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POSITIVISM AS A WORKING SYSTEM.

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"Religion originally spontaneous, then inspired, and afterwards revealed, has at length found its ground in demonstration."—*Auguste Comte*.

"The path of thought, as it were, has taken a sudden turn round a mountain; and our bewildered eyes are staring on an undreamed-of prospect. The leaders of progress thus far have greeted the sight with acclamation, and have confidently declared that we are looking on the promised land. But to the more thoughtful, and to the less impulsive, it is plain that a mist hangs over it, and that we have no right to be sure whether it is the promised land or no. They see grave reasons for making a closer scrutiny, and for asking if, when the mist lifts, what we see will be not splendor but desolation."—*W. H. Mallock*.

A NEW religion is offered to Christendom to take the place of that under which it has been educated. It is offered, and urged upon our acceptance for three reasons:

First, because the Christian religion, as generally received, embodies great errors. It has precious truths wrapped up in superstitions. It presents to the minds of men unreal aims, promises fictitious rewards, frightens them with groundless terrors, appeals to low motives, makes men narrow, egotistical, covetous of personal happiness, is opposed to progress.

Second, because the new religion is a *final* religion, founded upon everlasting truth. It can be *proved* to be true by the nature of things. It makes no demand for faith in the unseen. It appeals to the highest motives only. It presents to man, in the place of an imaginary, personal Deity, a Power that is always here on earth; an ideal which, through all ages, is fitted to inspire his enthusiastic devotion.

Third, because Christendom has outgrown her old religion. It was a religion of provisional and temporary value only. Christianity, as commonly understood, whether true or false,

has lost its power. It cannot be *proved*. Its beliefs are therefore rapidly fading from the minds of a generation that requires a proof for everything. We are now, it is said, in the presence of a great opportunity, nay, of a great emergency; there is no time for hesitation. The ground on which we stand is about to be submerged. But, on the horizon, the watchmen have descried the ark of safety bearing down upon us. Now is the time to harden our hearts against the past. Uprising sentiment must be strangled. Old associations must be broken up. It will not do to wait till the inevitable overtakes us. It is the duty of the hour to demolish our old houses, fill up our wells, break down our enclosures in the sight of all our neighbors. "Why," cries an impassioned disciple of Comte, "do we not make up our mind, or try to make it up?" "Why do we not resolve in which camp we will stand? How long shall we halt between two opinions?"

The new way has been set before us in various lights; for all positivists are not followers of M. Comte. One eminent scholar and critic¹ presents the new religion as a restoration. The Bible is not a fallacious guide; but it has been grossly misinterpreted. Freed from the accretions of human superstition and error, it is said to be purely a book of conduct. Christianity is to be the religion of the future; but Christianity purged of its supernatural elements. In the place of a personal God we have a "stream of tendency" — "the not ourselves that makes for righteousness." This, for the "total man," is, "*The Eternal Power, not ourselves by which all things fulfil the law of their being.*"² The cultivation of literature and of the critical faculty is indicated as the means by which our powers, intellectual, and moral may be re-enforced for the attainment of the highest ends.

The school of Comte differs from the above, in presenting as the foundation of its system a newly-discovered and all-important principle, which bears the same relation to the whole life of man that the great discovery of Sir Isaac New-

¹ Mr. Matthew Arnold.

² *Literature and Dogma*, p. 385.

ton bears to the science of astronomy. This principle is a law of human development. "There are but three phases of intellectual evolution, for the individual as well as for the mass, the theological (supernatural), the metaphysical, and the positive."¹ The civilized races of Europe are now entering on the last stage, in which, being freed from all belief in the supernatural, they are destined to merge all their differences in the unity of the one great religion of humanity. The necessity for a positive and powerful religion, which shall keep society at a high pitch of devotion, is insisted upon; and the idea that the religious spirit is disappearing from society is scouted as a pernicious falsehood. "Human nature," we are told, "individual as well as collective, tends to grow more and more religious." "Neither enthusiasm," says Mr. Harrison, "nor discipline, nor faith, nor reverence, nor devotion to a cause, nor love for a power greater than ourselves are at all dying out in the world. They are not growing weaker. They are, even in the midst of change, growing wider, deeper, more universal."²

What, then, is this universal religion? In its most concise expression, it is "Consolidation of co-operation." A more ample statement of it is given in the following extracts from Mr. G. H. Lewes's exposition of Comte's philosophy:³

"Religion is not this or that form of creed, but the harmony proper to human existence, individual and collective, constituting for the soul a normal consensus similar to that of health for the body." "*Humanity* is thus the great collective life of which human beings are the individuals. It must be conceived of as having an existence apart from human beings, just as we conceive each human being to have an existence apart from, though dependent on, the individual cells of which his organism is composed. This Collective Life is, in Comte's system, the *Etre Suprême*; the only one we can know, therefore the only one we can worship."⁴

¹ Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences, by G. H. Lewes, p. 10.

² The Creed of a Layman. — 19th Century, March 1881.

³ Philosophy of the Sciences, pp. 339, 341, 342.

⁴ Comte and Arnold give different definitions of God. But they rely upon

Mr. Frederic Harrison summarizes the situation thus:¹ "The problem is this: Human life and society are in want of a revivifying and reforming force. The force of a great devotion has been the most potent of all reforming powers. It must be a devotion that wholly satisfies and coincides with scientific, logical intellect; and therefore must be not super-human. It must be one that wholly satisfies and appeals to our practical energy, our craving for work and life on earth; and therefore it must not be supra-telluric. Now the old creeds, Bible, and salvation no longer even seem to satisfy these latter conditions. I will not say that these have been thrust aside by science and industry. Rather, they have themselves slipped out of the way, fled from science and industry, got themselves out of sight and out of mind, retreated to some cloud-capped and inaccessible mountains far away from life, never to return. . . . What is there left? I say, what other idea can become the basis of a mundane faith, but the idea of *Humanity*, which includes all? The collective destiny of man in the past, the present, and the future is the real whole, of which all these smaller ideas are but the broken reflections or germs."

Science cultivated in all its branches is the basis upon which the social superstructure is to be raised. Science is a part of religion as religion also is a part of science. Mr. Arnold does not altogether dissent from this view of science.

the same fundamental principles. In positive systems the name of God may be applied indifferently to any one of the fundamental ideas. In Comte's philosophy we find something very like Mr. Arnold's God, "*The Conception of an Invariable Order actually existing without us,*" doing duty as the "Objective Basis of Positivism." And in the same connection (*System of Positive Polity*, Vol. i. p. 19). Comte tells us that in theological systems, the objective basis was supplied by spontaneous belief in a *Supernatural will*. A conception which "in respect of moral discipline cannot be compared either for precision, for force, or for stability, to the conception of an Invariable Order, actually existing without us." Comte really gives us two principles to take the place of the theological idea of God. Where God was conceived of as a moral governor, whose commands must be obeyed, the recognition of an "*Invariable External Order*" is the substitute. Where he was conceived of as an object of love, devotion, and willing service, the idea of "*Humanity*" is offered to fill the void.

¹ The Creed of a Layman.

“To treat science,” he says, “with the same kind of seriousness as conduct does seem, therefore, to be a not impossible thing for the Aryan genius to come to. But for all this, however, man is hardly yet ripe.”¹ Somewhat varying expressions of this general idea might be multiplied, but it would avail nothing for our present purpose.

Underlying them all (the system of Spencer as well as that of Comte and Arnold) we find one common ground of agreement, which may be briefly summed up in two propositions: 1st. The pernicious beliefs of supernaturalism are rapidly dying out of the world, and will soon be numbered among the things of the past. 2d. Man is sufficient to himself. His own faculties, unclouded by superstition, may be depended upon not only to guide him into all truth, but also to provide all necessary motive power for the triumph of his higher nature, and the attainment of all it is possible for him to attain.

A SPECULATIVE DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTION NOT SUFFICIENT.

Now, confidently as these views are put forward, demonstrated though they are said to be, they must of necessity be sharply challenged by the conservative part of the world. An important part of their claim turns upon a question of actual conditions and tendencies, matters of fact, that are open to general investigation. It is upon a further accumulation and more skilful marshalling of these facts that the positivists must rely to prove their position as to the moribund condition of supernaturalism and the need of a new religion. And, on the other hand, it is only with *facts* that the defenders of the old faith can hope successfully to meet and repel the charge that has been brought against them. It is not indeed anticipated that the question on this account is destined to an immediate solution. Until the completion of another cycle of development the one camp will continue to affirm and the other to deny; for facts admit of a variety of interpretations. And, owing to the nature of the case, there

¹ Literature and Dogma, p. 386.

will be many facts, influencing powerfully those who hold the citadel, which cannot be understood or taken into account by the attacking party.

The conservatives may go heart and soul with Mr. Harrison in the belief that religion is not dying out of the world; that, on the contrary, men are growing more and more religious. But, sincerely as they may regret to part company with so earnest and brave a spirit, they are forced to conclusions which are the flat contradiction of those to which he points. In the growth of the religious spirit they detect an evidence of the pervasive and leavening power of Christianity, by which Western civilization has been moulded, and with which it is in every part instinct. And it is with *facts* that they justify themselves in taking the position that all that is worth the name of religion in that civilization is, though not conterminous with the church, the offspring of Christianity. In the religion of Mr. Harrison even they recognize a waif of this same Christianity, though he may, in all honesty, be unable to trace the relationship.

They may, again, agree with Mr. Arnold, that "an inevitable revolution of which we all recognize the beginnings and signs, but which has already spread farther than most of us think, is befalling the religion in which we have been brought up."¹ But on the ground of *facts*, which owing to the nature of the case it must be impossible for him to appreciate as they do, they declare the tendencies of this revolution to be of a nature exactly the reverse of that which he ascribes to them. It is not by the eye of faith alone that they profess to see in this revolution the best grounds of hope for the triumph of an intelligent supernaturalism. Where he sees only destruction, they see purification. Where he sees simply the removal of foundations, they see as clearly the work of rebuilding with better and more enduring material.

