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## ARTICLE VI.

## RELIGION AMONG THE CHINESE.

BY THE REVEREND GEORGE DURAND WILDER.

IT is my purpose in this article to give only my own observation of religious phenomena, or the results of reading and the study of Chinese literature that have been verified in my own experience. This purpose necessarily narrows the scope of the essay, but it may add something of definiteness and concreteness. The writer has never made a special study of Chinese religion, and will simply glean from the memories of ten years in China,—a period spent in study of the Chinese language, and in evangelistic work in the districts adjoining the cities of Peking, T'ung Chou, and Tientsin.

Probably nearly every missionary in his first attempts at introducing the subject of religion to individual Chinese makes the mistake of asking, "To what religion-door do you belong?" or "To which of the three great religions, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, do you adhere?" The dropping of the jaw and the blank expression on the man's countenance are sufficient to convince one of his mistake, and prevent its repetition, for he soon learns that probably the man belongs to no religion in any such sense as a Christian belongs to the church; but, being born a subject of China, he is a Confucianist; being brought up in the society around him, he has imbibed a lazy, indifferent sort of belief in the doctrines of Taoism and Buddhism, and any other ism that happens along. He

has no conception that doctrine has anything to do with everyday life, or that there is any incompatibility between different religions. He is ready to accept any standard religion, and to worship any new god about which he learns, on the principle that if he can have all he will surely have the true. When one of his family dies, he will hire priests of all faiths accessible to come and perform their rites for the soul of the dead. The Christian missionary has been invited, but our rule is never to have Christian ceremonies in connection with any heathen rites at either funeral or wedding. The fact that the heaven to which one set of priests would send the soul is in the north, that of another set in the south, of another in the east, and that of a fourth set is in the west, does not at all embarrass him, but rather gives him all the more confidence that the dead man's soul will surely reach the abodes of the blessed.

I have held friendly discussion with Buddhist and Taoist priests and Confucian scholars in a Buddhist temple where we were all entertained by the abbot, and none of my companions apparently had any idea of fundamental hostility between the religions represented. In Tientsin, I am told, there is a small temple with images of Buddha, a Taoist divinity, Jesus Christ, and the tablet of Confucius. High officials and reformers in both China and Japan have advocated an eclectic religion for the Orient which shall embrace the main features of both Eastern and Western religions.

Thus far I have used the term "religion" as the Chinese use it, meaning merely a system of doctrines, ethical, metaphysical, theological, or religious. In the more strict usage of the word "religion," as that form of doctrine and social organization that embraces the relations of God, or gods and men, pure Confucianism is often said not to be a religion. This statement is made, because Confucius himself refused to discuss

the service of gods, by saying, "We cannot serve our fellow-men aright as yet; how can we serve gods?" When asked, in the same connection, about the future life, he replied evasively, "We do not know life; how can we know death?" Again the statement is made, because in the classics the people are supposed to worship only their living parents and the spirits of departed ancestors. This is the logical outcome of the principle of filial piety, which is the backbone of the Confucian system of ethics. Scholars also worship the tablet of Confucius. Strictly interpreted, this worship of ancestors and of Confucius is not a worship of gods, but only of the spirits of the dead, and the Chinese word for "worship" is exactly equivalent to the Greek *προσκυνέω*, to prostrate one's self in reverence before either gods or men. This being the only worship recognized by Confucianism for the common people, and the duties of man to man being so fully explained, it is said to be merely an ethical system.

And yet this assertion needs modification. When asked whether it were more profitable to worship the kitchen god or the more genteel god of the parlor, Confucius replied, that neither is important, but the one care should be not to offend heaven; for, "When once you sin against heaven, you have no one to whom you can pray." When about to die, his disciple suggested prayer as a resource, and he said, "My prayer is of long standing," probably meaning that his integrity of life is a sufficient prayer, though some translate with an opposite meaning, "I have not prayed for a long time." With either interpretation a relation of suppliant to a superior being is recognized. Confucius as an official performed the required sacrificial rites, and Mencius and other authors in the classics give wise counsels as to the reverence and solemnity with which they should be performed. The ancient emperors

from whom Confucius professes to have received his doctrines performed sacrifices to the various spirits of the mountains, rivers, heavenly bodies, etc., and worshiped Heaven as a personal being without image. There is abundant evidence of this in the Books of History, of Poetry, and of Rites, all of which are included in the sacred books of Confucianism, and give fairly authentic history from 2300 B.C. So it is evident that duties to the gods, and perhaps to God, are recognized in the *system*, if not in the words, of its greatest sage.

It should be noted that the Confucian system has little or nothing for the common people: it is only for the guidance of the emperor and his officers. The supposition is that, if the emperor is virtuous, the people cannot but imitate him; and this supposition is distinctly stated in the books but not fully verified in life. All the worship of God or Heaven is performed by the emperor alone, representing the people, and the worship of inferior divinities is all assigned to him and his officials, for their own good and that of the people. So the common people have no worship but that in their own homes due their parents and ancestors. This is performed by all, as a matter of course, without any rites of initiation, or entrance to any church or order. No organization of a religious nature is recognized or sanctioned by the government. In the development of this governmental religion, which is the standard Confucianism of to-day, there has been abundant provision made, through the influence largely of Taoism and Buddhism, for worship of gods, and so it may strictly be called a religion. "It consists in the worship of ancestors, of certain gods of agriculture, and of a great number of other national saints, rulers, sages, and heroes of all times, apotheosized by emperors under every dynasty, of a host of faithful servants of the state, and male and female paragons of virtue and self-sacrifice; it also

includes the worship of certain gods of nature, such as heaven and earth, the sun, moon, and stars, wind, rain, clouds, and thunder, fire, mountains and rivers."<sup>1</sup> So it is evident that this state religion in China comes under the strict category of religion; and with the assumption by the common people of the worship of those nature deities anciently monopolized by the state, and also of the numerous Buddhist and Taoist deities, numbering forty or fifty thousand, it is apparent that the present-day Confucianism of the mass of Chinese people is a pure polytheism, and not a mere ethical system.

