

patible with anything of the nature of a general or universal church organization. Faith in the one holy catholic church is not only right, but essential to a true apprehension of our Saviour's thought and plan ; but it is no necessary, it is no legitimate, inference from it, that this *ἐκκλησία*, so unitary through faith in Christ, calls for unity in polity and government also. However, the New Testament teachings concerning church government do not fall within the purpose or the compass of this Article, and must be reserved for another.

---

### ARTICLE III.

#### POSITIVISM AS A WORKING SYSTEM.

BY REV. F. H. JOHNSON, ANDOVER, MASS.

##### No. II.

"A sense of duty is inherent in the constitution of our nature, and cannot be escaped till we can escape from ourselves. It does not wait on any ontological conditions, and incur the risk of non-existence should no assurance be gained with regard to a being and a life beyond us. Even though we came out of nothing, and returned to nothing, we should be subject to the claim of righteousness so long as we are what we are. Morals have their own base, and are second to nothing. . . . Does it follow that because morals are indigenous they are therefore self-sufficing? By no means. Though religion is not their foundation, it is assuredly their crown."—*James Martineau*.

IN a former article the religion offered by modern positivism was compared with the politico-ethical system of Confucius. In this comparison I endeavored to show that these systems offer striking points of resemblance ; and further, that these points of resemblance, far from being confined to the surface, are the outcome of essential and fundamental agreements. It was not claimed that the two systems, or the conditions affecting them, are identical, but that they are so nearly alike that we are justified in affirming that the results which have flowed from the one are substantially the results which would flow from the adoption of the other.

It was also claimed that this radical agreement of Confucianism and positivism is a fact of great importance in its bearing on some modern discussions; especially on that of the question as to *the probable results of an elimination from modern thought of the belief in a personal God and personal immortality*. It was shown that the discussion of this problem had hitherto been confined mainly to the region of speculation, and that while thus confined, the results arrived at by different thinkers had displayed diversities of opinion about as marked as could possibly be expressed in language, ranging all the way from the anticipation of a consequent elevation of society to a prophecy of its general decay and disruption; and therefore, that the results arrived at by the workings of *Chinese* positivism supply us with a much needed aid for forming a true estimate of the validity of the claims of *modern* positivism, and of the probable results to society of its adoption in the place of Christianity.

The object of the present article will be an exhibition of the successes and of the failures of Confucianism; and, in connection with this, some application of the facts brought out, first, to the theories of those who prophesy the worst things of positivism, and second, to the claims of its advocates.

There are, without doubt, obstacles in the way of a just appreciation of a civilization in many respects so divergent from our own; and this difficulty is not made less, but greater, by the fact that there are so many points of sympathy. When we find a country where social science has received a development which compels our admiration, as being, in some directions, a far closer approximation to our own ideals than anything we have been able to attain, we are naturally prepared to find agreement in other respects; and consequently those characteristics which differentiate the Chinese from ourselves strike us as doubly strange and abnormal. But, on the other hand, an accumulated knowledge of Chinese institutions and habits of thought comes to our aid. So much has now been written about the Chinese by men who have approached them on different sides — as government agents,

as merchants, as scientific travellers, as missionaries, as scholars, — that a careful comparison of their testimony ought to give results which, so far as the main features are concerned, may be relied on as true.

How much then, our inquiry shall be, has Confucianism accomplished for those who have lived under it? What has it failed to accomplish? The significance of this inquiry ought not to be underestimated. It is often said that *the usefulness of a system of religion has nothing to do with its truth*. But however sound this statement may look, nothing can in truth be farther from soundness. The strongest evidence of the truth of any religion must be looked for in its fitness to realize the highest ideals of human nature. That one which develops the higher nature of man, that gives him mastery over the lower, that elevates, that enlarges, and strengthens the individual and the race, has an evidence for its truth that no logic or authority can stand against. "By their fruits ye shall know them," is a testing principle equally applicable to religions and to men. Men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. If the agencies relied upon by the positivists are *sufficient*, if they can be trusted to fulfil all the requirements of man's nature, if they can do more for the human race than Christianity has done and is doing, the outcome of Chinese civilization ought to confirm this fact. And if a fair comparison of the results of Chinese positivism with those of Christianity should be in favor of the former, it is useless to deny that one of the strong defences of Christianity would be gone.

It is the underlying consciousness of this that has caused all praise of non-Christian civilizations to be received by many with a mixture of surprise and incredulity. And, to neutralize the effects of such praise, counter statements of the most extraordinary character are often made — statements which are not true, and which can only prejudice the cause they are intended to serve. If the elevated character of the teachings of Confucius is affirmed, it is replied that these teachings are the grains of wheat in cartloads of chaff, that

they have been inoperative upon the mass of the people, that they have remained shut up between the covers of books, while Christianity has embodied itself in the lives of nations. Now statements of this kind may be calculated to allay the rising fears of Christians, they may neutralize for a time the boasts of the enemy. But Christianity does not need the help of misrepresentation; nor can it afford it. At the present day, to say nothing of other days, it is most desirable that we should have an *intelligent* Christianity, that we should look squarely in the face all the *facts* that science and history set before us; that we should be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"; that we should combine patience in investigating with caution in answering. Next to the disservice of pointing a man in the wrong direction, is that of one who, while pointing out the right path, puts in the hand of the wayfarer a broken staff. He may accomplish his whole journey without using it, but he may be leaning his whole weight upon it at a critical moment.

One thing is certain. We ought not to be afraid of a comparison with other systems of religion. On the contrary, we ought, as the phrase goes, to "court investigation," to invite comparison, confident that by every such comparison Christianity will advance to a stronger position, and increase its power over the minds and hearts of men. If human nature is insufficient to itself, if mankind has needed a revelation to supplement the guidance of his higher powers, then the deficiencies of the Chinese civilization will set this fact in a powerful light. And if the Christian revelation has done great things for the race, a comparison of Christian development with Chinese ought to furnish results to which we can point with triumphant assurance. The Chinese, says Dr. Martin, never ask concerning a religion "is it true?" but "is it good?" Is not the whole world asking the same question? That is, does not every thoughtful inquirer look for goodness, power, efficiency as the indispensable evidences of truth? Another writer,<sup>1</sup> in speaking of the prospects of the Christian

<sup>1</sup> China and the Chinese, by Rev. John L. Nevins, p. 434.

religion in China, says ; " This one from Western lands asks for no blind faith, appeals to no popular prejudice or superstition, but presents its irrefragable evidences and proofs." Whether or not Christianity asks for a *blind* faith depends upon the meaning attached to the word blind. Christianity certainly requires faith, and faith in large measure. While it does not appeal to popular prejudice or superstition, it does appeal before all else to the religious wants of men, the natural and irrepressible reaching out of the soul for the supernatural. It appeals least of all to that part of the man that concerns itself with dialectics. If it presents *irrefragable proofs*, they are not of the kind that come through the "enticing words of man's wisdom," but through the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

An *objection* to a comparison of the results of Confucianism and of Christianity may have already suggested itself to the reader — namely, that *the two systems are on different planes*. Christianity has always pointed to a *future* life for the fulfilment of its grandest results. It has never promised worldly prosperity and happiness as its great reward, or even as the necessary result of following its precepts. Confucianism, on the other hand, has devoted itself to the solution of problems of purely mundane interest. It promises nothing beyond. Its processes come to their full fruition in this life. We therefore, it may be said, do a great wrong to Christianity when we compare its half formed beginnings with the completed results of a system that has given its whole strength to the securing of well defined and immediate advantages. I have stated this objection here mainly to show that it has not been overlooked. The answer to it will appear only when the discussion is finished. For the present, it is enough to say that though we may be instituting a comparison between a completed circle on the one hand, and only the arc of a circle on the other, our comparison will not fail of its object, if it can be shown that this arc is in truth a part of a far grander circle, that it represents a more comprehensive humanity, and that, were it never completed, the arc is worth infinitely more than the circle with which it is compared.

