

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

served," in the words of one¹ who, notwithstanding his disesteem of the theory of final causes, could not yet deny the importance of our science, "let it be observed that there be two principal duties and services, besides ornament and illustration, which philosophy and human learning do perform to faith and religion. The one, because they are an effectual inducement to the exaltation of the glory of God; for as the Psalms and other Scriptures do often invite us to consider and magnify the great and wonderful works of God, so if we should rest only in the contemplation of the exterior of them, as they first offer themselves to our senses, we should do a like injury unto the majesty of God, as if we should judge or construe the store of some excellent jeweller, by that only which is set out toward the street in his shop. The other, because they minister a singular help and preservative against unbelief and error; for our Saviour saith, 'you err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God;' laying before us two books or volumes to study, if we will be secured from error; first the Scriptures revealing the will of God, and then the creatures expressing his power; whereof the latter is a key unto the former, not only opening our understanding to conceive the true sense of the Scriptures, by the general notions of reason and rules of speech, but chiefly opening our belief, in drawing us into a due meditation of the omnipotency of God, which is chiefly signed and engraven upon his works."

ARTICLE III.

LIFE, CHARACTER, WRITINGS, DOCTRINES AND INFLUENCE OF CONFUCIUS.

By Rev. Ira Tracy, formerly Missionary in China.

As that great nation, which has from the earliest ages, occupied the eastern part of Asia, is becoming more and more an object of admiration and interest to us, it is natural to inquire *what are its peculiarities, and by what process did it come to possess them.* Its greatness, recluseness and singularity, conspire to awaken our curiosity and attract our attention. This curiosity and inte-

¹ Lord Bacon, Advancement of Learning, Book I.

rest it is well to cherish. We should have little reason to laugh at the sons of Han for supposing that China is "all under heaven," if we, in the plenitude of our knowledge, should practically and habitually regard it as one of the less important nations of the earth. Our error would be more unpardonable, and of more injurious tendency, than theirs. It includes probably one third of the great family, of which we and they are, in common, members, and for the well-being of the whole of which we should care.

To the welfare of this great family, the Chinese have contributed perhaps more largely than is generally supposed. If they had sent to western nations nothing but their *tea*, our debt to them would not have been small. How many the pleasant hours it has made around the tables of the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant. How different the social visits of our female ancestry, and of our own mothers and sisters too, from what they would have been, had the stupifying ale, or the maddening punch passed around their circles, instead of the mildly cheering beverage which China gave them.

Silk, which is acknowledged to be of Chinese invention, has had not a little to do in refining the manners and cherishing the industry and ingenuity of the western world.

The manufacture of white earthen ware, for the first knowledge of which we are indebted to the Chinese, has also done much to increase our comforts, and improve our sentiments as well as our habits. But for the Chinese, we should, for aught we know, have been using brown earthen to this day.

And not to dwell on many things of less importance that China has done for us, it is worthy of notice and remembrance, that the art of printing, gunpowder and the mariner's compass, which have wrought such general and beneficent changes in the condition of nations and the state of society here, made their appearance in Europe soon after Marco Polo had published his travels in China, where they were all in use.

The Chinese have more peculiarities than any other portion of the human family, except, perhaps, the Japanese, who are probably much like them. Savage and barbarous people cannot have so many, for they have less in which it is possible to be peculiar; and all the other civilized nations of the earth have exerted an assimilating influence upon each other; but the Chinese are a civilized people, whose character, condition and habits have not been affected, in any appreciable degree, by any other civilized people.

Many as are their peculiarities, the most important of them may be traced to the influence of one man. He who understands what *Confucius* was, and what were his doctrines; and how pervading and commanding has been, and still is, their influence on the minds of the Chinese, cannot fail to have a pretty correct idea of what *they* are. Their minds are run in the mould that he formed for them; and they endeavor to conform their civil, social and domestic habits to the instructions which he bequeathed to them.

Of this remarkable man I propose to give a brief account in the present Article. I do it as the best means of acquainting my readers with the most important peculiarities of the Chinese.

