

## TAOISM, AN APPRECIATION.

BY GILBERT REID.

[Our readers are acquainted with Dr. Reid, the founder and director of the International Institute of China, at Shanghai. News of his work and reports from his pen have frequently appeared in these pages. The following address was delivered under the Billings Lectureship of Boston, at the International Institute, on the 18th and 25th of April, 1915.—Ed.]

MY acquaintance with the teachings, books, and followers of Taoism has been nearly as long as my acquaintance with Confucianism, and growth in acquaintance has brought growth in appreciation. On my part there is to-day more than tolerance of another faith, there is real sympathetic appreciation.

It is as a Christian and as a missionary that I view with admiration the fundamental characteristics of Taoist doctrine. Just as to my mind there is no antagonism between Christianity and Confucianism if the essentials be considered, so in the same way Christianity and Taoism are not mutually antagonistic. In very much they are in accord, and in many ways they may be mutually helpful. The Christian teacher, on his part, can find many a choice expression in the Taoist classics, containing high spiritual truths and interpretive of the great teachings of Christianity. The sayings of Confucianism are useful in ethical instruction, and those of Taoism in spiritual instruction.

Both Taoism and Confucianism embrace within themselves the teachings prior to the time of their special founders, Lao-tze and Confucius, just as Christianity includes the records of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. In ancient times there was only one religion in China which had been handed down from the earliest days. Confucianism and Taoism were only two branches of the one ancient faith, two schools of thought interpreting a revelation from God. The Confucian branch represents the more practical and ethical side of religion, while the Taoist branch represents the more spiritual and mystical side. There are indeed but few references to the ancient Books in Taoist literature, but the careful student will discern many religious ideas which were absorbed into the Taoist classic from the holy men before, just as one who drinks from a stream is drinking from a spring far up the mountains.

I. The student of Taoism must be first impressed with its profound

message concerning *Tao*, "the Way." This word is best understood if translated as Universal Law, or the Law of Nature, such a law being *the way*, or *course*, in which Nature operates, or which God, the great First Cause, known in Chinese as the "Great Extreme," has been operating through the phenomena of the universe. Some have used the word Reason to translate the Chinese term, and thus an impression has been created that Taoists are the rationalists of China, when more properly they should be called spiritualists and mystics.

Another Chinese term called *Li*, and translated as an Inner Principle, is almost interchangeable with *Tao*, so much so that in colloquial Chinese the two are used together, and are generally understood to denote doctrine or truth. If there is any sequence in the two terms, Law is preceded by Principle. Thus in the first sentence of the Doctrine of the Mean, written by a spiritual-minded disciple of Confucius, we are taught that first in order comes Heaven, or God, who is elsewhere called the root of all things. Next in order comes the Inner Principle which emanates from God and is implanted in all Nature, animate and inanimate; with man this Principle is spoken of as his moral nature. From the Inner Principle there comes Universal Law or the Way, the particular thought being that God has a way in which this Inner Principle must reveal itself. From this Universal Law there issues a Teaching, or a religion, this being the final and specific elaboration of the laws written on the heart by the indwelling Spirit of God.

With the Confucian series Taoism has much in common; its emanations, however, are set forth in simpler order, in a threefold series. There is first Heaven, or God, then this Universal Law, embracing in itself the Inner Principle, and then Virtue, or goodness, instead of Teaching or a religion. The term Teaching, or a religious system, is suited better to the scholastic character of Confucianism, while the term Virtue is suited to the spiritual character of Taoism. So close is the relation of God to his Law as it works itself out in the universe, and especially in man, that the impersonal Law and the personal God are thought of as one and the same. Hence some have criticized Taoism, as they have criticized modern Confucianism, as being without God, as materialistic or atheistic. Thus, it is cited, Chu-fu-tze of the Sung dynasty once used the expression, "Heaven is *Li* or Principle," turning personality into a mere idea. The thought of this profound philosopher was rather that even Heaven must conform to the ruling principles of the universe, and so much does Heaven conform thereto that both are



LAO-TZE.