## THE SUCCESSES OF CONFUCIANISM.

We have seen that Confucius was the inheritor of great resources. The fundamental principles on which he grounded his system had been already developed. Among these principles we may note the following as being the most prominent. First, that the universal good, the well-being of humanity in general, is the object of all government. Second, that man is formed for goodness, that he is innately moral. Third, that his innate goodness can be developed successfully only by the application of moral forces. Fourth, that the joint education of the intellect and the heart of each individual is the chief of these forces. Fifth, that the harmonious development of the best principles can be secured only when the best men are in power. Sixth, that a wise, powerful, and merciful God rules the world, and listens to the prayers of men.

These principles, it has been said, were in existence. It must be added that they were all to a very great extent obscured. Confucius lived in an age of great moral depression. Extensive changes were in preparation. The old order of things growing out of the feudal system was rapidly coming to an end. Disorder, violence, oppression, and a general disregard of duty by those in authority characterized the times. Unpropitious as all this may seem to have been, it really constituted the opportunity of a man like Confucius: for out of this chaos a new order of things was destined soon to emerge. Possessed of the natural endowments of a great moral teacher, and filled with a vivid and all-absorbing ideal, he stood where he could profoundly influence the character of the nation. He gathered, as it were, to himself the pre-existing forces of an ancient civilization — forces which, like an old currency, were worn and depreciated in value, and re-issued them with a fresh and clear impression. He wisely disclaimed the merit of being an originator. But he was, in fact, much more of a power than he assumed to be. In the compilation and editing of the ancient classics he had the

power of selection and suppression. And there is reason to believe that he used this *latter* power extensively.

That Confucius, as compared with the ancient books, was one-sided, and that his influence confirmed a tendency to one-sided development in the nation cannot be doubted. The one great thought of his life was the bringing of man into harmony with his surroundings and the laws of his own being. But while grasping the fundamental idea that the secret of this harmony lay in the true adjustment of *personal relations*, he saw only one side of the truth. So deeply impressed was he with the spectacle of the misery and degradation resulting from the disturbance of inter-human relations, and so clear was his vision of what those relations, at their best, might be, that the first part of the great commandment announced by Christ escaped him, or, to speak more accurately, was persistently disregarded by him. Without being ignorant of the idea of duty toward God, he underestimated the value of it as a principle of action. He looked upon it as a rival and disturbing influence. He saw that superstition was rife at the same time that morals were at their lowest ebb. He knew how easy it is for men to become unbalanced in the worship of the unseen, how prone they are to dissipate and exhaust their best inspirations in such a worship; and there is every reason to believe that he recognized the practical inconvenience which might result from bringing men into personal relations with a power higher than that of a visible government.

Now, according to the speculations of some of those who have traced the probable effects of a decline of religious belief upon morality, the system of Confucius ought to have resulted in failure. The obscuring of the sixth principle (the recognition of God) ought to have rendered the other five inoperative for the want of a motive-power to make them efficient. "The absence of religious belief," says Dr. Ward, "(of belief in a personal God and personal immortality), does not simply *injure* morality, but, if the disbelievers carry their view out consistently, utterly destroys it."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nineteenth Century, Vol. i. p. 532.

It is evident that the possibility of discussing the effects of the absence of religious belief upon the practice of morality must depend upon the existence in the mind of a sharply defined distinction between *religion* and *morality*; otherwise we are lost in a labyrinth of words, and find ourselves continually returning to the same point. In its restricted sense religion has been defined as "*Morality toward God.*" This phrase, if it be understood as covering all the ground comprehended by the first half of our Lord's great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," may be accepted as the definition of the word religion in the present discussion. It is the *absence* of religion in this sense from Confucianism that pre-eminently distinguishes it from Christianity. The positivists have a substitute for the claims of love and duty Godward to which they give the name of religion. Confucianism has the same. They are both, in fact, systems founded on the moral sense in its relations manward; their religion is a purely *manward religion*, or in other words *morality toward man*.

What then does Confucianism teach as to the possibility of sustaining and developing society and the individual on the basis of such a system? The history of China and its institutions must be looked to for an answer to this question; and if national permanence, industry, and wide-spread prosperity are to be regarded, this system must surely be said to have had some important successes. The great principles of the ancient books did not altogether fail for want of a motive-power to vitalize them. Though men completely lost sight of their personal relations to God, and though the idea of personal immortality was obscured, yet there were powerful moral influences at work in China.

It is important, in this connection, to recognize the fact that the outcome of Chinese civilization is very *directly* the fruit of its moral system. The great principles of the classics, reaffirmed by Confucius, defended and firmly established two centuries later by Mencius, have not existed merely as

theory and ornament. China has in the main sincerely and honestly applied herself to following out these principles. She has shown her confidence in moral forces by trusting herself largely to them. Her morals have been her politics. Her philosophers have been her statesmen. When Mencius, who has been called the St. Paul of Confucianism, waged a mighty controversial warfare against the advocates of rival philosophies he was not fighting in the clouds. He achieved no empty victories. He was confronted on the one hand by those who taught the doctrine of the essential badness of man's nature; on the other, by those who taught universal and impartial love, and again by those who advocated the doctrine of "each man for himself." And in every case he fought against these principles as active forces that were assailing the citadel of Chinese power. This was, in his view, the doctrine that *human nature is formed for goodness* — that the nobler faculties of man are by nature the stronger, and can be made to triumph, if properly nourished and educated.

Mencius won the battle. The citadel was saved; and with it the principle of governing by moral forces survived, to receive a remarkable vindication. The following expression of this principle is given by Mencius: "He who seeks to subjugate men by goodness (by forcing virtue upon them) will never succeed in subjugating them. He who *educates* them by goodness will bring the whole realm into subjection. If the *hearts* of all in the whole realm be not subjugated, the imperial power is unattainable."<sup>1</sup> The recognition of this idea has been at the same time the crowning glory of China and the secret of her success. The word education is to be understood in this connection in its broadest sense. The people are to be *led*. The science of leading extends to all classes of men and to all the departments of life. As a matter of fact, the people of China have been educated most assiduously, and in a great variety of directions. Their education has been industrial, political, intellectual, social, moral.

<sup>1</sup> Faber's *Mind of Mencius*, p. 247.

## GOVERNMENT BY EDUCATION.

The *industrial education* of the people has been not simply in the direction of instruction. This has indeed been given in great abundance. Treatises on all branches of agriculture and the mechanical arts have been prepared and circulated by the government, and many of these are wonders of carefulness and detail. But looking deeper than this for the elements of success, the Chinese educators have paid the most particular attention to securing conditions favorable for the application of the knowledge thus disseminated.<sup>1</sup> From the most ancient times the carrying on of important public works has been regarded as one of the leading duties of government. The highest praise is bestowed upon those sovereigns who drained and redeemed waste lands, who confined the rivers within their channels, who built canals and bridges, and in other ways extended the field of labor while rendering it more secure. As far back as we can go in the history of China we find a Board of Public Works; a branch of the administration which has always been one of the highest in honor and importance. It would take volumes to give an adequate description of what has been accomplished. It is enough to call to mind such works as the Great Wall and the Grand Canal, the latter "six hundred and fifty miles long, its bed cut down in some places seventy feet, its banks twenty feet above the country and a hundred feet thick." A large part of China bears witness also to the intelligence that has characterized its public works. Roads and canals for irrigation cross it in all directions; and its rivers are made navigable almost to their sources.

