

cultivation. Deified first as Prince Earth (or "genius of the soil") he became in later centuries identified with the earth itself. So arose the modern *worship of the earth*.

The first downward step had been slow ; the *second* was more rapid. In the midst of the confusion and evil which followed on the loosening of the bonds of good government and moral restraint during the instability and disruption of the latter half of the rule of the Chan dynasty, there arose, side by side, the two great teachers, Lăo-tsze and Confucius, each animated by what appeared to him the almost vain hope of checking the current of destruction. Lăo-tsze desired to turn it bodily back ; Confucius to regulate the State and the people against its onward rush ; but the former, in hopelessness, retired at last to the wilds beyond the western limits of the empire ; the latter died weary of the fight, and practically broken-hearted. Then disciples and followers took up the burden which the masters had found too heavy, but, in the distracted state of the kingdom, with even less apparent success. Broken up into numerous sects and schools, they spent their time largely in mutual conflict ; while each party for itself searched vainly for that reality which could give rest to the craving of the spirit, and for that power which could confer stability on social and political life. It was then—when the old *régime* was crumbling in ruin ; when the feudatory States were struggling to snatch what they could from the *débris* ; when the princes fought each for his own hand, and suppressed or perverted the ancient records to suit each his individual ambition—it was then that the minds of thoughtful men were stirred to unwonted activity, and sought in every direction for the peace which seemed to have left the earth.

The doctrines of the early Confucian and of the early Tăoist schools will be afterward more fully alluded to. It may be said here, however, in addition to the remarks on a previous page, that (1) the Tăoists, led by Chwangtsze, regarded the nature of man as but a *screen*, worthless in itself, on which the attributes of the Tăo (the Supreme)—particularly those of righteousness and love—should be displayed ; while (2) the Confucianists, headed by Mencius, held that human *nature, originally good*, needed only for its proper development that man should act in accordance with it. On the other hand, (3) Seun King, a learned writer of the same period, argued that man's nature was essentially evil, seeking only self-satisfaction, and, if followed, leading man in the end to a state of savageism. If man's nature were good, said he, it would not need like a crooked stick to be restrained into the semblance of straightness by external pressure, as of rules and laws. Again, the fact that men wished to do good proved that their nature was bad ; for the ugly wished to be beautiful, and the poor to be rich. Man craved for that which he did not possess. (4) A fourth school, led by the philosopher Kăo, also of the same century as Seun King and Mencius, asserted, as their leading tenet, that human nature was as equally indifferent to good and evil as water to the direction in