

THE  
hinese ecorder

AND

MISSIONARY JOURNAL.

---

---

VOL. XVII.

AUGUST, 1886.

No. 8.

---

---

NEW TESTAMENT PARALLELS IN THE FOUR BOOKS.

BY REV. GEORGE OWEN, PEKING.

THE works which the Chinese call the Four Books, or the Books of the Four Philosophers, are the Ta-Hsio or Great Learning, the Chung Yung or Invariable Mean, the Lung Yü or Analects, and Meng-tsz or works of Mencius.

The Great Learning is a small work consisting of only a few pages and is supposed to have been compiled by Tseng-tsz, a celebrated disciple of Confucius. The Invariable Mean, according to general acceptance, was written by Tsz-sz or K'ung chi, the grandson of Confucius. It contains only thirty-three short chapters or sections, we may almost say verses. The Analects are mostly a record of the sayings and doings of Confucius with occasional notices of his disciples. The work seems to have been compiled by some unknown hand or hands from the notes and oral teachings of the disciples. The Works of Mencius consist of seven books which were composed either by Mencius himself during his later years and subsequently edited by his disciples, or by a few of his disciples after his death.

Roughly speaking these books were written between the years 470—280 B. C.

These four works treat almost exclusively of morals, ethics and politics. The Chinese sum up their contents in two words 倫常, *lun ch'ang*, or the five social relations, and the five constant virtues, and we may accept the summary.

## METHODS OF MISSION WORK.

## LETTER VIII.

BY REV. J. L. NEVIUS, D.D.

## BEGINNING WORK—(Continued.)

*How shall we reach the people?* When places in the interior are visited for the first time, there are opportunities to preach to crowds such as will probably never occur again. The whole population moved by curiosity, comes out to see the foreigner, eagerly intent to hear what he has to say. In preaching under these circumstances, even when well acquainted with the language, we must not expect the people to understand more than a moiety of what we say. There is too much curiosity, excitement, and noise, to admit of connected discourse or continued attention. Besides, the people are so unaccustomed to religious subjects, that language fails to communicate the ideas intended. This kind of preaching, though for the reasons above stated, very ineffectual as regards its main object, is still very important. We may at least leave the impression behind us that we have kindly intentions, that we are not barbarians, and may also give some general idea of our character and work as religious teachers; thus preparing the way for a more lengthened visit and more detailed teaching in the future. We may also hope and pray that in the crowd which gathers around us as we pass from village to village there may be some person prepared to receive our message; or that the good seed may find a permanent lodgment in some heart and bring forth fruit in God's own time. A few tracts are very useful at such a time, to convey to the people as they are read afterwards better ideas of our object than we have been able under the circumstances to give orally.

There are many advantages in visiting the regular *fairs* which are so striking a feature of country life in most parts of China. Here crowds of country people are gathered, and an excellent opportunity is afforded for addressing a constantly changing audience, representing many surrounding villages and distant cities. If there are those listening who wish fuller instruction, or whose curiosity is not satisfied, they will probably seek out the missionary in his inn.

In the inn there is an opportunity for more or less lengthened conversation, adapting instruction and information to individuals, and forming acquaintances which may be followed up in the future. Books can also be disposed of with a greater degree of care and discrimination. In parts of the country where there are canals, the travelling boat largely takes the place of the inn.

Visits to native schools are sometimes very interesting and encouraging. Here we may expect widely differing receptions and experiences according to the character of the teacher in charge.

Some missionaries adopt indirect and unobtrusive methods, avoiding crowds and making comparatively little use of public preaching; waiting for the people to seek them rather than going after the people. The Romanists, so far as my observation goes, generally adopt this method. Their long experience and success render their example worthy of serious consideration.

Others wherever they go make enquiries after religiously disposed persons or seekers after truth, a class which is found in greater or less numbers almost everywhere in China; and endeavor to influence them, and through them the circle of friends or adherents always found connected with them. This plan is obviously reasonable and practical, and has the special sanction of our Saviour's teachings, Matthew 10: 11. It has been largely adopted by the English Baptists in Shantung, and with encouraging results.

While most missionaries give their chief attention to the middle or more illiterate class, a few feel a special call to attempt to influence the literati and officials; not only because they exercise a dominating influence on the masses, but also because they have been in general too much neglected. It is obvious that this kind of work is attended with peculiar difficulty, and requires special preparation, particularly in acquainting one's self with Chinese etiquette. Indeed a theoretical and practical knowledge of Chinese laws of politeness is very important for every missionary in intercourse with all classes.

