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Ancestor Worship

E C. Zimmermann

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_zimmermanne@csl.edu

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CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ANCESTOR WORSHIP

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Seminary Faculty
In Candidacy for the Degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

E. C. Zimmermann

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W. Arnold.
P. Kuehnemann.

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ANCESTOR WORSHIP

GOD'S LAW WRITTEN

"In the beginning God created the

IN THE HEARTS OF MEN heaven and the earth." (Gen. 1, 1).

"And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness," (Gen. 1, 26), that is, in perfect righteousness and holiness. When God created man, He wrote His holy Law in the hearts of men, as is stated in our Synodical Catechism, and the proof passage given in this connection is taken from Romans 2, 14. 15, and says, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." Included in this reference to the Law is also the commandment of God to "honor thy father and thy mother," (Gen. 20, 12; Deut. 5, 16.) The Law of God, written in the hearts of men, was doubtless much more clear in the early days of the human race than now, and while there may be no particularly outstanding instances of filial piety recorded in the first chapters of the Scriptures depicting the history of the human race up to the days of Noah, we need not necessarily begin to assume the contrary. We do know that these early patriarchs beget sons and daughters. Their children were doubtless dear to them and they in turn were dear to their children. There is no doubt about there being families and even large families for they obeyed the command to be "fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." Even as Cain's conscience pricked him after he had slain his brother Abel, so doubtless those were conscience stricken who did not obey their parents and honor them.

In the days of Noah we note that Ham committed an offence against his father. Shem and Japhet "took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness." (Gen. 9.) The offending son, Ham, received a curse because he sinned against the law of filial piety, he had dishonored his father instead of honoring him as the Law of God demanded.

THE PATRIARCHS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT From the days of Noah we may skip other Bible history and come to the age of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. At one time we read that the Lord commanded Abraham to offer up his son Isaac, and we note in this connection the obedience of Isaac. Then we also read of the deep spirit of filial piety that filled the heart of Joseph with love, honor, and respect for his own dear father. His was not a spirit of filial piety offered in order to prevent some curse from falling upon him, but it was rather a feeling of deepest heartfelt reverence.

One who has studied the customs of the Chinese through a period of years of residence in their own country sees in the customs obtaining in the days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and others a pattern of the customs that have obtained in China for milleniums, even down to recent times. Old Jacob was the head of a large family, the head of his clan, and he was a veritable king in his small domain. His sons and in fact all his descendants lived under his roof and remained subject to his wishes and rule as long as he lived. Shortly before he died he pronounced blessings upon sons and grandsons and divided the

family inheritance among them.

THE PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM

IN CHINA

We find a similar social structure obtaining in China until this very day, or at least until very recent times. The writer thinks, for example, of the home of one of his language teachers. This language teacher had become a Christian and was also one of our Christian day-school teachers for some years. He often invited us to his home and there we could see one of these ancient patriarchal systems in operation right in our own day and age. Our language teacher's father was a very old man, and his name was Wang. We shall call him Grandfather Wang, though in our own home in China we often called him "Old Father Jacob." Old Grandfather Wang and his sons and grandsons, together with his wife and unmarried daughters and his daughters-in-law all lived together under one roof. It was somewhat of a tumble-down shack, but old Grandfather Wang had a place and room for them all, and his word was law in his own domain. In recent years with a modern form of government taking form many of the old laws and customs have begun to pass from the scene, but until quite recently in a home such as that of old Grandfather Wang the old patriarch had the only say, and he held power of life and death over his wife and his sons and his daughters (if still unmarried and in the home) and also over his daughters-in-law and his grandchildren. Within reason he could cause the death penalty to be inflicted, or could banish his wife or daughters-in-law from the home, as may be noted later in the story of Ming Chih-ch'ien. Should he exceed reason in his dealings with his wife or daughters-in-law, he would possibly have a feud on hands with members of the family

from which they came. If he abused his wife or daughters-in-law or children or even a son unjustly he in turn would perhaps also be dealt with by the magistrate of the community, or even in some cases by a clique of men gathered against him. Therefore an old patriarch like Grandfather Wang would be very careful in meting out punishments. On the contrary if a man became old and ruled well in his day, he was often highly respected in his community and honored by all who knew him for his wisdom.

Do the Chinese also have the Law of God written or engraved in their hearts? Doubtless this is true. Somewhere, at some time, the ancient founders of the Chinese departed from some family or clan of God-fearing parents. Somewhere, at some time, from Shem, or from Ham, or from Japhet; or from Shem and Ham and Japhet; from any one of them, or from any two of them, or perhaps from all three of them once upon a time sprang the Chinese race. From somewhere they brought traditions. They could not help but spring from some race or clan that was once loyal to God if one goes back far enough. Hence, somewhere, at some time, the ancestors of the Chinese must have known God and God's Law very well. Doubtless many of the customs of the people of God and many of the customs used in worshipping God in the temple or temples of God came down through the generations of the Chinese. However, there is so much worn away now until one doubts whether there is so much as a shred of evidence left now-a-days of a former connection with some of God's children. Of course, we all know that there had long ago been no vestige of saving knowledge left. Perhaps two, or three, or even four centuries have passed since the last vestige of saving knowledge

have disappeared entirely from the originators of the present Chinese race, though doubtless, from time to time there have been believers found here or there among them. But Romans 2, 14. 15 will certainly assure us that men will "show the work of the Law written in their hearts." This means that vestiges of God's Law will remain in the hearts of men for aye. There will always be a certain natural knowledge of God in the hearts of men. Likewise, all men will always know it is wrong to kill, to commit adultery, to steal, etc. Some commandments, such as bearing false witness, may tend to wane almost entirely in some cases. But of all the commandments, perhaps that one which is closest to the first table will leave its mark the longest. Of course, there may be logical reasons for this too, at least to some extent, because for the first decade or two after a child is born, parents may retain mastery over it through sheer mastery of strength of brawn or mind. Perhaps some children may feel it is proper to revere and honor parents in the sight of all men if they themselves wish to be revered and honored some day when they become old. All this may be a perfectly natural logical deduction. But on the other hand we will not deny that the fourth commandment of God is still graven in the hearts of men.

However, as time went on and the knowledge of salvation disappeared among the ancient Chinese, so also the natural knowledge of God and the Law of God written in the hearts of men also did not remain the same. It became warped and, let us say, mutilated. They no longer loved and trusted in God, they no longer followed God and his guidance, and followed the guidance of Satan instead. Satan could not erase the natural knowledge of God or the Law of God written in the hearts of men entirely, but he did cause it to

become warped and to take on fantastic forms. Men wanted to give vent to their feelings concerning the fourth commandment and did so. By-and-by the venerating and honoring of parents went to the extreme of worshipping them; and eventually not only the living parents were worshipped, the dead also were, and there you have ancestor worship.

How would that work out in present-day China let us say? Let us go to the home of the old patriarch, to old Grandfather Wang. At certain set festivals the young are called in and each in his turn will kowtow in worship before the old grandfather and after him the grandmother also if she is still living. This kind of ceremony would take place as a rule on Chinese New Year's day, on birthdays, and on wedding days. After all, until very recently, the ceremony at a wedding consisted actually in this that the bride would kowtow before the groom, and the two in turn before the family ancestor tablet and both would thus worship and acknowledge the ancestors in worship at the same time. After all have worshipped the housegods and the ancestors in the ancestor tablet immediately after dawn on New Year's day, all in turn fall prostrate or kowtow before their living seniors and do obeisance to them and worship them. The eldest in the household would be the aged old grandfather. After all have worshipped him, all in turn begin the worship of the next in rank, and so on till everyone who is senior to someone else is worshipped, and there is always a chain of new worshippers growing up. And it is only a natural thought that if worshipped while living, that same ceremony should be continued to the ancestor after he is dead. In fact, it is claimed that ancestor worship was invented by a young

man who did not respect his parents properly while they were yet alive and then after they were dead he set up images of them and paid post-humous respect, homage, and worship to them. Others are said to have seen this case and felt that was also an opportunity for them to do more for their parents and ancestors, and lo, and behold, the custom took root. This latter may or may not be true, but it is quite possible to conceive that the cult could have been brought into being in some such way or by some such ^{accident} accident.

If then parents are so much venerated and worshipped while still living here on earth, one need not be surprised if respect and honor for parents at times happens to run in very peculiar channels. From many passages of Confucius, the sage of old, the Chinese have learned that men should love, reverence, and honor their parents. In fact, Confucius is generally known because of the many passages in which he urges filial piety. And filial piety often means things to the average Chinese which we would hardly think of placing under that heading. But since filial piety as practised in China among the unbelievers is not at all filial piety as practised by Christians, and since filial piety is as the root of ancestor worship, and ancestor worship as the very heart of all their religious thinking, we shall consider their ideas of filial piety also under this heading.

**"TWENTY-FOUR EXAMPLES
OF FILIAL PIETY."**

The Chinese have a small booklet called "The Twenty-four Examples of Filial Piety." The purpose of this little book is to show the importance of the virtue of filial piety and the duties connected with it, and also to show the rewards that are sure to follow. We

will give some free translations of five of these twenty-four examples, letting these be more or less as samples of Chinese thinking on this subject. These are stories most every Chinese knows better than our people know the stories of "Old Mother Hubbard," or "Snow-White," or "George Washington and the Cherry Tree."

The first one is not to involve any worship, but it is to show, that no matter how old a son becomes, he should always take the place of a son over against his parents.

LAI-TZU DRESSED IN VARIEGATED GARMENTS "At the time of the Chow Dynasty, there was an ancient named "Lai" who always obeyed his parents most dutifully. There was nothing too good for him to provide for them. Although he himself was already in the neighborhood of seventy years, he said he was not old yet. His habit was to dress himself in many-colored embroidered garments, and then like a small child stand playfully at the side of his parents. He would also carry buckets full of water into the house, and then make believe he slipped, and the water would spill all over the floor, after which he would wail and cry like a child. All this he did in order to divert the minds of his parents."

KO CH'U BURIES HIS SON "In the days of the Han Dynasty" (about the time of Christ), "there lived a man whose name was Ko Ch'u and whose family was very poor. He had a child three years of age. One day he noticed that his aged mother shared the little food she received with his own little child, her grandchild. Ch'u said to his wife, 'We are so poor we cannot even support our

mother. Besides this, she even shares her food with our little one. Why not bury the child? Another child may be born to us, but a mother once gone will never return.' His wife did not dare to oppose, and so Ch'ü proceeded to dig a grave about three cubits deep, when suddenly his eyes beheld at the bottom of the grave a pot of gold. An inscription on the top read, 'Heaven bestows this gold upon Ko Ch'ü, the dutiful son. The officers shall not seize it, nor shall the people take it.'

LU CHI PUTS ORANGES

IN HIS BOSOM.

Sometimes most any (other) sin can readily be forgiven if there is evidence of filial piety. "It was at the time of the Later Han Dynasty when little Lu Chi, aged six, went to Kiukiang to see a friend of his father named Yüan. Mr. Yüan served the boy some oranges and little Chi hid two of them in his bosom. When little Chi started to leave, he bowed to his host and the two oranges rolled out. Yüan said, 'Do you as my guest dare to steal oranges by hiding them in your bosom?' Little Chi knelt before him and said, 'My mother likes oranges very much and I planned to give them to my mother.' Old Yüan was greatly pleased with this reply."

WANG HSIANG LIES

DOWN ON THE ICE

Occasionally one hears how children will go to great extremes in order to please their parents. "While Wang Hsiang was very young his mother died and his stepmother did not like him. She liked fresh fish very much, but in the cold of winter the ponds were frozen over with ice and it was impossible to catch any. Hsiang took off his clothes and went to sleep on the ice in order to get some fish. Suddenly the ice melted through and opened up and several carp sprang out. He then took these home to his mother."