(From a Chinese drawing.)

brought together as one. In the same way Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

The Taoist mystic also linked his idea of Law with God and made them one and the same. Lao-tze was a great monist. God as the origin of all must conform to the Law which He has implanted in the universe and in man. Eternal Law binds God as it binds all mankind. Law is universal, it is eternal, it is one, it is God. To such a degree is this true, and so masterful is the sway of Law, that if human thought is to think of a series at all, Law is thought of as first and God as subsequent. Thus in the fourth chapter of the great classic, it is said that this Universal Law is as if it were the ancestor of the material universe, plainly teaching, as it is taught elsewhere, that before the heavens and the earth and all this material world with its vegetable and animal life there existed this Eternal and Universal Law. Then comes the paradoxical statement, "I do not know whose son it is; it seems to be before God." That is, instead of Law being a son, it is a father, of God. This is, however, only a strong and striking way of saying that Law, by which all the universe is governed and from which it cannot escape, is everlasting, and so much so is it everlasting, and so supreme, that even God is bound by it and may be said to come after Law. In reality Law and God are alike everlasting.

Chuang-tze, the disciple of Lao-tze, and equally profound in his utterances, advances the same idea as to the priority of this Universal Law. Here are his words:

"This is Law: it has emotion and sincerity, but it does nothing and is without bodily form. It can be transmitted yet not received; it can be apprehended yet not seen. It is itself the origin and the root [i. e., self-existent]. Before there were the heavens and the earth, there it was, securely persisting. By it there came the mysterious existence of the spirits, and the mysterious existence of God. It produced the heavens; it produced the earth. It was before the Great Extreme [or the First Cause], yet may not be deemed high. It was beneath the Great Extreme, yet may not be deemed deep. It was before the heavens and the earth were produced, yet may not be deemed of long time. It grew up in highest antiquity, yet may not be deemed old." This is like the Biblical expression, "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday; from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God."

The first chapter of the classic of Lao-tze starts off with a most concise statement of *Tao*, or Law, distinguishing two kinds. The one is everlasting, the nameless, the ineffable; the other is not

everlasting, and bears a name. From other passages we learn that one is Heaven's Law, and the other Man's Law, but that man to attain to highest virtue must conform himself, not to his own ideas, but to the Law of God, written on the heart.

This distinction in the idea of Law, the two aspects of one and the same Law, is that Law has its eternal and Godward side, full of mystery and limitless, and that it also appears in time, is manifested in the phenomena of Nature, and has a manward side, capable of being comprehended and with definite limits and outward conditions.

Thus the first chapter says. "Law which can be made into laws is not the eternal Law. The Name which can be named [i. e., used on human lips and which is an interpretation of the eternal Law] is not the everlasting Name. The Nameless one is the beginning of the heavens and the earth; the Namable one is the mother of the material world."

These and other expressions cannot but attract the Christian and should command his appreciation. Though the *Tao* of Lao-tze has not the same meaning as the *Logos* of St. John, also translated into Chinese as *Tao*, yet this twofold aspect of *Tao* or Law in the Taoist classic is like the twofold aspect of God as taught by the Apostle John. "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. All things were made by Him. And the Logos became flesh." Thus God on the one side is mystery, the Unknowable; on the other, He is a manifestation and known. The Logos is God in the aspect of being revealed, culminating in a human incarnation. According to the Taoist idea Law has these twofold aspects, both of which, but especially the aspect of manifestation, are concerned in bringing the material universe into being. The Taoist teaching, moreover, being based on traditions, like that of Confucianism, is that the world was not created but passed through a process of evolution or emanation. In any case, the fundamental teaching is that the heavens and the earth and all the universe of Nature are not everlasting; only Law or God is everlasting. Only Law, only God, is from the beginning, and all else has come therefrom. The cosmogony of Lao-tze does not explain the method of the world's origin; it states the fact without any explanation. Law reveals itself in all the works of Nature and in every individual being, and yet it existed before Nature and man came into existence. "It is not merely immanent; it is supernatural and prenatal."

Another remarkable expression in the Taoist classic is this one:

“Heaven and earth and all material things are born from Being, and Being is born from Non-Being.” In this the idea seems to be, first of all, and which is plainly intelligible, that all materiality comes from immateriality and the concrete from the abstract. Elsewhere it is said that this universe comes from Universal Law, which continues to abide in all the universe, imparting to all things and all men a particular and distinctive character. From this passage there seems to be implied that this immateriality or this Universal Law bears within itself a distinction, called Being and Non-Being, or existence and non-existence. Before this material universe came into shape, there was an unseen, immutable, and omnipresent Law, which is like Kant’s “pure form,” or Plato’s “ideas,” but even this has a higher and lower state, the latter called Being and the former still more intangible and spiritual, denominated as the great Nothing, as pure Non-Being. In this highest of all states the last vestige of anything material has disappeared.

