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The spirit of the east, 1942.

THE SPIRIT OF THE EAST

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Confucianism and Mohammedanism -- the last of a series of three discourses on "The Religions of the Far East."

By Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

> At The Temple

On Sunday morning, February 8, 1942 Max Nordau, in one of his last books, "Menschen und Menschliches von Heute", introduces Sidi Ibrahim, a professor at Azhar University, who explains the difference between the East and the West.

"'Progress,' says this representative Easterner among other things, 'that is the word you Europeans always have on the tip of your tongues. But I have never understood what you mean by it. When I heard the word, my mind conjures up a picture of your boulevards. People are racing madly on them until they gasp for breath. An evil spirit seems to be invisibly behind them, whipping them on. Whither are they running? Why are they chasing about? No one knows. That is what your progress seems like to me. I see the commotion clearly enough but I do not see the aim and the purpose of it. You are tortured with restlessness; you suffer from fever -- the Lord turn all evil from you and us. You are always craving excitement about you; you are forever wanting to change everything. You cannot leave things as they are. So you destroy the most beautiful gift granted to mankind here below: the joy of always finding everything again as one has always known it, dear and familiar. I was born in Jarabub. When I visit my native town, everything is in its place: the house in which I was a child, the street I played in, the brook I splashed in forty years ago. The dust has preserved my sainted father's footprints, and in theold orchard wall the marks which I scratched there as a dreaming boy are still to be seen. But now if I return to Cairo where you are masters, I find an apparently strange street where I had known a house so intimately, a house under a tree of which I had been accustomed to seek the shade. We know how to relive our childhood even as greybeards. You treat the past like the corpse of a criminal. You burn it and strew the ashes to the four winds. Perhaps I am mistaken, but it seems to me that among us men may become happy during their lives, but not among you. Europeans drink in order to lose consciousness. We Easterners do not yearn to be taken out of reality, but are contented with the blue sky, the sweet date, the creamy goat's milk. The European's learning makes him arrogant; it makes the Oriental modest. Our science is the voice of the fathers, while yours burrows among beasts, dead bodies, and stones. What does it matter whether the state blossoms or decays? That does not much depend on or change the fate of the individual Moslem. He cultivates his fields, he fattens his calf, he marries his children. Our cities perish only then when we have no reason for keeping them up. With us the city exists for the sake of the people, not the people for the sake of the city. In a word, the Europeans can do a great deal, but it does them no good. You strive after knowledge; we strive after righteousness and wisdom. You train your children in skill; we train them in goodness. You are always talking of freedom but are bound in a thousand chains. We are all servants of the Lord, but the individual can do and leave undone whatever he pleases. Man's happiness grows out of his morality, not out of his eridution."

This is a rather challenging difference between the East and the West....

Confucianism is the religion of some 350 million human beings -- 350 millions of Chines -- one of the most civilized peoples in the world. The Chines are a great people, have a long historic continuity of over 4000 years. They had a great civilization when most of Europe was barbaric. Most of the essential inventions such as printing, gunpowder, compass, paper were started in China.

Above all they perfected the art of living as no other before them or since.

They are a courageous and a long suffering people. They have in the last

few years given evidence of their amazing courage and of their great spiritual

resolution in fighting the deadliest foe of the Far East -- Japan.

Confucius is the teacher of the Chinese, and has been for nearly 5500 years. Confucius is the Latinized name for K'ung Fu-Tze, was known as Kung the Master. Confucius was born of illustrious stock. Early in life he devoted himself to the study of the ancient lore of China, for China was already in his day an ancient people. To earn a living, he devoted himself to public service -- first in one position and then in a more responsible position until he became adviser to the ruler of the Province.

At 22 he was a teacher. Confucius, according to all accounts, was an aristocrat in thought, in speech, in carriage and in manner. In all things he insisted on good form, on propriety in all things; also on earnestness and righteousness.

China, in his day, the fifth, sixth century of the Common Era, was a like the rest of Medieval Europe.

