

Bible Self-Study Supplement

Confucius

Thus all-embracing and vast is the nature of such a (true) man. Profound it is and inexhaustible, like a living spring of water, ever running out with life and vitality. All-embracing and vast, it is like Heaven. Profound and inexhaustible it is like the abyss.

As soon as such a man shall make his appearance in the world, all people shall reverence him. Whatever he says, all people will believe it; whatever he does, all people will be pleased with it. Thus his name and fame will spread and fill all the civilized world, extending even to savage countries. Wherever ships and carriages reach; wherever the labor and enterprise of man penetrate; wherever the heavens overshadow and the earth sustains; wherever Sun and Moon shine; wherever frost and dew fall, all who have life and breath will honor him. Therefore we may say he is the equal of God.

— Confucius

"A revolution in China changes nothing but the leader. The unwritten constitution of the old sages remains in full force."

Confucius was born in the Kingdom of Lu, about 551 B. C. This part of ancient China was the home of the Lu tribes of

the Lao people who, surrounded by barbarians (the Chinese), had grown lax about observance of ancient Lao customs and were fast forgetting teachings which had been theirs from time immemorial. As his life mission, Confucius undertook the task of reviving and preserving the Lao culture, the last surviving remnant of Atlantean civilization.

Confucius met with but little success during his lifetime. Leaders of the Chinese bitterly resented Lao teachings with their impossibly high standard of virtue for virtue's own sake and their insistence on nobility of mind and character on the part of rulers. The times were decadent; immorality was prevalent. Nobles and barons were particularly conspicuous by reason of their lewdness and arrogance. The austerity of Confucianism was especially distasteful to them. Confucius spoke his mind plainly and without equivocation, so persecution was inevitable. Prominent Chinese leaders issued edicts against him from time to time. His books were burned yet they continued to survive, cherished by devoted, self-sacrificing, disciples.

At last the Prince of Lu insulted Confucius by offering him eighty dancing girls instead of a desired opportunity for demonstrating the art of government. Realizing that he could not hope to see his ideal state put into effect in Lu, he set forth as a homeless wanderer and for many years he sought abroad the opportunity denied him at home.

Not until 195 B. C. was the work of the great Sage recognized as a powerful ameliorating factor by which peace, understanding and mutual respect might be established between China's two races: the Lao people and their conquerors, the Chinese. Then a new Empire came into being through amalgamation of the old and the new, and Confucius was officially canonized as China's supreme philosopher. Temples were erected to his honor in every center of learning. This long overdue recognition proved of inestimable benefit to China; and it will eventually benefit, not China alone but all the nations of the world.

One of the ironies of history is that both Lao-Tzu and Confucius were discredited and rejected by their own — the Lao people whose ancient culture both sought to preserve — but were accepted and honored by usurping strangers whom they and their people had sought to dislodge! This is not the only historical instance of a Savior coming to His own only to be despised and rejected.

The two Sages went about their tasks differently. Lao-Tzu endeavored to prevent the destruction of the Lao State by bolstering it up from within and by the cultivation of spiritual power as a bulwark against aggression from without. He knew that the subtle forces of spirit are more powerful than any material forces ever brought against them, that by the power of spirit (Tao) miracles can be

wrought. He sought to preserve the outer kingdom by first seeking the kingdom of God within, knowing that all else would be added. This is a far cry from the mere passivism of a later Chinese era — a passivism which rendered the people weak and inert, unable to defend themselves against foreign aggression.

Confucius approached the same problem from the outer. He endeavored to preserve the State by a nationwide practice of rules of morality and by mental discipline, thus following proved customs of antiquity and of rulers who had lived the good life. As Will Van Buskirk writes in his *Saviors of Mankind*: "Confucius sought to keep the race intact, independent, pure . . . an end to be gained through a lofty personal morality, a wise and a just government. Under such a condition of widespread tranquility and under a just and benevolent government by Lao princes, the people could maintain their ancient (Lao) customs and arts. Only a brief glance at the teachings of Confucius is necessary to reveal the fact that he was attempting to save the best features of a long-established civilization. This could scarcely be a Chinese civilization which had so recently come to the land and which had progressed only two or three hundred miles beyond Lu nearly three hundred and fifty years later."