Confucius, the great philosopher and teacher of the Chinese, was born in the north-east part of China, in the year B. C. 552. His father, who was a man of high rank, died when Confucius was but three years old. Although his ancestors had, for six generations, held office in their native State, the family was so poor that he was obliged to work for its support during his early youth. He applied himself to study, as soon as practicable, and made rapid progress in the knowledge of the ancient records, which were engraved on pieces of bamboo. His abilities, acquirements and good character, soon became known at Court; and at the early age of twenty years, he was appointed to an important office in his native country, Loo. This independent State was not so large, as is any one of the eighteen provinces which now compose the Chinese empire.

During the next thirty years he held several offices in that, and neighboring States, but did not remain long in any of them. While he sought for office as a means of usefulness, he likewise studied and visited celebrated teachers to increase his knowledge, and travelled to seek opportunity for the promulgation of his doctrines. But he found it difficult to persuade any of the princes whom he visited, to adopt, for any considerable time, the rules of conduct he proposed; and after many disappointments, he returned, at the age of fifty, to his native country, and retired to private life, that he might collect and compile several important works, in which he could embody the precepts and examples of some ancient princes, whom he desired the people, and especially the princes, of his own and future ages, to imitate and obey. In a few years he was called from his seclusion and made governor of a province, and afterwards prime minister. In this office he exerted himself very successfully, and in three

years produced such a reformation, that a neighboring State became alarmed at the increasing prosperity of Loo, and by stratagem seduced the prince and most of his officers from attention to their duties, which so disgusted Confucius, that he resigned his office, and again withdrew from public life.

Encouraged by the successful beginning made here, and hoping to carry out his plans of reformation more thoroughly in some other State, he soon went abroad again, and offered his services to several princes; but they either felt unwilling to adopt his rigid rules of morality and close attention to their duties, and rejected his offers; or soon became weary of them, and dismissed him from their employment.

Thus thwarted every where in his endeavors to get his doctrines put in practice, he retired finally to his native State, and spent the remainder of his life in completing his writings, and preparing his disciples, who had now become numerous, to hand down his doctrines to future ages. As he approached the close of life, he lamented the degeneracy of the times in which he lived, and the rejection of those doctrines, the reception of which, he felt assured, would have given prosperity and happiness to his country and the world. "I am no longer useful on the earth," said he, "it is necessary that I should leave it." He died at the age of seventy-three, in the year B. C. 479.

Confucius seems to have arisen in China at the stage of its progress, in which tradition had so multiplied the facts that were worth remembering, and the experience and observation of successive generations had so accumulated knowledge which ought to be preserved, that a *compiler* was needed; and he seems to have possessed, in a degree rarely seen among men, both ability and disposition to be a *teacher* of his own and succeeding ages. He gave himself to his two-fold work with zeal, and even enthusiasm.

How much aid he derived from his predecessors, it is now impossible to determine. He has so mingled his own sayings with theirs, that no one can tell what are his and what theirs. The first emperors in the long list of China's rulers, are evidently fabulous characters. Even Yaou, who, with his immediate successors, Shun and Yu, figures largely in the books of Confucius, is said to have begun to reign in the year B. C. 2337, ninety years before the building of Babel. It is probable that Confucius used these names, which may have belonged to princes that lived a few centuries before his own time, to give greater weight to the

instructions which he wished to inculcate upon the minds of his contemporaries; and consequently, that most that is excellent in his writings, is his own. However this may have been, it is no small praise, to say of him that he was capable either of originating, or appreciating, such doctrines as he gave to his countrymen, and had a disposition to devote his life to the promulgation of them. The object of his life, so far as we have the means of knowing it, was to do good, and this was the aim, and in no small degree, the tendency of his writings.

