

# God and the Ancient Chinese



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九九

李維三



Samuel Wang and  
Ethel R. Nelson

**GOD**  
*and the*  
**ANCIENT**  
**CHINESE**

**Samuel Wang**  
*and*  
**Ethel R. Nelson**

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## DEDICATION

To the Holy Man who died on the cross, and to the  
Chinese and the world for whom He died.

## ABOUT THE COVER PAINTING

ARTIST: Li Wei San

*And someone will say to Him, "What are these  
wounds in your hands?"*

*Then He will answer, "Those with which I was  
wounded in the house of my friends."*

*(Zechariah 13: 6).*

## About the Authors

诗以言志，文以载道。

**“Poetry is to express one’s will, and writings to convey the Dao [Tao, the truth].”**

This is a faithful Chinese saying.

The great Dao of Heaven and the teachings of early Chinese kings and sages were faithfully recorded in ancient Chinese writings over a period of 2,000 years before Christ. Yesteryear’s lessons are always today’s blessings. Much can be learned, by modern Chinese and Westerners alike, from the way God dealt with the ancient Chinese.

*God and the Ancient Chinese* is a unique, comparative study of the Chinese classics with the Bible. It is a witness to “*the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world,*” (*John 1: 9*), and to the truth that “*God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.*” (*Acts 10: 34, 35*). The God of the ancient Chinese is the God of the Bible.

To write such a book is beyond anything I could earlier have imagined. I was born into a farmer’s family near the Yangtze River. My father had only six months of education in school. His total learning was from the so-called *Four Books*, a collection of Confucius’ and Mencius’ teachings, which he had memorized. Ours is a large family—it always takes two tables to have everyone seated at family gatherings. At the time of a family reunion in my parents’ home, my father would always recite from these *Four Books*. He

especially liked *The Works of Mencius*. This tradition has come down for years, with the same teachings being repeated time and time again—now even the third generation can repeat the stories and sayings. These occasions give special opportunity for the younger generation to be educated in the great traditions of these ancient writings, woven together with our parents' deep love for them. The effect has been tremendous.

But my father no longer had these books in his possession. His only set, which had been well kept in a fine wooden box, was carried away with everything else in the house in a flood before I was born. But we learned that even before he could understand them, he had been required to memorize all the books. That was the practice for teaching young Chinese students in his day. I can never forget the scene when my father saw the gift I brought for his very important 70th birthday. He jumped up from his chair to receive the *Four Books* in a modern edition, tears running down his wrinkled face. For a long time, he stood there speechless, holding the volume as he would the hands of a long lost friend.

In 1994, I went home for another celebration of my father's birthday. Since I had recently accepted Jesus Christ as my best Friend and Saviour, this time I presented my father another book—The Holy Bible. After reading it carefully, he said that the teachings of Jesus were even greater and clearer than those of the *Four Books*. You may have correctly concluded already that both of my parents became the first Christians in their village. They have since turned their home into a house church.

My interest in the Bible was first kindled by attending lectures in social linguistics given by John Evans, an American teacher in my graduate program. Mr. Evans always closed his class by analyzing a Chinese character, and relating the corresponding story recorded in his "favorite Book," a phrase that he used in a communist classroom, indicating the Bible. All the students were amazed to see the integral connection of Chinese characters to the Holy Bible. Later Mr. Evans gave me a copy of *Discovery of Genesis*, the book he used for his character study in the class. That was my first acquaintance with the name of Dr. Ethel Nelson, the other author of the present book. Dr. Nelson's

character-study books have planted the seeds of Heaven in the hearts of many modern Chinese, including myself. I realized and accepted for the first time the most obvious and scientific fact: modern Chinese come from the ancient Chinese; and the ancient Chinese came from God, not from Peking Man!

If our Chinese characters could entail so much information about God, how much more should the ancient writings, written with these characters, reveal God to us. As you have seen, my interest and love for the Chinese Classics were implanted in my heart when I was very young, and I have always wanted to understand these books which were so dear to my father. Since studying them myself, a new world has opened for me. My parents' ready acceptance of Christianity convinced me more than anything else that there must be a close connection between the teachings of Chinese sages and of Jesus.

