gives honour to the reality of self-sacrificing love.

Further, the indigenous religious mind is capable of producing endless new surprises. We have seen that in earlier ages the Chinese were given to creating new gods and goddesses

through the lives of heroes or special apparently miraculous manifestations. No new gods have appeared in the last fifty years,[1] unless we except the interesting beginnings of what might in a more superstitious age have become a new cult, namely the veneration paid to Sun Yat-sen after his death. But there have been a number of new more or less secret societies formed for the study and practice of new forms of religion. For example, about the turn of the century a group of good-class farmers and country shopkeepers started a movement in Central China which spread into at least two south coast provinces. They worshipped 'Empty Space'. It was a half-physical, half-spiritual cult involving training in long periods of sitting squarely and uprightly in a chair and rolling in winter snow, thereby purifying the mind and will of self-centredness and putting the self into harmony with infinite space. The adepts became 'Elder Brothers' and were listened to with reverent attention when they delivered themselves after long meditation.

Another instance comes in a higher rank of society, namely that of well-to-do retired officials living in and near Tsinan in Shantung Province about 1920. Being much exercised over the continuing disruption of civil war they formed a society for considering measures of social salvation. They were earnest and engaged in good works, but on the larger scale of the national problems they found neither the old Scriptures nor the new-fangled notions able to reveal a way forward. They worshipped 'the Most Holy Primeval Father' as the founder of all religions, and were prepared to receive teaching from any religion. They betook themselves to prayer and fasting and sought guidance by means of 'spirit writing' through the use of the planchette. There were also other societies of the same nature in those disturbed years which announced themselves as uniting all the religions, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism,

[1]The latest example of deification of which we know, occurred in Ming times. A simple fisher girl in Fukien was believed to have saved by her prayers the lives of her father and brothers from shipwreck. After her death veneration for her spread rapidly, and today hundreds of temples in the coast provinces exist for the worship of her under the title of Heaven-above Holy Mother.

Christianity, and Islam. Some held their meetings in secret, others held services after the Christian pattern with readings from the ancient Scriptures and exhortations. None of them seem to have met people's need to any great extent.

One other modern development would appear to have religious potentialities in it. This is what has sometimes been called the Buddhist 'modernist' movement. It has centred round a monk, T'ai Hsü, now an abbot and near to being a really old man. He made a considerable study of Western philosophy and natural science and, having the gift of exposition, proceeded to speak and write from the angle of the old Buddhist corpus of dogma being reformed in the light of modern knowledge. It is difficult to say how many real disciples he has in the ranks of the monks and lay devotees. The older and more conservative people shake their heads over his tendency to syncretism, but they have not been able to destroy his influence, and during the war he and his friends were quite active in Szechuan. There have been other efforts made to popularize the Buddhist appeal by improving the old-fashioned methods of relieving the indigent and the sick.

It is doubtless significant that no such movement has emerged from the Taoist temples. Speaking generally, their leading abbots have less religious intelligence and fervour than the Buddhist abbots have, and although during the late war some Taoist temples have been rebuilt by wealthy philanthropists, the Buddhist centres receive more support from the devout. The practice of the contemplative life still continues in the monasteries on sacred mountains, and more particularly perhaps in the sacred island of P'u T'u Shan off the mouth of the Yangtse River, where the whole island is given up to a Buddhist community in which are to be found saintly and learned monks. Even there, however, the strain of financing the great establishments and preserving the beautiful buildings has engendered more sophistically modern attacks on the purse of the public in the great cities. Expert fund raisers spend nearly their whole time in fund-raising campaigns.

With regard to Confucianist family religion, ancestor worship, and the strict discharge of the old filial piety code: in

the more poverty-stricken parts of North China the ancestral temples have tended to fall into disrepair. There just was not the money among the clansmen to keep them going. The result of this is the complaint on the part of elder folk that the family and clan tie is not so strong as it used to be. In South China this has been less apparent, for the poverty there is not so bad. Many of the rural communities have rich old fields and the lack of seasonable rain seldom brings famine. Further, for nearly a hundred years there has been a stream of emigration to Malaya, Siam, the Philippines, and the East Indies, as well as to America and Australia. While the casualties in the movement have been many, and sons and younger brothers have disappeared never to be heard of again, yet the majority have made good. Large fortunes have been made and money sent back to the ancestral homes through wealthy banks whose business mainly consists in this; and there is a continual stream of returning travellers, either for holidays or, some of them, returning home to die and be buried with their ancestors.