At the early age of twenty, Confucius became the keeper of the granaries and overseer of the public fields. Public attention was attracted by the grave and studious youth who sought and found the means of instituting needed reforms. Observing the great disparity between the evil system under which he then lived and the ancient laws of the Lao civilization, he began to proselytize, convinced that in Lao culture lay the remedy for calamitous conditions. The rulers, however, distrusted both him and his ideas while the Lao people rejected him. Nevertheless, he continued to grow in wisdom and renown, and young men from many provinces came to imbibe of his teachings. At length he was appointed magistrate of the town of Chung-Tu where he introduced such amazing reforms, modeling his government upon the ancient plan, that he became the envy of and object of attack by other magistrates, who eventually brought about his downfall.

About himself he wrote: "At fifteen I had my mind bent on learning, at thirty I stood firm. At forty I had no doubts. At fifty I knew the decrees of Heaven. At sixty my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of Truth. At seventy I could follow what my heart desired without transgressing the right."

Classics of the Confucian School are listed as The Book of History, The Book of Divination, The History of the State of

Lu, and the Sage's own Chronicle of the Spring and Autumn. To these are added the works of his leading disciple, Mencius, and a compilation of the sayings of Confucius entitled The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean. Confucius gave himself no credit for originality of authorship, declaring his writings were but compilations from very ancient predecessors. For the most part he concentrated his attention upon matters of personal morality and religious observance because he recognized that through self-discipline an individual became a channel for spiritual illumination designated by Lao-Tzu as Tao. But Confucius was more than a moralist, more than a ceremonialist. He used custom and ceremony as a means to an end, not as an end in themselves. The end toward which he moved was this Tao of Lao-Tzu, the Ancient Wisdom of Atlantis. However, Tao was not to be separated from custom and ceremony or from the arts and crafts of contemporary culture.

Confucius rather suggests that wisdom may be sought and found in the streets of the city, in the homes of people, in workshops, in schools, in the governmental palaces; that it is not necessary to seek the retreats of "plumaged brethren" to find wisdom; that wisdom lies in the hearts of the people and may be conjured thence by the application of social disciplines. In a word, that life itself, everyday life, is the lapidary who uncovers the glory of the gem.

There is nothing essentially new or original in all this, as Confucius was the first to declare. In the golden days of Atlantis every king was also an Initiate-Priest to whom the people looked in reverence for spiritual guidance. Confucius turned his face from the dissolute princes of his day to, contemplate the exalted princes of the Lao Dynasty under whose beneficent reign a great civilization had flourished, a civilization reproduced in the Chinese Golden Age of Empire.

Confucius taught that a nation reflects its own government, that a wise and just governor will rule a virtuous people. He placed the chief responsibility for national goodness and virtue on the rulers, stating that if an official is irresponsible he is guilty in the sight of Heaven and worthy only of death. Ideas such as these were not likely to endear him with the unsaintly ruling class, so it is no wonder he was not raised to positions of power in the government. When recognition was conferred upon him it was a mere show of authority without its substance, and was offered in the hope of quieting his tongue. He disdained such false honors and went into retirement. However, many of his disciples were appointed to positions of responsibility so his influence was not set wholly at naught.

The Confucian doctrine exacted exemplary conduct in official matters as well as purity of personal life. Maxims

addressed to the youth of Confucius' day are pertinent to our own: "When a youth is at home, let him be filial; when abroad, respectful to his elders; let him be circumspect and sincere, and while exhibiting a comprehensive love for all men, let him ally himself with the good. Having so acted, if he have energy to spare, let him employ it in study."

It is not generally realized that Confucian morality teachings have a metaphysical aspect, at which point they meet and merge with the teachings of Lao-Tzu. Thus, from The Doctrine of the Mean: "That which Heaven has conferred is called nature; accordance with this nature is called Tao; the Way is called education." In other words, liberation is not achieved in a struggle against nature but by cooperation with nature.

It fell to Mencius, a disciple, to preserve and perpetuate the Master's tradition. When others sought to distort and misrepresent the words of the Sage, Mencius took it upon himself to restore the teachings to their original pure form and to dispense them to all who sought.