His followers describe him as temperate, industrious, kind to his inferiors, respectful to equals and superiors, and say that he exhibited a faultless propriety of behavior, in all the relations he sustained to his fellow-men, and in all the various stations he occupied in the different periods of his life: that he "was mild, but firm; majestic, but not harsh; grave, but pleasant." They see no wrong in him; but he was not entirely blind to his own defects, and repeatedly confessed them. "To be like a sage, or a purely benevolent man, how dare I presume!" "To exhibit in my own person the superior man, I have not yet attained." "There are four things practised by the superior man, not one of which Kung (that is Kung foo tsze, or Confucius) is yet able to do; what I require of a son, in serving a father I am not able to do; what I require of a minister, in serving a prince I cannot do; what I require of a younger brother, in serving an elder brother I cannot do; what I require of a friend, I cannot first bestow."¹

His conduct, both in private and in public, was in general exemplary. He was doubtless one of the most moral of the heathen. The only recorded exceptions to the moral rectitude of his life are that on one occasion he was guilty of lying, which, however, his followers do not censure; and that he divorced his wife, for doing which no other reason is assigned, than his "desire to acquire wisdom in retirement."

His admirers praise him as humble and free from ambition and every form of selfishness. His readiness to resign his office as prime minister, when he thought he could not be useful in it, is adduced as proof of his freedom from those passions. Nevertheless he appears to us to have been a proud and ambitious man. His ambition, however, was for something nobler than mere demagogues and aspirants for office and emolument ever aim at. There was much of patriotism, and even philanthropy mingled

¹ In this quotation, as I shall also in others, I give nearly a literal translation, for the sake of showing the style of the original.

with it. He earnestly sought office, but it was that he might be the more useful. He ardently desired the prosperity and happiness of his country, and was deeply grieved at the viciousness of its rulers, and the evils it had produced or perpetuated. He longed for a reformation, and believed that it might be effected by the doctrines he taught. To this belief he was strongly, even enthusiastically attached. All his disappointments could not change it. It controlled his whole life.

Religion formed scarcely any appreciable part of his character. His real praise is that he was a moral and political philosopher and reformer, and ambitious to do good; and though, like the rest of men, not without faults, his memory may well be revered by his countrymen; and if we compare him only with other teachers unaided by inspiration, we may see many good reasons why Pope, in his "Temple of fame," should say,

"Superior and alone Confucius stood,
Who taught that useful science—to be good."

There are nine books which the Chinese speak of as the works of Confucius. They are called the "Four books," and the "Five classics." Only one of them was written entirely by Confucius. The four books were compiled and composed by his disciples, but as they contain some fragments written by him, and a large portion of them consists of his sayings, and their doctrines are wholly Confucian, it is not without propriety that they are called his works. Four of the five classics are collections of the writings and traditions of former ages, compiled and enlarged by Confucius; and one was written by him.

The four books are, *Learning for adults*, *Due medium*, *Dialogues*, and *Mencius*. *Learning for adults* is a short treatise, containing less than 2000 words. Its aim is, to point out the way to become perfect in personal, domestic, social and political virtue. The theory of Confucius, as developed here and elsewhere, is, first reform yourself; then you can easily reform your family, then a district, then a province, and then an empire. The *Due medium* professes to teach, what right character and right conduct are, and how they may be attained. Much of it is obscure, bombastic and fanciful, ascribing to Confucius, and to the superior man, whoever he may be, qualities which do not pertain to human nature, and of which it may be doubted whether the writer himself had any very clear ideas. The *Dialogues* are mere scraps of conversations between Confucius and others. They seem to have

been spoken at different periods of his life; and are recorded in such a manner that this book has been called "the Chinese Boswell." Various incidents of his life, and descriptions of his dress, deportment, habits, etc. are intermingled with them. There are many good remarks in them, and they show much knowledge of human nature, and great skill in adapting his instructions to the various capacities and dispositions of his disciples. *Mencius* contains nothing which it is important to our present purpose to notice.

