

Conversion Stories of Chinese Christians

By the Rev. Thomas Torrance, F.R.G.S.

[1871 – 1959]

November 2016

Foreword by David W. Torrance (youngest son of Thomas Torrance)

My father, the Rev. Thomas Torrance, was born into a farming family in North Lanarkshire, Scotland in 1871. Converted as a young man in his teens, he heard God calling him to be both a minister and a missionary. He studied theology at Hulme Cliff College, Sheffield and trained at Livingstone College, London for missionary service. In 1895 he sailed for China under the auspices of the China Inland Mission. After language study he was sent as a missionary to Chengdu in charge of several out-stations. In 1910 when attending the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh he was invited to be Superintendent for West China of the American Bible Society (ABS). He accepted the invitation and served with the ABS for the next 25 years, also becoming, at a later period, Superintendent for West China of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Serving with ABS gave him greater scope than formerly for widespread evangelism.

A man of prayer, who could often be heard praying in his sleep, and with a great passion for Christ, he threw himself into the work of spreading the Gospel and dispersing the Scriptures, in Chengdu and the surrounding areas and also in the mountains among the Qiang and other mountain tribes. Convinced of the need for the Chinese to possess the Bible for themselves, he and his helpers over the years gave out several million copies and portions of Scripture. They gave out or sold over one million in his last year, so that on his retirement it was said of him that no one had done more to make the Bible known in West China. He returned to Scotland in 1935.

In his own words, *“these life stories of Chinese Christians are sent forth in the hope that they will prove helpful to Christians generally and stimulate prayerful interest in foreign missions.”*

Several years ago the family donated some of my father’s many publications and letters to Yale University, USA. I am indebted to Miss Joan R. Duffy, Senior Archives Assistant at Yale Divinity School Library, for her helpfulness in sending me a scanned copy of this manuscript. I would also like to thank my friends and family who typed, read and checked the manuscript prior to publication.

I pray, as did my father, that this book will encourage Christians in their support for evangelism and world mission.

Rev. David W. Torrance
November 2016

Note to the Reader (2016)

On his return to Scotland in 1935, the Rev. Thomas Torrance hand-wrote then typed the manuscript for this book. In the days before electric typewriters and word processors, consideration would have to be given to each word typed and the format of the sentences. Mistakes would have to be crossed through and typed again, corrections made. These can be seen on the original manuscript. Accordingly, it is notable that references to Christians and Christianity are in lowercase, while all words pertaining to the divine nature of God are capitalised. This adds to the particular charm of Mr. Torrance’s narrative voice giving the reader insight into his personality, life and work. His desire to share the love of Christ and his familiarity with Scripture is very evident, as is his compassion and understanding of the frailty of the human condition.

Thomas Torrance’s almost forty years in China, together with personal experience and knowledge of the people whose stories he has translated, mean these observations are also a primary source for historical purposes. Therefore, the original text and format has been retained for this publication with the following exceptions: some quotation marks have been changed from double to single and some modern alternative text has been supplied where the language is considered to be archaic.

Square brackets denote text or references that have been added for clarification.

CONVERSION STORIES OF CHINESE CHRISTIANS

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Preface

These life stories of Chinese christians are sent forth in the hope that they will prove helpful to christians generally and stimulate prayerful interest in foreign missions. As each has its own lesson to convey and all bear witness to the divine faithfulness, the series is one of real testimonies put into print.

The characters were selected from converts intimately known to us and to ensure accuracy of statement they were asked, where possible, to write for us their christian experiences. This they each did in their peculiar native style and language. These are here freely translated and set forward with what added information came from the close observation of personal contact.

Attention is drawn to the importance of the circulation and reading of the Scriptures because from long experience in this work the writer learnt better than most its fundamental necessity.

It is now our prayer that these pages will serve to bring nearer to the hearts of home readers the trials and difficulties which beset the paths of the missionaries and of their converts in the cause of world-wide evangelisation.

T. Torrance.

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Chapter 1 The Story of Tang Kuang-Ching [Tang Guangqing]

'They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.'¹ God is searching out His jewels today, the wide world over. No place is too obscure for Him, no nation or people too degraded out of which He cannot gather sons for His glory. Even where men would shun to tread and scorn to go He is seeking and finding them one by one. Thus amid the lost millions of China God found Tang Kuang-Ching, a farmer, who like Elisha,² left his plough to become a preacher of righteousness.

Tang was a man of industrious habits, gentle in disposition and without guile. To the gospel he gave a ready response; it fulfilled the deep desires of his heart. Like Nathanael³ he seemed [to be] waiting for a revelation from Heaven and when that came a new-born joy filled his whole soul; it brought him the gift of eternal life through an all-sufficient Saviour.

In China it is much easier to win converts among the country classes than among the crowds of the cities. Many among the latter are keen on the acquiring of wealth and become steeped in deceit; repentance is exceedingly hard because so very inconvenient. The sons of the soil, contrariwise, who depend simply on the produce of their farms for a living are comparatively free from such temptations and lend a readier ear to the truth.

At the same time it is rare to find anyone even in the country accepting it immediately. Prejudices have to be removed, doubts dissolved, the message taught gradually and courage raised before the majority can break with the old beliefs and accept the new. [Mr] Tang was an exception. He had a keener moral sense than most. A love of the truth possessed him. When he met his Lord he instinctively knew Him. There was no thought of hesitancy. To the recognition he added a ready submission and to a ready submission a whole-hearted allegiance.

How should he pray? That was his first concern. No-one had told him. He did not quite know. The nearest mission station was four days away. By and by someone would come and instruct him and he should learn. Meanwhile he felt he must begin. The lack of the exact method need not detain him. Therefore,

'When day was dying in the West
And heaven was touching earth with rest'

He lit several stick of incense and stepping outside the door of his house, inserted these in the ground. As the fragrant fumes rose on high so also did his heart in earnest supplication to the Creator of heaven and earth, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the prayer was not altogether in the language of the hymn yet the inspiration was the same:

'Lord of Life, beneath the dome
Of the universe, Thy home
Gather us who seek Thy face
To the fold of Thy embrace
For Thou art nigh.'

"Through Thy Son", he reverently added. [Mr] Tang confessed himself a sinner. He pled the Son's merit. He accepted His death and resurrection as his own. He received with thanksgiving the gift of eternal forgiveness. He took his stand under the canopy of Christ's righteousness. And while the evening lamps were set alight through all the sky his soul was set aglow for evermore with the glory of Divine grace.

Mr Tang soon learned that the use of incense was not necessary in christian prayer. But no later petition exceeded in importance this first which opened to him the gate of life.

¹ [Malachi 3:17]

² [1 Kings 19:20-21]

³ [John 1:45-51]

The old man had been a Christian for a number of years before the writer met him. There was nothing outstanding about him to attract one. What a stranger noticed first was his meek demeanour coupled with an earnest smile. His clothing was the commonest. He neither pretended any superiority nor sought place for himself. He was content to be a help to any one.

No family claims restricted his movements. He was a childless widower. Once he had adopted a son but he turned out wild and left him. Being therefore, free from dependents, he rented out his farm that he might give his remaining years to preaching. With the love of Christ in his heart the call was imperative. Who, knowing what Christ could do for men, could stand aside when their moral darkness was so dense? He must tell his countrymen of the Saviour's grace. True it was, the rent from his farm would be barely sufficient to meet his needs but he did not mind hardship for the privilege of proclaiming the gospel.

That he lived Christ as well as preached Him every one knew. Men invariably saw in [Mr] Tang a man whose words and actions were beyond reproach. All he did was perfectly transparent. Never was anyone freer from self-seeking and nowhere else was there found a fellow mortal whose every word could be implicitly believed. In a country where all men were more or less given to lying, where children grew up in falsehood and where deception often was gloried in as a fine art, the guileless farmer was a native prodigy.

It is not generally appreciated that one of the heaviest trials in a missionary's life is having one's soul vexed from day to day with the filthy conversation, the awful corruption and wanton cruelty of the heathen. And where these are polished over with a suave politeness of manner and the profession of a superior ethic the reaction is very depressing. But the limit of endurance is reached when it is found that sometimes Christians bring over with them into the church the double dealing and avaricious habits of their former state. Under such circumstances it is only the love of Christ welling up in the heart combined with a knowledge of the marvellous power of His sanctifying grace that enables one to carry on. As we looked at faithful Tang, we, like the apostle on the way to Rome, thanked God and took courage. Such a sweet flower to find in such an evil morass! What God's grace could do! We never met him without a warming at the heart. It was a pleasure to sit down and talk with him. Some of his ways were, of course, primitive but what of that? He was a son of the King, who saved our faith in the possibilities of his race.

We grieved simply that in ordinary conversation he laboured under a handicap; he was somewhat given to stammering. The boorish element could not refrain thereby from discounting his personal worth or treating him with less respect than they should, yet happily he never stammered in his preaching. This was remarkable. Account for it how one might, the fact remained. He could face his audience confidently without any tremor or hesitancy in his speech.

Stammering, as is not too well known, is a peculiar habit where a speaker unconsciously tries to inhale and exhale at the same time, the result of which is a distracting and broken or gurgling form of articulation. Where a full breath is first taken and talk proceeds as that is steadily exhaled stammering is an impossibility. Tang knew nothing of this, he had simply acquired the habit when young and it had remained with him. But it was different with the subject matter of his message. His heart was so full of the good news that it flowed from his lips freely, unreservedly and effusively.

There was neither stuttering in his accent nor in his theology. His Bible was too assiduously read for that. He had experienced so much of God's goodness that he spoke as one who knew. There was no uncertain sound in his call for repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Men should take God at His word and taste and see that He was good.⁴ A plain man himself, he spoke to plain men. His language was theirs. If eloquence was lacking, what he said they understood and it had the right ring. That in the end was what mattered. Consequently it was the plain people he won – the farmers, the artisans, the average work-a-day folk. They wanted a note of certainty or authority to satisfy

⁴ [Psalm 34:8]

their hearts and because he could show them that in the Scriptures, they rallied to his side in the same faith.

The Chinese are firm believers in the existence of evil spirits. All their lifetime they are subject to bondage through fear of them. Their malignant powers are thought to be varied and far reaching. As a consequence exorcists are in constant demand. The houses of these men can be easily detected by the tiers of idols displayed in their doorways. Inside they have rows of jars on shelves, each of which contains, it is alleged, a demon caught and sealed up there from some residence it had frequented. Our friend as a christian had long ceased to credit such roguish practices, nevertheless he was certain demons did abound and could trouble men by their presence. To prove his belief he told us once of an experience of his own. A homestead had become the object of an evil spirit's visitation. The people hearing that christians were not subject to demoniacal annoyance called for Mr Tang and others to go to their assistance. On their arrival he himself witnessed proofs of its presence. As they sang hymns and prayed, a sudden rushing sound through the mat ceiling was heard and it had gone never to return. No critical questioning could shake his positive statements. To him there was no doubt about the evil they could do any more than there was any doubt in his mind that they fled at the name of the Lord Jesus. Moreover the fact comforted him that since God's Holy writ ran through the spiritual world, it was an earnest of the power that would deliver believers from fear of evil when they came to pass through the dark valley.⁵ No followers of the Lamb need dread the malignant beings of outer darkness. Christ had taken away the sting of death which was sin and nothing but light and love awaited those who put their trust in Him.⁶

During the most of his years of service, he took charge in succession of several out-stations. Wherever he laboured he invariably drew around him a number of earnest believing people. The missionaries knew all was safe when he was present. Scheming men drew off from him; he attracted only those of like mind with himself.

On one occasion, a striking incident was related to us. He had gone to visit his native place, which was near the city of Tanlin. On the way he lodged one evening at the [mission] out-station there. The preacher in place of showing him the customary hospitality, sent him to pass the night in a small empty granary. It was during the trying heat of summer and the mosquitoes were in swarms. In such suffocating quarters the old man lay tormented by them. Sleep would not come, he could only lie patiently and try to endure. While suffering like this, a voice came to him saying, "Tang Kuang Ching, Tang Kuang Ching, I am present with thee." At once an indescribable peace filled his soul and he slept as sweetly as a child until the morning. Let who will seek to explain away the voice, the experience was very real to him. Though underrated by man the realisation that his Lord knew and loved and cared, made everything easy. Next day he went plodding on his way with a glad heart.

His whole life was one long plod. Other men could command a crowd or gain plaudits and distinction, he had to pursue his own quiet path. Yet their success often depended on what he had first done. When he had lived for a time in a place, his presence and prayers seemed to soften and loosen the usual difficulties. After him, success was easily attained. Thus he laboured and endured until his Master called him to Higher Service.

The Missionaries in these pioneer days, when anti-christian feeling ran high, prized greatly Tang's faithful witness. He could not be intimidated or induced to compromise. His best apology [defence] against false accusers was silence and sufferance; he set honest deeds against dishonest words. If he did not strive or lift up his voice in the street there was no mistaking the nature of his faith. He preferred to be as an Isaac before the Philistines rather than to wrangle.⁷ Men saw him to be a man of peace who preached the Gospel of peace. And since 'he ate his own rice' and not that of

⁵ [Psalm 23:4]

⁶ [1 Corinthians 15:54-57]

⁷ [Genesis 26]

the foreigner no fault could be found 'against him except concerning the law of his God.'⁸ With well-doing he 'put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.'⁹

No monument marks his grave; no epitaph records his worth. It may chance, however, that this brief story of his life will bring encouragement to other labourers in the Lord's vineyard, especially to those entrusted only with one talent. It shows what God can do with a plain man who consecrates his remaining years to His service in the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

⁸ [Daniel 6:5]

⁹ [1 Peter 2:15]

Chapter 2 The Story of Ko Da-Niang (Auntie Gou)¹⁰

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.’¹¹ ‘Blessed be ye poor for yours is the Kingdom of God.’¹² A mere academical critic with his scholastic judgment may pronounce these sayings to be varying versions of a single original but the humble christian reader with a finer spiritual sense and a truer appreciation of their fitness to christian experience perceives them to be neither conflicting in meaning or verbal expression, but rather the obverse and reverse sides of the same great current truth. St. Matthew and St. Luke here as elsewhere are supplementing each other, showing again the exceeding preciousness of the Scriptures and that nothing can be too small in their iridescent setting not to warrant our careful attention. The seeming flaw in the construction to the pedantic scholar, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit is seen to be a mark of beauty and enhances their import to the believer.

Mrs Ko Da-Niang, the subject of the present sketch was blessed in the double sense for she was both poor in spirit and poor in this world’s goods. A servant of the Lord and a servant to man she possessed one of the gentlest dispositions that could be found. Truly when one knew her he had to say that God’s flowers could grow in the lowest and unlikeliest of places.

How came such grace and beauty in her life? It came not in her circumstances or environment or family prosperity. She might with simple truth have said, “All things are against me.” She had no natural advantages, no school-learning, no ease from the grind of daily toil, no material incentive to rise superior to those around her, but much to irritate, depress and drag her down. She had the continuous dull ache of bound feet;¹³ her husband died comparatively early; her two sons had to eke out a hard living on a small farm; first one of these died and then the other. Like Naomi¹⁴, the Almighty seemed to deal bitterly with her. The struggle for existence with her daughters-in-law and grandson became very hard. Nevertheless she ever retained her gracious, ladylike, gentle manner. From whence indeed but from the grace of God came all that patience in trial and such strength of character?

No-one could have said she was a theologian. A request to recite the Apostles creed would have debarred her for ever from baptism. She knew simply the salient facts of christianity and took her stand thereby. The great thing about her was she invariably ‘ran true to form.’ Others might preach she could live. She translated the faith into everyday love and action. Hers was the charm of a pure and faithful life, ‘the moral sublimity, not the intellectual magnificence,’ that touches the universal heart.

All round dependability summed up her services. We had servants we could have trusted with our lives at any time whom we should never have dreamt of trusting with our purses. Honesty was not in them. They regarded us as legal prize and all was fair in this love and war of gain-getting. ‘Squeeze’ theoretically, might perhaps be wrong but it was the Chinese custom and that was all they cared. Mrs Ko was of a different order. She loved us as friends in the highest sense and her moral principles rose superior to such meannesses. Our lives, our honour, and our goods were equally safe with her. No jibe, taunt, threat, cajolery or artifice could make her disloyal to us and her duty. For did she not serve God more than man?

Christians and faithful servants in China had much abuse to bear. The enemy’s favourite reproach was to style them ‘foreign slaves’ or ‘traitors to their country.’ They were cursed as atheists, as the neglecters of their ancestors, as the hangers-on of an outside religion and as the

¹⁰ [Ko Da Niang means something like Aunt Ko, which is a term of respect for an older lady. Ko Huang Shih, as mentioned later in the text, may well have been her actual name.]

¹¹ [Matthew 5:3]

¹² [Luke 6:20]

¹³ Foot-binding in China permanently cripples the feet.