Confucius has been called the great Star shining in the East who should lead his nation to Christ. Certain it is that he pointed to the coming of the Christ when he said that "In the West the true Saint must be looked for and found." His life and wisdom plainly mark him as an emissary from the Invisible Government, sent to make China's millions

ready to receive the highest and purest enunciation of Truth in the day of its coming. Lao-Tzu spoke for the few, the elect; Confucius for the masses. His thought still pervades the soul of China and that nation's civil institutions were built upon his philosophy. More than sixteen hundred Temple-shrines have been erected in the Great One's honor, the most magnificent of them occupying ten acres of land. In his name two sacred festivals are observed each year, ceremonials containing fragments of the mystical rites he taught to a "qualified few."

Thus Confucianism is not merely secular. It is premised on the existence of one Supreme Creative Principle underlying all existence, from which proceed all natural things. Lao-Tzu has shown that in its essence this Principle is not comparable to any manifested thing or natural force; yet it is the Eternal Principle and it operates in a twofold manner: by expansion and contraction. The outflowing pulsation is Yang; the inflowing pulsation is Yin. These may be termed the positive and negative, the masculine and feminine principles of all that is. They are the dual or androgynous force which is called in Mystic Christianity Father-Mother-God. The point of equilibrium between these two aspects is the Eternal, the goal of every esoteric seeker.

Confucius taught much pertaining to the "square man" in whom perfect balance has been achieved. In common with

all teachers of Ancient Wisdom, he maintained that it was this great blending that produces beatific vision and divine at-one-ment with God. True holiness, he declared, consists in having intuitive vision and a recognition of the great twofold Supreme Principle in all its manifestations. The point of equilibrium is the Holy of Holies from which all miracle-working powers flow forth, even the secret of life itself.

Every sacred book the world over is dedicated to this Truth. If the teachings of Confucius continue to work their magic it is because the great Sage knew the Truth and how to invoke it for freeing the souls of men. When the Messiah came He spoke words Confucius would have understood: "I am in the Father, and the Father in me."

Excepting the influence of Christ, that of Confucius has been regarded by many as being perhaps more far-reaching than that of any other single individual. Strong bonds of family love, admiration for learning, zeal for study, and respect for morality have pervaded Chinese life as the direct result of Confucianism.

Confucius belongs to a small company of Immortals who devoted their lives to the elevation of their fellowmen and who began their work where it should begin — with themselves as exemplars. Like many men of genius, he evidenced his inclination in early youth. At the age of fifteen

he was already deep in the study of China's most ancient sacred books. They were the inspiration of his life. At the age of seventy-three he gathered his disciples together and solemnly dedicated to heaven the books to which he had given the greater part of his life in study and to which he had added numerous commentaries. Had he not done this, the ancient teachings would have been irrevocably lost. Beautifully fitting was his final deed when, in the presence of assembled disciples, he raised an altar whereon he placed the revered volumes. Then upon his knees he praised God for having granted him health, strength and opportunity to finish his great undertaking.

The Books of the Kings were the repository of a profound wisdom which refers all creation to a Supreme Being, omnipresent and omnipotent, who projected the ideal that all men should live together in peace and brotherhood. The perfect attunement of man's spirit with that of Divinity has never been more exquisitely described than in these words:

"Heaven penetrates to the bottom of our hearts, like light into a dark chamber. We must conform ourselves to it until we are like two instruments of music tuned to the same pitch."

Confucius was born the year that Cyrus probably became King of Persia. Cyrus was a Master Ego sent to aid in the restoration of Palestine preparatory to the coming of the

Supreme Master. Confucius was also a Master Ego, sent to another and far-distant part of the planet to turn the thoughts of his people toward the same Divine Event, that they might recognize Him when He came.

Early Christian Fathers said that Greek philosophers were schoolmasters ordained to bring men to Christ. They might have added that the Great Chinese philosopher pointed out the path leading to the summit where Christ sits enthroned above the world.

With deep humility of heart Confucius wrote: "I cannot bear to hear myself called equal to the sages and the good. All that can be said of me is that I study with delight the conduct of the sages and instruct men without weariness therein." And again, "Coarse rice for food, water to drink, the bended arm for a pillow, happiness may be enjoyed even with these, but without virtue both riches and honor seem to be like a passing cloud."

As the fame of this Wise One increased, his disciples increased in number. Historians place their number at three thousand-five hundred of whom occupied high official positions, seventy-two were students of the deeper mysteries of their Seer's philosophy, and ten were his personal disciples. One of the latter, Tze-lu, has been compared for impatience and impetuosity with Peter; another, gentle and loving Tsze-kung, with John.

