



THE
URANTIAN®

Journal of URANTIA® Brotherhood

THE RELIGIONS OF CHINA

The West has been fortunate in that many European peoples were able to develop into nationhood under the aegis of one or more of the many sects of Christianity, which in turn had evolved from the guiding principles of Jesus. Ecumenical movements under way are attempting to reconcile the separate theologies of the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, Lutheranism, and the Greek Orthodox Church, as well as other divergent Eastern rites. However, if the influence of *The URANTIA Book* is to touch other peoples that have not been directly affected by Jesuonian teachings, it behooves us then to understand their religious traditions, and, in particular, their cultural ascendancies linked up where possible with the previous currents engendered long ago by the Sethite priesthood. The "URANTIAN Journal" will offer its readers over the coming issues papers about the important religions of Asia, which will point out the intuitive feelings of the different paths taken toward spiritual development in that most populous part of our globe. To achieve the brotherhood of man we must take the effort to understand the way of thinking of other important groups of men, including their idiosyncrasies.

Since the most heavily populated nation of Urantia is China with a population over the one billion mark and since China has been furthest removed from the many religious centers in West Asia, it would seem appropriate to start the series of papers on the religions of China with an appreciation of its religio-philosophical approach while being sensitive to the social cohesiveness it achieved long before other nations gave it a cultural continuity which has endured through the twentieth century.

Visits to Chinese temples in Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Macau, and other cities in Asia usually show images of Buddha, Kwan-yin, Kuan-Ti, the Gods of wealth, and medicine, as well as a panoply of other gods too numerous to enumerate. The religions in China over the centuries have become so blended in with each other by borrowing tenets and rituals that it is difficult to separate the main streams and their ascendancies. As an example, whether the Chinese attend a Buddhist or Tao-

ist temple, they regard the Dipper God as a god of the common people. In fact, one can talk of a general religion which antedates the traditional religions and in which the spirits of heaven are venerated, Shang-ti being the highest, followed by the spirits of earth, the spirits of human beings, and the spirits of animate and inanimate objects.

In historical times Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism have been considered traditionally China's religions, but we shall also see that other influences came to bear here, due to the interest her rulers and religious men took in the different movements taking place at her borders and the international trade that was being fostered through the commercial exchanges with the West by sea and land.

What has given China its social cohesiveness has been the ancestor cult which existed as far back as 1765 B.C. in the Shang Dynasty as has been discovered from oracle bones. The veneration of the departed parents was not done out of a sense of fear or gain. To the Chinese, worship "is to fulfill human relations" with the spirits of the departed, whom they believed to be alive; hence, food is offered to them, candles and incense are lit, and paper money is burned as a gift to them. To their way of thinking: "As the foundation of things is heaven, so the foundation of men is ancestors." Families build ancestral temples and these become identified with a certain clan, where elaborate systems of burial and mourning are practised for the ancestors "who are present," out of a sense of filial piety.

The world identifies social order and statecraft in China with Kung Fu-Tzu (Confucius) who lived in the sixth century B.C. and was very much part of the unusual co-ordination of spiritual forces which brought forth many presentations of religious truth. He deeply influenced the shamans to replace magic with morality (see page 1034) and had an almost perpetual hold on the Chinese mind in emphasizing ethics in their religion. He advocated true manhood as the highest good, the superior man as the ideal being and cultivation of life as the supreme duty of man. At one point in his life he taught 3,000 pupils in the art of poetry, history, ceremonies,

and music. In fact, he was the first Chinese educator who taught in social relationships and being true to one's self. Over the centuries his influence grew, particularly through the amalgamation of the ideas of Menzius and Hsun Tzu on the development of mind. In the second Century B.C. Confucianism became merged with the Yin Yang philosophy of Tung Chung-Shu, which referred to the cosmic harmony of the negative and positive universal principles in nature. Eventually he was deified and temples were built to him in every country as an extension of respect toward the teacher. Although his influence led us away from the Universal Father and the brotherhood of man, he did draw distinctions between Tien and Ti, the first being the Supreme Lord in the sense of omni-presence and all-inclusiveness, and the second the directing power. He also predicted that the "Inner nature of man comes from heaven," which seems to foreshadow the recognition of the Thought Adjuster.