¹⁴ [Ruth 1]

eaters of foreigners' table leavings. A servant 'boy' of ours who coveted a bed-coverlet hid it away to take home on the first opportunity. When it was accidentally discovered by another servant and restored to us, the 'boy,' in his chagrin charged [accused] the restorer with having no regard for the interests of a countryman but only for those of the foreigner. Another amusing instance of this strange mentality happened in the travels of a colporteur. Footpads, seeing he had with him two large well-filled baskets pounced out on him, suddenly, when going from one town to another. Discovering that they contained only Gospels, which to them, were valueless, they could not help saying to him, "O, you are a slave to the foreigner, and one of these traitors to your country, are you?" The implication was that he was worse than they were. These incidents aptly illustrate the contempt often exhibited in pioneer days towards those who joined the 'foreign religion' and broke caste with their race. The assumption was, that no one could love his country and accept a non-Chinese faith. Even Buddhists joined in offering the galling insult.

As in ancient Rome, to be a christian was regarded as being an enemy to society.

None of these things moved, in the least, this lowly christian woman. The progression of years brought no diminution in her loyalty or staunchness of character. The cares of her family forbade her staying long with us in Chengtu but she served others from time to time in her native city of Kwanhsien¹⁵ with equal fidelity. She could not preach but by her help she could set free those who did. And when they returned home everything was clean, sweet and in order. The comfort and soothing satisfaction of it all, to the tired and weary missionary was beyond words. Who can assess the worth of service of this sort? In ancient Israel, he who abode with the stuff and he who went down into battle shared alike the spoils. In the Kingdom of Heaven shall not the reward of the faithful be likewise?

We read that God set in the church, as His gifts to it, - first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.¹⁶ Mrs Ko distinctively came under the sixth classification of 'helps.' She was God's gift to us. His grace shone in her life, enabling her to fill a most needy niche. She came not to be served but to serve and give her time to facilitate the work of others.

Every Summer during July and August we had to leave the trying heat of the plain for the cooler air of the Western hills. It was near this summer resort that Ko Huang Shi, as she was also called, lived. The way she then rejoiced in meeting Mrs T.¹⁷ was as a mother over her daughter. Love insisted on manifesting itself in every way possible. She then entered and became one of the family, as a veritable Granny. Love made it her right; she had such a homely eager interest in the comfort and well-being of all.

In the summer of 1929 it became obvious that her strength was beginning to fail. She was then in her eighty-fourth year. On parting with her that Autumn a wistful look came into her eyes as she tried to let us understand that it was doubtful if we should meet again on earth. The news of her death during the winter did not, therefore, surprise us though it left a pang that we had not been able to be near to minister to her at the end. But the angels carried her Home.

N.B. Let us read now these sayings of the Lord, as recorded by St. Luke.

'Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your names as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice upon that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers to the prophets. But woe

¹⁵ [Now part of Dujiangyan]

¹⁶ [1 Corinthians 12:28]

¹⁷ [Annie Elizabeth Torrance: missionary and wife of Thomas Torrance]

unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.¹⁸

Are they not surprisingly adapted to her case? Note how peculiarly they fit into her experience to soothe, cheer and enable her to endure. Would not all such as she be vastly poorer without this every-day garb of the *Logia* of Jesus? He who made His preaching of the Gospel to the poor the greatest sign of His Messiahship expressly repeated in simpler form His Sermon on the Mount¹⁹ to enable such as this humble servant of the Lord to bear patiently the trials of this present life.

¹⁸ [Luke 6:20-26]

¹⁹ [Matthew 5-7]

Chapter 3 The Story of Han Shen Chih [Han Shenchi]

Han Shen Chih lived at Jamingwan, a picturesque little town, nestling at the foot of the mountains to the west of the great Chengtu plain in the province of Szechuan. He was a man of easy circumstances and good education. His land yielded him a fair return. Besides he was the owner of a property on the street, part of which served as a tea-shop and part as a medicine shop. Among his neighbours he was regarded as a man of standing, one capable of executive ability. But, he had a grave fault: he was a very heavy opium-smoker.

There was another prominent figure in the town, a scholar, with a degree to his name. Whether it was that the two were rivals for the public esteem or that the proud Confucianist was too haughty in his bearing towards [Mr] Han might have been difficult to determine but there existed a feud between the two men. The scholar keen to offset [Mr] Han in any feasible way wrote against him to us. Finding how matters stood a tea-meeting was arranged and the two men invited with others to attend. We talked kindly to the scholar and beyond expectation succeeded in convincing him of our sincere good will. We explained that christians stood for charity before all. We preached forgiveness, love and mutual forbearance. To our very enemies we required to return good for evil. When we then appealed to him to let bygones be bygones and if he would, Mr Han should do the same and the two hereafter might live together in peace and concord, he quietly agreed. Moreover, he kept his word.

The reconciliation cleared the air. Besides removing a load from Mr Han's mind it put the church on its feet. For a literary man of this class carried great authority among the people; he might have created endless trouble for all. With his neutrality gained, the little flock felt free to go on to the consolidation of their church work.

It was at this juncture we besought Mr Han to give up the evil habit of opium-smoking. If he would, we could take him to Chengtu and place him in the Mission hospital where he should have every attention. He need not fear; others had been cured; why not he? He came. All went as expected until the third and fourth days. Then the nervous reaction which usually reaches its worst at this period became, with him, more than he could bear. He had smoked such an excessive quantity that the cure became correspondingly hard. In the extremity of his distress he exclaimed, "I know that no foreign doctor and no medicine can help me; no one, but God can. Without His intervention my case is hopeless." So there and then he cried unto the Lord of all mercies to save him.

The ancient miracle was repeated. The Lord heard the suppliant's call, and answered him out of His Holy temple. The needed deliverance came. It came abundantly to body and soul. From that day forward Mr Han became a new man. Physically and spiritually, he returned to his home a wonder to his neighbours. The opium-slave was changed to the saint!

He settled down quietly to his old vocation, but he showed a new power in witness-bearing. Christ had become real to him. His children he faithfully taught in the Word. To all he set forth the Gospel. Wherever anyone was sick or in trouble, there one would find him pointing them to the source of supreme comfort. As a matter of course he took the place of leader in the church. The position naturally devolved upon him.

Sorrow came unexpectedly to his own door. His only daughter, a girl of tender years, sickened and died. Before she breathed her last, she led her mother into the full joy of Christian liberty. Unlike the father, the mother had not given up the opium-pipe. The daughter told her mother that as long as she used it, "one foot remained in the pit". Thus she would never be able to meet her in heaven. Her heart-wringing entreaty at once did its work; the mother thereupon fully consecrated her life to Christ.

Han's Master was teaching him. It must not be supposed, however real his christianity was, that he suddenly became free from everything of the flesh and the world. Called out of heathen

surroundings the grave clothes had to be unloosed. There were certain usages and clinging ways it took time to shed. The main thing was, he had the principle of life within. He was constantly growing. The Rev. F. and Mrs Olsen, who returned to the station became father and mother to him: he could pour out his heart to them, they in turn poured the best in theirs to him.

One day he went to visit friends. A messenger ran to tell him that the street in which he lived was on fire. Returning hastily he heard, while yet on the way, that the saving of his house was hopeless; the fire had started in the adjoining building. Instantly he went on his knees, though it was in a busy thoroughfare, earnestly beseeching God to help him. Almost at once the wind changed blowing the flames in the opposite direction. His house was saved. Everyone marvelled. The answer was so direct that no one could doubt that He whom the Christians worshipped was the one true God who answered the prayers of His children.

After a time a fresh sorrow came to him. Mrs Han fell sick. The Master who took the daughter now took the mother. Home felt strangely lonely to him and the two sons. In very truth their thoughts were being turned from earth to heaven. Yet, the Lord of life and love remained. This was his consolation. Where he could not trace he could trust.

In the church Mr Han had an intimate friend. This man, Shong Shen-Ting, did not have [Mr] Han's breadth of intellect or wide knowledge of Scripture but had a strong gift of loyalty. The two were like David and Jonathan in all they did, one in heart and purpose²⁰. At the revolution, when the Chinese discarded the queue²¹ which had been the sign of submission to the late dynasty Mr Shong firmly dissented. He was now an old man, he explained, it could not be long before he met his Emperor and when he did, he wanted to show him that he remained true to him to the last.

It was only a very occasional visit that one was able to make to the district, such as when an invitation came to join an evangelistic band, organised now and again for a preaching campaign through the country of the foothills, but any time the writer did manage to go Mr Han's welcome was the warmest. He ever spoke in grateful remembrance of his being taken to Chengtu. His joy rose very high once, when we were able to be present and assist at a number of baptisms. The Lord had given him fruit, it was meet we all should rejoice together.

The church he built on a plot of his own ground. The cost was borne mostly by himself. It combined a room for the use of the missionary on his visits and two others for the use of the caretaker. Though it had no outward elegance, it was substantial: it was their own.

As the years advanced on him, he mellowed visibly in his Christian deportment. His speech took on a wistful note. He pondered much on Christ's Second Coming. When should the Rapture happen? It was evident the glory of the other world was beginning to dawn on his soul. He wanted to see the Saviour, the King of Righteousness,

'In His beauty all-resplendent
In His glory all-transcendent.'²²

A month before his decease, he remarked that he suffered from no ailment save a growing weakness. The last sermon he preached, as chance or divine decree had it, was appropriately on the words, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which, the Righteous Judge shall give me in that day, and not to me only, but unto them also that love His appearing.'²³

²⁰ [1 Samuel 18]

²¹ [Male hairstyle worn by the Manchu people and then the Han Chinese during the Qing dynasty]

²² [From the hymn written by Frances Havergal. Thou art coming, O my Saviour. Verse 1]

²³ [2 Timothy 4:7-8]

Chapter 4 Eventide Conversions

The Hunchback Priest

Fu Ho-Shang [Fu Heshang²⁴] was only a frail old hunchback. There was nothing about him to attract the casual observer but his deformity. Other priests in the Ling-Ngai²⁵ temple were quick to assert themselves; he, on the contrary, was quiet and unassuming. Morning and evening he might be seen going the rounds of the courts beating the prefatory drum signals to apprise the mud-gods of their daily recognition and inserting candles and incense before them. If his colleagues were late or absent the old man was always on hand. He was the stand-by. They could drink, smoke opium or do worse, Fu had no such evil habits. To his unobtrusive constancy was added an unusual morality. Here it was that the missionaries, who came to his mountain-dwelling to escape the fierce July-August heat of the plain, became interested in him. His gracious smile, in answer to a kindly word, was something to be remembered. In addition to his other work, he also diligently kept the paths clear of weeds so that he was regarded as a common benefactor.

How came he to wear the robes of a Buddhist devotee? Obviously, his whole bearing was not of the priestly order. He had been a braid-weaver the most of his life. When infirmity began to overtake him and the opportunity presented itself of service in a temple, with its assurance of sustenance for the rest of his days and the accumulation of a spiritual account against the world to come, it was too good to let slip. So this is how he met us and we met him. The impact of the meeting certainly led to momentous issues for him.

It did so because he had a greater freedom from bias than is usually the case with men reared in an atmosphere of incense. His chief, for instance, clinging tenaciously to self-acquired merit from long-time Sutra incantations and wooden-fishappings, wilfully refused to give ear to the wooing notes of a free, divine, sinner-justifying righteousness as revealed in Jesus Christ. His associate similarly, blindly supposing all was well for him in Buddha's clutch for time and eternity went plunging forward in a lifelong course of carnal gratification. The poor hunchback alone saw that the missionaries had something real in their faith.

The perception he was afraid to plainly acknowledge. By this time he was far too infirm and tottering to try and gain a livelihood elsewhere. Open interest would have brought heavy censure if not expulsion from temple precincts. Faith, however, like love can not for ever remain hidden. Circumstances arise sooner or later impelling confession. In the old man's case it was sickness. The gift of medicine by Mrs T.²⁶ with added nourishment overcame his trembling reticence. When told afresh of Jesus and asked why he did not put his trust in Him for salvation, the implied rebuke was more than he could stand. "Let me tell you," he earnestly insisted, "it is indeed in Jesus that I am trusting." The sudden irrepressible outburst of soul brought an indescribable thrill to our hearts. Moreover it threw the rebuke back on ourselves for our lack of faith. We had been caught again preaching the gospel in unexpectant fashion: we had not dared to believe that God could snatch such a brand from the burning. Yet, though humiliated, we rejoiced at his confession.

Our brief summer sojourn on the mountain soon terminated and duty took us back to the plain. We left him very weak and feeble in body but calmly trusting in the Lord. The end came during the winter. He died in his seventy-seventh year. What a joy it must have been for him to exchange his hovel in the dilapidated temple on the cliff for the one not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens! When our day of toil is done we are sure he will greet us again with the same sweet smile which first won our hearts to him on earth.

²⁴ [This 'Heshang' is probably the Chinese term for 'monk' 和尚]

²⁵ [Ling'ai Temple, now called Lingyan Temple, in the mountain foothills west of Chengdu, above Dujiangyan]

²⁶ [Annie Elizabeth Torrance, missionary and wife of Thomas Torrance]

The Village Patriarch

Su Da-Yea [Xu Daye²⁷] was our first Chiang convert at Wenchuan. We met him first on the street with several others of his race, when visiting this walled town in the North-West mountains. There were Wasze tribesmen, Chinese and Chiang all there but I was then pursuing investigations mostly among the last named and persuaded several to pose for their picture. Su Da-Yea was one of the number. That and medicine supplied to him on further visits won his lasting regard. Year by year he would watch for me as I passed on my journey up the Min valley. Never did he lose an opportunity of meeting me. We knew we had his heart. Yet that to us was not enough: we wanted him for Christ. It grieved us much that while he and his fellow villagers would laden us with eggs and walnuts to show their affection when we called, the gospel seemed to make so little impression on him. What was to be done? At that time we had not learnt all there was to be known about the secret religious customs of his people and consequently were not so well equipped as we later became to urge the claims of Christ. Still the weapon of prayer remained and its power which we knew, could reinforce our talks to him.

It was not lost upon us that, if he were won, others among his friends would follow. Being the patriarch of his village his example went far. It was not that he was averse to listening to the truth or having it presented to others. He once took care, after we had finished addressing a number of people, to translate and repeat what we had said to those among them who were not fully conversant with the Chinese language. The great awakening simply had not come to him yet. His mental assent required to be changed into a living appropriating faith.

To foster this desired end it was resolved to hold a winter-time Bible Class at Wenchuan. Then the farmers would have more time to attend. We sent a capable teacher from Chengtu to conduct it. He was instructed to gather in promising adherents and provide free board for all so that no one need remain away through poverty. Su Da-Yea attended the class. It transpired he had been sick but had recovered in time to join. The daily study of the Word succeeded where the casual conversations and talks had failed. The old man was won outright to a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

On the teacher's return to Chengtu, great was our joy to learn the good news about our highland friend. But swiftly behind it came the tidings of his death. Soon after returning to his home another attack of sickness overtook him which this time proved too much for his strength. After four days he passed in to see the Saviour he had so recently accepted. In the passing he was heard to pray, "O Lord do not let me go, I'll never let Thee go." This was the interpretation of the meaning of his expiring cry.

Have not the most of Christ's own, at one time or another, prayed the same Heaven-piercing prayer?

'When I fear my faith will fail,
Christ will hold me fast:
When the tempter would prevail
He will hold me fast.

He'll not let my soul be lost
He will hold me fast
Bought by Him at such a cost
He will hold me fast.²⁸

²⁷ [Grandfather Xu]

²⁸ [Hymn written by Ada Ruth Habershon. When I fear my faith will fail.]

The Wounded Farmer

‘Send the light, where souls are dying
In their darkness, gloom and light;
Haste, O haste! The days are fleeting
And the hours – how swift their flight!’²⁹

These words of the hymn come to the mind when passing round the wards of the hospital. Always to a certain number here time is indeed fleeting. The opportunity of directing them to Christ is likewise fleeting. One knows not how many will have passed on before another visit, how many sent off as incurable and how many, as convalescent, given leave to go home. A very pressing sense of responsibility, therefore, weighs upon the christian worker as he passes from bed to bed.

A man of sixty years, or there about, had been brought in wounded to the Canadian Mission hospital in Chengtu. Robbers, so numerous everywhere since the establishment of the Republic, had attacked his home, leaving him with a serious wound in the upper thigh. Treatment being altogether beyond the power of any Chinese practitioner he had been brought to the care of the well-known missionary surgeon.

Wound cases are common enough in China today. One never stops to regard their occurrence as anything unusual. It was the kindly, gentle bearing of this man that impressed one immediately. He was not of the common order. His features too, had more of a foreign cast than of the true Mongolian form. On inquiry, he explained how he came to be thus wounded. The gift of a tract, an expression of sympathy with a few pointed words anent his soul’s welfare drew from him his story.