But notwithstanding all this,—hopeless as the task may be of convincing those who are on the opposing side,—each party may claim to have, in this part of the discussion, solid ground

¹ Literature and Dogma, p. v.

to offer those who are inclined to side with it. Not so, however, when we come to deal with the constructive phase of positivism,

The question as to the *fitness* of the new religion for the rôle assigned it has been handled almost exclusively, as if it admitted of no other than a speculative treatment. Few subjects have been discussed with greater interest, few have drawn to their discussion so many writers of great and varied abilities. But the results arrived at have been even more varied than the habits of mind and occupations of the writers. From Dr. Ward, who takes the position that, "the absence of religious belief — of belief in a personal God and personal immortality — does not simply *injure* morality, but, if the disbelievers carry their view out consistently, utterly destroys it,"¹ to Mr. Huxley, who tells us "the assertion that morality is in any way dependent upon the views respecting certain philosophical problems a person may chance to hold, produces the same effect upon my mind as if one should say that a man's vision depends upon his theory of light"²; we find many phases of opinion, in each of which supernaturalism receives credit to a greater or less degree as the supporter of morality. While from Mr. Huxley on to Mr. Harrison and Mr. Arnold³ we find another scale of opinion, on which each one strikes a higher note of jubilation over the fact that the black bat of supernaturalism is taking flight, and that thereby a great accession of strength will come to the cause of morality and humanity.

Without doubt this discussion has been instructive and stimulating to a wide circle of readers. It was necessary that the subject should be treated in this way. To some the result has probably been a clearing of the atmosphere, and an increased or decreased degree of satisfaction in holding to one or the other of the views represented. But in no case can the logic have been so convincing that there has not been a sense of something wanting. A reader, for

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. i. p. 532.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. i. p. 536.

³ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 369.

example, who has been carried along irresistibly by the brilliant analysis of Mr. Mallock,¹ finds himself instinctively reaching about for facts by which to test and illustrate the successive positions to which he is led. True, Mr. Mallock refers to facts; but are they not discredited by the very same process which he has so ably applied against the witnesses of the other side?

When the positivists adduce, as evidence of the adequacy of the new religion, the fact that "lives nourished and invigorated by a purely human ideal have been, and still may be, seen amongst us, and the appearance of but a single example proves the adequacy of the belief," Mr. Mallock, while he accepts the fact, condemns the inference. He does this on the ground that the lives alluded to have sprung from a soil that is saturated with Christianity. He accuses the positivists of thinking that they have but to kill God, and the inheritance shall be theirs; they strike out the theistic beliefs, and then turning instantly to life they sort its treasures. He claims that no inferences drawn from a society nurtured on Christian ideals, can have weight until it can be shown that this society has been completely "de-religionized." This he shows farther to be an impossibility; "for it is really but a very small proportion of religion that exists pure. The greater part of it has entered into combination with the acts and feelings of life, thus forming, as it were, a kind of amalgam with them, giving them new properties, a new color, a new consistence."² The more we try to sublimate out of the life around us the beliefs and feelings which prayers and creeds hold pure, the clearer does it become that religion is lurking everywhere.

This objection can hardly fail to commend itself as a sound one. But does it not exclude Mr. Mallock, as well as the positivists, from the employment of facts drawn from life that cannot be de-religionized? And does he not violate his own rule, when, in a controversy with those who hold the beliefs and institutions of supernatural religion to have been,

¹ Is Life Worth Living?

VOL. XXXIX. No. 156.

² *Ibid.*, p. 83

all along, the great obstacles in the way of morality, he appeals¹ to facts that have been evolved under the regime of Christianity, to prove that selfishness is so deeply rooted in the heart of man that no purely human ideals can be relied upon to overcome it? Mr. Arnold, or the late Professor Clifford, would be fully justified in objecting to these facts, on the ground that they are drawn from a society that has been penetrated through and through with the demoralizing beliefs of supernatural religion, a society that is, as yet, only beginning to emerge from the baneful effects of sacerdotalism.

All the facts of the life with which we are familiar, therefore, must be ruled out of the discussion. They are all vitiated by the presence of an element that renders them unreliable.

MODERN POSITIVISM MAY BE TESTED BY CHINESE POSITIVISM.

We are ready then for the next question. *Can we anywhere find an embodied experience which has been evolved from conditions so nearly corresponding to those contemplated by the new religion, that inferences applicable to the problem before us may be drawn from it?*

It cannot for a moment be supposed that we are expecting to find an absolute parallel. History never exactly repeats itself. But if we can find any example of continuous human development in which the main conditions and chief lines of tendency have corresponded to the plan of the positivists, we shall be in possession of a basis for deductions; which will be not, indeed, of the nature of demonstration, but which will throw a flood of light on the question, and assist us to the formation of solid conclusions. Now, a parallel of this kind we may reasonably hope to find, and I believe do find, in the history of a great contemporary nation, which is at the same time a nation of the most far-reaching antiquity.

As to the legitimacy of this course it would perhaps, be unnecessary to say anything, were it not that an eminent

¹ *Is Life Worth Living?* p. 169.

writer,¹ in his criticism of a comparison similar to that which we propose, has seemed to condemn not only the spirit of the comparison, but the method itself. "The history of ancient religion," he says, "is too important, too sacred a subject to be used as a masked battery against modern *infidelity*." That the objection is not intended to call in question the propriety of the method, is apparent from some general principles laid down in the same volume.² But, however this may be, the history of ancient religion cannot be too sacred to be used as a guide to the future. Its chief value to us is that it is human experience, that it is the record of the failures and successes of men in seeking after God, "if haply they might feel after him and find him."

The different religions of the world have performed the same service in the moral sphere that explorers have performed in the physical. They have tested in a great variety of directions the possibilities of religious and moral development. They have demonstrated the impracticability of many promising paths, the deadliness of regions that are theoretically inviting; and the study of them ought to save the world the expenditure of a vast amount of misdirected energy. It ought to prevent the repeated trial of experiments, and new departures in morals and religion, which, as often as they are tried, end only in a more or less complete failure. They have, on the other hand, borne valuable testimony to the universality of the religious nature of man. They speak, in a language that cannot be mistaken or disputed, of the inextinguishable force and persistency of that part of man's nature which leads him to reach after God. And with all their mistakes they compel our reverence for much that is true and heartfelt and elevating in them.

It is with all respect, therefore, that I approach the religious system of China. Nor do I propose to compare it with any scheme of modern *infidelity*. Modern schemes of religion are entitled to respect as well as ancient ones.

¹ F. Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, Vol. i. 55.

² *Ibid.*, p. xxli of Preface.

Christianity, as it is embodied in the life of the nineteenth century, is not such a perfect thing that we can be justified in dismissing only with contumely those impatient spirits who burst away from it. If they are filled with an honest zeal for the welfare of mankind, if they truly believe they have found a better way, which they earnestly preach as a new religion, let us thankfully acknowledge and respect the lofty spirit that actuates them, while we search with them through the volumes of revelation, nature, and human experience for further light on the great interests which we all have at heart.

We have seen that in the speculative discussion of the question as to the ability of man to do without a supernatural religion, there are almost as many shades of opinion as there are writers. China has *tried* the experiment of getting on without supernaturalism. She has tried it, moreover, under circumstances which make the experiment one of special value.

THE NEGATIVE CONDITIONS OF CHINESE CIVILIZATION FAVORABLE.

The negative conditions under which the Chinese system has developed are such as we could hardly have hoped to find without the means of reaching another planet. First among these negative conditions I would place its *isolation*.

China has had a development so nearly independent of all extraneous influence that she may be said to have evolved her long course of history completely out of her own individuality. Buddhism, it is true, began to find its way into China as early as the first century of our era. But, for a long time, only the ethical side of this religion was preached, a side which "did but carry out ideals familiar to every youth in China, the burden of classics, schoolbooks, and domestic training." In the year 835 the Chinese were for the first time permitted to take Buddhist monastic vows. But it was not until the ninth century that the more distinctive doctrines of the religion began to make themselves felt, and not "till the eleventh and fifteenth centuries that anything like a proper

canon of speculative Buddhism was formed.”¹ Until comparatively modern times, therefore, we have to allow very little for the admixture of foreign ideas; and such foreign elements as have been admitted to China have found acceptance as additions, not as substitutions. The heart of Confucianism has not been touched. It has remained supreme until the present day. The Chinese may therefore be said to have, in the main, worked out their own principles to their ultimate conclusions. Cross-fertilization having been reduced to the minimum, we may regard the results offered to our observation as the legitimate product of the seed sown.

We cannot, however, appreciate the full bearing of this condition, without viewing it in connection with another great fact of Chinese development, namely, the existence of an unusually full record of the past. The conservative tendencies of the Chinese, re-enforced by their almost religious regard for everything written, has resulted in the preservation of books which not only carry us back to the infancy of the nation, but which also enable us to trace through the long course of its continuous history, in the works of historians and philosophers, the story of its evolution. It is in the mental conflicts of a nation, rather than in the records of its military exploits, that we read its history. And in this department the literature of China is particularly full and satisfactory. We know not only the systems that triumphed, but those also that were opposed to them. We know something of the nature of the soil at the outset, something of the character of the germs lying in it, how these were developed, how they were modified by a selection partly natural and partly artificial, and we have the results fully set before us in the Chinese civilization of to-day.