No one can study the ethics of Confucius as taught and lived by him without profound admiration. There are those who maintain that not only the ethics of Confucianism, but also its philosophy, metaphysics, political economy, poetry, etc., are unsurpassed by anything in Greek literature. The prevalent impression that Confucius taught only the negative form of the golden rule is a mistake, arising from the fact that he has the sentence, "Do not unto others as you would not that others should do unto you," and has not the positive form explicitly stated. A Confucian scholar who was helping me read the classics pointed out the fact that in Chinese literature the statement of such a negative implies the positive, and referred to a passage in which the master is asked what one word sums up his teaching, and says, "Is not reciprocity such a word?" Reciprocity is explained to carry the full meaning of the golden rule, and in the same connection Confucius says, "He has not attained unto serving his father as he would have his son serve him, to serving his prince as he would have his minister serve him, to serving his elder brother as he would have his younger brother serve him, and to behaving to his friend as he would have his friend behave to himself." These relations

<sup>1</sup>De Groot in *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China.*

are four of the five human relationships; the remaining one, of husband and wife, is omitted from this passage simply on literary grounds, so that the substance of the golden rule is certainly within the content of Confucius' teaching. A heterodox philosopher, Micius, developed the doctrine of universal love, but was branded a heretic because Mencius, in controverting his doctrines, twisted them to mean an obliteration of the five relationships. For if one loves every one else as well as his father, then, he says, the distinction of a specific relation of father and son ceases. The obligations of man to man, under these five categories comprehending all human relations, are expounded with exquisite delicacy and profound insight; and a world in which the Confucian precepts were carried out would be a beautiful world. But, lacking the fundamental relation of God to man, they lack the necessary motive for fulfilling the duties of man to man. The result is a system built up as an intellectual exercise, and absolutely divorced from the real life, which is, with profound irony, largely its subject-matter.

Though divorced from real life in the minds of the Chinese of to-day, it has had certain profound effects on the life of the Chinese people, and I shall point out a few of the results of the doctrine of filial piety and reverence for elders that are obvious even to the transient visitor in China.

1. The exquisite manners of cultivated Chinese, the polite behavior of great masses of comparatively illiterate people, and the respectful demeanor of the children who have attended school or received training at home are conspicuous to one who has been accustomed to the free and easy manners in this country or the colonies of England. This politeness is due to the centuries of training in the schools in the outward forms of deference to parents and all elders. The classics indicate this to be one of the prime objects of education.

2. The Chinese are bound by the strongest ties to their native soil. Emigrants to foreign countries are almost exclusively from Canton, and they go as a rule without their families, fully intending to return for their old age and burial at home, where their sons can offer the proper sacrifices at the grave. A man is reluctant to go far away from the old homestead, because it is his duty to be at home every New Year's Eve to knock his head to his parents, and to the tablets of his ancestors. The eldest son must also be on hand at the three or four seasons when it is necessary to repair the graves in the spring, to burn the paper imitation of winter clothing late in the autumn or the summer clothing in May for the use of the spirits of the departed. Another home tie is that a man's wife remains at home to serve her mother-in-law when her husband goes into a distant province to do business for a lifetime, with only triennial or even decennial visits home. This is the case with Shansi bankers, who do business in all parts of the empire, and with Shantung men, who have a monopoly of the water-carrying in Peking, and with most officials who hold office in parts of the empire remote from their birthplace, according to the settled policy of the government. This separation from their own families may account for a large part of the bigamy and prostitution, which is, on the whole, less prevalent in China than in most countries.

3. This very feature of the high standard of morality among the sexes, the low percentage of illegitimates, and the fewness of prostitutes in proportion to population, is also traceable to the effects of long-taught filial piety. While there are no statistics to prove the facts just mentioned, yet they impress every one who is thrown into contact with the masses of Chinese, rather than with the officials and those separated from their homes by the necessities of business. The explanation



of this sexual condition, and freedom from venereal diseases, is to be found in the fact, that every one marries in China, and marries young. The explanation of this fact is found in the doctrine, that one of the essential duties to parents is to beget sons, who shall carry on the worship at the graves of their ancestors.

4. Most of the polygamy that is met with is among the well-to-do classes, and is often explained by this necessity of having sons to carry on the ancestor worship. If the first wife does not bear sons after a reasonable time, the man's parents are apt to find him another, for they cannot die happy until they have seen a grandson born to them.

5. The great regard for marks of respect to dead parents affects a variety of customs. It often reduces families to beggary in providing expensive funerals, or it imposes a debt that will weigh down the living for several generations. It accounts for no small amount of the poverty everywhere prevalent in China.

6. It also accounts for the excessive importance attached to cemeteries. This has had a very deterrent influence on railroad building, mining, and other enterprises which disturb the soil, but are for the material prosperity of the country.

7. One teaching of the classics is that the body should be preserved entire and uninjured, or ingratitude will be exhibited to the parents who gave it. Hence, in punishing crime, beheading or otherwise mutilating the body has an added terror and disgrace. It is a mark of leniency highly prized when the death sentence is carried out by hanging or strangling. The severest penalty is slicing the criminal's body, and having the graves of the ancestors dug up, the bones scattered, and all living descendants put to death. This punishment has a horror in China greater far than it could have here, owing to the

belief that ancestor worship is imperative for the blessedness of the departed and the righteousness of the living.

8. The form of government is determined by this same principle. It is a paternal despotism, where the people have much of the freedom and democracy that inheres in the government of a family. All officials are called the "parents of the people," and are blamed if their behavior has not at least some of the marks of paternal mildness.

9. Our city of T'ung Chou is disgraced by having one of the corners of its wall rounded and the tower razed. Some cities have two or three corners rounded, and one or two cities are said to have been destroyed, and only the ruins left to mark the site, all in the execution of the following remarkable law: when a case of murder of a parent occurs in a city, a corner tower shall be torn down, the whole corner torn out, and a wall, forming three-quarters of a circle, shall be built in its place, protruding as a conspicuous disgrace. When three corners have been rounded in one city, if there shall occur another case of patricide or matricide the whole city shall be demolished, and the people scattered. So this doctrine has left its impress deeply on the laws of the land, and even on the face of the country. Indeed, the laws are largely built on this principle of filial piety, and it permeates the whole civilization.