But on a subsequent visit we spoke at more length, a glance made it plain that his strength was dangerously declining. He listened calmly, thoughtfully, gratefully. Doubtless he realised our interest in him. As a pause came in the conversation, he said, “God, yes, Jehovah God.” Surprised at the interjectionary remark because we had supposed that he knew little of God, we inquired how he came to know the Name of Jehovah. He smiled back, “I have a Bible at home and have been reading it.” This indeed gave us no ordinary joy. Resuming, we urged him to make his prayer unto Jehovah, the Lord of all mercies. Such now was his own ardent wish. He asked if we could supply him with a printed prayer that he could use.

Evidently he wanted to make no mistake in his petitions, the tremendous importance of salvation made care necessary. We tried to explain that true prayer came from the heart and was offered in the Name of Jesus. “Yes,” he understood, nevertheless, he would like a pattern prayer to guide him. Looking up at me with his whole soul in his eyes he said, “If you will give me one I shall be everlastingly indebted to you.”

His words rang piercingly in our ears. We indeed gave him his request, and soon after he passed within the veil. Wounded in body, but healed in soul!

‘If I ask him to receive me,
Will He say me nay?
Not till earth and not till heaven
Pass away.’³⁰

²⁹ [Hymn written by Fanny J. Crosby. Send the light, O send it quickly. Verse 2]

³⁰ [Hymn written by St. Stephen of Mar Sabas, translated by John M. Neale. Art thou weary, art thou languid? Verse 6]

The Rich Young Ruler

‘The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth, so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.’³¹ There are memorable occasions in the lives of God’s servants when their words are so directed and adapted to the particular needs of an individual or an audience that they themselves wonder at it. Every sentence seems to ring with power and the response in the listeners is electric. It was thus one afternoon the writer met a tubercular patient in one of the private wards in the hospital in Chengtu. He was a man of official connection, thirty-eight years of age, from the district of Suining and incidentally the finest looking Chinese I had ever seen. The soft keenness of his eye and the heightened colour of his cheeks lent much, of course, to his attractive appearance.

His manners were of the pre-revolution dignified type; he was a gentleman – every inch of him.

The day being Sunday, he knew my errand. He appreciated that and listened respectfully. In the course of conversation, he asked if we thought he should recover. It was evident that his days were nearly run, his voice had lost its resonance, he could only talk in a whisper, but we evaded telling him so. Our business was to gain his ear. The succeeding talk abundantly did that. Face to face with eternal issues, he drank in every word. Consenting to accept Christ we suggested he should give his decision definiteness by engaging at once in prayer. He besought us to lead him, which we did. It was truly a heart-moving time. Every sentence he repeated so earnestly, reverently and unfalteringly that instinctively one realised the Spirit of God was present. Only at the last word, which was a new one to him, viz., the Amen, did he pause for a fraction of a second before pronouncing it. Looking across at him, we knew a soul had passed from death unto life.

He told me that once he had been urged, by a friend, to consider the gospel. But the appeal failed. When he went on to say that he was then in official life, he did not need to explain why he had turned aside from the truth. The appalling corruption in government courts made it next to impossible for a public man to be a christian. Fortunately for him, the same God who saw fit to carry his people to Babylon to plead with them, brought him likewise into the valley of affliction for the same purpose, ‘Jesus, beholding him, loved him.’³² He would not take his “nay” as final for did He not discern an embryonic “yea” wrapped up in the very sadness whereby he had turned away. In the glory, therefore, of an all-wise love He brought it forth at last, when the sadness turned to gladness, which in turn was changed into rapture at the sight of the Lord.

The Broken Student

Can anything be sadder than to see the young cut off, especially at the opening of a promising career? The world is so rosy, its possible achievements so alluring and friends so numerous that the dark spectre of death is never so hideous looking as it is then. Have we not all moaned in spirit when seeing a widow’s son taken, or some Lazarus³³ friend laid away in the darkness of a tomb? Such tragedies made Jesus himself weep.

A young student lay in the corner bed of the open air ward on the roof of the Chengtu hospital chapel. How sad he looked! The sun to him, as it were, had gone out. Life had become an utter tangle. A severe lung haemorrhage had suddenly shattered all his hopes. Without God or prospect of anything good in earth or heaven fate seemed harsh and malevolent. To be cut off not even in the midst of one’s years but at the beginning of them was indeed hard. Like a bird with a broken wing or a wild creature with a mortal wound, all he could do was to hide himself away and then, if the foreign physician failed, wait painfully for the end.

³¹ [John 3:8]

³² [Mark 10:21]

³³ [John 11]

In the midst of his gloom, what a surprise it was for him, to be told definitely, that 'God is Love.'³⁴ The Heavenly Father cared for His children. He certainly did not make man, to mock him. He had a wise purpose in His creation, and, if we only had eyes to see it, all things work together to accomplish this for us. Not caprice, but eternal righteousness moved Him in all He did: the purpose was that 'man should attain unto eternal life.'³⁵

This, truly was the object of human existence. What hindered men from receiving it was the fact of sin. So many refused to repent. They loved darkness rather than light. This arrested their spiritual development. A man might live to be eighty or a hundred and, because of sin, fail entirely to attain unto the stature of the super life – eternal life; whereas a child, if he willed, might receive it and excel him. The measure of life was not its span but the use made of it. Did we realise or not its divine design?

The removal of sin was the first necessary step in the process. Christ, the Son of God, accomplished this on the Cross. He died there, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Consequently upon those who repent and accept His saving work, the Spirit of God comes to implant eternal life in their hearts. Therefore, 'he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life and he that believeth not the Son shall not have life; but the wrath of God abideth in him.'³⁶

Thus to anyone who has received eternal life the thought of an early death need not be regarded as a calamity. For has he not achieved the supreme purpose for which he was made? The cessation of earthly existence will but open the door into the door of the glory beyond. 'To be with Christ is far better'³⁷: the sooner we are with Him, the more sorrow we shall escape here. We should trust the Architect of our lives as to our length of days. Our times are in His hand. His love cannot but bring to us the best good for He cannot divest Himself of 'His nature to love.'

Such was the sum of the message given to the broken student. To him, as to multitudes besides, it came as a direct revelation from Heaven. Humbly, gratefully, rejoicingly he accepted it. Darkness, doubt and fear vanished. For the Holy Spirit fell again on him who received the Word. From that day forth he was a new man in thought and feeling. Whenever we met him afterwards his face lit up with a kindly smile.

To nourish his faith we sent a Chinese christian to sit and chat with him. They could share their joys in common. For some weeks there was no apparent change for the worse in his physical condition; death did not seem near. So it was thought. But one day the bed was empty. Another attack of haemorrhage had come, without warning, which ended the tale of his earthly career. He was not, for God took him.

'Out of the fear and dread of the tomb,
Jesus I come, Jesus I come!
Into the joy and light of Thy home,
Jesus I come! Jesus I come!
Out of the depths of ruin untold,
Into the peace of Thy sheltering fold,
Every Thy glorious face to behold,
Jesus I come! Jesus I come!'³⁸

³⁴ [1 John 4:8,16]

³⁵ [John 10:27-29]

³⁶ [John 3:36]

³⁷ [Philippians 1:23]

³⁸ [Hymn written by William True Sleeper. Out of my bondage, sorrow and night. Verse 4]

Chapter 5 The Story of Teacher Ho [Teacher He]

‘There are few nobler characters, even among the many noble ones of the Old Testament, than Nehemiah, the leader of the restored exiles. He was no prophet – he was no priest – he made no pretension to possessing a divine commission, but he was a devout, resolute, sagacious man with the fear of God in his heart and Jerusalem graven on his inmost heart. Prompt and practical, with a strong dash of organising ability, there was yet a vein of poetry in him. He was bold and cautious, prudent yet daring, full of ready resource, able to hold his tongue and bide his time, and deep down below all this there was a great fountain of enthusiasm which was called forth by the thought of God and of his land lying in desolation and ruin.’

“‘So did not I because of the fear of God’; these touching words have immediate reference to a particular matter but they let us into the secret of a great part of his character. His predecessors, the representatives of a foreign dominion, had been in the habit of making a gain of their office, or at least charging the maintenance of the cost of their court and household to the people already impoverished and ground down by exactions. Against this practice he made a stand. It might be a little thing but Nehemiah brought a great principle to bear upon it, and though, says he, it was a recognised legitimate custom and source of gain, though all my predecessors had done it, and though there was nothing but a sentiment to stand in the way of my doing, yet I could not do it, because – I feared God.’

This comment on the character of Nehemiah by the late Dr. A. McLaren might with slight variation have been written about that of Teacher Ho, a preacher and sincere friend of the writer. He was a man who dared to be singular because of the fear of the Lord. What others around might or might not do carried no force with him if he was persuaded that they were in the wrong or acting unwisely. He put God and His glory first because Jesus Christ was his Captain. The heavenly Jerusalem he had ‘graven on his inmost heart.’ To gain honour from men he cared not, if he found not honour from God. No one could entice him to go with a multitude to do evil or exploit his help for questionable ends. He could not be turned aside from what he conceived to be the path of rectitude and duty.

Confucius is reported to have said: “Is it not delightful to have friends coming to see you from distant quarters? Yet is he not a man of complete virtue who feels no discomposure though men may take no note of him?” Such a one was our friend; a man about whom it could be truly said what the immediate followers of China’s great sage said about him, he was, “benign, courteous, temperate and complaisant.” He, “held faithfulness and sincerity as first principles” as all were charged to hold and had no friends not believing therein.

He was one of four brothers who all became Christians. He himself followed the profession of a school teacher. When he heard the gospel preached in his native town, his aptitude for study enabled him to supplement what he had learnt by reading the excellent tracts written by Dr Griffith John, the eminent L. M. S.³⁹ missionary at Hankow [Hangzhou]. Their fine scholarly language, cogent, reassuring and clear statement of Christian truth carried conviction all along the line. He yielded without a struggle. He learnt that, ‘whereas Confucianism taught men to try and work their way up to heaven, Christianity had come down from heaven to carry men up there.’

Every evening the Chinese evangelist at the mission station gathered the young Christians around a common table for Bible study. By this means he was given consecutive teaching in the fundamentals of Christian doctrine. The example too of daily Scripture reading engendered the habit of this methodical practice so essential in the up-building of solid Christian character. He thus was given a good start. If anything were lacking he had it supplied in the gracious influence of the young missionaries with whom he first associated. The old preacher, the tracts, the missionaries together

³⁹ London Missionary Society

led him to the feet of Christ. One sight of his crucified and risen Lord and what unbelieving men might say or do weighed then as nothing compared to the advantage of finding Him.

It is a great day when the soul begins to throw out its tentacles of faith towards a living God. To this school-teacher to whom the thought of God hitherto had been that of a remote and more or less abstract Deity, it meant the filling in of warm life and hope. The heart began to realise its primary functions. Aspirations vague, undefinable, even tormenting before now, found object and direction. Others awakened that had been unsuspected. The greatest revelation was that there was no such thing as a mere formal religion. The sanction or spring of all action lay in the Author of Personality. A Heavenly Father reigned on high who was constantly striving to make Himself known to men. He was their Saviour and the fountain-head of all good. Day unto day, night unto night His speech went forth to the ends of the earth. There was no one to whom He was not willing to make known His will or give grace and glory. By prayer and meditation His voice could be heard in the Scriptures. To listen to Him there, brought man spiritual discernment. The law of the Lord alone could convert the soul and make wise the simple. Religion to be acceptable in His sight must be that sincere worship of God through Jesus Christ, when by the indwelling of His Spirit we were strengthened in the inner man to apprehend the greatness of the Father's love⁴⁰ and do those things pleasing in His sight.

Teacher Ho with his new Christian consciousness over against his trained knowledge in the Confucian classics and intimate acquaintance with Chinese religious life could easily pierce the ignorant self-complacency of the numerous opponents of his faith. It was not possible that the human heart could be satisfied with natural religion. Men should live in tune with the Infinite. Could anything be more unwise than the neglecting to make use of those spiritual forces the Creator had placed within the reach of man for the regeneration and development of the higher life? Men ought to turn as naturally to God as flowers to the sun. An ethic without a dynamic was a mystery if not a monstrosity. It became the height of presumption for a sinful being to presume that he could by his own unaided strength comport himself into a state of righteousness pleasing to God. Why reject the saving mercy provided through an all-sufficient Saviour? The 'everlasting arms'⁴¹ of the Heavenly Father though omnipotent could be so tender and soothing that 'the weakest and most tired child on earth might rest itself in them' with the greatest assurance. To worship Confucius and forget God, to beseech a dead hero or saint for help as so many did, stamped such men as gravely deficient in reason and gratitude. It was reprehensible not to call on God in prayer. If China's sage knew little *about* God, he knew *of* Him and the moral counsels he assiduously transmitted to posterity gave plain proof that he would have been glad to have known more. That which Confucius lacked the gospel now supplied.

With Taoists and Buddhists whose delight is to reproach Christians as atheists, another line of argument became first necessary. Before Lao Tsze [Laozi 老子] and Buddha were born who ran the universe? Had men no spiritual guide or saviour before they appeared? Did we imagine that the Most High cared not for His offspring? Why did He give us our daily bread?⁴² And since He remembered to do that, was it reasonable to think that He would forget to provide us with nourishment for our souls? Whence came the Taoist pantheon, if no idols obtained mention in the Tao-Teh-King [Daode Jing 道德经], Lao Tsze's classic on wisdom and virtue? Who commissioned the followers of the Indian Ascetic to spin out of his mystical gropings a religious system for men? Let the priests produce their credentials to see whether they were of man or of God. How cared they to explain their many inventions of doctrine and ritual as a substitute for the worship of the Creator and Sustainer of life?

We do not say that Teacher Ho covered the ground as succinctly or as orderly as this in every discourse but these constitute the outlines of his arguments when trying to clear the way for the

⁴⁰ [Ephesians 3:16-18]

⁴¹ [Deuteronomy 33:27]

⁴² [Matthew 6:11, Luke 11:3]

introduction of the gospel. The devotees of false religions are very often contemptuous of christianity. They cling most tenaciously to their own old ways and resent almost as keenly the unmasking of their spiritual tenets as they would the filching of their purses. A few simple questions put in the right way can often do much good.

Mr Ho's first preaching commission was to a neighbouring city to assist an evangelist there. A friend went with him. Though work had been opened in it for some time, only a mother and her son so far had consented to attend worship. She had been won to hearing the gospel by a gift of quinine which cured her malaria, but her fellow-citizens held aloof from the name of accepting 'the foreigner's religion.' The presence of the two visitors brought an immediate change. Daily the house bustled with listeners. The witness of three somehow prevailed over that of one. Spiritual union brought strength. Prayers rose with more power. Answers came readier. One visitor after another ventured to believe. The good Word of God carefully unfolded caught their understanding and their affection, when the moulding of the will followed as a matter of course. Its behests appeared so authoritative, its promises so gracious and the need of obedience so urgent that they could not but obey and rejoice.

The three preachers exulted in spirit over this token of good the Lord had given them. However weak and inexperienced they had been, He, in His super-abundant mercy, had owned their testimony. It was grand to witness the power of the Word. It was from Him they found this fruit, surely they might continue to expect more.

After some time Teacher Ho was asked to take over the work of an outstation where his steady reliable hand was required at the helm. A predecessor with more zeal than discretion had fostered a mass movement which boded future difficulty unless wise care was exercised. In the formation of new churches as in the planting of young trees a good beginning makes all the difference in after-growth. So much depends on the spiritual tone given first. For a colleague he had one of his young missionary friends, a man too of cautious disposition and in no hurry for the glare of numbers lest the work of the Lord should hereafter suffer by the inclusion of insincere men. The partnership proved singularly pleasing to both and fruitful to the work.

After a period of more than two years they selected from several hundred adherents a party of seven for baptism. There were no persons of worldly renown among them, or rich men of goodly apparel, but all professed a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ere [before] long fourteen were added to the number and the church properly organised. The heathen in the city might now or might not repent, but, if not, the blame could not be laid to a lack of light among them.

