

MY OPINION ON SEVERAL QUESTIONS CONCERNING RELIGION

By Liang Han-Chao, Taiwan

In the period of celebration of our National Day this year all the religions in this country arranged an Inter-religious Cultural Objects Exhibition of the Republic of China in Taiwan Provincial Museum at Taipei. I think it is an opportunity for me to write out my opinion on several questions concerning religion.

The first question is whether religion should exist in human society. Some of so-called scholars are so fickle to say that as we are in a scientific age today, human thought should proceed actively along the open highway of science and religion is of no use to us anymore. So in their mind they look down upon those students and advocators of religion as backward elements and obstacles to human progress. I think this way of thinking is the most shallow kind. Everyone of some vision has known that in the human history of the last two hundred years the ever advancement of scientific spirit and methods has brought forth the modern civilization. Hereafter, it is out of question that man should continue their progress along various branches of science to seek advancement in human knowledge and abilities in order to improve human living. However, is it right that academic studies should be directed to the scientific side alone without going to the other directions? This question needs to be carefully and profoundly considered.

First, as I know, the modern scientific progress in the West was originated from the Renaissance in the 14th century. This Renaissance was the resurrection of ancient Greek spirit. Since the ancient Greek philosophy has reawakened the seeking of profound truth from nature and does not like to have one's own thoughts subject to the directions of others (religious education and political authority), there have risen various forms of inventions to explore the cosmic secrets and to start the chain of modern civilization and culture. This civilization and culture not only have not been insulated from ancient civilization and culture, but are the gradual development of them. Then how can mankind review the facts by forgetting their origin.

In a review of the history of academic thoughts or recent centuries, great thinkers like Nicolaus Copernicus the Polish astronomer, Gallieo Galilei the Italian astronomer, Sir Issac Newton the English philosopher and mathematician, Emmanuel Kant the German metaphysician, Alfred Russel Wallace, the English naturalist and Albert Einstein the American physicist, all have their firm religious belief. Can the achievement of those fickle fellows

who always talk about science without any idea about religion surpass them? As I see it, the existence of religion in human society is a historical fact. If religion is not needed by man, it will be eliminated long ago without the trouble of having man to thumb it down. But religious believers are found in every corner of the earth. Even totalitarian states like USSR and Communist China whose aim is to eliminate religion, have no way to suppress the freedom of faith. In the statistics of world publications religious and literary writings have occupied the highest percentage every year.

Why men in this world of swelling scientific tide are still so conservative and unchanged? There must be some reason for that. The life span of any man can hardly be over one hundred years, but his spiritual or mental demand is unlimited and permanent. The definition of religion is man's thoughts and belief towards the questions of life and death and the relation between nature and mankind. In the application of science for seeking truth by mankind, it is necessary for many to work along fields of study to ferret out the minutest problems within the universe by sharp thinking and scrutinizing analysis on the one hand. On the other hand, it is also necessary to have many to use their all-comprehensive thinking to seek the meaning of human living in this world as a whole. Those who are engaging in these two different lines of work should render mutual help, show mutual love and respect and bear mutual witness with open heart to seek the highest, greatest, best and truest truth, so that the results of these two kinds of studies will develop in balance and work in perfect co-operation with the purpose of realising a utopia for mankind (that is also the realization of a kingdom of heaven on the earth).

Thus science and religion, even philosophy and literature are needed by mankind. If man cannot accept this very common knowledge and, on the individual biased opinion and deflected individuality, insists in crushing down anybody whose opinion is different from his to create troubles and continuous strife, it is the mischievous working of the primitive urge hidden in human nature, and it is also the cause of incessant tragedies that happen in human relations. This has nothing to do with science.

We Chinese nationals and other nationals are of the same mankind and share the common excellent traits and defects. However, our spirit of forbearance and leniency cultivated by our traditional culture makes us better than others in this respect. Members of the same family, be one of religious faith and another not and be one of one faith and another of another faith, can live together harmoniously without getting into trouble. This is really the excellent trait of Chinese race. The Inter-religious Cultural Objects Exhibition arranged by the seven religions existing here should be counted as a great event in this world.

The second question is how the different religions get along together. As I said before, religion is man's thoughts and belief towards the questions of life and death and the relation between nature and mankind. However, such thoughts and belief underlying in human mentality can hardly be purified. The biased opinion of an individual, the deflected individuality of each man and the various selfish interest and consciousness that have no relation with religion at all have often been manifested in the religious organizations under some excuse to develop into very unreasonable struggles. I deem such a thing as the result of environmental provocation and emotional impulse caused by "the mutual cause and effect of selfishness and obscured intelligence." Although religion is taken for the cause such a man has really departed from religion.