Jesus said to the Jews, *"For had you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"* (John 5: 46, 47). This should also be true for those who love and believe the ancient Chinese sages, for they also wrote of Him, as you will find out in this book.

All of these happenings led me to the idea of writing this book. It is my special honor and pleasure to work with Dr. Nelson, whose input has helped make this book possible. We both believe that it is divine Providence that led us to collaborate. The Chinese idiom, "to weed through the old and bring forth the new," (推陈出新), holds the same principle as what Jesus said in *Matthew 13: 52*: *"Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."* Of course, neither of us is a scribe or a scholar of the Chinese Classics in any sense, yet "things new and old" were discovered in our humble effort. It is our wish that, in the light of the Bible, this book will restore the teachings of the ancient kings and sages that have been distorted, and be of some help in kindling the ancient love for God in the hearts of the Chinese.

I especially want to thank Dr. David Lin, who, incidentally, baptized me in a bathtub in Shanghai, and more recently has taken pains to critically



review this manuscript and encourage us in pursuing this important study. Our special thanks are extended to Bob Smith and Wayne Senner for their generous help. My appreciation goes to Dr. and Mrs. Yew Por Ng who brought Dr. Nelson and myself together. Jeff and Christy Reich have given us their support in many ways. The cover painting was produced by the artist, Li Wei San, after several telephone conversations to China, where he lives. Terri Prouty helped design the cover, and assisted with copy editing. My personal thanks goes to Dr. Drew Liu and Dr. Andrew Lai, whose friendship and help have been a living witness to me that we do have a loving Father in Heaven. I am also greatly indebted to Dr. Charles Taylor, Dr. and Mrs. Sukachevin, Traci Lemon, Mr. and Mrs. Shen, Dr. and Mrs. Dai, Dr. Samuel Young, Pastor Joseph Jiao, Dr. Joseph Hwang and all my church family, and all those supporting our study in many ways.

Finally, I want to express our gratitude to last century's missionary, James Legge, whose translation of the Chinese Classics has been a great help in preparing this book. My translation of the Chinese texts may sometimes be quite different from his. I take responsibility for any errors in translation.

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# Introduction

It has been my privilege to be acquainted with Samuel Wang and Dr. Ethel Nelson during the years of their sojourn in China. My friendship with Samuel Wang began after he had spent many years as a leading Yoga teacher in China. He had studied under a famous Hindu guru and had translated, published and distributed scores of titles of Yoga scriptures, including *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, all over China, and had raised up several groups of Yoga enthusiasts among Chinese university students.

He had read the Bible before, but never saw any light in it until he was led to a right understanding of the truth about life and death, of which he and Dr. Nelson have written in depth in this book. It convinced him that the truth he had been searching for is in the Bible. He repudiated all religious errors built on reincarnation, the so-called “spiritual evolution,” and false gods, and dedicated himself to studying and preaching Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as revealed in the Bible. This led him to many new discoveries in the Chinese Classics, in which he had been trained from childhood.

Dr. Nelson was a medical missionary to Thailand for twenty years, and was later led to the study of Chinese philology and etymology. Her study first appeared in *The Discovery of Genesis*, written with Pastor C. H. Kang. Her latest book is *God's Promise to the Chinese*. Both books deal with the comparison of Chinese characters and the Bible.

The authors of this book are of widely differing backgrounds, but have a like faith in the Holy Scriptures, and share the same conviction

that there existed a close communion between God and the ancient Chinese, as evinced in certain ancient Chinese writings, as well as in the Chinese characters.

The research done by Samuel Wang and Ethel Nelson in their particular fields has borne fruit in this book, which is now published separately in Chinese and English. While both present the same substance, neither one is a translation of the other. In either book, the reader will find a wealth of material to demonstrate that God loves the “heathen” as well as those who have a knowledge of Bible truth. Said Peter the apostle, *“In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.” Acts 10: 34, 35 (NKJV).*

The authors have pooled their efforts in digging out Bible truths that had been buried in the works of ancient Chinese sages, who, Samuel believes, were raised up by God to educate and uplift the Chinese people.