While thus distinguished as Being and Non-Being there is only one, called the Eternal and Universal Law. Thus in the Confucian philosophy there is the Great Extreme or First Cause and the Absolute or Limitless, but the two are one.

The high spiritual and deeply mysterious character of *Tao* or Law is brought out in another remarkable passage:

“Looking for it, but yet invisible—it may be named colorless. Listened for, but yet inaudible—it may be named soundless. Grasping for it, but yet never attained—it may be named subtle. These three cannot be analyzed; they blend and become one. . . . Forever and continuously, it remains the nameless; it is ever reverting into the immaterial. It may be called the form of the formless, the image of the imageless; it may be called the transcendently abstruse.”

Here, then, is pure form; here is spirituality, transcendental and elusive, though the words “spirit” and “breath” as used in the most ancient books are here not used in the Taoist classic. The whole universe and even God become absorbed in the oneness of an infinite ideal.

Chuang-tze, the noted disciple of Lao-tze, has also the following reference:

“*Tao*—Law—is without beginning and without end. Material things are born and die, they are never permanent; but now for better and now for worse they are ceaselessly changing form.”

The difference here described is that between the material and the immaterial; the former is temporary or at least had a beginning,

the latter is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning and without end.

This distinction between materiality and immateriality, between the visible resultant and the primeval, spiritual cause, or Eternal and Universal Law, is the most valuable truth which Taoism unfolds in a great variety of expressions.

To the Christian there is something unsatisfying in the failure to lay the same emphasis on God as on God's Law. Still, there are a few sentences which may be quoted from Chuang-tze. In one place we have these words:

"Human knowledge is limited, and yet by going on to what he does not know man comes to know what is meant by Heaven or God. He knows him as the Great Unity; he knows him as the Great Mystery; he knows him as the Great Illuminator; he knows him as the Great Equitable; he knows him as the Great Infinite; he knows him as the Great Hope; he knows him as the Great Destiny—this is ultimate knowledge. The Great Unity is everywhere, . . . the Great Destiny is to be depended upon. The ultimate end is God. By conformity comes enlightenment. He is the revolving center. He is the beginning."

In another passage this religious philosopher says:

"From of old the comprehension of Law must be preceded by a comprehension of Heaven or God. Then follow all laws and virtues, and after a comprehension of law and virtue (religious and moral truth) come the virtues of brotherly love and righteousness."

In summing up this first part of our appreciation, I am inclined to make use of the prologue of St. John's Gospel with a change in one word in English, though the same in Chinese:

"In the beginning was the Law and the Law was with God, and the Law was God; the same was in the beginning with God. All things were produced by Him, and without Him was not anything produced that was produced. And the Law was transformed into Nature, animate and inanimate, and we beheld its glory, the glory as of the highest emanation of God, full of virtue and truth."

Having fully discussed the deep meaning of *Tao* or Universal Law, as unfolded by Taoism more fully than by any other religious system, it is easy to pass on to other features of Taoism which command the Christian's appreciation. These features may be considered less minutely, though their importance must be equally recognized.

II. A second reason for appreciating Taoism, particularly from the Christian standpoint, is its teaching concerning *Teh*, or "Virtue."

This word of supreme significance is joined, as it should be, with *Tao*, or Law. The last quotation made under the previous section shows the gradation of thought as understood by Taoist thinkers, namely, God, and then Law, and then complete moral character summed up in the two words *Tao* and *Teh*, or Law and Virtue. The two ideas, of Law and Virtue, are linked together so inseparably that in thinking of the one, we must think of the other.

The Chinese language has no two words in more frequent use than *Tao* and *Teh*—Law and Virtue—and they are generally combined to mean moral and religious truth and sometimes religion. They represent the spiritual and inner side of religion, while *Chiao*, or Teaching, as used in Confucianism, represents the scholastic or outward side. According to Taoism Virtue is the working and manifestation of Law. Greater than this material world as an illustration of Law, is Virtue. The Virtue used with the word Law is viewed as so important that the two together form the title of the great Taoist classic. "The appearance of comprehensive Virtue," said Lao-tze, "is none other than conformity to Law. The character of Law is impalpable and eluding." Law is the root; Virtue is the fruitage.