The five classics are, *Song classic*, *Book classic*, *Change classic*, *Propriety remembrancer*, and *Spring and Autumn*. The *Song classic* is a collection of ancient odes. A large portion of them are historical, some amatory, and a few religious. Confucius was accustomed to make quotations from them in conversation, and his followers often select mottoes from them for the chapters of their books. They are highly esteemed by the Chinese, but Europeans find little *poetry* to admire in them. One reason of this difference of opinion doubtless is, that no foreigner can appreciate so fully as the Chinese do, the beauties of composition in their language. The very nice discrimination of sounds to which they are accustomed from their infancy, naturally imparts a charm to their more highly finished poetry, to which a foreigner must remain a stranger. Their poetry, if I may presume to speak from a very limited acquaintance with it, is strikingly similar to that of the Hebrews, as exhibited in the Psalms and Proverbs. Antithesis and parallelism, together with curious and often beautiful similes, and a most accurate arrangement of words in respect to sound, appear to constitute its most remarkable characteristics.

The *Book classic* is a collection of historical dialogues, and was designed to give a history of China from the time of Yaou nearly to that of Confucius. The principal speakers are the three successive emperors, Yaou, Shun and Yu. This book contains clearer intimations of the knowledge of the Almighty and reference to his authority, than more modern Chinese books do. The style is even more concise than that of the other books of Confucius; and learned Chinese often differ in their interpretation of it. Its obscurity is supposed to be increased by the loss of a considerable part of it, said to have been caused by the burning of books by Whang-te, the builder of the great wall, who ordered that all books should be destroyed, that there might be no record of men greater than himself.

The *Change classic* is a symbolical description of the changes

in the seasons of the year, and in the animal and vegetable world. By different collocations of the symbols used in this book, it is supposed that things past, present and future may all be known. It contains a theory of the creation, in which *yang* and *yin*, the male and female principles, are supposed to be creative and operative powers, which pervade all things, and continue their existence. Confucius himself considered it difficult to understand this book; and doubtless said truly, when he remarked, that if any one could understand it, he could know all things.

The *Propriety remembrancer* is a book of rites and forms of etiquette. By its rules Confucius wished to regulate all the actions of men; even to their walking and sitting, their eating and sleeping, their laughing and weeping. It is larger than either of his other works, and contains a very full discussion of the subject to which it relates; giving reasons for the rules it prescribes, and showing the importance of their being carefully observed in practice.

The *Spring and autumn* is so named, because it was begun in the former and finished in the latter. It is a dry historical work, and seems to have been written as a continuation of the book classic, taking up the thread of history where that book left it, and following it down to the historian's own time.

These five classics are the oldest books extant in China. Confucius doubtless embodied in them nearly all that was valuable in the records that then existed. By compiling and composing them, he became at once the father of Chinese history, poetry and philosophy; the Herodotus, the Homer, and the Aristotle and Plato of the Chinese; for his philosophy is practical like that of the former, yet as theoretical as that of the latter.

Confucius taught that men are *naturally* virtuous. Their vices he attributed chiefly to ignorance and bad example. Consequently he believed that it would not be very difficult to restore them to the practice of virtue. Accordingly he said, probably to some prince: "When you yourself are right, if you do not command, the people will do rightly; but when you are not right, though you command, they will not obey." And again, "Desire them to be good, and the people will be good." His favorite theory has been already noticed. He taught that if a ruler would govern himself and set a good example, that example would be the means of reforming his ministers, and through them and those influenced by them, his whole country; and that if a single country were thus reformed, surrounding countries would soon submit

● this virtuous ruler, and he would become a universal emperor.

The good example, by which he expected such conquests over men's minds and hearts to be effected, consists in propriety of conduct in all situations, and in respect to all the affairs of life. He accordingly insisted much on ceremonial politeness. The science of etiquette was with him the most important part of political science; and the practice of it, the most important requisite in the ruler and the ruled. Still he taught that rectitude is a part of propriety, and that rectitude could be expected to proceed only from a right heart. To exhibit at once some features of his style of writing, and of his doctrines, the following close translation of a part of the second page of the *Learning for adults* is inserted.