To this, again, we must add the fact that the Chinese classics are no longer hidden from us in characters that can be understood by those only who devote a lifetime to their study. They are open to every English reader in a translation which is the result of years of patient labor and of manifold

¹ *Oriental Religions: China.* By Samuel Johnson, p. 748.

comparisons and revisions.¹ We have also many elaborate works on China, some of which make the cultivation of this branch of history as attractive as it is instructive.²

Another condition which makes the study of China one of peculiar value to us is involved in the fact, hitherto little recognized, that, on one side of their nature, the Chinese are our eastern congeners. They have been called the "Anglo-Saxons of Asia." In their independence, industry, personal activity, and within a certain range their enterprise, they are far more like the people of the West than they are like any of the other Asiatic nations.³ There is in them a total absence of that hatred of labor, that dreamy resignation to the idea of fate, which puts such a gulf between our habits of thought and action and those of the populations of India. A modern French writer goes so far as to say: "The assertion may seem astonishing, but we do not hesitate to say that, as regards everything that enters into the composition of well-organized industrial communities, there is infinitely less difference between the Chinese and the English, the French, and the Americans, than there is between these latter and the inhabitants of Spain and Portugal."⁴ The ease with which the Chinese work into the every-day life of America, and their prosperity under the conditions of our civilization, illustrate this point better, perhaps, than anything which can be said about them.

Now if we take this resemblance of the Chinese temperament to our own, in connection with the additional fact that the climatic influences which affect the Chinese over a wide

¹ The Chinese Classics, translated into English by James Legge, D.D., LL.D.

² "China," a volume of "Oriental Religions," by Samuel Johnson, is a work of this character. Its literary merits are such as to create enthusiasm, and its general reliableness, as to the *facts* of Chinese history and development, has been endorsed both by Chinese scholars and the leading Sinologues of Europe. Frequent quotations in the course of this Article will show the writer's indebtedness to it. This indebtedness he warmly acknowledges, while obliged to differ radically from some of Mr. Johnson's opinions and theories.

³ The Chinese and their Rebellions. By Thomas Taylor Meadows, p. 56.

⁴ *Considérations générales sur l'ensemble de la Civilisation Chinoise.* Par M. Pierre Lafitte. Paris, p. 154.

extent of country are similar to those which affect the west of Europe and the United States, we have a condition of things which very much reduces the allowance which, in any comparison of this kind, must be made for race-peculiarities.

All the conditions thus far noticed are of a very general nature, and admit of a wide application. We come now to consider the special fitness of the Chinese field as an aid to the valuation of the new religion. We found ourselves excluded from western civilization by the presence of an all-pervading, disturbing influence. Now, so far as Christianity is concerned, we have here exactly the condition of things demanded by Mr. Mallock,—a condition corresponding to that of a de-vitalized fluid, sought after with infinite pains by those who endeavor to solve the question of spontaneous generation. China had been living five hundred years under the system of Confucius when our Saviour was born; and down to the present day no appreciable effect has been exerted on the Chinese, as a nation, by any form of Christianity. But this is only the beginning of the truth. China is not only free from any suspicion of Christianity; she has been, through centuries of her course, almost free from *any* religion of the kind which the positivists are accustomed to consider objectionable.

This may seem a strange statement in view of the fact that China has now *three* great religions, or rather *one*, formed by the amalgamation of three. But we are at present concerned not with the *results* of the Chinese system, but with the principles out of which these results grew. Each of China's three religions, Confucianism, Tâoism, Buddhism, was at the outset not a religion but a system of philosophy. That it is impossible to extinguish the religious instincts of a whole nation, and that the religious nature if denied a normal development will be sure to manifest itself in abnormal and diseased forms, is a truth to which Chinese history bears important testimony. But this is a consideration that will occupy us later on in the discussion. For the present, it is enough to establish the fact that positivism

has, at one time, had in China a fair field and favorable conditions for its development.

COMPARISON WITH MR. ARNOLD'S SCHEME.

In the view of Mr. Arnold, the great hinderance to the triumph of good over evil in the England of to-day is, "the dogmatic system current — the so-called orthodox theology. This prevents now, as it did then [the time of Christ], that which righteousness really is, the method and secret of Jesus, from being rightly received, from operating fully, and from accomplishing its due effect."¹ Now, Confucianism may be said to know nothing of theology. Confucius, it is true, inherited the traditions of a comparatively pure monotheism, — traditions which are still kept alive in the state worship. But he re-enforced powerfully a tendency already in operation toward the gradual abandonment of the idea of a personal God, and the substitution for this of a somewhat pantheistic conception of an impersonal power pervading all nature, and expressing itself in the physical and moral order of the universe. He strengthened this tendency, not so much by his direct teaching, as by persistently turning his back on the whole subject of the existence of a personal God and man's relations to him. The following translation of a paraphrase of the Confucian doctrine, from the writings of Wang Yû-po, is given by Dr. Legge :

"Here is man with his head toward heaven, and his feet planted on the earth, in the midst of all other existing things. He is endowed with the principle of rectitude all complete, and outside him there are the requirements of duty in his lot; — What is there wonderful and rare that he has to attend to? There are the relations of ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger, friend and friend, and the duties severally belonging to them; no one, intelligent or stupid, can dispense with these for a single day. If besides these, beyond your proper lot, you go about to seek for some refined and mysterious dogmas, and

¹ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 369.

to engage in strange and marvellous performances, you will show yourselves to be very bad men.”¹

The four subjects on which it is said Confucius did *not* talk, were “prodigies, feats of strength, disorder, and spiritual beings”; while the four on which he did talk were “letters, morality, devotion of soul, and truthfulness.” One of the few things which he allowed himself to say about spiritual existences, defines in a few words his position: “To give one’s self to the duties due to *men*, and while respecting spiritual beings to keep aloof from them, may be called wisdom.”² He habitually, in referring to the idea of God, refrained from using the ancient, personal name *Ti*. “Only one case,” says Dr. Legge, “occurs to me in which he used the personal and relative name, except when he was quoting from old books.”³ In every other case he used the impersonal *T’ien*, (heaven). In all this, as has been said, Confucius only strengthened and accelerated a tendency already in operation. But his influence here, as in other directions, rendered permanent ideas and habits of thought which before him were floating and indeterminate; and, as a result, Confucianism, the religion that has been intellectually and socially supreme in China,⁴ developed into a purely rationalistic system.⁵

The Chinese system, again, knows nothing of sacerdotalism. “There is,” says Dr. Legge, “no priesthood in China. We

¹ The Religions of China, by James Legge, p. 105.

² *Ibid.*, p. 140.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁴ The Chinese and their Rebellions, pp. 326, 327, 361.

⁵ It may seem hard to reconcile the above with two well-known facts; namely, that a supreme God is adored in the state worship of China, and second, that the word *T’ien* (heaven), is constantly in the mouths of all the Chinese. With regard to the first it may be said that it has for centuries been nothing more than a state ceremonial. The people have no part in it. The God to whom the emperor prays once or twice a year is not a God with whom they can enter into personal relations. To the educated, the whole observance, so far as it is anything more than the keeping up of an ancient custom, is a symbolical recognition of the beneficent forces of nature. “All cultivated Chinese are — intellectually at least — strict and conscientious atheists”

apply improperly to the religious offerings in its various services the name of sacrifices, and then conclude that in order to offer those sacrifices there must be priests." The emperor is often called the high-priest of the nation, because he once a year makes an offering for the whole people; but he does this simply as their representative. There is no body of priests serving under him. "There are paid officials, who aid in the performance of religious rites; but the function involves no privileges or special honor. Properly speaking, the civilization is secular."¹

Furthermore, there is no claim on the part of Chinese teachers to inspiration. "Confucius is a philosopher; he appeals to reason only; he claims no divine commission, no Messianic destiny. It is in the name of all history and experience, that he announces laws of private and public ethics, and enforces them on his time."² Neither do the Confucian teachers profess to work miracles. All things are referred by them to the orderly working of the laws of nature; and against the encroachments of supernaturalism they have made persistent war.

(Meadows, p. 361). So also the word *T'ien*, so frequently used by all classes, is one from which the old meaning has largely evaporated. As generally used it is in no respect less vague than the definition of Mr. Arnold; it stands for the unknown and unknowable power that works without us. "With regard to creation," says Dr. Edkins (*Religion in China*, p. 94), "they know of no law but spontaneity and self-development in the construction of the existing universe. They consider that all things have come to be as they are of themselves." It is probably true that the identification of the idea of deity with that of *law* or *ultimate principle* did not find a philosophical expression until the twelfth century of our era. But there is as little reason to doubt that Chühi, the leading mind of that literary period, gathered up and gave utterance to tendencies of thought that had been long at work in the nation, and that had been strongly re-enforced by Confucius himself. That the Chinese have actually been able to rid themselves of the idea of a personal God is not what I mean to state. In times of great national calamity the conception of an over-ruling providence, who can be influenced by the prayers and humiliations of the Emperor has found an intense expression. (*The Middle Kingdom*, Vol. i. p. 369). But ordinarily they deny his existence, and intellectually give the same explanation of the conception of an overruling power that Mr. Arnold does.

¹ China, p. 563.

² *Ibid.*, p. 575.

