

FOREWORD

To some of us who lived within the Japanese-occupied territory of South China, World War II meant a prolonged and trying time of isolation, and an urge was felt to concentrate on studies and literary pursuits.

It was far from easy, however, to maintain the necessary concentration of mind amidst a constantly changing situation ever fraught with new dangers and problems. At times the nervous tension threatened to break down spirit and strength. On the other hand, one also learned what a wholesome effect it had on soul and body to occupy the mind with ideas and visions gained in days gone by.

It was not difficult to find suitable material and subjects. For many years I had felt an urge to commit to writing some of my experiences among outstanding men of piety whom I had met during more than forty years of missionary work in East Asia. In other words, I had felt it laid upon me to make a religious-psychological study based on what I had learned through long and intimate contacts with the religious élite of the East. Indeed, it was more than an urge; I felt that I was under a sacred obligation, a debt that must be repaid, first of all to my Creator, who so graciously and wonderfully had led me into the sanctuaries of East Asia; and to many friends but for whose sympathy and support our Christian work among non-Christian religious groups in East Asia could not have been done. Ours had been the privilege of many years of vital contact with outstanding representatives of the various religious communities and their sanctuaries and sacred writings. As a result, not a little material had been compiled which I felt ought to be committed to writing "before the shadows lengthened".

As the plan for this work matured it became clear that it ought to include something of the Chinese religious background, for only thus could the men of piety of the present time be seen clearly. It appeared necessary, therefore, to give a brief outline of the older religious systems and their most prominent persons. Fortunately, there was one central idea around which both systems and practising devotees could be

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grouped, namely meditation in its various forms. This, therefore, has been made the axis, and everything else revolves around it.

It seemed necessary too to say something about the sanctuaries—the temples, monasteries, academies and sacred mountains, i.e. the places where men of religion spend their lives. True, I had already treated these matters in earlier works. It seemed obvious, however, that a supplement was needed in order to show the *milieu* from the inside.

Other important questions arose as the plan and scope were in the making. It was envisaged that some readers would raise the question, “What attitude should Christians take towards devout people of non-Christian religions?” In other words the question of general and special revelations was seen to gain actuality as people were confronted with different types of piety in East Asia.

It seemed desirable that these matters should be discussed briefly in the introductory part. Naturally, too, there had to be a special chapter on points of contact between the religions. In this way incursions had to be made into the realm of theology, more particularly into that of dogmatic theology. An exhaustive treatment of these questions was never contemplated. The main subject of this present work, namely meditation as the heartbeat of the devout life in East Asia, will be found discussed in the second part of this volume.

A sequel to the present volume will have as its title *The Transformed Abbot*, and will give the life-story of my Buddhist friend Miao-Chi who became a Christian. Other representatives of the religious élite in East Asia will be introduced.

With the present work goes the author's ardent desire that it may serve to deepen the reader's understanding of the vast world of the East, which is coming increasingly to the fore in international affairs; that is, an understanding of the Asiatic peoples in their most essential nature revealed through their religions. With understanding there will be respect, and respect prepares the way for that higher power, love—the only power that can extinguish the flames of fear, hatred, and racial prejudice, and bring the two, East and West, into one family of nations.

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