

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

CHINA VIEWED AS A MISSION FIELD.

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We need not feel fearful that in dealing with Missionary topics we shall be employed in any narrow-minded consideration. Missionary effort, in its full sense, involves the broadest and most important considerations we can possibly know or think of. The very declaration of our Divine Master, "The field is the world," is sufficient to establish the breadth and dignity of Mission work.

The Missionary field is not bounded by any lines of nation, age, or climate, but is a spirit of high and universal philanthropy. But in dealing with all matters of such extensive character, we usually find it most convenient to divide the work up into sections and subdivisions, that each part may receive its due attention.

It seems to me, if we survey the whole heathen world, no portion presents such a problem in connection with the opening up of means for the introduction and establishment of Christianity, as China. In the first place, its immense extent and population almost bewilders one. Taking the most moderate estimate, over four hundred millions of human souls exist within its borders. To evangelize these alone is a work worthy of the best thinkers, the most skillful tacticians, and the most zealous and enthusiastic laborers of the age. But in addition to the gigantic character of the project, there is a kind of peculiarity in the Chinese nation—a sort of mystery in connection with their history, government, customs and religion—that invest them with a singular interest, and spread a charm around the study of Chinese character and institutions. Besides, any careful observer of the workings of things, will notice important developments now in progress in connection with the Chinese which have a direct and exceedingly interesting relation to ourselves in many ways. To me, then, it seems that China is just the question with which Christian men should now grapple—the problem they should make every effort to solve.

China! There are strange and complex ideas suggested by the very word. We have, after all, a kind of intuitive awe mixed with our ideas of China. This is altogether a remarkable people. Their history is teeming with the hidden and mysterious; their customs are the most singular conceivable, and their religion contains elements which require much investigation in order to the satisfactory elucidation of its fundamental principles. Their religion is of great interest as a study. It contains some sound principles in relation to human life, and is bolstered up on much assumed learning and erudition. It is held in high veneration by its professors, but is nevertheless cold, formal, unsound, unfitted to elevate man, defective as a rule of life, unsuited to man's spiritual nature, and inefficient as a world-power. It is altogether false and absurd, abounding in disgusting rites and degrading superstitions, and far from being capable of satisfying the longings and aspirations of man's spiritual nature. If it were necessary, and space allowed, it would be easy to substantiate these statements. But without stopping to look into Chinese history, or endeavoring to trace the various developments of Chinese manners, customs, religious beliefs, &c., it is sufficient to merely look at them as they are; and a superficial glance will suffice to convince us that their social system is corrupt and degrading, and that, as a nation, they are politically, socially, religiously in a weak, wretched, unhappy state, calculated to excite the pity of cold skeptics even, and surely the sympathy and charity of every Christian heart. A wide-reaching, densely populated, and, in some respects, enlightened and enterprising nation, these people need some power to excite a wholesome influence over their minds and hearts, which shall elevate their thoughts and lives, prepare them for good citizenship, raise them to a vigorous and noble manhood, and, above all, convert their souls and fit them to enter Heaven. All this is just what Christianity can do. Not only do its principles, when sincerely embraced and consistently adhered to, tend to prepare men for death and the joys of Heaven, but in the accomplishment of this it gives man broader views of life, higher sentiments in reference to his duty to Society and the State, and imbues him with a spirit of benevolence and philanthropy