The *division of lands* in China has from the earliest times, been based upon the principle of *the greatest good of all*. In the institutes of Tcheou (1200 B.C.) the most minute regulations are laid down for the equal apportionment of the land among families. In theory, the emperor, as the patriarch, divided his realm among his children without partiality, requiring of them again only such assistance as was necessary

<sup>1</sup> Mencius, Book iii. chap. 1. sec. 3.

for securing the public welfare. It is a fact, however, that in the later days of the feudal period, the great feudatories had a quasi-imperial tenure of their territories. "How long they have had this tenure," says Mr. Johnson, "or whether it was original, is not within our knowledge. The old authors speak of a process as going on from early times by which imperial officials received their salaries in lands instead of money, acquiring power over the people dwelling thereon, who were therefore called their men."<sup>1</sup> Mencius urged upon the rulers of his day a return to the regulations of the Tcheou institutes, and a redistribution of lands, giving equal homesteads to all farmers. But the times of Mencius were not those of reform. Affairs were too far advanced on the down-hill course to be arrested. Seventy years after his death, (B.C. 221) the conquest of Tsin Chi-hwang-ti put an end to the feudal system, centralized the empire, and opened the way for a thorough reconstruction.

This reconstruction was not the design of the conqueror. But out of the general disorder of the times grew up a *de facto* ownership which was practically in harmony with the ancient ideal, and which afterward came to be recognized as valid, even as against the claims of the emperor himself. The conditions of agriculture at the present day are thus described by a traveller in the tea districts of China: "The farms are small, each consisting of, from one to four or five acres; indeed every cottager has his own little tea-garden, the produce of which supplies the wants of his family, and the surplus brings him in a few dollars, which are spent on the other necessaries of life. The same system is practised in every thing relating to Chinese agriculture. The cotton, silk, and rice farms, are generally all small and managed upon the same plan. . . . I really believe that there is no country in the world where the agricultural population are better off than they are in the north of China. Labor with them is pleasure, for its fruits are eaten by themselves, and the rod of the oppressor is unfelt and unknown."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Oriental Religions: China, by Samuel Johnson, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> Wanderings in China, by Robert Fortune, pp. 190, 191.

Prominent among the educating ideas of China has been the honor in which labor has always been held. The spirits of the land and grain and the superintendents of the mountains, the woods, the streams, and the lakes form an unseen body of administrators holding a position midway between the emperor and the people. They are, as it were, the deification of agricultural interests. The emperor annually sacrifices on their altars; and in accordance with an ancient rite, he holds the plough and opens the first furrow of the year in the presence of the people. The empress also with her attendants, opens the season of silk-worm breeding in the palace park. The duties of the ruler in this direction are set forth in the following ode from the Shih King, translated by Mr. Johnson.

“Kong-lieou, our prince, did not shrink from toil;  
He sought neither pleasure nor repose.  
Devoted to husbandry, busily portioning the lands,  
With harvests he filled his granaries every year.  
He went over the country, and saw peace and content;  
Ascended the hills — laborers were tilling their summits;  
Descended into the vales — they too were peopled.  
He measured the fields, dividing each into nine lots, —  
The central lot to be tilled by the common toil, for the state, —  
Regulating the labors of farmers and fixing the tithes of the harvest.”

Of labor, Mr. Carlyle has said: “The *latest* gospel in this world is, *Know thy work, and do it*. . . . A man perfects himself by working. Foul jungles are cleared away, fair seed-fields rise instead, and stately cities; and withal the man himself first ceases to be jungle and foul unwholesome desert thereby.” If this gospel of “know thy work and do it” is recent among Western nations, it certainly is not so in China. The fundamental importance of labor, cheerfully and regularly performed, as an educating and moral force, was fully recognized in the ancient books, and insisted upon by Mencius. “Let the people,” he says, “be employed in a way to secure their ease, and though they be toiled they will not murmur.”<sup>1</sup> Here, then, we touch on the first great secret

<sup>1</sup> Mencius, Bk. vii. Pt. I. ch. xii. See also Bk. I. Pt. i. ch. vii. 20, 21.

of Chinese success, — the appreciation of *labor* not simply as a great producing, but also as a great *moral* force.

“Six hundred and fifty millions of acres are under cultivation in China alone, independent of her colonies. The hundred million pounds of tea exported in 1846 were but a twentieth part of the annual product in that article; and so vast is the amount of this that a sudden failure of the whole Western demand would scarcely affect the home price. The tonnage of the coast and river craft alone exceeds that of all other nations together. Mountains of silk are produced every year. The manufacture of porcelain at King-te-chin has employed a million of workmen; and the light of its furnaces by night resembles an immense conflagration.”<sup>1</sup> The material results of industries pursued on such a vast scale are impressive. But their great significance lies not in the results themselves so much as in the physical and mental characteristics, which in the course of their production have been bred in the Chinese people—characteristics which to-day strike the most advanced nations of the earth with astonishment and admiration, not unmingled with fear.

The *political education* of the people must certainly be regarded as one of the most remarkable features of the Chinese system. The office of the emperor is hedged about with sanctities. He is the “son of Heaven.” He rules in accordance with the divine will. But he is *not* rooted in the hard and fast soil of infallibility. The doctrine that *the king can do no wrong* has never obtained in China. The will of Heaven has for its expression the voice of the people. This is a fundamental principle. If the people are prosperous and happy, Heaven smiles upon the emperor; if the reverse, Heaven frowns, and it is the duty of the people, inspired and led by Heaven, to put another in his place. Speaking of these ideas, Mr. Meadows says, they must be regarded “not as the theorizing of a few ingenious Chinese of modern times, or as the lore of historical antiquaries, but as ever-present, practically operative ideas in the minds of the whole people.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> China, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> The Chinese and their Rebellions, by Thomas Taylor Meadows, p. 19.

And again, "The principle that no man is by birth entitled to reign over them, is better known to the three hundred and sixty millions of China than it is known to the twenty-seven millions of Great Britain and Ireland that they are entitled to be tried by their peers."<sup>1</sup> It is equally true that this idea of the welfare and happiness of the people as the ultimate test of right, combined with the principle of the responsibility of rulers, *pervades the whole system*. It acts as a check upon every public officer in the realm, from the highest to the lowest. It is in itself a body of rights. Rude and undefined it may be, — but, having the force of a great national idea, it has always made it necessary for the government to keep constantly in view the interests of the governed. "With public opinion on its side," says Dr. Williams, "the government is a strong one, but none is less able to execute its designs when it runs counter to that opinion."<sup>2</sup>

The other great feature of political education in China grows out of the same general principle that *government exists for the benefit of the people*. Under the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–905) the application of this principle to the filling of all positions of power and trust below that of the emperor gave rise to the system of competitive examinations, — a system that has continued in operation from that time to the present day. The beneficial and strengthening influence of this governmental device can hardly be overrated. As a binding power in this great empire it has been second to none. From one end of the realm to the other it acts as an incentive to every ambitious man to make the most of himself. It turns all eyes and all aspirations toward a common centre, while at the same time it gives hope to all. This is the Chinese way of allowing the people a share in the government.

The *intellectual* and ethical education of the Chinese are closely related to the above system. In a former article, the extent to which this has acted as a stimulus to the pursuit of the higher education, and the popular enthusiasm for mental

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese and their Rebellions, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> The Middle Kingdom, p. 418.

improvement which it has nourished, have been spoken of. It has been shown further that in the courses of study *ethical* instruction not only occupies the foremost place, but that it is of a most elevated character. Only two additional features of this education will claim our attention here. First, the minuteness and particularity with which general principles are applied by means of a multitude of rules and ceremonies to every department of life. The Chinese are not required, as Christians are, to be their own casuists; there is no puzzling of the judgment with questions of right and propriety. Not only is the path definitely pointed out, but even the very footprints, in which one generation after another must carefully tread all the way from the cradle to the tomb. The result of this is not only a great want of spontaneity; it is also a subtraction from the Confucian ethics of much of their educating power; — the power, that is, which great principles have of developing men by making them think for themselves. The other peculiarity is of an exactly opposite character, namely, the *voluntariness* of education. Although so much importance is attached to it, though so much is staked upon it, yet there is no such thing as *compulsory* education. There is, in fact, no state system of education at all, unless the periodical reading of the Sacred Edict in all parts of the country may be construed as such.

