

well-being of the living depends upon the comfort of the dead ancestors, who can bless or curse in a very practical manner, according to the treatment they receive from their living children in the matter of food and paper clothing (which cost the nation, be it remarked, some thirty-two millions of dollars annually). It is terrible to the Christian enquirer to remember that the happiness of five generations of his ancestors will be endangered if he embrace the new faith, and that in future his family can expect no blessings from their departed relatives.

It is probably to the fact that the Church of Rome sanctions the worship of the dead that she owes her greater proportion of converts. Between the worship of saints and that of ancestors the line is very shadowy, and prayer for the souls of their dead relatives is only another form of caring for their spiritual existence. The Chinese take more kindly to a system which, while it does not force them wholly to relinquish their beloved idolatry, still supplies them with much their own religions lack, yet which their human hearts crave.

When the truth, as it is in Jesus, has really dawned on their souls, this superstition, of course, takes a changed aspect, but in most cases the convert will have to sacrifice his entire family along with it, and when we consider that Chinese households are patriarchal, several generations living under one roof, we can realise something of how great a sacrifice it is.

For this reason—and it is one of the bright sides to mission life in China—the converts, when made, are likely to be genuine. They have nothing earthly to gain by a profession of faith, everything to lose, so that they do not lightly come forward for admission to the visible church as lightly to return to heathen ways. So that when from the crowds of listeners, of whom the missionaries may always be certain, one stands forth to profess his faith in Christ by baptism, they have such a conviction of the reality of his conversion as it is impossible to feel in lands where it is at least respectable to seem to be a Christian.

The Chinese, too, realise very fully that genuine Christianity means a change of life. In the early days of the Fuh Chow mission, a man informed Mr. Cribb, the missionary, that, much as he admired the new doctrines, it was impossible for him to embrace them, because "he was engaged in business." He was a fish dealer, and had been accustomed to ask more than the fair value for his fish, to meet the custom which prevails in China, as in many other places, of offering less than the fair price. If he became a Christian, this poor heathen felt a change must be made, and though admitting, in answer to Mr. Cribb's arguments, that the honest course was the best in the long run, yet he lacked courage to brave the immediate results of such an effort.

The conservatism of the Chinese also places many a stumbling-block in the path of the missionary. The great mass of the people are so content with things as they are, and fail to see any point at which a change could enter advantageously. No doubt they have much of which to be proud. Within certain limits, they are the most inventive nation in the world, but the people who would rather scratch up the surface soil, according to established usage, than make use of modern and manifestly superior agricultural implements, are hard to deal with when it comes to superceding traditional beliefs by the faith of mistrusted foreigners.

Another difficulty in the way of the reception of the Gospel is that the Chinese are relieved of so much thinking by their government, that they are less capable of entertaining, assimilating, and deciding upon what is new, than those whose minds are continually in action. The government, which not only fixes the day for doffing and donning winter and summer clothing, but decides on the colour and pattern of the house decorations for all classes, must relieve its subjects of a good deal of that burden of responsibility which stimulates intelligence and braces the mental faculties. It is harder to win admission to such unexercised minds, and this, in part, accounts for the length of time our missionaries worked before they gained any converts.

But mission life in China has its pleasant places as well as its Hill Difficulty. The people are ever ready to hear. Whenever the missionary can speak well enough he is sure of a crowd of listeners. At street corners, over shop counters which face the street, on village public grounds, he is surrounded by a throng of listeners who prove their attention if not their interest by numerous questions about the new doctrine. In this way they become familiarized with it. Their peculiar, what I may call self-contained position, keeps them lamentably ignorant of much that to the rest of the civilized world is no new thing, for, although in their sense, the Chinese are highly—I had almost said desperately—educated, their education does not include the results of modern thought, either intellectually or scientifically, and they are practically just what they were 2,000 years ago. Then, as I have said before, a Chinese convert is usually a real convert, he has counted the cost, the great cost, of being on the Lord's side, and is willing to pay it. It is strange how the two distinguishing characteristics of the Chinese, *timidity* and *cupidity*, are changed by the influence of Christ's Gospel into courage of no mean order, and liberality. They indeed give as those who realise that they are giving to Him "who giveth all." In 1880, the native Christians of Fuh Kien contributed \$1,700 to the mission, and these were not wealthy converts; for the Christians in China are mostly poor people;