Mr Ho, fortunate among many, rejoiced in having all his brothers turn to the Lord. The one divine impulse swept through each heart. Two became for many years doorkeepers at mission stations, the fourth remained on his farm. Yet Mrs Ho, while outwardly consenting to her husband's faith never seemed to experience that inward change of heart so vital to a profession of belief. To the end she remained, even if she did not worship idols, a baptised heathen. The old Canaanitish⁴³ ways clung closely to her. Hers was not a case of reversion to type, it was a case of persistent adhesion to type. Sermon and meeting and example left her unchanged. The heart remained dormant to the truth and the call to the ideal. How she was able to be a witness of her husband's worthy walk and listen daily to his christian conversation without becoming affected, let others try to explain, but the fact was only too evident that her Orpah disposition never changed – never became like that of the winsome Ruth.⁴⁴

To the inexperienced, one of the greatest perplexities in life is the way a man may be thrown against his will into a set of trying circumstances over which he has had no control and the very last he would have wished to meet. Without warning may be, he finds himself in a cauldron of conflicting opinion where the passions of men run high and angrily. A decision one way or the other is

⁴³ [A reference to the idol worshipping ways in Canaan. See Psalm 106:38]

⁴⁴ [Ruth 1]

demanding of him and on that decision great issues hang. There is no safe middle course. The clamour is too insistent to be denied. Under threat of loss, perhaps also of official as well as popular displeasure, he must preserve his honour or by a policy of silence, subterfuge, vacillation or expediency, be insidiously drawn into a compromising attitude which leaves the heart ill at ease. Happy then the man whose stand is perfectly unambiguous and whose purity of motive is beyond reproach, but how despicable is he who has saved himself at the expense of the right or has skulked in the shadows of excuse and come not, like the inhabitants of Meroz,⁴⁵ to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

It was Teacher Ho's fate to be thrown into such a cauldron. His services were required at a central station where two Chinese preachers were usually employed. He became one of these. The other in character, manner and spirit was a striking contrast. Teacher Ho, anyone could see, belonged to the meek of the earth, humble, inoffensive, gracious; his colleague belonged to the ambitious set, persuasive, polished, crafty. A clash came in the church between the colleague and a man who took an unaccommodating stand on what was virtually a case of church purity. Ho and his friends were asked to support a scheme to have this straight-laced man cast out as a nuisance. But no veiled threat could move Ho; neither fear of disfavour or loss of position had the slightest influence with him. Much less did he adopt the weak man's usual strategy to mitigate his position by saying there were faults, of course, on both sides. The enemy could exact nothing from him.

The persecuted man as the conflict grew fiercer seemed to grow the more inspired, whereas Satan could be seen more and more shining out of the eyes of his antagonists. False evidence was eagerly sought and even paid for to blacken his character. They imputed to him their own motives. Nothing was left undone to secure their success, and the leer of triumphant confidence was already theirs when as if by a miracle he was able to produce evidence that entirely discredited their whole case. To Ho and others it was the Lord's doing and wondrous in their eyes.

Ho loved righteousness between man and man. He loved it because the Chinese themselves knew much of its import, but he loved it more because he had found it in its fullness in Jesus Christ. The word for righteousness in China similarly to that in Scripture carries a two-fold meaning. Its first is that of 'justice' or of 'what is fair.' The written character for it is a composite of 'my' and 'sheep' [我+羊=義] – mine is mine and thine is thine. This meaning is strengthened by an auxiliary with the import of 'public' or 'what is common' when it denotes 'that which is currently regarded as the right.' From such a significance it goes on to mean 'fair-mindedness' and by another easy transition 'good-mindedness' whence its second meaning is that of 'kindness' or 'charity.' A free or endowed ferry, for instance, is a righteous ferry; so is a charitable institution called a righteous institution and a kind or considerate man a righteous man. An illustrative couplet beautifully expresses the desirability of the virtue:

'In the whiteness of the snow there is righteousness
In the bloom of the peach tree there is no lust.'

Another couplet states the blessing that comes from its pursuit:

'Regard righteousness as gain
And your path will be one of shining light.'

Summer and winter this is what Teacher Ho by divine grace sought to see amongst his church members.

A church where so many had compromised themselves in the clash naturally required fuller instruction. Their errors, it was plain, had sprung largely from the prevalence of old heathen notions among them. The mere cashiering [dismissing] of the offending preacher could not remedy much. Something more was needed. When, therefore, a Keswick⁴⁶ type of missionary came along his

⁴⁵ [Judges 5:23]

⁴⁶ [Refers to an evangelical Bible-teaching ministry, which holds annual conventions in Keswick, England]

services were requisitioned to conduct a series of consecration meetings. These did much good, but what, according to reports given, interested us particularly were two incidents that occurred at them, one of which related to Mr and Mrs Ho.

It appeared that an opportunity was given for mutual acknowledgement of sin as a help to individual consecration. Teacher Ho, if he had nothing in the recent church fracas to blame himself with, remembered that a few years back there had been something he ought to put right now. When his missionary friend had gone home on furlough⁴⁷ the church in the country had subscribed money to present him with a complimentary silk banner. He in all fidelity had done this, only when he had paid for it a petty balance remained. It was an insignificant sum, unseemly to hand over to the recipient, and by all local custom he was entitled to retain it, so the thing had been allowed to slip. But now in these days of strong self-inspection he remembered it and arose to confess his fault before all present. He would, he intimated, pay this sum over to the missionary at the first opportunity. Mrs Ho, however, had different ideas. "You shall do nothing of the kind," she said. "Yes," calmly answered her husband, "I will. This is a matter between myself and God, and nothing shall be allowed to interfere with my duty to Him."

Mr Ho's confession must have touched to the quick [deeply affected] many a conscience that day. The humour of the situation far from destroying its effect rather helped to enhance it by its wider publication. To this day, though it is over twenty years since the event, his words are still remembered.

The other confession came from a man who owed his position to the influence of the persecuted purist. This man's employer had sided with the malcontents and he, fearing his displeasure, had associated with them, when he should have cut clear from their company. This lay on his conscience. He felt he had deserted his friend in his hour of need. Policy had led him astray. But now, no matter what anyone might say, he courageously arose and confessed his wrongdoing. "I betrayed my benefactor," he said.

The two confessions aptly struck hard, though unintentionally, on the two outstanding sins of that church. Both carried rebuke and both acted powerfully to recall the church, if possible, to itself. But the discredited preacher was stung to the quick [deeply affected]. The second confession added gall and bitterness to his defeat. Though he waited till afterwards he told him sneeringly that since he like Judas had betrayed his Lord he should too like Judas, "go and hang himself."⁴⁸

Teacher Ho did not long survive these peculiar experiences. The Lord seemed to set him forth in the midst to demonstrate what His grace could do with a believer in the most difficult circumstances and then carry him home in triumph to heaven. But on his death-bed he left another invaluable witness and example to his fellow Christians. Realising his time was at hand he evinced the strictest care that all his debts and obligations be scrupulously met so that no person should meet loss on his account. In a land where looseness in money matters is prevalent and where Christians often come short in this respect, he preached his finest sermon perhaps, on his death bed. "So did not I" oppress any one "because of the fear of the Lord."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ [A temporary leave of absence for the missionary to return to their native country – generally one year in every seven, because of the length of time required to travel. Also known as a 'home assignment.']

⁴⁸ [Matthew 23:3-5]

⁴⁹ [Malachi 3:5]

Chapter 6 The Story of Pan Ting Shan [Pan Tingshan]

Remarkable reports from time to time reach the Bible Societies how a gospel or a Testament or a Bible has been the means of leading some benighted soul from darkness to light but few surpass in interest what the reading of a copy of St. Mark's gospel did finally for Pan Ting Shan of Suining.

One day, his uncle, Teng Ming-Ko, the head of the land-tax office in this city, lent him the gospel which he himself had borrowed from a friend. As he did so he remarked that all the books he then was studying at school could not compare in interest with this one. The lad, for Pan was only eighteen years old at this time, looked surprised. Enquiring how that might be he was told to read it and see.

Which Society issued the book and who brought it to this region he did not discover. There was no mission station there then, and none nearer than Chungking [Chongqing] and Chengtu [Chengdu]. Few missionaries were in the province. Probably some Bible Society Agent breaking fresh ground, or pioneer missionary had handed it out. Pan thought nothing of this, however, his one care was to see what it taught, especially since his uncle had aroused his interest so acutely about its contents.

Its first word was 'God' ... 'God's Son, Jesus Christ's gospel, its beginning.'⁵⁰ So ran the opening verse. He read on; he read carefully; he read the book through. During forty days he read it three times. The first time he was left with the outstanding impression that Jesus was pre-eminently a Healer of diseases and a caster-out of demons. The second time He appeared more as a great and Unique Teacher. The third time both these characteristics were eclipsed to him in the conflict at Gethsemane and the Passion on the Cross. He could not make out what they directly meant, yet they drew his attention powerfully; it was plain that the latter was the culmination of the former and both were parts of a great mysterious work of a divine order.

His uncle returned to reclaim the wonderful book; it was necessary to return it to the owner. It was a loss to part with it yet it had given him a truly soul-stirring vision and awakened within him unquenchable desires. Where might he find its interpretation and gain fuller light?

Soon after this, he left Suining to enter a high-scholastic institution at Anyoh. He remained there for nine years. His studies following the usual literary course in China at that time centered around Confucianism. The lofty moral teaching of the great Sage carried their weight with him. He saw that they lent cohesive strength alike to the family and the State. Right was right since God was God and He had written these principles of conduct in the hearts of men. It was self-evident they had to be followed if society was to prosper and Heaven not be offended. The Emperor was the Son of Heaven, the officials he appointed were his children and in turn the parents of the people. Beginning in the family, the children gave subjection to their parents, their parents to the official parents, the official parents to the Emperor and the Emperor to God. The homogeneity of the system was complete. Of this there was no gainsaying [contradicting]. Such an order of society was ideal. If carefulness were maintained in the regulation of family life and men rectified their lives by sincerity, every thing would prosper.

But could man rectify his own heart? Confucianism might be admirable in State relations but not where Pan felt in common with many of his fellows, the soul of man craved for some way of communion with the Unseen which would bring release from sin and the disquiet of its foreboding. This was what he wanted. Undoubtedly the reading of Mark's gospel had stirred up this desire in his soul and it would not be denied. Confucianism by itself could not satisfy him.

His father having died, it fell to him as the eldest son to take charge of the family estate. Meeting now men in all walks of life, he was introduced by certain friends to a rural sect of Buddhists. There was certainly more imitative drift than clear reason in what he now did, but since

⁵⁰ [Mark 1:1]

this brand of Buddhism was at hand, had hosts of adherents, and professed to meet men's spiritual aspirations he went off into an exploration of its allegations, conceits and vagaries. It was a profound pity, for he lost here twenty of the best years of his life.

These fussy ritualists soon had him enveloped in their toils. They gave him religiousness for religion, lengthened mummerly for prayer, weird solemnity for spirituality and lonesome contemplation for divine righteousness. Lest he should reflect and come to realise that God was not in all their thoughts, they appealed to his vanity, leading him along a will-o'-the-wisp [misleading or deluding] course of Sutra attainment and showy service, holding up in front of him an ever ascending degree of merit. After his wife died, he joined their order as an active worker, drawing an annuity which increased as his rank rose.

A man of his parts and learning, they could not let go. He was too great a catch and too big a draw not to keep secure. An important post for him was found. The trust imposed in his integrity can be gauged by those who know how few strictly honest Chinese are to be found when it is stated that the control of association funds was his especial charge. He remained here eight years, voluntarily quitting it to come to Chengtu at the time of the revolution. Later, however, he settled at Meichow [Meizhou] undertaking teaching, doctoring work, etc. Though remaining a member of the association, he, after quitting his high post in it, had naturally more opportunities for independent reflection. This seemed part of the divine leading to bring him to the truth, for his heart was far from being satisfied. Human speculation could not give the rest of assured revelation. That he knew he did not have. It had not been lost on him that Chinese Buddhism had departed far from its original Indian type. It had descended into gross idolatry. It had made many inventions. It eclectically had added much from others. It was too often a maze of groundless speculation, even tintured at times with wilful deceit. For it laid itself out to gain the popular favour and had thereby to offset and try to forestall the best in its competitors. Sorrowful and perplexed, he felt like a mariner at sea who knew not how to steer his barque ashore. His conclusion was to take the best of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism and do the best he could.

Once in Chengtu he went to church. Alas, for him that forenoon there was no distinctive message. At another time he bought a copy of 'St. Matthew's Gospel' and one of 'The Acts of the Apostles.' The colporteur from whom he purchased them was one of the best staff of the A.B.S.⁵¹, but on this occasion he failed to explain the message of the books and Mr Pan found himself no further forward. Why the reading of these books did not increase his light seems at first strange, yet the fact has only to be recorded. The astonishment will be lessened if it be remembered that no one can prostitute his religious faculties so long as he in the worship of spurious gods, without seriously dulling and hardening their early keenness or susceptibility. Even in our churches when men compromise with the claims of Christ and settle down to delude themselves with a mere church-roll-membership, this same inevitable process of soul-hardening goes on till it becomes next to impossible to renew them unto repentance. The eye becomes dim and the ear becomes heavy, and it can be said of them as of the Jews, "Though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him."⁵²

In the mercy and forbearance of the Lord, however, light for his dark soul was at hand. A call came from Chengtu for him to come and mediate in an association controversy. On the way back to Meichow, by a chain of circumstances so unusual as to seem divinely ordered, he found himself on a boat with a church adherent who was travelling to Penshan, a city near his own. The two began to converse. Naturally the latter told him something of his faith. One remark he made completely turned the flank of Mr Pan's position. Explaining that 'Shang Ti' or God, was not the Chinese celebrity who had been decreed to be a god and given the same name, but was the Most High and the Creator of all, he crowned the explanation by saying that it was our Shang Ti who made his 'shang-ti'. Like a flash of vivid lightning on a dark night, Mr Pan saw at once where he stood and the

⁵¹ [American Bible Society]

⁵² [John 12:37]

error of his whole life. He hitherto had been worshipping the creature rather than the Creator. As the christian proceeded, what he said called up strangely out of the depths of the long past the emotions that had so strongly stirred his soul when reading the gospel of Mark. Facts, truths, incidents leapt back to his mind but this time correlated in one organic whole, and the haze that had surrounded them gone for ever. At the voice, as it were, of prophesying, the bones miraculously came together, bone to bone, lo! sinews and flesh came upon them, skin covered them and by the Spirit of the Lord they lived. Mr Pan's excitement was intense. The moral earthquake accompanied the prophesying. He had found at last what he had been so long seeking. The two talked until the christian grew weary. At length he told him that if he wanted to hear more he should go ashore at Penshan and see the missionary, the Rev. J. R. Muir, who would gladly tell him all he wanted to know. Eagerly, expectantly, he did this. Mr Muir, glad to meet such an eager enquirer, took him straight to his heart. How easy it was to introduce him to Christ. Yea, and what joy to see the seeking Saviour and the seeking sinner meet at last. Would too that the old pioneer could have been present and witnessed the fruition of his labours. After 33 years, it was wonderful!

Mr Muir had previously arranged for special meetings to be held presently at Meichow. He announced this to Mr Pan that he might attend. It was now that the writer first met the new convert while taking part here. The daily addresses came most opportunely for him. They served to loosen him from his grave clothes and let him go free. And it seemed fitting that since Bible Society work began the good work in providing the gospel of Mark, a Bible Society man should have a share in its completion.

His first step was to cut all connection with Buddhism. His heathen books he consigned to the flames. The surprise to his erstwhile idolatrous friends did not lessen when he refused to draw his religious annuity and remarried. When his warm-hearted minister later felt led to undertake student work in Chengtu, he followed him thither [there]. Mr Muir was nothing lothe [Mr Muir was willing], for here was a man of note with a testimony which needed wide telling.

Mr Pan's new powers soon proved themselves, and as a result the Rev. J. Hutson of the China Inland Mission secured his services as an evangelist in his church work. In 1926 when the Communist rising necessitated the temporary withdrawal of many missionaries, he assumed charge as pastor, in which position he remained until his death.

A quite gentle manner with a gift of Scripture exposition endeared him to his people. He dearly loved an aggressing preaching of the old, old story; it never palled with him. Not infrequently the writer went at his request to proclaim it. He freely admitted he could not excel the missionary in the art, especially in the denunciation of current sin. To emphasise the call to repentance equally with the demand for faith in Christ, few Chinese ventured to do. This being his own desire, his solicitation for help was always urgent and pressing.

He and his good helpmeet [wife and partner] knew by experience the power of prayer. They earnestly gave themselves to it. Westerners might be surprised at their simple abandon therein or the methods they pursued, but the point to be noted is that they received the answers they sought. How few, for instance, would think of rising in the middle of the night to spend an hour or more in solicitation at the throne of grace? Yet this was not uncommon with the two. Word came once that their younger son in a mission-boarding school was falling into wild ways. The elder son informed them. Their grief found vent in prayer. In the absolute stillness of the night, when distraction was an impossibility, the two for a week or more poured out their cries to the God of all mercies. Very soon a letter came from the boy himself, telling them of his conversion.

On another occasion, a child of one of the deacons was hopelessly sick. Mr and Mrs Pan's prayers again triumphed. Prayer to them was the only way out of difficulties. To whatsoever natural means men might resort, they believed prayer should begin and end all.

Having floundered so long in the slough of heathen despond⁵³ no one knew better than he how to tell others the way of escape from it. No Buddhist or Taoist could stand before him, or those who like himself tried a compound of the best in all religions. He knew indeed and in truth the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas he was blind he could say he now saw. And St. Mark's Gospel, he affirmed was the best of the four to put first into the hands of those who had never heard the truth. It was simple, it was succinct; the divine message it presented sharply, vividly, and forcefully; the others followed it with more effect when it had prepared the way for them.

