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A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_evangelical\\_quarterly.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php)

# GOD PREPARES THE WAY FOR HIS CHURCH IN CHINA<sup>1</sup>

“ Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

“ Seeing that we have this ministry we faint not.”

THE “footsteps of the Anointed” seem to us so slow and lagging—and often a noted advance in the kingdom is followed by a severe reverse. Note the beautiful marble churches in Decapolis that were destroyed by the Mohammedans ; and the splendid success attending Paul’s and John’s ministry in Asia Minor was followed by a thousand years of darkness. Such thoughts crowd into one’s mind and tend to sap one’s courage.

So for a perspective let us note some of the outstanding facts in the religious history of China. Thus we may see that God is bringing this great people to His feet.

## I

### TAOISM AND BUDDHISM

In A.D. 1500 an old priest stood at Macao and looking over toward China said, “ Oh wall ! when wilt thou open ? ” Could he have known it, the wall was then crumbling. Taoism, once the religion of the ancient world, and which held the East in its grasp, also invaded Europe. It came to grips with Christianity in Gnosticism and magical cults. However its definite failure to give longevity by its chemistry or by its magic discounted it before men. Its five magical books and its five mystical books lost their authority. While there are to-day a number of long haired priests who profess to tell how to avoid sorrow and trial, they are helpless and few. The hand that bound millions of hearts has grown palsied.

Buddhism, probably, is the greatest counterfeit religion the world has ever seen. Piety is taught, self-restraint and many virtues are inculcated, also a release from the sufferings of the next world may be secured for a consideration, and above all man is made supreme and works out his own salvation with prayers and beads.

In the sixth century Buddhism had attained an astonishing influence in China. Buddhist books were a hundred times

<sup>1</sup> An address to missionaries at Sutsien, delivered by Professor Patterson and sent for publication in this *QUARTERLY*, by Rev. Wm. F. Junkin, Sutsien, North Kiangsu, China.

more numerous than Confucian books—and old Buddhist votive offerings . . . all claim to have come from that period.

Nestorian Christianity now came on to the scene. It met Buddhism well entrenched. The infamous female dictator (Wu Tse Tien) who murdered and ruled for eighteen years under sixteen titles, built a temple nearly 300 feet high adorned with all the splendour that a great country could afford. But God's hand was with the Nestorians and in the history of the day we almost see the Christian writers speaking through the kings in their moral decrees. The famous Nestorian tablet tells us of the great success of the monks. There were in China as many of these monks from Syria, as there are men missionaries of the Protestant Church in China to-day. They were given great honour. An Imperial delegation met Priest Olopon and welcomed him to China. Kings contributed to the temples that they built—and the monks also held positions of great responsibility in the government.

In A.D. 714 Kai Yuen "sifted" out 12,000 Buddhist priests, returning them to lay life. A hundred years of struggle for supremacy between the Nestorians and the Buddhists followed. Then, in August, 846, Emperor Wu Tsung was disgusted with the Buddhist priests, and had 46,000 temples destroyed.

He returned 265,000 monks and nuns to the ordinary walks of life and liberated 15,000 of their slaves. He melted up their idols and bells and made coins, and seized thousands of square miles of their lands. He built public buildings with the material from the temples. Buddhism was wounded but not unto death. This king the next year also expelled a thousand Syrian monks. They had been unfaithful to the revealed Word, which was not fully taught. The very next year I Tsong went to meet a bone of Buddha and in his joy said, "Since I have seen this I do not grudge to die."

The Syrians unfaithful to the Word of God failed. The Buddhists with their prayers for the dead and some appropriated Christian items are reinstated for a thousand years while Nestorianism only leaves some relics of Christianity.

Then Hong Hsiu Chwen, a hundred years ago, broke every idol that he saw and freed the people from fear of them—and to-day the Red propaganda has been used of God to let in the light. Buddhism is to-day in the mouths of the people called "Mi Hsin" (fanaticism). This is not by man's power.

## II

## CONFUCIANISM

Fifty years ago Dr. DuBose writing his catechism of the three religions of China laid bare the sins of the Buddhists and Taoists; but he trod lightly when he spoke of Confucianism. In reality Confucianism was a power to be reckoned with far more seriously than the other two. It was a social gospel. It preached sincerity, morality, truth and the golden rule and, above all, filial piety, and loyalty to the rulers. It worshipped God but "distantly"—God was one of a pantheon. It gave the people no magna charta and no loyalty to God, so it has been held guilty for China's fifty major rebellions and a thousand local rebellions in the last two millenniums. We need not discuss its part in exorcism, polygamy, intrigue and insubordination, geomancy and deceit. Suffice it to say that political preferment through the classics and filial piety going into ancestral worship were two enormous tap-roots going into every home in China and demanding respect and obedience. Who has not seen the sin of ancestral tablets and yet who has not sympathized and suffered with the families as they discarded them!