10. While Confucianism has resulted in an inferior position for woman, its basal principle of filial piety has not been interpreted so as to exclude the mother from her due portion of filial regard, and, as soon as a woman bears a son, her position in society and her lot in life are perceptibly raised. In case of a father's death, the mother is the head of the family, even when her sons are beyond middle life. The result is that every woman may look forward to a time when she may have a good deal of authority, and may have the coveted chance of

ill-treating her own daughter-in-law as she was ill-treated in her time. The Empress Dowager would find it far more difficult to hold the reins of power, were it not that, as the aunt of the Emperor, i.e. a member of a higher generation, she has a rightful authority over him, and has the moral support of the whole people in exercising it, as well as the support of the Emperor's own conscience.

11. It is hardly necessary to state that ancestor worship is responsible for the backwardness of Chinese civilization, and for the numerous cases of arrested development in many of the arts and sciences in which they had made conspicuous advance for a time. It is unfilial to know more than one's parents, and the praiseworthy principle of imitating the good qualities of their forebears has deteriorated into a slavish imitation of minutest details, and in a positive refusal to admit anything bad of them. We might select *other features* of Confucianism, and show their influence on the Chinese civilization, but space forbids.

The worship of Confucius and of ancestors has not degenerated into image worship but into a tablet worship, which is at least one degree less gross. The temples of Confucius in every city of size have a shrine in the place of honor, with a wooden tablet, one or two feet long and three to six inches wide, bearing the inscription, "tablet of the most worthy, holy man Confucius." Ranged along the sides of the main room will be found the shrines and tablets of the other authors of the classics and distinguished disciples and interpreters of Confucius. Every school must have a tablet of the sage where the scholars can do it reverence every day. So too with the ancestor worship in every home. The tablets containing the names of the grandparents and great-grandparents will be placed in a niche in the wall in a position of honor. At Chi-

nese New Year, every son comes and knocks his forehead to the ground three times to his father and mother, and then to the tablets of the ancestors. Wealthy families have fine ancestral halls for the tablets and for family gatherings. These halls sometimes have the walls covered from floor to ceiling with long tills like those for chalk at our black-boards, in which the small wooden tablets, inscribed each with a name, are arranged in order. Doubtless there are many scholars who understand that "the tablet is only to remind them of the names of their numerous ancestry," and that they do not worship as gods" either the tablet or the spirit it represents." Yet the masses have become so ignorant as to regard this ancestor or tablet worship exactly as they do idol worship. Therefore it is the almost unanimous opinion of the native Christians and missionaries that the worship of Confucius and ancestors cannot be permitted in Christian schools and families. This has kept some out of the church. It has also resulted in the exclusion of Christians from the government universities, where the worship of Confucius was made compulsory. Since 1901 the government has been establishing universities in the different provincial capitals for the teaching of Western science. These have usually required all students to bow to the tablet of the sage every morning, contending that it did not interfere with any one's religion, as it was not a religious act. Yet most Christian students have withdrawn when the rule was enforced, and some foreigners at the head of these institutions have resigned when unable to induce the trustees to make exception to the rule in case of Christians. It was considered a form of religious persecution.

This suggests a word in regard to the common idea, in which the writer shared until recently, that the Chinese government is absolutely tolerant of all religions. This common impress-

ion that China has absolute religious freedom may be explained by three facts: (1) that she has been for long periods so indifferent as not to interfere with the various religions represented in her borders; (2) that many emperors have built and maintained Buddhist temples; (3) that, partly from fear of the foreign nations, she has promised, in treaties, not to allow interference with converts to Christianity; so that, with the exception of the year 1900, there has been practical freedom of conscience ever since modern missions were undertaken. But a Holland Sinologue, De Groot, has recently published a book proving that this comfortable belief in the government's tolerance is erroneous. There have been ruthless persecutions of all the other religions than the state religion ever since the Christian era at intervals. In 574 A. D. the Emperor called a parliament of religions, and fixed the relative rank in this order, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and this is the order in which they are always mentioned to this day. That looked like tolerance, but, the second year after, "Buddhism and Taoism were abolished, their sacred books and images altogether destroyed, priests and Taoist doctors not allowed to exist. Heretical sacrifices were abolished." Again, in 845, the Emperor Wu Tsung destroyed Nestorianism, and gave Buddhism a blow from which it has not yet recovered. The History says, "Four thousand six hundred monasteries, and 40,000 temples were pulled down in the empire; 265,000 monks and nuns were registered as ordinary people, and 150,000 of their male and female slaves, and several thousand myriads of *ching* of their grounds were confiscated"; [a *ching* is sixteen and two-third acres].

How shall we account for the survival of Buddhism and Taoism through many such persecutions? Not by saying that they must therefore be true; though we may say that Buddhism does

offer satisfaction to the religious instinct, whereas pure Confucianism does not, and so keeps its hold by supplying a need of human nature. A sufficient explanation is found in the fact, that, while some emperors persecuted, others supported the sects and built temples. Kang Hsi, the greatest emperor of the present dynasty, issued edicts suppressing Buddhism, yet worshiped daily in a Buddhist temple. Buddhism holds a strong influence over even thoroughgoing Confucian families by reason of its hold on the illiterate women and mothers, who train the children. Again, the pagodas and temples are located in accordance with the philosophical system of *feng shui*, a Taoist doctrine which early gained a paramount influence over the reigning house of China, and so the temple has the sanction of their system of philosophy. The numerous temples and pagodas in the beautiful hill sites around Peking, are built and maintained by the emperors of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, both of which have been anti-Buddhistic. The laws of the present dynasty, the Ch'ing, expressly interdict all heterodox religions, logically though not expressly including Christianity. Very few, however, know of the laws, and they are ignored even by most emperors and officials. This double-faced policy makes an apparent but unreal religious liberty. The laws are used against members of all secret societies or religions by unscrupulous enemies to plunge the members, no matter how innocent, into litigation and punishments.