which must of necessity elevate the race, and produce an exalted manhood. The humanizing elevating and converting truths of the Christian religion are just what China wants, to break through those thick crusts which have been formed during the last thousand years over her social well-being and spiritual enlightenment. Indeed, if the Christian Religion means anything, if it is a truth, a reality, we must believe it to be the only one now existing which can lead men to a knowledge of the true and living God—the only one adapted to suit the present condition and meet the present wants of man. But, after all, the question arises, in view of the painful and wretched circumstances of the Christian world—shall we break in upon the existing system of China, and increase their responsibilities, by giving them a knowledge of the Gospel. A shrewd reasoner might say, "Look at the moral state of New York, London, Chicago, Paris, Madrid, Rome. See the terrible persecutions which the human race have suffered at the hands of Christian potentates. See the frightful scourges inflicted on humanity by the direct sanction and authority of the Christian Church. Witness the convulsions, revolutions and massacres which have resulted from the acrimonious bickerings and contentions of Christian people. God is just, and judges men according to the light and knowledge they possess. Let the heathen alone." What shall we say to all this? We need only oppose to this the pointed command of our Omnipotent and all-wise Lord and Saviour, "Go ye out into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Another great consideration is also presented, and I would desire to put this matter in as calm and reasonable a light as possible; but we are boldly confronted just here with this question. According to the plainly taught principles of the Christian religion, what must be the inevitable destiny of the multitudes of accountable beings that are thus yearly entering eternity without an interest in Christ? I will offer no opinion in answer, but to all true and simple believers in Bible teachings this enquiry involves considerations of overwhelming moment, and unquestionably calls for the vigorous and cordial efforts of sincere Christian men.

However, perhaps this is an old story. China wants the Gospel—wants a knowledge of Jesus Christ—and it only remains to speak a few words in reference to the peculiar obstacles to be surmounted, and difficulties to be overcome, in the work of its evangelization, and to consider the most feasible measures for the accomplishment of this desirable end.

The first great difficulty to be met is found in the circumstance of their vastness as a nation, and their comparative intelligence. Just think. We have not a mere handful of ignorant savages, with no national, no venerated religion. On the contrary, we have a semi-civilized people, conscious of their immense territories, possessing a national literature—a people exceedingly fond of reading and study, and with minds eminently adapted to discover and magnify their own political greatness and national importance.

But further, they possess a religion whose founder was evidently a man of genius. Confucius appears to us as a man of strong character, a philosophical man—altogether a hero. His teachings must have been admirably adapted to Chinese tastes and thoughts. His recorded writings are sagacious in many ways, and embody very accurately the early spiritual gropings of the Chinese mind. Mencius was another eminent teacher, of whom they are not unjustly proud. The memories of these two are still held sacred by the Chinese. Their names and teachings are still held in the highest veneration, while the doctrines they inculcated, supported by the so-called Chinese classics, still hold absolute and almost universal sway over the minds of the nation.

Besides, they have an imposing national history. They have preserved a host of old national traditions. Indeed, they are part and parcel of an altogether interesting and important Empire, rich in historical and traditional lore, the investigation and study of which are quite bewitching, and the elucidation of which throws much light on the various movements which have occurred in the development of renowned nationalities, ancient and modern.

The Chinese are not blind to these things, neither are they wanting in the characteristics essential to a full sense of their self-importance. Far different. An extremely vain people, they have never been accustomed to acknowledge any foreign people as their equal in dignity, influ-

ence or importance. They esteem themselves a favored people, far removed above the common mould, counting all foreigners as mere barbarians. They speak of their country as the Inner Land, and the Flowery Country. A short extract from one of their most popular essays will illustrate the extraordinary feature of their national character now under consideration, better than any more description can do:—

"I felicitate myself that I was born in China, and constantly think how very different it would have been with me if I had been born beyond the seas, in some remote corner of the earth, where the people, far removed from the converting maxims of the ancient kings, and ignorant of the domestic relations, are clothed with the leaves of plants, eat wood, dwell in the wilderness, and live in holes of the earth; though born in the world, in this condition I should not have been different from the beasts of the field. But now, happily, I have been born in the Middle Kingdom. I have a house to live in; have food and drink and elegant furniture; have clothing and caps and infinite blessings. Truly the highest felicity is mine."

Little wonder then, that a Chinaman should hesitate to resign the religion of his fathers, preserved and handed down through a series of centuries, at the solicitation of those whom he deems, in every respect, his inferiors.

(Conclusion in our next.)

For the Christian Messenger.

THE DUTY OF LOVING GOD.

Mr. Editor,—

Please allow me to submit to your readers some texts showing the importance of loving God, and some remarks thereon.

From the texts, I need hardly say, there is no appeal. The Remarks of course, should be dealt with by each according to their merits.

TEXTS.