But we shall be asked at this point, Do not the Chinese believe in the personal immortality of the soul? and Does not this belief constitute an important supernatural element? It is difficult to treat this question in few words; but the following statements may be sufficient to show the relation in which the Chinese conception of immortality stands to the present argument. There can be no doubt as to the existence of such a belief, both in ancient times and at the present day. It is wide-spread, and it exerts a powerful influence. But it is also true that it has never occupied the place of a positive dogma in the Confucian system. Confucius found the doctrine in existence, but he treated it as he did the conception of a personal God. He turned his back upon it, and sought to lead the minds of men away from the consideration of what he regarded as an unprofitable subject. But he could not prevent his followers from questioning him about it. The questions themselves show that the belief was not an established one in his day; and all the undoubted utterances of Confucius on the subject harmonize perfectly with his general views on supernatural questions. "I venture to ask about death," said one of his disciples. He answered, "While you do not know about life, how can you know about death?"¹ When asked, again, about the *actual presence* of the spirits of ancestors at the time of worship, he replied: "Sacrifice to the spirits *as if* they were present." Dr. Martin, speaking of Confucius, says, "When interrogated as to the survival of the soul, he refused to admit that it possessed any conscious existence after the death of the body."² So also Dr. Edkins: "The Chinese sage said so little on the subject of the unseen world, that the national tendency is toward unbelief in regard to the immortality of of the soul."³

The belief in existence after death, therefore, while it is wide-spread, is one which has sustained itself without any

¹ Lun Yu, xi. xi.

² The Chinese. By Dr. W. A. P. Martin, President of the Tungwen College, Peking, p. 264.

³ Religion in China, p. 142.

direct encouragement from Confucianism. In its modern phase it belongs rather to Tâoism,¹ the rival of the established system. But it is of still greater importance to notice that the Chinese conception of life after death is on an entirely different plane from the Christian. It is of the earth, earthy. It postulates no higher sphere of action, unless it be for the emperor. It presents the future world *not* as a place of rewards and punishments,² but as a continuation of the scenes of this world in which the departed hover about the places that formerly knew them. The motives which it brings to bear upon men are no higher, and in no important respect different from those which exist in the present life. Such a belief in immortality can hardly be said to constitute a supernatural element. The influence which it exerts does not materially differ from that exerted by the thought of posterity.

We find, then, in China a field clear of those special obstructions which are said to have operated so unfavorably on the cause of righteousness in Christian nations; and we may pass to a comparison of Confucianism with Mr. Arnold's analysis of biblical Christianity. In this analysis we found God defined as "*The Eternal Power, not ourselves, by which all things fulfil the law of their being.*" Of the Chinese conception of God, Mr. Johnson says, "T'ai-ki, Tâo, T'ien, Shang-ti, Li, or however this Supreme be expressed, is always known as principle, law, reason, immanent in the cosmos, speaking through the symbolic meaning of its forms and changes, and interpreted by the reason and heart."³ And, in another place, "As Christianity asserts Fatherhood, so Confucian faith is in the wisdom, order, benignity of righteous cosmical laws, and in man's essential unity therewith."⁴

THE METHOD OF JESUS.

In the teachings of our Saviour, separated from the super-

¹ Legge, p. 87, also Martin, p. 263.

² The idea of future reward and punishment in China is of foreign and comparatively modern origin.

³ China, p. 926.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 613.

natural element, Mr. Arnold finds three leading ethical principles which he denominates, "*The method of Jesus*," "*The secret of Jesus*," and "*Sweet reasonableness*." Now, are these principles peculiar to the teachings of Christ; or are they found in other systems also? It will not be difficult, I believe, to convince the reader that these principles have not only not been wanting in the system of China, but that, on the contrary, they have occupied the place of *fundamental doctrines*; and more than this, that the last of the three, "*Sweet reasonableness*," has characterized the teachings and system of Confucius in a far higher degree than those of Jesus, considered apart from their framework of supernaturalism.

First, as to the *method*. This, following Mr. Arnold's definition, is "*A change of the inner man*." A fuller expression of it is given in the following: "Watch attentively what passes within you, that you may obey the voice of conscience! so you will keep God's commandment, and be blessed; The things that come from within a man's heart, they defile him! cleanse the inside of the cup."¹ Now, we do not have to hunt up and down the Chinese classics to find some isolated sentence which may be construed into a parallel to this. The inward character of virtue is never lost sight of by Confucius. There is no goodness with him except goodness of the heart. The following extracts from the Confucian ethics will show some of the forms in which this was expressed: "The substance of the Odes is in this: 'Have no depraved thoughts.' When one discovers no evil in his own mind, what room for anxiety or fear?" In another connection, "Is virtue from a man's own force, or from another's? How can a man conceal his character? The superior man sees the heart of the mean one. Of what use is disguise? What is in comes out; therefore the wise will be watchful when alone." The following is the Confucian picture of the ideal man: "He prefers concealing his virtue, while it daily grows more

¹ Literature and Dogma, p. 196.

manifest to others. He knows how the distant is involved in the near, and how what is minute becomes manifest. He examines his heart that there may be nothing wrong there."

These sentiments it must be remembered do not originate with Confucius (who claimed to be a compiler rather than an originator). They date back to the earliest times. The inscription on the washbasin of an early emperor was, "Let my heart be daily cleansed and renewed, and be kept clean and new forever." They were insisted upon with even greater emphasis by Lâo-tsze than by Confucius. His constant theme is Tâo (the true way). He who is in harmony with Tâo is righteous without effort. But "when Tâo is lost, then comes [conscious] virtue; when virtue is lost, then comes justice; and when justice is lost, then comes propriety. For propriety is the mere skeleton of fidelity and faith, and the precursor of confusion."¹ It is the same with Mencius. "That wherein the superior man," he says, "is different from other men, is what he preserves in his heart, namely, benevolence and propriety. The benevolent man loves others; the man of propriety shows respect to others."² Chuhi, who stands at the head of the later Chinese philosophers, gives equal prominence and emphasis to this characteristic of true virtue. Speaking generally of the Chinese ideal, Mr. Johnson says: "The Chinese distinguish the highest form of man, the saint, by this, that he perceives and follows the right path *spontaneously*, preserving his unity with the universal order, while others reach wisdom and righteousness by labor."³

THE SECRET OF JESUS.

Pasing on to Mr. Arnold's second principle, "The secret of Jesus," we find in it a "rule of action," conformed to the "busy inward movement created by the method of Jesus." "The secret of Jesus" is "*self-renouncement*," — the dying to "one's apparent self," the living to "one's real self." If

¹ Tâo-te King, xxxviii.

² Mencius, Book iv. Part ii. xxxviii.

³ China, p. 943.

this was pre-eminently the secret of Jesus, it was no less the secret of Confucius. In the "Chart of the Heart," a tabular arrangement of moral precepts, a translation of which is given by Dr. Martin,¹ the two parallel categories are entitled, "The Wisdom Heart," — "The Human Heart." Under the former, for one of the two main divisions, we have "Restrains Self." Under the latter, the corresponding division is, "Indulges Self." As the basis of this system is truth in the inward parts, so the great end and object of all activity is *self-elevation*. Next after the ideal grade of saint comes that of the *superior man*. The superior man is not spontaneously virtuous, though he continually approximates this state. "He is endowed with no special grace by nature, but by carefully perfecting the good originally implanted within him, his way becomes identical with that of heaven and earth and all things, and he arrives at the dignity of a superior man."² Carried into social life, this principle manifests itself in benevolence, the burying of self in serving others. How completely Confucius held this manifestation to be involved in the idea of self-renouncement may be seen in the following extract from the Lunyu: "Seeking to be established, the true man seeks to establish others; wishing enlargement, he enlarges others."³

Equally, if not more, prominent is this principle in the philosophy of Lâu-tsze. Speaking of his one book, the Tâu-te-king, Mr. Johnson, says: "Its constant theme is the abdication of personal claim, and the love and service of mankind."⁴ So also Professor Douglas, "Self-abnegation is his cardinal rule for both the sovereign and the people."⁵ The following extract from the Tâu-te-king⁶ will serve as an illustration of much that is of the same import: "He who bears the reproach of his country shall be called the lord of the land. He who bears the calamities of his country shall be called the king of the world." His favorite figure is that of water,

¹ The Chinese, p. 129.

² Confucianism and Taoism. By Prof. Robert K. Douglas of the British Museum, p. 88.

³ Lun Yu, 6. 28.

⁴ China, p. 865.

⁵ Ibid., p. 192.

⁶ Chap. lxxviii.

which, while constantly seeking the lowest place, is most fruitful in benefits to mankind.

SWEET REASONABLENESS.

The "Sweet reasonableness" of Mr. Arnold contains two closely-related ideas, — that of *mildness* and that of *balance*. "This total stamp of grace and truth, this exquisite conjunction and balance, in an element of mildness, of a method of inwardness perfectly handled, and a self-renouncement perfectly kept, was found in Jesus alone."¹ It was this "total stamp" that produced the "total impression of his 'epieikeia,' or sweet reasonableness." The text quoted by Mr. Arnold as representative of the element of mildness is, "Learn of me that I am mild and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Surely, Confucius was not wanting in mildness and humility. Both in his teachings and his personality these two characteristics stand out in strong relief. "A striking characteristic of Confucius," says Professor Douglas, "was his humility; he scrupulously disclaimed all originality of doctrine. 'A transmitter and not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients, I venture to compare myself with our old P'ang,' was his description of himself. Nowhere did he depart from the language here used, and he resisted every temptation to usurp honors which did not belong to him. Though more deeply versed in the literature of his country than any of his contemporaries, he yet professed himself deficient in knowledge; . . . though looked upon by his fellow-men as a sage, he disclaimed the possession of the qualities of even a *superior man*."² So also Mr. Johnson: "Surrounded by a personal admiration without limit, his modesty is astonishing. He lays claim to nothing but love of truth and virtue; thinks himself good enough at letters, but far from the ability to carry out in conduct what he believes right. He dares not rank himself with the great

¹ Literature and Dogma, p. 215.

