

# EVANGELIZATION AMONG BUDDHISTS AND CONFUCIANISTS

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## PART ONE: GENERAL SURVEY

### 1. *Our formidable rivals*

Buddhism and Confucianism are two major world religions. It is generally estimated that there are more than 400 million Buddhists and about 300 million Confucianists (a figure drastically reduced after the Communists took over mainland China). Geographically speaking, they occupy the vast continent of the world, and have about one-fourth of the entire world population. Ideologically speaking, they have manifested for over twenty-five centuries their toughness and arrogance in their way of thinking. Spiritually speaking, they are strongholds erected by Satan to impede the spread of the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ. Strategically speaking, they are formidable rivals which should not be ignored by any missionary strategist in approaching the tremendous task of world evangelization.

With the great upheaval resulting from World War II there has been a great resurgence of Buddhism. Buddhism was usually considered as a hobby of elderly retired people, but now it has caught the hearts and minds of young people. Buddhism has a systematic conception of philosophy and is taking the initiative of outreach. It even looks down upon Christianity and considers its supernaturalism as unscientific and as a naive religion for the child of superstition. It is no longer a quiet and secluded religion in a monastery; it has turned out to be very aggressive and has even made an impact on the West.

Since the Communists have taken over mainland China, Hong Kong has become a center of activities of Chinese intellectuals as well as a center of resurgent Confucianism. A New Asia College was founded as its headquarters, and a "Manifesto to the world on behalf of Chinese culture" was issued as another significant evidence of its resurgence. Over against the "cultural revolution" in Red China, a "renaissance of Chinese Culture" movement was promoted under the leadership of President Chiang Kai-shek. This movement is in fact another form of the resurgence of Confucianism.

### 2. *The right approach*

The author of this paper was not only an ardent follower of these two religions, but was the founder-president of Kiangnan University which was intended to be the headquarters of the resurgent movement of Oriental religion and civilization. In 1950, while he was on his way to India (in a sense, as his road to "Damascus"), with a plan to unite religious leaders in India to start this movement, he was mysteriously intercepted by God and, by his Providence, led to Java where he was later gloriously converted. So this paper is not merely a piece of academic work, but rather a personal witness of his conversion.

In order to win Buddhists and Confucianists to the Lord, we must first be identified with them and thoroughly understand them (of course, without compromising). This author could have been converted in his teens when he was in a Christian university, but instead he remained in pagan darkness for fifty long years. After his conversion he came to know that those years were not altogether wasted, but rather had a divine purpose in preparing him to know the aspirations and problems of Buddhists and Confucianists so that he could be used by God to win them to the Lord. As Dr. Philip Schaff pointed out in defense of Christianity against paganism, "The only formidable rivals are Brahmanism, Buddhism and Confucianism. These must be met by learned missionaries." An ancient Chinese strategist has said, "The surest way to victory is to know our adversaries." One of the causes of our failure of missions is our lack of such understanding and knowledge.

In formulating our missions strategy, we should avoid the mistakes of the "eclectic" and the "expulsive" approaches — the former will lead to the "suicide of missions," the latter will result in the "suffocation of missions." Our strategy must be "creative" in order to win Buddhists and Confucianists to the kingdom of love and light of Jesus Christ. We are not to be hostile or belligerent to them; nor to oppose them or destroy them; nor even to impose a religion on them. We are just to stretch out our arms to embrace them, to share with them the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, who is the only Savior — the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We are to help them to know this Savior so that they might be delivered from bondage to freedom, from darkness to light, from death to life, and from the power of Satan unto God.

Paul's strategy was neither "eclectic" nor "expulsive." He started from a point of contact in view of the relationship between general revelation and special revelation, but went on by warning the Gentiles to repent, and pointed out the absolute difference between general revelation and special revelation, emphasizing also the supreme uniqueness and finality of Christianity.