Matthew xxii., 36 to 38—"Master, which is the great commandment of the law? Jesus saith unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

See Mark xii., 29 to 30—Where "strength" is added to "heart, soul and mind."

See also Luke x., 25 to 28, and Deut. vi. 5, and xxx., 16.

Joshua xxii., 5—"Take diligent heed to do the commandments and the law which Moses, the servant of the Lord, charged you: to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul."

John xiv., 28—"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."

Rom. viii., 23—"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

1 Cor. ii., 9 and 10—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things that God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

James i., 12—"He shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him."

REMARKS.

Cruden defines love thus: First a natural passion inclining us to delight in an object; secondly, a gracious principle or habit, wrought in the soul by God, which inclines us to delight in, esteem, and earnestly desire to enjoy an interest in God's favor, and communion with him, as our chief good, portion and happiness, and the fountain of all perfection and excellency, and which likewise disposes us to good will to all, especially such as resemble God in holiness, or such as love Him.

To love him with heart, soul, mind and strength is to do so with our affections and understanding, both natural and spiritual, and to the extent of the abilities given us, whether these be great or small—one talent or ten; whether overwhelmed with the guilt of coldness, or other sins that are past, or in the enjoyment of pardon and justification, or sanctified or glorified.

I am, dear Brother, yours in the privilege of loving God, with a heart in which no good by nature dwells, but which God will love and dwell in, if it loves Him and His Son Jesus Christ.

A. B.

For the Christian Messenger.

REFORM IN SINGING.

Dear Sir,—

I have long thought that we need a reformation in the singing department of our worship, and will proceed, with your permission, to offer two or three suggestions.

1. The singers. We are accustomed to Choirs, and our Choirs are accustomed to have it all to themselves. I don't think it ought to be so. The Choir should lead, but the congregation should join. Otherwise the singing is a performance by a few, instead of a common act.

2. The attitude. There is no prescribed attitude for prayer. Kneeling, standing, sitting, prostration are mentioned in the Bible. But I do not recollect that singing is represented as connected with any other than a standing posture, which appears to me the most natural and easy. Besides, some change is desirable in the course of the service. Many congregations sit still all the time, which has a lounging, lazy appearance.

3. The hymns. Singing is pre-eminently the service of praise, and should be confined to it, I think, in public worship. In social and exclusively Christian assemblies there may be more latitude. I am glad to hear that a new Hymn-Book is about to be published by the American Baptist Publication Society, and that it will be a "book of praise."

Many of the hymns in the Psalms are unfit to be sung in a general congregation. I heard the 469th sung the other day, much to my annoyance. I dare say you remember it. The first verse is:—

"In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopped my wild career."

I will not encumber your columns with the remainder. A more unfit hymn for a public and promiscuous assembly can hardly be imagined, although it accurately represents the writer's experience, (John Newton.)

I was once in a Baptist chapel when a hymn was sung, commencing thus:—

"I would but cannot sing,
I would but cannot pray,
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frights my soul away."

It was sung, too, to a lively tune!

Surely there should be great discretion in the choice of hymns; and it is, perhaps, deserving consideration whether some method might be adopted to render our service more directly an act of common worship. In some English congregations, as I am told, all the people pronounce the "Amen" at the close of the minister's prayers, as they were accustomed to do in Justin Martyr's time; and in others they all unite in reciting the Lord's Prayer, or in chanting a Psalm.

Our exercises are open to improvement, in my opinion.

Yours,

ZETTES.

For the Christian Messenger.

HANTSPOBT.

Dear Editor,—

Allow me to record another of those seasons so blessed to the givers, so comforting to the receivers. From the day of my arrival in Hantsport till the present, the kind attentions of the people have been unflinching. While I came in much weakness and misgiving as to fitness for the great work, my brethren, in the true spirit of the Gospel, lovingly held up my hands, and cheered my heart by their prayers, encouraging words, and generous gifts.

But on the evening of the 4th inst., their kindness seemed to reach the climax, for they came together and filled our quiet domicile to overflowing, and after regaling us with "The cup that cheers but not inebriates," and corresponding luxuries, friendly intercourse and singing, making all pass

"Merry as a marriage bell."

