

## The Chinese—The Problem of Christianity.

BY WILLIAM ASHMORE, D. D.

It will be admitted that, to the Chinese rulers, Christianity is a sore and perplexing problem. The question first asked about Jesus is now being repeated about his teachings—What shall we do with them?

An explanation of the situation will be an explanation of the problem. The moral sentiment of this immense nation has been dominated by heathenism—a heathenism whose tremendous power lies, not in its aggressiveness, but in its torpor. The whole land is in the condition described by the riders on the horses among the myrtle trees in the vision of Jeremiah—"the earth sitteth still and is at rest"—utter stagnation and death everywhere. Then came Christianity. Verily, Christ's words were true—"I came not to send peace, but a sword." The stagnant water began to be stirred and mephitic poison began to be exhaled. Of its own bare self, in its purest and simplest form, Christianity was bound to be a "sword." Yet it must here be distinctly affirmed and vigorously maintained that of its own simple self Christianity would not have been such a bewildering problem as it is. Romanism is the trouble.

Christianity has come in two separate forms—in the form of Romanism and in the form of what is called Protestantism. The working methods of the two forms of belief are diametrically opposite; Protestantism preaches a kingdom that is not of this world; Romanism claims a dominion as much of this world as it does of the next. Protestantism teaches men that in matters of the soul Christ is supreme; Romanism claims that on the banks of the Tiber sits an Italian potentate who is the sole and fully empowered vice-regent of Christ, and who holds the keys of death and hell in his own hand as much as does Christ himself. Protestantism claims no temporal authority and declines temporal distinctions; Romanism ambitiously and persistently seeks for them both.

The Chinese are in a quandry. Times was when both forms of Christianity were regarded with supercilious disdain. Yet even then Romanism was hated because of its arrogant pretensions. But of late both Romanism and Protestantism have gained immensely, though each in a different way. The former is backed up by France and is made a political tool; the latter is gaining in numbers, in assertiveness and influence. The Chinese at one time, again, hoped to stamp out Christianity; then they tried to hold it in check. Lately the problem has been, Can it possibly be utilized? And then, again, can one form of it be made to play off against another?

The final shaping of this great problem is not yet fully apprehended by the Chinese, though we think it is beginning to be. When it is fully so the real struggle will be on hand, and you will feel the jar of it even in America. The Romanist assumption will assert itself more and more, and unless France gets a backset in Europe will go till a crisis will be reached out there. We are watching with keen interest the French government's treatment of Jesuits in France, and are hoping some less consideration will be shown to Jesuits in the far east. The Protestant doctrine of soul liberty finds no objection among the Chinese. On the contrary, it strikes them favorably, and is in accord with the genius of their own ideas, while the correlated doctrine of a separate church and state pleases them greatly and makes them cease to be apprehensive that we are a dangerous element. The difference in status, therefore, between the Romanist and the Protestant is immense. Before it is over with we shall expect to find the Chinese appealing to the Protestant principle as the only sound and just one, and using it with tremendous effect against the Franco-Roman principles and methods.

The high authorities are now considering "the missionary question" in every possible bearing, and are going into the subject with a degree of minuteness of inquiry which delights us Protestants. Among other things, a commission has been appointed by some of them to study up and report on the essential differences between Romanists and Protestants, and it is reported they are now busy studying up the story of Lutheran reformation. The result of all this investigation we expect to hail with satisfaction. If it is a correct and faithful one it will be all that we want, and if it is not, we have plenty of champions who will take the matter up.—The Standard.

Swatow, China.

## Study John Bunyan.

BY REV. THRODOR L. CUYLER, D. D.

"Give me a hint or two as to the books I shall find most profitable," is the request of a young minister. In answering him, let me give a hint to some others. Next to your Bible, study John Bunyan's immortal Pilgrim's Progress. Spurgeon's pure, racy Saxon-English came from his constant study of the tinker of Bedford, and Bunyan fashioned his style on the English Bible.