### 3. *The danger of theological confusion*

The root cause of the "suicide of missions" lies in theological confusion without differentiating general revelation from special revelation. As Augustine pointed out from his experience of conversion, the apologists of the first century only stressed the similarities of some fundamental principles in Greek philosophy and Christianity; their eyes were closed to the more striking dissimilarities. They overemphasized general revelation and twisted the Bible by quoting Acts 14:17 and especially John 1:5,9, and falsely argued that since the light lights every man that comes into the world, therefore, all religions — including Buddhism and Confucianism — must be good for they all come from the same light, the general revelation of God.

It is true that God does reveal himself to all creatures — to natural men; but the Bible also teaches us that "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God" (1. Cor. 2:14), for general revelation is absolutely insufficient to enlighten man to know the way of salvation and the only Savior of mankind.

There is a group of religious philosophers and liberal theologians who quote the Bible out of context by stressing the point that "Light shines in darkness and lights every man that comes to the world" (John 1:5,9). William Temple, for example, remarked, "All that is noble in the non-Christian systems of thought...is the work of Christ upon them and within them...By the Word of God...Buddha, Confucius, Jesus Christ conceived and uttered such truths as they declared...there is only one divine light and every man in his measure is enlightened by it." Such view might well approve Buddha's claim that he is the "Enlightened One," and also support the self-righteous Confucianists who claim "to illustrious virtue to renovate the people and to press on to the highest excellence," and are "able to make illustrious his lofty virtue." But they are not aware of the great truth as set forth in the Bible, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5); "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9); "Light is come to the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil" (John 3:19); "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing" (Rom. 7:18); "The god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not" (II Cor. 4:4).

#### 4. *The vanity of pagan religions*

From these quotations we can readily see the vain deceit of the claims of Buddhists and Confucianists. For instance, Buddha claimed to be the "Enlightened One," but in fact, he was an atheist. The "Bo Tree" under which he was said to have been "enlightened" might well be interpreted as a sort of "tree of knowledge" which was the root cause of the death of all men (cf. Gen. 2:17; Rom. 15:12). While "Nirvana" is the "raison d'etre" of Buddhism and the eternal destiny of Buddhists, yet Buddha's answer to this life and death issue was very evasive. When a young mother asked Buddha to give a cure for her dead baby, Buddha, instead of raising her baby from death as Jesus did to the only son of a widow of Nain, retorted with sarcastic words, "You thought that you alone had lost a son? The law of death is that among all living creatures, there is no permanence!" Thus, according to Buddha's own words, Buddhism is a "law of death" rather than "the way of life."

Confucius earnestly sought after the way to heaven, as he once proclaimed, "If a man in the morning hear the way, he may die in the evening without regret." But he confessed that he even does not know the mystery of death and life; and his disciples were disappointed because their master never talked with them about the way to heaven; nor did he talk about "the extraordinary things and spiritual beings." Confucius had never claimed himself to be a prophet, but rather confessed, "Learn as if you could not reach your object, and were always fearing lest you should lose it." He also lamentably confessed, "The leaving virtue without cultivation; the not thoroughly discussing what is learned; not being able to move towards righteousness...; and not being able to change what is not good: these are the things which occasion me solicitude." Confucius only teaches "attainment" but provides no "atonement." As he himself confessed, his own attainment was a tragic failure. He was not enlightened about the "Truth" and "Life"; nor does he know about "the Way to heaven."

From the above discussions and from the words and confessions of Buddha and Confucius it is clear enough beyond doubt that Buddha is not the "Enlightened One" as he so claimed; and Confucius is not a prophet even though he was respected as the "Great Perfection, Ultimate Sage and Foremost Teacher" by his followers. Their religions are indeed vain deceit. The teeming millions of Buddhists and Confucianists are in fact blinded by "the god of this world" and shut up in the shadow of death. So it is our solemn task to send "the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ" and "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God..." (Acts 26:18).

#### 5. *The need of theological penetration*

To accomplish this task demands an honest evaluation of our strategy of missions and a thorough examination of the causes of our failure. We do not deny the significant achievements made in the past by evangelical missionaries; but we also need the insight to discover and the courage to confess our shortcomings and recognize the hard fact that the evangelization of the Orient is still an unfinished task. The program of Christian missions has shown our insufficient knowledge of the non-Christian religions and culture in the Orient. There has been a lack of profoundness in our understanding and a lack of theological penetration into the hearts and minds of their people — especially the intellectual.