China stands out as the only Oriental nation whose origins date back to the time when Egypt, Assyria and Babylon flourished far to her west. Today those ancient peoples have long become extinct. Their hieroglyphs and cuneiform writings are dead languages known to only a few scholars, while the Chinese race and culture continue to thrive, now in her fifth millennium, and a positive factor in the modern world.

Samuel Wang and Dr. Nelson believe that China’s vitality is due mainly to the saving influence of the teachings of noble ethical principles which were taught and perpetuated in the ancient Chinese classics, but are missing in the literature of other ancient races other than the Jews. This is the leading thought in the chapters of this book. Samuel Wang goes so far as to believe that God raised up prophets in China in the same manner as He called the prophets of ancient Israel, though perhaps, not speaking through them so directly.

Much has been written on Chinese culture, and yet more on biblical studies, but few scholars have attempted a systematic comparison of ancient Chinese ethical writings with biblical theology. Linguistic differences have made it difficult to arrive at a common terminology, yet discerning

minds can see a similarity of Chinese moral concepts with divine ideals revealed in the Bible. Now we have grounds to believe that these two streams of thought came from the same source. The present work strives to bridge over this terminological gulf to discover that common source. And the authors imagine that this treatise might be regarded as an initial attempt at a systematic theology of the Chinese Classics.

Samuel Wang observes that the ancient Chinese had long looked for the appearance of the Prince, the King, the Holy Man, the Incarnated Dao, the Faithful, the Son of Heaven, coming from above to teach, to bring peace and love to the world and establish the Great Harmony. This book explains that all these longings and prophecies were fulfilled in the Man who died on the cross. Here the lesser light in ancient Chinese writings met the Great Light, *“the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world”* (John 1: 9). Jesus Christ is the One to whom the Chinese Classics point and testify! The Bible is truly the Book from the God of Heaven!

More than a century of archeological discoveries have confirmed the historical accuracy of the Bible. For not a shred of real evidence turned up by the spade has yet disproved any biblical record. The findings of our two authors have added more facts from a different angle to strengthen this observation. One example is the year 1766 B.C. Genesis 41: 57 says that the seven-year famine in Joseph's time was “in all the world,” not in Egypt alone. Taking the year 2348 B.C. as the year of Noah's Flood according to James Ussher's chronology, and then adding up the ages of the patriarchs recorded in Genesis 10 through 46, we come to 1766 B.C. as the year Jacob entered Egypt at the age of 130. That was the second year of the seven-year famine. Now, 1766 B.C. happens to be the first year of the Chinese Shang dynasty (1766 - 1123 B.C.). A reference from *Lu's Spring and Autumn* says that a five-year famine occurred in the beginning of the reign of King Tang, the first monarch of that dynasty. Later writers have corrected this statement by citing earlier records to show that the famine actually lasted seven years, beginning two years before

the change of the dynasty. 1766 B.C. is right on target! This is but one of the remarkable harmonies between Chinese history and the Bible record. It is another hard evidence that proves the accuracy of the Bible record.

After reading this book, I can say that every thoughtful reader will be benefited not only intellectually, but spiritually. To one who believes the Bible, the fresh evidence will strengthen his faith. To one not familiar with the Bible, many facts will convince him of its unique value—that it is indeed the word of God.

David Lin,  
Retired pastor of the Mu En Tang church,  
Shanghai, China.

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# 1

## China in Bible Prophecy

**O**ne fifth of the world's population today is Chinese. China, occupying the third largest area on earth, has always fascinated modern western minds because of its more than 4,000 years of undivided history and culture. The great ancient wisdom manifested by Confucius (孔子, 551 - 479 B.C.) and Lao Zi (老子, c. 570 B.C.) are gems in the spiritual treasures of the world. In the darkness of today's lax morality, the light from this ancient jewel is still shining. If the Bible is a book for all peoples, it seems only reasonable to find China at least mentioned in the Bible! Does the Bible have anything to say about China? In searching for an answer to this intriguing question, let us start our quest by delving into a bit of China's ancient history.