Thus while family religion is on the decline it is only gradually so, and it may still prove to be able to hold its own against the forces which have threatened it. Although the autocratic power of the father in the family has been challenged and youth can and does break away to live its own life, yet family feeling survives with extraordinary vigour. The Chinese genius for compromise asserts itself here. The elders have had to make concessions to the spirit of the times and in most cases do so with graciousness, and youth on its side responds with courtesy. The most acute stage of the struggle between the generations has passed, as it has in the West, and from now on it is likely that the strength of family feeling will revive and continue. In this connection the effect of the war with Japan is highly illuminating. On the one hand, an immense number of young married men in the eastern provinces felt no option but to go west, but they left their wives and children with their parents or relations in their home towns and villages.

Inquiry during the war amongst hundreds of these young men in Free China elicited the almost unfailing reply that they proposed to return home as soon as peace came. In less than

ten instances was the reply that home meant nothing to them now. On the other hand, marital fidelity suffered tremendously. For instance, the Central Government found it necessary in the end to make regulations for army officers. If a man had not heard from his wife for four years he was at liberty to contract a new marriage tie. This tells its own tale.

Further, the emancipated young woman of to-day can be a very disquieting and unpleasant phenomenon, thinking only of herself and what she can get by self-exploitation. But flagrant instances of this cause strong revulsions in local opinion, and for the most part an educated woman shows herself strongly on the side of social decency and order. Even in the ranks of women working in factories, as a recent social survey has pointed out, they prefer to remain an integral part of their family. They will not put up with tyrannical exploitation by a grasping, conscienceless father-in-law if they can help it, but will sacrifice their own interests a good deal if thereby the family can be kept together.

In conclusion, therefore, we are slow to believe that the sanctity of the family as an institution will be lost in the immediate future. Even with partial industrialization, the Chinese people will remain predominantly an agricultural nation, and as the post-war debility is gradually overcome and the long-looked for peace becomes a reality, the economic recovery of the great rural areas may surely be expected to bring a revival of family religion. The disease of excessive self-consciousness with its eternal self-questioning must surely abate. Nevertheless, much which the comparative anthropologist acclaims as good functioning religion can hardly survive the rational test which the modern world brings to bear on it. Thus with the religion of filial piety which has served the Chinese people so well at times of stress in the past, it never transplanted its roots from the soil of ancestor worship. Can it then survive if the peasant family of to-morrow ceases to believe that the '*po*', the material souls, of these ancestors are dependent on the sacrifices offered for their comfort?

The answer to this question is sometimes given that in the scholar class there have always been men of keen rational

acumen who have had their doubts on this score, that for that very reason philosophical Buddhism had its attraction; and yet the rituals have survived all down the ages. True enough, but this ritual practice was knit together with the semi-religious, semi-political philosophy which placed a 'Son of Heaven' at the head of the 'Hundred Clans', and gave to him the sacred office of conducting the Sacrifice to Heaven and the Sacrifice to Earth on behalf of the Great Community. On the faithful observance of these two supreme rites depended the prosperity of the country as a whole.

Is it proposed that, when peace is re-established, the President of the Chinese Republic should revive these sacrifices? One can well believe that this might take place, and it would ill become any foreigner to belittle such a revival. The psychology of the act would be very different from that of Louis XV in France when he was egged on by the Physiocrats to take a leaf out of the Chinese book and 'drive the sacred plough': an act of romantic syncretism which could hardly stand a chance of becoming a really religious ritual. Nevertheless, with the farmers educated to understand the use of fertilizers and the selection of grains, and the Government through trained officials promoting the science of husbandry, there would be a curious dichotomy between the Ministry of Agriculture and the department responsible for the rituals. Inevitably there would be an element of mere romantic antiquarianism about the revival of such sacrifices.

In the last resort there is to be expected much the same strain as exists in the Atlantic cultures where transcendent religion and natural science show little sign of being able to come to terms with each other. As that strain increases in China, then her scholar-scientists, whether old rationalist or new believer, will have something to say in this great controversy; for in the Great Tradition of the Chinese people there is to be found so clearly and unmistakably their own combination of realism and idealism, of materialism and mysticism. Where the Confucianist tended to be too pagan and this-worldly, the Taoist was there to open his eyes to the mystery of the Tao. Where the Taoist with his naturalism was liable to

be caught in the net of a sluttish *laisser-faire*, the Confucianist was there to inspire him with the sage's vision of a society which can be redeemed.

As this book goes to press, the news comes of the Communists having overcome the Kuomintang as a national government. What Communist dominance may produce on religion in China, who can prophesy? That a religious mind, both good, bad and indifferent, exists there, has, it seems to the authors of this book, been demonstrated all through China's history. In this the Chinese are much the same as other peoples in the world. The problem in China today is the same fundamentally as that which faces religiously minded people the world over.

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