THE STORY OF CONFUCIOUS'

The following story is considered

PUPIL, MING CHIH-CH' IEN

by the Chinese as the best of all

from this book of "Twenty-four Examples of Filial Piety," and is told to show to what extremes children should give in to their parents and also to show how at times filial piety brings its own reward. "When but a few years old Ming Chih-ch'ien's mother died and his father married again. The step-mother did not like Chih-ch'ien because he was not her own flesh and blood. Then she also bore two sons and the three boys were raised together. One year in the cold of winter the father bought a goodly supply of cotton, enough to make a nice thick quilted garment for each of the three sons and handed it over to the mother to make up for them. While the father was away from home for a few days, the mother made the garments, but she stuffed all of the cotton into the garments of her own two sons and the garment of the eldest, Chih-ch'ien, was filled with the furry products of the marsh plant like our catnine tails. This makes a thickly padded garment, but does not give warmth.

"After some days the father returned to his home and noticed that all his sons had on new garments, including his firstborn Chih-ch'ien. The father asked him to bring him a cup of tea. The mother made the tea very hot, and when Chih-ch'ien brought it in the palm of his hand he soon found it to be hotter than he could bear, and dropped the cup and the tea. The cup broke, and this angered the father so much that he grasped a rod and struck the son across the back with the result that the outside garment was ripped open and the catnine fur flew out.

"The father called the mother to give account of this deception

of making the garment of catine fur instead of the genuine cotton. Had he not sent enough cotton for three garments? and had he not asked that all three should be made alike? The father then became very angry with the mother and started quite a scene, ordering the step-mother to leave forthwith (see page three), for he would have her on the place no longer.

"Then Chih-ch'ien knelt before the father and pleaded with him not to drive the mother away. He said, 'Just now, 'tis true, my mother treats me very ill. If I alone must eat this bitterness, I shall not mind, for if you drive this mother from the house and subsequently marry another, then there will be three of us brothers to suffer equally.' This line of argument appealed to the father, and he listened to boy's entreaties and permitted the step-mother to stay. However, from that time forth the step-mother also loved Chih-ch'ien sincerely, for she had seen his wonderful demonstration of devotion and his willingness to suffer even more to keep his half-brothers from suffering."* Ever since that day people in China have regarded the attitude of Chih-ch'ien as the apex of filial piety, and even Confucius praised him highly.

There are also many other stories told to show the virtues of filial piety and which are not written in the little booklet of "Twenty-four Examples of Filial Piety." There are two interesting stories told near Shasi, Hupeh, China, stories that have probably never appeared in print in English, each of which gives its own peculiar slant on filial piety.

* The first four stories from the "Twenty-four Examples of Filial Piety" follow Wieger, "Moral Tenets and Customs in China" to some extent, but the last is an original translation.

"WU-YUAN CH'IAO"

Kingchow is an ancient walled city

OR

NO AFFINITY BRIDGE

about five English miles from Shasi, the

city in which the writer lived for many years. On the way to the walled city of Kingchow there is a small bridge over which one may travel, and the name of this bridge is "Wu-yuan" Bridge, which could mean No-Affinity bridge or Lack-of-Affinity Bridge. There is a story told in connection with the bridge, which story runs as follows. An elf in human form set down on the bridge one day and he offered fine lú⁶cious peaches for sale to passers-by. When he asked them for whom they wanted the peaches, some replied by saying that they wanted them for their wives at home, others said they wanted them for their children, and still others wanted them for other friends they loved. But when not one of them mentioned that they wanted these peaches for their parents, he arose from his place and threw all of the peaches into the stream below and disappeared. The elf thought, if the parents are not the first to be remembered with good things, then the descendants themselves are also not worthy.

"AN-HSIN CHIAO"

There is another story told in

OR

COMFORT THE HEART BRIDGE

the vicinity of Shasi, which also

concerns a bridge and which also has a point for our topic of filial piety. This bridge is also to be found between Shasi and Kingchow and every time one makes a trip between these two cities one may see this bridge across the canal. The road does not cross it, but if one made the trip between the two cities on a canal boat as we have done any number of times, one would pass under this bridge as well as under the other bridge mentioned above. This story, too, is not included in the booklet of

"Twenty-four Stories on Filial Piety." Near An-Hsin Bridge once lived a man with his wife and young son. Their house was situated on one side of the narrow canal and on the other side stood a temple in which dwelt some monks. One day the father died leaving the mother alone with her son. As time went on the mother became very intimately acquainted with one of the monks from the temple on the other side of the canal. The priest often called upon the mother and acted in a manner quite unbecoming the sacred person of a temple monk, and which actions also dishonored the mother. Each time he came for a visit, whether in summer or in winter, he would have to wade through fairly deep water across the canal to get to the home of the mother. And each time the mother would have to go to a great deal of trouble to bathe the monk's feet and to make him dry and warm again. Therefore, in order to lessen his mother's labors and out of respect to her, the dutiful son built a bridge across the canal. That was the "Wu-Yuan Ch'iao." After that the priest could come over with dry feet and the mother would not need to work so hard to prevent the priest from becoming ill. Of course, it is understood, the son did not build the bridge because he loved the priest or because it happened to benefit him, but out of respect for his mother and in order to lessen her labors. In this way he did what he could for the comfort of his mother while she lived, so as to make her days happy while on earth.

After some time the mother also died, whereupon the son forthwith put the monk to death. He was dutiful to his mother while she lived, but now that she was dead, he felt duty bound to avenge the honor of his father which the monk had besmirched.

Many of these stories are in themselves good and proper as far as establishing what the ancients thought of filial piety was concerned. Of course, we readily recognize that the ideas of the ancients, which ideas have been brought down to the present day through these stories, are rather different from our own, or let us say, our Biblical and Christian ideals and ideas of what does actually constitute filial piety. On the other hand we see in these stories how many other sins may be excused or even condoned so long as the idea of filial piety is carried through. We see that Ko Ch'ü's willingness to kill his own son is excused because he desired to support his mother. Lu Chi's theft is excused because he wanted to please his mother. In the last story, a son out of respect for his mother overlooks her adultery, and later when he killed the monk to avenge his father, we find that this murder is condoned.

Filial piety was greatly stressed by Confucius and the ancient teachers, and the classics are filled with passages urging the duties of the children over against their parents. On the basis of the writings of Confucius and others on the question of filial piety, and respect and honor for the ancestors, has grown the whole system of ancestor worship, which is, after all, more than Buddhism and Taoism, the warp and woof of Chinese religious thought and practice. "To it cling the most reverent thoughts, the deepest experiences of the Chinese religious mind." * "This most ancient form of worship, ancestor worship, has not been given up by the Chinese nation; and the original worship of ancestors,

* T. W. Douglas James, in Chinese Recorder, November, 1925.

like the older formation of rocks on the earth's surface, is strong as the everlasting hills, and, though overlaid by other cults, as the primary rocks are by other strata, is still at the foundation; nearly all the other methods of worship being later additions and accretions. The worshipping of ancestors thus underlies most of their religion, and many of their everyday acts and deeds. 'Social customs, judicial decisions, appointments to the office of prime minister, and even the succession to the throne are influenced by it.' A magistrate, for instance, will pass a much lighter sentence on a criminal if he is the eldest or only son, in the case one or both of his parents have recently died, than he otherwise would, for fear of preventing him from sacrificing to the dead. An emperor on accession to the throne must be younger than his predecessor, in order to worship him." *

Thus we see that from the idea of filial piety has grown the whole system of ancestor worship, and we shall now enter upon the subject proper, showing what the common people think of it, and showing especially the popular way in which it is practised. In a general way most Chinese believe that every person has three souls, and we shall enter in upon this question now, and devote our next three chapters to a discussion of these supposedly three souls.

* J Dyer Ball, Things Chinese, Shanghai, 1925, p. 29.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST SOUL

BELIEF IN THREE SOULS It is commonly believed that every person has three souls, and that these three souls are always there to protect the body from possible harm. For instance, if at any time one should go for a walk, one soul goes before, a second one is inside the body, and a third one follows behind. The soul within the body does all it can to protect the body, and the one in front shields it from any harm that may come from the front, and the one to the rear will shield the body from any harm that may come from the rear.

DISPOSITION OF THE THREE SOULS AT DEATH When a person dies, of course, there are three souls to be accounted for. This matter is handled as indicated in the following. One soul remains in the body and is buried with it; another soul flutters about the room when released from the body by death and through intriguing devices and trickery is finally captured and for a while is reposed in the soul tablet, after which it is transferred to the ancestral tablet and placed on the same table or shelf with the family gods where it is worshipped; whilst the third soul must go to Hades and be prayed through the many divisions or courts eventually to be released and reincarnated. In this connection Day^s days,

The soul becomes three; one stays with the body in the grave; one goes wandering through the spirit world; and one goes through its transmigrations in re-incarnations after judgment in the underworld. At last, if its stock of merit becomes sufficient, it may hope to enter heaven and be at rest.*

*Clarence Burton Day, Chinese Peasant Cults, p. 118.

Addison wrote a small booklet on "Ancestor Worship," and he says about the same,

A common belief in China to-day is that each man has three souls. At death one remains with the body in the grave; one takes up its residence in the tablet; and one goes to the other world, usually to some purgatory. (J. D. Ball, "The Celestial and His Religions," Hongkong, 1906, p. 80.) This doctrine is often stated by Western authors as the cause of the rites which take place at the grave, the rites which take place before the tablet, and the Buddhist "masses" said for the departed. Historically, however, the doctrine arose to account for the fact that all these ceremonies were equally customary and yet logically contradictory. The distinction between a yang soul, which ascends on high, and a yin soul, which descends to the earth, has been familiar in China since classical times; the necessity for positing a third soul is the direct outcome of Buddhist beliefs and practices; and the effort to combine the three in a psychological doctrine is of Taoist origin.*

And MacLagan says,

The conception of each individual having three souls has been pressed into service to this extent, that they can be allotted one to the tablet, one to the grave, one to the other world. **

Thus ancest or worship provides opportunity for worship of these souls, either at the cemetery, or before the ancestral tablet, or otherwise.

THE SOUL IN THE BODY THAT IS BURIED When death occurs, the exact day and hour are carefully recorded and fortune tellers, or necromancers, or geomancers are consulted with a view of determining when a propitious day will come for that particular person to be buried, which will, of course, depend upon many, many circumstances. Sometimes the day of burial will follow almost immediately, especially if a very propitious day follows soon. But sometimes they must wait for

* James Thayer Addison, Chinese Ancestor Worship, p. 34f

** P. J. MacLagan, Chinese Religious Ideas, p. 168

weeks, or months, or even years. Once in the writer's congregation, heathen relatives would not release their aged great-grandmother who was a Christian to be buried until about two months after she died. In another case we recall the case of a heathen woman, perhaps in her fifties, who was not buried for about two years. The coffin stood in the midst of the guest room, and almost daily for some months we passed within touching distance of it as we walked through that room to get to our own chapel which was then located in a section of that same house beyond that in which this woman's coffin stood. From time to time Buddhist priests, or Taoist priests, or each in turn, are employed to chant their sutras and wail their lays, all of which will cost the family no little. One soul, as you have been told, is in Hades, or a kind of purgatory, and much praying needs to be done to pray it out again. They are there for eternity, as they say, but through some machinations of these bonzas and priests they claim to manage to pray them out of one section into the next one and finally entirely out. However, it appears as though they never manage to make much progress in this direction in the lifetime of the children still living, but stop,--we shall speak more of that in a later paragraph, we merely mentioned it here to show that much ado must be made before the body is buried, and also while the interest of the children is still high, for a very great portion of the support of the Buddhist monks and the Taoist priests depends upon the contributions they obtain from these sessions of praying souls out of the Buddhist Hades.

Eventually the day for burial comes. For several days there has been much excitement. For several days restaurateurs have been very busy, serving fine meals to the many visitors, and the visitors bow before the chief mourning son or grandson who represents the entire bereaved family in receiving these courtesies*. The visitor will also approach the coffin and upon a kneeling pad placed there for that purpose he will kowtow before the corpse which in plain words is extending worship to it or to the soul within it, or to both**, though doubtless the one so doing does not make much of a distinction between body and soul at the time. The whole performance is done because it was ever done thus, because it is the custom to sacrifice, as Addison says***. It is tradition, it is custom, and custom in China is usually much more powerful than law, mores we call them. After the kowtow the chief mourning son will acknowledge this respect through a bow.