"The ancients, who wished to illustrate virtue to all under heaven, first promoted good order in their own provinces. They who wished to promote good order in their own provinces, first regulated their own families. They who wished to regulate their own families, first became virtuous themselves. They who wished to become themselves virtuous, first rectified their hearts. They who wished to rectify their hearts, first purified their motives. They who wished to purify their motives, first perfected their knowledge. Perfecting knowledge depends on investigating things. Things being investigated, knowledge is perfected. Knowledge being perfected, motives are purified. Motives being purified, the heart becomes right. The heart being right, persons themselves become virtuous. Themselves being virtuous, their families are regulated. Their families being regulated, the nation is governed. The nation being governed, all under heaven is at peace. From heaven's son (the emperor) to the common people, all should regard the cultivation of personal virtue as the root."

One of the greatest defects in his theory, teachings and practice, as a moral and political reformer, was his neglect and abuse of the female sex. Although he attaches great importance to the relations of men to each other in the family, society and the State, and gives very prolonged and minute directions respecting the duties of all the other relations; and though he calls marriage the principal relation; yet he says very little about the duties of it; and what he does say, relates almost exclusively to the duties of the wife, and enjoins upon her implicit obedience to the will of her husband. "He does not scruple," says the Chinese

Repository, "to tell mothers, wives and daughters, that they stand in the lowest place in the scale of nature. 'Woman is not a free agent; she is an inferior, dependent being, and lives only for man.'"

Mr. Davis, whose "History of China," in two volumes,¹ contains the best account of that country easily accessible to American readers, tells us that the most remarkable passage in the "Four books," is the following: "Being asked if any one word could express the conduct most fitting for one's whole life, he replied: 'Will not the word *shoo* serve?' and he explains it by 'Do unto others as you would they should do unto you.'" Probably Mr. Davis would not have used so nearly the words of the golden rule, in making his translation, if he had never read them. He gives Confucius more credit than he deserves. The passage, literally translated, is, "What yourself desire not, do not to men." This direction of the sage is good, but it is only a negative precept. It merely requires abstinence from injuring others, which is a very different thing from seeking to do good to them as earnestly as to benefit ourselves. If we, enlightened by inspiration and accustomed to reason on such subjects under its guidance, should infer from this negative, the positive duty enjoined by the Saviour's rule, it is by no means certain that the Chinese would make that inference; and I do not know that they have ever made it. And if they should make it, the honor of it would belong to them, and not to Confucius, whose books give no evidence that he ever made it. Let him have, if Mr. Davis pleases to give it to him, the honor of having been the wisest and best of heathen; but let not the praise that is due only to the "Wisdom of God," be given to him.

Of religion Confucius says but little. He was himself an idolater, or at least a worshipper of false gods. He speaks of the worship of them, as something to which all will of course attend, and enjoins sincerity in it. Some of his sayings indicate that he was a fatalist; but in others he seems to refer to the Almighty, using the word "heaven," as Christian writers sometimes do. He generally discouraged inquiry respecting spiritual beings, and even the future state of man. One of his disciples inquiring of him respecting the service of the gods, he replied: "Not yet serve men, how can serve gods?" The disciple asking what he thought of death, he said: "Not yet know life, how can know death?"

¹ Published by Harper and Brothers in the "Family Library."

His great desire and aim was to make men virtuous and happy in the present life. To this he wished chiefly to confine their attention. The means he used to accomplish his object were threefold: 1. He set before them the examples of Yaou and Shun; whose characters he clothed with all the excellences of which he supposed human nature to be capable, and whose lives he adorned with all the virtue, success and happiness, that he considered desirable for the princes and people of his own and succeeding times. 2. He gave many excellent instructions on political, social and domestic morality and economy; relating to the duties of prince and people, husbands and wives, parents and children, friends and neighbors. He taught that in each family children should reverence and obey their parents; and the younger members, the elder; and that in the nation they should consider themselves as members of one great family, of which the emperor is the father. 3. He prescribed minutely the ceremonies, modes of action and forms of address, to be observed in the intercourse of all these classes of persons. The proper observance of the directions he gave, would, in his opinion, constitute propriety of behavior, and propriety of behavior would produce happiness.