We have an urgent task to infuse a new spiritual life into this dying world by a "theological penetration" to the system of philosophy and religion which have spoiled millions of souls. We should realize that the religious heritage in the Orient is so deeply rooted that we cannot brush it aside with a casual sweep of the hand, but it demands profound theological penetration. We must know that one of the chief causes of the success of Buddhism was its cultural and doctrinal penetration. It reached the most thoughtful intellect and penetrated into the deeper layers of the hearts and minds of the people. Confucianism too has exerted a tremendous influence on Chinese life. It has dominated Chinese thought for twenty-five centuries. It molded the national character, touched every corner of human activity, and permeated into all departments of life whether moral, social, or political. Without theological penetration — mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and faith in Christ — evangelization among Buddhists and Confucianists would never be a reality.

This author, an ardent follower of Buddhism and Confucianism for nearly fifty years, after his conversion has weighed them in the balances and found them wanting (Daniel 5:27) as "vain deceit" (Col. 2:8). It is his hope and prayer that this paper, although brief as limited by space, will be used by God to help us to understand the fallacy and futility of these two religions through a penetrating theological analysis, so that we might be able to find a creative approach and formulate an effective strategy for evangelization among Buddhists and Confucianists.

## PART TWO: THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF BUDDHISM

1. *Its teachings on God*

Many world-known scholars of religion agree that Buddha denies the existence not only of a Creator but any absolute being. According to the Buddhist world view, "Where there is no being but all is a coming to pass, there can be recognized not a substance." They not only deny the existence of God or the Creator, but even transmute the universe into a void and illusion.

Although there are references to the "gods" in their literature, there is no reference to "God." These gods are the old deities of the Hindus. They are finite beings; they are also subject to impermanence and death, and to sin and moral infirmity. So to the Buddhists the gods were not needed and worship was useless.

Some scholars argue, however, that they do use the terms "the Supreme" and "the Perfect," etc. In his conversation with Upasaka, Buddha did claim that he was the "Supreme Master," "the Perfect Buddha." But, as has been said, the only god in Buddhism is what man himself may become, for self-deification is one of the chief characteristics of heathenism.

Again, some scholars argue that Buddha did not categorically deny the existence of God, so that his position might be better called "agnostic." But, as Kellogg said in this respect, "Whether we call it atheism or agnosticism, from a moral point of view, it is virtual atheism."

As a matter of fact, millions of Buddhists in the Orient do worship Amida and Adhi-Buddha as their "Supreme God." For man cannot live without God; if there is no God, he must invent a God. But this is not the authentic teaching of Buddha; it was the new doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism which was transformed in some measure as a result of its contact with Christianity. Moreover, it is the manifestation of "His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. 1:20) and the spontaneous cry of human beings. So in practice, these Buddhists do not believe according to Buddha's teachings. This is a strong proof that Buddha was not able to satisfy the aspiration of his followers and that his teaching is not the truth. Buddhism is a subtle form of atheism.

2. *Its teachings on man*

a. *On the meaning of life* — According to the "Four Noble Truths," to live is evil in itself because it involves suffering. The origin of suffering is our desire. In order to be delivered from suffering, one must be delivered from existence; in order to be delivered from existence, one must know the true existence is the Nothing. The Nothing alone is certain; Being, which originated in and from Nothing, must again go to Nothing, for it is essentially Nothing.

To such teaching we must answer that the origin of suffering is not desire, but sin. Desire is not evil in itself; only desire which is against the will of God is evil. The extinction of suffering is not accomplished by annihilating desire, but by repentance and surrendering to the will of God and by the purging of sin by the precious blood of our Savior shed on the Cross.

