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"SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY GO FORWARD."—Ezekiel xiv, 15.

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Religious Intelligence.

THE RELIGIONS OF CHINA. CONFUCIANISM.

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From Home and Foreign Record of American Presbyterian Church.

In this letter, it is proposed to speak of Confucius, his doctrines, and the worship now rendered to him.

Confucius was born 519 B. C. in what is now the province of Shantung, which is nearly in the north-east corner of China proper, and bordering on the Yellow Sea. It is related that his mother had prayed to the hill Ne, for a son, and fable says that when this son was born, two dragons encircled the house, while sweet music was heard in the air.—The Chinese can believe such stories, and they have an exhaustless fund of their reputed miracles to offer against those which we relate to them out of the Bible to prove the divinity of Christ, and the authenticity of the Scriptures. We find that they cannot be convinced but by the Holy Spirit, when He shall open their hearts to receive the truth. We tell them of the miraculous conception of the man Christ Jesus; they refer us to the intervention of the gods in the birth of Confucius.

Confucius did not set himself up as a religious teacher. During the most of his life he was engaged in political affairs, and only in his declining years devoted himself to the establishment of a school of philosophy. His writings contain many things that are unexceptionable, and his teachings have done more to render the Chinese nation what it is in civility and stability, than any, or all their other writings. He admonished and instructed kings, and all in authority, by the histories he gave (whether real or fictitious) of the wise princes of their ancient kings, and he taught the people to regard their sovereign as ruling by divine appointment—as commissioned to assist heaven in the government of the world. He instructed parents and teachers in the training of the young, and enjoined upon all the duties of the several relations, that children should reverence their parents, the younger be respectful to the older, and that all must yield due honours to their rulers. He encouraged industry and economy. The honour in which this teacher has ever been held, has had, no one can doubt, a great influence in elevating the nation and preserving it, while all other nations have changed, or quite passed away. Yet, in some respects, it might have been better for the Chinese had they never had a Confucius.

Though only the literati can be classed among those commonly termed Confucianists, still every Chinaman knows about Confucius, and all regard him, while he was on earth, as something more exalted than a man, and now as enjoying a place among the gods; and all he said and wrote is regarded with superstitious reverence as the words of a god. Therefore it is that they so carefully gather up all scraps of written paper, lest any of these should be defiled. This reverence for their holy book is like that of the Mohammedan for his Koran, and greater than that of most people in Christian lands for their Bible. But the teachings of Confucius contain many things which are contrary to the truth. His disciples quote him as having taught, that man by nature is good, and becomes bad only by bad example and imperfect instruction. He also taught his followers to reverence the spirits and the gods, but to keep them at a dis-

tance; but he taught nothing about the true God or a future state; and the influence of his doctrines and example are now seen in China in inducing so great interference on these subjects. In his works are some allusions to heaven as the priding power of nature, and to fate as the determiner of all things. He enjoined the appropriate sacrifices to heaven, earth, the gods of the land and grain, and to ancestors.

All Chinese, who study at all, use the books where such things are taught, they commit them to memory. The sayings of Confucius and other sages, are familiar to all, for such as cannot read learn them from others. Nobody, not even the priests, or Bodkins, dare speak a word against any of the doctrines of this philosopher. It will be seen, therefore, that before they can receive the doctrines taught in the Scriptures, they must unlearn, or learn to regard in their true light, the doctrines which now have such a controlling influence over them.—With many it would be sufficient reason why they should give no attention to what we teach, that their sacred books say nothing on such subjects. People sometimes say to us, "How can you expect that we will renounce a religion and customs which have been handed down to us from high antiquity, for doctrines and strange gods which you foreigners wish to introduce amongst our people?" You tell us that the doctrines you teach are true, and the God you worship the only true God; but we have for this only your assertions, and why should we believe you, a few strangers, against the instruction of our wise men, and against the practice of our whole nation? You tell us that what you teach you know to be the truth, because it is contained in your sacred book; but we also have books which we consider as important and as worthy of belief, as you do yours." Some there are who take occasion to speak contemptuously of Christian books, and translations of the Scriptures, because they lack the elegance of style in which their own books are written. Some again, who are positively reticent when speaking against our doctrines in our presence, who acknowledge they are very good, but that their books contain that which is equally good, and therefore we may infer their opinion, that they have no need to put away the old, which is good, for something that is new, and so far as they can judge, no better.

Often when we are talking to them about Jesus Christ, the Saviour, they compare him to their Confucius, and suppose that Jesus must be to the Western nation, what Confucius is to the Chinese, and they say "Yajooz (Jesus) may be better for you, but Confucius is better for us." Again, they have doctrines with which to oppose those which we teach. We speak of the self-existent and eternal God, who created all things, and who is distinguished from every other object that may be worshipped in this, that "the gods are idols, but the Lord made the heavens;" and they refer us to their system of cosmogony, viz.: that all things were produced by what they term the *dua povera*, Yin and Yang, the male and female principles, which pervade everything, and cause all the changes which are seen in matter; while matter itself they suppose to be eternal. Of the origin of the world, their books teach thus: "Before heaven and earth were divided, there existed one universal chaos, when the two energies of nature were gradually distinguished, and the Yin and Yang, male and female, principles were established. Then the purer influences ascended and became the expense of heaven, while the grosser particles descended and constituted the subject earth." From the combinations of these two, all things were produced, and thus heaven is the father and earth the mother of nature." They say further, heaven and earth produced all things, but as they could not speak, the sages came to settle the form of governments, and teach the principles of right conduct; therefore the sages are considered equal to heaven, hence also the saying, "Heaven, earth and man;" man meaning the sages.

Every department and every district, has its own Confucian temple, so that in the city of Ningpo, we have two, one for the Hen, or district, and a much larger and more splendid one for the Fou, or department, an account of which may be found in the "Letters to Sabbath Schools," of the late Rev. W. M. Lowrie. In these temples, images are not employed, but their absence is supplied by tablets, one tablet on which is inscribed the names of Confucius, and others for his principal disciples. The worshippers present their offerings, before these, and here they perform their kneeling and bowings. In the district temple at N. Ningpo, we find an exception to what is required in these places; it is an