Pan Ting Shan to the last remained an earnest evangelical preacher. When he passed on [died] he left behind his own spiritual tone in the church. Mrs Pan for the sake of sentiment placed a copy of St. Mark's Gospel beside his body in the coffin. The Chinese in Szechuan often put a piece of silver in the mouth of the corpse. The custom is a relic of the ancient practice of laying on the tongue of the deceased a white jade cicada as the emblem of immortality. Mr Pan carried with him into the tomb the Word of eternal life which at first brought him immortality.

⁵³ [A reference from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan]

Chapter 7 The Story of Mrs Pan Been-Shan [Mrs Pan Binshan]

Do we always remember as we should the important part that wonder often plays in the awakening of the spiritual consciousness? Yea, and later in the development of the christian life? There comes in one way or another an, “Oh” or “lo, and behold!” - It may be a vision and a voice - a sudden divine flash of soul-moving illumination – a surprise or astonishment – an arresting paradox – an alluring mystery – a tantalising ideal – some impelling call for inquiry, decision and faith. Should the will respond to its invitation or demand then life is never the same again. Henceforth it moves on a higher plane.

We read that after the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple the people ran together unto the Apostles in Solomon’s Porch greatly wondering.⁵⁴ This indeed was the direct purpose of the miracle, that they might learn that the wonder-working Jesus who only could perform such a restoring cure and whom their rulers had crucified, was alive. Here was the proof of it. He had risen from the dead. God had made Him both Lord and Christ so that forgiveness and salvation might be preached through Him unto Israel. It became incumbent on all, therefore, to repent and turn to Him that their sins might be blotted out. It was by faith in His Name and through His Name that this man had been made strong and given this perfect soundness in the presence of all.

And again after the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira fear came upon the church and on as many as heard these things.⁵⁵ The wonders wrought by Christ at the hands of the apostles, like those He wrought during the period of His visible ministry were all signs, each one carrying its distinctive blessing and warning, and peculiarly adapted to arouse men from indifference and natural lethargy. They saw through such that there was nothing common place in christianity, it was verily a divine interposition of God in Jesus Christ on behalf of man’s moral and spiritual redemption. A supernatural power had been brought near to deliver all who should call upon the Name.

Now while we do not expect the same type of miracles to-day⁵⁶ the fact remains that God in a similar fashion still works on the heart of men. He arouses many to believe by some sort of significant circumstances or startling truth. The conversion of Mrs Pan Been-Shan was a case in point. ‘The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,’ to her was a sense of wonderment. Attracted to the church by lantern views⁵⁷ that were given on a certain occasion, she marvelled greatly at the scene in the inn at Bethlehem.⁵⁸ Why was it, she wondered, that the Saviour of the world, as we called Him, should be born in such lowly guise and such poor surroundings? Truly it was strange. Yet the announcement that He was the Saviour of the world and could cleanse a sinner from his sin moved her peculiarly. The news corresponded so aptly to her own need. She had long been seeking a Saviour. It was this that had made her a devotee of the Goddess of Mercy [Buddhist] and take the vow of a lifelong adherence to vegetarianism. Now she felt she must attend these meetings for further light.

One day an earnest church-member named Shae She-Leang [Shao Xiliang] offered her for sale a copy of the gospel of St. John. The price was cheap, only twenty small copper cash. “Buy it and read it,” he said, “It contains the story of eternal life.” She did. When she came to the sixteenth verse of the third chapter and read, ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life,’⁵⁹ she halted with excitement. Here was the finding of her soul’s quest at last. How different this book was to the Buddhist classics, she thought. It spake with authority; it pierced the heart; it met its need. With

⁵⁴ [Acts 3:1-11]

⁵⁵ [Acts 5:1-11]

⁵⁶ [Thomas Torrance did not necessarily *expect* them, but he did believe that they could happen.]

⁵⁷ [Photographic images on glass slides shown to an audience by means of a slide projector]

⁵⁸ [Luke 2:1-20]

⁵⁹ [John 3:16]

what assurance it carried the reader along. Buddhism as a religion was a delusion and a snare. It was a hypnotic fraud. Thank God the light of divine truth had come to her at last. Forthwith she went boldly to the mission station and enrolled her name.

But this aroused the animosity of fellow Buddhist devotees. Nevertheless she maintained her attendance. Mrs Han, the wife of the resident preacher and daughter-in-law of Han Shen-Chih, taught her in the faith. On two things she earnestly insisted: (1) that she should pray for these late friends who now opposed themselves and (2) that she should break her vegetarian vow, as a witness that she had ceased trusting in idols. The first was easy as she herself was anxious to see them saved; the second appeared impossible as she feared the vengeance of the Goddess to whom she had made the vow. When Mrs Han, however, explained that she was a nonentity and, therefore, could neither harm nor help anyone, whereas God in whose mercy she had come to trust would certainly help her, she obeyed with alacrity and went home peacefully and happily.

On it becoming known that she had broken the vow the Buddhist women prophesied that evil spirits should now be the bane of her life. The greatest calamities would overtake her. She was doomed to die raving mad. Mrs Han's kindly counsel, however, sustained her. Their evil forebodings only led her to pray all the more earnestly for them. As time passed they ceased to annoy her.

During this period the Rev. J. and Mrs Muir in whose district she lived had been watching carefully her progress in the faith. After her baptism an unexpected joy came. The arrangement of a marriage between her and Pan Been-Shan was suggested. It seemed so fitting that these two whose lives had been rescued in such a surprising manner from the meshes of heathenism should be united in matrimony. As husband and wife, what a powerful testimony they could give to the efficacy of Jesus Christ to save men. Mr Pan had long been a widower, she was now nearly thirty years of age; both gave the proposal their ready consent. The Muirs when consulted rejoiced with them and soon the nuptial tie was consummated.

With the marriage, taking place as it did soon after both their conversions, the full glow of their first love for Christ ran concurrent with and ennobled to no ordinary degree their affection for each other. Wherefore they very early learnt of the great mystery in regard to Christ and His Church, how this tenderest of earthly relationships constituted part of the divine plan to show men how Christ ever nourisheth and cherisheth the people of His Body.

If ever a union was planned in Heaven, theirs' of a truth carried full evidence. It needs no effort, therefore, to imagine how blissfully happy the two were in the wholly unanticipated turn that life had taken for them. Oh the wonder of it all! The Lord had indeed blessed them. But people in homelands [of the missionary] can scarcely realise the intense relief that was theirs over their liberation from the bondage of idol worship that had so long held their souls in misery. The torment of uncertainty, the dread of a passage through the revolting chambers of the Buddhist hell, the galling service of ritual, that brought no genuine approval of conscience but rather a sense of dreary emptiness, had made existence for them little more than a protracted nightmare. And now they were free, body, soul and spirit, living in a world with a God of love in it and not a host of evil spirits who had to be appeased at every turn. Jesus Christ was unspeakably precious to them. For He was a real Saviour. Truly the Kingdom of Heaven had begun on earth for them.⁶⁰

Both were fortunate in having the missionaries to teach them at length the great things to which they had fallen heir in Christ. Mrs Pan, consequently, could not forget Mrs Muir. "It was she who brought me up," she would say gratefully. Which indeed was true alike in precept and example. With a sanctified life before her daily it was easier for her to learn the manner of a Christ-like demeanour than by spelling it out slowly for oneself.

To the prayer life of the Pans we have already referred in the sketch of his conversion and work. The work of intercession was part of themselves. In its efficacy few more believed. They were never so much one as here. Perhaps if in turn they had been asked which was the better gospel to

⁶⁰ [Matthew 3:2, Matthew 4:17]

give to a non christian, he would, of course, have said St. Mark's while she would as quickly have said St. John's but anent [about] the value of prayer they were absolutely of the same mind. One direct answer left an abiding impression on her. On their removal from Penshan [Pengshan] to Chengtu, a deaf and dumb brother who lived with them got lost when entering the city in the crowd and crush at the city-gate. In vain did they search for him. With great distress of mind that evening they prayed for his safety and restoration. The danger of his falling among evil-disposed persons they knew was very real. Full and strong, accordingly, were their prayers for him that night. The answer was almost immediate though they did not know it until next morning. For when they arose and opened the door, lo, he was sitting on the very doorstep where he had been for 'a long time.' Not knowing his destination and quite unable, if he had known it, to enquire from anyone, he was, no doubt, brought there in answer to their prayers.

Was not this wonder too a sign that He who had directed their steps hitherto, though they also had long been 'deaf and dumb,' should continue to guide them with His counsel and afterward receive them to glory?

To equip herself better to be Christ's messenger to the lost, Mrs Pan now attended Bible classes at the Women's Missionary Society of the Canadian Methodist Mission. While her own simple testimony was by itself a telling one, she yet felt she would be able to reinforce that by an ability to present the truth in a fashion that would carry conviction to all classes. To do this it was necessary for her to study it systematically. Then she could give a reasoned or considered Scriptural statement of the hope within her. A bald statement of the mercy of God was scarcely enough. What that mercy cost and the story of the depth of the love that gave His only begotten Son to die for sinful men were the forces that alone could move the heart strings of the human race. For was not Zion redeemed with judgment and with righteousness? The Cross stood as the symbol of divine wrath and divine compassion. Christ was made 'a curse for us'⁶¹ ... 'that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.'⁶² She wanted to be able to state this as one skilled to set forth the Word of God plainly.

In Chengtu she learned to love Mrs Hutson. The sunny consistent disposition of this exemplary lady became a constant cheer. Moreover she witnessed in her daily walk and conversation the pattern of things in the Mount. To work with such a colleague in trying to reclaim heathen women to Christ was an invariable stimulus. The contagion of example carried her forward.

Family duties and the care of children came later to curtail Mrs Pan's time for public preaching, yet no one proved more ready as the occasion arose to stand forward for the Master. Her heart never ceased to go out to those enslaved by heathenish rites as she had once been. The knowledge of how hard and bitter a course it was to bewail one's virginity for a fanciful saving of one's soul, gave her an ever-ready compassion for such women. And time and again it was given to her to see one or another released from their sufferings. Among those who found the truth because of her testimony were two of the devotees who at first foretold what calamities would accrue if she persisted in following Christ.

It was eminently the case with both husband and wife that they had been saved to serve. They had continually many an opportunity of helping all sorts and conditions of people who knew of no other way of seeking saving help than by way of idol service. The province has a sacred mountain on its western side where vast numbers of pilgrims go each spring and summer to worship the golden coloured mud gods in the numerous temples which dot the route of its ascent. Bands of men and women, often conducted, keep its long flights of steps lively with their eager agitated movements. "Upwards to the golden peak" is their cry. "There we shall see the glory of Buddha and find rest to our souls." The pitiful wistfulness of their gaze is only equalled by the pathetic manner many of the elder women hobble forward with their crushed bound feet. The waste of energy, the dissipation of soul force, the inevitable disappointment to the more discerning and the assumption

⁶¹ [Galatians 3:13]

⁶² [2 Corinthians 5:21]

of a superior sanctity by others less discerning because of the toils undergone, are hard for anyone to witness with composure. Here the Pans excelled in sympathy; they could pity and denounce, explain and satirise, preach and warn in a way that held the attention of all.

Mount Omei [Emei] is over 10,000 feet high.⁶³ A temple stands on the summit immediately overlooking an immense precipice. Often a great bank of white clouds gather below on which the pilgrims can gaze as if in fairy land. When the sun shines over this ethereal sea and rainbow colours glisten across its surface especially if a shadow be cast forward by one's own figure when the light comes from behind, the pilgrims attain the coveted vision. For this is heralded by the priests as the glory of Buddha.

It is a daring callous fraud on multitudes of ignorant, credulous, country people, but it serves the monks well in maintaining a paying interest in their mountain which otherwise has great attractions of natural beauty, and at the same time fosters a general interest in their religious system. Our friends could ably expose the hollowness of this childish sensuous worship: the marchings, the toils, the prostrations, the adulations, the offerings, were nothing more than a 'feeding on ashes.' A deceived heart had turned the pilgrim aside so that he had no understanding or knowledge to say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

Against the practice of whole or part time vegetarianism to gain saving merit both husband and wife were unrelenting in their denunciation. For in it they had to do not only with the sophistry of the Buddhist aversion to taking life (even to that of rats and reptiles) but also with the extensive system of religious debits and credits inculcated by its votaries. It reduced religion to bargain-making, confounded the material and the spiritual, and perverted the highest instincts of the soul. God, as usual, was left out. Any room for Him in the heart became sedulously occupied by divinities of human creation and the seeking out of many inventions. Zealous for the Name of the Lord and jealous that it was not hallowed with men, they lent their strength to publish abroad the sublimity of their Jehovah Saviour who could descend in the cloud of earthly circumstance to His own and to proclaim to them His glory. 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin and that by no means will clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation.'⁶⁴

While her husband lived Mrs Pan served as his true helpmeet⁶⁵ in all he did. Fretfulness or contentiousness of spirit no one saw in her. The even, unruffled demeanour she showed was surprising. He leant on her counsel and sympathy more than he knew. Her price to him was far above rubies. For did she not rule while she served, managing all by her wand of discretion even to supporting his frailties and turning his very foibles to account?

When it became apparent that his days were drawing near to an end her heart was sorely rent. Nevertheless she gently bade him have no solicitation for her. The Lord, she said, would direct and provide as before. This would be far better than any prearranged plans of their own. The steps of the righteous were ordered by Him and He delighted in his way.⁶⁶

Several days after the funeral she came over to us for a talk regarding her circumstances. The house felt empty, she seemed to feel that a friend of long standing could best give her the word of solace her heart craved for. Besides, it did her good to recount to a ready ear Mr Pan's consideration for her. If he was absent he had only gone before. The Lord remained, His goodness never failed. At this juncture, notwithstanding her tears, she proceeded to relate what to her was another wonder of much comforting significance. Some little time before she had received a call to go and help a lady missionary in a special mission. The journey owing to various reasons had been a

⁶³ [More than 3,000 metres high]

⁶⁴ [Exodus 34:5-7]

⁶⁵ [Wife and partner]

⁶⁶ [Psalm 85:12-13]

trying one, and it was after dark before she arrived at the environs of the town where it was to be held. At a certain place where the paths forked hither and thither she halted not knowing which way to turn. The road was deserted. No one could be found from whom to enquire. The predicament appeared hopeless. But presently five men approached. Seeing she carried a lantern they asked if she would oblige by so shining it for them that they might cross a bridge there in safety. Replying readily in the affirmative she enquired in turn the way to the town. Should she too cross the bridge? "Yes, you must," they replied. So in supplying the need of others she found her own supplied. The light she gave them directed her own steps. The coming of the men at that precise moment she averred was no mere coincidence. In the incident she saw an undoubted manifestation of the Lord's care for His servant. It was His doing and marvellous in her eyes.

From time to time as she led women to Christ she would call to tell us of her joy. In soul-winning her cup ran full to overflowing. There was no other like it.

Mrs Pan still lives and works on. Many bless her name for the light of life she takes to them in their darkness and despair. That God should so love the world as to send His Son to die for all men is the wonder which this good woman never ceases to proclaim; and she finds that the same wonder which saved her own soul is indeed the most potent to save the souls of others.

Chapter 8 The Story of Hsu Wan-Liang [Xu Wanliang]

Outwardly the Chinese have the appearance of being a very religious race. In reality they are far from being so. Though they have innumerable temples and gods of all description their real concern about another world is generally very small. They are the most materialistic of peoples. An outward religious decorum satisfies. The form, the semblance, the name are regarded as enough. In like manner to be accounted moral is the grand ideal rather than being actually so. Righteous scrupulosity of thought and conduct is foreign to them. Veneer is everything.

If they be questioned about 'The Most High,' they will freely admit and take pride in the fact that He is mentioned in their four ancient books and five classics.⁶⁷ Only He is too remote to trouble about. To seek to serve Him personally is alien to them. For the most part, they evade mention of His name by the use of the synonym Heaven. It sounds less direct and embarrassing. Moreover they euphoniously substitute for His worship that of heaven and earth which indeed 'has a shew of wisdom and will worship,' and since it is likewise connected with the homage paid to rulers, ancestors and teachers, it carries all the éclat and decorum of what they think is their due to God and man.

As regards Taoism and Buddhism they are generally regarded of equal or no value except at special occasions when custom requires the observance of certain established rites. Even when the claims of the gospel have won their tacit approval it is very difficult to break down the apathy of the average man and rouse him to a sense of his duty. His interests here on earth control his attention. He cannot appreciate what he cannot see. Why be so persistent and upset his easy-going ways with rude ungentelemanly questions about sin and repentance in view of a world beyond his horizon?