² Confucianism and Taoism, p. 147.

ideals. 'It may simply be said of me that I strive to be like them.'"¹

As to mildness, we have only to look at the Chinese ideal of government by kindness and culture,—an ideal insisted upon by both Confucius and Mencius—to be convinced that this very virtue was its distinguishing characteristic. The Chinese civilization, says Mr. Meadows, "has always taught distinctly in words and in books that man should struggle with man by moral and intellectual agencies rather than by physical, should gain him by subduing his heart and his head rather than his body." In this feature of their mental civilization he adds, "The Chinese are practically more Christian than the Christians of the West."²

The force of example is held by Confucius to be the great power possessed by the sovereign. "Tsze-loo asked about government. The master said, 'Go before the people *with your example*, and be laborious in their affairs."³ Again he is asked, "What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?" he replied, "Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desire be for good, and the people will be good."⁴ Mencius developed this principle at greater length even than Confucius; and advanced to the position that the power of example and education must be not only the chief, but the *sole* reliance of the sovereign. "Therefore the carrying out the [feeling of] kindness [by a ruler] will suffice for the love and protection of all within the four seas; but if he do not carry it out, he will not protect his wife and children"⁵; and again, "He who educates them [the people] by goodness will bring the whole realm into subjection. If the *hearts* of all in the whole realm be not subjugated, the imperial power is unattainable."⁶ In view of the representative text chosen by Mr. Arnold, it is interesting to notice that Confucius makes the great object

¹ China, p. 589.

² The Chinese and their Rebellions, p. 120.

³ Lun-Yu, Bk. xiii. chap. 1.

⁴ Ibid., Bk. xii. chap. xix.

⁵ Mencius, Bk. i. Part i. chap. 7.

⁶ Faber's Mind of Mencius, p. 247.

which the superior man while "cultivating himself in reverential carefulness" should constantly keep before him to be this; "He cultivates himself so as to give *rest* to all the people."

Lão-tsze, who is seldom at variance with Confucius where ethical principles are concerned, exceeds him in his descriptions of the power of mildness. His sayings on this point have a startling resemblance to those of our Saviour.

"The good I would meet with goodness. The not-good I would also meet with goodness. The faithful I would meet with faith. The not-faithful I would also meet with faith."¹ "Compassion is that which is victorious in the attack and secure in the defence. When heaven would save a man it encircles him with compassion."² "The sage is ever the good saviour of men: he rejects none. He is ever the good saviour of things: he rejects nothing. His I call comprehensive intelligence. For the good men are the instructors of other good men; and the bad men are the material of the good men (the material they have to work upon)."³ "The great should become lowly."⁴ "The holy man makes himself less than others, and becomes the first."⁵ "He that humbles himself shall be preserved entire." "He that bends shall be straightened. He that is low shall be filled."⁶ "Recompense injury with kindness."⁷

Confucius could not follow Láo-tsze to the full length of this *last* precept. He was always exceedingly shy of extreme statements. And in this we touch upon the predominant characteristic of the man. Balance in everything, the middle way, is his ideal of virtue. "Perfect is the virtue which is according to the constant mean."⁸ One-sidedness, excess, unrestrained enthusiasm, are the root of all evil. It is at this point, that the essential harmony of the ideal of Mr. Arnold with that of Confucius appears with the most striking distinctness. It must be remembered that in Mr. Arnold's

¹ Táo-te-king (Chalmer's translation), Chap. xlix.

² Chap. lxvii.

³ Chap. xxvii.

⁴ Chap. lxi.

⁵ Chap. vii.

⁶ Chap. xxii.

⁷ Chap. lxiii.

⁸ Lun Yu, Book vi. chap. xxvii.

scheme our Saviour is considered entirely apart from his divinity. He is altogether on the human level. He is to be compared as a sage, side by side, with Confucius. From this stand-point it must appear that in some of the qualities already considered, as those of humility and self-renouncement, the Jewish philosopher was far behind the Chinese. His vast claims on the reverence and faith of men, the lofty height which he assumed to occupy when teaching them, the anticipation of his future glory, the constant magnifying of his own personality, — all this stands in glaring contrast to the self-retiring, self-depreciating tone and bearing of Confucius. But it is in the light of the *epieikeia*, the *sweet reasonableness*, the exquisite conjunction and *balance* of inwardness and self-renouncement, in an element of mildness, that the harmony of Mr. Arnold's ideal with that of Confucius, and its discord with that of Christ, appears with a clearness which is irresistible.

Taken apart from their theological setting the sayings of Christ, as a whole, cannot be said to be characterized by *sweet reasonableness*. They are not the measured utterances of a man who is before all else anxious to keep the middle way. They are not the carefully guarded maxims of a philosophic mind humanly but exceptionally farsighted. "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." "And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead." In the case of the young man who had kept all the commandments from his youth up, but had great possessions, Christ made a decision which *seems* to be utterly at variance with "*sweet reasonableness*."

From the stand-point of human philosophy such utterances, and there were many such, are more justly characterized as extravagant, unbalanced, tending to enthusiasm, and the disorganization of society.

As a matter of fact there has through the ages flowed from Christianity a beautiful harvest of just such results. These sayings of Christ have indirectly been the occasion not only of widespread movements which have produced untold suffering to great classes of men, but also of individual heart-aches, conflicts, and self-torturing which the greatest efforts of the imagination can hardly exaggerate. These painful consequences, let it be carefully observed, have been produced *not* by the truths themselves which Christ gave to the world, but by the character of the medium in which they were delivered. They have been the result of the *unqualified, extreme expression* of great principles. It would seem that in his divine wisdom our Saviour saw the necessity of stating his principles in forms of startling unreasonableness, that mankind might be thereby roused from the deadness of a moral equilibrium.

It was necessary that a period of fermentation in races and in individuals should precede that of peace and blessedness. He who promised peace said also, "I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." Fully alive to all the suffering and pity of it, he calmly dropped into the world elements that would fall like vitriol on the souls of men, and from generation to generation continue to produce the most profound disturbances. And all this he did in virtue of a wisdom *not of this world*, which enabled him to estimate truly the value of that which could be obtained, and obtained *only*, at the expense of such fermentation, unrest and suffering.

It is of Confucius, therefore, and not of Christ, of whom Mr. Arnold seems to be speaking when he says, "Never were utterances concerning conduct and righteousness which so carried with them an air of consummate truth and likelihood ;

..... and never, therefore, were any utterances so prepossessing."¹ It is of Confucius, wisely cognizant of the evil which may be done by immoderate statements, wisely apprehensive of the vagaries and extra-beliefs that are likely to flow from language that can lend itself to anthropomorphic views of the Eternal, of Confucius and not of Christ, that all this and "epieikia" are broadly characteristic. The following is the description given of him by an earnest student of his life and teachings.

"His counsels are wise, kindly, and fitting the case in hand; he is no doctrinaire, but a student of persons and emergencies. His incessant theme is the balance of character, the danger of one-sidedness, the mutual dependence of study and original thought, of solid sense and fine taste, that due observance of limits in which the virtue of any quality consists. He is not partisan, but catholic, without foregone conclusions, or arbitrary prejudices, or obstinate egotism. From his followers he conceals nothing, to none refuses instruction, whether rich or poor; meeting the questions of every person on the ground of reason."²

Can we say of Christ, *brought down to the level of humanity*, that he was characterized by freedom from dogmatism and egotism? Can we say that he met the questions of every person on the ground of reason? Did he not, on the contrary, deal in mysteries? And did he not postpone indefinitely the explanation of many things apprehensible by the human reason to a future enlightenment to be given through the Holy Spirit?

CULTURE.

One more important factor in Mr. Arnold's scheme of religion remains to be touched upon. *Conduct* is said to be three fourths of human life. The other fourth of life Mr. Arnold assigns to *culture*. But the three fourths "have relations of a very close kind with culture." If men think "that the three fourths of their nature concerned with conduct are the whole of their nature, and that this is all

¹ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 88.

² *China*, p. 588.

they have to attend to, still the neglected one fourth is there ; it ferments, it breaks wildly out, it employs itself all at random and amiss.”¹ It is from the wild and random action of this neglected one fourth of our nature that our misconception of the Bible, our dogmatic theology, our hymns, and “all religious persecution” have arisen. On the other hand, it is alone by the assiduous cultivation and discipline of this one fourth that we can hope to arrive at that rectified understanding of God and the Bible set forth in Literature and Dogma. This one fourth is therefore the intelligent and directing part of us.

It is plain that culture must hold an important place in any system. But in the scheme of Mr. Arnold it covers not only the same ground that it occupies in an enlightened Christianity, but in addition it fills the space assigned there to the agency of the Holy Spirit and to the law,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind.” It is therefore at the very foundation of everything. There can be no true understanding of duty, no trustworthy inspiration, without it. This was fully understood and deeply appreciated by Confucius ; and the system of culture to which his example and teaching gave the impulse must be regarded not only as the great secret of the power and perpetuity of his influence, but more than that, as constituting his strongest claim to the gratitude and veneration of the Chinese. The Confucian philosophy of life is briefly but comprehensively set forth in the following passage from the tract called The Great Study :

“Those ancient princes who desired to promote the practice of virtue throughout the world first took care to govern their own states. In order to govern their states, they first regulated their own families. In order to regulate their families, they first practised virtue in their own persons. In order to the practice of personal virtue, they first cultivated right feeling. In order to insure right feeling, they first had

¹ Literature and Dogma, p. 382.

regard to the correctness of their purposes. In order to secure correctness of purpose, they extended their intelligence. This intelligence is to be obtained by inquiring into the nature of things." ¹

In the continuation of this passage the order is inverted, and we are told that, when the nature of things was inquired into, knowledge became complete, the successive stages of virtue were attained, and the result was the happiness and tranquilization of the whole empire. Culture lies at the root of everything.

"Tsze-loo asked what constituted the superior man. The master said, 'The cultivation of himself in reverential carefulness.' 'And is this all?' said Tsze-loo. 'He cultivates himself so as to give rest to others,' was the reply. 'And is this all?' again asked Tsze-loo. The master said, 'He cultivates himself so as to give rest to all the people.'"² The final object to be obtained is the happiness and prosperity of the people. Culture is the force relied upon to accomplish this. It conducts the individual, and through the individual the state, to the highest possible perfection.

