

Li Hung Chang and the Missionary Societies.

Written for the Review.

The great Chinese viceroy has come and gone again, carrying with him no doubt many impressions which, however hastily formed, are likely to influence his future policy to foreign countries and foreign ideas in no small degree. What the effect will be on China if any we shall soon know; for he is an old man now with but a few years to live. Whatever he would do must be done speedily. With the political outcome of his remarkable journey around the world we do not here concern ourselves. But we are deeply interested in the attitude he may hereafter adopt towards Christian missions in China. As yet there is little by which we can be guided in forming an opinion. During his progress he peppered everybody he met with questions but said little as to his own views. While in New York, however, he consented to receive a deputation from the American Missionary Societies. Dr. Ellin Wood of the Presbyterian Board acted as spokesman for organizations representing 723 missionaries in China. His reply as reported in the daily press was somewhat non-committal as might be expected, but it was not antagonistic. "In a philosophical point of view" said he, "as far as I have been enabled to appreciate, Christianity does not differ much from Confucianism, as the golden rule is expressed in a positive form in one while it is expressed in the negative form in the other. Logically speaking whether these two forms of expressing the same truth cover exactly the same ground or not, I leave it to the investigations of those who have more philosophical tastes. It is at present enough to conclude that there exists not much difference between the wise sayings of the two greatest teachers on the foundations of which the whole structure of the two systems of morality is built."

Now, of course, apart from any convictions he may have, this is shrewdly put so as to please the Christians before him without offending his fellow countrymen at home. But it affords the hope that he will extend at least his protection, if not his encouragement, to the advocates of a system which he confesses to be as good as his own. Probably his own personal feeling, if he were free to express it, is more favorable still. The story of his conversion to western medical science, through the cure of his wife when apparently at the point of death by the skill of the missionaries, is well known. The reality of his gratitude was proved by his equipment of a large hospital at Tien-tsin. He can hardly have any but a kindly feeling towards the representatives of a faith which did him such a kindness. Confucian morality is all very well as far as it goes but it has left China stagnant for many centuries. Let us hope that his tour through Christendom has convinced him of the vast superiority of Christianity as a motive power to secure the practical attainment of moral character and the development of a high civilization. If it has not produced that conviction the fault must have been largely our own.

Study of the Bible.

"WHY DO I GET SO LITTLE OUT OF IT?"

The question that heads this article has frequently been put to the writer. There are very many who listen with wonder to others as they give out the results of their study of the Bible, and then are deeply perplexed at the fact that their own study yields no such fruit. Much Bible reading and Bible study has little profit in it, and not a little is absolutely profitless. There are various reasons for this.

The first is, the use of a poor method of Bible study. The reading and study of many is without any method or system whatever, quite at random. Every one should adopt some method, and be sure that it is a good one. It would not be wise in this article to attempt to even outline a single method of Bible study, and no one method will suffice. We need to follow several methods if we are to get the full measure of profit from our study. We would suggest that the reader go to some one whose own study has proved itself richly fruitful, and ask him to show how he studies the Bible. But a few characteristics of the vicious method can be pointed out.

Any method that spends more time in studying about

the Bible than in digging into the actual contents of the book, is a thoroughly vicious method of Bible study. Questions regarding the authorship of the various portions of Scripture, the date and manner of their composition, etc., are doubtless of great importance, but they are not as important as the divine truth contained in the books themselves. Yet one frequently meets with those who are thoroughly up in the latest discussions regarding the sources of the Pentateuch or Hexateuch, and the authorship and date of Isaiah and the Psalms, who betray the densest ignorance regarding the priceless truth contained in these various portions of the Word of God. A bright college student, in commenting on the fruitlessness of his class work in the Bible, recently said, "We have spent a whole year trying to find who wrote the Pentateuch."

A method of study of the contents of the books that occupies itself more with the mere details of history, chronology and geography than it does with the great truths taught and illustrated, is a vicious method of study. I once examined an elaborate system of Bible study, covering one of the richest portions of the Book, and yet the analysis and questions and suggestions for study were almost entirely taken up with matters of historical and geographical setting, and very little with the essential and eternal truth thus set.

Any method of study that does not demand close thought and hard work is a hopelessly vicious method. People are seeking for some easy method of Bible study. There is no easy method that is of any value. God never puts gold where it can be got without hard work. Any good method of study will demand time, close application and hard work. It need hardly be said that the reward of a wise expenditure of time and labor in this direction will be exceeding great.

There is also much study of the Bible which bears little fruit because of a failure to concentrate the thought upon that which is being studied. The mind is constantly wandering to other matters. Whole chapters are read through, and scarce a thought in them has penetrated the mind, much less fixed itself there. But no other book demands such concentration of thought for its understanding and appreciation. We must then seek out a method of study that compels concentration of thought.

The failure to meditate upon what is read is responsible for much fruitless Bible study. There is a deep wisdom in the words of the Psalmist when he pronounces that man happy who *meditates* in the law of the Lord day and night (Ps. 1, 1, 2). Meditation is the method of intellectual and spiritual digestion and assimilation. It is wonderful how verses and chapters and books of the Bible open up as one meditates upon them. The first half of the seventeenth verse of the eighth chapter of Romans, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," had been familiar to the writer for many years. There had long been a strange charm about the words. But one day he sat down to meditate upon them. They were turned over and over in the mind, the exact meaning and force of the familiar words are weighed, and the mind allowed to follow out their leadings and suggestions. That day will never be forgotten. Other days have been similarly glorified by meditation upon other passages.

The failure to make a personal application of the truth discovered in Bible study, lies at the root of its fruitlessness in many instances. In the study of the Bible the question before our minds should always be, What is there here for me? What duty is pointed out here for me to do? What line of action is suggested here for me to follow? What privilege is here revealed for me to claim? What promise is here proclaimed for me to make my own? In this way our life will be steadily enlarging into the measure of that perfect life which is set forth in the Bible. Happy is the man who stands before his Bible with the determination that every command in it he will obey, every promise in it he will appropriate, and every privilege declared in it he will claim for himself, and who is constantly on the lookout for new commands to follow, new promises to lay hold of, and new privileges to make his own. But how many there are who study their Bibles and seemingly get quite a clear understanding of their meaning, but upon whose minds it never seems to dawn that these inexorable commands, these stupendous promises, these immeasurable privileges are *for me*! If you belong to this class, learn to read your Bible in a new way, as the voice of "the living God" speaking directly to you.