He sometimes speaks of benevolence, as if he had right views of it as the chief of virtues. Nor does he seem disposed to contract the meaning of the word, or the exercise of the virtue, to giving a little to supply the present physical wants of the needy, as do many who would know better, if they studied their Bibles, and especially the Greek New Testament. He, on the contrary, teaches that benevolence should actuate all our conduct, leading us to set a good example before others, and to remove, by good instructions, that ignorance which is the cause of many, and he considered the cause of most of the miseries men suffer.

As a politician he had wisdom enough to see that a peace policy is most conducive to the happiness and prosperity of a nation. As a moralist he knew that to pursue our individual advantage to the injury of others, or exalt ourselves on their debasement, is wrong and pernicious. He taught accordingly. Next to those of the Prince of peace, his, of all the doctrines inculcated on their fellow men by those who have sought to instruct them, tend most to cherish the principles and spirit of peace.

The influence of Confucius while he lived, was great, though far from being commensurate with his desires. In the courts of the princes, in whose employment he sought opportunities for

usefulness, it was considerable ; but that exerted on the minds of his disciples, produced the most permanent and important results. The number of those who sought instruction from his lips, is said to have been three thousand. Some of these gathered up the brightest fragments of his remarks, and recorded the most remarkable particulars of his conduct ; and they and their successors, from age to age, have commented on his writings, sayings and actions, till his books and these comments form the classic literature of China, and are the study of the prince and the people, of the father and the son, of the most ignorant pupil and the most learned teacher. The little boy seven or eight years old commits to memory the *Learning for adults*, and the old man of seventy or eighty still studies the *Book classica*. It is impossible that political and moral sentiments, so early and so constantly before their minds, should not do much to form their characters and habits.

Accordingly we find that their government, their social and domestic habits, and their moral, characters, are formed about as nearly on his model, as the pravity of human nature would permit. He taught that the prince should be *the father of his people* ; and so the emperor, be he Chinese, Mongul, or Mantchou, views the whole empire as his family, for whose good government he is responsible, whose wants he must supply, and whose safety he must secure, both from the invasion of enemies and the injustice of each other. He must set before them an example of industry ; and as agriculture is the direct means of providing the necessaries of life, he goes out in the spring of every year and guides the plough ; and in summer the empress feeds the silk worms for a similar reason. If the people transgress his laws, they must be corrected with a fatherly chastisement, and thank him, or the magistrate who acts for him, for thus seeking their reformation. If the rivers overflowing their embankments, or drought, or locusts, occasion a famine in any part of his vast empire, he must send food to his hungry children there ; or, what is more commonly done in moderate cases, he excuses them from sending the usual proportion of their crops to the imperial storehouses.

The laws by which the government is administered, are evidently formed on the principles Confucius taught. As example, according to his theory, is of omnipotent influence, if one does rightly, his whole family will certainly be virtuous ; and, if one family is virtuous, the neighboring families will also be made virtuous by its influence ; therefore if a crime is committed, the

whole family to which the criminal belongs, must be guilty, and none in the neighborhood can be innocent. Consequently, *they* deserve punishment, as well as the offending individual, and the laws require that it should be inflicted. But the maxim of the Chinese respecting their execution is, "Let the laws be very strict, but be lenient in the execution of them;" and it is seldom that any but the criminal is punished, except in cases of treason. For this crime, it accords with the doctrines of Confucius, as well as with the spirit of despotism, to make the punishment peculiarly severe. The government *should* be good, and if good, to oppose it was, with him, the greatest of crimes; but if it becomes cruel and oppressive beyond endurance, he taught that it is right to overthrow it. While it seeks the good of the people, it is the institution of heaven, and must be obeyed; but when it ceases to do this, it is forsaken of heaven and doomed to destruction. The influence of this doctrine, impressed on their minds from their very childhood, has been very great, both upon the rulers and the subjects of China. The proof of it is seen, both in the generally peaceful submission of the vast population of its widely extended territory to the authority of its rulers, during so many ages, and in the several revolutions which have removed unworthy monarchs from the throne.