This conception of the importance of culture has not been allowed to perish in China for want of organization. From the days of Confucius the educated class began to be formed into a power. This power at first met a natural resistance from the governing class; but in a few centuries it had triumphed over all opposition, and made itself the preponderating element in political life. In a country destitute both of an hereditary aristocracy and a priesthood, and in which the idea of caste has never existed in any form, the educated class became the regulating and limiting power. Thus two thousand years ago in China the theory of the right of moral and intellectual superiority to govern was not only carried into practice, but, what was of far greater moment, was so firmly established that it has never, save in some brief intervals, lost its place as the fundamental and vital principle of national life. The ideal, which supports

¹ The Chinese, p. 132.

² Lun Yu, Bk. xiv. chap. xiv.

this principle, permeates Chinese society from the top to the bottom. It reaches nearly every man who is enough of a man to desire to improve his condition. A very small proportion of the people are excluded from government offices by the following of certain callings, as, for example, play-actors and barbers. But with this exception, the highest places in the government are open to those who can prove a right to them by virtue of mental and moral superiority; while a jealously guarded system of competitive examinations secures to each candidate the greatest possible assurance of fair play. Thus a stimulus of the most powerful kind in the interest of culture is constantly in operation.

Nor is the machinery requisite for the drawing out of whatsoever is good in the nation wanting. Schools, academies, libraries, gratuitous public instruction to the masses, have never failed to receive support from both private and public sources. "In no other nation," says Mr. Johnson, "has such honor been rendered to literature and literary men. Academies are at the summit of the state, and public instruction is its first requirement. The number of colleges of the first and second orders is more than two thousand."¹ As to primary instruction, the same author says: "The educational impulse, thus encouraged, expresses itself in the small private schools which are everywhere supported by the people:—day schools in the poorest country towns, and evening schools for mechanics in the cities. . . . All classes are admitted to the schools, without distinction, and the price of tuition is very low—parents, in fact, paying according to their means."² As to libraries, "There are public libraries in every provincial capital, and nearly three hundred celebrated ones. Circulating libraries, new in the West, are in the East immemorial. Thousands of light publications issue continually from the press. Standard works on history, law, and letters are published by the Hanlin (Royal Academy), and distributed to the learned world, which in China consists of at least two millions of scholars."³

¹ China, p. 195.

² Ibid., p. 198.

³ Ibid., p. 196.

As a result of all this, we find existing from age to age in China an enthusiasm for education which can be compared to nothing but that inspired by religion. The popular proverbs express this: "By literature the people become great." "May I be so learned as to hide ten thousand volumes in my mind." The self-denials of the poorest of the laboring classes express it. Often from the time of their marriage they save a pittance from their scanty earnings, that expected children may not be without the means of schooling. "So spontaneous," says Mr. Johnson, "is this religion of culture, that its elementary work is not subjected to an organic rule or system, but is left safely enough to the force of public sentiment, the incentives of social and political aspiration. . . . There is not, properly speaking, any public-school system in China, yet probably a larger proportion of the population have acquired those elements of knowledge which fit them for pursuing the further discipline requisite for position and distinction than in any other nation of the modern world, except perhaps Switzerland and Prussia."¹

But it may be objected that this culture has not the breadth and freedom of that contemplated by Mr. Arnold. It may be said that Chinese education is characterized by a dead level uniformity; that scholars are the victims of a prescribed routine from the bottom to the top of the educational scale; that original thought is not encouraged; and that the splendid organization and machinery which we have been considering, while it promotes education within certain well-defined lines, acts at the same time as a repressive and limiting power. All this is true. But it does not materially affect the significance of the main fact, that the idea of culture has for two thousand years held the place of highest honor and power in China. The Chinese system of culture must be considered not only as a producing power; it must first of all be considered as a product. Its characteristics are not the result of influences working upon it from without. It was not adopted ready made from a foreign source. It is just what Chinese habits

¹ China, p. 197.

of thought have made it. So far as its main characteristics are concerned, it is the creature of the system which it serves;— that system which, after various fortunes, was finally accepted as the moulding power of the Chinese world, and which is distinguished from Christianity by the exclusion of its most important element.

It is important to notice that the deficiencies of the Chinese system are not the result of a lack of broad ideas and liberal theories of culture. True, Confucius took his stand on the ancient writings, and declared his belief in the sufficiency of these for the demands of the most extended education. But it is also true that Confucius made no claim to inspiration or special sources of knowledge. He grounded all he said on reason and the nature of things, and asked for the acceptance of his ideas only as they commended themselves to the moral sense and deliberate judgment of his disciples. The same has been true of the whole course of Chinese literary development. Speaking of *The Book of Odes*, which comes the nearest to a sacred book of any possessed by the Chinese, Mr. Johnson says: "The *Shi-king* is incapable of serving any purpose of ecclesiastical or mental despotism. It knows no mythology, priesthood, ritual, nor caste. . . . Nowhere in the whole immense line of critics is there one pretence of supernatural authority or absolutist commission to interpret this classic for the common mind."¹ And again, speaking of the Chinese literature as a whole, he says, "If the vast record is a monument of patience, rather than of genius, it is at least not the dead hand work of millions, directed by priesthood and caste, but the spontaneous life of a people."²

In other respects, the conceptions of culture entertained by Confucius, and which have been made part of the mental furniture of every educated Chinese mind, are exceedingly liberal. Some passages illustrating this point have already been given to the reader. The following may be added: "Man ascends by nature, as water descends. You may find the measure of heaven and earth, but not of mind." "The

¹ *China*, p. 534.

² *Ibid.*, p. 440.

superior man," says the Chung Yung, "honors his virtuous nature, and maintains constant inquiry and study, seeking to carry it out to its breadth and greatness, so as to omit none of the more exquisite and minute points which it embraces, and to raise it to its greatest height and brilliancy."¹ Confucius says: "When a man does not ask, 'What shall I think of this and of that?' I can do nothing with him." And Confucius is also the author of that much quoted apothegm, "Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous." Mr. Johnson regards the conditions of the Confucian system as far more favorable in some respects to the advance of science and art than those presented by Christianity. Distinctive Christianity, he says, has shown itself antagonistic to science and art, "in so far as it has absorbed the ideal element in theological dogma, in commandments and sanctions of an external will. Confucianism escapes these reefs of theological prescription; and there are foundations for science in its idea of inherent order, and for art in its love of harmony, limit, and relation, as well as for religion in its reverence for ethical perfection, for culture, for humanity."²

The question which forces itself upon us at this point is a most interesting one. Why, when China has been favored by such immunity from hostile influences, — when she has been allowed to develop quietly for more than twenty centuries under a system that both in its intention and its actual conditions has been eminently favorable to the highest forms of culture, — why is it that she has been, and is to-day, distinguished by arrested development, while nations that have run their course under the influence of Christianity are characterized by an almost superabundance of that vital principle of growth in which she is so conspicuously lacking? Mr. Johnson's answer is, "*ethnic peculiarities*" — an answer which, notwithstanding my respect for Mr. Johnson's scholarship, seems to me not only insufficient, but when made to cover such a vast fact as the one before us, at variance with

¹ Chung Yung, Bk. xxvii. chap. vi.

² China, p. 618.

the principles of a sound philosophy. Such a solution of the problems of humanity, if applied generally, renders impossible a comprehensive philosophy of history. It makes comparatively useless to each nation the experiences of others. But in this I am anticipating. In the remainder of the present Article we have to consider the relations of Confucianism to another form of positivism.

THE POSITIVISM OF M. COMTE—HUMANITY.

The consideration of Mr. Arnold's scheme brought us in contact with the ethical and intellectual side of Confucianism; that of Comte leads rather to a comparison with its social and political aspects. The points of resemblance between the elaborately developed social system of Comte and the actual working system of China are numerous, and in some cases the correspondence extends to details. But it is not to the *many* resemblances that I wish to direct the reader's attention. For, interesting as the tracing of these might be, they could lead us to no sure conclusion as to the real harmony of the two systems. It is solely on fundamental, and not on phenomenal, agreements that I rely for sustaining the position that there is to be found in them an essential unity of spirit, of purpose, and of motive power.

We have already seen that the great central object of Comte's system is humanity. This is the idea which is entirely to supersede the conception of God. It is the Great Being, the *Etré Supreme*. "Towards humanity," he says, "who is for us the only true great being, we, the conscious elements of whom she is composed, shall henceforth direct every aspect of our life, individual or collective. Our thoughts will be devoted to the knowledge of humanity, our affections to her love, our actions to her service."¹ "In this point consists the unity of positivism as a system of life."² Now, I am not claiming anything which cannot be abundantly substantiated when I say that this idea of humanity is no less the pivotal principle in the Chinese civilization than in

¹ *System of Positive Polity* (English translation), Vol. i. p. 264. ² p. 263.

the social system of Comte. A just appreciation of this point can be arrived at only through a true comprehension of the Chinese idea of the state. For it is in this that the positivist idea of humanity finds its complete analogue. The following quotations are from Mr. Johnson :

“ What, then, do we naturally find to be his religion? Not personal experience of relation to the infinite and absolute, so much as a body of common interests, averaged, conciliated, and expressed in domestic and political institutions.”¹

All these interests find their source and centre in the idea of the *State*.