Hsu Wan-Liang in all this was distinctly typical of his race; the patient industry that characterized him in affairs temporal contrasted strangely with the inexplicable lethargy he showed in things spiritual. Soon after missionaries came to Chengtu he became intimately acquainted with them. More than one he assisted in the construction of mission buildings. He served Dr. Canright of the American Methodist Mission for a time. He knew Miss S. C. Brackbill, the gifted pioneer of the Canadian Methodist Women's Missionary Society and lent his skill to Dr. M. Killam when she prepared premises to open women's work. From these good friends he heard the gospel. Dr Canright, apparently noting his peculiar weakness, advised him against making the pursuit of wealth the dominant end in life. And he did not forget what he heard. Yet about all it did for him was to destroy his faith in idols. He never again worshipped temple gods. He allowed himself simply to drift like the multitude. 'Let us eat and drink and be merry, we have all to die some day anyway, why worry about it?'⁶⁸ For nearly thirty years the drift continued. Twenty-five of those he wrought in the Chengtu arsenal, never coming to church or paying any heed to the truth he had learnt. The pity of it! The degradation! To forget his Maker; to be blind to God's investiture of man on the earth, to 'consider not the miracles of the loaves,'⁶⁹ to turn his back on the multitudinous mercies He offered him in Jesus Christ, never giving thanks, never offering praise, never seeking the habiliment [clothing] of divine righteousness: how low, though made in the image of God, man can fall!

It was surely through the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering that he was finally led to repentance. In 1929 the Rev. H. J. Openshaw and the writer began joint evangelistic work in the Great East Street of Chengtu. Thrice weekly we distributed tracts in the street, holding afterwards a meeting in the Mission hall. The following year Mr Hsu chanced to attend. He became attracted. The addresses he found strangely direct and drawing. The old old story told so simply and unambiguously seemed this time to grip his heart strings with a new power. Time and again he returned to listen. One evening in the course of an address the writer mentioned that

⁶⁷ [Refers to the traditional canon of Confucianism]

⁶⁸ [1 Corinthians 15:32, Luke 12:19, Ecclesiastes 8:15]

⁶⁹ [Mark 6:52]

so many years ago that day he had come into the world. But a man's best birthday was that on which he had been born again. No one began to live in the highest sense of the term until he took Christ as his Saviour. Then he received a new life – eternal life – whereby he received power to become a child of God. A man's real age dated from this hour. These chance remarks brought him to a definite resolution. Once and for all he gave his heart and life to God.

As evidence of this he came forward and had his name enrolled. Then he later bought a Bible. The fountain-head of all truth he must possess himself. On Monday evenings he came across the city to a Bible class in our guest room. It was easy here to note his sincere desire to know the Word. Some came for a time only, he remained constant. The opportunity was too rare to lose. The old time indifference had quite gone. At long last he lived alert, aware and appreciative of the goodness of his Heavenly Father.

In due course he desired to be baptised. To continue attending church without taking this full stand was inconsistent. But a difficulty barred the way. His wife clung to her household gods. She was a Buddhist vegetarian. Her sister and niece were Buddhist nuns. It were better to win her to the truth, he thought, than to force her to follow him when she did not believe. Exhortation, expostulation left her, as it once had left him, cold and little moved. She no longer gave the images obeisance but refused to break caste by removing them. What was to be done? He felt he must have these dumb gods cast out before he could submit to the ordinance [the sacrament of baptism].

We introduced him to Pan Been-Shan⁷⁰. He had the necessary experience to help him in his perplexity. Pan visited her [Mrs Hsu]. The tale of his release from the bondage of idolatrous vanities was exactly what she needed to hear. Mrs Pan too lent the appeal of her personality. She was told that only Christ could satisfy the human heart. The choice lay between an acceptance of Him and the clinging to these make-believe gods. She professed a readiness to take down the offensive deities but stipulated for time. What was the rush since she was not now serving them? If sincere, it was plain she would prefer to be a secret rather than an open believer. She feared the talk of the village, the disapproval of her friends, the sneer of the passer-by. Truly Satan again was hard to exorcise.

Pan counselled him [Mr Hsu] to two courses of action. The first was to pray; this kind could come forth by nothing save by prayer and fasting. The second was to ask her son to talk her round; it is hard for a mother to resist her son's appeal. Hsu, willing to do anything to see her feet on the right path, readily agreed. Yet she remained obdurate; she would not renounce the seeming merit of a lifetime's service to her gods. Mr Pan therefore advised his baptism.

If he could not win her easily this did not lessen his zeal to win others. We remember him bringing a friend to the hall whom he was anxious to persuade. That evening the subject of the address was 1 Timothy 2:5,6. 'There is one God and Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.' We used the make-up of the Chinese character or ideograph for Heaven to fix its meaning in the memories of those present. The applicability of the illustration lay in the fact that Heaven stands often as a synonym for the Name of God. Analysed, the Heaven character 天 is composed of the simpler characters of 人 *man*, of 大 *great*, and of 一 *one*. The halfway character for *great* itself analysed, consists of *man* and *one*. Thus the character for *one*, added to *man*, makes the character for *great*, literally the One Great Man, and another *one* character added to *great* signifies Heaven or God 天. Therefore even as their character for Heaven showed, God was One over all and there was One Great Man between Him and man whom the Scriptures explained was our Mediator and Saviour. The aptness of this blackboard illustration went far to convince Hsu's friend. No sooner was the meeting over than he rushed forward with him to have his name enrolled as a christian.

The confirmation of his faith, strangely enough, happened on another evening when we took a bunch of withered chrysanthemums to visualise to our hearers the message of Psalm 103:15,16,17. 'As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field so he flourisheth. For

⁷⁰ [His story is in Chapter 7]

the wind passeth over it and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him and His righteousness unto children's children.' The sight of the dried, shrunken, drooping flowers was half the sermon. There were few who were not deeply impressed. When the story of the everlasting mercy of the Lord was then told, a deep wave of feeling swept over all. In the appeal we asked who wanted one of the chrysanthemums to keep as a reminder of the meeting and as a token of their acceptance of this everlasting mercy. Among the calls was one from Hsu's friend. In the eyes of the outsiders it was a silly thing to be seen carrying such a dead relic home; there was no beauty therein that one should desire it but he clung to it for the sake of the new vision in his soul of the loveliness of Jesus Christ.

Once when Hsu came in to have a chat the talk turned to the sad tale of his many lost and barren years – the years that the palmerworm, the locust, the cankerworm and the caterpillar had eaten. What might he not have done had he come to Christ at first? Yet repining was useless. Nothing could bring back these neglected opportunities. But how grand it was to rejoice in the mercy of the Lord who after all had cleansed and saved him with an everlasting salvation! And how marvellous it was to hear the voice of Jehovah saying, 'Fear not ... Be glad and rejoice for the Lord will do great things. ... I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm and the caterpillar and the palmerworm. ... And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied and praise the Name of the Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never be ashamed.'⁷¹

Mr Hsu's prayers for the cleansing of his home were ere long answered. Six months or so after Mr Pan had advised his baptism, viz., at Chinese New Year time, the great holiday season, he succeeded by semi-insistence and much love-craft in inducing his wife to remove the hateful idols. She actually took them down with her own hands. To give formality and finality to the occasion he invited a number of friends to a feast with him. In plain language he explained the meaning of the step; he had renounced all recognition of false gods and taken Jesus Christ, the revealer of the Heavenly Father as his Saviour. In the place where they had stood in his central room he put up a scroll with the words, 'The Only One and True God.' By doing so he let all see he had not been prompted by any atheistical motive, but, on the contrary, it was religious zeal that led him to do what he had done. To his guests he gave copies of St. John's gospel and tracts that they might read the truth for themselves and believing, obtain with him eternal life.

The following April he was baptised by Dr. H. J. Openshaw. The day perhaps was the happier because he had looked forward to it so earnestly. But it had a touch of pain in that Mr Pan who had been such a sweet counsellor did not live to congratulate him; three weeks previously this preacher had entered into his eternal rest. Next morning, however, Mr Hsu came to visit us overflowing with joy over the public witness he had been privileged to bear for Christ. His friend was with him. Together we sat in long discourse over the things that belong to the Kingdom of God, only separating after we had each commended the other to the grace and keeping of the Almighty Saviour.

⁷¹ [Joel 2:25-26]

Chapter 9 The Lord's Day Experiences of Two Chinese Christians

1. Does it pay to keep the Lord's Day⁷²? The question is as old as Man himself. All who have given careful thought to its observance admit that physically, mentally, morally and spiritually it does pay. In many cases this is capable of demonstration. The Sabbath law of worship and physical relaxation saves man from that slavish soul-destroying absorption in earthly things which unremitted labour always begets. The weekly change reminds him that he is not a machine; he lives not on earth for ever; his highest interests are not in the seen but in the unseen. God is his Father and He did not make him to be a slave to his temporal necessities, but for freedom, righteousness and fellowship with Himself. It is good to remember God's day.

But from the mere material standpoint, does it pay? Here doubt often arises. Those whom the Scriptures classify as the ungodly for the sake of supposed earthly prosperity often discard the observance of the day. Since life is so complex and its requirements so varied, they argue, there are circumstances apart from those of necessity and mercy where Sabbath observance is impracticable. The dropping of one day in seven results, they maintain, in direct pecuniary loss, attendant with frequent hardship and discomfort. Can this be right? What, therefore, should one do? While some might be able and willing to sustain pecuniary loss from sabbath-keeping what of those to whom it would bring dislocation of industry and starvation?

Cho Da-Yea [Zhou Daye⁷³], an old christian of Sheenjeen,⁷⁴ had this problem to solve for himself. He was an itinerant sweetmeat seller who found it hard to make ends meet. There was no element of calculation in his creed; gladly would he, if need be, have suffered loss on account of the Lord's day but he simply could not see his way through, and thought a compromise the best solution of the difficulty. In the forenoon he went to church, in the afternoon he resumed his candy-selling.

Mrs Ho, the wife of the church pastor, noticing his usual resumption of work after worship, asked the old man why he did not devote the whole day to the Lord as became a christian. The duty of a disciple was to be faithful in this respect. Looking at her sadly he replied, "Let me make plain to you, my teacher mother, that I can only earn each day sufficient for my food. It is not that I am unwilling to observe the Lord's day faithfully but were I to go idle for one whole day I should have nothing to eat at night. Necessity compels me to return to business on Sunday afternoon."

Admitting his hard plight, she sympathetically suggested a new plan. He should take the matter to the Lord in prayer; let him ask for help to earn sufficient during the six days of toil to tide him over the day of rest. This sounded reasonable and he readily agreed.

It was, therefore, in no spirit of bargaining that he sought divine help. He was as anxious as any other to bear a genuine christian witness before the heathen. And verily help came. On the following Saturday evening he found he had enough of a surplus to sustain him on the morrow. Consequently with the sincerest gratitude he gave praise to the Giver of all good.

Mrs Ho and her husband rejoiced with him. Cho Da-Ye never did business again on the Lord's day. God gave him his daily bread. He gave more. Previously Cho possessed only one suit of clothes and a pair of sandals. Now he slowly acquired enough to buy a change of clothes and, besides, warm shoes and socks. Comfort henceforth took the place of penury. It was the fulfilment of the promise, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.'⁷⁵

Worship to Him now was an unmixed joy; he could eat the passover with unleavened bread. His Lord felt nearer. It was easier to testify of Him. The things of time and sense were not everything.

⁷² [Exodus 20:8-11]

⁷³ [Grandfather Zhou (like Auntie Gou, a term of respect for an older person)]

⁷⁴ [Possibly Shenzhen]

⁷⁵ [Matthew 6:33]

Man's wisdom was to sanctify God in his heart. The willing and the obedient, not the rebellious, ate the good of the land. It was the meek who inherited the earth.⁷⁶

2. Jang Bing-Ngan [Zhang Bing'an], a christian in a neighbouring city, was another who came to prove by experience that man liveth not by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.⁷⁷

Unlike Cho Da-Ye, he was a man of easy circumstances. He kept a tea-shop. Though he attended church regularly and was an active christian worker, his business premises were kept open on Sundays by his employees. He reckoned that to close his shop one day per week would lose him a seventh of his income. And since the shopmen were not believers there was no harm in keeping them at work; did not Satan find some mischief still for idle hands to do? This, of course, would have been perfectly logical had the foundation law of the universe been that of mere arithmetic and not righteousness.

Fortunately for Mr Jang he was to find out that owing to the latter law his calculation was sadly at fault. A Bible class teacher came to the station who was able to show him the inconsistency of his policy. It was unworthy of any follower of Jesus Christ. Christians should take up their cross and follow Him at all costs.⁷⁸

This settled the question. Jang willingly agreed to deny himself for the Lord's sake. Private gain he would forego in obedience to the divine will. The tea-shop hereafter was never opened on Sundays. Even on busy market days he refused to compromise. The surprise now came that he actually profited by the venture. Not only was there no decrease in the volume of his drawings, but a marked increase. The only explanation was the added blessing that God gave. It was unmistakable. The Lord's day was sacred. It could not be stolen without loss of blessing, material and spiritual. Undue anxiety as to worldly gain was unworthy of a citizen of the Kingdom of God. He who fed the sparrows and clothed the lilies of the field could not forget His children's needs.⁷⁹

Cho the sweetmeat seller has long since passed to his reward. Jang still lives. Their experiences are recorded in these pages if happily they may awaken others to the fact that earthly prosperity has an intimate connection with the laws of godliness and righteousness. The Creator does not live aloof from His universe; He has a care for the wants of His people. Even the solution of national problems lies close to faith in God. Famine, want, war and distress of nations come when men grow indifferent to the claims of the Unseen. 'Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with them for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.'⁸⁰

⁷⁶ [Psalm 37:11, Matthew 5:5]

⁷⁷ [Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4]

⁷⁸ [Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23]

⁷⁹ [Matthew 6:28, Luke 12:6-7]

⁸⁰ [Isaiah 3:10]

Chapter 10 The Story of Chen Yuen-Chang [Chen Yuanchang]

In our evangelistic work in Chengtu we had frequently to regret that so many who professed an interest in the truth would ere [before] long pass out into the unknown and leave us wondering what had become of them. We knew that not a few under the spell of enthusiasm and the cogent presentation of the gospel would hastily give in their names, who later awoke to the fact that the loss of the smile of the world was more than they could bear; thus fear of relatives, keenness of worldly interest, and dread of persecution constantly drew men back into the vortex of an ungodly life. Besides these, there were others who had come earnestly for weeks and even months to our meetings and then had disappeared without leaving a trace of themselves. What had also become of them?

Nevertheless we kept sowing the good seed.⁸¹ That was our commission. Necessity was laid upon us. We dared not, therefore, slacken our exertions though results were not immediately manifest or always steadfast. Ours was to obey the command to preach the gospel to every creature.⁸² Some day the harvest would be seen; God's Word could not return to Him void.⁸³

As we preached, we followed the rule of offering the Scriptures to those interested. For in the end it was the Scriptures that made men wise unto salvation.⁸⁴ Addresses can evaporate, but when men take home with them the Word of God to read, then what they have heard will often sink the deeper into their hearts and bear fruit readily. The case of Mr Chen Yuen-Chang, the subject of the present sketch, was one of this kind; he both heard and read. If it was by hearing that he was won, it was by reading that his faith was definitely established in the Lord.⁸⁵

By profession he was a 'pei-shu' or private writer in the army. Here he went the usual pace common to Chinese military life. But as time went on, he found that these lapses into sinful hilarity left an increasing depression on his spirit. If the life was gay he paid for it at the expense of his manhood.⁸⁶ Did he not once despise those who suffered themselves to lose that? And now the incredible was happening, that he was losing his own. The root of depravity within, in league with current evil without, was hurrying him into a future he shuddered to contemplate. Self respect called for reform, yet how or where could it be wrought? The toils of depraved, if fashionable, society were too many for him and his sense of moral helplessness only aggravated his misery.

Chance, shall we call it, brought him one evening to our mission hall. What was it the foreigner had to say? As the preaching proceeded he sat riveted to his seat. He listened to a plain denunciation of sin and a lengthened statement of its heinous nature which his heart admitted to be true though it increased much his sense of guilt, but he heard also something that awakened hope in his breast. His life, indeed, had been one long rebellion against God and a crushing of his better instincts, yet here came an offer of pardon and reconciliation through Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. He had died for his sin. Wonderful! "Christ came into the world," the preacher stoutly declared, "to save sinners." He pointed to this text on the wall behind the platform. There the words themselves stared him in the face. The saying, moreover, he read was "worthy of all acceptance."⁸⁷ The preacher sat down to let a colleague continue. "No man can save himself," the colleague affirmed, "he must trust in the power of God to save him."⁸⁸ The words sank deep into his soul. He could not forget them.