*In what way should we spend our time and talents so as to accomplish most for the advancement of Christ's cause?* The dominant idea of a missionary should be duty, and not immediate individual success, as judged by human standards. If the desire for tangible results should take the form of a wish to gather into the Church as soon as possible the greatest number of professed converts, it may become a dangerous temptation and snare.

It will be early fifty years hence to determine with positive certainty what any individual life has or has not accomplished. Only in eternity will every man's work be fully made manifest what

sort it is. Results of apparently great importance may attract attention and secure general commendation, and yet prove only temporary and misleading. On the other hand a good book, or a word spoken in season, may bear rich and abundant fruit, though the world may never be able to trace these results to their true source.

Probably no two men ever have or ever will work in the same groove. Each man will do his own work best in his own way. If God has called us as individuals to serve Him in China, He has a special work for each of us to do, and if we earnestly seek His guidance He will direct us to it. It is apt to be a very different one from that which we have been disposed to plan for ourselves.

It is sometimes asked what practical answer does the experience of missionaries in China for the past forty years give to the question, "Which methods of work have really brought the greatest number of converts into the Church?" This question should probably be regarded as a legitimate and important one, but can only be answered approximately. The conventional modes of work which sum up the labors of missionaries as reported every year to the home societies are Bible distribution, Tract distribution, Chapel preaching, Translating and Book-making, Schools, and Itinerations.

The number of copies of the Bible and parts of the Bible distributed in the different parts of China during the past forty years can only be estimated by millions: the same is true of Christian tracts.

Many missionaries have given their time largely to chapel preaching and have thus spent from one to three hours daily. A great deal of this work has also been done by natives. The number of chapel discourses during the past forty years can also only be estimated by millions.

The result of literary work in the study cannot be tabulated. It passes into and is utilized in every other department of labor.

The aggregate number of years spent in teaching in different kinds of schools during the last forty years, I am convinced, can only be numbered by thousands.

As to itinerations it is a very common thing for a missionary to preach in from five to ten villages in a day, and from two hundred to five hundred times on a tour. The number of these itinerating addresses during these forty years can only be numbered by hundreds of thousands; and including those of natives probably by millions.

The question is, to which of these different modes of work is the conversion of the about 30,000 Protestant Christians of China to be mainly traced? I am disposed to think that the number of conversions due to each would be found to increase about in the order in which they are mentioned above; and that the number traceable to them all together would be but a small fraction of the whole; and that by far the greater proportion is to be referred to *private social intercourse*, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

*In the spiritual work of the conversion of souls and building up Christ's Kingdom on earth we of ourselves can do nothing except as instruments.*—This is a fact so familiarly known and universally acknowledged that it may well be regarded as a simple truism. Theoretically we learned this lesson almost in infancy; practically however it is difficult for some of us fully to learn in a life time. It is so natural for us to feel that with a good knowledge of the language, sincere earnestness and sympathy with the people, together with prudence, common sense, zeal, hard work and perseverance, sooner or later great spiritual results must certainly be accomplished. This is by no means the case. Our labors may combine all the above conditions and yet be fruitless in the conversion of souls. If we depend upon our gifts or acquisitions, our zeal in the use even of God's appointed means, but with an underlying and insidious desire for a result which may be regarded as something which we ourselves have accomplished, we shall probably be disappointed. If we are cherishing a feeling of self-dependence in any form, God will probably humble us before He will use us. We must feel that if anything is accomplished it will be by the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit, and be ready to ascribe all the glory to Him. Otherwise He will probably leave us to ourselves to learn the lesson of our own weakness. The natural tendency to depend on self, or on anything else rather than God, has been a prominent sin of God's people from the earliest times. I am disposed to think that this tendency now prevails to a great extent among Christians at home, and that missionaries commence work in foreign lands too much under the influence of it.

In this commercial age a commercial spirit has crept into the Church. As in business matters generally, so in religious enterprises, it is supposed that a certain amount of capital, judiciously expended, will naturally work out a certain result. The success of a Mission Society is gauged by the amount of money in its treasury. In order to secure more liberal contributions, only the more favorable and encouraging facts are welcomed and laid before the Churches, so that

they may feel that they are contributing not to a failing but to a prospering cause. Let me not be understood as implying that money is not important, and that the duty of giving to missions should not be pressed home upon the hearts and consciences of all, whether native converts or home Christians. The danger I would guard against is of giving such disproportionate prominence to money as to divert the mind from what is of much greater importance. In a word it is making money, or what money can command, rather than the Holy Spirit, our main dependence. I am quite aware that all Christians would earnestly disavow any such intention. It is not an uncommon thing however to find ourselves doing indirectly, or unconsciously, what we could never be induced to do deliberately and knowingly. The work we are prosecuting is distinctly and emphatically a work of God's Spirit. If we fail to recognize and act upon this fact, the mission work will decline even with a full treasury; while with the Spirit's presence it will prosper even with a depleted one.