“ The *State* is the central spring of Chinese life, and suffers no intrusion of higher sanctions than those itself recognizes.”² “ It is not the ideal of a special state, but the *one only* real state; its relation to the idea of good including allegiance from all nations and races to its own exclusive authority. That unity which Catholicism affirms for its one church universal, the Chinese idea asserts of its one state universal.”³

This religion of the state finds its symbol in the emperor, and its ritual in the worship of the emperor, of great benefactors, and of ancestors. For these three kinds of worship are one, offered at different shrines to the same great central ideal—the ideal of the universal good. The fact of the symbolic character of this worship is brought out with great clearness when we contrast the estimation in which the emperor is held as a person with that which attaches to him in his representative capacity. Mencius, who consolidated and rendered permanent the system of Confucius, lays down with the utmost frankness the principle that the emperor exists only for the good of the people; that he is in his own person hedged about by no sanctity; that he is, in short, the most unimportant person in the realm. “ The people,” he says, “ are the most important element in a country, the spirits of the land and grain are the next, the ruler is the lightest.” And again: “ When the prince of a state endangers the altars of the spirits of the land and grain, he is

¹ China, p. 20.

² Ibid., p. 564.

³ Ibid., p. 267.

changed, and another appointed.”¹ The imperial heredity, it must be remembered, is in China only an heredity of convenience. No divine right appertains to it. Not only in theory, but in practice, it is overborne by the requirements of the public good.

But when the emperor is thought of in his *representative* capacity, the statement of Mencius has to be exactly reversed. The emperor stands in direct relation to heaven. He is the son of heaven. The spirits of the land and grain, unseen administrators of the forces of nature, are inferior to him. The people are his children, and the eyes of all should be directed to him with that filial devotion which is inculcated as the first of all the virtues. It is in this capacity only, as the embodiment of all human interests, that he is worshipped.

“It is the symbolism of the state that rules. The silence into which the individual monarch withdraws before this invisible idea is as perfect as the stillness of his people when he passes through their crowds.” “When all officials in China bow down or kneel, on a certain day in each month, before the boxes which contain their seals of office, received from the Tien-tsze, it is the *State*, not the individual, that the worship recognizes as its end.”² “The emperor, whose dress in the old time was covered with emblematic figures of sun and moon, dragons and insects, mountains and streams, a composite type of all powers, has this universality purely as symbol of the state; which means, after the ideal of the family, providence and obedience in their simplest and broadest sense. Under this form it embraces morality, politics, faith, all in one; it is the beginning and end of culture; it is the only church; and its *ancestral rites embody the initial mystery of faith.*”³

In the italics of the foregoing quotation we have the key to an institution which for the European mind is often involved in the deepest mystery. The worship of ancestors, even if it has been, as Mr. Herbert Spencer affirms, common to all nations at some period of their development, has an

¹ Mencius, Book vii. Part ii. chap. xiv. ² China, p. 272. ³ Ibid., p. 271.

exceptionally significant character, as the religion of a great and enduring civilization like that of China. Its meaning is not easily apprehended by those who have from infancy been educated in the thought that a God of infinite attributes is the only object worthy of man's adoration. But the mystery of it disappears when we once arrive at an understanding of the Chinese conception of the world. Humanity is the sum and substance of all things. It is the highest product of the orderly processes of nature, and at the same time it has been a mighty producing power. The great material civilization which is the inheritance of each succeeding generation, the vast area of land subdued by cultivation, the industrial arts, the traditions, the literature, the social organization, the strong government, in short, all the conditions and possessions which distinguish the lot of the civilized man from that of a wandering savage, are the result of the labors, the self-denials, the conflicts, and the heroism of those who have gone before.

In the absence of a belief in a personal God, who is the Creator and constant Benefactor as well as the Moral Governor, this religion of humanity, arising from the consideration of inherited benefits, appears not only as the most natural, but the most reasonable for a civilized people. It is a cult of reverence and gratitude in recognition of all the earnestness of soul that has gone to the making of those conditions into which each individual is born. It does not stop with the family; but, seeing in all mankind the larger family, it pays homage to every recognized benefactor of the race. Thus the traditional founder of every trade is worshipped by those who follow it, and natural elements are under the care of those who are alleged to have first utilized them for the benefit of man.¹ Where the forces of nature cannot be associated with the name of a traditional person, their unknown guardians are worshipped, as the spirits of the sun and moon, the spirits of the land and grain, the cloud-master, the rain-master, the lord of the winds, the spirits of mountains and

¹ China, p. 713.

hills, of the four seas and four great rivers. "It is yours, O spirits," reads the edict, "with your heavenly conferred powers and nurturing influences each to preside as guardian over one district, as ministers assisting the great Worker and Transformer, and thus the people enjoy your meritorious services."¹

This worship of spirits has been misconstrued in two ways: some have regarded it as the worship of many gods, and have reported the Chinese to be polytheists; while others have seen in it a worship of natural objects, and have treated of it as fetishism.² It is neither the one nor the other. The spirit guardians are conceived of simply as mortals of a high rank who have been placed in responsible positions for the benefit of humanity. In the Record of the Rites and Ceremonies the spirits of the sun and moon, of the forests and rivers, are associated with those benefactors of the race who have "legislated for the people," who have "died in the diligent discharge of their duties," "whose toils have established states," "who have warded off, or given succor, in great calamities"; and the closing sentence of the paragraph is, "It is only such beneficial services that give a place in the sacrificial canon."³ Thus, from whatever point of view we look at the religion of Confucianism, it is seen to be a religion of human uses. Its worship conducted at many shrines is one worship. In the sphere of the family it is quickened and made efficient by personal affection, by the consecration of filial love. But humanity is the larger family into which all lesser streams of devotion flow. The state is the embodiment of this idea of humanity, and the emperor is the visible symbol of it.

It is interesting to notice that the deification of the idea of humanity by Comte has led him to a position with regard to the great dead which is almost identical with that of China. I do not refer especially to the ceremonies in commemoration of the dead which he appoints for the last day of the year;

¹ The Religions of China, p. 19.

² Laffitte, p. 15.

³ The Religions of China, p. 89.

but rather to the principle which he lays down with regard to the dead, of which his commemorative rites are the outcome, — a principle which the following quotations will serve to illustrate :

“ Man always labors for posterity, impelled therein by the labor of his ancestors, who have handed down to him the materials *with* which, the processes *by* which, he works.” “ The sphere of continuity is the connection between the representatives and the agents of humanity. The dead are her representatives, the living are her agents. Since the dead stand pre-eminent in dignity, the living are superior in efficiency.” “ In two senses, then, the living are brought more and more under the patronage of the dead, the dead being at once their protectors and types. The dead alone can represent humanity ; they collectively really constitute humanity.”¹

Here we have a foundation for ancestor worship. And should the system containing this principle ever become the creed of any considerable portion of mankind, it would be not only possible, but almost unavoidable, that the religious nature of man would find its satisfaction in a family cult similar to that of the Chinese.

It may be objected that the analogy between these two systems fails in one very important point, because the Chinese has no look toward the future. But this is a mistake. It has. True, the Chinese ideal is a golden age in the far-away past, when the virtuous ruler Yao and Shun were as saints among men. But the expectation of a return to the perfection of that age, through a grand cycle of evolution, takes hold on the future as completely as if no such actual past had ever been conceived. The constant inspiration of every elevated Chinese mind is the belief in an ideal perfection, both for the individual and the race, to be realized in the future. In speaking of the account of the original condition of mankind given in the old Chinese chronicles, Mr. Johnson says : “ It foreshadows Darwin and modern science, and is a curious

¹ System of Positive Polity, Vol. iv. pp. 31, 32.

commentary on the supposed inability of the Chinese to conceive of progress"¹; and in treating of Confucianism: "It is, moreover, unjust to represent Confucius as laying down a doctrine of *inertia*. The precise contrary is shown in passages already quoted." "It is not claimed that such passages should be strained to the effect of contradicting that appeal to the supposed past as a fixed ideal, which is, of course, the prevailing spirit of Confucian teaching. But they show that hostility to progress beyond the actual present is no part of that spirit."² And, again, in connection with later philosophers: "This ideal humanity, realized in a few, is regarded as the process of history, and as yet to be unfolded in the race. Confucius, Mencius, Tsze-Tsze, Lao-tsze, Chuhi, all describe its fulfilment as the ground of universal harmony on earth."³

THE MOTIVE POWER.

The other fundamental agreement to be noticed, which is of even greater significance than the one just considered, is that of the *motive power*. This is the touch-stone of all religions. Theoretical morality, in its main features, is the same the world over. The great difference between systems is in the conception which is relied upon for the subordinating of man's lower to his higher nature. The perception of the better way is not so difficult. The great difficulty is to find a power which will enable men to walk in it. And the strength of a religion depends not so much upon the elevation of its moral code as upon the sufficiency of its inspiration to develop and fortify that which is best in man. We have already seen that the systems of Confucius and Comte agree in rejecting the conception which is relied upon implicitly by Christianity, — the conception of a personal God, who sustains to men the relations of a loving Father and Moral Governor. A further comparison will show them to agree no less in the great principle which they accept. The *motive*

¹ China, p. 483.

² *Ibid.*, p. 616.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 961.

power relied upon by both is found in "*the subjection of the intellect to the heart.*"¹

That this subjection of the intellect to the moral nature was an accepted principle in the great theological systems, is recognized by Comte. But in those systems, we are told, the intellect was reduced to abject submission. In positivism the intellect is the servant, but not the slave of the heart. "It is for the heart to *suggest* our problems; it is for the intellect to *solve* them." The former arrangement gave to all intellectual progress an insurrectionary character, and led to anarchy. The latter, based on the true co-ordination of man's powers, leads to the highest development and harmony of the individual and the race.² When the heart is supreme, with the intellect in the position of its willing servant, man will move upward to realize the highest possibilities of his being. This will be the result, because of the innate strength of man's altruistic or benevolent instincts, when re-enforced by the recognition of "an invariable order, actually existing without us," and by a systematic study of the laws of nature.²

The corresponding groundwork of Confucianism is briefly summed up in the opening passages of *The Great Learning*. The meaning of its first sentence is given by Dr. Legge in the following paraphrase: "The first object in *The Great Learning* is the making of one's self more and more illustrious in virtue, or in the practice of benevolence, reverence, filial piety, kindness, and sincerity. The second object is to love the people." The next paragraph affirms the primary condition of success to be "mental repose" (the co-ordination of the faculties), which will make possible "calm deliberation." The third calls attention to the fact that "Things have their root and their completion. Affairs have their end and their beginning. To know what is first and what is last will lead men to what is taught in *The Great Learning.*"³ After this follows the passage, a part of which has been already quoted, in which the true order of develop-

¹ *System of Positive Polity*, Vol. i. p. 17.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 13-19.