Feudal State, in decline, China was being broken up into a number of competitive states. Within these states rival families were striving for supremacy. There was a great deal of confusion and unrest in China. The country was in danger of anarchy. There was a great need for the re-establishment of sould political ideals in China, a sound political sciencefor the nation.

Confucius set for himself just that task. He wandered from province to province, from town to town offering his services to executives, rulers, in order to guide them in the ways of political adminstration. He wanted to be the guide and teacher of other people, to guide their destiny, just as Plato was

was the teacher of Dionysius and Aristotle, the teacher of Thilip of Macedon.

Confucius believed that there could be good government only if the man at the top were the proper man, properly instructed in the ways of administration. Confucius, in other words, believed that a political reformer was one who based his political doctrines not upon convenience, but upon profound ethical principles. During his lifetime his teachings were not heeded, as was the case of all great teachers and leaders of men. He died a rather heartsick old man. But soon after his death his teachings and sayings spread. They became the most powerful influence in that great world which is China in molding not only the lives of individuals, but in molding the life of the nation.

I said a moment ago that Confucius was interested primarily in the smooth functioning of organized society. Most of his teachings were directed to rulers, public officials. He believed that by their example the individuals of the nation would be inspired to live lives of virtue, goodness, and that peace and tranquility would thereupon ensue.

Confucius was not a prophet any more than Buddha was. He brought no new revelation. Seemingly none of these great figures of the Far East brought any new revelations. The concept of revelation seems to be particularly attributed to the genius of the Semitic race. It is found in Judaism, in Christianity and in Mohammedanism.

Confucius was not a theologian. He brought no new concept of God. He had nothing new to say about the human soul or about the immortality of the soul, or about the Hereafter. One of his disciples once asked him how to save the spirit of the dead. "While you are not able to save men, how can you save their spirits?" When he was asked again: "How about the dead?", he asnswered, "While you do not know life, how can

you know about death?"

Confucius was not an iconoclast. He did not wage war on any superstitions of his day. Nor was he interested in great ethical metaphysical problems of human suffering, problems of evil. He avoided all that. He was not a mystic. He was not a metaphysician. He was a philosopher and a political moralist. He educated and elucidated and out of teachings of his race he drew his philosophy which he presented to his government and to the laity. He looked upon himself merely as the transmitter. In the self-same sense Mohammed and later on Jesus regarded themselves as transmitters.

What Confucius taught I found in three books, none of which he himself wrote, but contain what he thought. These were written down by his disciples, and are found in the "Analects", "The Great Learning", and in "The Doctrine of the Mean". The latter book, "The Doctrine of the Mean", according to record, was translated by his grandson. Confucius in this book states that all improvement in society begins at the top. In order to rebuild society you must rebuild men. In order to rebuild men, you must rebuild the man who is at the head of the government. That man at the top has the supreme responsibility. Therefore he must perfect himself before he can rule other men, properly train himself to rule other men. He must cultivate his heart and mind. He must develop himself most completely and most harmoniously. Unlike Buddhism which advised human beings not to think of self, Confucius guided and urged men to develop themselves - their minds, souls, hearts, harmoniously so that would be well-rounded and well-constructed whole men. "The superior man", says Confucius, "seeks everything/himself; the ordinary man seeks everything in others." He was a great believer in instruction, knowledge, study. Therefore China was wak enabled, perhaps before any other people, to develop universal systems of education. China always laid

great stress on learning.

How does one perfect himself? How does one develop himself? By following in a straught line that course which nature has outlined for him without deflection to right or left, without deviation. Keep your heart straight. Avoid passion. A man's conduct will be incorrect under the influence of sorrow, terror, distress, or sentimentality. Be sincere in thought — no deception, no self-deception: "Fine words, an insinuating appearance and excessive , I am ashamed of them!", said Confucius. Knowledge is a sure way of self-development. Investigate things — everything. Scholarship is to be held in highest repute. Learning tempers all virtue.

also
That, by the way, is/is the Jewish attitude of learning. Important to learn, even the hard way — but to learn at all times. " man who in eager pursuit of knowledge forgets his food, who in his eager pursuit of knowledge forgets his food, who in his eager pursuit of knowledge forgets his food, who in the joy of its attainment forgets his sorrows, and does not perceive that old age is coming on."

