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SECRET SECTS IN SHANTUNG.

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THERE is an inexhaustible fascination in the study of the religions of the world." Thus opens a brief but brilliant review of Mr. Samuel Johnson's "Oriental Religions," Vol. III. Persia. The succeeding sentences may serve as the text of the following study. "Whether Mr. Herbert Spencer is right or not in asserting that all religion had its beginning in the worship of 'ghosts,' it is certain that there has never been anything in our world more real than has been the power of the religious instincts over the faiths of men. This it is which, more than any other one thing, has awed and charmed, mastered and moulded the human heart and life." "Comparison, insisted the great Cuvier, is the lamp of science." If this be true of the great world religions, some of which have been studied so profoundly by modern investigators of comparative theology, it is no less true of those more local and little understood systems of religious life which prevail among men. It is from the myths and mythologies of Greece and Rome that we discover a deeply hidden theology. It is from Folk-lore and Fable that we discover the springs of superstition. By the ever widening collation of the facts of human experience we build solidly a Social Science, or an Ethical Science, or a Science of Religion.

It is the fascination of the study of life, especially of the study of the spiritual life of men, so exhaustless in variety and yet so common in its passions and needs, that gives occasion and excuse to the present endeavor. "The fortress of time-honored customs and supernatural beliefs," says Mr. Robert West, "in which the soul of the heathen is, as it were, entrenched, must be explored and studied: if any atom of adamant truth has survived it must be respected."

METHODS OF MISSION WORK.

LETTER III.

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

HOW SHALL WE DEAL WITH NEW CONVERTS.

THE reception of first converts in any mission is an epoch fruitful of consequences for good or evil. The course pursued at this time will establish precedents, and in a great measure fix the policy and determine the character of the Church of the future. How then shall these first converts be dealt with? To this weighty question the Scriptures furnish us some ready answers.

I.—“*Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.*” 1 Cor 7. 20. This command is repeated in a different form in the 24th verse of the same chapter. “Brethren let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God.” This Apostolic injunction we are further told was ordained “for all the Churches.” It teaches most emphatically that Christianity should not disturb the social relations of its adherents; but requires them to be content with their lot, and to illustrate the Gospel in the spheres of life in which they are called. How many of us have given these passages of Scripture that weight of authority which they deserve? How many of us have realized that in taking untried Christians out of the positions in which God has called them, and making evangelists of them, we may be literally, though unconsciously, opposing a divine purpose. Such a course directly tends to unsettle the minds of new converts, and excites the very feeling of restlessness and discontent which this command seems specially designed to prevent.

It may be objected that the literal carrying out of this injunction would prevent missionaries ever employing any native assistants, and would in fact have prevented our coming to China, or entering the ministry. This objection so far as it has any weight lies against the Scripture itself. It may be remarked however that all Scripture commands are limited and conditioned by other Scripture teachings, and are to be interpreted by them. This passage does not determine whether a man is to abide where he is called, permanently, or only temporarily. This is a question to be left to the future. Special providences afterwards may indicate a further and different divine purpose no less clearly. So Paul did not hesitate, when the proper time had come, to remove Timothy from Lystra, and there was no inconsistency in his doing so.

As for ourselves, we entered the ministry because we believed we had a divine call to it; and the Church has sent us to China because it concurred in this opinion, and considered our characters sufficiently tested and proved to warrant them in sending us forth to preach the Gospel, with a reasonable assurance that we had renounced worldly aims and worldly advantages, to give our lives to the service of Christ. All we insist on is that the same principles, and the same prudence should be used in dealing with the Chinese.

In determining whether this command to let every man abide in his calling is applicable and binding at present, it is undoubtedly legitimate to enquire whether there may not be special reasons in this present time which overrule and annul it. I can think of none except such as we may regard as growing out of our special circumstances. For instance we may have been praying for labourers for the "great harvest," or more specifically that God would give us a native agent to occupy an important station at —, and we say: "Is not this the man God has sent for this very object." We should not forget however that when this injunction was given, there was as great need of workers, and as many important places to be occupied as now.