Chang Chih Tung, the famous viceroy of the two Hu Provinces, 40 years ago, saw the threat of Christianity, and, to make Confucianism impregnable, asked the Emperor Kwang Hsu to deify Confucius. This he did. So China and her rulers were prepared to challenge Christianity on its own ground, and besides was fortified with 2,000 years of respect for custom, and both social and political influences. No school could be recognized without the scroll of Confucius on the wall and no one could take the examinations to get political preferment unless they worshipped this new god. We know several very bright young men that deliberately chose to stay out of the Church so as to get the scholar's degree.

But Confucianism was crushed with the stone that was "cut out of the mountain without hands". The Boxer war, which caused the punishment of the official class, and the Red propaganda have swept away the obstruction of Confucianism. Classic expressions that used to have the force, in China, that the Scriptures have upon the Church, fall on deaf ears to-day. The young men in the schools do not know the meaning of these classical expressions. Thus the third great barrier has fallen.

## III

## OPEN WAY

The daily press is opening the way for one to meet the Chinese on an even plane. Formerly every heart was sealed with ignorance, prejudice and pride. God's providence in taking away these barriers has allowed the light to enter. There is, of course, still dense ignorance in thousands of hearts, but one is also surprised to see how well informed so many of the people are.

The numbers of people that have joined the Church may be small but we must look at the opening doors and also at the barriers that have been removed ; also at the great amount of general and Christian information that like a leaven is working in the nation. To-day one can almost say that there is a Christian Church within the reach of every man in China. (Tibet not included.)

It is a pleasure to tell two instances which occurred at Sutsien, Kiangsu, that show the stand Christianity is taking among the people.

Sutsien was besieged by soldiers fleeing from a defeat in the South. The gates of the city were shut and the General outside demanded that the magistrate be given over to him or he would shell the city. Dr. Junkin was called into the Yamen with the city elders to devise a way of escape. One suggested that Dr. Junkin go out of the city and say to the General that the magistrate was gone. A man among the company, who was an infidel, said, "Do not trouble Dr. Junkin that way for he is a Christian and he could not say that the magistrate is gone when he sees him sitting here." They realized that Christianity stood for the truth.

Again, an uprising had forced the magistrate to burn hundreds of houses in the neighbourhood of Sutsien. This made a greater rebellion and thousands surrounded the city and threatened to kill every well-to-do man in the city and also all the women and girls whose hair was cut off. (Bobbed hair was a sign of the new revolution.) The school girls cowered in Mrs. Junkin's inner rooms for two days and the city was thoroughly frightened. Finally the besiegers agreed that if their houses were rebuilt they would retire. They would not take the guarantee of anyone except Dr. Junkin and Pastor Cheng. If these two would come out and tell them that the collections were really being made in the city they would return to their homes. This they did and the

city was saved. This is an illustration of Christianity being recognized for what it really is, Truth. God is making His light manifest.

What we should not overlook is that pride and self-sufficiency are impregnable forts of defence. China, like some other nations, was well entrenched in these respects. A score of world events that have come to pass without the Church lifting a finger have forced China to recognize something outside herself and to feel the need of a physician. So the way is open for the light to come in. Where once an inquirer was a wonder, to-day hundreds are poring over primary catechisms.

Christ is risen and is working in association with His people. The rocks of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism are removed. Ignorance of the affairs of the world and distrust of the missionary are now far less. New opposing forces of no mean organization and power are arrayed against the Church to-day: such as the propaganda of infidelity and the Red menace or "mammon" fortified by civil power. But here the issue is defined—not merely blindly opposing but choosing or rejecting God, and for this God gives us the weapons of offence. "Not walking in craftiness or handling the word of God deceitfully." Our lives preach as well as our words and creed. There is a danger that our fair profession may be streaked with sin that we do not realize, but which is not hid from others. If we will be faithful to the word of our risen Lord He will see to it that the powers of darkness will surely fall in His own time: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry even as we have obtained mercy we faint not."

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