VISITORS COME

Meanwhile something else has happened.

AND

The visiting friend is accompanied by a

PRESENT GIFTS

servant. Upon entering the house the

master is recognized; and the business manager of the funeral, or the secretary or book-keeper in charge, as we may also say, shouts in a stentorian voice, "a guest has arrived," or he may even say, "Mr. So-and-so has arrived to pay respects." He then enters the visitor's name upon the pages of the guest book provided for that purpose, and meanwhile the accompanying

* J. Dyer Ball, Things Chinese, p. 405.

** Clarence Burton Day, Chinese Peasant Cults, p. 173:

*** James Thayer Addison, Chinese Ancestor Worship, p. 47

servant lays down the gift that was brought along, and for the servant's own use the secretary will hand him at least ten per cent of the value of the goods in cash as a present for carrying the things for the master. The present may be ever so small or light, the master could perhaps carry it easily, but a servant will always be taken along, for it is presumed by most everyone that it is felt this ten per cent may as well go to the servant as not, for the master could not collect it, it would represent a loss of face. Sometimes the gift may not be a large one, perhaps only one or two bunches of fire-crackers. Or there may be as many as ten to twenty bunches, each bunch containing from one thousand up, but usually one thousand, five thousand, or ten thousand. The more of these that can be accumulated the better, for at the time of the funeral procession many, many of these will be needed. They will be fired as they proceed from the house, and all along the way, and about the burial spot to drive evil spirits away. At this place, while speaking of fire-crackers, we may speak a word regarding their use by others while the funeral cortege is passing. If the fire-crackers are fired by store-keepers along the way, or friends living along the way, and these are fired before the funeral procession arrives at that point, or to be clearer still, if they are fired before the coffin arrives, then it is considered a respect, or an honor, and the interpretation is that they are "welcoming the procession," or rather the body of their friend passing that way. This is done with the kindest of intentions and has nothing to do with driving away devils. It represents as much of a courtesy as if we were to send a

spray of flowers or stand with head bared as the coffin of a friend would pass by. All Chinese, Christians or heathen, I have interviewed on this matter spoke the same language. But if the coffin is already past the house and fire-crackers are fired from the rear, after the procession has passed, that is intended to drive away some evil spirits that may be lurking about as the result of the funeral passing that way. This would be an insult to a respectable person, and all friends are very careful to have the fire-crackers exploded early enough so that all are exploded before the slow-moving coffin passes that point. In case not enough fire-crackers are presented to the friends of the deceased the family must purchase a sufficient supply, but if the family is one of much face in the community, there will be many, many times more than can be used, although one would be surprised at the large number of fire-crackers that can be exploded in one large funeral. At Christian funerals no fire-crackers are used, unless friends along the way fire them to "welcome the deceased." If too many fire-crackers are presented, the "business manager" will sell those that are not used, and thus convert some of the surplus supply into cash with which to help defray other funeral expenses.

SCROLLS Perhaps no fire-crackers were brought, but a pair of scrolls instead. The cheapest ones would still cost several dollars, and these are written on strong paper. Better ones will have silk floss edges, and still better ones will be written on good white cloth. These are always appreciated by the women in the family, as the white cloth can be washed out and used for making clothing. The best of all are written on

finest silk, the cost of which may run into enormous figures. The more money a friend spends on presents or scrolls, the more face he gives the deceased, and incidentally to the mourning family.

On the scrolls is written a couplet, that is, one line of meaningful words, usually rather complimentary to the deceased, is written on the one scroll, and another line, with an equal number of characters, and perfectly arranged according to the rhyming and tone scheme of the Chinese language, on the second scroll. The words are usually written for the person by some famous writer in the community for which the writer in turn exacts an appropriate fee. The seal of the giver of the scrolls is affixed beneath his name, and if the writer of the scrolls was renowned, his name and seal will also appear, so that the mourning family can see plainly that the donor went to much trouble and expense in honor of the deceased. Many of these scrolls speak complementarily of the deceased, others will place him or her in heaven, and if somewhat older, they may be spoken of as gods, or other-worldly, or as being especially in the condition now as worthy of worship like a god. If the scroll is made of silk or is very elaborate or has very high-sounding words on it, or comes from a person of much face or of high standing in the community it will be hung in the rear on the center wall flanking both sides of the shelf on which stand the family gods and the ancestral tablets. Less important ones will hang side by side on the side walls, but all in the room in which the coffin stands. These will

usually be hung while the guest is still present, perhaps while he is kowtowing in worship before the coffin. The family likes to have this done at once while the person is still present to prove to him that his gift is highly appreciated, but they appreciate most highly the fact that their guest is kowtowing before the mortal remains and worshipping the same ancestor they now also have begun to worship. The servant may long ago have returned home, but the guest may stay a while and partake of a delicious repast served by the busy cook especially hired from some well-known restaurant in the community, and by the especially employed table-waiters.

In many instances cash gifts together with cash realized from the resale of salable presents will amount to more than the expenses connected with the buying of the coffin and all the sundry funeral expenses combined, so that often a substantial profit remains. This is especially true of people of prominence, of people with prestige, with face; whilst poor people often are faced either with going deeply into debt to keep up with prevailing funeral customs, or to lose much face through having to bury their loved ones in a cheap plank-board coffin painted black.

THE FUNERAL EXPENSE The funeral will be as elaborate as the family can afford, and poor people, as said, often prepare funerals far more elaborate than they can afford and plunge themselves into life-time debts. The feast alluded to before is one of the greatest expenses. The splurge may be for the

sake of face for the immediate family, for it may "look bad" not to go to great expense and preparation, and the Chinese thinks in highest terms of his face. Of course, the reason given for all the splurge is because of veneration for the deceased, based upon the system of ancestor worship.

MUSIC AND WEeping There will be music by fife players, w@rd funereal music, music that makes you feel creepy, music to make a proper setting for the ancestor just deceased, music for the gods, for the genii of the house, the field, the air, the unknown. There will be weeping of the female folk of the house*, and there may even be paid wailers. That this weeping and wailing may not always be heartfelt is shown by the fact that they plunge into their weeping or wailing at will, keep it up for a half-hour or hours, and stop as suddenly and begin a conversation, not a tear in the eye. In their wailing they call upon the spirit of the deceased to hear them, they talk to him and ask him repeatedly why he left them, and they also plead with him not to think hard of them for this or that misdeed or act of disobedience of which their conscience reminds them at this time, for they now regard the departed one to some extent as a god to whom one may speak and who may be able to bless or curse those who remain behind. **Before the coffin leaves the house the mourners and friends will in turn kowtow in worship before it, for it is now an ancestor to be worshipped in this way.

* Day, Op. cit., p. 99

** Addison, op. cit. p. 51

J. R. Saunders, The Chinese as They Are, p. 110

CARRYING OUT

Funeral carriers or bearers are hired to

THE COFFIN

carry the coffin from the house to the grave.

At first they carry it out of the house and set it in the street, there to adjust their carrying poles and ropes. As soon as they have set the coffin down, someone from the household quickly takes a short broom and a dustpan and will sweep up the trash and dust lying about where the coffin had stood. Actually the floor is rather clean, and the sweeping is a mere going through motions or actions. They sweep diligently, as though quite a bit were swept up, and they sweep in the direction of the door, and with a sudden motion, the sweeper does as though sweeping the dustpan clean, sweeping all away from the door and into the street. Actually, the meaning is that should there be any vestige of evil spirit left from the deceased, it would herewith forever be swept out of the house, into the street, and into oblivion.

Before the door the carriers adjust their ropes and poles. If a very small child, a friend of the family may place the small coffin on his shoulders, whilst another carried a shovel and a hoe. For children there may be two carriers. For very poor adults, four; usually for poor there are four or eight; for the middle class there may be eight or sixteen; and for very rich people, perhaps thirty-two. For officials or very wealthy people, perhaps as many as sixty-four bearers have been used. This does not mean that there was so much more weight, excepting when many carriers are used that the central pole would be a shaft almost as large as a telegraph pole though not so long. The additional men were used to honor the deceased.

On the other hand, their more elaborate coffins are definitely very large, and often there is a base of from six to eight inches of lime in the bottom of the coffin to preserve the body as long as possible within the sealed case, so that the descendants may keep the body till the auspicious day if possible, that is, the auspicious day for burial picked by the fortune teller or the one who sets these dates.

SPIRIT MONEY In order that the loved one may have a peaceful journey along the road to the cemetery, a youthful attendant, as a kind of fore-runner, is sent just ahead of the funeral to scatter special paper money. In most cases this is simply soft yellow paper, having holes punched into it with an instrument that looks something like a multi-pronged ice-pick. Sometimes this is made of silver or gold-colored paper to imitate the coin, or it may look somewhat like real paper money, and they call it spirit money, or other-world money, and many English-speaking people call it joss-money, or joss-paper. * This money is used to "buy the road" so that the beloved ancestor may have no regrets because he passed over a road without paying for it

If the way is long, or if the carriers may have a long muddy stretch of road ahead of them in the country, and perhaps also through pouring rain, a halt may be called just before leaving the city before some tea house. The coffin is deposited in the middle of the street, and everyone stands around until the carriers have had tea and a few cakes. They

Ball, op. cit., 405.

They "rest" sometimes as much as a half-hour, and no one urges them on lest they become offended and perhaps speak out some curse-word in the hearing of the beloved deceased or perhaps heap some curse upon the departed, which the departed, it is believed, would reflect upon the family at an early date, and their worship of him would not be acknowledged or heard.

THE GRAVE Not only is an auspicious day chosen for the obsequies, but the "Yin-yang hsien-sheng," the diviner of geomancy on the basis of male and female principles, has again been consulted to determine the exact position of the grave, for the Chinese have a saying, "The most important thing in life is to get buried well." * Improper position of the body may seriously inconvenience or cramp the deceased in some way. Rice and tea leaves spelling out certain good words are carefully placed in the bottom of the grave so that the ancestors may have food and drink on the way.

WORSHIP As soon as the body is properly placed in **AT THE GRAVE** the grave, sometimes during the time of covering the coffin, or immediately thereafter, the chief mourning son kowtows before the ancestor in the grave doing filial obeisance. Thereafter he will turn to all the others who have helped with the funeral, especially to such as may have officiated, and to the geomancer, and frequently also to all the coffin bearers or at least to their chief, and last of all to all friends or guests who came along to the grave. After

* Ball, Things Chinese, p. 407

him friends of the family will also kowtow before the grave and worship the departed. The mourners will return again that day or the next to continue their kowtowing, and not until the third day do the female members of the family go to the grave. However, when they do go, there will be much wailing, and much kowtowing, as they seem to take the worship of ancestors much more seriously than do the males. Thereafter the descendants come to the grave as a rule on stated holidays to worship there, chief of which is the "Ch'ing Ming Chieh," or, the "Feast of the Tombs," or also called "Spring Festival."

CH'ING MING CHIEH

This festival corresponds to some

OR

extent with our own Memorial Day or

FEAST OF THE TOMBS

Decoration Day, but the pagan Chinese

use it, not only as an opportunity to decorate and sweep the graves, but mainly as a special day on which to worship the ancestors. It falls on the first day or the third moon (month), or about April 5th on our calendar.

Perhaps several days previous to the festival one of the members of the family went out to the graves, taking someone along to cut the grass and otherwise to trim the grave to some extent. Then on the festival day all the members of the family go out, but at different times of the day so that the house may not be left unguarded. But the ideal way is for every member of the family to go out at the same time. Viands of fine food, flasks of fine wines are lavishly and decoratively set before the tomb of the ancestor and he is vociferously

invited to participate of the fare, whilst all members of the family at some time or another during the day kowtow before the graves of the ancestors one or more times. This is a day kept very faithfully by all. After the food is set before the ancestor and the worshipping finished, members of the family enjoy a stroll or a picnic and such foods as the ancestor did not eat will then be served before members of the family still living. Of course, as they say, the ancestor truly took his share in spiritual food, and others say he got his share from the aroma, and now the family is satisfied to eat the husks, the form, the outward appearance, and they all feel happy, indeed, that the worthy ancestor deigned to leave at least that part of the feast for them to enjoy.*

Later perhaps some final kowtows before the beloved ancestor are made and the members of the family again go home, all feeling satisfied that once again they. . .----had a nice picnic. If there were more ancestors, all graves were taken care of in the same manner and food set before each. Often remnants of dishes of food are left in broken dishes as the family goes home.