*Personal experience in beginning work in Shantung.*—I commenced itinerating work in *Central Shantung* about fifteen years ago; my previous tours having been in the eastern part of the province. I knew the language and had the advantage of seventeen years of experience elsewhere; but was without a native assistant. I prosecuted the work laboriously, making long tours over the same ground every Spring and Autumn, but for five years had not a single convert. The work at that time was quite different from what it is at present. Then my labors were entirely with the previously unreached masses, and consisted in preaching at fairs, in inns, and on the street, in book distribution, and efforts to form acquaintances with well disposed persons wherever I could find them. At present nearly all my time and strength, when in the country, are expended on the native Christians, on the plan detailed in previous letters. As a rule I now reach the masses indirectly through the Christians; they doing the aggressive work and I following it up, directing and organizing it. Had I again to begin work in a new field, I do not know where I should change the methods heretofore adopted, except in the one particular of not encouraging in any way, hopes of pecuniary help. Why these methods proved fruitless for so long a time it is impossible to say. In looking back over my experience during the first five years of work in this field, it appears made up chiefly of failures and disappointments. Men for whom I had watched and labored for years, who seemed almost persuaded to be Christians, went back and were lost sight of. Associations of co-religionists were at different times on the point of entering the

Church in a body with their leaders. From them all I have realized little else but wasted time and labor, with no doubt the acquisition of some valuable experience. I have in mind several places within my circuit where there seemed to be an unusual religious interest springing up, places which I hoped would soon be centres of Christian influence with chapels and native leaders; but these expectations have hardly been realized in a single instance. In some cases I have endeavored to encourage and stimulate persons who have been doing something in the way of active Christian work, by giving them a little pecuniary assistance hoping that they might be of help to me in the future. This class has not furnished so far as I can recall, a single individual who has not disappointed me. Help in the way of pay for Christian work which ought to be done without pay, has always done harm. The amount of pecuniary help which I considered reasonable and ample, has been regarded by beneficiaries as insufficient, and has often produced dissatisfaction, complaint and resentment.

When converts have appeared they have come from unexpected quarters, and in unexpected ways; stations have been established without my planning, and in places previously entirely unknown to me. As a rule the now existing stations are not found in the sections of country where the itinerating work began; nor are the results realized traceable to previous work of seed-sowing. If asked the cause of the difference in the outcome of labors of the preceding and succeeding years, the question is not easy to answer. The influence of the work of famine-relief, and a supposed special susceptibility to religious impressions in the regions where these stations are found, will account but in part for the difference. We can only say God in His inscrutable providence has so ordered it. For myself I have learned I trust, at least partially, that God's ways are very different and infinitely wiser than mine; that it is better to follow than to take the lead; and that there is need to pray not only that we may be used as instruments in God's work; but that we may be kept from marring or obstructing it.

I might add here that I have known of many instances in which individuals, and groups of individuals, have been brought into the Church with very imperfect and erroneous views of Christianity, and moreover influenced largely by mercenary motives, who have afterwards given evidence of having become intelligent and sincere Christians.

Some have supposed that we are warranted in the first presentation of Christianity, in withholding those doctrines which antagonize Chinese systems and are calculated to excite prejudice and

opposition, presenting only those features which are conciliatory and attractive; thus drawing the people to us and gaining an influence over them, and afterwards giving them instruction in the complete system of Christian truth as they are able to bear it. I doubt very much whether such a course is justified by the teaching and example of our Saviour. God may and does in His mercy and grace make use of our incomplete presentation of His truth, and an imperfect apprehension of it, for the conversion and salvation of men; but have we not still greater reason for expecting His blessing in connection with His truth when given in its completeness? I believe there is no doctrine of Christianity the full presentation of which we need fear. With all our care to "declare the whole counsel of God" there will still be a great amount of misconception in the minds of those who hear us, and we may well be thankful that God will use and bless inadequate conceptions of His truth. It is for us however to make our teaching as full and clear as possible.