The "Four Noble Truths" only inform us about the disease but they give no medicine; they only abhor suffering but provide no remedy. We also know the suffering of mankind (Rom. 8:22), but we know too that "the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21) by virtue of the "suffering" for us on the Cross by our Savior, who shall "bring many sons unto glory" (Heb. 2:10), to eternal bliss; not to "nothing," not to "eternal extinction." Only those unrepentant sinners, including those misled by Buddha, are going to "Nothing" and eternal perdition! Thus we can see the so-called "Four Noble Truths" are not truth, but horrible fallacy and radical nihilism!

b. *On the nature of man* — Besides the "Four Noble Truths," Buddhists believe the doctrine of "five Skhandas." Man consists of an assemblage of these five qualities: Rupa (form or body), Vedana (feeling), Sanna (perception), Sankhara (reaction), Vinnana (cognition), but none of these corresponds to the notion of soul. The body is constantly changing. Man is never the same for two consecutive moments, just like a candle which is dying by burning. Man is no more than a Nama-Rupa (name and form), just like a "chariot," an illustration they often used, it is a "name" given according to its "form." Such a life-view is quite similar to De Mettrie's "L'homme Machine." Thus Buddhism is in fact materialism. According to the authentic teachings of Buddha, there is no God nor soul. But millions of Buddhists in the Far East, constrained by the witness of their own conscience, believe in the existence of the soul and hope to live in a "Western Heaven" after death. Thus, again they do not believe according to Buddha's teachings, but in opposition to his teachings. This is another evidence of his fallacy.

c. *On the destiny of man* — According to the "law of Karma," the Karma of the previous set of skhandhas of sentient being determines the locality, nature, and future of the new set of skhandhas of each new sentient being. All that you see and feel bodily or mentally of yourself, will pass away. There will remain only the accumulated result of all your actions, words, and thoughts. The question naturally arises about how the record of man can survive since they teach that the soul itself never existed. Buddhism acknowledges a mystery here; no real explanation can be given. Besides, since Buddha denied the existence of God, this so-called "law of Karma" is nothing but a vain imagination, because it has no "lawgiver."

Another doctrine regarding the destiny of man that must be discussed is that of Nirvana. It is the *raison d'etre* of Buddhism; yet no doctrine of Buddhism has been so much in dispute as this. It has been widely maintained that it means "extinction"; but others held the view that it does not mean the extinction of being, but only the extinction of the three fires of passion, and therefore it really means "the highest bliss." Unfortunately, Buddha's answer regarding Nirvana was very evasive. When his most intimate disciple, Ananda, asked him why he had not given a definite answer to this question, Buddha said, "If I had answered 'the ego is,' then that would have confirmed the doctrine of those who believed in permanence; if I had answered 'the ego is not,' then that would have confirmed the doctrine of those who believed in annihilation." But if no

definite answer to such a fundamental doctrine has been given, then what is the foundation of their faith?

In China, where Mahayana Buddhism prevails, Nirvana has been interpreted as a return to the original and all pervading "Buddha essence" (Tao). This is a Chinese anomaly. Here is more evidence that what Buddhists believed is in opposition to, rather than in accordance with Buddha's original teaching.

### 3. Its teaching on salvation

a. *The nature of salvation* — The entire doctrine about the nature of salvation is summed up in the "Four Noble Truths"; it is simply deliverance from suffering through the destruction of desire and existence. Its basic doctrine is presented in Vinaya Pitaka, where we read:

"By the destruction of thirst, attachment is destroyed;  
by the destruction of attachment, existence is destroyed;  
by destruction of existence, birth is destroyed;  
by destruction of birth, old age, grief, lamentation,  
suffering, dejection, despair are destroyed."