The whole day is looked forward to by all as a holiday* and schools are dismissed for three days, and when the season ends it will be long remembered. Because of the holiday, frolicky aspect of the occasion one is a bit at a loss to determine the sincerity of all the proceedings, albeit if only the picnic end of it were in view, doubtless they would not need to go to the ancestral tombs to enjoy it.

* Saunders, op. cit. p. 106 ff.

THE WORSHIP AT THE

Here we bring a description in

CHING MING FESTIVAL

great detail of the worship proper,

and it is prepared by Professor Harvey* who in writing about ancestor worship submits the following eye-witness description of

"a clan or large family sacrifice, offered at the burial place of the clan's honored dead:

The Chinese visit the tombs twice a year, in spring and in autumn. The first time is called the "tsing ming" [ch'ing ming], "bright clear," referring to the fine weather which is then expected; the second is called "ch'iu tsi," [ch'iu chi], "the autumnal sacrifice." The rites performed during the tsing ming season are the most generally attended to by the Chinese. Their governors teach that the prosperity of individuals and families depends greatly on the circumstances of a parent's grave;--as its position, its being dry or damp, its being in good external repair, etc. Therefore to "sweep" and repair them, to mark their limits and see that they are not encroached upon by others, are objects of the visit to the tombs. When there are large clans, which have descended from the same ancestors, living in the same neighborhood, they repair in great numbers for the performance of sacrificial rites. Rich and poor, all assemble. Even beggars repair to the tombs, to kneel down and worship. This usage is known by the phrases, sao-fen-mo, "sweeping the tombs," and pai-shan, "worshipping the tumuli." To omit these observances is considered a great offence against moral propriety, and a breach of filial duty. The common belief is that good fortune, domestic prosperity, honors and riches, all depend on an impulse given at the tombs of ancestors. Hence the practice is universal; and when the men are absent from their families, the women go to perform the rites.

On some of these occasions . . . even where there are two or three thousand members of a clan, some possessing great wealth, and others holding high rank in the state,--all, old and young, rich and poor are summoned to meet at the "tsu-tsung-tze-tang," or the ancestral hall. Pigs are slaughtered; sheep are slain; and all sorts of offerings and sacrifices are provided in abundance. The processions from the hall to the tombs, on these occasions, are performed in the grandest style which the official rank of the principal persons will admit,--with hammers, tablets, gongs, lances, and many other implements. All present, old men and boys, are dressed in the best robes

* Edwin D. Harvey, The Mind of China, Yale University Press, p. 243-246, quoted from Chinese Repository, I, 499 ff.

which they can procure; and thus escorting the victims for the sacrifice and the wine for oblations, they proceed to the tombs of their ancestors, and arrange the whole in order, preparatory to the grand ceremony,--there is a chu-tsze, "lord of the sacrifice," appointed to officiate as priest. There is a director of ceremonies appointed to give the word of command. There are two stewards to aid in the performance of rites. There is also a reader to recite the prayer; and a band of musicians, drummers, gong-beaters, and lictors.

After all things are in readiness, the whole party stands still until the director gives the word. He first cries with a loud voice, "Let the official persons take their places"; this is immediately done and the ceremonies proceed.

Director: "Strike up the softer music." Here the smaller instruments begin to play.

Director: "Kneel." The priest then kneels in a central place fronting the grave, and behind him, arranged in order, the aged and honorable, the children and grandchildren all kneel down.

Director: "Present the incense." Here stewards take three sticks of incense, and present them to the priest. He arises, makes a bow towards the grave, and then plants one of the sticks in an incense vase in front of the tombstone. The same form is repeated a second and a third time.

Director: "Rise up." Here the priest and party stand up.

Director: "Kneel." Again the priest and all the people kneel.

Director: "Knock head." [kowitz] Here all bending forward and leaning on their hands, knock their foreheads against the ground.

Director: "Again knock head." This is forthwith done.

Director: "Knock head a third time." This is also done. Then he calls out: "Rise up, Kneel, Knock head"; till the three kneelings and the nine knockings are completed. And all this is done in the same manner as the highest act of homage is paid to the emperor, or of worship to the supreme powers, heaven and earth. This being ended the ceremonies proceed.

Director: "Fall prostrate." This is done by touching the ground with knees, hand and forehead.

Director: "Read a prayer." Here the reader approaches the front of the tomb holding in his hands a piece of white paper on which is written one of the sacrificial forms of prayer. These are generally much the same; differing slightly according to the wish of the composer. The form states the time; the name of the clan which comes to worship and offer sacrifice; beseeches the shades to descend and enjoy the sacrifice; to grant protection and prosperity to their descendants, that in all succeeding generations they may wear official caps, may enjoy riches and honors, and never become extinct; that by the help of the souls in Hades, the departed spirits and the living on earth may be happy, and illustrious throughout myriads of ages. . . . The prayer being finished, the Director cries: "Offer up the gold and the precious things." Here one of the stewards presents gilt papers to the priest, and he, bowing towards the grave, lays them down before it.

Director: "Strike up the grand music." Here gongs, drums, trumpets and clarinets are beaten and blown to make as great a noise as possible.

Director: "Burn the gold, and silver, and precious things." Here all the young men and children burn the gilt papers, fire off fire-crackers and rockets.

Such is the sum of a grand sacrifice at the tombs of ancestors. But to many the best part of the ceremony is to come, which is the feast upon the sacrifice. The roast pigs, rice, fowls, fish, fruits, and liquors are carried back to the ancestral hall; where, according to age and dignity, the whole party sit down to eat and drink and play. The grandees discuss the condition of the hall, and other topics connected with the honor of the clan; the young men carouse and provoke each other to drink deep. Some set out for home with a catty or two of the "divine flesh," which had been used in sacrifice; others stay till they wrangle and fight and night puts an end to the entertainment.

Those who live remote from the tombs, or who have no ancestral hall, eat their sacrifice on the ground at the sepulchres. And the poor imitate their superiors at a humble distance. Although they have no hall, no procession, no music,--they provide three sorts of victims, a pig, a goose, a fish, and a little distilled liquor at the tomb--for spirituous liquors are used on all these occasions. After presenting these at the tomb, they kneel, knock head, and orally or mentally pray, for the air of their ancestors' souls to make the existing and all future generations of descendants, rich and prosperous.

A prayer for such an occasion (in A. D. 1832) was as follows:

Taoukwang, 12th year, 3rd moon, 1st day, I, Lin Kwang, the second son of the third generation, presume to come before the grave of my ancestor, Lin Kung. Revolving years have brought again the season of spring. Cherishing sentiments of veneration, I look up and sweep your tomb. Prostrate, I pray that you will come and be present; that you will grant to your posterity, that they may be prosperous and illustrious; at this season of genial showers and gentle breezes, I desire to recompense the root of my existence, and exert myself sincerely. Always grant your safe protection. My trust is in your divine spirit. Reverently I present the five-fold sacrifice of a pig, a fowl, a duck, a goose, and a fish; also, an offering of five plates of fruit; with oblations of spiritous liquors; earnestly entreating that you will come and view them. With the most attentive respect, this annunciation is presented on high.

Over two thousand persons, young and old, took part in these services. It would hardly seem as if the old faith and practice had in any way diminished. And while it is true that a hundred years have elapsed since that celebration took place, anyone who has intimately observed Chinese life and practice within the last decade knows that similar services are offered to the souls of deceased ancestors in this generation. In spite of all the surface changes of the past few years, thoughtful Chinese of the present would find it difficult to disagree with the following summation of their faith:

When Heaven and Earth were served with intelligence and discrimination, the spiritual intelligences displayed their retributive (that is, rewarding) power. . . . When in the ancestral temple . . . (one) exhibits the utmost reverence, the spirits of the departed manifest themselves. Perfect filial piety and fraternal duty reach to and move the spiritual intelligences. . . . In such a state of things while alive, parents reposed in the glory of their sons, and when sacrificed to, their disembodied spirits enjoyed the offering. Therefore in all under heaven peace and harmony prevailed and calamities did not occur, misfortunes and rebellions did not arise. (Sacred Books of the East, Chinese Classics, III, 484-488, passim.)

(End of Dr. Harvey's quotation.)

Thus the first soul lived on earth, and still lives on in the grave, and continues to be venerated and worshipped.

CHAPTER III.
THE SECOND SOUL.

CHICKENS ABSORB THE SOULS OF HUMAN BEINGS When the body dies, we have heard that one soul remains within it and is buried with it in the grave, where it is forever to be worshipped by faithful descendants. A second soul, however, is thought to have an entirely different history. Death is held to be the separation of body and soul, even as we also say, excepting that there is a contradiction concerning the first soul which is buried with the body. Just before death if possible, and especially right at the time of death a live chicken is tied securely to prevent fluttering and struggling and laid on the bosom of the person about to die. However, if this was not accomplished just at death, the chicken is laid on the bosom of the person as soon after death as possible. As soon as the body is encoffined the chicken is laid on the lid of the coffin. The reason for this is because it is believed that a chicken has a propensity for absorbing a human soul. If the chicken was not laid on the bosom of the person before or at death, it is thought that the soul is fluttering about the room like a frightened bat. It constantly recognizes the body, the frame from which it only lately came, and feign would reenter, but it is dead and cold. That is the reason why the chicken may be placed upon the bosom of the dead person or upon the coffin lid, for the soul will always flutter in the direction of the dead body which it cannot enter because it is cold, and so will finally enter

the warm blood-stream of the chicken.

THE SOUL TABLET At this time certain priests will be called to the home of the departed and the chicken is killed. The priest will in a proper ceremonial setting dip a specially purchased and dedicated writing brush into the warm blood of the chicken, which incidentally is claimed to have absorbed the soul of the deceased. He will then write the name of the deceased on a small strip of thin yellow paper of the proper sort. He will also write the station in life of the deceased and state also that this is now the place of repose of the spirit of the person whose name is given. Very frequently care is taken that bits of chicken-feather are retained in the thick blood of the chicken as it coagulates or dries on the paper. Some priests write this upon a piece of thin wood especially prepared for this purpose. When this is written upon paper they will stretch this paper over a frail wooden frame, and then the whole is placed in a wooden frame or stand, something like an ordinary ancestor tablet. If it is written upon a thin wooden board, it is slipped into a similar kind of frame. This little soul tablet, standing a foot to fifteen inches in height, prominently showing the name and station of the deceased is placed on the shelf or altar of the family idols and the family ancestor tablet. It is treated with about the same amount of respect usually shown the ancestor tablet, for is not the soul of a very recent ancestor reposing in this soul tablet as in a kind of temporary home?

SOUL REMOVED
FROM
SOUL TABLET
TO
ANCESTRAL TABLET

Customs vary in different places in China, for in some cases the descendants wait two and one-half years, but in most cases they wait only eighteen months. Thus on the exact anniversary of the eighteenth month plans are made to transfer the soul from the soul tablet to the ancestral tablet. Many preparations are made for this great day. Pagan priests are engaged to the extent that the family can afford. Meals are prepared in advance for the feeding of these priests and also some guests of the family invited to these ceremonies. Just as soon as the priests arrive they are given a bountiful meal to make them feel good. Then long tables are set through the middle of the room, and the head priest will sit nearest the family altar or shelf for the idols which is in the center of the rear wall of the room. At the table we see priests sitting with their sacred books or sutras before them from which they chant. Actually they merely hum as they read, and they turn one page after another in leisurely, but still rather quick succession, and the humming is to give the affect of extremely quick reading, and thus they carry on for hours at a time. Thus also the more books they can read the better for the soul for which they are praying. It is the same procedure used for praying souls from one section of hades to the next to the end that they may one day be prayed entirely through hades either into a better world, or through a reincarnation into some new existence on earth, but this will be more fully treated in the next chapter. At this occasion some priests play fifes, others beat small drums, and still others beat

small wooden fish-heads or make other rhythmic sounds. The main part of the ceremony is about to take place.