Bro. Glenn (Presbyterian) took the chair, and called upon Bro. Porter, who, in behalf of the company, presented us with cash and articles to the value of \$156, which, with other sums previously presented, amounted to \$180. Among the articles above mentioned were two barrels of choice flour. It was one of the happiest evenings of our life. Thus our people have bound us to their hearts by bonds stronger than steel—undying affection.

This is exclusive of Falmouth, from which we have received many tokens of kindness.

Having told you of earthly blessings, perhaps I cannot do better, in closing my

notice, than tell you of our spiritual progress. A few weeks since we held some special meetings in Brooklyn, an out-station of Hantsport Church, with good results. God's people were quickened, and a number hopefully converted. I baptized three young people, and others stand ready.

During the last three weeks I have been laboring with all my strength in U. per Falmouth, in the new meeting house, which owes its origin and completion mainly to Bro. Mark Curry, Esq., of Windsor. It stands on the site of an old tavern which once sent forth its streams of desolation and death. But now we can say with Israel, "The Lord hath done great things for us." Wanderers are coming home, and sinners are being converted. On the 19th inst. I baptized four—making twenty since I came to Hantsport. I expect to welcome quite a number next Sabbath. Brethren, pray for us, that we may see not only a meeting house on the ruins of Satan's kingdom, but also a "Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Our Quarterly Sabbath School concert came off last evening. The subject was Missions. It was a pleasant and profitable season. Our school now numbers 140, and is increasing.

Yours in Christ,

J. MURRAY.

Hantsport, March 27th, 1871.

For the Christian Messenger.

IN MEMORIAM.

DEA. JOHN P. GRAVES,

of Upper Aylesford, aged 47 years, after a few days' illness, of inflammation of the lungs, calmly fell asleep in Jesus, on the morning of March 16th, 1871, at the residence of Mr. James A. Hall, of Biltown, Cornwallis, leaving a widow, four sons, and one daughter to mourn their sad and sudden bereavement. In early life he found peace in believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and professed his faith before the world. He was baptized by the writer twelve years ago, during the great revival in this place. As indicative of the high estimation in which he was held by the Church as a man of ability and piety, he was chosen to the office of Deacon soon after his union with the Church, which office he filled with much credit to himself and satisfaction to his brethren. He was also appointed Justice of the Peace. The duties of this important office were performed in such a way as to retain and deepen public estimation and confidence. His memory is enshrined in the hearts of his family, and also in that of the Church, of which he was a devoted and faithful member. He was Superintendent of our Sabbath School. By earnest prayer and activity in its service, by setting a wise and holy example, by kindness, love and forbearance, he occupied a large place in the hearts of the children. We, as a Church, and community, deeply mourn our loss. The funeral of our deceased brother took place on Sabbath, the 19th inst. A very large concourse assembled to show their respect for the departed and sympathy with the bereaved. The text chosen for the occasion was 2 Kings ii. 11.—Com. by Rev. J. L. Read.

MRS. HANNAH O. CROUSE,

beloved wife of Mr. James S. Crouse, of Crousetown, Lunenburg County, and second daughter of Henry and Amelia Porter, of that place, departed this life suddenly on the evening of Sunday, March 19th, in her thirty-second year. She was baptized fourteen years ago by Rev. I. J. Skinner, and received into the fellowship of the Bridgewater Church, of which she remained an earnest and consistent member until her removal by death. Deeply interesting services were held in connection with her funeral, which were participated in by the clergy of three different denominations. The sermon was preached by Rev. S. March, from Isaiah xxxviii. 18-19, and we hope that the sorrowing relatives and friends were comforted and supported by the consolations of Divine truth; and many sinners were aroused to see the importance of attending at once to the concerns of their souls, and seeking preparation for eternity. Much sympathy was manifested for the bereaved family. She has left a disconsolate husband and one lovely daughter behind to mourn their loss. May God support and cheer them in their deep affliction.—Com. by Rev. S. March.

MRS. ESTHER SMITH.

Died, December 12th, 1870, at her residence, North River, Onslow, Estier, widow of the late James Smith, in her 83rd year.