The *peaceful* tendency of the doctrines of Confucius, has done not a little for the benefit of China. The long continued increase of its population finds no parallel in countries where war has often raged, or by which it has been carried on. Its wealth has not been wasted, as has been that of the great nations of the west, in the maintenance of large armies and navies. Its citizens have not spent their skill in inventing, nor their strength in manufacturing, the means of destroying their fellow men. The arts of peace have occupied their thoughts, and they have employed their time to increase the necessaries, comforts and conveniences of life at home; and they have done it with such success, that for many centuries they enjoyed them more fully than any other people in the world. It is only within the last three or four hundred years, that the most civilized of Christian nations have become better supplied with them, than are the Chinese. It is a fact worth the attention of every friend of man, that the farther we recede from the times of war, and the more free we become from its expenses, excitements and occupations, the more numerous become those useful inventions and improvements which increase the efficiency of human labor, multiply our enjoyments, and facilitate our progress in every excellence.

The effect of the instructions of Confucius on the *manners* of the Chinese, is very apparent. The fact that his book of ceremonies is the largest of all his works, shows that he attached undue importance to them. His followers have imitated his example, and are a nation of formalists. Attention to ceremonial politeness among them is excessive; and is considered a sufficient reason for falsehood on the tongue as well as in the heart. Excessive formality appears in all their intercourse; from the bowing nine times to the very ground before the emperor, to the complimentary terms which the meanest villain uses in their courts of justice, and the red papers with which the people honor each other on new year's day. A certain degree of attention to such formalities unquestionably tends to prevent a people from degenerating into barbarism, and may, in some states of society, assist them in rising to a higher civilization; but that degree the Chinese, under the guidance of their sage, have exceeded; and their excessive formality increases their hypocrisy.

In the family, Confucius taught the supremacy of the father's authority, the duty of filial affection and fraternal kindness, and the inferiority of wives and daughters. Mothers he would have to share the respect and affection due to fathers. These instructions have had their natural effect. Parents are revered and obeyed to such a degree, that the children of many a Christian family, might well be pointed to those of China for an example, which they would be the better by imitating. If the father chastises his child it is presumed that he does it for his benefit, and it is proper that he should thank him for it. I have seen a Chinese boy when severely whipped by his guardian, of his own accord, bow politely to him, and thank him for his earnest endeavor to correct his faults. The education of females is generally neglected. They have no voice in the choice of their husbands; and in many respects they are deprived of their proper rights and opportunities for enjoyment and usefulness. But the Chinese seem not to be at all deficient in domestic feeling, and the wives and daughters are often, and perhaps generally, treated with more kindness, than the expressions which appear in some of their books, would lead us to expect. Still it is a lamentable fact, that the instructions of their great teacher have tended to deprive females of their proper rank and influence in society, and thus inflicted an incalculable injury upon his country.

The influence of Confucius upon the individual characters of

those who are subject to it, has perhaps been sufficiently indicated by what has been already said. It is only needful to remark further, that it is *universal* in China, though not equally felt by all its inhabitants. He taught that learning, with virtue and ability, which he seemed to think would always be found in company with it, should be a sure passport to office. Accordingly the highest offices in China, save that of emperor, are accessible to the sons of the humblest peasant. Consequently every family that has sons, seeks to educate at least one of them, hoping that he may prove an able scholar, rise to office, and enrich and honor the family. On going to school, this son, after spending a short time on small books that may be called primers, begins to commit to memory the books of Confucius; and his chance of success in life depends mainly on his ability to quote from these books with facility and aptness, and to explain their doctrines. These doctrines, therefore, become thoroughly impressed upon his mind; and his mode of thinking, and style of expression are derived, in a great degree, from the writings of the sage and his commentators. He strives to mould himself into the intellectual and moral image of Confucius and the more ancient sages, whose example Confucius gave him to imitate. Those who do not learn to read, imbibe the doctrines of the sage from those who do.