The object we all have in view is of course to secure the greatest usefulness of the convert, and the greatest good to the common cause. Now if the young Christian seems to have qualifications for making a good evangelist, is he not just the man wanted to develop the work where he is? And will not further experience fit him all the better for doing other work to which he may be called in the future, when perhaps he may be spared from his station without its suffering in consequence? God's designs with reference to this man are wiser than ours. Let us wait for those designs to develop as they surely will, and follow carefully as we are led.

Other passages of Scripture place our duty in this matter in a still clearer light. "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." By one rash and unauthorized step we may inflict an irreparable injury on the person in whom we are so much interested, and destroy all hopes of his future usefulness. Again; "Be not many masters (teachers) knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." This is a warning to would-be teachers, and may be applied with equal force to those who would gratuitously assume the responsibility of recommending and employing teachers, without sufficient Scriptural grounds for doing so. Again we are taught; "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partakers of other mens' sins; keep thyself pure." The pertinency of these passages is too obvious to require lengthened remarks.

II.—*The Importance of Precedents.* The Chinese are remarkable for their tendency to follow a fixed routine, and to be governed by precedents. If the first convert is soon employed, those who follow will expect to be. If the first station is supplied with a chapel, succeeding ones will require the same, and so on indefinitely. As a matter of precedent, the question as to whether the Gospel shall be first introduced by the instrumentality of paid or unpaid agents, is of such importance as to deserve very careful attention. Here again we get light from Scripture. Nothing is more strikingly characteristic of the missionary methods of the Apostle Paul than his purpose to preach the Gospel freely or “without charge.” He gives us very clearly his reason for doing this. “For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us; for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man’s bread for naught; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread.” 2 Thes. 3: 7—12. There were in Thessalonica and other places in Greece, as there are now in China, idlers, busybodies or disorderly persons, who would fain live without work. From such persons Paul apprehended great danger to the infant Church; and he not only denounced them in unsparing terms, but determined by his own example to furnish a precedent which would have more weight in establishing a fixed usage in the Church than anything he could say. In addressing the Ephesian elders he gives the same reason for the course adopted. “Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20: 34,35.

The Apostle in the 9th chapter of 1st Corinthians lays down the general rule that, as a matter of right, the teacher should depend for his temporal support on the taught; still *in first introducing the Gospel to a heathen people*, he felt it his duty to waive this privilege. The example which he set was that of a preacher not having his influence curtailed by the suspicion that he is laboring for pay. While the Church at home has decided that in lands where Christian institutions are established the pastor should depend for his

support on his flock, and abstain from secular employments, I believe it is best, at least in the first stage of mission work, for the native evangelist to follow Paul's example. Take a man laboring on the plane of his ordinary life as an earnest Christian and make him a paid laborer, and you deprive him of half his influence. It may be said that by paying him you enable him to give all his time to evangelistic work. Still it is a fair question (we are now speaking of new converts) whether a man will accomplish more for good in the end by preaching or by living Christianity. The examples that we want are those of men illustrating Christianity during six days of secular work, and one day of Sabbath observance. Such men and such women present Christianity, in the concrete. They are "Cities set on a hill"—"Epistles known and read of all men." When stations multiply after this type they strike root into the soil. There is life and aggressiveness in them.

Some will probably ask—"Why do not missionaries themselves work with their own hands, and set the same example that Paul did?" If circumstances were the same, and the course chosen by the Apostle were now practicable, and would secure the same end that it did in his case, it ought to be adopted, and I believe missionaries would adopt it gladly. The reason why we do not is, that doing so in our case would defeat the object aimed at. Our circumstances as foreign missionaries in China are different from those of the Apostle Paul in almost every particular. He was a Roman citizen in the Roman empire. He labored in his native climate; was master of Greek and Hebrew, the two languages required for prosecuting his work; and his physical and intellectual training had been the same as those with whom and for whom he labored. We, in coming to China, are obliged from the first to undertake the work of acquiring a spoken and a written language, both very difficult, taxing mind and body to the utmost and demanding all our time and energies. We have to submit to the disadvantage and drudgery of learning in comparatively advanced life, (so far as we are able to do it) what the Chinaman learns, and what Paul learned, in childhood and early manhood. Besides, for a foreigner to support himself in China in competition with natives in any department of manual labor is manifestly impracticable; and one attempting to do so would diminish rather than increase his influence. Were it practicable and consistent with duty, how many of us who have a natural taste for mechanics, or agriculture, or business, would gladly spend a portion of our time in these pursuits, rather than in the wearisome work of the study. Is it not obvious that the only persons who can furnish in China the much needed example of propagating Christianity while they labor with their own

hands, are not Europeans, but natives laboring for and among their own people ?