We have already seen incidentally how Taoism and Buddhism have both modified the state religion, and secured a firm influence over the government. These two religions, once mutually hostile, have adopted much from each other. Taoism, originally a system of profound philosophical speculation, and some high moral precepts, such as "Return good for evil," has deteriorated into a chaos of superstitions, embracing devil

worship, the use of rituals and charms much as the African savages use their fetishes, the pursuit of the elixir of life, the effort to transmute other metals into gold, geomancy, location of wells with hazel rods, fixing of sites for houses, graves, etc. The Taoist Pope lives in great pomp on the Dragon and Tiger mountain in Kiangsi, and is said to be summoned by the emperor to give advice. He goes in state as an official, and returns riding in the clouds and clothed in mist!

This power over the emperor supposed to be possessed by the Taoists is matched by a real power of the Buddhists. In the hills west thirty miles from the capital there is a great and wealthy monastery, called Tan Chou ssu. There is a popular saying, "When Tan Chou ssu is destroyed by fire, Peking will be destroyed by water." The priests find it easy to exact what they want from the emperor by threatening to set fire to their monastery. They also have a great ginkko tree which has a trunk for each monarch of the present dynasty. They are able to control the development of the new sprouts, and claim now to have a shoot coming out of the root of the preceding emperor's tree, which represents a posthumous son, born to one of the concubines, who is said to have been secreted by Li Hung Chang. They claim supernatural power to bring him to the throne, and may hold this over the emperor as a threat. But the present emperor is probably largely emancipated from these fears, since coming to believe in our God. A vast horde of magicians are continually preying on the royal family, in the matter of fixing the place for the burial of the emperors where the *feng shui* is perfect. Many of the emperors are not yet permanently buried, and the skillful manipulation of the superstitions about *feng shui* yields an almost limitless revenue to the magicians. Even if the emperor does not believe in their magic, the opinion of influential men at

court is so strong that he would not dare to dismiss the court magicians, or neglect to consult them in all matters of *feng shui*. When it is remembered that these courtiers are mainly well-educated Confucianists, it will be seen that, in spite of the supercilious contempt in which many Confucianists profess to hold all these superstitions, yet they at heart cannot free themselves from belief in them. Whether they believe in them or not, in the vast majority of families in the empire, there is more or less worship of gods, and reliance on magic. Principal Fairbairn's statement, that the Chinese are "singularly deficient in the religious faculty," is singularly incorrect.

Thus we see that Confucianism, with its high and pure teaching at the start, has not availed to keep even its devotees from gross polytheism and all kinds of superstition in daily life. Neither has it succeeded in molding the life and thought of the people by its ethical teachings, so as to produce real reverence for parents, faithfulness to rulers, love and kindness among brothers and sisters, proper relations between husband and wife, fidelity among friends, and the resulting peace to the empire. It is indeed a story of degeneracy, and mixture with gross forms of religion. But it has profoundly affected the forms and customs of daily life, some of them beautiful, and only lacking in the real spirit, others ugly or revolting.

Our reference thus far to the three great religions is only sufficient to give the impression that the present religion of the Chinese is a conglomeration of many incongruous elements, which cannot easily be traced to source or analyzed and labeled. This impression should be deepened when we say that there are also a great number of so-called "secret societies," some of which "possess all the features of a system of religion as founders and prophets, a pantheon of gods, commandments, moral philosophy, initiation and consecration, ritual, sacred



books, theology, paradise, hell," etc. These things are largely borrowed from Mahayanistic Buddhism and ancient Chinese philosophy and cosmogony. They are mixed in varying proportions by different societies, and these societies correspond more than anything in the three great religions, to our churches and denominations. Indeed, Christianity is classed with them and hence is looked upon by many as a rebellious society. "Furthermore, it is in these societies that religious feeling, piety, and virtue created by the expectation of rewards and punishments hereafter, flourish among the people."<sup>1</sup> Many of the most truly religious Chinese are, or have been, members of one or more of these sects, and at the same time would classify themselves as belonging to the state religion, and would go through the forms of worship required by it, though I have met with some who declared that idol worship is theoretically not permissible in their sect. So, considering this mixture, it will not be strange if this paper does not make everything plain and simple. If it produces only an idea of confusion, it will be strictly in accord with the facts.

Allow me now to tell of some of the most universal customs of worship, and of the ideas involved.

1. The kitchen god is worshiped in every heathen family. It is so universal as to be a test of belief in the one God, or gods many. If a home has no kitchen god pasted on the wall, it is taken for granted that the family is either Mohammedan or Christian. This rough-colored paper picture of the god is purchased at New Year's for a fraction of a cent, and pasted over the kitchen stove, for he is said to give food. The calendar of the year is usually printed on the same sheet of paper, but it becomes almost illegible from dust and smoke before the year is out. On the twenty-third of the twelfth month, the

<sup>1</sup>The Chinese Recorder, March, 1905.

family assembles, daubs a kind of taffy candy on his mouth, so that he will tell nothing but good about the family when he goes up to heaven. Then they scrape him off the wall, and burn him, together with a paper horse, so that his spirit may ascend to heaven. For a few days they have no god, and at the new year paste up a fresh one. Our preachers remind them that they get food during the days of the god's absence, and also that Mohammedans and Christians, who do not worship him, have no peculiar lack of food. They also point out the real disrespect shown the god in putting him in the dirtiest place in the house.