Holy Birth

Confucius — latinized from K'ung Fu-Tsze which means Philosopher or Teacher K'ung-has been called the Uncrowned King of China. Nothing is known of his parents or birth but legends have grown up about him like those with which loving hearts everywhere romanticize their great ones. According to these his birth was attended by the rejoicing of Angels. Celestial music sounded through and around the house in which the babe lay with his mother, Chang-tsai. Like Mary and Joseph, the parents of Confucius saw signs and wonders prophetic of their child's great destiny. They prayed often together in the dell of Ni for the coming of a son. As Chang-tsai walked up the hill, leaves and plants erected themselves and stood very straight to do her honor; on her return they bent themselves to the ground in obedience. One night a voice spoke to her in a dream and said, "You shall have a son who will be a Sage and you must bring him forth in a hollow mulberry tree."

While in reverie another day, she saw five old men who called themselves the "Essences of the Five Planets." They were leading what appeared to be a small cow with one horn (possibly the legendary unicorn). This creature knelt before Chang-tsai and cast forth from its mouth a slip of jade upon which was the inscription, "The son of the Spirit of Water shall succeed to the decaying Dynasty of Chou and shall be a throneless king."

The legend states that as the birth time drew near, Chang-tsai inquired of her husband as to whether there might be in the neighborhood a place called "the hollow mulberry tree." He replied that there was a cave nearby bearing that name. She told him of her dream and they journeyed thither for the birth. On the night when the child was born two dragons kept watch upon the hill and two, spirit ladies hovered in the air, pouring fragrant odours over Chang-tsai. At the moment the babe appeared a spring of clear water bubbled up in the cave and then disappeared as soon as the infant had been bathed in it.

The exact birth date of Confucius is not known but it is said to have occurred on the twenty-first day of the tenth month, in the holy season of the Winter Solstice and the birth-time of all world Saviors. Also, wonders are said to have attended his passing from this earth.

Another legend has it that during the spring months of 481 B. C. a servant of the Duke Chi-Kang captured a small and mysterious looking animal. No one could identify it so they sent for Confucius. He recognized it at once as a lion, and identified it as the very animal which visited his mother to predict his birth. Therefore, he took its reappearance in his old age to be an omen of his death. "For whom have you come?" he asked. Then replied to his own question, "The course of my doctrine is run."

Shortly afterward, early in the morning, his disciples heard him singing softly as if to himself as he walked to and fro before his doorway:

"The great mountain must crumble,
The strong beam must break,
And the wise man wither away like a plant."

Thereupon the disciples came together sorrowfully, saying "The, Master, we fear, is going to be ill."

As they approached him, Confucius addressed them thus: "Last night I dreamed I was sitting with offerings before me between the two pillars my time has come to die." And so it was. He returned to his couch and in exactly seven days was no more of this earth. His death, like his birth, was accompanied by celestial music.

just before his demise he is said to have seen a Phoenix-bird bearing a river ideograph; these he also took to be signs of his transition. A Phoenix and a river are symbols pertaining to higher consciousness — which Chinese wisdom likens to water, for the rushing, turbulent stream of mortality must at last reach the quiet Ocean of the Eternal.

Confucius' teachings have continued to serve his people. The five Constant Ideas are the pillars of conduct; Jen, humaneness; Yi, righteousness; Li, propriety; Chi, wisdom;

and Jun, trustworthiness. These cardinal virtues became an integral part of Chinese life just as the Ten Commandments have of Western life.

In the year I A. D. Confucius was canonized as "Duke Ni, the All-Complete and Illustrious." In the years 492 and 609 A. D. similar canonizations were conferred upon him; and in 657 he was canonized for the fourth time as "The most Complete and Holy, K'ung, the Foremost Master."

So completely is the consciousness of his people attuned to his message that it is said if one wishes to understand the Chinese he must familiarize himself with the teachings of Confucius,

Despite materialistic encroachments, this great Sage will live in the heart and soul of China until the time is ripe for the Christ influence to envelope the land. When that time arrives there will be no greater rejoicing than in the heart of the wise Teacher, for he dedicated himself from first to last to the Great Preparation.

— ***Corinne Heline***