The soul-tablet is brought into the center of the room with much pomp and ceremony. Then one of the priests touches fire to it and it immediately burns up completely, leaving only the barest ashes. Just what has now taken place? The reader will recall that this soul-tablet had written on it in chicken blood containing the soul of a person his name and station in life. Since this has now been burned, the soul no longer has any coagulated chicken blood in which to repose and so is thought to begin all anew to flutter about the room as it did when first released at the death of the body in which it formerly existed. Again this disembodied spirit flutters about the room as a blind bat in daylight not knowing what to do. Its . . . eighteen-month place of repose is burned to ashes and the body in which it formerly existed and with which it was familiar is buried long ago and is not in the room. Therefore this soul flutters about looking for something else that is familiar and in which it can repose. This disembodied soul may begin looking for an old chair in which the deceased formerly liked to sit, and so the chairs of the room are all piled up to represent a flight of stair steps with the favorite chair way at the top. They all believe that the soul will in its flutterings about the room fly against this flight of chair-stairs and will try them out, moving from one slowly to the other. It tries them all out in their turn till it discovers that favorite one right at the top. However, this process may not go very

quickly. Actually, it all depends upon how much money there may be forthcoming from the family of the deceased. If the sum is small, certainly the priests cannot stay too long, perhaps a half-hour or one or two hours. But the writer recalls a case where this ceremony was kept up for over one week. The priests would continue beating their drums and gongs, blowing the fifes, and chanting of "buzzing" their sacred books day in and day out, day after day, changing shifts so there would be no interruption. The beating of the drums and the blowing of the fifes is to keep the soul hopping and fluttering so that it finds no rest for the sole of its feet. To this end also every now and then strings of fire-crackers are exploded, not merely to create more excitement, but to keep this soul astir. In the case the writer recalled, they had chairs piled very high right in the middle of the street, in fact, they had tables under them to make them still higher. The priests were inside the house assuring the family that the soul of the deceased was making proper progress up the stair-like arrangement of chairs out in the street, which, of course, was a kind of invitation to the family to continue the process as long as possible. Finally, the priest announces that all should be quiet, the soul has now reached the eminence and is complacently sitting in the chair at the top, quite contented and satisfied.

Meanwhile, at the foot of the mountain of chairs, but on the opposite side of the step-like arrangement they have placed the ancestral tablet. This may be a new one, or it

may be one in which there are already reposing the souls of some of the ancestors of the family. This ancestor tablet varies in shape in the several parts of China. Those in central Hupen province are usually made of wood one to one and one-half inches in thickness, a foot or so wide, and from thirteen to eighteen inches in height. The entire tablet is covered with black laquer and then from top to bottom the name and the station of the ancestor are written. These names and details are usually written in letters of gold, and when a new ancestor is to be brought into it, the new name and other information is written and all completed in advance with the exception of the dot on the "chu" (lord character which is to be placed there after the soul of the recently deceased ancestor is taken captive inside the tablet. On the reverse side of the tablet, just opposite the place where the name is embossed there will be cut a small hole about three-fourths of an inch square and also about that deep. The hole will be square*and they will also prepare a plug to fit into that hole most exactly and very tight. This hole on the back side of the ancestral tablet is now exposed to the chair at the top of the mountain of chairs, and in a way familiar to the priests, they manage to frighten the soul perched so comfortably in the chair on the top or otherwise dislodge him and send him tumbling down. Perhaps many fire-crackers were fired just at that time to help in the ceremony. With suddenness they surround the ancestral tablet, do a bit of "shooing", and the ancestral tablet is grabbed up, the plug in the rear quickly inserted or plugged in to keep the soul from escaping again, and some shellac is smeared

* Clarence Burton Day, Chinese Peasant Cults, p23

over, perfectly sealing it. All this is done very quickly, almost in the twinkling of an eye, and the victorious priest will proudly announce that the soul has now been brought to peace and is enshrined in the ancestral tablet together with some other ancestors if this is the case, and then the ceremony of completing the inscription will take place, that is, the final dot on the "chu" character will be carefully affixed. Sometimes this will be written in gold ink the same as the other characters, and sometimes it will be written in the blood of the chief descendant and then shellacked over to make it uniform. * Then with more ceremony, with much kowtowing in the direction of the ancestral tablet, it will be handed to the chief mourning son or grandson, who will then with much precision and ceremony place this tablet on the place reserved for it on the shelf or altar reserved for the tutelary gods and ancestral tablets.

Thereafter the chief descendant, that is, the chief mourning son or grandson will offer his respects by kowtowing and worshipping the new soul now reposing in the tablet above. After him each member of the family in turn will perform the same ceremony, from the greatest unto the least. This soul is now also at peace and will probably stay right there for a long time, till some day it may be removed to the family ancestral shrine or memorial hall which may be near or it may be far, far away in some other part of China, a place whence the family originally came ~~from~~, a place that

* James Thayer Addison, Chinese Ancestor Worship, p. 32.
P. J. MacLagan, Chinese Religious Ideas, p. 144.

may have been the family headquarters for one or two milleniums.

Meanwhile the priests return to their temples, feeling happy that they have again accomplished something for someone, so that now ancestor worship may continue in the home, and at the same time in their estimation they have performed a good work.

THE WORSHIPPER In the ordinary worship of the family the chief mourning son is usually the one who performs this rite, as he is looked upon as the head of the family and it is in his home where the ancestor tablet is enshrined. Often in our experience we find mixed homes, or homes let us say, where the eldest son has become a Christian. In such cases finally someone else is found to perform these rites, perhaps a younger brother, and if this does not work, then a cousin of the family or some other descendant. From this point of view comes the very common accusation in China that sons who become Christians have "mai" (sold) their ancestors: which sin is considered a dastardly shame. *

WHICH ANCESTORS ARE WORSHIPPED The number of ancestors to whom worshipped is tendered is not always the same. Sometimes it goes up only to the third generation, sometimes to the fourth or the fifth, as far as the home is concerned, and after that the tablet is moved to the ancestral shrine, wherever that may be, and continued at certain intervals there. Normally female ancestors also are worshipped, for

* Addison, op. cit., p. 36.
Soothill, Three Religions of China, p. 216.

while the place of woman may be rather despised at times during her life, she nevertheless is revered if she has brought forth sons to worship her husband and herself while living and after death. Deceased children have no spirit tablets or offerings.* Usually unmarried sons or daughters are not buried as grown people, it is considered that they somehow don't count as anything, and one hears the remark that they have no soul as yet, though this point is not definitely pronounced upon as they feel they have no "proof."

WORSHIP FORMS

"The forms of Chinese ancestor worship are simple, for the rites constitute a family meal in which the dead share. Food and drink are placed on the table before the tablets of the deceased, and at a later hour, or on the following day, after the spirits have enjoyed the soul or essence of the offerings, all the members of the family (or clan) eat and drink what remains. (n. At the clan sacrifices only men are present.) The presentation of the offerings is accompanied by an invitation to the departed to partake and by the prostrations which, for the Chinese, constitute the natural method of expressing reverence for parents and superiors. Candles and incense are usually burned as symbolical of invitation and to attract the attention of the spirits. When the sacrifice is presented on some special occasion, announcement is made at the same time of whatever event has prompted the ceremony. The nearest approach to prayer appears to be made on the most important occasions when the ancestors are greeted with praise and

*Addison, op. cit. p. 37, quoting Doolittle, Soothill, and Johnson.

requested to receive the offerings and to bestow their blessing*"

TIME FOR ANCESTRAL WORSHIP One cannot always detail exactly when offerings are to be made to the ancestors, but usually there are the morning and evening sacrifices, when candles will be lit, and when perhaps some little portions of food may be set, or at least a small glass of wine. Another definite time will be on the first and the fifteenth day of every moon, that is of the month according to the lunar calendar. Usually these daily and semi-monthly ceremonies do not include a meal of any kind other than already mentioned. The head of the family should attend to these matters, but more frequently this is attended to by his wife or a pious daughter-in-law, or even by a faithful servant of the family. Of course, on certain holidays, such as on New Year's day, at the Ch'ing Ming festival (Feast of the Tombs or Memorial Day), autumn festival of Harvest Home Festival, at the Dragon Boat festival, sometimes on birthdays, on anniversaries of death, sometimes on the fifth, fifteenth, and twenty-fifth of a month, and just prior to the closing of the old year.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS TO THE ANCESTORS. There are frequent occurrences for making announcements to the ancestors. Whenever there is some important event taking place or has taken place in the family, announcements may be made accompanied by offerings and prostrations. The ancestors are thought to

* Addison, op. cit. p. 38
 Soothill, "Three Religions," p. 216

** Addison, op. cit. p. 39.

be interested in the welfare of the family and to take pleasure or pain in these announcements. Very formal announcements are made at the time of a birth and especially of the birth of a male child, which would be a "Stamhalter," to continue the family line. Birthdays are also reported, so also betrothals, marriages, and distinctions accruing to the family. Deaths especially are reported. In the days of the emperors many announcements were made to the ancestors, especially when there was a successor to the throne. When the Manchu dynasty was overthrown and the republic established, Sun Yat-sun went to the tomb of the first Ming Emperor at Nanking and dramatically announced this fact, which in the estimation of many Christians did not reflect a proper Christian attitude. In respect to this Addison says, "Even so modern a radical as Sun Yat-sun announced to the first Ming emperor, before his tomb at Nanking, the overthrow of the Manchus and the establishment of the Republic -- a dramatic act revealing not the private convictions of Sun but his conception of what the people would expect and approve." *

WORSHIP OF ANCESTORS

One of the highspots in the

BY BRIDAL COUPLE

life of a Chinese was the day

of marriage. Marriage was consummated by bringing the bride to the home of the groom and the two would be brought together before the ancestral tablet, and among the many kowtows made on that day, the joint kowtowing or worship of the ancestors by bride and groom together was the principle one and the

Addison, op. cit. p. 40, citing W. H. Bitton, "The Regeneration of New China," London, 1914.

fact that joined them together as man and wife. In addition to the worshipping of the ancestors, the bride would also kowtow before the groom, before his mother and father, and if living, also before his grand-parents. Thus acknowledging them as her ancestors, she would now be introduced to one after another of the other relatives. *

When the souls of a number of generations have accumulated in one or more ancestor tablets, usually from three and not more than five generations, a great pilgrimage would be planned. One or more representatives of the clan would be entrusted after much ceremony to carry the ancestral tablets to the near or distant ancestral shrine. These shrines are built like large temples, and in the greatest center of the rear wall of the main hall is found the great ancestor of them all. Men who know their family will be able to show their own direct line and be able to trace it all the way back to the remotest ancestor. The writer's own aged language teacher said he was able to trace his ancestors back to about 200 A. D. In the city of Shasi was the later ancestral shrine of the Cheng family, and the walls all around were filled with plaques and ancestral tablets brought in from time to time by descendants. Their more ancient shrine and central shrine was at Peking. Usually some descendant lives in the shrine and acts as keeper of the place. Near Simakow, Hupeh, the writer saw a shrine that dated back rather far, though the outside of the building was not kept up any too well. When descendants come to the

* Addison, Op. Cit. p. 40.

shrine with ancestral tablets there will be much ceremony as they are properly installed into places on the walls amongst the illustrious ancestors. The tablet is first taken from place to place and held before the other tablets and "piens" (tablets horizontal in shape, very costly, containing perhaps the name of some very illustrious ancestor with a few lauding words.). After all these ceremonies have been taken care of the representative visitors will in their own name and in the name of hundreds of people back home worship various ancestors, bringing, of course, their main prostrations before the grand ancestor. At the same time announcements will be made, among which with loud voices will be one to undertake certain major repairs or improvements at this central shrine. Perhaps some of the main tablets will be washed and regilded with genuine gold leaf. Presents will be left for the distant relatives in charge of the shrine and to reimburse them bountifully for their hospitality. Those remaining at home expect great blessings to accrue to them from the visits of their representatives at the shrine and when they return home there will be a grand reception at the homes of the heads of the clans and with many prostrations or kowtows announcements of what took place will be made to such ancestor tablets as still remain.