Western scholars on the whole have over-emphasized the influence of Kung in fostering the social integration of the Chinese people and have chosen to leave aside the

underlying influence of Lao-Tzu. In traditional books on Chinese religionists we learn that he was the founder of Taoism and that his central interest was discussing the true nature of Tao, also called the Unnamable, which is the "mother of all things" and antedates Heaven and Earth. We are introduced to a struggle of semantics, which recalls the Kabbalah and its reference to the "Limitless One (En Sof)" and the mysteries of the Divine Name. We learn that from "Tao" there comes one. From one comes two. From two comes three. From three comes all things." A successor to his movement, Chuang-Tzu, stated that Lao-Tzu's leading idea had been the "Super One," who is equated to the Tao. His attitudes soon came into conflict with the conformism of Kung, as he respected also the individual personality and its guiding inner light, when he stated "Keep pure and free your mind through art." It was this movement which stimulated free minds and led the Chinese to higher levels of culture that it reached in later centuries. *The URANTIA Book* informs us that Lao had taught that "...man's eternal destiny was everlasting union with Tao, Supreme God and Universal King." (*1033:6) He also made one of the earliest presentations of the doctrine of returning good for evil: "Goodness begets goodness, but to the one who is truly good, evil also begets goodness." Lao's concept of true faith also foresaw Jesus' explanation when he "...likened it to the attitude of a little child." (*1034:1) How lucid was also the following remark: "'The good man seeks not to retain truth for himself but rather attempts to bestow these riches upon his fellows, for that is the realization of truth. The will of the Absolute God always benefits, never destroys; the purpose of the true believer is always to act but never to coerce.'" (*1034:2) Perhaps the crowning glory of his cosmic concept was "...That faith in the Absolute God is the source of that divine energy which will remake the world, and by which man ascends to spiritual union with Tao, the Eternal Deity and Creator Absolute of the universes." (*1034:4)

Even further back in history, in pre-history, 100,000 years ago, Singlangton, who had assumed leadership of the yellow peoples, proclaimed the worship of the "One Truth" and in the course of time, "From 25,000 to 5000 B.C. the highest mass civilization on Urantia was in central and northern China." (*885:5). The beneficent influence of adhering to a monotheistic religion reflected itself in the development of a superior culture, particularly in contrast to India, which was even then floundering in a wide variety of gods and idols.

THE
URANTIAN®
Journal of URANTIA® Brotherhood

Published Quarterly by
URANTIA Brotherhood
533 Diversey Parkway
Chicago Illinois 60614

Subscription Price: \$5.00 a year

International Subscribers - add \$1.00 for postage

* All quotations within this Journal, unless otherwise indicated, are from *The URANTIA Book*, ©1955, and are used with the permission of the URANTIA Foundation, the copyright owner.

Inasmuch as there is no official URANTIA Brotherhood or Foundation interpretation of the teachings of *The URANTIA Book*, the views expressed herein are based wholly upon each author's understanding and personal religious experience.

Copyright©1984 by URANTIA Brotherhood Corporation. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

In the middle of the second millenium before Christ, the teachers commissioned by Machiventa Melchizedek and his successors penetrated Central and East Asia. The Salemites established their headquarters at See Fuch in China for over a hundred years and their influence stimulated the formation of Taoism. (see p. 1032) When Jesus spoke to a merchant from Mongolia in Caesarea (p. 1429) it turned out that he was a Taoist and was therefore already a strong believer in the doctrine of a universal Deity. Upon his return to his native land he was so imbued with the advanced teachings of Jesus that he taught his family, neighbors, and business associates and consequently his eldest son decided to become a Taoist priest. At that time Taosim still conserved some of its purity. A poem entitled "Ti" (one with God) illustrates this:

Only the way of wholeness and integrity
Can guard the soul
Guard it so that nothing is lost,
And you will become one with the soul
The essence of this "one" blending
Will mingle with Heaven's law.

Unfortunately the teachings of Lao became lost through subsequent additions brought by other religious groups. He himself, however, was deified and worshipped as a member of the Triad, which are the three purities of Taoism, an imitation of the Buddhist Triyaka. In that pantheon "lives" the Lord of the Jewel of Heaven, who lives in the Realm of Jade Purity and populated by holy men; the Lord of the Jewel of Intelligence, living in the realm of Superior Purity and populated by pure men and the third, the Heavenly Honored of Brahma Form, living in the realm of Great Purity, populated by immortals. In the third phase of Taoism a prominent philosopher was finally to write: "There is no Creator and everything produces itself and it is not produced by others." Here we see the complete degeneration of a faith in one God down to his denial. However, Chung Shu, who was prominent in creating the famed Chinese civil service examination system, stated once: "Heaven, when it constituted man's nature, commanded him to practice love and righteousness."