This simply means the eternal extinction of the personal self-consciousness, and to attain this is the supreme object of Buddhism. While Jesus Christ promises eternal life, Buddha holds to eternal extinction of individual conscious life as the highest good. Since to live is suffering and therefore evil, the nature of salvation is the destruction of existence which is, in fact, committing "spiritual suicide."

b. *The ground of salvation* — In Dhammapada V. 165, we read, "By one's self, the evil is done; by one's self, one suffers; by one's self, evil is left undone; by one's self, one is purified. Lo, no one can purify another." This teaches that personal merit is the sole ground of salvation. It is not by grace, but by work and one's own merit that one is saved. But the tragic fact is that it also teaches that when one's merit is exhausted, he will again fall into "samsara." Thus, merit is not the reliable ground of salvation. To accumulate merits is as futile as for one to hew "broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13).

c. *The means of salvation* — According to Buddhist teaching, "The true existence is nothing; the nothing alone is certain. Being, originated from nothing, must go to nothing." To know this is the destruction of delusion, and then of thirst and then of attachment and existence and then of suffering. This is their way of salvation. So the basic means of salvation is knowledge. It is not by "faith" that we are saved, but by knowledge — seeking one's own enlightenment; not by the power of God, but by the wisdom of man (cf. I Cor. 2:5). We are told that Buddha was "enlightened" under the Bo Tree, and came to the knowledge of salvation; as he claimed:

"The all-subduing, the all-knowing, am I, in everything that I am, without a spot. I am a delivered one. By my own power, I possess knowledge...In the world, including the heavens, there is no one like unto me. I am the holy one in the world. I am the Supreme Master. I alone am the Perfect Buddha.

Thus we see that Buddhism is a most radical form of self-deification and auto-soterism. If Confucianism can be called Pelagianism, then Buddhism is Pelagianism run mad!

They believe that every sentient being is a "potential Buddha." If a man could only come to this knowledge, he would be instantly saved, but as it is recorded in the Bible, this is the satanic scheme (cf. Gen. 3:5, 2:17).

Dr. P.A. Sorokin, great authority on sociology, warned mankind that "at the dawn of human history the misused tree of knowledge cost humanity its Garden of Eden. A similar misuse now threatens to destroy the very tree of human life." We should surely be aware of misusing the Bo Tree of knowledge, lest we "shall surely die!"

d. *The effect of salvation* — We are told that a saved Buddhist is a man who not only ceases to hate, but also ceases to love; not only ceases to desire evil, but also to desire good; is not only delivered from the desire of long life in this world, but also from the desire to live in heaven. In a word, a Buddhist should have no attachment whatsoever. The secret of salvation is the detachment from all things.

We do not deny the negative value of Buddhist teaching. It is not wrong to urge mankind to die to self, to die to the flesh, to die to the world. But if there is no positive answer and glorious hope, it would only lead the world to pessimism and nihilism.

From the Bible, we see a striking contrast between Christianity and Buddhism. We do not only die to self; we have Christ live in us (Matt. 16:24-25; Rom. 6:3; Gal. 2:20). We do not only die to the flesh (those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passion) but we are at the same time born again in the Spirit and renewed by the Spirit (Rom. 6:4-11; Gal. 5:24; Eph. 4:22-24). We do not only die to the world ("by Christ, the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," Gal. 6:14); but at the same time, God has "delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). While "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up...nevertheless we, according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:10,13).

While Hinayana's teaching cannot satisfy the aspiration of Buddha's followers, many Mahayana Buddhists in China believe in putting their faith in Bodhisattva, who by his infinite compassion and stock of countless merits may deliver them from Samsara, and thus they hope to be received into a heaven of eternal bliss. However this is not Buddha's authentic teaching, but a Chinese anomaly. And according to K.S. Latourette, this resemblance between Mahayana Buddhism and the Christian faith was the result of the Christian preaching at a very early date in the northwestern part of India. Here again we find evidence that there is a strong contradiction between the teaching of Buddha and the practice of his followers.

### 4. Its teaching on the Last Things

a. *Individual eschatology* — According to the Buddhist teaching, man is nothing but "Nama-Rupa," there is nothing substantial remaining after death, so death is the end of man. As Max Muller puts it, "Buddhism is

only a gospel of helplessness and universal doom!" What a striking contrast between Buddha and Jesus who raised the son of the widow of Nain as recorded in Luke 7:11-17! Buddha only knew "the law of death" and he himself was under the law and died miserably after an attack of dysentery. And before his death he helplessly uttered these sad words, "Decay is inherent in all component things!" While Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believes in me though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever lives and believes in me, shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

b. *General eschatology* — Regarding the future of the world, Buddha holds no brighter prospect. Buddhism teaches a future destruction of the world by fire, by water, and by wind. Some scholars have imagined that this is a point of resemblance with Christianity. But such view can hardly stand after careful examination.