Thus far for the story of the second soul, the one dwelling in the ancestor tablets. There are constantly many prayers spoken before those ancestral tablets and people fear to invoke their wrath or displeasure. Thus the living are inseparably bound up with the dead.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE THIRD SOUL

THREE SOULS ^{Students} Some, of course, deny that ^{the Chinese believe} there are three souls, some Chinese also perhaps deny this, in fact some Chinese don't believe there is even one soul. There has been quite a bit of contention among book writers as to just what the Chinese think about this matter. Quite a few writers feel that this question shouldn't be discussed because there is little or no documentary evidence for the belief in three souls. They feel in connection with the subject of a soul or of souls and also what may or may not happen to them, if actually there are thought to be any, only that should be discussed which can be found written up in detail somewhere in authoritative Chinese writings, especially in the ancient classics. But whether written in books or not, whether recorded in the classics or not, there certainly are vast sections of China where the belief in three souls is rather prevalent,* and it is decidedly a rather universal tenet in that section of China where the Missouri Synod's mission work is being done. Then also, when books written by writers living in widely scattered parts of China keep referring to the matter,* it does seem as if the idea is rather wide-spread, and is probably believed in all parts of China, and thus it becomes an issue for the missionary to combat.

THE THIRD SOUL The third soul goes to Hades (or hell or
GOES TO HADES purgatory) after death. Death is the tearing
assunder of body and soul or souls, but just how this takes

* Addison, op. cit. p. 34 J.D. Ball, Celestial and His Religio
MacLagan, Chinese Religious Ideas, p. 168

place seems not to bother people a great deal, they just naturally take it for granted, somewhat as an audience takes a great deal for granted in a drama. When scenes change in a drama, not all details between scenes are shown, and usually one is expected to imagine a great deal that happens or could happen between scenes, and if everyone in the audience thinks differently on the matter, it does not affect the previous or the subsequent scene a great deal. Thus also just what transpires at death, according to the Chinese way of thinking, does not affect the previous existence before death, nor the subsequent existence or scene after death in Hades in the least.

BABIES AND CHILDREN

There seems to be a rather wide-

HAVE NO SOUL

spread idea that babies or children,

even up to twenty years of age or before marriage have no soul, at least not much of one to speak of. Boys before marriage are not counted if they die and their names are not recorded on ancestral tablets, and neither is there thought to be any like that descending into Hades after death.

WOMEN

Likewise some have claimed that only men have a soul and that women do not, but there is a great amount of contradiction on this question, for there are many instances of the names of women being written on ancestral tablets, especially if they have given birth to sons, and certainly there are many instances of women suffering the torments of Hades. In this connection we bring the story of Mu-lien and how he descended to Hades to save his mother, who was suffering torments down there. Reichelt gives the story as follows:

The story of how Maudgalyayana (Chinese: Mo-ho-mu-chien-lien, 摩訶目犍連, or Mu-lien, 目連) one of Sakyamuni's disciples, the pious son, saved his mother, is now popularly told in China as follows:

A pious mother who had always been the most scrupulous vegetarian, fell sick, probably the result of excessive asceticism. She tried all kinds of cures, but all were in vain. Then one of her sons came to her and said that he could help her, if she would be willing to eat meat. The mother refused most vehemently. In spite of this the son prepared a dish which resembled vegetarian food, but contained a little meat. She ate and was soon quite well again.

One of the slaves in the house told the truth of the matter to another son, Mu-lien, and he, fearing lest his mother had thereby lost all hope of salvation, told her. She, secure in her innocence, denied it, calling upon all the gods to bear witness to the fact that she had not eaten meat.

In the dramatic presentation of the story which is most often given (it is one of the loveliest dramas on the Chinese stage), the mother is represented as saying, "If I have eaten meat, I pray that all the gods may cast me down into the deepest hell!" Immediately blood streams from her nose, mouth, and eyes, and the devil-hangmen draw her away to Hades.

Mu-lien does everything in his power to rescue her. He lays upon himself all kinds of tortures in order to expiate her sin, but everything seems in vain. One night he sees her in his dream; her clothes are in tatters and her countenance bears traces of the greatest sufferings. He sees how the hangmen in Hades steal the money and the food that he has burned for her support. He hears her suppliant cry, "Come and help me." Thereupon he determines to go to Hades (die). He wanders through the various zones in the kingdom of death, and after a long and persistent search finds her. She has been placed in a great cauldron where she is to be dismembered and cooked. He casts himself down before the devil-executioner and beseeches him to be allowed to take the torture upon himself. This is permitted, at least for a time.

In the dramatic presentation, one sees Mu-lien, appearing in the various torture scenes, always strong and firm. But when his need is the greatest, Buddha reveals himself in light and glory, and makes known the happy news that his mother can be saved if a body of monks will come together, and perform a mass for her soul. So after a while, one sees a row of monks drawn up solemnly before the figure of Buddha, and after the chanting and the musical instruments

have sounded for some time, the gates of hell spring open, releasing the happy son with his redeemed mother. The scene closes with a high-pitched song of praise.*

WHAT IS HADES? The idea of hell or Hades or purgatory is told in various ways. The usual belief is that there are eighteen sections and that each of these is eternal or just about so. The soul after death descends into the first section and stays there eternally or just about that long, but through the instrumentality of masses said by pious Buddhist Bonzas or Taoist priests and paid for by well-meaning descendants or even by people who wish to spend money for "good works" through which they themselves wish to secure immunity later, or build up works of supererrogation, the tortured soul may be prayed out of the first section eventually, through many kalpas, only to be cast into the second section to remain there for endless kalpas or eternally. However, the idea of saying masses is thought to be invoked again and eventually the soul is prayed out of that section and into the third, and so on until at long last it is prayed all the way through those eighteen long sections and out again. The soul is released from Hades and may then be reincarnated, being born into most any form, perhaps a pig, or a cow, or an insect, or even again a small baby, and for that reason pious Buddhists (and the whole idea is after all a Buddhist idea) will therefore not willfully kill or harm any living creature, lest they thus be killing or harming some ancient ancestor of theirs for which cause then, they would be heaping many curses and misfortunes

* Reichelt, Truth and Tradition in Chinese Buddhism, p.91f

upon themselves and upon their clan and descendants.

VARIOUS IDEAS However, there are various ideas
CONCERNING HADES as to the numbers of sections in
Hades and we will let Reichelt, who has made a very special
life-long study of Buddhism, speak on this subject from
his book, Truth and Tradition in Chinese Buddhism as
follows:

The "holy mother" (Buddha's mother, Maya, 摩耶, in Chinese) asks Ti-ts'ang to tell her what are the conditions down there in Hades, for the people of Asia especially. In his answer Ti-ts'ang gives an account of the eternal law of recompense and the horrors of the punishment in hell.

"This is the state of affairs in southern Asia, with regard to the recompense for sin," he says. "There are children who are disobedient to their parents even to the point of killing their father and mother, and who therefore must sink down into that hell where the pangs have no relief and whence through countless kalpas they can never escape.

"There are others who pierce Buddha's messengers on the earth. Still others who speak with scorn of the three holy values, and have no reverence for the holy scriptures. All these must sink down to that hell where there is no cessation of anguish and whence through endless kalpas there is no escape. Or there may be people who devastate and destroy the holy collections of scriptures, who dishonor monks or nuns, or in the monastery buildings give themselves up to the lusts of the flesh, killing and hurting. All these must sink down into that hell where the pangs have no relief and whence, through countless kalpas, they can never escape.

"Or there may be people who have become Buddhist monks under false pretences, for in their hearts they are not monks, and therefore misuse the monasteries, harass and deceive the laity, and commit all sorts of evil. These all must sink down to that hell where there is no cessation of anguish and from which, through endless kalpas, there is no chance of escape.

"The people who have become guilty of any of these crimes must sink down into the five different hells where pain has no cessation, and where not even for a moment is there any relief of the anguish."

"Once more the woman Maya spoke and asked Ti-ts'ang: 'Why are these places called the "endless hells"?'"

"Ti-ts'ang said: 'Holy mother, with regard to the various hells, there are eighteen large hells within the "Iron-Encircled Mountain" (T'ieh-wei Shan, 鐵圍山). Besides these, there are five hundred smaller ones, all with different names. In the large hells, there are great cities of eighty thousand li in circumference. The cities are entirely built of iron, with an iron wall that is ten thousand li high. From this wall there blazes up a mass of fire. Everywhere flames can be seen. In the center of this city all the divisions of hell come together, each with his own name. In the innermost circle is the "endless hell," eighteen thousand li in circumference and with a wall ten thousand li in height.

1. The picture is taken from the ancient Chinese cities, where there often was an inner city, also surrounded by a wall. One li is about one-half of a kilometer, or one-third of an English mile.

"Everything is of iron with tongues of flame which dart up and out on all sides. There are iron snakes and iron dogs, from whose mouths dart tongues of fire. They reached out greedily after their victims and are in a ceaseless hurrying chase to east and west. In the middle of this hell is arranged an endless row of iron beds and on each bed one sees portrayed the various pains which the unhappy sinners must undergo. All see their own punishments clearly before their eyes. There are hundreds and thousands of hideous devil-hangmen with teeth as long and sharp as swords. Their eyes gleam like flashes of lightning. Their hands are chained to copper claws with which they seize their victims and hurry them off. There are other devils who carry long spears with which they bore through people, either piercing through mouth and nose, or through stomach and back, now casting them up in the air, now catching them again on the point of the lifted spear.

"There are iron eagles, which pick out the eyes of sinners, and iron snakes which coil themselves round their necks. Every joint in the body is spiked through with iron nails. The tongue is drawn out, and the victim is pulled about by it, like a draught animal. The bowels are drawn out and hewn in pieces. Melted

copper is poured down their throats, and glowing bits of iron are laid over their bodies. They die and live again in ceaseless torment, with new pains and tortures." *

The eighteen-section hell is a strictly Buddhist idea, though it fits perfectly into the conglomeration of public thinking concerning the future existence. Taoism will not oppose it. MacLagan said, "If we distinguish their religious affinities as Buddhist or as Taoist, we are doing more than most of their worshippers do. ** Likewise, that their idea of a hell appears as a city with walls surrounding it is not strange, for DuBose made the statement that hell was just "China ploughed under." "The world of spirits is an exact counterpart of the Chinese empire . . . Hades has its provinces, departments, and counties; its emperors, its officials of all ranks, its bureaux, its several hundred thousand attendants, doorkeepers, runners, horses, horsemen, detectives and executioners, corresponding in every particular to those of Chinese officials of the same rank." *** Taoists colored the idea of hell and all its attendants being subject to the decrees of Yü Huang Shang-ti. **** Confucianism with its ever-recurring pronouncements on filial piety seems quite in need of this doctrine of Hades as a weapon of law to enforce its doctrines. The whole set-up

* Reichelt, op. cit. pp. 121-123.

** MacLagan, op. cit. p. 149

*** H. C. DuBose, The Dragon, Image, and Demon,/quoted from
Day, Chinese Feasant Cults, p. 118.

**** Day, op. cit. p. 123.

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concerning filial piety and ancestor worship both here and hereafter needs this to complete the circle. The Buddhists need this hell as a source of income for their many-monked monasteries, and it easily brings them sufficient income through the reading of "masses" to supply all their needs.