Coming now to the *social* education of the Chinese, we have to consider that side of Confucianism which borders most closely on religion. Or rather, if we may abandon in this connection the restricted sense of the word, to that side which *constitutes* its religion. It is in the idealization of the social relations that Confucianism finds the power to which it trusts for the drawing out and sustaining of all that is highest and best in human nature. It lays hold of that natural love which springs up in the family, concentrates the imagination upon it, throws round it all the sacredness that custom and far-reaching associations can bring to it, and thus creates an atmosphere in which conscience is quickened and right purposes stimulated. From earliest infancy every child is taught that

the highest of all duties is the rendering of love and service to his parents. Through life his conscience approves or condemns him in proportion as he makes himself a delight or the reverse in their eyes. But they are only the living representatives of a long line of ancestors who have a claim on his veneration, and in the consciousness of whom he may be said to live and move and have his being. All that is best centres here. When the follower of Confucius enters into the silent room that is consecrated to the memory of his ancestors he is in their presence. His conduct is known to them. He feels himself approved or condemned as he performs his commemorative worship before their tablets; and in accordance with the moral measure which he brings, he goes on his way strengthened in his self-righteousness, or humbled and stimulated to more earnest efforts. The following passage from the Shih King<sup>1</sup> describes how such a belief in the supervision of spirits ought to influence men.

“When mingling with superior men,  
In friendly intercourse, Oh, then  
How mild your face! what harmony!  
All wrong and error how you flee!  
When in your chamber, 'neath its light,  
Your conscience keep as pure and bright.  
Say not, 'No one can see me here;  
The place is secret.' Be in fear;  
The spirits come, but when and where  
No one beforehand can declare.  
The more we should not spirits slight,  
But ever feel as in their sight.”

Although the idea of personal immortality is obscured, it is to a happy and honored reception by his ancestors that many a conscientious follower of the sage looks forward as the consummation of his earthly life. “The comfort of his dying hour,” says Dr. Martin, “is largely determined by the view he takes of the kind of welcome he is likely to receive when he meets the shades of his forefathers. ‘How could I look my ancestors in the face if I should consent

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Dr. Legge.

to such a proposition ?' is a reply which many an officer has given to a temptation to betray his trust."<sup>1</sup> The Christian cannot but feel that all this, as far as it goes, is in the right direction. It is founded on the very same conception as that which bears him upward to the vision of a loving Heavenly Father, who is the fulness of purity, of wisdom, and of might. Like everything else in the Chinese it stops short of its highest fulfilment. It cannot get away from the earth. Nevertheless, thwarted and dwarfed as it has been, this conception has proved a mighty power in the Chinese world. If we ask why it has never risen to a higher plane there, we come, in the answer, upon the underlying spirit of the whole Chinese civilization. It may be said of this throughout, that it has "gravitated to administrative ends." The worship of "*Humanity*" has clipped its wings in every department. The following extracts are from Mr. Johnson.

"Properly speaking, the civilization is secular; not for want of religion, but for the necessity of recognizing ideas in their positive working uses. . . . The worth of a belief is tested by its working capacity for general service. . . . It is not a mere lack of speculative interest, but a positive zeal for being and doing. The State is the central spring of Chinese life, and suffers no intrusion of higher sanctions than those itself recognizes."<sup>2</sup> "Their religion, technically a worship of spirits and elements, is really a worship of uses achieved, of relations fulfilled. . . . On the gates of the celestial kingdom is very legibly written: Do not ask here what mysteries have been fathomed; but behold what realities have been achieved."<sup>3</sup>

#### A. COMPARISON.

In venturing now on a comparison of these achievements with those of European governments, it is important to notice at the outset the great antiquity of the former. Social problems which are yet unsolved in the West, and which promise still a world of trouble, found in China a solution two thousand

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> China, pp. 563, 564.

<sup>3</sup> China, p. 65.

years ago. Since the days of the T'sin conquest (B. C. 206), hereditary or class distinction has been almost unknown in China. The highest and most honorable places have been the prize of those only who could show themselves entitled to them by industry and mental superiority. Labor, which has been despised and oppressed in the West, has been in China particularly honored, protected, and wisely encouraged. The theory of the divine right and infallibility of kings has been the proclaimed principle of European despotisms; the theory of the divine right and infallibility of the people has been that of China. In Europe the surest guarantee of stability has been sought in the ignorance of the masses; in China the principle of governing by education has been recognized for twenty centuries. The system of competitive examinations, to the appreciation of which the most enlightened statesmen of the United States are struggling to elevate public opinion, has in China been in successful operation for ten centuries.

As regards personal freedom, we have the following testimony from one who has made a careful study of Chinese institutions: "The Chinaman can sell and hold landed property with a facility, certainty, and security which is absolute perfection compared with the nature of English dealings of the same kind. He can traverse his country throughout its two thousand miles of length unquestioned by any official, and in doing so can follow whatever occupation he pleases. In open defiance of an obsolete law, he can quit his country and re-enter it without passport or other hinderance. Lastly, from the paucity of the military and police establishments, numbers of large villages (towns, we may call some) exist in every district the inhabitants of which scarcely ever see an official agent, except when the tax-gatherers apply for the annual land tax."<sup>1</sup> "The natural consequence is a large amount of local self-government, to which no one who visits China can shut his eyes, and which is an insoluble problem to those who persist in seeing in the government a despotism, and in the people slaves. . . . I

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese and their Rebellions, p. 28.

need not point out how much this system of local self-government and self-protection tends to engender those very qualities of voluntary respect for virtual law and power of combination for common purposes which distinguish the Anglo-Saxons among Occidental nations. In these qualities all Chinese resemble the Anglo-Saxons; for the system exists, in different degrees of independence of the imperial authorities, all over China.”<sup>1</sup>

To this may be added the testimony of Sir John Davis, that “industry, tranquility, and content are unusually prevalent in the bulk of the population,”<sup>2</sup> and that “whatever there is of extreme poverty and destitution in the country arises solely from the unusual degree in which the population is made to press against the means of subsistence, and not from any fault in the distribution of wealth, which is perhaps far more equal here than in any other country.”<sup>3</sup>

#### CONFUCIANISM HAS DEVELOPED THE LOWER VIRTUES.

Passing, now, from the consideration of what Confucianism has accomplished in the way of supporting and developing society, we come to the question of Chinese character. What type of man has Confucianism formed? I think we shall find the answer to this question to be, that Confucianism in the middle and lower ranges of character has accomplished much, but that in the higher it has been a failure.

First, let us set down to its credit that it has preserved a great nation from the innumerable evils which flow from, or are aggravated by, indolence. For the reader to be convinced that this advantage has been achieved by educational, rather than by climatic influences, it is only necessary to call to mind the fact that the Chinese of California come to us from the tropical part of China; a circumstance which would naturally lead us to expect a temperament the reverse of energetic.

In a very marked degree the Chinese have developed those virtues which are so highly esteemed in the west of Europe

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese and their Rebellions, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> China, by Sir John Francis Davis, Vol. i. p. 299. <sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol. i. p. 302.

and America that they may be said to constitute, especially in the latter country, the ideal which the mass of the people most delights to honor. In the quality of *savoir-faire* they are unsurpassed. They have perseverance, patience, thrift, self-restraint. They are full of the spirit of competition. In the pursuit of their ends they show great energy and an untiring capacity for work. Keeness of wit enables them to put their labor to effective uses; and their powers are sustained by an habitual light-heartedness. As colonists they are second to no people in courage and enterprise. The spirit of adventure has carried the south-eastern Chinese not only to the gold mines of California and Australia, to the guano islands of Peru and the sugar plantations of the West Indies, but also to "Siam, to Manilla, to Borneo, to Java, Singapore, and the Indian archipelago generally; where they are, sometimes under the eyes of the Europeans, sometimes in places little visited by us, elbowing out the native Malays by dint of superior industry and energy, as well in the arts of peace as in those of war."<sup>1</sup>

The following tribute to this side of Chinese character is taken from a recent issue of a leading California journal: "The Chinese are dangerous because they are adepts. In all the arts and sciences we find them rapidly catching up with modern progress. They are reaching out everywhere. It was but recently that the advent of a Chinese ship created commotion on the Thames. It will create more commotion before they are done with it. The Chinese go to stay. A few rebuffs do not dishearten them. Knowing their capacity to underlive and undersell their competitors, they are tenacious in the extreme. They don't know any such word as fail. If the Chinese were intellectually inferior to Caucasians, the danger would be less. But they are not. In commerce especially they are the keenest, wisest, and most forehanded people of the earth."