*What is the best way to get out of old ruts and make a new beginning?* To those who still prefer the old system this question has of course no relevancy, but it is presumed that there are others who will regard it as a practical and important one. In some respects it is much simpler and easier to commence work from the beginning: on the other hand there are many advantages in having an old foundation to build on, and much good material to use. Many of our native employes sustain characters beyond reproach or suspicion. Some are efficient workers, others are simply out of their place, having been brought into a position for which they are unsuited, and by long continuance in which they have become unfitted for their original modes of life. If there are any persons who are to be blamed for this result they are mainly the missionaries of twenty, thirty or forty years ago, who inaugurated the present state of things, or the societies which sent them out with instructions to do so. Probably blame should be attributed to no one, as both foreigners and natives concerned have done what they regarded as their duty, and what they supposed was for the best interests of the mission cause. Under these circumstances long established relations should not be rudely severed; and the natives who are more to be pitied than blamed, should be treated with sympathy and justice.

In the case of competent and efficient pastors whose people are able and desirous to support them, no change is required. Other pastors able and willing to "endure hardness" might take the charge of several weak Churches which combined would be able to give them a competent support. Pastors left without charge by



this union of Churches might be employed, if they have the requisite gifts, as evangelists, either in opening new fields not yet reached, or in superintending weak and scattered companies of Christians who are under the immediate instruction of leaders or elders. Such evangelists if thoroughly proved and tried might be supported wholly by the mission; or wholly by the native Churches; or by the two conjointly. Others specially suited for the purpose might supply the helpers and attendants required by the new plan as well as the old. These would be connected with, and under the direction of, the missionary, giving him needed assistance in receiving entertaining and instructing guests; in itinerating tours; and in the care and oversight of enquirers and new stations. Others unfitted by age or incapacity for active service might be retired on a pension, and left to do what they can by voluntary labor as private Christians. Assistance might be given to others for two or three years in acquiring some trade or profession. One of the older missionaries in China much interested in this question has suggested the plan of furnishing to suitable men three years of theoretical and practical instruction in the science of medicine, thus putting within their reach a useful and honorable means of livelihood, and then leaving them to themselves. By some such means as this, men of the right stamp might have their influence for good greatly enhanced.

Probably some readers of the foregoing letters may derive the impression that the writer is desponding and pessimistic in his views of mission work. On the contrary, if I may be allowed an opinion on such a question, I think I have always been rather sanguine if not enthusiastic, and never more so than now. I believe that a great deal has been accomplished in every department of missionary work in China. The literary outcome of the past forty years is alone, and by itself, a rich legacy to the missionaries and native Christians of the present, and gives them a vantage ground in undertaking future labor which it is difficult to overestimate. The ratio of increase in the number of converts, and the evidence of growth and development in native Churches, are also full of encouragement. While we must record many cases of coldness, and defection, we remember that such cases have characterized the history and progress of the Church to a greater or less extent in every age. On the other hand we rejoice in being able to point to many who give undoubted evidence of being God's chosen ones, while there are others whose names are already enrolled among the noble army of martyrs. It has been my privilege to know many Christian men and Christian women in

China, whose godly lives and peaceful deaths have been an inspiration to me, and made me I trust a better man and a more earnest worker. I count among my nearest and most honored Christian friends, not a few who are now bearing faithful testimony to the truth in the midst of opposition, and manifold trials, such as Christians in Western lands can only imperfectly appreciate. It has been the object of these letters not to extol the virtues of native Christians, but rather to point out the evils of what I regard as a mistaken policy of missionary work. If the reader has not met with many reassuring facts and cheering prospects it is only because this is not the place to look for them.

Thankfully acknowledging what has already been done, I believe we have not accomplished what we might if we had followed more closely the teaching and example given us for our guidance in the Scriptures. I believe that the too free use of money, and agencies depending on money, have retarded and crippled our work, and produced a less self-reliant and stalwart type of Christians than we otherwise should have had. There are abundant evidences of God's willingness to bless our labors, and evidence also that the Gospel of Christ is as well adapted to the Chinese as to any other race. Let us then with unwavering faith in God's revealed word, and an implicit trust in the efficacy of the Divine Spirit, address ourselves to our labors with renewed zeal and earnestness; praying the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest, and for the abundant outpouring of the Spirit upon us and those to whom we are sent; hoping and believing that in these most remote regions of Eastern Asia, so long preserved by God's providence, so thickly peopled with his erring children, and so lately reached by the message of salvation, the Church may yet record such signal triumphs of grace and power as have not been witnessed in any previous period of her history.