The importance of trusting at first mainly to voluntary unpaid agency, or rather to the influence of Christian men and women remaining in their original callings, may be further shown by other considerations. It is a prevalent idea in China that diligent and successful attention to temporal matters and religious matters at the same time is impossible. We often hear the remark from Chinamen ; "I am tired of the world and its employments, and would like to enter the religion ;" the true interpretation of which generally is, that the man would like to avoid work and live on the "Kiao-hwe." Another says "Christianity is good, but I must earn a living for my family." Sometimes this is a mere excuse, and sometimes it expresses a man's honest conviction, that an effort to lead a Christian life will interfere with his temporal prospects. I believe that nothing is more important to the success of our work than to do away with this idea ; and this can be best accomplished by living examples showing that a man may be a good Christian and a good farmer or artisan at the same time ; or in other words, that "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." Even voluntary and unpaid preaching is not to be compared for wholesome influence to earnest, consistent, Christian lives. The secret of the world's evangelization is to be found in the words of our Saviour "Let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." During the last few years I have often found it necessary to exhort and remonstrate with some of my people in such language as the following ; "Though it is commendable for you to visit your friends and acquaintances, and to talk to them about Christianity when you have time to do so, *you must not neglect your business.* Your usefulness as a Christian, the religious interests of your station, and the spread of the Gospel in the neighborhood, depend largely on your success and prosperity in temporal matters. If you neglect your business, and run in debt, and are obliged to sell one acre of land this year and two next, you will be a warning to all your neighbors, and they will point to you and say,—'Beware of the Christian religion ; our friend entered it and in a few years he and his family were brought to want.' If this is the outcome of your life in temporal things, all your preaching to your neighbors will do little good."

Some will say that depending largely upon the voluntary and unpaid labor of native Christians for the propagation of the Gospel is presupposing a larger amount of zeal and devotion on their part than is found even among Christians at home. If this is true, so much the worse for Christians at home. I believe the contrary

however. There is a great army of active workers at home, as well as idlers. As to young converts in our country stations, it is a fact that they are willing to do this work, and able to do it, and still further that they do it. In the early history of the Church, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, Christianity spread chiefly through the voluntary zeal of ordinary Church members, and the work of the Apostles consisted mainly in superintending and organizing the companies of Christians thus gathered. Their zeal was so great that persecution could not repress, but only intensified it. If there is not that zeal and effort in the Church at home, it is much to be deplored. Perhaps the want of it is due in a great measure to a growing habit of leaving work for Christ to be done by those who are paid for it. Where such an idea prevails, whether at home or on missionary ground, it tends to paralyze the power of the Church for good.

It may be objected further that this aggressive zeal to which I have referred is due largely to the expectation of being employed; and that for this reason it is not to be relied upon, since it will decline as the hope of employment diminishes. There is no doubt much truth in this. Shall we then knowingly and deliberately pander to this mercenary spirit, and by continuing to employ new converts increase and perpetuate an evil which we deplore; or shall we not rather by refraining from employing them put a stop to the evil as soon as possible? While however without doubt some of these voluntary labourers are working with selfish aims, I believe there are others who work from higher and worthier motives. Let us depend on these and we shall not be disappointed. Not giving pecuniary employment to new converts will probably retard our work for a time, at least so far as numbers of adherents is concerned, but it will promote the work in the end.

III.—*We may get help in learning how to deal with new converts and stations by considering the nature of the Church and the law of its development.* Christianity, whether embodied in the individual or in a Church, is the outgrowth of a vital principle. In the spiritual as well as vegetable kingdom every vital germ has its own law of life and development, and it is only by following that law that the highest development can be secured. Christianity has been introduced into the world, as a plant which will thrive best confronting and contending with all the forces of its environment; not as a feeble exotic which can only live when nursed and sheltered. All unnecessary nursing will do it harm. A pine may be trained into a beautiful and fantastic shape, so as to be an object of interest and curiosity, and may flourish in a way; but it will not tower heavenward as the king of the forest unless from first to last it is subjected to the various and seemingly adverse influences

of scorching sun, biting frost, and surging tempest. A certain amount of care, and especially the right kind, is necessary: too much or injudicious care is injurious, and may be fatal to the life which it is intended to promote.