The third great religious influence upon the Chinese people was the gradual introduction of Buddhism into their daily life. However, since it had its origins in India, it is the object of a separate paper. But it should be pointed out here that Buddhism in India was to become too deeply confounded with Hinduism and Tantrism and due to its shift to China, it collapsed as an influence

at its roots. Its influence on the Chinese and Japanese religion proved to be decisive, however.

Politically the modern history of China starts with the unification of the country by the first emperor of the Chin dynasty, Shih Huang Ti, who in 255 B.C. deported the feudal nobility and had all books burned, except technical ones, to ensure the consolidation of the new state. Forty nine years later Emperor Kao Ti established the Han dynasty, which since then has become synonymous with Chinese, as in "Son of Han." Leaning on Confucianism greatly facilitated the organization of the Empire since it emphasized the importance of an obedient family with many duties and no personal rights. The ethical philosophy provided the under-pinning for the Han rulers to obtain popular support for their dynastic power.

Contact with the West had greatly declined from 479 B.C. onwards during the ensuing period of the "Seven Warring States." With the accession to power of emperor Wu Ti in 140 B.C. steps were taken to establish links with the world beyond the confines of his dependent tribes on the borders, which included non-Chinese. Among these were the Hephthalites or White Huns, a Scythian tribe (descendants of Andites, who had lived for 25,000 years in Central Asia), who paid tribute to him. Originally, he wished to engulf all Scythians living in the western part of Central Asia and decided therefore to send out an ambassador to trace the main groupings. His trip took him through what is today Sinkiang, past the Kunlun mountains to the Pamir plateau through some of the world's highest passes. Eventually he found the main groupings in the highlands of Bactria further west, where he also established contact with the Persians and the Greeks. In due course the stretch he had travelled became the silk route, which explains why Greek geographers called the Chinese peoples Seres, their word for silk. The returning caravans brought glass, enamel, pottery, jewels, and horses. Thus, the first great route of world trade was established over the central regions of Urantia. Chinese plenipotentiaries reached the Persian Arsacid Empire in the period 120-104 B.C. and diplomatic contacts with the Roman Empire were established in 166 A.D. Unfortunately for the history of Urantia contact was established too late, as the decline of Rome set in and China became involved in a civil war which ended with the period of the three Kingdoms. Had commercial exchanges taken place for several centuries, world peace would have

been promoted and could have led to the adoption of a few but important languages. The rise of the Arsacid Empire led to the Parthian wars with Rome, which were fought to eliminate the Persians as middle-men. In the meantime, the Arab traders were playing a similar role in the Indian Ocean on the maritime route from China. When Mohammedanism finally conquered Persia, links were almost severed between east and west.

Another major religionist whose advanced ideas make him entirely modern, even though he lived from 479-81 B.C., was Lao Tzu. A militant preacher against Confucianism, he predicated the doctrine that everyone in the world should love everyone else equally and without discrimination. In his main work, he states *inter alia* that: "God exists; that he loves mankind; and that His will is that all men should love one another. He constantly supervises the activities of men, especially the rulers of men." It is almost as if he were describing the Most Highs. He also taught that once the world became one community there would be harmony and love of one's fellow men and concern with their well-being would then prevail. Kindness and compassion would become general, coupled with a basic collectivism. The practice of "chhien aik" or universal love, should be performed. Interestingly, Lao Tzu, when using the Chinese word for God, used the word that was used in the early

Chou dynasty founded in 1122 B.C., namely Shang-ti, or God on High.

The impact of Jesus' thoughts and influence on Chinese life has taken on many characteristics through the different sects that settled down in that vast country. Another paper will deal with the impact of Catholicism, Manicheism, Nestorianism, and Protestantism on Central and East Asia. In respect of modern Christianity, the influence it had on overseas Chinese in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, as well as other Asian countries, will prove to be rather unexpected.

We have seen how the Sethite influence even affected the religious development of distant China. Recent travellers in mainland China report that the ancestor cult has been severely undermined, hopefully for ever. In view of the innate Chinese personality, the country will one of these days rediscover its mission and undoubtedly it stands presently on the threshold of great happenings. It has already digested Marxism, by giving it a distinctly Chinese flavor. As meditation and contemplation return to the daily life of the people, its forward-striding attitudes will once more bring forth a re-awakening of the worship of "One Truth," the Absolute Tao, and a return of the Universal Father.

—Mario Harrington
Oakland Park, Florida

"We cannot judge religion by the status of its accompanying civilization; we had better estimate the real nature of a civilization by the purity and nobility of its religion. Many of the world's most notable religious teachers have been virtually unlettered. The wisdom of the world is not necessary to an exercise of saving faith in eternal realities."
(*1127:6)