Such a ruler who develops himself, his heart and his mind in the right way and who then proceeds to train his family in the right way, includating the members of the home with filial piety which is the basis of the whole patriarchal system of China, and kindness to one enother — if the leader will train himself and his family, there will result an orderly state in society. "From the loving example of one family, a whole state becomes loving, and from its courtesies, a whole state becomes courteous."

In other words, Confucius' conception of good government, of a proper society consisted of this: "When every one performs his duties properly, according to his station, without defect or excess, in proper substance as well as in when all proper manner, and is performed in a spirit of reciprocity." Thus Confucius

declared: "The superior man does what is proper to the station in which he is; he does not desire to go beyond this." "In a position of wealth and honour, he does what is proper to a position of wealth and honour. In a poor and low position, he does what is proper to a poor and low position. Situated among barbarous tribes, he does what is proper to a situation among barbarous tribes. In a position of sorrow and difficulty, he does w what is proper to a position of sorrow and difficulty. The superior man can find himself in no situation in which he is not himself." And do nothing in excess. -- the Golden Mean. The Master said: "To go beyond is as wrong as to fall short." Not to be too good; not to be too smart." Some one said, "What do you say conerning the principlethat injury should be recompensed with kindness?" The Master said, "With what then will you recompense kindness? "Recompense injury with justice, and recompense kindness with kindness." One must do, in other words, what is proper to your station, without excess and do it with propriety, with the proper manner. There must be ritual in life. There must be ceremony in life. The formal expression of an act is important. The dramatization of life is important. Confucius was influenced by the whole court procedure in China. He sought to introduce it in every walk of life -- everything done gracefully, with the proper manner, with the proper gesture. Confucius succeeded in making the Chinese the best mannered people in the world.

So he declared: "Respectfulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes timidity, boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without the rules of propriety, becomes rudness."

"The superior man", said the Master, is correctly firm, and not firm merely."

Then there was the Golden Rule, give and take. It was Confucius

who first pronounced the Golden Rule six hundred before Hillel and the time of Jesus. "Is there one word which may serve as a practice for all one's life?" the Master was asked. The Master said: "Is not recriprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." Hillel and Jesus said the same thing later on.

So in Confucianism we have a philosophy of balance, moderate life, proper form and proper substance, a life of self-cultivation, of self-perfection learning, grace and ceremony in social intercourse with all other men to a condition of universal peace and tranquility. Here you have a philosopher who tasted life and set out to share his wisdom with other men. That is Confucius.

Another altogether different type of religious leader was Mohammed, head of Islam. Today some 220 million converts are followers of Mohammedanism in the world and many millions of them in the Far East. Mohammed came 1000 years after Confucius. He was the last of the great founders of religions. Unlike others, Mohammed was a prophet. He regarded himself as such. He was a man who came with a revelation, a series of revelations which were later collected and embodied in the sacred text of Mohammendanism called the Koran.

Unlike Confucius and Buddha who were principally philosophers, psychologiests, teachers and whose teachings were largely secular, the religious thought of Mohammed was permeated with the idea of a personal God, like Judaism and Christianity from which he borrowed most of his essential ideals. God the all just, the all wise, the all powerful God—that is central in the thinking of Mohammedanism. Mohammed has much to say about human souls, the Hereafter, God.

Arabia in his day, the sixth century A. D. was a pagan world. People

still practiced idolatry. The people of that day were grossly materialistic. Mohammed warred upon this idolatrous materialism. He came with a passionate revelation of the Oneness of God. "There is no Go but God." The unitarian ideal was all dominant in his thinking. He rejected Christianity because ofits trinitarianism. He came to resture, he said, the pure teaching of Abraham which he regarded as having been corrupted by Jews and Christians.