2. In addition to the kitchen god, nearly every family will have a god of some trade or occupation which it worships regularly. The carpenters have Jou Pen, an artisan mentioned in the classics. Keepers of beasts of burden worship the horse god. Farmers will worship the god of the soil, though the emperor himself begins the agricultural operations early in the spring by putting the plow into the soil, with proper rites to the god, at the great temple of agriculture. The most universal of these trades gods is the god of war, Lao Yeh or Kuan Ti. Practically every shop in the land not kept by Christians or Mohammedans has an image or picture of this god, with a shrine and daily worship. The idea seems to be that nothing is so dreaded by the commercial people as war, and the god of war is the god best able to prevent it. He is the one to whom supplications for peace are offered. He was a military hero of the second century after Christ, who preserved the empire from the attacks of the Northern barbarians (Mongols?), and was apotheosized by his emperor. His four conspicuous virtues of filial piety, courageous independence, faithfulness, and uprightness have been the ideals of all generations since, and are constantly kept in the minds of

the people by means of plays in the theaters, and a most interesting historical novel, "The Three Kingdoms," written centuries before the modern historical novel was invented. His worship is not confined to the shops, for nearly every hamlet has a temple to Kuan Ti, and probably his temple is the most common throughout China. At his birthplace and burial-place there are very fine temples in his honor, as is the case also with Confucius and other worthies. He is styled the "protector of his country."

In preaching sometimes, our native speakers give this god's history, and then ask, "Do you think he is still living, and able to protect the nation?" "Yes," they answer, "even more able than when a man." "Well, then, how did he suffer the Mongols to establish their rule over us in 1280 A. D., and why did he let the Chinese Ming dynasty be overthrown by the foreign Manchus in 1644, and how is it that you dare ask him to protect the present foreign Manchu dynasty?" "Are you not asking him to be a traitor? And why did he not protect us from the Japanese in 1895?" These questions are posers, and give the preacher a chance to answer them from a Christian point of view, and speak of the God of nations.

3. The god of wealth is about as universal as the greed for money, but his temple is not common. On the second day of the first month almost every one worships him with an all-day salvo of firecrackers. At evening they sacrifice a living carp, and then eat it themselves. Business prosperity for the ensuing year is thought to be proportioned to the amount of money burned up in gunpowder. His paper picture is hung up all day, and finally burned with paper imitation of gold, silver, and copper money. This paper money is supposed to be current in the spirit world after it is burned. The burning corresponds to death of the human body. The god of wealth is

also worshiped in the form of the live weasel, or hedgehog, and many a man builds a miniature brick house in his front yard, and places the food proper for these animals at its entrance; the idea being that if one of them comes to live in the hut he will bring wealth or good luck in trade.

4. Next in popularity come the gods of medicine, of whom there are several, including the Buddhist goddess of mercy, who gives sight to the blind. Those who pray to her and get their sight, bring cloth imitation of eyes to hang on her image. The healing of a hand will be acknowledged by a cloth glove stuffed with cotton. In case of sickness, it is common to vow a pilgrimage to a distant mountain, where the god has a shrine, to be made as soon as the sickness is past. Often a son or daughter makes the vow for a parent, or fulfills the parent's own vow in place of the parent. These vows to the medicine god sometimes involve committing suicide by leaping over a precipice at the temple site, or perpetual virginity, or vegetarianism. Forty miles north of T'ung Chou is a sacred mountain Yachi Shan, where three or four leap off every year.

5. Connected with this is the worship of the goddess of sons and grandsons, who gives male children. A woman comes to burn incense, and then searches in the temple for the little porcelain doll that the priests keep hidden away. These doll babies are often conspicuously of masculine gender. She finds one, takes it home, and puts it on the bed. If later she bears a son, she brings back to the temple a gift of some fifty or one hundred more of the porcelain dolls, so as to keep up the supply.

6. There are gods of different seasons that are worshiped at certain festivals in the province where I live. The rabbit god is worshiped at the harvest moon, when the grains and fruits that the rabbits like, are in abundance. The rabbit king

lives in the moon, and one of the offerings to his picture, hung for a day at the altar in each home, is the moon cake. This cake is the size of a pie or a cookie, according to the wealth or piety of the family. It is cut into as many pieces as there are mouths in the family. With it are offered saucers of the finest fruits the market affords, and the best grains, wheat, corn, peas, beans, etc., that the farm has produced. Incense is kept burning on the table in an urn. At the close of the day the god is burned, the family eats the cake, and the fruits are often laid away for future guests, as I have found out to the delight of my palate.

The first and fifteenth of every month, and the first of the first month, second of the second, third of the third, etc., are feast days for special worship of different saints and gods. Most of the unimportant feasts are observed merely by the addition of some luxury as meat, or early green peas, etc., to the day's bill of fare. The New Year's festival is observed by first settling up all business accounts, then spending many days in feasting, visiting, and recreation.

7. In time of drouth or flood, the dragon god is worshiped by some village's taking a collection for a free theater to be held in the god's honor. An image will be made and placed in the temporary stage, or taken by a procession of the whole village down to a river bank, where he will be given a drink and a feast.

8. In the same way a village sometimes has a thanksgiving festival and theater after a bounteous harvest. These functions seem to be rare occurrences; I have never seen the thanksgiving festival, and only one case of the dragon god's worship.

9. City dwellers are supposed to contribute for the temple of the god of the city. This is the spirit of some good official

in the history of the place. These patron deities in each city are changed frequently. The appointment is supposed to be made by the spirit of Chang Yü Huang, a great statesman of the Sung dynasty (960-1127 A. D.). This city god can elevate "expectants" to office, and assist in administering the city. Each town and hamlet has a similar deity called Tudi.

10. Every locality has one or two famous holy mountains, whose shrines it is common to visit at certain seasons of the year, when the temple guest-rooms and neighboring inns will be taxed to the utmost to accommodate the throngs of pilgrims. Most of these draw from only thirty or forty miles away, but there are four or five mountains that are famous, and draw from all over the empire.. A visit to Wu T'ai Shan, or Five-terrace Mountain, in Shansi, is the ambition of a lifetime for thousands of Mongols. They often spend years in traveling the thousand or more miles, often begging their way, but fed and lodged free by the priests of temples along the road. Many measure their length like an inch worm all the way. Others knock their heads at every other step, or creep on hands and knees through dust and mud and terrible sunshine. At some seasons the roads are thronged with such pilgrims. Their eagerness and real sincerity often gives an opening for the entrance of the gospel into their hearts.