⁸¹ [Matthew 13]

⁸² [Mark 16:15]

⁸³ [Isaiah 55:11]

⁸⁴ [2 Timothy 3:15]

⁸⁵ [Romans 10:17]

⁸⁶ [His self-indulgent lifestyle took its toll on his own sense of self]

⁸⁷ [1 Timothy 1:15]

⁸⁸ [1 Timothy 4:8-10]

A free pardon! The gift of God was eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.⁸⁹ How vastly different this was to the Buddhist doctrine of cancelling sin's punishment by a laborious running up of a credit account of alleged good works with the auditor of the soul? Remission and release, peace and hope! Good news in very deed!

As he left the meeting he was given with the others a copy of the book of Hebrews and a simple sheet catechism which he took home to read.

Unknown to us at the time he returned night after night, eager to hear more of the good news and would wait impatiently at the door till it opened.

‘Depth of mercy can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear,
Me the chief of sinners spare?’⁹⁰

“Yes,” he was told, “but it cost Him the agony of Calvary. There Jesus bore our sin on the accursed tree. There He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.”⁹¹ Mr Chen marvelled, but with his whole heart believed the report; the Son of God had poured out his soul unto death as an offering for sin: “He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”⁹² What relief and what peace it brought to him! As deep calleth unto deep so he knew in the depths of his being that this was the divine truth.⁹³ He could only bow before his Lord and sob out his contrition and his thanks.

He left Chengtu without making himself known to us. We knew nothing of his conversion until long afterwards.

In the meantime he travelled south to the province of Yunnan where he resided for eight months at Yunnanfu and joined the church. The fellowship he had here with the Christians and the instruction he received from the missionaries brought him sweet consolation. His copy of Hebrews never left his hands. More and more it became to him a *vade-mecum* [manual] of the Christian faith. The eleventh and twelfth chapters strengthened him constantly to bear all for Christ's sake.

From this city he wrote back to the mission station nearest to the residence of his aged mother requesting that someone be sent to tell her the gospel. He sent money with the letter to meet the travelling expenses of the person sent. To his own son he wrote asking him to purchase a Bible and begin reading it. His desire was that all his family and relations should find the same mercy and salvation in Christ that he had found.

From Yunnan he found his way to Hong Kong, thence to Shanghai, and from Shanghai, after a visit to Nanking, returned to Chengtu. Now it was that he made himself known to us. It was good to listen to his story but it was still better to see the radiance on his face; there was no mistaking its nature or derivation.

“I want to come to the East Street Mission hall,” he said, “and bear testimony to what the Lord has done for me. It was there His Spirit moved on me and there I must tell others of His salvation.”

The tale he unfolded, when he came, of his former condition and woeful helplessness bore plain witness to the greatness of God's grace in saving him. It was an interposition of divine power that had lifted him out of the pit of sin and misery, and had taken his feet out of the miry clay of despair and set them firmly on the Rock of ages.⁹⁴ Naturally a new song was now in his mouth, even

⁸⁹ [Romans 6:23]

⁹⁰ [Hymn written by Charles Wesley. Depth of Mercy Can There Be. Verse 1]

⁹¹ [Isaiah 53:5]

⁹² [Isaiah 53:12]

⁹³ [Psalm 42:7]

⁹⁴ [Psalm 40:2]

praise unto God who had done so much for him. He did not state explicitly how it came to pass that necessity had led him to travel to other parts of China, but it was plain that the necessity by the over-ruling power of God had served a rare purpose in the confirmation of his faith. It cut him off entirely from the opposition and chilling influence of former worldly associates until his daily experience of the Saviour's presence became so intimately precious that nothing could move him.

Moreover he learnt the art of prayer. It was sweet to wait on the Lord and renew his strength.⁹⁵ There was refreshment of spirit and deliverance from evil when shut in with the Father of all mercies. Those who met him saw how much it became a part of his being that during times of urgent supplication he cared not to eat; his meat was to secure the petition he craved.

We knew then why his face shone. The light in it came as a reflection of that caught in the mount. When we thought of its rarity among those who followed his profession it recalled the love that the Chinese once had of a bright unique porcelain made in Szechuan a thousand years ago. This ware resembled the clear blue of heaven in the purity of its brilliance. It thus showed the colour and beauty of the best jade. Fine bowls and plates of it made during the Tang Dynasty had their rims bound with burnished gold. So much was it prized that high officials claimed the prerogative of using it. On this account, its name became that of the 'pei-sě' or 'pi-sě' porcelain. The name, foreign collectors of Chinese porcelain have mistakenly translated as 'the secret colour' because the word 'pei' or 'pi' sometimes carries this meaning. But the nature of the colour was well-known. The name simply meant that it was the exclusive or private colour of vessels used by those in the higher ranks of official life. Mr Chen's profession being that of 'pei-shu' or private secretarial writer, one could not fail to note how appropriate it seemed that in his new prayer life his face should take on the rare exclusive brightness of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Soon after his return to Chengtu his wife and daughter joined the church. His mother became a believer. But his officer son, though in full sympathy with his father's faith, held back from an open stand for Christ. He continued reading his Bible yet the strength of adverse opinion around him deterred his decision. Mr Chen took up his profession again in no way abashed by what any man might think or say. When men wondered how he could go on to live his new manner of life in the army it gave him the opportunity of explaining that the life he now lived was by the faith of the Son of God; Christ was his life.⁹⁶

At the following New Year time when special evangelistic meetings were held every night in the hall, he came to conduct an after-meeting among those who professed an interest in christianity. From his own past experience he could meet better than we the peculiar native doubts and difficulties that hindered an acceptance of Christ. The suggestion to help us in this way came entirely from him and his assistance brought us no little joy.

It was at this time that he came to us enquiring how best to silence the objections of those who, to excuse themselves from the authority of the Bible, asserted that it was written like other books and to be treated merely as high class literature. He felt he needed instruction here. Though he knew himself that the Bible was divine it was another matter to convince such men that it was. Fortunately we had two tracts at hand suitable for this purpose called, 'The Bible is the Word of God' and 'A Short Introduction to the Bible.' We gave him a third on 'The Resurrection of Christ' as the supreme challenge to the world's doubt. But the greatest answer to unbelievers we informed him was the witness of a sanctified life. The obvious always spoke for itself.

His professional duties took him wherever his regiment happened to be stationed. But he never failed to call on us when he could. At one of his periodic visits great was his joy to learn that fifteen men that spring had been baptised from the hall mission work. In turn he told us of finding a young man in the country who like himself had been won to the Lord there. The fact made at once a

⁹⁵ [Psalm 27:14]

⁹⁶ [Galatians 2:20]

bond between the two. If we were thus able to stimulate his faith, he was also able to encourage ours. The good seed was not being sown in vain; it was bearing fruit.⁹⁷

At another visit to Chengtu he came again to the hall. We invited him to give a further word of testimony. At the close the first man to come forward to signify his interest was of the same name as himself. The coincidence led to an intimate heart to heart talk between the men. That evening it was evident from the numbers who handed their names as believers that there was no stint to the Lord's power to touch the consciences of men when Christians were unitedly anxious to see His glory. Mr Chen had a remarkable demonstration of this; though preaching might by some be reckoned as foolishness yet God had chosen it to rebuke the wisdom of the wise and convert the simple.⁹⁸ The word of the Cross was indeed the power of God unto Salvation to all who should believe on Christ's Name.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ [Matthew 13:23]

⁹⁸ [1 Corinthians 1:21]

⁹⁹ [Romans 1:16]

Chapter 11 The Story of Yuin Bow-Chen [Yun Baochen]

The disciples often found it hard to understand their Lord. His words frequently were an enigma to them and the reasons for much that He did they could only at the time conjecture. He lived and moved on a higher plane than they. His conversation, as became His mission, was in heaven and of the near coming of the Kingdom of God. Though their minds too were set on that search their worldly conceptions of the Kingdom were apt to blur their vision. This fact, however, in no way diminished Christ's love for them. The newly formed fruit required time to grow and ripen. They were his children. If He sometimes had to rebuke their lack of faith, the rebuke became, in the manner administered the greater evidence of this. He was teaching them. Their training was not an affair of a day. Only slowly and step by step could they come to know His mind; the law of progress is always a gradual process of accretion and advancement. The Lord thus taught them as they were able to bear it, and while He did so, encouraged them to exercise patience, for one day He would bring them to a clear vision of His work and to a perfect understanding of His will. He had called them and chosen them and taken them aside from the world for this very purpose. They should trust in Him.

How He rejoiced over the band! They were almost constantly by His side, listening, watching, noting, thinking, enquiring. With what desire He strove to reveal to them His compassion and divine saving power that progressively they might discern His glory. Unique or special revelations He gave them from time to time in high places of the land. On the Mount of Beatitudes¹⁰⁰ He sat in their midst, while they with the multitude listened spell-bound to that heavenly discourse wherein He transformed the text of the old covenant of Mount Sinai into the New Covenant of grace, word by word, sentence by sentence, ten in all, so perfectly accurate in their order, import and rhythm of grace – the Covenant He was so soon to ratify with His own blood on Mount Calvary – that it seemed as if heaven had opened and the glory of the Unseen had shone upon them. He taught them with authority, they said, and not as the scribes.

The Beatific revelation obviously implied another: the promise of the blessing took for granted the removing of the curse. In this respect although perfect in itself it was not alone. It was the text of a covenant yet to be ratified. Sin had to be removed to give effect to the pronouncement. When that hour of revelation came the eyes of the disciples would be fully opened and they would know Him in all the splendour of His full orb'd glory. Mount Ebal and Mount Gerazim completed each other.¹⁰¹ The righteousness and judgment of Jehovah could not be separated any more than the cherubim who stood over the mercy seat with their wings on high. They were twain [two] but their faces looked one to another.

Slowly, therefore, Christ kept disclosing to His own the things concerning Himself and His mission on earth. We see Him at one time rejoicing over their progress, and at another gently chiding them for the paucity of their faith. Once when He had particularly bidden them,

“beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod,”¹⁰² they erroneously imagined that He referred to their neglect to bring bread with them, and did not understand that He was bidding them, “beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees and not of the leaven of bread.”¹⁰³ “Why reason ye because ye have no bread?” He said, “Perceive ye not, neither understand? ... How is it that ye do not understand?”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ [Matthew 5]

¹⁰¹ [Deuteronomy 11:29, Joshua 8:33]

¹⁰² [Mark 8:15]

¹⁰³ [Matthew 16:11-12, Luke 12:1]

¹⁰⁴ [Mark 8:17]

They needed the word of correction He gave but to cheer them on and assure their faith He now wrought a miracle wherein they saw themselves as He saw them and bidden take heart for one day their discernment should likewise come to perfection. When a blind man was brought to Him at Bethsaida to be healed¹⁰⁵ He took the sufferer by the hand and leading him outside the town for the sake of seclusion, let them witness in an acted parable how their vision should progressively be restored to them. Though they had lived intimately with Him for some time, listening to His words and feeling the touch of His power on their hearts, their perception of His thought and purpose was yet incongruously immature. That day they themselves had made that very evident by their misunderstanding of His counsel. They still, as it were, saw men as trees walking.¹⁰⁶ Yet if they exercised earnest care to learn further of Him, they most assuredly should have, by the exercise of His power, their inward sight brought true to life and actuality. There was no doubt about the ultimate result.

In China, times without number, the missionaries have witnessed among the converts in their Christian development a similar moving forward from one stage of illumination to another. Not all at once did the inner vision become complete. It took time and often considerable time to see them brought to a true discernment of the mind of Christ. A period of apparent repose often intervened between special manifestations of the Spirit's power, when they would be changed and thrust forward into a higher spiritual plane of experience.

Such an one was Yuin Bow-Chen. His profession of faith was the only thing he had to recommend him. His conduct showed little removal from that of the heathen. He came to church simply. Some would have considered his case hopeless and cast him out. Though he had lost faith in mere natural religion and had no leanings to idolatry he had a very hazy conception of the higher truths of Christianity. However, fortunately for him, the patience of the missionary did not fail nor the power of Christ show less of its ancient wonder and he was finally brought to a full clear vision of the loveliness of his Saviour.

Yuin's first contact with christianity came when his aunt returned from a sojourn in Canton. She there had learnt to know Christ. On returning home and relating to her friends what had befallen her in that far away place she also told them of the peace she had found from believing in the one and only Saviour of men. No longer did she live in the fear of death, Christ had redeemed her. The interest of Yuin's mother could not stay until she knew how she too could be saved. The mother in turn sought to persuade her boy. As a filial son he could not but listen demurely yet he felt extremely annoyed that she had allowed herself to be carried away so easily by this foreign cult. He inwardly vowed he would have none of it.

Some allege that 'religion is a universal human impulse.' If so, Yuin now took a strange way of showing it. For the continued mention of God aroused in him a feeling of determined opposition. At the hearing of His name an unwonted bitterness, anger and resentment filled his heart. The mere sight of his mother's Bible in the house, as also a sheet of the Ten Commandments hung where her idols used to stand enraged him almost beyond endurance. And his fury was in no way lessened but rather increased when she opened the Bible and pointed to the verse that, 'God commendeth His love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly.'¹⁰⁷

What did he want with such foreign teaching? Were not their ancient doctrines enough? By them he should live and die. Yuin here unconsciously manifested the old natural enmity in the heart of fallen man, not necessarily to the dictates to a specious morality but to the claims of divine righteousness. He had no consciousness of the need of supernatural help. His dethronement of God first as immanent in the universe and second as the regal illuminative power in the soul of man, over against his enthronement of self and unaided reason in the shaping of life's destiny marked him out as belonging indeed to that class whom the Scriptures classify and reproach as the ungodly. One set

¹⁰⁵ [Mark 8:22]

¹⁰⁶ [Mark 8:24]

¹⁰⁷ [Romans 5:8]

of ideas governed his mind. He had neither the wit nor the inclination to see that the spiritual is complementary to the natural, in other words, that morality divorced from its life source grows dry and stunted. He was rather suspicious that his mother's religion would deprive him of some right or pleasure which he imagined was necessary to happiness.

He wanted to stand on his own feet; all the sages inculcated self-reliance. The lives of the ancient emperors Yao, Shuen and Yu served as examples of these virtues and the matchless ethics of the Duke of Chou, Confucius and Mencius went to instruct men how to exemplify these in every day conduct. It were heterodoxy for one to seek another and a foreign teaching. "No," he said to himself, "I shall never proscribe our own culture, I shall never adopt an alien religion. I have been born a Chinese and I shall die one; as surely as the Chinese heaven covers me, so surely shall a Chinese grave receive me. Sooner would I lose my head than my national heritage."

One, of course, wonders why he did not seek in himself the reason of his agitation or why he would not pause to examine carefully the alleged benefits of christianity. Had it been monetary or material gain at stake there is no doubt he would have acted differently. From whence came his irritation and prejudice bordering on frenzy? Was not the Creator entitled to the love and trust of His creatures? Had no thankfulness to be shown for His goodness and creation, providence and redemption? How came this aversion to Him? But half-truths held him fast in their grip. He could not see past his Chinese ideals of propriety, sincerity, courage, loyalty and benevolence.

Since he assumed he could trust himself to live up to these ideals it was in vain for anyone, even his mother to try and convince him to the contrary. He would not be taught; 'pride, the never failing vice of fools,' carried him away. Had he been humble enough to read the Scriptures before condemning them they would have shown him the darkness of his own unregenerated heart and his need of Divine power to cleanse his conscience from dead works to serve the living God. But his fanatical preconceptions and misconceptions forbade that. Once on returning home in the absence of his mother, he actually tore up the Book of books and in sheer contempt cast the mutilated pages on the floor. Recollecting, however, that Chinese print or writing was sacred and therefore sinful to trample under foot he picked these up and deposited them in the waste paper receptacle which hangs in every Chinese house. His aunt he thought to murder when afterwards he would travel afar and be free from the pain of seeing his mother following a delusion.

Perhaps he imagined the end would justify the means. The intention itself was plain proof of his preoccupation of mind. Obviously nothing but sad experience would be able to bring him to his senses. His mother saw this and gave herself the more earnestly to prayer on his behalf. She refused to let him go for she felt confident that the Holy Spirit would yet lead him to repentance.

One day she succeeded by her importunity in persuading him to accompany her to church. On that occasion it was a Christian Endeavour meeting the preacher led.¹⁰⁸ The sincerity and happy abandon in the singing surprised him. How these detestable foreigners he thought, beguiled and deluded people. But what foolishness was this he saw when, after the singing, one and another with closed eyes stood up in turn to talk to themselves! It filled him with disgust to see such infatuation. This 'side door and left-handed doctrine' of christianity was obnoxious. Inwardly cursing this Jesus and this Saviour of whom all spoke he bolted from the place to take refuge in a wine shop. Here he had a peculiar fright which made him tremble in the midst of his blasphemy. He took suddenly and alarmingly ill. His surmise was that Jesus was wreaking vengeance on him for cursing His name. His soul became filled with dread for every spasmodic choking breath confirmed the conviction. But once sober he recalled that he had eaten a certain vegetable that morning which upset the digestion if followed by draughts of wine and here he found the cause of his illness. The attack after all was not due to his anti-christian anger and he laughed his fears away.