This difference in the order of Law and Virtue appears in another saying found in the great classic.

"Law germinates, Virtue nourishes. Through the material world they are given form, by the forces of Nature they attain to completion. Therefore among all the varieties of the universe nothing should be so revered as Law or so honored as Virtue. Thus to revere Law and honor Virtue does not come through any command but ever arises spontaneously. Hence the saying that Law germinates, while Virtue nourishes, brings up, feeds, brings to completion and maturity, rears and protects. To bring into being but not to own, to act but not to rely on one's action, to raise up but not to dominate: this is called profound Virtue."

Thus the origin of all various forms of Virtue, as the origin of the material universe, is eternal Law; but Virtue, once produced, goes on forever both in its task of developing to completion all human character and in its various operations, from beginning to end, of correct soul-training.

As *Tao* or Law has within itself a distinction—the divine and the human, the ineffable and the nameable—so Virtue has a distinction—the superior and the inferior. The great Teacher after expressing this inner distinction goes on to show the relation of Law to all the virtues in the following language:



"In losing Law, Virtue is lost. In losing Virtue, brotherly love is lost. In losing brotherly love, righteousness is lost. In losing righteousness, the sense of propriety is lost." From this we see that every virtuous action must be traced back to Eternal Law, summed up in the Eternal God.

Nothing is more important in the Taoist conception than character saturated with Virtue, which in turn is the truest expression of the voice of God speaking imperatively in every human soul. Every virtuous characteristic is attainable only through the possession of the essence of Virtue, which is in perfect accord with unchanging Law or the Mind of the Infinite. So the Christian Scriptures: "Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

III. Closely connected with this teaching concerning the supremacy of Virtue is the cognate teaching concerning placidity or passiveness. The teaching is unique, and full of the highest truth and greatest value. There are many references in the Taoist classic.

Thus from the section containing our last citation there may be taken these lofty conceptions:

"Superior Virtue is Non-Virtue [i. e., does not attempt to be virtuous]. Hence it is real Virtue. Inferior Virtue is found not to lose Virtue [or does not lose sight of Virtue]. Hence, it never becomes real Virtue. Superior Virtue is simply non-action, never striving to act. Inferior Virtue is action, again and again striving to act."

In Taoism there is used a word almost as frequently as the words which we translate Law and Virtue. The word means tranquillity, stillness, quiescence. Here is one of the sayings tersely expressed, "Attain to complete abstraction, preserve unalloyed tranquillity." And again: "In return to the root, this is called tranquillity." By this is meant, that a basic element of Virtue is tranquillity.

In another section, the great Teacher says: "I understand the advantages of inaction, i. e., non-assertion. Few indeed realize the instruction of silence, and the advantage of inaction."

Still another section imparts instruction so contrary to the usual opinion of men: "In the pursuit of *Tao* or Law one is willing to decrease, until he reaches a state of non-action. By non-action there is nothing but can be done. To win the empire, one must always be free of much doing. He who is a busybody can never win the country."

This quality of putting oneself into a state of quietness, but subject to higher influences, is taught again in these words: "Practise non-action; do the silent deed; have ambition to be without ambition; turn small things into great; make much out of little."

The sage or holy man, according to Taoism, is different from the Confucian conception. Lao-tze says: "The holy man abides by non-assertion in his affairs, and practises the lessons of silence."

Chuang-tze, the disciple of Lao-tze, adheres to the same idea, though not emphasized to the same degree. We cite one of his sayings: "What is *Tao* or Law? There is the Law of Heaven and the Law of Man. Inaction and compliance form the Law of Heaven; action and entanglement the Law of Man. The Law of Heaven is fundamental, the Law of Man is accidental. The distance which separates them is vast. Let us all take heed thereto."

Thus if man conforms to the Law of Heaven, he will aspire after passivity, non-assertion, freedom from useless exertion and troublesome meddlesomeness. He will regard as nothing his own deeds, and give full play to the inner working of the Law of the ages and the Spirit of the Infinite.

By a process of non-action, i. e., by not forcing oneself to do a thing, one is able to do the most. By striving, one fails to reach the best results—this is the lower form of Virtue. By submitting oneself to the internal operations of Law the greatest results are reached—this is the higher form of Virtue. It is by dependence on infinite power, rather than by self-assertion or personal exertion, that Heaven finds scope for carrying out action in the soul.

As with the individual, so with government. The best way to rule a people is by having few enactments and by silent influence that avoids stirring up opposition. Thus Lao-tze says: "The method of Universal Law is to work silently and by this method everything is done by and under law." If kings and rulers could only observe this the whole world could be transformed.

This feature of quietness is a great charm of Taoism. It is like the Biblical expression, "In quietude and in confidence shall be your strength." The true Taoist is the opposite of a busybody. He does not intermeddle in the affairs of others, but he persuades others and enjoins on himself to submit to the true path and the inner law of the Perfect One.

Modern Christianity with its institutionalism and many organizations, societies, and committees, is rather the converse of such teachings as these of the Chinese mystic, but a choice element in Christianity through all the ages has drawn instinctively to this

meditative aspect of spiritual religion, has made use of retreats, and has cultivated self-abasement that "God may be all and in all." In fact the best type of Christian thought and life is in close agreement with this fundamental teaching of Taoism.

IV. A fourth reason for appreciating Taoism is that it teaches that modesty and reserve are superior to ostentation and display. This self-abasement is but an element in placidity and non-action, as they in turn are a form of Virtue. Lao-tze says, "Who tiptoes, totters. Who straddles, stumbles. The self-displaying man cannot shine. An egotistic man is not distinguished. One who praises himself has no merit. The self-conceited cannot excel." The idea is that one must hide himself under the cover of Law and Virtue, which are perfect, satisfying, eternal, and pervasive. The one who pushes himself forward is apt to diminish the glory and effectiveness of the Supreme and Infinite. This is like the Christian saying, "He that is first shall be last."

One more saying of Lao-tze, very similar to the one already quoted, still further substantiates this truth: "The holy man embraces unity and becomes the world's model. He is not self-displaying and thus he shines. He is not egotistic, and thus he is distinguished. He does not praise himself, and thus he has merit. He is not self-conceited, and thus he excels." These are sentiments closely allied with the sayings of Christ, and we may well say that, "They are hard to hear." None the less they are great spiritual truths.

V. A fifth teaching which every Christian can appreciate is that it is the weak who are to conquer the strong. One of Lao-tze's sayings is this: "In the world nothing is so delicate and flexible as water, yet for attacking that which is hard and strong, nothing surpasses it. There is nothing that can take its place. The weak conquer the strong, the tender conquer the hard. Every one knows this, but no one practises it." This is like the saying of the Apostle Paul, "God chose the weak things of the world that he might put to shame the things that are strong, and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised did God choose, yea, and the things that are not, that he might bring to naught the things that are." This teaching fits in with the two previous ones concerning quietness and self-effacement, non-action and modesty.

VI. This exaltation of weakness over all brute force, of the delicate over hardness, fits in with the sixth feature of Taoism, viz., that peace is better than strife. There are several passages illustrating this idea. One is as follows: "He who by the aid of

Eternal Law assists the ruler of men, does not rely on arms to conquer the world. Where armies are quartered, there briars and thorns grow up. After a great war there comes the year of famine. A good man is determined, and goes no further. He ventures not to take by force."

Again Lao-tze says, "Even beautiful arms cannot make them auspicious weapons. Even inanimate Nature despises them. Hence he who follows the laws of the universe has nothing to do with them. Soldiers are instruments of ill omen, they are not agents for the princely man. Only when it is unavoidable does he use them. What he prizes most is quiet and peace. He will not praise a victory. To praise a victory means to rejoice in the slaughter of men." Further on in the same section he adds: "The slayer of multitudes should bitterly weep and lament."

These remarkable, most unusual, well-nigh unbelievable, teachings of the great Taoist teacher stand forth with distinctness, a message to the world as well as to China. The very last sentence in the Taoist classic sums it all up in these words: "The law of the holy man is to act but not to strive." Whereas elsewhere the idea is one of non-action, the idea here seems to be that while non-action is the ideal, yet if one must act, he must not go so far as to strive; or possibly the idea is, that while the holy man—a model to all others—must place himself in a state of passivity, full scope is given to the Law of Heaven to act in and through him, but never to the extent of strife, struggle, or warfare.

We seem to hear the words of the ancient Hebrew prophet, as he looked forward to the Coming One: "He shall not strive nor cry aloud." We seem to face in another form the gentle, forgiving spirit of Christ—the great Logos appearing in China before he appeared in Judea.

VII. A seventh attractive feature of Taoism is that it teaches our duty to be good to all. Thus Lao-tze says: "The good I meet with goodness, the bad I also meet with goodness; goodness is Virtue. The faithful I meet with faithfulness, and the faithless I meet with faithfulness. Faithfulness is Virtue." Thus Christ in many ways taught that we should love those who hate as well as those who love, even as God's love goes forth to the good and the bad alike. Lao-tze in one clause of only four characters says we should "requite hatred with virtue," like the Biblical saying, "Re-compense evil with good."

This teaching is the highest form of all human teaching; it brings the Law which governs God into the activities of man—

God's grace and man's love, universal in their scope, without discrimination or partiality.

VIII. An eighth attraction is the teaching concerning immortality. It is expressed in one sentence in Lao-tze's classic, viz.: "One may die but not perish—this is everlasting life." In many ways Taoism has brought to human hearts a feeling of satisfaction by the hope perpetually taught of life after death, life immortal, and life with a spiritualized body.

The Taoist looks forward to the dwelling of the immortals; the Christian looks forward to eternal life. The Taoist believes that through proper training life becomes perpetual; the Christian realizes that time is only a part of eternity, and that death is only a passing from a lower form of existence to a higher. Both Taoism and Christianity have the hope of immortality and the thought of a spiritual body transformed from this body of flesh and blood, of animal passions and restricted capabilities. Both are cheered by the belief that in the future life one passes from earth into the greater power conditions of God's great universe.

IX. The last feature of Taoism which the Christian can appreciate is that he who does right—he who follows Law and possesses Virtue—need fear no harm. "Venomous reptiles do not sting him, fierce beasts do not seize him, birds of prey do not strike him."

Chuang-tze has also words of consolation for the good man, in the face of threatened danger: "The man of perfect Virtue cannot be burnt by fire, nor drowned in water, nor hurt by frost or sun, nor torn by wild bird or beast. Happy under prosperous and adverse circumstances alike, cautious as to what he discards and what he accepts—nothing can harm him."

Many passages in the Scriptures, especially in Psalms, have the same lesson of hope and confidence. He who does the will of God has God's protection and need fear no harm. Thus the Psalmist has spoken his message of consolation, which stayed the souls of martyrs: "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent, for He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the serpent shalt thou trample under feet."

These nine specifications of Taoist teachings cannot but awaken surprise and admiration in the thought of the Christian and particularly of the Christian missionary. The Christian should give

thanks to God for thus imparting so many truths to the people of China, through all these centuries of the past.

Lao-tze as a person is wrapped in uncertainty, but a benign influence has flown forth from his life, made articulate in his words, which form a gem in Chinese literature. Whatever be the defects in the followers of Lao-tze, as in the followers of Christ, our admiration goes forth to both Lao-tze and Christ, and we believe in perfect confidence that their goodness, or grace, or truth, or gentleness, all come from God, "to whom be all the glory."

## THE POST-EXILIC PERIOD.

BY REV. AMOS I. DUSHAW.

THAT the post-Exilic period is of great interest and of great importance to the student of both Judaism and Christianity is evident by the voluminous literature on the subject, and by the scholars of international reputation from the foremost universities of Europe and America who have produced this literature.

To the great majority of Bible readers this period is probably only a blank. In fact up to very recently even the majority of preachers thought it negligible, and there are undoubtedly quite a few even to-day who do not fully realize the significance of it. But to the faithful student this period is of more than secondary interest. From a religious point of view it may well rank with the period of the eighth-century prophets. It was during this period that the Jews made an honest effort to put into practice the religion of the prophets, namely, monotheism plus morality. If Elijah could have returned he would have found to his great joy that his labor had not been in vain, because idolatry, the great sin of ancient Israel, had been completely obliterated and Baal had no more worshipers among the Jews.

This period produced the prophets Haggai and Zechariah; the great leaders of Judaism, Ezra and Nehemiah. This period produced Ben Sirach; the Apocalyptic literature; the translation of the Old Testament into the Greek; Judaism; the great Maccabean family; the religious parties; the great rabbis, like Antigonus of Socho who said, "Men should serve God without an eye to the reward"; also the great and gentle Hillel; Philo the great philosopher of Alexandria; and last of all it produced Christianity. "To the student of Christianity they [these times] are of the greatest in-