He was a man of one book. He had but a small

library, and when he went into Bedford jail, he took only three or four books with him, for which let us be devoutly thankful. God's Word was the constant companion of his cell, the volume of his morning studies and his evening meditations. This perpetual delving in the mine of divine relation gave Bunyan the pure gold out of which he fashioned his masterpiece. He had read no other poetry than the sublime poetry of David and Job, Isaiah and Habakkuk, and we trace the effect of such close communings with the inspired Hebrew bards in all the grandest imagery of the Pilgrim's Progress. His description of the glories of heaven, when the gates open to "Christian's" entering footsteps, is almost a literal copy of John's Apocalypse. Bunyan had never seen the inside of a theological school, he got his body of divinity from the fountain-head by going directly to Moses, the prophets, the Apostles, and to him who spoke as never man spoke. Where in the whole range of religious literature can be found a richer, purer, stronger evangelical theology than is contained in this marvellous allegory? Saturate your soul with it, my young brother; it will give you the right pitch when you sit down to your sermons. No danger of your theology becoming pulpy or mucilaginous when you feed on the "Holy War" and the "Pilgrim."

Let Bunyan teach you also what wonderful things the Scriptures are when approached in the right spirit. He pored over them on his knees. Not a shadow of doubt as to their perfect inspiration and infallible authority ever disturbed him for a moment. He went through them, not with lexicons and commentaries, but with a keen spiritual eye that discovered every atom of gold as sharply as a Colorado miner picks out every grain of precious metal from the auriferous soil. The Holy Spirit took of the things of Christ and showed them unto him. This patient waiting on God's Word, this humble sitting at the gates of the infinite wisdom, and this fervent, earnest inquiry directly from God, let Bunyan into the interior truths that concern most deeply the human soul and its experiences, and eternal destinies. As your business is to deal with human nature in all its varieties, you will find no range of portraitures which surpasses those presented by the dreamer of Bedford.

Bunyan will also teach you how to read your Bible in terrible earnest. He made it as literal as the flash of the noon-day-sunbeams. Not one sharp edge of the divine threatenings against sin did he ever blunt; in these times there is too little pungent preaching on the "sinfulness of sin" and its just retributions. Nor did Bunyan minimize the ineffable and marvellous love of God in redemption and in providence. Into the bosom of the exceeding great and precious promises he fairly leaped as a child leaps into the arms of a mother. Every syllable of the divine book he pored over and pondered till his memory held it in solution. You will be constantly delighted with his ingenious introduction of the out-of-the-way passages of Scripture, into the most unexpected places. If you can learn how to do this, you will hold the attention of your hearers, and give them happy and profitable surprises.

Style is a vastly important element in effective preaching as the Spurgeons, Maclarens, Robertsons and Bushnells testify. The best style is that which most resembles a window of perfectly transparent glass. The Pilgrim's Progress is a well of English undefiled. I do not recall but one foreign word in it, and that is when "Mr. By-ends made them a low congee." That French word seemed to suit exactly a frivolous and foppish fellow. In every page Bunyan sticks to the stout old dialect which the illiterate can understand and which the most cultured cannot improve. Hardly any other book abounds more in monosyllables. There is a model for you in terse, trenchant vigor of speech; and you will be all the more popular and powerful as a preacher if you will learn what Daniel Webster and John Bunyan teach you, viz.: that for all the highest purpose of an instructor of the people, pure, plain, simple English is the mightiest instrument. In after years you will thank me for exhorting you to study John Bunyan.—Evangelist.

## From Heart to Heart.

BY PASTOR JOSIAH WEBB.

My dear sisters and brothers—you who are shut in and cannot go out into the fields and pluck the wild flowers, and watch the tall grain as it waves gleefully in the summer breeze:—I have been thinking about you of late. I thought that I saw you one fine day looking out from your chamber-window. A smile lit up your face as the sweet song of birds came floating into your room on the wings of the morning air. But that smile did not stay long; it faded slowly away. A dark cloud came over your brow, and your eyes became dimmed with tears. Then I knew that the glad song of birds, and the beautiful sunshine reminded you of the painful fact that you must stay in the house and suffer. The sunshine and the long summer day do not mean the same to you as they do to the birds and the flowers, and to the children whose

limbs are strong and active, and whose cheeks are aglow with health.

