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**A CRITIQUE OF THE CHINESE NOTIONS AND
PRACTICE OF FILIAL PIETY.**

Read before the Conference of Canton Missionaries, April, 1878. (enlarged).

BY REV. ERNEST FABER, OF THE RHENISH MISSION.

(Continued from Vol. IX. Pags 418).

SOME INTRODUCTORY MATTER.

ABOUT the *author* of the Canon of filial piety, the Chinese critics disagree among themselves. Commonly Tsang Tsz is said to be the writer of the book, though Confucius is regarded as the author of the contents. Confucius had discussed the subject with his disciple, who is said to have been particularly qualified for it; and Tsang, after having received the instruction, put it into writing. Other critics maintain that a disciple would not have called himself *Tsz*, and his master by his childname *Tchung-ni*. (see com. to chapter I.)

The Han catalogue, mentions 11 works by different authors on the Canon, 爾雅 and 小爾雅 included; but there is no where a record which gives the names of its traditional interpreters from the time of Confucius down to the Han dynasty 授受無緒 as is the case with all other canonical works. This absence of tradition forms one important reason to some critics for doubting the authenticity of the Canon. It is said to be one of the works which came down from the 70 disciples of Confucius, of which 河間獻王 collected 131, and ought to be one of the chapters of the Li-ki, like the 儒行 and others, only that the work calls itself Canon, is divided in chapters, etc.

We have here, however, not sufficient ground to decide in favour of Confucius, or Tsang Tsz, or of some one else. My own opinion is rather against both Confucius and Tsang Tsz, (see remarks to

Ho Tai and Jesus.

DEAR SIR:—

Perhaps some western scholar, deeply engaged in studying the Chinese "Four Books" and "Five Classics," at this suggestion will write an article defensive of the Christian Faith, whose line of argument shall be something like the following.

Contrast the account given in the Chinese Classics of the miraculous birth of Ho Tai 后稷 and the account in Matthew's and Luke's Gospel of the birth of Jesus. The conduct of the two mothers makes a most striking contrast; the mother of the Chinese sage endeavoring to destroy her offspring, Mary's ascription of praise to God, with her whole deportment, being in perfect keeping with the announcement that her child was born of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel narratives most wonderfully carry out the expectations raised by the declaration made at their very outset that Jesus was born miraculously. In tracing Ho Tai's 后稷 life, is the same success found in making his character and actions consistent with the assumed miraculous birth?

I should like to see such an article both in Chinese and English and I think others would also, therefore pardon the liberty of making the suggestion.

J. F. C.

One Bible.

DEAR SIR:—

All must feel thankful to Dr. Williamson for his labor in collecting and collating the views of the senior and representative Missionaries, as to the "desirability and practicability of a Uniform Version of the Sacred Scriptures in Wen-li." A few extracts from his "conspectus." "All are agreed that both versions, though valuable, require most careful and thorough revision." "There are others who think that while of course the two versions will remain for reference, yet revision is to some extent thrown away, inasmuch as the defects of each are so great, that *only a new version will meet the wants of China.*" "It thus appears that *a sense of the need of some action is universal.*" "Judging from what I have gathered, I think there is a great deal more harmony of opinion existing as to the *principles of interpretation* than formerly. The general feeling seems to be that the version should be as literal a translation as possible, consistent with clear intelligibility and easy and idiomatic Wen-li."

This settles the question of *desirability*. The *practical* difficulty at the "Peking Meeting," was that "the hands of the Missionaries qualified for the work are so full at the present time, that men cannot be spared to undertake the task." This seems to place the question at rest.

Two remarks.—1. The work might be *initiated* at the present time, looking forward to two or three years in the future when the "hands" now "so full" might leave the oxen with which they are plowing. Q. However it may be at Peking, at the South one of the Fathers is now devoting himself to a revision of one of the existing versions, and there is a standing Committee for the revision of the other. So that many of the Missionaries are now "spending *thought and time* in revision.

It is easily seen that if the old versions are "patched up" and revised editions published, the "shadow in the sun dial" of the New and Uniform Version will return more than "ten degrees backward." Two reasons.—1. In a new dress they will be tolerably acceptable. 2. Those who have laboured upon the old will be loth to begin the new.

What the consequences of having Two Bibles will be, not only in the practical matters of concordances, commentaries, quotations, &c., but also in promoting schism in the future native church, it is hard to foretell.

There is "need of some action." Now.—1. That some *initiatory* steps be taken, so that it may be generally understood the work has *fairly started*. 2. That the repairs on the old buildings, whether at Jerusalem or Gerizim should cease.

In order to meet the views of Dr. Baldwin, the elder, that the translation committee be "representative" might it not be suggested that there be a provincial partition of the books of the Bible? The New Testament to three provinces and the Old to four; (the Yang-tse stations considered a province). The Committees to refer for criticism as in the revision of King James. It would hardly be necessary for the portions of the Old Testament to be referred to more than one or two other provincial committees. As A to B, B to C, C to D, and D to A would bring each into correspondence with two others. It is surprising how evenly distributed the missionary body is provincially. Each province appoints either a large or a small committee at its pleasure and fills vacancies.

Though the work should be *initiated* at once, it ought to be proposed to carry it on till after the completion of the English revision, accepting their version as authority upon doubtful points of the original and so take out the double rendering as in some cases in the Mandarin. Perhaps for a final revision there ought to be a meeting of a select committee from the different provinces. In the assignment of the different portions, one of the Southern provinces should be given a part of the Old, and one a part of the New. Also Kiang-su and Cheh-kiang from their proximity be united.

As the Classic language has made the prophets and apostles speak in divers tongues, every colloquial has been a "law unto itself," but when this trumpet gives forth no uncertain sound the Mandarin and the Dialects will take their places in line and present a united and unbroken front, and Chinese Protestants have ONE BIBLE.

SOOCHOW, Dec. 10th, 1878.

H. C. D.

P. S.—Since writing the above, in the last number of the *Recorder*, is Mr. Muirhead's, request for "emendations" to the Delegates Version. This venerable Missionary, was one of the first to propose the New Version, but since the *Pekin quietus* on the movement, I suppose he gave up the scheme as hopeless and so now wishes to revise the Old.

In the Minutes of the recent meeting of the Synod at Hangchow, presented to me a few days since, I find the following:

"The Rev. A. P. Happer, D.D., was elected principal, and the Rev. J. McIlvaine, alternate, to take part in the revision of the Wên-li Bible." This looks forward to "another" Bible than the above. There are none more ready for union in every good work than our Northern Presbyterian brethren, and no doubt the Synod would hail with pleasure any feasible proposals for a New Version.

Jan. 27th, 1879.

H. C. D.