

(March 25, 1929)

Confucianism and World Peace

BY DR. CHEN HUAN-CHANG,

President of Confucian University and Confucian
Association, Peking, China.

THE PRESIDENT:—Gentlemen, there is at the present time more than ever before, a desire among nations of the world to understand better one another's aspirations. We have come to realize that most of the difficulties arise from our failure to appreciate the particular point of view of the states which go to make up the mental background of the peoples with whom we come into contact. It is seldom indeed that we have a visitor from China who by virtue of his knowledge, experience, scholarship and his interest in affairs, can be said to be an authoritative spokesman for his own country, and who, by virtue of an extended period of residence in America, has become familiar and intimate with our life and customs.

It gives me very great pleasure to introduce to you, Dr. Chen Huan-Chang, representative of China at the last Geneva Conference and the learned President of the Confucian University, Peking.

DR. CHEN HUAN-CHANG:—Mr. Chairman, I know to come here is just like at home. Your people always treat me so kindly, even better sometimes than our own people do. I am going to ask you to please excuse me if I am not very clear; it is so long since I have had a chance to practise English.

Confucianism is a religion founded by Confucius (551-479 B.C.) He was the incarnation of Chinese civilization; we know the sages who lived before him only through him; and all the scholars and philosophers of the different schools after him have derived their inspiration from him. He was the great teacher; and he has been the guide of the Chinese people in their daily life throughout their his-

tory. He has made China perpetuate her civilization for over five thousand years. Although some Chinese politicians of today prefer to pursue the suicidal policy of discarding Confucianism for the time being, the Chinese people, as a whole, are firm believers in the teachings of their master. Confucianism derived its principles from Heaven. Since Heaven does not change, the principles of Confucianism are equally everlasting. Confucius has been called "The Sage of all Times." He will govern the world throughout all the ages.

What is meant by the word religion in the sense of Confucianism? A definition was given by the grandson of Confucius as follows: "What God gives to men is called Nature; action according to Nature is called the Way; the regulation of the Way into a system is called Religion." But how do we regulate the Way? He said again: "The Regulation of the Way is through love. Love is the characteristic element of man." In other words, anyone who is not acting in accordance with the Way of love may be regarded as not being a man. Love, therefore, is the chief principle of Confucius. In practice, the principle of love, according to Confucius, begins at home. The second chapter of "The Confucian Analects" says: "A superior man lays importance on the root. When the root is established, the principles will flourish. Filial piety and fraternal affection, are they not the root of all actions of love?" Human nature is about the same everywhere. The love of a child for its parents and brothers is intuitive. Confucius regarded this intuitive love as the root, and developed it into a universal love to the greatest extent, not only for human beings, but also for animals, insects and nature. It is very spontaneous, reasonable and practical, and it has made the Chinese people most peaceful, and has made possible many a "Golden Age of Peace" in the different periods of Chinese history. Filial piety is constituted of two essential elements—love and respect. Confucius said: "One who loves his parents dares not hate others; one who neglects his parents dares not neglect others." Therefore, he laid great emphasis on the principle of filial piety and took it as a starting point for world peace.

Next to the principle of love is that of justice or righteousness. Anyone who has common sense can tell what is just or right. Yet, many a man acts in the wrong way, contrary to his own conscience. Why is that? It is simply because he cares for profit much more than for justice. Hence he clings to the former and gives up the latter. Confucius said: "The mind of the superior man is conversant with justice. The mind of the mean man is conversant with profit." "A state should not consider profit as profit, but should consider justice as the real profit." This is really a great principle for the maintenance of international peace. According to the principles of Confucius, one should not commit a single act of injustice or kill a single innocent man, even though by so doing, he could obtain possession of the whole world. How much more foolish, unjust and inhuman it is for one to commit numerous deeds of injustice and to kill millions of innocent people for nothing! Is not justice the real profit of a state? How much dearer is human life than the value of land! Should we sacrifice millions of human lives for the conquest of land or for acquiring a market for trade? Certainly not. The Confucian principle is this: "The superior man does not injure man with what should be used for nourishing man."

Mencius (372-289 B.C.), the great disciple of Confucius, said: "When contentions about territory are the grounds on which they fight, they slaughter men till the fields are filled with corpses. When possession of a city is the ground on which they fight, they slaughter men until the city is filled with the dead. This is what is called 'Utilizing the land to devour human flesh.' Death is not enough for such a crime. Therefore, those who are skilful in fighting, should suffer the highest punishment."

During the period of Spring and Autumn (722-481 B.C.), in which Confucius lived, there were many nations fighting against each other. Prompted by the existing conditions, Confucius, in the 71st year of his age, wrote a most important book entitled "The Spring and Autumn," which is now the foremost of all Chinese Classics, dealing with international problems, codifying international law, and promoting permanent international peace.

Universal peace was the goal of Confucius. To illustrate his ideals, he divided the period of history mentioned in his book "The Spring and Autumn," into three stages, namely, the Stage of Disorder, the Advancement of Peace, and the Perfect Peace.