In the first place, while the Bible only reveals one such world catastrophe in the future, Buddhist scriptures falsely predict a cycle of destruction and renovation. This presents a pessimistic philosophy of history with no hope of the glory and triumph of the righteousness of God.

In the second place, Buddhist eschatology is nothing more than speculation or vain deceit, because there is no historical fact or sign to prove it. But Christianity is a historical reality. From Genesis to Revelation, from time to eternity, it is all centered in Jesus Christ. Biblical prophecies have been fulfilled and proved by historical facts; and now his second coming is also being fulfilled and proved by the signs of this troubled world. All systems that have not arisen from the revelation of God will then pass away. The hundreds of millions of Buddha worshipers will not have a single votary. Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of the world? He has perished by the power of death and by "the law of death" as Buddha said. But our Lord Jesus Christ, who is over all, God be blessed forever, will be the life, the blessedness and the glory forever and ever.

### PART THREE: THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF CONFUCIANISM

#### 1. *Its teachings on God*

In ancient China, God was acknowledged as a Supreme Being, a Ruler in heaven (Shangti); but Confucius was a humanist, and, though he did not deny the existence of a Supreme Being, he only recognized him as a mere abstract concept of nature, but not as a Person. Confucius was a "liberal," very much like the modern "higher critics." He refused to talk about "extraordinary things and spiritual beings." When he edited the ancient Chinese canonical classics, he must have deleted much material of high spiritual value which was supernatural and beyond his understanding. As the Bible says, though he "knew God" he "glorified him not as God." As a result there came a spiritual degeneration. For most people, God became an impersonal Tien (Heaven) and they became "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened"; and still worse, "they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Rom. 1:21-23). They worship dead men instead of the living God. And thus the tide of ancestor worship began to grow into an overpowering swell.

After the Han dynasty and through the influence of the Neo-Confucianism of the Sung and Ming dynasties, the traditional conceptions of the so-called "Tien-Jen-Hah-Yih" (unity between heaven and man) were developed and culminated into a system of Pantheism. They believed in "Tai-Chih" (the Supreme Ultimate) and "Wu-Chih" (the Supreme Ultimateless), having no shape, body or person whatsoever. Every man possesses the Supreme Ultimate. "One is All, All is One." They deify themselves and in fact, deny the personal God; and became naturalists or "practical atheists."

#### 2. *Its teachings on Creation*

Since Confucius did not believe in a personal God the Creator, the origin of life and of the universe remained as a great mystery and only left his disciples in perplexity. It was recorded in the Confucian *Analecets* that Confucius was not able to give an answer regarding these problems, except by raising an interrogation, "While you do not know life, how can you know about death?" And his disciples expressed their disappointment by saying that "the Master's discourses about man's nature and the way of Heaven, cannot be heard." Therefore, this problem of Creation only left his followers to speculate.

During the twelfth century, Chu Hsi, the greatest scholar of Neo-Confucianism, advanced the view that the universe and all things were composed of two principles, "Li" and "Chi." These two are co-eternal, infinite, distinct, and formed the groundwork of Creation. According to Chu Hsi, "Li" was conceived as the psychic principle — an *elan vital* of dynamic energy, and "Chi" was represented as the material form or the "flesh" of all things. According to such a doctrine there was no room for a Creator. As a result, Chu Hsi led many Confucianists into naturalism, materialism, or agnosticism, and the living and almighty God was expelled and had no relation with the lives of the Chinese people.