For millennia, China has called herself 神州, "the land of God." It would appear that the Hand of Omnipotence was leading this ancient civilization. In the annals of Chinese history, we do not find a single instance of God's anger being poured out upon a Chinese city because of moral depravity, as happened to Sodom, Gomorrah, or Pompeii. Ancient Chinese art has never featured pornography or naked female sculptures—like that uncovered in Near and Middle East excavations.<sup>1</sup>



When it comes to China, however, you might agree that, for most people in the world today, the familiar image that comes to mind is not Confucius or high moral standards, but the Great Wall! Construction of the Great Wall was intensified by the first Chinese emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi (秦始皇, 259 - 210 B.C.).

The Chinese nation, earlier known as the "Middle Kingdom," (中国) dates back to 2205 B.C. with its first dynasty, the Xia (夏), established by King Yu (禹). Even today in China, King Yu is still well-remembered as "the great Yu." He was favored by ShangDi [上帝, the God of Heaven] who instructed him in the nine methods which enabled him to solve the problem of draining a huge flood that prevented further development and habitation of their land.<sup>2</sup> King Yu was also renowned as a virtuous and exemplary ruler, providing a fitting pattern for later rulers to emulate.

Following the Xia were the Shang (商) and Zhou (周) dynasties. Each of these kingdoms ruled over many states, some of these states having more extensive land and greater power than the royal dynasty itself. We will learn that most of the many kings of these first three dynasties served as Heaven-appointed agents, ministering by love rather than by force.

During the later Zhou dynasty, the rulers of the eastern states fought one another for the control of all China. In 221 B.C., the Qin State defeated all its rivals and established China's first empire controlled by a strong self-imposed emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi. Thus China entered its fourth dynasty, the Qin, (秦, 221 - 206 B.C.).

To keep out invaders, Qin Shi Huangdi ordered the construction, repair and strengthening of the Great Wall, which, with its eventual completion, stretches about 4,000 miles. It was built with the blood and tears shed by thousands of slave workers under ruthless oppression, and was finished several centuries after the Qin dynasty. The Great Wall, the greatest human project in the history of mankind, has a sad history. Many of the 300,000 workers, who suffered from a most inhumane and cold-blooded treatment, lie entombed within its massive structure. Even though the Great Wall today

is a symbol of unity and peace for the Chinese, no one can forget the high price paid to keep out potential foreign aggressors. Now, more than 2,200 years after Qin Shi Huangdi, the Great Wall has gradually become a landmark of unity for Chinese all over the world, and an identifying symbol of China. The name of “China” in all foreign languages of the world finds its root in the Qin [Chin] Dynasty.

Back to our opening question: does the Bible, which is meant for all people of the world, have anything to say about the land of China? The Holy Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God and written by more than 40 authors over a period of 1,600 years, faithfully records the words of the God of the universe. It is a treasure mine of priceless truth. It is the great standard of right and wrong, clearly defining sin and holiness. Of all the books that have flooded the world, however valuable, the Bible is the most deserving of our closest study and attention.

The Bible opens the history of past ages. Without it we should have been left to fables and speculation regarding occurrences in past eras. This sacred volume gives not only an accurate history of the creation of this world, a history of our human race, but also the world's only authentic account of the origin of nations. It contains instruction concerning the wonders of the universe, and reveals God as the Author of the heavens and the earth. The Scriptures unfold a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy. Without the Bible, we are soon enveloped by false theories, superstition, and spiritual darkness.

Although unappreciated by many in today's secular world, the Bible is, in fact, the foundation of all true knowledge, for it is the revelation of God to man. Throughout the ages God's divine hand has preserved its purity. The many mysteries found in the Bible are perhaps the strongest evidence of its divine inspiration. One of these mysteries is Bible prophecy—foretelling persons or events in the future. In the entire Bible there are thousands of prophecies. By now, most of them have been exactly fulfilled in time and