These are the most commonly worshiped gods, as observed in and near the capital. Most families worship the gods of the kitchen, war, wealth, and some trade. They observe the annual festivals in honor of other gods with more or less ostentation, usually less, and on occasions of special need are apt to go to the nearest temple of the appropriate god to burn incense, and *kotow*, or visit some distant mountain shrine. Add the worship of parents and ancestors at New Year's, and the offerings of food and clothes at the proper seasons, and you

go through the gamut of the average man's religious affairs, with one exception, for we have still to consider one important form of worship, that of heaven and earth. This is an essential in the religious rites of a heathen wedding. The one essential part of the civil ceremony of marriage that holds in all parts of the country for heathen and Christian alike is the carrying of the bride in a red sedan chair from her home to the home of the bridegroom's parents. That alone constitutes a legal marriage, without any other form. But there are many other attendant customs, varying in different localities. As soon as the chair is lowered in the bridegroom's yard, he comes forward to receive the bride, and they turn at once to a table over which is hung an inscription on paper, and together they worship heaven and earth by *kotowing*, i.e. by knocking their heads to the ground three times before this tablet of heaven and earth. Probably the reason for this worship at this time is that heaven is the male principle, earth the female principle from which all things were born. Their worship probably is a mute request that the union may be fertile. The tablet of heaven and earth has this inscription: "True ruler of Heaven [i.e. the sky], Earth, the three realms [i.e. abode of good spirits, or heaven, of bad spirits, or hell, and of living men], the ten directions or regions [i.e. the eight points of the compass, and up and down], the myriad living beings. In the Chinese order the characters for heaven, earth, come first and True Ruler last. We often tell the people, "The author of that inscription thousands of years ago was a wise man, and knew what he was talking about, but his descendants have stupidly and superficially taken the first two words only, and worshiped them as God, without understanding the meaning of the phrase at all; whereas the last two words, '*True Ruler*,' are the important ones, indicating whom to worship. We come to tell you about

him." Another interesting thing about this worship of the tablet of heaven and earth is, that tablets of half a century ago have the words "True Lord Ruler," omitting the word "Lord" to avoid the suggestion of the Catholic term for God, Heaven's Lord.

The worship of heaven by the emperor on the second day of the year is as impressive and pure a worship as can be imagined. He has to spend two or three days in purification, fasting, prayer, and all-night vigil, in preparation at the altar of heaven, where a mat shed is erected. The altar is in a circular enclosure, about a mile in diameter, surrounded by a high wall. Inside this outer wall are a half dozen rows of cedar-trees, then an open space, which proved in 1900 large enough for the drilling of many British regiments, then there is a central grove of solemn cedars, and in its heart is the circular altar, of pure white marble, one hundred and fifty feet in diameter, in the form of three terraces, with three staircases on four sides leading to the top; carved marble balustrades border the edge of each terrace. The top, about fifty feet in diameter, is paved in white marble stones cut geometrically accurate, with a round stone, some six feet across, in the center, three stones around that, the next concentric circle of nine paving-stones, the next of twenty-seven, and so on, in multiples of three, to the lowest terrace. That central stone is the center of the universe, under the center of heaven; and there, at sunrise, after the night of vigil under the stars, the emperor alone, representing all peoples, prostrates himself to Heaven. A bullock is burnt in an iron crate at one side as a sacrifice. The emperor also worships for the people, at temples of agriculture, earth, moon, sun, and rain god, at special seasons. When a person is mortally sick, he is dressed in his burial robes, taken off the family bed, and laid out on a board,



beside his coffin, if that has been provided. I have not heard this explained.

At death the relatives of the deceased go through a great variety of performances, and have as many priests as they can afford, to perform rites too complex for me to attempt to unravel. The members of the family of a higher generation than the dead do not wear mourning, and a husband will not mourn for a wife. But the members of a lower generation wear mourning in varying degrees from a full suit of white, including cap and shoes worn by the son to only a white girdle. The different white garments may be laid off after a certain number of days, but a son must wear a white thread braided into his queue for three years (?), and white shoes for a less time. He must not shave, either, for one hundred days after the death. Loud wailing is indulged in during the performance of funeral rites, and at the grave while the coffin is being covered. Three days after death the spirit is supposed to return to visit its former home, just as a bride visits her father's house three days after the wedding. The coffin is uncovered, the doors and windows are opened, food and drink are placed before the coffin, for the use of the spirit. The priests attending on this third-day ceremony offer incantations to the Buddhist deity or "angel who receives and leads away." This is probably to insure the soul's going away again, and not haunting the house. The writer has a fine carving in fragrant wood of this receiving angel. It is a human figure, nine inches high, with a fine benevolent face, clothed in gracefully flowing garments, standing on the clouds, and carrying the sun in one hand and the moon in the other.

The soul is thought to return every seventh day after the third day for seven weeks, and the friends go to the grave to offer food and wail on all those seven occasions, just as certain

tribes of the North American Indians do. The place of abode of the spirits of the dead is spoken of as the shady place, and heaven and hell are variously located by different sects. Sometimes a spirit haunts a house or spot of ground. In the American Board compound in the city of T'ung Chou there was, until destroyed by the "Boxers," a very ancient hollow locust-tree, five or six feet in diameter, but just a shell, and only fifteen feet high. It was stipulated in the deed that the missionaries were never to destroy that tree, because it was the abode of an ancestor of the former owner. The purchase price was small, because of the place being haunted.

The burial is in the earth with a high conical mound for ordinary people; but the Mohammedans use a terraced square mound; and the Buddhist priests are buried in the position of the seated meditating Buddha, the mound being an urn-shaped brick structure.

The classics indicate that in ancient times the various utensils, horses, dogs, slaves, etc., of which the deceased was fond, were buried with him. Ancient graves are the source of most of the ancient Chinese coins now in the hands of numismatists. The practical Chinese has found a way to avoid this waste of life and treasure. He makes cheap imitations of tables, chairs, horses, slaves, food, and money, with a framework of Barba-does millet stalks, on which paper is stretched and painted. These imitations are burned at the grave, and the fiction is that they become spirits, or of such a nature that the spirits can use them.

