

fear of the slave-dealer. The other is inhabited by the vast multitudes of a great and civilized nation, whose tradition forms an unbroken record from the time of Abraham, whose literary activity, scarcely later in origin, is without end—a nation possessed of the grandest moral teaching, apart from revelation, which the world has ever seen—a nation which has engulfed without sign more than a score of dynasties, native and foreign, and has come to regard all other peoples as but modern, barbarian, and tributary. In China the Christian missionary finds himself assailed not by the fierce war cry of fanatical superstition, but by the weary sigh of hopeless pessimism; finds his work to lie not in a tangled swamp of gross paganism, but in a dry desert of blank indifference.

China, however, not only presents a striking contrast to Africa as regards its religious state, but also offers to modern Christendom a terrible object-lesson as regards its religious history. In the glorious sunlight of the Gospel, China, so far as its national, religious "tine spirit" is concerned, looms before the world of men as the moon before the earth—a warning and a portent; retaining petrified, as it were, its ancient religious form, with all phases of real religious existence behind it, without radiant light outward, without spirit of life within.

In these days—when, in practice, the fact of the providence of God is ceasing to be recognized as essential to the governance of His world; when, in thought, the doctrine of the fall of humanity is being replaced by a theory of the evolution of religion; when, in ethics, the love of God as a spring of action is being set on one side in favor of a social altruism; when, in religion, a trust in the grace of God which brings salvation is being superseded by a belief in a tendency of human nature which makes for righteousness; in these days, and in regard to each of these points, a weighty lesson is offered by the religious history of China.

If that history shows one thing more plainly than another, it is the fact, not of the evolution of religion, but of the natural inclination of the human heart, when left to itself, to introduce its own inventions in place of the service of God, and to separate itself further and further from Him in a process of spiritual decay and death. For that *reverence* due to the Supreme Ruler of the universe which had been brought by their forefathers from the West, the Chinese substituted worship of spirits and of the powers of heaven and earth, and so, losing sight of God, came to give themselves into actual servitude, as at this day, to the supposed influences of the purely material objects of nature.\* So, also, in place of *service* to God they put duty to man, and thus, losing knowledge of binding moral sanction, came at the last to regard even duty to man as a matter of mere utility and expediency. Hence the mass of the people were left to fall an easy prey to idolatry; and are to-day, before our eyes, lying bound in

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\* In the system of geomancy comprised under the title "fêng-shui," literally (the influences of) wind and water.