Like Jesus, Mohammed was impressed with the thought of the approaching Day of Judgment in which many will perish and only a few saved. And he was commissioned to warn people, to summon people to repent, to surrender their idolatry and gross immorality or they would be destroyed. He said the few, the righteous, the pure in heart would be rewarded in Paradise. A banquet would be prepared for them in the Garden of Delight where the faithful would be able to drink sweet wines served by fair damsels.

Mohammed preached five basic things: 1) The absolute unity of God, 2) the importance of periodic prayer, 3) the mandate of alms, charity, 4) fasting as a way of purification and penitence, 5) periodic pilgrimage to Mecca, that old pagan shrine.

In the second revelation of Koran he states: "There is no piety in turning your faces toward the east or the west, but he is pious who believeth in God, and the past day, and the angels, and the Scriptures, and the prophets; who for the love of God disburseth his wealth to his kindred, and to the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and those who ask, and for ransoming; who observeth prayer, and payeth the legal alms, and who is of those who are faithful to their engagements when they have engaged in them, and patient under ills and hardships, and in time of trouble: these are they who are just, and these are they who fear the Lord."

Mohammed preached charity to his people, love, faithfulness. He recognized no race barriers. He opposed blood feuds, infanticide. He denounced

Nearly all of his teachings can be traced back to the earlier teachers and still earlier teachings of Judaism. But what was original was the fact that he was able to set in motion a powerful religious movement which swept the world in a breath-taking way, so that during his life and after his death, Mohammendanism swept through, Syria, the Gates of India, west across to Gibralter and Spain. Evidently the world was ready for a new voice.

Unlike all other great teachers of whom we have spoken and of whom we have not spoken, such as Zoroaster, Jesus and the pophets of Israel,

Mohammed was not satisfied merely with changing others to his way of thinking.

He relied upon the sword. "Kill them, seize them and oppress them and set yourself against them at every avenue." He was a prophet who battled and warred.

In his youth, Mohammed was a camel driver, a visionary in Mecca.

He fled to Medina. Later on he grew impatient with those who opposed his teachings and resorted to the sword, and he inspired his followers to use the sword to force people to accept his teachings.

Mohammed not only brought a new religion to mankind, he brought a new empire into the world. And led by the new faith, the Arabs swept out of that mystic world of Arabia and became the conquerors of nearly two-thirds of the people of that day. He built an amazingly fine civilization. After the Fall of the Roman Empire when Europe went into that Era of Darkness and poverty, the Arabs took over the heritage of the ancient world, established universities, etc. Carried learning over to Europe and so paved the way in Europe for the Modern Day.

My good friends, I have spoken during the last three weeks, of some of the religions of the Far East. The East is awakening today. A great Oriental crisis is on. The East has been asleep for many centuries. In Science and Technology it has been far behind the Western World. But in Religion, in the things of the spirit, it was always and remains, far ahead of the WesternWorld. I suppose that the greatest religious figure of our day is still Mahatma Gandhi. The East is now determined to catch up with the Western World technologically, scientificall. The hope/that it will not destroy its soul in so doing. The hope is that in adopting the machine it will adopt the machine only only without its heart, that it will not permit itself to become mechanized, materialistic.

In the East the soul was always the supreme concern of men, and the culture of the heart, rather than than the culture of the mind. And today when the West is relapsing into paganism and barbarism, today when the West is spiritually declining, distrously, it is even more important that the East shall retain that which is so native to its genius and so characteristic to the essence of its being — the spirit, the inner light, the truth which wells up from the inner springs of the human heart.

Perhaps from the East will again come light to a tortured Western world.

Perhaps the East has awakened the West to a synchronization of Science with

Religion.

The East and the West in a large sense are now at war. Perhaps out of the crash of arms there may come in the days to come greater contact of ideas which will help mankind to synchronize these two ways of life, to give one what the other lacks. It would well repay the peoples of the WesternWorld to acquaint themselves more deeply and profoundly with the philosophy and the way of life of these people of the East from whom in the long past the West has borrowed all that has today — more of the soul and the things of the East.