This, like all the ancestor worship, is evidence of a strong belief in an after life. Among other proofs are the following: **Men**, and especially women, who have suffered much and have no power to get revenge in this life, often commit suicide at the door of their enemy, or a daughter-in-law, in the

room of her mother-in-law. One explanation is that they hope to haunt the enemy and bring trouble to him. Just before committing suicide, they often make the threat, "I'll haunt you all your days." This would indicate a belief that spirits of the departed are more powerful than men in the flesh. Another explanation is that they die to save their face, i. e. preserve their own self-respect and the approval of bystanders. This would still indicate a future state in which these things are of value. A third explanation is often true, and has no implication of belief in a future life, unless the supposition is that revenge will be sweet even after death. That is the fact that death will plunge the enemy into a sea of troubles, of endless litigation, or endless debt incurred to provide a proper funeral, for the deceased's relatives will demand an expensive funeral, in atonement for having "persecuted the person to death," as the phrase is. This is the common revenge of a daughter-in-law, and, if she has strong relatives, her only resource to escape persecution will be to threaten suicide.

The practice of giving posthumous honors and titles to worthy dead, and of punishing criminals by tearing up the graves of their ancestors, may imply a belief that it will be known to the spirits, though the effect on the living may be an adequate explanation.

It is also a common belief that every one must be tried in the court of Yen Wang (Rhadamanthus of the Buddhists, or King of Shades) after death, for the deeds done in the body. But there is a widespread impression that good deeds, like giving alms, freeing captive birds and fishes, will be laid up in the records to offset evil deeds. A murderer of my acquaintance has been for eleven years in a sect of ritualists who abstain from intoxicants, opium, tobacco, etc., and he feels that he has laid up merit enough to cover his crime, the more easily done

because it was committed at the desire of a friend. This friend, unable to get vengeance, gave him a fine knife, with the simple remark, that "Mr. Chang is my enemy." He killed Mr. Chang forthwith, and three different officials acquitted him, on the ground that the duties of friendship demanded the murder. A fourth official convicted him, but he drew a lucky number in the lot cast for the pardon of a certain number of criminals at the Empress Dowager's sixtieth birthday, ten years ago. So now, he says heaven also approves him, because of the mitigating circumstances of duty to the friend, and the accumulated merit of his temperate life.

It is common for wealthy men to feed the poor of their city in winter, and give clothing at certain seasons as a work of merit. Every city has places where the poor may get relief, some established by government, some by private philanthropists. I know one man who gives the total profits of a large business to this work, amounting for the past twenty years to ten thousand dollars a year. From conversations with him, I feel that he takes true delight in the work, and he thinks he has no evil deed for which to atone. His money came by inheritance, and he is an honest man; but his explanation of it all is, that he expects the merit to profit him in the after life. He feels that transmigration may be true, and that, if it is true, he will surely be born an emperor, or richer still, next time.

From these facts of (1) ancestor worship, (2) suicide, (3) posthumous honors and punishments, (4) laying up of merit, and (5) belief in transmigration, we see that the faith in a future life as spirit, in many cases, as man or animal in others, is firm and widespread. Yet a common proverb is, "Man's life is a candle snuffed out at death," and with the masses this materialistic view that death ends all is far more potent in re-

ducing men to the level of beasts than any appeal of a problematical future life.

Where I have used the word "worship" it usually means prostration and *kotow* after having lighted incense sticks, in the urn before the tablet, idol, grave, or coffin, as the case may be. The incense is of the nature of a sacrifice or offering, as it is supposed to be pleasantly fragrant to the spirit. Dishes with wine, fruit, grain, cakes, etc., are given to various spirits to please their palates, or supply them with necessary nutrition.

I have gathered the following reasons for offering sacrifices, though not more than one or two would be true in any one case:—

1. One of the most common ideas is that when misfortune has overtaken the man, it is because some spirit is offended, perhaps by his neglect of the sacrifices. He hastens to *placate* the deity, so that he may have good fortune again. Probably the commonest thought in their worship is to get the general good-will of the spirits, so as to avoid misfortune and have good luck for my unintentional offense.

2. The sacrifice often stands for emphasis on a special request, as for children, or for healing.

3. Less frequently it will be offered in thanksgiving for answer to prayer.

4. Pilgrims often say they are in search of peace, usually meaning comfort in outward circumstances, but often meaning peace of mind. It is the testimony of many Christians, that the more gods they worshiped, the less peace they had, i.e., the more anxious they became lest they had, after all, omitted the true god. And then they say they finally become indifferent, and worship any god that is recommended, or any that others are worshiping out of deference merely to their neighbor's opinions. Then, when they get the convincing

proofs of the one true God, their old eagerness returns, and also true peace of mind with it.

It is a strange fact that they never worship the one god to whom they instinctively appeal in trouble. That is "Old Mr. Heaven," who controls wind and rain. Some say he is the blue sky, others say he is the sun, others that he is the one true God, but not the "Heaven" referred to above.

Should any one wonder that, in a nation of Buddhists, Buddha himself is not included among the popular gods, let him remember that Buddha has come to be a generic term for god, and is applied to any god, and also to the Empress Dowager, in common speech. When the founder of Buddhism is indicated, his name, Gautama, is always preferred.

I referred above to answers to prayer. Prayer as a continuous utterance to God, I have never heard of among heathen Chinese. To pray for rain seems to be simply to offer gifts to the dragon god. To pray for a child is simply to burn incense, etc., at the temple of the goddess who gives children. There are many who have no idea what the words for "pray" mean. Educated Chinese know the meaning of the word, not from experience, but from the references in the classics to prayers of confession, self-justification, for mercy, and for remission of penalties in the form of great natural calamities, which occur in the book of history. Probably the emperor prays, but his subjects rarely do.

Just as many do not understand the word for prayer, so many do not understand that for God, and in no case is it safe to assume that the Chinese mind has the same idea as the speaker. The "term question" is sufficient for an extended essay, and I can only touch on it. It was a question in bitter debate among the earlier missionaries as they felt it to be vital; Isaiah xlii. 8 was quoted as proof of it.