That these characteristics are not a recent development, is shown by the whole history of the growth of China. The

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese and their Rebellions, p. 46.

Chinese empire was not consolidated in a day. Beginning in the north, some thousands of years ago, the Chinese spread themselves gradually over the whole territory which now bears their name. This they did sometimes by hard fighting, but as a rule by hard labor and mental superiority. As colonists they continually pushed on beyond the confines of their own country, conducting themselves peaceably, making themselves useful to those among whom they settled, acquiring land, and finally crowding out the former owners to such an extent that the absorption of the new territory by China seemed only the necessary outcome of an unforeseen and unavoidable course of events. China has been repeatedly conquered, by force of arms, but such conquest has invariably resulted in the peaceable reconquest of the territory of the invading nation. The conquered people, more apt in the arts of industry than in those of war, have poured into the new country, politically united with their own, and in course of time have made it irrecoverably Chinese. It was by such means that the territory of the Khitan Tartars, and later the territory of the Mongols became a part of China; and during the last two hundred years the same process has been going on in Manchooria, the original home of the present dynasty.<sup>1</sup>

If now for a moment we allow our thoughts to turn back in a review of the ground passed over, we cannot, I think, avoid the conclusion that Confucianism has accomplished much for that portion of mankind that has lived under it. The political wisdom embodied in its most ancient institutions, the purity and depth of its ethics, the stability of its government, the amount of prosperity and happiness that has prevailed, these are its enduring monuments. They have excited, and will continue to excite, the unbounded astonishment of Christians. But is not such astonishment the result of an underestimate of the power of man's moral sense, unaided by revelation? Confucianism is a conspicuous example of the law written in men's hearts. The Chinese philosophers did not turn their backs upon that law.

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese and their Rebellions, p. 85.

They listened intently and devoutly to the voice that spoke within them. They probed their hearts with unswerving thoroughness, and they taught a morality that made no intentional compromise with evil. God's blessing has rested upon those teachings.

In the attainment of worldly advantages the Chinese have had in some directions an earlier success than Christians. But do we find anything in the promises of Christ which should lead us to regard such a result as strange? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." But as in the individual, so in the nation or race, putting the kingdom of God first has often postponed the realization of worldly felicity. "In the world," He said, "ye shall have tribulation"; "I came not to send peace, but a sword." The New Testament everywhere represents the crown of life as the reward of conflict and the patient endurance of earthly trials. Not so Confucianism. It devotes itself directly and exclusively to the attaining of those present advantages which Christianity, relatively to its higher ideals, despises.

China has made social science its one great study, its religion, in fact. Whatever of enthusiasm, whatever of inspiration has existed in the race during its long development has been directed into this one channel. No external will insisting on conformity to a higher law, no standard more elevated than that of a far-seeing man has been present to shape mankind to higher ends. If the religious nature of man sought expression in beliefs which had no evident practical bearing, such beliefs were uniformly discouraged. Christianity has walked by faith, China by sight. Christianity has theoretically, and to a considerable degree actually, given its highest and best energies to objects lying beyond the range of earthly vision. It has trusted to the future to have the dark things made light and the crooked things straight. China has moved onward with wide open eyes, making a level highway of life, suspicious of every deviation into the unknown realms on either side, holding fast, in the absence of

a higher inspiration, to the doctrine of "*the mean.*" We ought not then to find it hard to allow that in some things the children of this world have been wiser *in their generation* than the children of light.

#### FAILURES OF CONFUCIANISM — HUMANITY.

But we have now to look upon the reverse of the shield. For as we advance to the consideration of the class of virtues which stand next higher in the scale, such as humanity, purity, and truthfulness, we shall find ourselves confronted by a far less favorable aspect of Chinese civilization.

In a former article it was seen that the idea of *humanity* has occupied in the system of China the same central position that it does in modern positivism; and further that this conception, embodied in the State, symbolized by the emperor, and consecrated by the rites of public and private worship, constitutes for the Chinese mind its chief inspiration. It is therefore with special interest that we interrogate the history of Chinese development in this direction. And it is just at this point that a comparison of the civilization of China with that of the West will disclose some of the most distinctive characteristics of each. For Christianity also declares the brotherhood of mankind, it too makes the duty of living for the good of others the object upon which all the earthward activities of man should be centred. But in Christianity this duty is not put forward as the primary motive of life. It is made second to and derived from the love which all men owe to a common Father. Love and duty to man are conceived of as bearing the same relation to love and duty Godward that the visible part of a tree sustains to the wide-spreading roots which, though unseen, are the source of life to the whole. And further, Christianity differs from positivism in placing the destiny of man immeasurably higher, in regarding his experiences in this life as only preparatory to a life of continuous and nobler development.

With such different conceptions of the end to be obtained,

and with reliance placed on such different motives we should naturally look for striking differences, both in the results arrived at, and in the intensity with which men strive to realize the ideals which they have formed for themselves. We are not disappointed. Practical humanity in China differs in many respects from the humanity of western nations, and the most important of these differences can without difficulty be traced to the principles from which it flows.

Speaking of the difference between the marriage customs of China and the West, Mr. Johnson observes, "The real key to the question between these forms of marriage lies in the fact, that the demand of mankind for monogamic relations corresponds with its progress in respect for the individual as such:— it is part of *the sense of personality as an independent and immeasurable value.*" A wider application of this same thought will give us the key to much more in the Chinese civilization than the existence of polygamy. Where mankind is considered in the mass, and where the good of the "collective life" is not only raised to the place of a supreme dominating interest, but is even, in an idealized form, enthroned as a religion, the minimizing of the estimation in which the individual is held is the almost necessary result. Personality becomes of fractional importance, the individual as compared with the great whole is an insignificant atom.

In every political system the securing of order and tranquility must occupy a prominent place; but in China the idea of *order* so completely overshadows all other considerations as to leave great classes of the population absolutely without protection, in fact, without any rights to protect. The position of children, and to a great extent of women, will illustrate this. But it is by a consideration of the nature of Chinese slavery that we shall penetrate most quickly to the heart of the subject, and see clearly to what an extent "the sense of personality as an independent and immeasurable value" has been sunk in the idea of the "collective life."