³ *Life and Teachings of Confucius*. By James Legge, D.D., p. 265.

ment is given, — a development which will lead to the external order of the world. The first step is the “enquiring into the nature of things.” The result of this is “the extending of intelligence.” The extending of intelligence secures “correctness of purpose.” The correctness of purpose ensures right feeling. Right feeling leads to personal virtue. The practice of personal virtue leads through ever-widening circles to the tranquility and happiness of the whole empire.

Both systems emphasize the doctrine of “the innate goodness of man.” Mencius says: “The tendency of man’s nature to goodness is like the tendency of water to flow downward,”¹ — a saying which, after a prolonged metaphysical controversy, became firmly established as a fundamental doctrine of Confucianism. In like manner, Comte lays down the principle that “the doctrine of innate altruism alone enables us to establish a systematic morality.”² “Theology and metaphysics,” he tells us, “reject instinctive altruism more unreservedly than they reject sociological prevision. The innateness of the benevolent instincts and the earth’s motion are the most important results of modern science.”²

Both systems, again, give great prominence to moral perfection. “From the emperor down to the mass of the people,” says The Great Learning, “all must consider the cultivation of the person [personal virtue] the root of everything besides.”³ In harmony with this maxim, *ethical teaching* takes the precedence of every other branch in the Chinese schools. “Chinese civilization,” says Mr. Johnson, “rests on the systematic preference of moral to physical forces. This is as true of its political method as of its literary culture.”⁴ So also in the system of Comte. “The highest progress of man and of society consists in gradual increase of that mastery which man alone can attain over all his defects, especially those of his moral nature.”⁴ It was

¹ Mencius, Bk. vi. ch. i. sec. 2. ² System of Positive Polity, Vol. iv. p. 18.

³ Life and Teachings of Confucius, p. 267.

⁴ China, p. 389.

⁴ System of Positive Polity, Vol. i. p. 262.

impossible, he tells us, for Greek and Roman society to form a distinct conception of the great problem of our moral nature, because with them morals were invariably subordinate to politics. But of positivism he says: "It supplies a direct solution, so far as a solution is possible, of the great problem of the Middle Ages,— the subordination of politics to morals. For this follows at once from the principle that social sympathy should predominate over self-love."¹ As to the position of Confucianism in this respect we find the following: "The civilizations have said, 'Politics and morality are distinct spheres.' Not so say the far-descended state-builders of the tribe of Han; "politics are morality or they are nothing."²

The doctrine of the personal existence of the soul after death, and the promise of an ever-extending posthumous development of its powers and capacities, has been, under Christianity, one of the most powerful incentives to holy living and earnest striving. Positivism in rejecting this doctrine, as an unfounded dream, gives as a substitute, for the inspiration of its followers, the idea which has been embodied in the phrase "*corporate immortality*,"³ and to which a wide currency has been given by George Eliot's poem.

"Oh may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence."

It is the assurance that though personal consciousness ends at death, the achievements of the individual will live on in the improved life of society. A similar incentive is not wanting to Confucianism. "This is the form," Dr. Legge tells us, "in which the doctrine of future retribution is now generally spoken of by Chinese scholars: 'Virtue and vice have their appropriate issues if not in the experience of the individual (in this world) *certainly* in that of his posterity.'⁴ "If a wise and good man do not get distinguished in his own time," said a dying statesman, "there is sure to be among

¹ System of Positive Polity, Vol. i. p. 264.

² China, p. 250.

³ Scotch Sermons.

⁴ The Religions of China, p. 116.

his posterity some one of vast intelligence." In the words of Confucius: "The family that *accumulates* goodness is sure to have superabundant happiness. The family that *accumulates* evil is sure to have superabundant misery." From the wider point of view of the whole of the Confucian teaching on this point, Mr. Johnson makes the following summing up: "For the worship of an external Creator, the Mongolian in China and Japan substitutes *grateful recognition of the inherence of character after death in the body and substance of the race.*"¹

It will not do to pass by that oft-repeated watch-word of Comte, "Live for others." Do we find this principle made prominent in Confucianism? In his "remarks on the ethical philosophy of the Chinese,"² Dr. Martin says: "Benevolence leads the way, in prompting to positive efforts for the good of others." In the enumeration of the virtues Mencius places wisdom first, and benevolence (in the broad sense of altruism) next. "Can I not," he says, "continue in benevolence, and do I wander from righteousness? This is termed 'casting one's self away.' Benevolence is the peaceful habitation of men."³ But it is not alone in a generalized and abstract form that this prominence is given to it. As a concrete, practical working power it constitutes the very essence of Confucianism. The burden of all Chinese teaching, both in the schools and in the public instruction given twice a month all over the empire, is *altruism*. The first precept of the Sacred Edict enjoins filial piety. "This," says Dr. Legge, "is the first and greatest of the commandments in China." From infancy the children of Chinese parents are taught to look away from themselves, to minister, as soon as that is possible, in place of being ministered unto. And the motive which has raised this principle to the highest place, is the recognition of the importance of giving an altruistic bent to the character during the period when the most enduring impressions are made. At every step onward

¹ China, p. 560.

² The Chinese, p. 141.

³ Faber's Mind of Mencius, p. 102.

the growing child has impressed upon him the duties which grow out of his manifold human relations. The duties of elder brother and younger, of husband and wife, of father and son, of friend and friend, of subject and ruler, are in turn urged upon his attention. If the prominence given to the first principle has often led, in practice, to social tyranny, it has not been because of an omission in the system to provide for the development of unselfishness in adults; but because of the insufficiency of its motive power to restrain men from taking advantage of the opportunity for social tyranny which the magnifying of the duties of children continually affords. "The house-father," says Mr. Johnson, "was not, with all his authority, the embodiment of rights more than of duties."¹ So also as regards brothers the Sacred Edict says, "If the younger have little talent, and the elder support him, this is simply his duty."²

Other agreements of the two systems are interesting as showing how identity of principles has resulted in a similarity of development. The great prominence given to the idea of the family, and the extent to which its influence is relied upon for the realization of the ideal order, is one of these agreements. Another appears in the excessive mechanizing and regulation of the human faculties, a characteristic which is a natural, not to say necessary, outgrowth of an exclusive reliance on human agencies and ideals. Other examples are to be found in the division of society into classes, combined with the rejection of the principle of heredity; in the resemblance of the *speculative class* of Comte to the *literati* of China; and in many striking coincidences in rites and in the objects of public and private devotion.

CONCLUSION.

In the positive principles of the two systems to which I have called attention there is nothing, it will be seen, which cannot be received by an enlightened Christianity. The innate goodness of human nature, as Mencius himself explains it (the

¹ China, p. 684.

² Mencius, Book vi. chap. vi. sec. 5.

being "constituted for what is good" ¹⁾, belongs as much to Christianity as to Confucianism. It is only when these systems affirm the *sufficiency* of these principles, and reject everything pertaining to the domain of supernaturalism, that they take up a distinctive position—a position, that is, which distinguishes them from Christianity. In presenting the reader with these points of agreement, I do not forget that the modern system inherits a condition of things very different from that in which the elder took its rise; nor would I deny that the results that would flow from the adoption of modern positivism would, in the first stages of practice, be extensively modified by these conditions. But taking my stand on the two principles that *like produces like* and that *man is essentially the same in all ages*, while disallowing the claim of the positivists to the *permanent* possession of the distinctive fruits of Christian civilization, I offer this comparison as a basis for the testing of a system which is now asking acceptance on theoretical grounds.

In a subsequent Article the results of Chinese positivism will be considered, and some application of the facts brought out will be made; first, to the theories of those who prophesy the worst things of positivism, and second, to the claims of its advocates.

I shall endeavor to show that China, notwithstanding the obscuring of belief in a personal God and personal immortality, has had some marked successes, and that these successes have been very directly the outcome of Confucianism. *Humanity*, the collective good of the collective life, has been the inspiring principle of its civilization, and in the pursuit of this great end China has honestly and zealously applied herself to carrying out the method of the classics,—the method of *government by education*.

It will be shown further that the result of this has been; first, the production of political and social prosperity. Confucianism has sustained and increased the nation through thousands of years, and carried it to a high degree of

material civilization. Second, the development of many virtues. Confucianism has made the Chinese people industrious, thrifty, patient, and polite.

But on the other hand, it will be shown that in the higher ranges of humanity Confucianism has been a failure; that with the most elevated principles for guidance it has failed to develop in men a high regard for purity or truthfulness; that notwithstanding honest efforts in a contrary direction, subjection and repression have played the largest part among its formative influences; that while making the good of humanity the *one* object of devotion, Confucianism has failed to supply that incentive which makes the largest and freest personal development consistent with order and the good of the collective whole; that it has dwarfed humanity by failing to lead it into any of the higher realms of progress. In short, that the history of China points unmistakably to the conclusion that the highest system of morality unsupported by belief in a personal God and personal immortality is a system without power so far as the higher ends of humanity are concerned.