#### 3. *Its teachings on man*

a. *On the nature of man* — Confucianism exhibits a keen interest in man. It taught that man's nature was originally good and that its degeneracy was the outcome of ignorance and of a clouded mind. But it failed to explain that this so-called clouded mind is the consequence of the fall of man. Since "sin entered into the world" (Rom. 5:12), man's heart has been polluted. It has been a futile attempt to clean the clouded mind by self-righteousness without the "remission of sins" (Luke 24:47). Only the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, can purify our conscience from dead works (cf. Heb. 9:14).

b. *On true manhood* — The central idea of Confucianism is to develop true manhood. Their chief aim is "to illuminate the illustrious virtue, to renovate man, to press on to the *summum bonum*." Confucianists are taught to establish and develop one's own character as a starting point to develop true manhood. They strive for self-perfection aiming at "the unity between heaven and man." But they are ignorant of the tragic situation of mankind in his "total depravity" and that true manhood can only be restored by turning back to God and becoming "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4) through regeneration.

#### 4. *Its teachings on sin and salvation*

Like all other non-Christian religion, Confucianism teaches nothing about original sin, redemption, forgiveness, atonement, and sanctification.

The three Chinese terms "Tsui," "O," "Kuo," mean respectively "sin," "evil," and "transgression"; but none of them carries anything like the connotation of the word "sin" according to the Bible, even though Confucius did point out that "sin against Heaven leaves man in a state of utter helplessness, and with nowhere to pray."

Confucianists thought that human degeneracy was the outcome of ignorance and a clouded mind, and that sin was simply something incidental not original, external not intrinsic, so that it could be wiped away by one's own effort. They believe that man causes his own downfall, and therefore he can work out his own salvation. As in Pelagianism, regeneration simply consists in one's moral reformation and development.

In the history of China, from Confucianism to Neo-Confucianism, from Confucius and Mencius down through the ages to Chu Hsi and Wang Yan-Ming (1473-1529), those great "sages" taught the Chinese people that there is no original sin and that only acts of conscious volition are considered to be sin. Man is as able to desist from sin as to commit sin. So it was urged that man can stamp it out by sincerity (Ch'eng) or devotion to doing good.

The present author was an ardent Confucianist and a strong advocate of the doctrine of Wang Yan-Ming who stressed the importance of the "unity of knowledge and practice of righteousness," so he has no prejudice against those Confucianists who are really earnest to do good with all "sincerity." But the tragic fact is that "we were dead in trespasses and sins." It is utterly futile to urge a dead man to do good works. We are saved by grace through our faith. One great problem which has vexed all Confucianists in China for several thousands of years is that no man can attain the "unity of knowledge and practice of righteousness." One noted Confucian scholar recognized this fact and said that this is the "tragedy of saints." This argues for us that it is not by "attainment" but by "atonement" whereby we must be saved.

#### 5. *Its teachings on ancestor worship*

Confucianism has been considered by many scholars of the world as a religion of ancestor worship which has been practiced and regarded as a proper manifestation of filial piety. Such false notions have hindered countless numbers of Chinese from accepting Jesus Christ and at the same time posed a dilemma for many missionaries, because the Bible teaches filial piety but condemns idol worship — including ancestor worship.

But the true meaning of filial piety is not ancestor worship. This is a misinterpretation and distortion. According to the first chapter of "Hsaoking" (Canon of Filial Piety), "Filial Piety is the root of all virtues and the stem out of which grows all moral teachings.

"It commences with the service of parents;

"It proceeds to the service of the Ruler;

"It culminates by the establishment of the character."

Again, OuYang Shieu, a noted scholar and statesman in the Sung dynasty, in one of his famous essays wrote, "It is more important to provide respectfully and affectionately for the needs of the parents when they are alive; rather than worship them by burning paper money and spreading a feast before ancestral tablets which are mere superstitious practices."

These classical sources suggest that there is no necessary logical relation between filial piety and ancestor worship. Filial piety is the root of all virtues. It only commences with the respect of parents, it should be culminated in the fear of the Lord, our Father in heaven. Therefore, faith in God is not in contradiction with, but is rather the ultimate fulfillment of, true filial piety in its fullest sense. Strictly speaking, only a Christian can really know and practice filial piety.