Chinese slavery is often apologized for on the ground that it is of a mild form, and that it is an outgrowth of the patri-

archal system. We are told that in the households of the higher class the position of slaves is that of members of the family, and that as such they are not only well cared for, but have great liberties in the way of social intercourse. Granting the truth of this we have still to remember that the good fortune of being attached to respectable families falls to the lot of only one class of Chinese slaves; that great numbers are owned by people in comparatively humble circumstances, who are mainly interested in getting all they can out of them; and further that many are sold and held for the vilest purposes. As to the absolute character of this servitude, Archdeacon Gray says: "The slavery to which these unfortunate persons are subject is perpetual and hereditary, and they have no parental authority over their offspring. The great-grandsons of slaves, however, can, if they have sufficient means, purchase their freedom. . . . . Slaves although regarded as members of the family are not recognized as members of the general community. They cannot, for example, sue in courts of law. In short, they are outside the pale of citizenship, and within the reach of the avarice, or hatred, or lust of their masters. Masters can sell female slaves either to other gentlemen as concubines or to the proprietors of brothels as public prostitutes."<sup>1</sup>

It will occur to the reader at this point that one of the foremost Christian nations has, up to a very recent date, recognized and justified a system of slavery as hard and degrading in many respects as the Chinese. But a comparison of American and Chinese slavery will only bring out in stronger relief those distinctive characteristics of the latter, which testify most heavily against the civilization that has fostered it. American slavery was not indigenous. It was not the legitimate child of the civilization which it marred. On the contrary it was the denial of its most fundamental and sacred ideals. It was phenomenal. It was incidental to a phase of growth, in which the demand for labor was far in

<sup>1</sup> China, by John Heary Gray, M.A., LL.D., Archdeacon of Hong Kong, Vol. I. pp. 242, 243.

excess of the supply. It was of the nature of a crime committed under peculiar stress of temptation, heavily atoned for, and bitterly repented of. In the centuries to come American slavery will seem but an episode in the life of a great nation; and the significant fact in connection with it will be not the disgrace of its having once existed, but the wonderful moral force which enabled the nation successfully to struggle with and cast out a disease which seemed to have obtained such a deadly hold upon it.

But slavery in China is not an excrescence. It is not a thing that has become attached from the outside by the fortunes of war or by the demands of labor. It is the natural outgrowth of that theory of subjection that is inseparable from the Chinese idea of social order. Its truly hideous character, therefore, and the testimony which it bears to the quality of Chinese humanity can be justly estimated only when it is viewed in its relations to other parts of the great system. The slaves in China are Chinese children, and their entrance into the condition of slavery has been effected simply by the transfer of the rights of their parents to others. All children in China are absolutely the property of their parents. Do what they will with them the law does not interfere. If while inflicting chastisement a parent chances to kill the child there is no punishment for the offence.<sup>1</sup> But, on the other hand, if a child strike the parent the penalty is decapitation. Even for the verbal abuse of a parent a child may be put to death if the former enter complaint. This subjection of children continues on into adult life. It is no uncommon thing for grown-up men and women to suffer severe corporal chastisement and imprisonment at the hands of their parents or guardians.

The position of woman in China is not invariably one of such complete subjection. Marriage brings to her certain rights as regards her husband. He has not the absolute power that belongs to a parent. But as a bride is generally taken to live with the parents of her husband, and as these have

<sup>1</sup> Gray's China, p. 234.

the same authority over her as her own, the position is frequently one of the most abject servitude through the best years of her life. A husband may divorce a wife, among other things, for barrenness, disregard of his parents, talkativeness, or bad temper. But if a wife leave her husband against his will the penalty is a hundred blows and to be *sold* in marriage. Second and successive wives are, as a rule, acquired by purchase, and when divorced may be resold, either into the condition of matrimony or into one far less honorable. It is only when the wife becomes a mother that she rises to a position of consideration.

Now, theoretically, it would not be difficult to show that, in the presence of the high moral standards and aims of the Chinese, the evil effects of the above regulations would be reduced in practice to an insignificant amount, that natural affection would go far to restrain parents from selling their own children, and that where this motive should prove too feeble public sentiment would come to the rescue. But the actual state of society in China shows the reverse of this to be true. Great numbers of children are continually sold as slaves, and this notwithstanding the knowledge that they will be used for the basest purposes. As a rule poverty is the constraining motive. But it is far from being true that all the slaves in China are supplied from the ranks of the very poor. Children are not unfrequently pledged as security for debts; and the vice of gambling, which is developed to enormous proportions in China, sends large numbers of children annually into the slave market.

As to the state of Chinese public sentiment in this direction, we find reliable data in the facts brought out by the discussion of the question of slavery in Hong Kong—a question which is one of the most embarrassing that the English colonial office has ever had to deal with. There are some ten thousand British subjects in slavery in Hong Kong. “About the facts,” says a recent number of the *Spectator*, “there is practically no dispute. Those who advise reform assert, and those who deprecate reform admit that Chinese

fathers and guardians do constantly sell their children for money and by formal deed into bondage — the boys to be hereditary domestic servants, and the girls to be prostitutes in houses so poor and low that their inmates cannot be recruited from among women really free.” There is no law in the colony legalizing slavery, and the present chief justice is “a determined and even enthusiastic opponent of the system.” Yet it prevails, and all attempts to put it down have been fruitless, owing to the support which it receives from Chinese opinion. Purchasers, we are told, “are supported in retaining their slaves by the public opinion, not only of their own class, but of respectable Chinese. The native traders of Hong Kong, for example, are alarmed to the utmost by the prospect of a local statute making the purchase of human beings an offence; and in their petition declare that the practice is in accordance with Chinese law, is indispensable to society, and is most useful in checking infanticide, which would otherwise attain even larger proportions than at present.”<sup>1</sup>

The relation which Chinese citizens sustain to the government is analogous to that which children sustain to their parents. There is the same over-development of the idea of order and subjection — an over-development which has found expression in the popular proverb, “Better be a dog in peace than a man in anarchy.” The penal code, it is true, makes elaborate provisions for the protection of the subject; and there is an appearance of regard for the individual which is in sharp contrast to the regulations within the family. But these safeguards are often nullified by great vagueness of statement, and by generalities which leave officials free to perpetrate almost any injustice. As, for example: “Whoever is guilty of improper conduct, and such as is contrary to the spirit of the laws, though not a breach of any specific article, shall be punished at the least with forty blows; and when the impropriety is of a serious nature, with eighty blows.”<sup>2</sup> The law, again, lays down severe penalties for

<sup>1</sup> *The Spectator*, April 29, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> *Davis's China*, Vol. i. p. 281.

officials who are guilty of imprisoning unjustly. But "as there is no Habeas Corpus act, the most frequent instruments of judicial injustice are prolonged imprisonments."<sup>1</sup> Equally severe punishments are denounced against cruelty. But where the use of torture in trials is recognized and legalized, it is only cruelty of the most extraordinary and outrageous description that has any chance of being questioned.

As matter of fact, the most dreadful cruelties are regularly practised in Chinese prisons and courts of law, without exciting any feeling of indignation in the community. More loathsome dens than the prisons can hardly be imagined. Filth, disease, and starvation are the lot of those who are cast into them. Overcrowding is often carried to a frightful extent, and the percentage of deaths among those incarcerated for terms of any length is very large. Torture in trials is used not as the last resort in extreme cases; it is the regular and almost invariable appliance for compelling confession from the accused, or testimony from reluctant witnesses. "It is a matter of no ordinary difficulty," says Archdeacon Gray, "for a foreigner who is ignorant of Chinese to distinguish which of the unfortunate men kneeling before the judgment-seat and receiving castigation is the prisoner, and which is the witness."<sup>2</sup> The methods of torture are many of them very severe, and result not infrequently in the permanent maiming and even death of the recipients. "Neither imprisonment nor torture," says Dr. Williams, "are ranked among the five punishments; but they cause more deaths, probably, among arrested persons, than all other means."<sup>3</sup> A more wretched object than a Chinese subject on trial can hardly be imagined. The dreadfulness of the prison on the one hand, and the endurance of torture on the other, present hard alternatives.

Contempt for the individual is further conspicuous in the peculiarly ignominious and degrading character of many Chinese punishments. To be whipped through the streets, pre-

<sup>1</sup> Davis's China, Vol. i. 286.

<sup>2</sup> Gray's China, Vol. i. p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> The Middle Kingdom, Vol. i. p. 409.

ceded by a man with a gong to draw attention to the shame of the criminal, is one of the most common. The cangue,<sup>1</sup> an invention which in all its forms combines cruelty and ignominy, is resorted to for the expiation of a great variety of offences. Not only hardened and shameless criminals, but those who have previously been men of respectability in the community are for slight offences subjected to the pain and public humiliation of this instrument of torture. Even state officials and military officers of high rank are not unfrequently castigated with rods, both for their own delinquencies and those of others for whom they are held responsible.