What the influence of Confucius *will be*, is to us a more important, because a more practical inquiry, than what it *has been*. For twenty-three centuries it has borne almost unresisted sway over the mind of China. But it is now coming in contact with another influence. The doctrines of Jesus Christ are beginning to be compared with those of the Chinese sage. Will the teachers of the gospel find his doctrines a help or a hindrance to their work? To this question no certain answer can be given by man; but we may form some opinion of the probable opposition or aid, which they will find in the books and disciples of Confucius. There will doubtless be some of both.

1. Confucius encouraged a reverence for ancestors, which, whether he so intended it or not, now amounts to worship. To this worship the Chinese are more strongly attached, than to any other. "These wooden and stone idols," said one of them, "are a small matter; but the worship of our ancestors, how can we cease from that?" It seems as wrong to a Chinese to neglect to worship his deceased father, as it does to a dutiful child among us to treat with neglect his living parent.

2. The high estimation in which the sage and his doctrines are held by the Chinese, makes them slow to admit the superiority even of Jesus Christ and the doctrines of inspiration. It will be hard for the proud Chinese to give up the notion, that Confucius, the glory of their nation, the long revered and deified, must be superior to any one of whom foreigners can tell them; and much the more hard because, in consequence of their own evident and great superiority to all the nations in their part of the world, they have for ages been accustomed to look with contempt on *all* foreigners.

On the other hand, Christian teachers may probably derive several advantages from the influence of Confucius.

1. It is probably owing to his influence, that education is so general and reading so common among the Chinese. Schools are numerous and their importance is appreciated. They are glad to have them noticed, and think it a work of benevolence to establish and support them. I have frequently visited schools established and taught by pagan Chinese, for the purpose of giving the scholars Christian instruction; and have always been well received, and permitted to address and question them as long as I pleased. Christian missionaries will be able to establish schools among the Chinese to great advantage; and probably may often bring those already in operation under their influence, at a small expense, and find them good places for preaching the gospel, both to the pupils and their parents.

2. He inculcated universal philanthropy. "All within the four seas," said he, "are brothers;" and brothers, he insists, should live in harmony and kindness towards each other. This favors the residence of missionaries among the Chinese; and their conduct in seeking the welfare of their "brothers" in China, may be shown to be in accordance with the teachings of the sage.

3. He confined his instructions to things pertaining to the present life, and left unsupplied the wants of the soul. The Chinese have, consequently, adopted parts of the religious systems of other nations with which they have become acquainted; but their attachment to them does not appear to be very strong. They feel, though not very deeply, the need of some religion; and as they have none, either in the books of Confucius, or the systems of superstition, which have come in from other countries, that is pure or reasonable enough to satisfy them, we may expect that they will be, at least, less indisposed to consider the claims of Christianity, than they otherwise would have been.

4. He confessed his ignorance on religious subjects, and told his disciples that *a great teacher would arise in the west*. A knowledge of this prediction, which we may suppose he was led to make by some acquaintance with the early prophecies respecting the Messiah, induced Ming-te, who reigned about sixty years after the date of our era, to send messengers westward in search of this great teacher. They went as far as the northern part of Hindostan, where they heard of Buddh and his doctrines; and thinking that he must be the teacher for whom they were sent, they returned to China with books and teachers of his religion. The doctrines thus introduced were propagated chiefly by means of books and schools, and Buddhism is now the religion of a large proportion of the Chinese. We may hope that the prediction of the sage, whom they so highly revere, may be used to advantage by the Christian missionary. Many of them see the absurdities of Buddhism, and they regard its priests with contempt. They may, therefore, be more ready to believe that it was a better teacher than Buddh, that Confucius referred to, and that the messengers of Ming-te did not go far enough westward.

5. His doctrine that the father of a family is to be obeyed, served and loved, and that *his father* is to be still more highly honored, and so on, may be used to show that God, the Father of all fathers, should be supremely honored and loved. According to the doctrine of their own great teacher, they ought to love God with all their soul, mind and strength.

Probably no other heathen nation has been equally under the guidance of a teacher, whose influence, on the whole, could be regarded as so favorable to the introduction of Christianity, as that of Confucius will naturally be.