

about one-third of the human race. To-day it is the soul of the Chinese Government, institutions and society.

It has undergone changes in its history, and may be divided into periods even as the Christian religion may.

Its first period lasted until the time of Confucius, 521 B.C., and is represented by the *Shu-King* or historical classic.

Its second period lasted for about 250 years, from Confucius to Mencius, and is represented by the *Four Books*. These books hold the same relation to the Chinese that the New Testament does to the Christian.

Its third period is that of the philosophers of the Sung dynasty, represented in the authorized *Commentaries* on the *Four Books*.

Far back, on the horizon of Chinese history, the light does not shine brightly. A haziness hangs over everything. There are, however, one or two outstanding facts of which we may be certain. One of these is a belief in the Unity of God. The primitive Chinese, as he viewed the wide expanse above his head, gave to it the name of "Tien," which signifies the Great Unity. From this he passed to the idea of a ruling Power, whose providence embraces all; and all the way down Chinese history the word "Tien" has been used in the sense of a ruling power or God. But while the idea of a Supreme God is to be found in the ancient Chinese religion, there was little or no worship of Him. The people's worship of this Being, was delegated to the Sovereign. The Sovereign's worship was obscured by a host of intermediary Spirits, who were supposed to be ministers of God. Nature was conceived to be a manifestation of God, and to be peopled with spirits superintending and controlling its different parts in subordination to Him. God was thus removed far away from the

people. They were not permitted to come near unto Him. They were not allowed the familiarity of a son to a father. They were not allowed to study the Deity, in all His glorious perfections. Heaven was veiled from their sight; and the horizon of their vision encircled only earthly things. They were compelled to breathe the atmosphere of earth, tainted, as it is with envy, malice, and selfishness, and were not permitted to breathe the purer air of Heaven.

The Emperor worships God on behalf of the people twice a year, at the summer and winter solstices. The nature of this worship is well set forth in a few words by Dr. Legge. "When we consider the heavens we are filled with awe; we are moved to honour and reverence Him whose throne they are. When we consider the earth we are penetrated with a sense of His kindness. Softer feelings enter the soul, and we are disposed to love Him who crowned the year with His goodness. The heavens are to us the representatives of the Divine Majesty; the earth is the representative of the Divine care. The former teaches us God's more than paternal authority; the latter His more than maternal love. By means of the one and the other we rise to Him as maintaining a Sovereign rule and an ever-watchful care."

Besides this worship of God by the Emperor, there is a direct worship of ancestors by all the people themselves. This is really the only worship offered by the people. Confucius said: "The services of love and reverence to parents when alive, and those of grief and sorrow for them when dead: these completely discharge the fundamental duty of living men."

The form of worship is peculiar, misleading, indeed, to a superficial observer. The Chinese does not kneel