Nobody knows one half of the pain and weariness and monotony that you, poor dear shut ins, have to endure during the hot summer days. When all in the house are walking noiselessly, and conversing in whispers, and consoling themselves with the thought that you are resting, I hear you saying, in voice so mournful: "How long the day seems! I feel so faint and tired! I shall be glad when it is night." And then when night comes, your nerves become excited: you try to compose yourself, but all your efforts are in vain. I hear you say in a half-sobbing voice, as the night is advancing toward day: "I am weary of the night. When will the morning come?" Your friends do not know all this; you try to hide it from them; for it would only increase your troubles and add to their burdens if you attempted to tell them all.

How good it is, when one is sick, to hear the physician say: "I know all about your disease. I understand perfectly what you suffer. You will be better after a little," but, alas! it may be that your illness is beyond the skill of earthly physicians, and there is nothing left you but to suffer and patiently wait for Jesus to come for you. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold," saith the Lord, "I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires, and I will make thy windows with agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones." What beautiful words! Lift up your eyes, ye sufferers of Zion; lift them up and behold; for know ye of a truth that there is a world, another than this—a spiritual—a world that is within, above and around this material world of ours. In this spirit-world there is a sun that never sets. The light of that sun is soft to the eye. The warmth of that sun is as balm to the wounded and sorrow-stricken heart. "Unto you," saith the Lord, "that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."

In this spirit-world there is a garden—it is the garden of the Lord. It is a most beautiful place: Angels look upon it with admiration and wonder. In this garden there are stately trees, all laden with ripe fruit. There are plants, all clothed with beautiful buds and blossoms. There are vines, all hanging with large clusters of luxurious grapes. These are the Wealeys and the Spurgeons and the Careys and the Gordons and the Moodys.

There are other trees and plants and flowers which, though not so prominent or distinguished in the eyes of men, are, nevertheless, beautiful and precious and useful. These are they who bear fruit, or send forth a sweet fragrance for the poor heathen in India, and in the dark slums of our cities, and in the homes of the poor.

There are still others which are very, very delicate, and which need the tenderest care. Their names do not appear on the fair pages of the world's history; their work is not rewarded on this side of the narrow stream; their beauty is not seen by earthly eyes; but God knows their names: He knows how precious, and how beautiful, and how useful they are. These are the mourning Marys and Marthas, and the poor suffering Lazaruses, and the afflicted men and women and boys and girls who are blind and lame and sickly. These are witnessing for God in the midst of the most trying circumstances. Some of these dear ones, like the water-lilies, are surrounded, and at times overwhelmed by the deep waters of affliction, yet they lift up their heads with their faces looking heavenward and reflect back the smile of their dear Heavenly Father.

In this garden of the Lord, though there are so many weak and delicate ones, death is unknown. Do you want to know the reason of it? Look away to yonder mount. There, upon that cross, is the Smitten Rock. From that Rock flows the water of life. That river has been flowing and flowing on all through the ages; the streams thereof branch off here and there in search of some thirsty fainting soul; there is not a dark recess, or a lonely chamber, if there is a soul that is seeking after God there, where those gentle, healing, life-giving streams do not flow. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God."

"O, what hath Jesus done for me!  
Before my raptured eyes  
Rivers of life divine I see  
And trees of Paradise;  
I see a world of spirits bright—  
Who taste the pleasures there;  
They all are robed in spotless white,  
And conquering palms they bear."  
New Canada, Linn. Co., N. S.

He is a wise man that can avoid evil; he is a patient man that can endure it; but he is a valiant man that can conquer it.—Quarles.

Put a seal upon your lips and forget what you have done. After you have been kind, after love has stolen forth into the world and done its beautiful work, go back into the shade again and say nothing about it. Love hides even from itself.—Henry Drummond.