Indeed, Buddhists play up the idea of suffering in Hades
 PANORAMA OF BUDDHIST HELL as much as possible. In
 SHOWN IN MANY LARGE TEMPLES many of the larger communities in China, certain Buddhist temples maintain a rather large and elaborate side-section or room in which they show a cross-section view of Hades and all its torments. It shows all eighteen sections, revealing how in the beginning the sinners are simply dumped into these nether regions, and how devil-hangmen immediately proceed to take charge of them by catching them on the prongs of their pitchforks, pitching them immediately to the rear and into the first courtroom where their cases are taken care of and where the judge of that first section immediately throws them into their suffering, which he witnesses while he judges more and throws them also into the suffering. One also sees how they pull out the tongues of men and drag bunches of sinners around by their tongues and take them to the places of suffering where they are to go. As one sees this long immense panorama one notices the chief devil in the main center giving direction on what to do with every case, and his judgment is never disputed, it is final, and sentence begins at once. One notices a large cauldron of boiling oil into which the

sinner's are cast, and where they boil and boil continuously for ages and aeons without end and still never boil done. From the lines of horror written on the faces of the sinners in this boiling cauldron of oil one is led to understand that this punishment is awful and full of torture. One sees another scene of a body in a coffin and several devil-hangmen on either side sawing through the coffin, either lengthwise or crosswise, blood spurting out in all directions, and from a protruding head one can note that excruciating pains are being endured. There are also those who are enduring torture in the lake of fire forever, with devil-hangmen standing around and overhead on bridges ready to push them back in with pronged spears and pitchforks if any should attempt to escape. Here in Hades one also finds those who were guilty of adultery in their mundane existence, but hopelessly bound together forever, and forced to commit adultery before every one in public forever. The picture shows how now their adultery is a forever burning pain, and how the two who could not be together enough on earth now fight hopelessly to get apart, but they are securely tied and thus forced to burn in stinging adultery forever. Thus each one of the eighteen sections of Hades is eternal, or just about so, and each one brings excruciating pains in exchange for any particular sins the sinner may have committed while on earth. The punishment fits the sin. One finds certain punishments for men, certain others for women, and in some places both sexes are found. As there were special punishments for adulterers, so also there are special punish-

ments for coveters, for those who abused widows, for usurers, for those who stole, etc. But all hangmen seem most bent on meting out the severest punishment to those who have not revered their parents and ancestors on earth as they should have done.

PRAYING FOR THE SOULS IN HADES It is claimed that Buddha and Ti-ts'ang urged men to pray for those in Hades in order to relieve their suffering and so that one day they may be released from their eternal prison. This is a wonderful opportunity for the Buddhist Bonzes to come into their own. They picture to the descendants the extreme condition of the departed in Hades, and urge upon them to do all in their power to relieve their suffering. Money is paid to them for the saying of masses for the dead and this in turn defrays the expenses of the monastery, although to the people they say, this will help their loved ones in Hades. There is also the possibility of doing too much, in which case the one supplying the funds and furthering these "good works" accrues unto himself works of supererogation. Sometimes the very rich or the officials will pay out large sums for public masses for those who cannot afford them, also for beggars, and for those killed in battle or who committed suicide. The descendants are usually most happy when the bonzes report that their ancestor has made this or that progress in the nether world, and if it could be brought to the point where they have truly brought the ancestors all the way through, so that they can be reincarnated, then the descendants are happy indeed.

SELFISH MOTIVES The descendant usually does all his good deeds for very selfish motives. These things are not done so much for the sake of venerating the ancestors or for bringing them any help as they are to appease the ancestors lest they harm the descendants or heap curses upon them. *

We have already heard how Mu-lien prayed for his mother and finally through substituting for her and taking some of her tortures upon himself succeeded in bursting asunder the doors of hell and bringing her forth again. That seemed to be somewhat of a special case, and so we shall let Reichelt speak again as he describes the "Feast for the Wandering Souls."

**FEAST FOR THE
WANDERING SOULS**

As we now attempt to give a description of the ceremonies which down through the years have been performed for the release of the wandering and lost spirits, it is natural to take first the "Feast for the Wandering Souls," or "Yü-lan-p'en Hui" (盂蘭盆會),

The main object of this ceremony is to conduct the souls as rapidly and safely as possible over the vast sea of want, hunger, thirst, and torment, which they got into when death overtook them, because of their sins. This has given rise to the expression "tu chung-sheng t'o-li k'u-hai" (度眾生脫離苦海), "to help all creation across the sea of pain," used in China again and again in speech and writing.

When a man dies, if there are any rich relations, pious and conscientious sons and daughters, widows or younger brothers, who can start the machinery, the whole matter can be arranged quite quickly. They simply order so many masses to be said in some temple or monastery, or allow the chief room or court-yard in their homes to be temporarily made over into a prayer hall ("tao-ch'ang," 道場), where monks can chant their masses by the day, or even by the week. Often however, there are no relatives to

* J. R. Saunders, The Chinese as They Are, p. 110.

come to the help of the dead, or their poverty is such that nothing sufficient to meet the case can be done. If this happens, the monks, together with pious and philanthropic people, step in and help. Even since the time of Amogha, it has been looked upon as a particularly meritorious act to contribute towards making the great "feast for the wandering souls" as splendid as possible.

Without doubt, much true sympathy and religious fervor is expressed in these acts. On the other hand, this feast is frequently used in a quite shameless way for personal gain or self-aggrandizement, money coined out of it, and the whole business takes on such a noisy and theatrical tone that its religious significance almost completely vanishes.

The observance of this festival is regulated partly by the calendar, as it goes by the ten-, twelve-, or fifteen-year periods in the old Chinese cycle of years. In addition, there may be special cases of necessity which call for extra observances. Occasionally there may be one or more earnest and pious people who see that a performance of the ceremony is arranged for. The date for the feast is announced in plenty of time by the posting up of big yellow placards. People are urged to send in lists of all who may have died by drowning, murder, or other accident. Likewise, a request is sent out for money or other gifts.

Great preparations are made for the feast. The city's butcher-shops are often officially ordered to stop all slaughter and sale of meat. People are urged to fast (i. e., to refrain from partaking of all kinds of animal food). Along the river banks great figures made of paper are set up, representing the gracious bodhisattvas of the lower world, T'its'ang, Kuan-yin, the "earth gods" of the place, and so on. Terrifying images of animals, whole rows of devil-haugmen from the lower world, with Tung-yi and Yen-lo at their head, as well as scenes of horror from the torture chambers of hell are all represented, made of coloured paper, stretched ingeniously on bamboo sticks.

The chief preparations are made on some open place, usually near a pond or a river. There terrace-like altars are set up, filled with incense burners, jars with flowers, inscribed pennants which flutter in the breeze, etc. Near the altar is placed a large house of paper, divided into five rooms. In the centre room stand two paper figures of the famous Yin-Yang Ssu (陰陽司), who conducts souls from this world into the other. He is represented with one side of

his face white, the other black, for he is supposed to have access both to the land of the living and of the dead. The side rooms are supposed to be waiting-rooms for men and women, respectively, who are on their way to deliverance.

In smaller paper houses stand figures which give out food and clothing to the hungry and freezing spirits. There are also thirty-six shops, where the spirits can provide themselves with all necessities. Money, consisting of stamped paper notes and imitation silver and gold bars, is sent over to the dead in immense quantities; this is burned.

The other world is then notified that the ceremony is about to begin, by the burning of a large paper pennant. At the same time a paper horseman and horse are burned. This is the herald, who hurries off with the inscription to the land of the dead.

Then begins the mass. Large sutras are read, often accompanied by the most ear-splitting music. Offerings of food, rice, tea, small cakes, etc., are set out. This is a very important part of the performance, really a sacramental act. Only monks with long practice can perform in a perfect way all the finger manipulations, the gracious sprinkling of water, and the throwing of rice grains, etc., in connection with this ceremony. If there is a pond in the neighborhood a small bridge is built over it. A priest stands with papers in his hand, and deals them out liberally to all the "poor people" who are thought to be passing over the bridge of death. The papers are handed to the priest on the other side, who then burns them.

Up on the central stage (the three-storey altar) stand a whole staff of Buddhist monks, who in long-drawn-out and high-pitched tones, chant the scripture and play the musical instruments. The leading monk stands between two others on the central platform, holding an ivory staff in his hand. On the lowest platform stand five monks, who are especially occupied with the chanting. By the tones of the music, one who is initiated into the mystery will understand how far they have got in the advancing process of redemption. He will know when that great moment comes when they have "broken into Hades" (p'o-liao ti-yü, 破了地獄), and when the way has been opened to the great pool of blood where the deeply sunk souls of women are specially tortured (p'o-liao hshih-hu, 破了血湖). He will be able to follow the further development, as the saving procession presses through the barred torture-chambers, and be present

when the burst of triumph at the end announces the great victory. It is midnight when these notes of victory are sounded. Then everything ceases at one stroke, for from that moment all things begin to move forwards towards the dawn and daylight! *

Thus we see that there is much ado concerning the saying of "masses" for the dead, so as to move their souls on through Hades and to final reincarnation, and after a number of reincarnations, it will attain to final Buddhahood and be satisfied to remain in a worshipful position forevermore with eyes fixed thanksgivingly forever on Buddha whom the Buddhist monks say has made all this possible. There may be some who will dispute that this whole process of praying lost sinners out of hell has anything to do with ancestor worship, but since popular belief has assigned this third soul to a trip through Hades, popular fancy also insists upon prayers, not so much to this soul in hell as for it. After all, ancestor worship is practised, not so much as a rule to venerate and honor and worship the ancestor, as it is to avoid the possibility of angering the departed spirits lest they wreak vengeance and harm upon the remaining ones.

DECAPITATED PERSONS One or another may think some of the customs foolish to the extreme, but it is popularly believed that it is very easy to deceive the gods. In this connection there is or was a special practice used by some in connection with persons decapitated for some criminal offence. If such a thing happened in the vicinity

* Reichelt, op. cit. pp 92-96.

of Shasi, Hupeh, China in the case of people with "face" they would look for the body of the executed one after nightfall and also look about for the head which had probably been kicked about the lot a great deal during the day by men and women and by young and old, which thing the writer has witnessed, and when found, they would employ an expert shoemaker who would carefully sew the head back onto the body. For this he received a very fine consideration, a handsome fee. The family of the decapitated man felt that thus they would be able to deceive the devil-hangmen in hell and the deceased would have an opportunity to pass through Ha des and one day be reincarnated, whereas, if the deceased would appear down in the lower regions in a headless condition, or perhaps carrying his head in his hands, there simply would be no chance whatever of escape or release.

The worship by descendants is, as we have seen, practised several times a year before the ancestor buried in the grave. However, most frequently the descendants bring their petitions and announcements before the soul of the ancestor remaining in the ancestral tablet which remains right in the home for a number of years and only eventually when most direct descendants are also in the graves is the ancestral tablet taken away to the ancestral shrine, where it is all but forgotten. The souls in hell may be prayed to, may be feared, but anything done for them is usually done through the so-called masses for the dead,

which are performed in the home at the instigation of the direct descendants for the souls of their own ancestors, and which masses or prayers are made publicly as we saw from Reichelt for the wandering spirits, that is for those who had no loving descendants to look after their affairs.

Thus we have presented the situation, showing what the people think happens to the ancestors and what they think they ought to do for them. That these beliefs are well-nigh universal would stamp this as a great religious practice, and anything so great is a formidable enemy or foe, and in our case, a foe of the Gospel. What shall be the Christian attitude towards ancestor worship? This will be set forth in a brief concluding chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE
ATTITUDE OF CHRISTIANITY

Ancestor worship is gross idolatry. Idolatry is actually to regard and adore a creature as God, or to fear, love, or trust in creatures as we should fear, love, and trust in God alone. (Is. 42, 8; Matth 4, 10; Matth. 10, 37; Ps. 42, 11; Ps. 75, 25. 26; 1 Sam. 28; Ex. 20, 3 ff.) Furthermore, the Scriptures know nothing of a purgatorial system for the expiational purification of souls after death. (Luke 23, 43; Rev. 14, 13; Luke 16, 23. 24; Matt. 7, 13; Matth. 25, 46; John 3, 18. 36.) The Roman Catholic church had a similar system, also not founded upon the Scriptures. Of them Dr. F. Pieper wrote, "Das roemische FEGFEUER (purgatorium), in das Rom die Seelen der Glaebigen versetzt, um noch rueckstaendige zeitliche Strafen abzubueszen, ist eine pure Erdichtung." * Luther said, "Sonderlich sind das eitel Iuegen mit dem Fegfeuer; denn dasselbe ist auf eitel gottlos Wesen und Unglauben gegrundet. Denn sie verleugnen die Lehre, dasz der Glaube selig mache, und setzen die Genugtuung foer die Suende als die Ursache der Seligkeit." **

Here we should and do rest our case. Sola Scriptura! But it would be interesting to see what attitudes other Christians have taken. The Roman Catholic church has taken several attitudes, whilst the earlier Protestant

* F. Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik, Band III, p. 575.