In the first stage, the Stage of Disorder, primitive civilization was being evolved out of chaos, and the social mind was still very rude. There was a sharp distinction between one's own country and all other countries. Hence attention was paid more to conditions at home than abroad. In the second stage, that of the Advancement of Peace, there was a distinction between all civilized countries and those of the barbarians; the limit of civilization became broader and the friendship of nations closer. Smaller nations could make their voices heard. In the third stage, that of Perfect Peace, there was no distinction at all. The barbarians became civilized, and had the same standing as any other people in the family of nations. The whole world became one unit. Righteousness prevailed.

In the 6th year of Confucius (546 B.C.), China had an international conference for disarmament. The conference consisted of ten leading nations. It was the largest organization working successfully for world peace in the early history of mankind. The result of that gathering banished all wars for eight years. At that time, *Chin* and *Ch'u* were the two strongest nations of all. Each led an alliance. Between these two hostile nations, *Chin* on the north and *Ch'u* on the south, the nation of *Sung* was advantageously situated. Consequently, *Sung* became the natural peace maker. Taking advantage of her geographical location, she initiated a conference of disarmament, held in her capital, and invited all the nations to attend.

In the 331st year of Confucius (221 B.C.), China began to realize through Confucian principles set forth in "The Spring and Autumn," the abolition of all the separate states and the unification of them into one Chinese world under one government. This was the first world state in human history. Before the western countries came into contact with China, she enjoyed the life of a world state and developed the ideals of universalism instead of nationalism. This is a vital difference between China and the

European countries: the former succeeded in uniting the Chinese world under one government for over two thousand years. When we come to the history of the European countries, however, we find that they have utterly failed in many attempts to make one world state. How could China do so? Confucianism enabled her to do it.

Now the real modern world has appeared. Nations are getting closer to each other every day. This is really a new period of "The Spring and Autumn," in the broadest sense. Therefore, the principles set forth in the book, "The Spring and Autumn," by Confucius, are the most suitable and feasible for universal peace. They may be summed up as follows:

1. Heaven is the Lord of the universe, and loves all creatures.
 2. Universal love includes all Mankind, irrespective of racial differences.
 3. The distinction between the civilized countries and the barbarian states is not on the basis of racial differences, nor of geographical situations, but on the basis of possessing propriety and justice.
 4. Reciprocity is the fundamental principle for international relations. "What you do not want done to yourself, do not to others."
 5. Truthfulness is the real binding force of international relations. Without truthfulness the world will go asunder.
 6. War cannot be justified because, all nations standing on an equal footing, they have no right to make war against each other.
 7. There are divisions of territories, but not of people, as all people belong to one family. Therefore, peoples of the world, irrespective of their nationalities, should migrate freely, and should not be excluded by any nation. This is a fundamental means of unifying the whole world.
 8. The whole world shall be a great unity, disregarding national strength and geographical advantages of locations.
- These principles are the most adaptable to world peace. It is impossible for me here to go into details as Confucius did in, "The Spring and Autumn."

But I should like to mention one point from "The

Great Learning," which is one of the four books of Confucianism. That discussion being the last and longest chapter in the book, deals with the questions of world peace. "The Great Learnings," begins with:

1. The investigation of things.
2. The extension of knowledge.
3. Sincerity of thought.
4. Composure of mind.
5. The cultivation of personality.
6. The regulation of the family.
7. The governing of a state.

And it ends with the eighth, the most important, the equalization of the whole world.

For centuries, every child in China has begun its study in school from "The Great Learning." So all the Chinese who have had any schooling have the ideals of equalization of the world in their minds. According to "The Great Learning," the equalization of the whole world is the final aim, but the cultivation of personality is the means, and sincerity of thought, in turn, is the real root by which a personality is cultivated. The conclusion is that we cannot have world peace unless we cultivate our personality; nor can we cultivate our personality unless our thoughts are sincere. Therefore, we must first pay attention to our hearts within, before we can perfect a world peace without. Otherwise, movements for world peace are bound to fail.

Human nature is instinctively good. But it is imperfect. If we want to have world peace, the youth should be educated accordingly. Confucius said: "Nature is practically the same with everyone, but it differs in proportion to the education received." Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for children to be educated at home, in school, and in society in order to fit them for the task of obtaining world peace.

Universalism represents the greatest ideal of Confucius. It is best expressed in the following words which he enunciated about 497 B.C.: "When the great principle of universalism prevails, the whole world becomes the common property of all; the people elect men of virtue, talent, and capacity; they act in good faith and cultivate

friendship. Thus men do not regard their parents as only their own parents, nor treat as their own children only their own children. Provision is made for the aged until their death, employment is given to the able-bodied, and the means for self-development are offered to the young. Widowers, widows, orphans, the childless, the disabled, and the sick are all supported by the State. Each man has his rights, and each woman has her home. Everyone values wealth, but no one keeps it only for himself. One loves to toil, but does not toil for his own benefit alone. As a result, selfish scheming finds no occasion to appear. Robbers, filchers and revolutionaries do not exist. Perfect security prevails everywhere. That is what I call Universalism."

All religions of the world are, in fact, Peace Makers. Politics can govern only the bodies of men, but religions govern and develop their souls. A set of principles of any religion, if practised, can make the world peaceful. How much more can we accomplish if all religions join together to bring about world peace!

Hereafter, we must join hands in a religious spirit. With such co-operation, we can predict World Peace will come.