IV.—*Young converts should be proved, before they are employed and advanced to responsible public positions.* It is said of deacons in the 3rd chapter of Timothy, "Let them also be proved." The *also* refers no doubt to the previous qualifications required in bishops. These varied qualifications include knowledge, experience, self-culture, and spiritual growth, and discipline; all combining together to form a stable and reliable basis of character. If deacons as well as bishops must be first proved, is there not the same necessity for proving preachers and evangelists in China? There are laws in civilized countries requiring that in testing an anchor-chain or a wire cable it shall be subjected to a strain greater than will be required in after use, before precious treasure and more precious lives are trusted to it. Ordinary prudence, aside from Scripture command, would dictate the still greater necessity of testing the character of a man who is to be used in matters affecting the temporal and spiritual interests, immediately and prospectively, of perhaps thousands. In the zeal and glow of first converts they are apt, and that unwittingly, to deceive not only us but themselves. By all means let them be proved. How can this be done without leaving them to meet the difficulties and trials incident to the condition in which they are found, and that for a considerable length of time? We have further authoritative teaching from our Saviour himself on this point, specially designed to guard against the dangers resulting from the influence of false teachers. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The outward appearance of a tree may give promise of its being everything we could desire; but we cannot be sure of its character until it bears fruit; for this we may have to wait for years, and then find ourselves disappointed.

V.—*Young converts before they are advanced to positions of prominence and responsibility, should also be trained.* The processes of pruning and training, though quite different and distinct, are carried on simultaneously, and largely by the same means. This training includes not only study, but work, trial and perhaps suffering. It should be such as will fit a man to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. A man may be carried through a course of theological training, all his wants provided for, and freed from the struggle of ordinary life, and yet get very little of this disciplinary training which is so important. We may think we are helping a man by relieving him of burdens, when we are in fact only interfering with his training. Here again the element of time is a necessity. We are so apt to be in haste; to spur ourselves

on to premature and fruitless effort by considering how many souls are perishing while we are delaying. After the Apostle Paul was chosen and called, he was kept waiting nearly ten years before he was commanded to enter upon his special life work. Who will say that those ten years were not as important as any other period of his life, or that his after usefulness did not depend on them? Timothy also, by years of active and successful labor at home, obtained a good report of the brethren in Lystra and Derbe, after which he accompanied Paul as a helper; and when many years of proving and training were passed, became Paul's co-laborer and successor in the work of evangelization and the founding of churches.

If it be further asked what then is the best way to train men for usefulness in the Church, I know of no better answer, at least for the first stage of preparation, than to repeat the Scripture injunction, "Let every man abide in the calling wherein he was called." Nothing else can supply the plan of God's providential training in the school of ordinary life and practical experience. If God who has called a man to the fellowship of his Church, has also called him to the work of the ministry, He will manifest His purpose in His own time and way. In the meanwhile we should give to these young converts all the instruction, advice, and help, which Christian sympathy and prudence suggest.

VI.—*We should with faith and confidence commit young converts "to the Lord on whom they believed."* This was the course unhesitatingly adopted by the Apostle Paul; and I know of no reason why we should not follow his example. Our Saviour has promised to be always with His people unto the end of the world; and to send the blessed Spirit of all grace to abide with them forever. He will furnish for them, by conferring special graces of His Spirit, "prophets, teachers, exhorters, helps and governments," as they are required. Paul on his departure from places where he had made converts, often left Timothy or Silas or others to spend days or weeks in instructing, exhorting, and comforting them; and also sent special messengers to individual churches to correct abuses and furnish help as occasion required; but we read in the Acts of the Apostles of no case in which he left any one to stay with them as their resident minister. I believe that in failing to follow this Apostolic example we have often checked the development of individual gifts, and self-reliance, and aggressive power in our Churches; making them weak, inefficient and dependant from the first.

In the meantime in view of the great need of evangelists to enter open fields not yet reached, and of pastors and teachers to care for those who are already gathered into the fold, let us heed the solemn injunction of our Lord; "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest."