THE RELIGIONS OF CHINA.

BY THE EDITOR.

KIRCHER'S large work on China contains a picture which excellently represents the religious conditions of the Celestial Empire. It has been copied from a Chinese drawing which is not at our disposal, but must have been made more than two centuries ago, viz., before the appearance of Kircher's book.

We see here, seated in the heaven, the three great teachers, recognised as the highest authorities of truth; Buddha in the center, Confucius at his right, and Lao-Tze at his left. Confucianism is the recognised State religion, if religion it can be called. Taoism, represented by Lao-Tze, is the indigenous faith of China, while Buddhism is the hope for salvation, a doctrine that has been brought to the country by Indian missionaries.

The dragon, the symbol of heaven, representing divine power and authority, stands in the centre of the picture. It is the coat of arms of the government, and it here carries on its back the shell of the tortoise, which is mysteriously connected in the old traditions of China with the invention of writing. The dragon seems to address Confucius, and if this attitude is intentional it can only mean that it communicates to the sage the mysteries of the Yih King, the Book of Changes.¹

Above Confucius we see three sages; above Lao-Tze a crowned hero, holding in his hands a sword and dressed in a coat of mail. The former seem to represent the great authorities of the Confucian school, Wen Wang, Wu Wang, and Chow Kung; the military divinity must be Kwan Ti, the god of war.

Underneath Confucius we have a general and a soldier, as personifications of the government, representing the mailed fist of Chinese paternalism.

¹ For details see Carus, Chinese Philosophy.
The Three Great Teachers of China.
Underneath Lao-Tze there are his disciples Chwang Tze, Lieh Fuh Tze, and Liu Ngan, the great Taoist philosophers.

At the bottom of the picture we see lower divinities rising from the waves of the sea. One of them, on the left hand side, offers up a gem; another one, the ruler of the deep, carries a trident, while the middle figure in the group, on the right, is the nâgarâja, producing from the bottom of the ocean the Avatamsaka Books.

While in Europe and America every one is expected to have one religion only, in China a man may follow Confucius, have faith in Buddha, and believe in Lao-Tze at the same time.

Japan is in this respect like China, only that Taoism is replaced by Shintoism, and the latter, a kind of nature-cult combined with idealised patriotism, is the State religion. Every family takes part in the several Shinto festivals, private as well as public. In school-life Confucius is revered, and in both countries, China and Japan, there is scarcely a house which has not a Buddhist shrine for the satisfaction of the deeper yearnings of the soul.

There is a universality in this religious system which it is difficult for us to understand, but is after all quite natural.