Responsibility for others permeates the Chinese system from the top to the bottom. There is perhaps no way in which the sacredness of individual right is more completely ignored than in the carrying out of the principle that the good of the great whole requires that some victim should be made to suffer for every crime—the innocent relations of the criminal, if the criminal himself is not to be found. In cases where the crime is of so heinous a nature that a larger sacrifice is deemed necessary to signalize it, as in parricide or treason, the criminal himself, his near relations, and even the schoolmaster who taught him, may be made to suffer an equal punishment.

Now the significance of all these facts can be appreciated only when we remember that they are the natural development of an ideal which the nation worships, that they are the embodiment of the Chinese conception of the collective good of the collective life. In his introduction to the translation of the penal code of China, Staunton says of it: "With all its defects, however, and with all its intricacy this code of laws is generally spoken of by the natives with pride and admiration. All they seem in general to desire is its just and impartial execution, independent of caprice, and uninfluenced by corruption."<sup>2</sup> This testimony, corroborated as

<sup>1</sup> A wooden frame in which the neck is confined.

<sup>2</sup> Penal Code of China, p. xxviii.

it has been by almost all writers on China, may on first thought seem to set the evils of the Chinese system in a more favorable light. But in truth it reveals to us the least hopeful feature of the situation.

Educated, as it has been for thousands of years, in the idea of the overwhelming importance of the collective good, Chinese human nature accepts personal effacement without a murmur. It is in accordance with the order of nature, a thing not to be fought against or questioned. In the absence of supernatural beliefs this could hardly be otherwise. No vision of life on a grander scale or of a higher personal destiny to be worked out is ever present to disturb the absoluteness of the abasement of self before the idea of the family and the state. No conception of allegiance to a higher master in whose sight all souls are precious and to whom all are personally accountable is there to lift the mind out of a consciousness of inferiority and relative insignificance. The very foundations of the highest kind of self-respect and the spring of ennobling aspirations are wanting. In short the Chinese mind is profoundly at rest on the basis of a philosophy which ignores the relations of man to an unseen world.

Hence it is that while political disturbances are common in China the object of them is never a change of principle or method. Secret societies for the attainment of political ends exist in spite of an elaborate system of espionage. But the idea of *reform* in the western sense of that word never enters them. All evils are traced to the baseness or incapacity of those in power, and a change of rulers is to the Chinese mind the limit of political change. The same is true of all benevolent enterprises. Hospitals exist for foundlings, for lepers, and to some extent for those afflicted with other maladies. Some provision is also made for the distribution of food to the poor. But all these schemes for the help of the unfortunate are most meagerly supported; and no dead-in-earnest philanthropy ever sets itself the task of removing the radical causes of misery and crime. As Mr. Johnson has well said, "This

heart worships a fulfilled ideal. It entertains no impulse to radical changes. . . . Chinese humanity ameliorates, but it does not reconstruct. With its abounding charities it does not establish reformatory prisons, nor institute methods of restoring the degraded to social opportunity and diminishing the extent of beggary. It has an apathetic and languid air, and does not rise to enthusiasm." <sup>1</sup>

It will before this have occurred to the reader to ask, what has become of that fundamental principle of the Chinese which affirms the possibility and the necessity of governing men by moral forces? It is evident that China has widely departed from it. This departure is certainly not, in itself considered, a ground for severe criticism. Every civilized nation has ideals which far transcend its actual condition. But, at the same time, it cannot be denied that the failure of China in this particular direction when contrasted with the developments of an untrammelled Christianity is deeply significant. With the most elevated principles for guidance, and while making the good of mankind the one object of devotion, China has found the encouragement of individual liberty impracticable. The incentive which makes the largest and freest personal development consistent with order and the good of the collective whole has been wanting. Subjection and repression have therefore played a conspicuous part among her formative influences, notwithstanding honest efforts in a contrary direction. Christianity, on the other hand, while making the good of mankind secondary to the working out of a higher principle, has found *in* that higher principle the power which has enabled it to realize the continually advancing collective good through the fullest and freest development of the individual.

#### PURITY.

With regard to the purity of the Chinese we have a great variety of testimony. But up to a certain point the opinion formed by all writers is the same, namely, that the Chinese as a whole, are lower as regards this virtue than Christian

<sup>1</sup> China, p. 48.

nations. In his China and the Chinese, the Rev. John L. Nevius, who takes perhaps the most favorable view of Chinese morality as compared with that of Western nations, gives the following as the result of ten years observation: "The standard and the practice of virtue are almost, necessarily, and as might be expected, lower in China than in Christian lands, but the wonder to my mind is, considering our superior advantages, that the difference is not greater. It is certainly not so striking as to form the basis of a very marked contrast, or to render it modest or prudent for us to designate any particular vice, or class of vices, as peculiar to and especially characteristic of the Chinese."<sup>1</sup>

That this is a *too* favorable view as applied to Chinese society in the mass is probable. Even if we set aside the testimony of writers who may be supposed to have looked too exclusively on the dark side of Chinese character, or who have, in making comparisons, greatly underestimated the proportions of vice in Christian lands, we find data in certain incontrovertible facts, which would lead us to receive with doubt such an estimate as the above. It would certainly be a startling discovery if, in a country where exist polygamy, concubinage, and the practice of selling children by the poor, it should appear that no very marked contrast is observable, when a comparison is made between its society and that of Christian lands. Our knowledge of what the influence of such customs has been in other lands is entirely at variance with such a result. The uniform influence of polygamy and concubinage, in the nations which have come more directly under our observation, has been the brutalizing of the community or the class in which they have existed. The importance of this consideration cannot be set aside by the fact that these customs have prevailed in China less extensively than in most Mohammedan countries. Held in check, as they certainly have been, they have yet borne the same fruits in effecting a complete separation of the sexes, and in making woman an inferior creature. As mothers, women in China have honor and priv-

<sup>1</sup> China and the Chinese, p. 290.

ileges ; in all other relations their consideration and influence is of the slightest. They pass the greater part of their lives in seclusion, not being allowed to mingle in the social amusements of the other sex. Thus the elevating and restraining influence which the presence of women exercises, and which plays so large a part in determining the character of society in Christian lands, is in China left out.

There are certain other customs, the existence of which in China throws important light on this question. Unnatural vice, which in western nations can hardly be said to have any foothold, prevails to a considerable extent in China, and this notwithstanding the liberty allowed in other directions. That this condition of things marks a distinctly lower descent in the scale of morality can hardly be questioned.

Again, the character of the mural decorations of the inns of Northern China does not easily associate itself with the theory of "no marked contrast." The extreme indecency of the pictures on the walls and teacups at Maimachin, the great trading post on the Siberian border, has been noticed by Erman, and more recently by Lansdell, who, after mentioning the report that the plays in the theatre were of a grossly obscene character, says : "This, however, is only in keeping with the pictures seen in the houses and sold openly in the streets, which are too licentious to bear description."<sup>1</sup> In the absence of other testimony it would be unjust to ascribe to China as a whole a condition of things found to exist on its extreme Siberian frontier ; but this testimony is not lacking, as regards a large portion of the country. Archdeacon Gray, in speaking of the reception rooms of inns in the northern provinces of China and Mongolia says, "On the walls of every public room of this sort I observed very obscene pictures."<sup>2</sup> Such a fact speaks for itself as to the character of public sentiment and taste in these provinces ; and when taken in connection with the fact emphasized by Sir John Davis<sup>3</sup> and others, that the Cantonese (the Southeastern

<sup>1</sup> Through Siberia, by Henry Lansdell, Vol. i. p. 344.

<sup>2</sup> Gray's China, Vol. ii. p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> China, Vol. i. p. 296.