** Luther, St. Louis, I, 1762, quoted from Pieper, loc. cit.

churches stood adamant against permitting ancestor worship in Christian churches. However, later on some of the Protestants took a different attitude.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Matteo Ricci, the first noted Jesuit leader, had viewed the ancestral rites as merely civil and secular in their

nature, and had tolerated the practice of them by Christian converts. He had written,

"They do not recognize in the dead any divinity, they do not ask anything of them: that is why there is absolutely no trace of idolatry in it."

Justified by these views, a general tolerance was observed.

. . . These concessions were regarded as only temporary and as destined to be gradually abandoned with the growth in power and influence of the Christian church.

But the equilibrium of this Jesuit compromise was soon upset when, after 1631, members of the Dominican and Franciscan orders began to join the group of Catholic missionaries. The Dominicans proved to have positive ideas on the subject of ancestor worship which led them to "view with alarm" the laxer practice of the Jesuits. The Dominican leader who first voiced this opposition was Jean-Baptiste Morales. . . . It was brought to official notice when Morales visited Rome in 1643 and submitted to the Holy See a series of "questions or doubts" suggested by the varying answers to the question of ancestor worship among Christians. These questions were answered on September 12, 1645, by a decree of the Congregation of the Propaganda to which Pope Innocent X gave his approval. The decree, which was not concerned with the truth of the facts set forth by Morales, simply condemned and prohibited the rites as he described them. Since everything, however, depended on how the rites were described, the Jesuits in China were not disposed to acquiesce, and sent Father Martini to Rome to represent the ancestral rites as acts of filial respect and gratitude without religious significance. On the basis of this description a decree was issued in 1656, approved by Pope Alexander VII, which (though cautiously worded, with an eye to the previous decree) sanctioned the practice of the ancestral rites, except for the "superstitious" features to which we have just referred. Though this official response naturally gave satisfaction to the Jesuits, the Dominicans could not accept it as nullifying the response of 1645.

On March 26, 1693, Charles Maigrot, the Vicar Apostolic of Fukien, published a charge to all the missionaries in

his vicariate, forbidding the permission to Christians under any circumstances of participation in the solemn sacrifices or offerings in honor of the dead. Ancestral tablets were to be authorized only if the usual inscriptions were changed and a profession of Christian faith inscribed therewith. *

Thus the controversy continued back and forth with many appeals to the popes and many decrees laid down. The Jesuits thought they had a great victory when they succeeded in securing from Emperor K'ang-hsi an official public statement approving the Jesuit interpretation of the ancestral rites as purely civil and non-religious. In September 1700 the new pope, Clement XI, rendered a decision: Christians must not be permitted to perform the customary offerings or rites, whether "solemn" or "less solemn", either before the ancestral tablets or at the tombs, even if they profess that the rites are non-religious. So as not to offend the Jesuits they did not publish this decree from the pope, but began to enforce it gradually. When the emperor K'ang-hsi heard about it he was indignant. He decreed that missionaries could preach the Gospel only to such as promised not to oppose the rites. If the missionaries did otherwise, expulsion would be their punishment. There they were, expulsion from the country on the one hand, and excommunication on the other. Some were expelled, among them being the pope's commissioner. Others like the Jesuits took a lax attitude, did what the emperor said, reported nothing to the pope who was far away and carried on that way for a while. In 1716 after eighty years of bitter controversy the pope ordered Christian participation in ancestral sacrifices for-

*Addison, op. cit. 60ff.

bidden, even to those who protest that the acts are non-religious. He put the missionaries all under oath to carry out this decree and gradually resistance collapsed. But the habit was deep-rooted and firmly established and only a minority among the lower classes were willing to drop the rite. The literati resisted and became embittered against the Christian propaganda and persecution began. The emperor, so long the friend of the church, now became its bitter enemy and persecuter. Within a year he signed a decree which ordained the expulsion of all Christian missionaries and the destruction of their churches. The damage had been done, the church dwindled in numbers and influence and maintained a fluctuating and uncertain life until its revival in the nineteenth century. For a while special "permissions" were granted, but later Benedict XIV definitely brought the Catholic controversy to a conclusion, he repudiated the special "permissions", put all missionaries under oath again, and issued a decree, so "vigorous and so ruthlessly detailed that the papal decisions were at last securely riveted upon the enfeebled church in China."

ANCESTOR WORSHIP

Until recent years there was almost

AND PROTESTANTISM

unanimity of opinion concerning this

question. "Except for occasional references to ancestor worship in the published books and reports of missionaries, nearly all of which condemn the rites as "idolatrous", the problem was not brought before the missionary public until 1877, after seventy years of Protestant work." *

* Addison, op. cit. p. 73.

In May 1877 a meeting was held in Shanghai at which a paper on ancestor worship was read, which condemned all the rites as "idolatrous." The paper expressed violent opposition to any form of concession on the part of the Christian church. In May 1900 a noted sinologue, the Rev. W. A. P. Martin, and a friend of the literati, read a paper entitled, "The Worship of Ancestors -- a Plea for Toleration," which emphasized the classical interpretation of the rites and minimized their religious significance. The other leading paper took the orthodox view, it being read by the Rev. H. Blodget. He said,

"Well will it be for Protestant missions if in the future, as in the past, no concessions are made to ancestral worship." *

Several of the missionaries present however voiced their sympathy for Martin's idea. But the debate closed with an appeal from Hudson Taylor, of the China Inland Mission, who took the floor to say,

"I trust that all those who wish to raise an indignant protest against the conclusion of Dr. Martin's paper will signify it by rising." *

And almost the whole audience rose. However, one could see that ancestor worship was at last getting a small following. At a meeting in 1907 "liberal views were freely expressed which would have been regarded at the earlier gatherings as due to the direct intervention of Satan." * The debate at this meeting culminated in the adoption of four resolutions which may justly be viewed as a summary of present-day Protestant opinion. They read as follows:*

* Addison, op. cit. 74 ff, quoting from China Centenary Missionary Conference Records, N. Y., n.d. and Missionary Review of the World, Dec. 1916, pp. 883 ff.

"I. That while the worship of ancestors is incompatible with an enlightened and spiritual conception of the Christian faith, and so cannot be tolerated as a practice in the Christian Church, yet we should be careful to encourage in our Christian converts the feeling of reverence for the memory of the departed which this custom seeks to express, and to impress upon the Chinese in general the fact that Christians attach great importance to filial piety.

"II. That recognizing the full provision made in Christianity for the highest development and expression of filial piety, this Conference recommends that greater prominence be given in preaching, in teaching, and in religious observances, to the practical duty of reverence to parents, and thus make it evident to non-Christians that the Church regards filial piety as one of the highest of Christian duties.

"III. Recognizing that in replacing the worship of ancestors in China by Christianity, many delicate and difficult questions inevitably arise, we would emphasize the necessity for the continuance education of the conscience of the members of the Christian Church by whom all such questions must ultimately be adjusted, expressing our confidence that, through the leading and illumination of the Spirit of God, the Church will be guided into right lines of action.

"IV. That this conference recommends our Chinese brethren to encourage an affectionate remembrance of the dead by beautifying graves and erecting useful memorials to parents and ancestors, by building or endowing churches, schools, hospitals, asylums, and other charitable institutions as is common in all Christian lands, thus making memorials of the departed a means of helping the living through successive generations." *

From these reports we see that "ancestor worship is still one of the greatest obstacles to the spread of Christianity," says Addison*, who adds however, that the Protestant churches have a . . . fairly uniform attitude. . . . They have defined "ancestor worship" as true worship

* Addison, op. cit. 76 and p. 77ff.

and flatly condemned it as "idolatrous." . . . The prime reason for this Protestant uniformity is of course the plain fact that ancestor worship, as we have seen, is a genuine religion in the lives of many millions. . . . The religious side of ancestor worship was too obvious to be ignored. "

On the other hand we also read in Addison the sentence,

"Some even suggest encouraging prayers for the dead on the not unreasonable plea that the Chinese need not forever remain Protestant Puritans."

Of course, he took this thought from others, but when he inserts the word "not unreasonable plea" without quotation marks, certainly they may be held to reflect his opinion. This he could well have omitted to his own credit.

SHALL WE OFFER ANY
SUGGESTIONS IN PLACE
OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP?

Definitely, we must ask our
Christians in China to make a
clean break with ancestor worship.
We have often heard the remark that

when people join the Christian church they "sell their ancestors." Fearing this accusation has prevented many a person from making a decision for Christ. But here the missionary must use tact. More than ever must the fourth commandment be taught. We most constantly emphasize and re-emphasize that Christians do not "sell their ancestors," but out of the fear of God and the love of God we honor our father and our mother even more deeply, for we fully know the story of creation. We may also encourage the hanging of pictures of the deceased loved ones, however in separate parts of the wall apart from the center rear wall. The

missionary must make sure that the old ancestor tablet is either surrendered to him, or else destroyed before witnesses. The missionary will find that before entering the church they may hand it over to some pagan relative "who may still have some use for it." This is also done with idols no longer wanted. This practice should be discouraged and forbidden. In many cases the Catholic church permits a cross where idols and the ancestor tablet stood before. Most Chinese don't hesitate about such an exchange very long and keep right on with the same prostrations before the family altar. Some Chinese have even told the writer that they saw not a great deal of difference between having a crucifix with Jesus affixed and having another idol. The practice of having a crucifix on the family altar should be discouraged. A cross may be better. We have found that it is a good suggestion to our members that they have the words of the Lord's Prayer neatly written by a good writer and hung in the center rear wall. No mistake is possible in this connection, in fact it is always a reminder to pray to the true God. Another practice is to hang a large paper scroll on which is printed a large red cross. This may be hung in the center of the rear wall in the place where the idols and the ancestor tablet formerly stood. Usually there is space at the bottom for the names of the family to be written in, that is, where the names of all baptized members of the family may be written. A legend is printed in bold letters, "Belonging to the Lord." The large red cross from a distance identifies this family with Christ, and the names below are a confession.

Records of the family may be kept in the family Bible in spaces provided instead of on the ancestral tablet. We may also encourage our people to take very good care of the graves, for outside of the Ch'ing Ming Festival often the graves are not looked after all year. Our Christians have already begun to take much better care of their graves than do the pagans who worship their ancestors. A memorial day somewhat as we have it in the United States may not be wrong, and we may teach them how to observe such a day without worshipping at the graves. Memorial tablets in the churches may also solve a difficulty. Instead of spending huge sums to pray the ancestors out of Hades it were better to establish a memorial of some kind for the erection of churches or other charitable institutions. And after all, as stated before, we must show our people as well as the outsider by word and deed that our people through keeping the fourth commandment reverence and honor their parents even more than they did before. In this connection a warning must also be sounded in advance to catechumens and time and again to our members to keep the matter before pagan parents that they now are Christians and as such can at New Year's day and other times no longer prostrate themselves before them, that is, kowtow before them in worship. On the other hand they should constantly renew their love to them and for them and promise to be true to them and ever reverence them, even though they themselves do not become Christian. That is truly honoring father and mother. No longer dare a Christian couple kowtow before the ancestral tablet or the gods together

to conclude their marriage ceremony, but they should with the consent of their parents pledge their vows in a Christian way before their pastor and in church if possible. These are only a few of the "substitutions" that may be made, only a few of the suggestions as to perplexing problems arising out of our opposition to this ancient religion, ancestor worship. The missionary will continue to use tact and pastoral wisdom to overcome all difficulties. When the Chinese joins the Christian church, he knows he must part from these old ways. It is one of the things he realizes very well that he can no longer give any honor and worship to men that must be given God alone. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve," and "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and still, "Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother."

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