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Learning tempers all Verture. (Jews, por 314/2)

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The Master said, "Respectfulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes timidity; boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without the rules of propriety, becomes rudeness. (72)

"Ornament is as substance; substance is as ornament. The hide of a tiger or leopard stript of its hair, is like the hide of a dog or goat stript of its hair. (119)

The Master : (169

The Master said, "The superior man is correctly firm, and not firm merely." (169)

(d) SPint, Responst

Tsze-kung asked, saying, "Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" The Master said, "Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." (165)

HIDER JOH

8.

When one cultivates to the utmost the principles of his nature, and exercises them on the principle of reciprocity, he is not far from the path. What you do not like, when done to yourself, do not do to others. (258)

"To be able to judge of others by what is nigh in ourselves; this may be called the art of virtue." (58)

Progress along with a thus

"Now the man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others." (58)

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1. The superior man does what is proper to the station in which - Each can be he is; he does not desire to go beyond this. (259)

6 So bean in His

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2. In a position of wealth and honour, he does what is proper to a position of wealth and honour. In a poor and low position, he does what is proper to a poor and low position. Situated among barbarous tribes, he does what is proper to a situation among barbarous tribes. In a position of sorrow and difficulty, he does what is proper to a position of sorrow and difficulty. The superior man can find himself in no situation in which he is not himself. (259)

3. In a high situation, he does not treat with contempt his inferiors. In a low situation, he does not court the favour of his superiors. He rectifies himself, and seeks for nothing from others, so that he has no dissatisfactions. He does not murmur against heaven, nor grumble against men. (259)

4. Thus it is that the superior man is quiet and calm, waiting for the appointments of Heaven, while the mean man walks in dangerous paths, looking for lucky occurrences. (260)

(h) ho Excess- Vice or Vinteres- golden Mans - Rabbane

The Master said, "To go beyond is as wrong as to fall short." (106)

The Master said, "I know how it is that the path of the Mean is not walked in: - The knowing go beyond it, and the stupid do not come up to it. I know how it is that the path of the Mean is not understood: - The men of talents and virtue go beyond it, and theworthless do not come up to it. (251)

The Master said, "Alas! How is the path of the Mean untrodden!" (252)

Some one said, "What do you say concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness?" (152)

The Master said, "With what then will you recompense kindness?

"Recompense injury with justice, and recompense kindness with kindness." (152)

(1) Propriety - Manner - Ritual + Ceremony-Demonstried Court procedure -Made Chinise west decorous + hest-mannered

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Manner- and when all is performed in a Mint 7 (4) Reenhousty'- (hill) 9) The burderate, balanced life. Prope projections These manners, grace + commoning of strind wherever! Tasked life - Know life - assumbaked human expenses and shared their windows with fellow were. but 5 Islam - 22019 - For East. Hereby warren - Timolert - cam with a Newlature - Worden with a seem box - Koran. O histor Con Buel, his rel. that was premated with 1 du ford - (les Jud. The. from while he Monnora) - Soul - Herapter. 3 Islam' Submissions Wheleudene afen 1204. all by byen there Twee the wavery in Both 1 Analow - propar - bether - polythinter - (delectronic)

The Master said, "Why did you not say to him, - He is simply a man, who in his eager pursuit of knowledge forgets his food, who in the joy of its attainment forgets his sorrows, and who does not perceive that old age is coming on?" (65)

(4) The Jenes-infrend with that you about and on the Day Judgment, The many well purch! evargel - the last the prest freshet awareness the approching End - world will be dishard togather with Ennes - Reportere Paroles - a sto a triguet and fair daments to sense there's fourtaines - sureat aris 6 He prouble Vinty - Prages - alus - Fasting and Polynwey to heeca - Ka' ba ded popan shuredethit affrohnake this monthis futh turages. That p. 356) Comment of capture - can pathons hures - Peroposed us race barries = infantiale - dumbres (8) With onginal - but on in ideas - that is organity wersone Swept them - wegent faith under four 9 th Swords. - Unerto Bud- Confu- Jones + Convenier - Sulyapation - "Kill the unbehances Front guery against thin Serethen - Mus them

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