Chinese) are the very worst specimens of their countrymen, we have in this and the previously mentioned considerations some substantial reasons for giving a measure of credit to the verdict of Dr. Williams, when he declares that, "With a general regard for outward decency, they are vile and polluted in a shocking degree; their conversation is full of filthy expressions and their lives of impure acts."<sup>1</sup>

That with such customs Chinese society has yet been prevented from sinking into the lowest places of immorality, must be attributed first to the elevation and purity of its ethics, and to the higher class public sentiment which has flowed from them; and second, to the blessed effects of systematized labor. Hard and regular labor not only reduces to the minimum the temptations to immorality, but at the same time furnishes for its own sake a strong incentive to the practice of temperance and self-restraint. A late writer on the social condition of factory towns and cities in America has noted the circumstance, that although in such communities the conditions of life seem to offer peculiar temptations to immorality, yet this is not one of their marked characteristics, since there is too much weariness and too little idleness for the production of such a result.

#### TRUTHFULNESS.

As to the truthfulness and general honesty of the Chinese, there exists nearly the same difference of testimony as with regard to their purity. "More ineradicable than the sins of the flesh is the falsity of the Chinese. . . . Their proneness to this fault is one of the greatest obstacles to their permanent improvement as a people," is the testimony of Dr. Williams.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, one whose opinion of the Chinese is entitled to respect, says: "Were I suddenly compelled to trust, where there was no check, to the courage, honesty, and purity of fifty people taken at random from any nation, I certainly would select Chinese in preference to some Occidental nations

<sup>1</sup> The Middle Kingdom, Vol. ii. p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> The Middle Kingdom, Vol. ii. p. 96.

I could name. But I would not hesitate a moment about preferring Englishmen to Chinese. The difference is undoubtedly not so great as certain unqualified assertions make it; and cannot indeed be called great at all. Still the Chinese are, I hold, morally lower than ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

As in the former case, we have to fall back upon well known facts, if perchance we can find any, that will throw light on the subject. Several such I think we do find. The first I would mention is the very general dishonesty of officials. Without doubt there are conspicuous instances of purity, disinterestedness, and nobleness among the Chinese officials of to-day, but there is great weight of evidence to show that, notwithstanding the prominence given to ethical education, corruption is the rule.<sup>2</sup> This, while it indicates a want of probity in the educated class, discloses also a powerful force at work undermining the natural love of truth and honesty which all men possess in some degree. The extent to which espionage is carried must exercise an exceedingly demoralizing influence in the same direction. The employment of torture in trials is not calculated to foster a regard for truth. One can hardly read the chapter on court procedure in Archdeacon Gray's "China" without seeing in the practices there detailed, not only a public confession of the utter want in the Chinese of trust in each other, but also in the whole system of trial by torture an effective agency for manufacturing in the community a feeling of utter shamelessness with regard to untruth. That such shamelessness does exist is conclusively shown by the character of the Chinese drama. In many of its productions the Chinese drama has a distinctly moral purpose. It aims at discouraging vice and honoring virtue. But no inconsistency is felt when virtue is made to triumph by means of deceit. "It is surprising," says Mr. Johnson, "to find the defence of innocence so dependent, in an empire of laws, on personal wits and sharp practice. The result is a lenient treatment

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese and their Rebellions, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Gray's China, Vol. i. p. 44; also The Middle Kingdom, Vol. i.

of falsehood and trickery when resorted to in self-defence or for good ends, while offences against the great social relations are severely dealt with.”<sup>1</sup>

#### CONCLUSION.

It is only fair, in closing our consideration of this part of the subject, to remind the reader that there is another side to the picture. The law of duty in human relations, as expressed in the ethics of Confucius, has not been persistently upheld in China without producing, all through the ages, much virtuous living. There has always been, and there is to-day, in China a class that loves virtue and hates iniquity, that strives in thought and action for a life that is characterized by honesty, purity, reverence, and benevolence.

I affirm this confidently, not only because of the reiterated testimony of many of the most thoughtful foreigners who have lived in China, but more especially because the incontrovertible facts of Chinese history necessitate such a conclusion. It is safe to say that no nation could have accomplished what China has accomplished in the absence of such a saving element. She has run her course of growth and development through a period of four thousand years, and down to the time of European intervention maintained herself at her highest level. Such a career is not to be harmonized with the theory of a progressive deterioration of general morality. The forces of evil are everywhere actively at work, the whole history of the world shows us that human society tends to decay unless there is some powerful counter-agency which arrests and to some extent neutralizes the destroying principle. We must therefore reject that representation of the Chinese which gives the impression that they are unqualifiedly vicious. But the rejection of one extreme statement does not necessitate the taking up of another; and surely that one which affirms no “very marked contrast” is wide of the truth.

The method frequently employed in defence of this view,

<sup>1</sup> China, p. 453.

though honestly intended, is calculated to confuse the judgment. The reader is led into the outskirts of Christian civilization, and made to sit in sackcloth and ashes on the dunghill of its immoralities ; and when the loathsome sights and foul odors of this dreary region have made his heart sufficiently sick within him, he is asked if the civilization of China can be much worse than this ? Now it ought to be sufficiently clear that we cannot correctly estimate the relative moral standing of two communities simply by a comparison of their delinquencies. The moral force relied on in a community is not proved to be weak by the fact that there is a strong reaction from it. There is in all human society a certain amount of determination to evil, and the higher the standard of morality introduced the more violent is the reaction from it likely to be. It is hardly necessary to say that the dregs of society in the West under Christianity are of the same nature as those of the East under Confucianism. The blackness in the one case is much like the blackness in the other ; and under both systems there is on the part of the best portion of society a humiliating disparity between the standard aimed at and the elevation reached. But that the proportion of light to shade is much greater under Christianity than under Confucianism there can be no doubt. Nor is this the whole truth.

The balance of virtuous living which must be put to the credit of Christianity does not begin to express the difference in the moral power that has been at work. After we reach a certain height in the moral elevation of society progress is slow. This may be illustrated by the generation of power by steam. After a certain degree of heat has been applied for the production of steam, the amount of additional power generated by an increase of heat becomes proportionally less. Double the amount of heat produces not double the amount of power, but only a comparatively slight increase of it. Passenger steamers in crossing the Atlantic use twice the quantity of coal consumed by freight steamers, but the voyage is thereby shortened only about one eighth.

Interest, policy, and the inconvenience of not obeying the laws of righteousness powerfully re-enforce in organized communities the drawings toward the good which exist to a greater or less degree in the majority of men. But after a certain level of correct living has been reached this outside pressure is reduced to a minimum; and in the absence of some loftier inspiration men will not be induced to rise higher. While there is in man a conscience which carries him easily to the recognition of the beauty and desirableness of the higher forms of virtue, there are great practical difficulties to be surmounted before he can realize them; and every higher degree of righteousness attained testifies to a vast increase of moral power in the community or in the individual. Considered, therefore, solely with relation to the results already attained, Christianity has shown itself to be informed by a moral power far higher in point of efficiency than that possessed by Confucianism.

But, as I have already observed, it is not by accomplished results alone that Christianity is to be estimated. Emancipated, or rather partially emancipated, Christianity has had the field only a little more than three centuries. Its power for revolutionizing and elevating humanity is just entering on its higher phase of efficiency. Great things have been accomplished in the past by Christianity, even when led about in strange disguises and with manacled hands. But it is not by these that its power can be judged. It is rather by the strength and tendency of the forces now at work, by the power it is continually displaying of righting great wrongs, of throwing off fatal diseases, of imparting new and ever more powerful impulses to society, of assimilating and using in the interest of humanity every new discovery, of entering and permeating every new department of knowledge; it is, in short, by its ability to lead men in an unlimited career of ever widening development that we are to gauge its power. To show that Christianity is possessed of such a power and that Confucianism lacks it will be the object of a subsequent article.