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The question is which to choose of three classes of names.

1. A few missionaries stood for the *transliteration* of all the Christian names for God, as Jeh Ho Hua for Jehovah, and this is used in the translations of the Bible. But, aside from this Jewish name, transliteration is not used for other designations of God, excepting, of course, Jesus Christ.

2. A large number advocate the use of the word *shên*, which is exactly equivalent to Greek *θεός*, Latin *deus*, etc. The London Missionary Society and some others have their Bibles printed with this term and the word *ling* for spirit. The main difficulty with this word *shên* is that most men, on hearing it, would understand "animal spirits," or the soul of man either before or after death of the body. In literature it is, however, the generic word for god, and the one God can be designated by it only by adding the adjective "true" or "the only," etc. And then a great deal of explanation is needed to tell why we consider the idols false. We use the word constantly, however, in making these distinctions of true and false gods.

The largest number of missionaries advocate the use of the Chinese name for the supreme god worshiped by the emperor, namely "Shang Ti," meaning "Supreme Ruler," and used as an equivalent of Heaven in a *personal sense*. In the classics the word "heaven" is not used consistently, though often, in the sense of a person, but Shang Ti is so used, generally. This word gives to the average mind, and especially to the reading man, the nearest approximation to our idea of God as Supreme Ruler, but it is very inadequate to convey our conception of God. About eighty-five per cent of the missionaries use it. This term and *shên* belong to the class called native, or ready-made, terms. The Bibles printed with the term Shang Ti use the word *shên* for spirit, and so confusion arises, for the Lon-

don Missionary Society's Bibles have *shên* for God. The objection made to the term Shang Ti is, that it is one of many heathen gods, and it is said that there is a temple in Peking with his image, and Isaiah xlii. 8 is quoted against it.

3. There is a third class of names supported by a very respectable minority of missionaries, perhaps ten per cent. These are our American Board missionaries and the American Methodists, principally. This class of terms is a translation into Chinese of the ideas represented in our Christian terms. The common term would be Tien Chu, or Heaven's Lord, with the London Missionary Society's term *ling*, for spirit.

One objection to this is, that the Chinese mind puts the word "Lord" in apposition to Heaven, making it "Heaven, i.e. Lord," and then we have again a native term, which we were trying to avoid. Another objection is, that it is the Catholic term, and we Protestants are seeking to avoid all semblance of connection with the Catholics, on account of their political aspirations. It was the pope's insistence on this term against the wish of Emperor K'ang Hsi (1662 A.D.) that prevented Catholicism from becoming the state religion of China, and resulted in its persecution by the government.

Both these difficulties have been avoided by the suggestion of Shang Chu, or Supreme Lord. No Bible has ever been printed with this term, and it is doubtful if it ever becomes widely used, as Shang Ti has already such a majority of users. A compromise is being pushed now to take this most popular term Shang Ti, for God, and the term used by the minority for spirit, namely, *ling*. This would avoid much confusion, and will take place easily as the older missionaries, who experienced the heat of the discussion, pass away. Whatever word is used, it must be explained repeatedly before it conveys our full meaning.



It is a little surprising to learn that the Indians after conversion to Christianity still cling to many harmless superstitions. That is not at all the case with the Chinese Christians, for they seem to have a keen instinct that tells them what is "empty and false," and they give up most of their vain customs as soon as they accept the one true God. Christianity seems to give them an orderly scheme of the universe by which they test all their old notions. They are even inclined to leave the old life so completely as to go to the extreme of discarding proper social forms. A few have been known to refuse to kneel to an official when giving testimony in court, saying, "I kneel only to God." They were easily taught, however, that kneeling to the magistrate is not an act of worship, but only a token of proper respect. They feel the insincerity under the old forms of expressing filial piety, and are apt to give them up, especially the *kotow* to parents. We need a better understanding of what is permissible in etiquette among Christians. Possibly the explanation of this difference between Chinese and Indian Christians lies in the fact, that the Indian is of simple, childlike mind, untutored, while the Chinese has the inheritance of ages of philosophical thinking, and reasons instinctively on these subjects. We do not need at all to combat their old superstitions one by one, but give first a true account of the Creator and Preserver of all. Then the darkness or superstition flees before the light. This illustrates that most happy phrase of a missionary to the Mandans, Mr. Hall, "We first give, then take." I believe it is a fundamental and vital principle in missionary work.

My experience leads me to approve, too, of his respect for the religious opinions and feelings of the heathen. It is easy but unwise to ridicule them. They will often join in the laugh, but doubtless their hearts feel the wound, and we lose the hold

on them we want to have. To ridicule or declare false the real ethical teachings of Confucius would be suicidal folly. It is easy, however, to show how incomplete his system is in omitting the fundamental relation of man to God, however perfect it may be in explaining the duties of man to man. Even here it is possible to pick flaws on Confucius' own authority, and to show how his teaching and example have led to corruption in politics, insincerity in word and deed, a low position for woman, and lack of progress in civilization. It is easier still to point out how the nation has failed utterly to practice the good in his teaching. Christianity comes to supplement him by telling of God and the future life, it corrects his errors, and, above all, supplies a motive potent to produce right living. While Chinese religion has not produced an obscene phrase in its sacred books (Buddhist books are in an unknown tongue, be it remembered), while it has not led to revolting rites and crimes as in India, it has failed to check the lower passions of men, and Chinese society does illustrate to some degree the terrible passage in Romans i. describing the result of idolatry.

As for the bearing of the Chinese religion on the subject of the origin of religion, it gives innumerable instances of the degeneration of pure forms of worship, as I have shown. The Sinologues differ as to whether the religion of the classics was monotheism or henotheism or polytheism. It cannot be disputed, however, that the earliest literature shows evidence of higher ideas of the Supreme God, and purer forms of worship, than does the later literature. Yet this must be said: the ancient literature does not mirror the religion of the people, but only of the kings, and the king's worship of heaven now is still a very pure worship. But, alas, the king has adopted polytheism and magic, evidence of degeneracy, with no hope of evolving monotheism, aside from the aid of Christianity.