#### 6. *Its teachings on the Last Things*

a. *Individual eschatology* — Knowing nothing like the Christian doctrine of immortality, Confucius was concerned primarily with man's earthly career here and now. He avoided answering questions about the life hereafter. Before his death, he lamentably said, "The wise man withers like a plant." He was a naturalist and considered death as a mere natural law of all organic matter, not as the judgment of God (Gen. 3:17) or "the wages of sin" (Rom. 6:23).

b. *General eschatology* — Confucius was a confirmed humanist; the whole system of his teachings was centered in the realm of the things temporal and not of the things eternal (cf. II Cor. 4:18). His disciples were disappointed for they never heard his teaching concerning the way to heaven. His final state is a golden age of so-called "Great Harmony," a kingdom of the righteousness of man, not the Kingdom of God. He promises no hope "for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13).

All humanistic systems, no matter how beautiful and glorious they seem to be, are only "cut flowers." A great sociologist, after his exhaustive search, found no cure whatsoever in any human systems. "In the course of human history, several thousand revolutions have been launched with a view toward establishing a paradise on earth," but "none of them has ever achieved its purpose.... The best way out of crisis was marvelously formulated a long time ago by Jesus Christ in Matthew 6:31-36. Without the kingdom of God, we are doomed to a weary and torturing pilgrimage from calamity to calamity, from crisis to crisis."

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.... But according to His promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (II Pet. 3:10-13).

"And God shall wipe away all tears...and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said: Behold, I make all things new...." (Rev. 21:4-5). This is the hope of glory which is in Jesus Christ, and has been hid from ages and from gen-

erations (Col. 1:26-27). This is the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew...but God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit (I Cor. 2:7-10). We must be ready to tell Confucianists the reason of this hope that is in us (I Pet. 3:15).

## EVANGELIZATION AMONG THE BUDDHIST AND CONFUCIANIST

*Secretary: Wayland Wong*

This study group had several problems that caused limitations to the effectiveness of our discussions. First, the group was small, averaging four or five persons each time, and most of the participants attended only one session. This made it difficult to have continuity and depth. Second, no one had access to the paper before the first session and the writer was not able to be present as a resource. After reading the fine paper, which presented the theology of Buddhism and Confucianism, it was felt that the scope of the paper was beyond our particular need in trying to reach the masses of people in Asia who were mostly nominal Buddhists. This paper would be more helpful for those trying to reach the intellectual Buddhist, and those who are very serious about Buddhist teachings. Certainly, this paper would be helpful for anyone trying to do evangelism in Asia.

Because of the composition of our group, we concentrated upon evangelization among Buddhists. It is believed that the majority of Confucianists are also nominal Buddhists in practice.

First a brief report was given from each country represented: Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Tibet, Japan, and Sri Lanka. Over 90 percent of the people of these countries are normally Buddhist. Thailand has over 50,000 temples and 400,000 monks. Although there are two major branches of Buddhism and there are differences in the practices of each country, the similarities are great.

In some countries like Cambodia, Buddhism is the state religion and is being promoted by the government. In Thailand nearly every government office has a Buddhist image. Some countries have a strong resistance to Christianity. In Sri Lanka the monks try to ridicule it. In Tibet the lamas have warned the people against accepting Christian tracts.

Buddhism is very syncretistic in each country. In Japan the people have Buddhist shrines and Shinto shrines together in the same room. Animism and ancestral worship are all part of Buddhist worship in most countries. (It is reported that Sri Lanka doesn't have ancestral worship).

In many countries the young people are restless and disillusioned with much of what they see. They are searching for something. Many have rejected Buddhism because it has not satisfied them. In fact, many young people now feel it is a foreign religion.

With so much poverty and suffering in many Asian countries it was repeatedly mentioned that the Christian Church must show genuine love and concern for the masses of people through organized efforts to help relieve the people. The church must manifest the love of Jesus Christ for the people.

In trying to evangelize the Buddhist, probably the greatest hurdle is the "foreignness" of Christianity that has been presented and the identity of Buddhism with Asian culture and society.