Yuin happily did not carry out his evil intention against his aunt. But circumstances decreed that he should go for a time to live in a far country. A few years previously the Viceroy of Szechuan

¹⁰⁸ [A nondenominational evangelical youth ministry]

had subjugated a large part of Tibet. At the time of the revolution in China the young republicans executed the viceroy but with the old self-same imperial hauteur, continued his policy there. When the inhabitants of the Hsiangcheng¹⁰⁹ district of Eastern Tibet thought to make a bid for independence, an army was sent to the Marches to tell them with powder and shot that such a republican blessing was not for them. Their best interests lay under Chinese rule. To this army Yuin attached himself. He was young. The spirit of adventure and achievement wrought strong in him. And his very typical Chinese frame of mind fitted him well to enter enthusiastically into the purpose of the expedition.

He made an excellent soldier. The high cold grass lands hardened his physique. Of fear he scarce knew the name. The firm belief that he was advancing his country's interests removed any thought of hardship. So wisely and bravely did he conduct himself in every engagement that he rose to the rank of captain. He was considered a man of resolution and reliability, never afraid of a hazard or one to hang back when a call for action came.

At the same time something of the free and easy manner of the Chinese soldier's life became manifest in him. His former set of high ideals scarcely appeared in such high relief. He found that mastery over self was not so easy as the taking of a stone-built fort. To an ardent nature like his, this left a sting of uneasiness. Certain usages or conventions may be socially condoned and he who refuses to conform may be dubbed a poor sort of fellow but compliance with these invariably reduces one's self respect. The inward monitor sees to that. Where now was Yuin's proud confidence in his own unaided powers? Hard experience brought it home to him that mortal man at his best is yet very weak and fallible.

Had he learnt nothing else in the campaign, this lesson alone was invaluable, for it is only to the poor in spirit that the Kingdom of Heaven is promised.¹¹⁰ A consciousness of want and a confession of frailty formed the first requirements to divine blessing. But he also learned respect for his fellow man even though he was not of his own nationality. And strange to say it came by observing and reflecting on the varying religious customs of different peoples. It was evident that each race put a value on religion. It seemed a part of life. The majority of men worshipped some god or another. Why, therefore, should he have shown so much spleen against Christianity? It was a religion and that of his mother. Thus slowly his mental attitude towards it changed into the tolerance he learned for these others. Though he could not at this time have definitely expressed what he was beginning to feel it was that there was a yearning in the heart of man for God and that this was widely evident no matter how crudely or how grossly many might show it.

On his return to Chengtu he found that his eldest sister as well as his mother was attending church. With his former prejudices largely removed his ears became more attentive to the truth. A church assistant helped him much toward faith in God. Then an earnest church pastor whom he met taught him the way of life more perfectly. Yet light did not come at once. It took time for its rays to penetrate the dark caverns of his heart. He could not understand what seemed so clear to them. He simply felt himself being led forward somewhere. Had he only known it his hand was now in the grasp of that of the Lord. At his mother's entreaty He was leading him aside from the world and its works to bestow on him the vision eternal.

The vision soon came in half measure. He removed to Kuanhsien, a city to the north-west of Chengtu. At this place his wife joined the church. The reason for her baptism and the necessity of the rite made an abiding impression on him. It was plain to him that there was only one living and true God who was over all, in all, and through all. In Him men lived and moved and had their being.¹¹¹ Moreover, He had an intimate care for the welfare of His offspring. He so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son to save sinful men by giving Himself as a propitiation for their

¹⁰⁹ [Presumably the Battle of Hsiangcheng [Xiangcheng], 1905-06]

¹¹⁰ [Matthew 5:3]

¹¹¹ [Acts 17:28]

sin.¹¹² Jesus was thus the divinely accredited Saviour of men. Yuin knew he had sinned and if his safety in the future life was to be assured he required pardon and salvation. Consequently, following the example of his mother, sister and wife, he underwent baptism and emerged a member of the church.

This much he understood. So far he saw. But his vision of the christian life remained discouragingly imperfect. There was a curious vagueness about his ideas of christianity which ill-matched the reality. His manner of life made this daily evident. Its inconsistencies were so obvious that it left one wondering why his heart was so obtuse. How came it that he could not understand? What was the reason that he failed to perceive that the retention of the free and easy ways of army life were entirely out of harmony with his profession as a christian?

What was to be done? Could he be saved from himself in any way? Which method would be best to deter him from these old habits and help him to live a consistent christian life? Remonstrance, coercion by church rules, discipline or what?

The experience of missionaries in heathen lands has always gone to prove that this half-way stage in the life of their converts is very difficult and trying. Their worst troubles come from the class who though in the church are neither truly christian nor truly heathen. Their voice is the voice of the christian but their hands are the hands of the world. They are apt to be heady. They resent interference. They love to compromise. As likely as not they may criticise the missionary himself by questioning his wisdom, impugning and doubting the practicability of his doctrine. In China the tendency is not lessened by the old assumption of native superiority to the foreigner. The new wine of their faith is apt to be poured into the old bottles of former customs and questionable practices. Hence the greatest patience, humility and discretion are needed to deal aright with them. The aim is to have a truly spiritual-minded church. Mere reproof and exhortation cannot accomplish this. These fail to remedy anything unless at the same time there is a sincere attempt to lead these half-blind church members aside to some quiet retreat and, after the New Testament method, bid them, "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."¹¹³ Condemnation irritates and alienates men. The adoption of any law-procedure defeats the end sought. The missionary having begun in the Spirit finds that the converts can only be made perfect as he continues in the Spirit. They require to have Jesus Christ lifted up again before them. For as light is essential to sight and all are blind till the light shines on them so only the Light of His Face can bring perfect vision to the soul. He not only gives us light but He is the Light.¹¹⁴

Yuin Bow-Chen was fortunate in finding a missionary who knew this. It so happened that in the pursuit of his new profession as a doctor that he went for a time to reside in another city and it likewise happened at that time that a Keswick type¹¹⁵ of missionary came for a period to conduct Bible classes there among the christians. In all this the Lord's grip on his arm was very apparent. The coincidence of time, place and circumstance was too minute to be accidental. A prolonged and careful study of the Epistle to the Ephesians crowned by a close meditation on the messages, warnings and promises of the Risen Saviour to the Seven Churches¹¹⁶ clarified his entire christian outlook and transformed his life.

From that day the Spirit of God came upon him in a new fullness. It was a changed Yuin that men now saw. He spoke differently, he acted differently, he looked differently. He manifested a greater love; he showed a deeper humility. At last his was the mind of Christ.¹¹⁷ To be saved, he knew now was not simply to have security against a future judgment of sin but deliverance from the

¹¹² [John 3:16, Romans 3:25, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:10]

¹¹³ [Hebrews 3:1]

¹¹⁴ [John 8:12]

¹¹⁵ [An evangelical Bible-teaching ministry]

¹¹⁶ [Revelation 1-3]

¹¹⁷ [1 Corinthians 2:16]

accursed thing itself. Jesus broke 'the power of cancelled sin'; He saved His people from their sin;¹¹⁸ the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made us free from the law of sin and death.¹¹⁹ The secret was to live and work in the Spirit for with the heart man believed unto righteousness and confession was made unto Salvation.¹²⁰ To be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise was to have the eyes of the understanding enlightened and know the hope of His calling, the riches of His glory of His inheritance in the saints and the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe.¹²¹

The old delight he had for the world and its sinful pleasures passed away. Smoking, drinking, gambling fell unwanted from him as the dead leaves dropped from the local 'Lanmu' trees when the spring buds began to burst. A new passion came over him, full and strong, to preach the Gospel. No longer was he diffident about confessing Christ. He gloried in making Him known. His peace wanted to communicate itself. He felt himself debtor to all men in the proclamation of the love and grace of God, particularly the Jubilee¹²² liberty and emancipation brought near to us in the gospel. Release and redemption became favourite topics - a return to our inheritance in God through Christ Jesus.

Was this the man who used to blaspheme when the Saviour's name was mentioned? Was this he who hid among the trees of morality in the garden when he heard the Voice of God calling him?¹²³ Was this the follower of Confucius that was so exceedingly jealous for the traditions of his fathers and vowed he would never adopt a foreign religion? Yea verily it was 'he who persecuted us in times past but who now preached the faith which once he destroyed.'¹²⁴ How came the change? Because Christ put His hands again upon Yuin's eyes and bade him look up. Then his sight was restored and he saw every man clearly.¹²⁵

In his zeal to give his countrymen the gospel he began to use his pen. He submitted to us a gospel tract written in a popular rhyming style. The lines were so catching and the subject matter so happily expressed that it was printed at once. Large numbers were soon widely diffused and the demand continuous.

Every sentence bears evidence of having sprung out of his own hard-bought experience. He earnestly warns all against the fallacy of trusting in personal merit or of relying on one's own strength to secure salvation. The grace of God has appeared bringing free pardon and life unto men. There is no need, therefore, to labour and agonise in the acquiring of moral credit to lessen or cancel future retribution; neither is there any efficacy in the worship and multifarious services of spurious gods. Though one has all the wealth in the world, though he has read a million books, though he can speak every language on earth, though he may be able to boast of the highest station and dignity, though he could tie up the sun in the heavens from going down to give him indefinite time to accumulate merit, none of these things would any more prevail with God in the securing of His favour than the presentation of a bribe of pebbles from the brook to a judge would secure a prisoner's acquittal. Repentance of sin and faith in the saving righteousness of Christ are what God requires. Our wisdom is to submit to His plan of salvation and not invent one of our own; there is mercy and deliverance for all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no necessity here to quote further from the tract to show how completely he veered round from his former self-complacent position, but another surprise was the rapid expansion of his mental faculties after his second illumination. Christ indeed became unto him wisdom. No creature showed a keener sense of distinguishing between the beneficial and the harmful or bird on the wing a finer instinct of direction than he in separating himself from what was

¹¹⁸ [Matthew 1:21]

¹¹⁹ [Romans 8:2]

¹²⁰ [Romans 10:10]

¹²¹ [Ephesians 1:17-19]

¹²² [Leviticus 25]

¹²³ [Genesis 3:8-10]

¹²⁴ [Galatians 1:23]

¹²⁵ [Mark 8:25]

baneful or wrong while richly enjoying everything that was pure and sweet and of good report. He had the gift of being able to rightly divide the Word of truth. His meekness of spirit, his naturalness of expression, combined with a subtle touch of illustrative power commended what he said. There was a sanity about his views for a man of common learning that made it very apparent he was taught of God. The book he once tore to shreds and now read so assiduously lent him its illumination. "What saith the Lord" became his constant enquiry. The Scriptures constituted his Urim and Thummim.¹²⁶ Consequently he could not go astray like those who neglected to consult the divine Oracle. Where they might flounder in doctrine he knew how to go back to the Old Testament and spell it out slowly for himself. There he could trace its exact derivation. That made all the difference between conjecture and assurance and gave him the distinction of a clear understanding of truth. People took note of him accordingly. The entrance of the Word gave him light. He was a man who could say, "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients because I keep Thy precepts."¹²⁷ The heathen as they saw him fain wished they could be christian too if only to possess his greater illumination and sunshine of soul which their own creeds were hopeless to give them.

Yuin's higher religious experience made itself felt to the benefit both of his clients and himself. It would have been unreal if it had not done so. Our friend now refused to stoop to dubitable methods of increasing his income. With his enhanced intelligence and a growing appreciation of medical missionary remedies he began to adopt the use of these. He stocked and sold standard drugs. As a result came greater prosperity. He healed more people and his income in place of suffering a decline, rose by leaps and bounds.

The city of Yachow, he saw, offered a good field for the sale of foreign medicines and thither he went to live. At this place he transferred his church membership to the Baptist Mission church in that city. Chinese christians, when left alone, find little difficulty in flitting to another connection. Our foreign 'isms' present no problem to them. They are surprised if told that there is any vital difference between one missionary society and another. "Have you not," they ask, "all the same Bible and worship the one God even as you trust the one Saviour?" A tree is not divided against itself though its branches vary in size, curvature and position. The sap, the leaf and the fruit are the same even if light and shade, wind and storm, have caused one to vary in growth from another. Though they have not the same saying, they know nevertheless that 'variety is the spice of life' and a stereotyped uniformity as an evidence of unity is out of place in God's universe. Yuin slipped as naturally into the Yachow church as a bird into its nest. The christians there welcomed him, learned to love him for his meek and earnest spirit, and before long chose him as one of their deacons.

In this capacity he took his place in an unique quartet of church managers. The oldest was a lithe, active, kindly, prayerfully-minded man of nearly eighty years who had been in the church from its establishment; the second, a man of sixty, slow, shrewd, sound and steady; the third, a man of fifty, tall for his race, stately, impressive, persuasive, immovable; and our friend of forty, with eager eyes, beaming face, ready hands and earnest manner. Here one saw a blend of age and experience, sagacity and daring, hard to excel.

A pleasing feature of their church order was the reservation of the vestry on week days as a closet for prayer. Kneeling mats were provided. Any one at any hour could retire here for a quiet time. To those who from the smallness of their houses could not secure this at home it afforded a great boon. A plan to check themselves against negligence of opportunity lay in a prayer register on the table. The custom grew common for each to record the date of a visit. Special united meetings for intercession were thus also marked. There was no ostentation in the plan, no desire to act a part; it was generally felt and recognised as a very valuable factor in their individual and congregational life.

¹²⁶ [Exodus 28:30]

¹²⁷ [Psalm 119:99]

Yuin rejoiced in his corporate life and work. He saw that if we are saved as individuals it is equally true that our best work is only done as we join our talents and strength with those of other Christians. The Israel of God is our commonwealth. The promise of the inheritance of the earth is specifically to the meek¹²⁸ – to those who can esteem the gifts and calling of their brethren as complementary to their own. ‘United we stand, divided we fall.’ Together we win, separated we fail. There is a blessing to be found in the house of God that can be obtained no-where else and all the saints may have a success that units cannot achieve. Yuin Bow-Chen, worshipping, praying, and labouring in company with his brethren found he was in his divinely appointed way.

“Woe is me,” he would say, “if I preach not the gospel.” And what was it that his listeners heard? They were not to make unto themselves a moral creed or any likeness of a religion for, ‘God hath ... spoken unto us by His Son who is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.’¹²⁹ ‘The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.’¹³⁰ “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”¹³¹ ‘God is a spirit and they who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in the truth as it is in Jesus Christ’¹³² ... So ran the burden of his message.

To professing Christians he was most explicit in urging them to live the Christ-like life. Many have a name to live that are dead, he would say. Because of this the world despised the religion they professed to accept. Many Christians and preachers were lazy and their loose ways became a stumbling block to young Christians and seekers after the truth. In times of persecution such men were loud in condemning what was done to them, but forgot that if their enemies were evil so also were they. They should repent so that by their good works evil men would have no excuse for injuring them. When we truly suffered for righteousness’ sake the Lord stood by us. Persecution then advanced the cause of Christ rather than retarded it, for it awakened us to greater earnestness and faithfulness. He, therefore, exhorted all to examine themselves and see that they were truly following Christ. They should preach His Word. It did not require “flowery words and embroidered speech” to do that. See how simply the Apostle John spoke. Yet who spoke with the same profundity and power?

The above is the gist of an article Yuin Bow-Chen once wrote in a church magazine to arouse those who ‘have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof.’¹³³ It is easy to see how he was thinking of his own former state when he composed it. We have given it here to show the earnestness of spirit he uniformly shows in all he does. To see such an one so happy and intent in his witness-bearing is the finest sight on earth. Yet this is not to say that his Christian life continues to be an unbroken ecstatic experience. Far from it, Christian service demands the bearing of a cross. God never promises an unclouded sky to his people or continuous sunshine. The heavens sometimes seem as brass and the elements pitiless. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Their manner of life will be misunderstood, they themselves misrepresented and maligned. Christ warned his disciples of this in the repetition of the eighth beatitude.¹³⁴ There is incessant toil and severe conflict. Mountain exaltations come in their order for faith and faithfulness. The way sometimes seems long. The feet grow weary. Faintness may come under the Juniper tree.¹³⁵ Then the groan is deep and sore over one’s unworthiness and the seeming triumph of God’s enemies. The world lieth in the evil one. A great hunger and thirst fills the soul ... not the hunger and thirst after the measured natural Righteousness of an ancient Sage or cultured Scribe or self-complacent Pharisee but after the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is

¹²⁸ [Matthew 5:5]

¹²⁹ [Hebrews 1:3]

¹³⁰ [John 1:14]

¹³¹ [John 3:16]

¹³² [John 4:24]

¹³³ [2 Timothy 3:5]

¹³⁴ [Matthew 5:10]

¹³⁵ [1 Kings 19:4,5]

of God by faith.¹³⁶ He longs to see it take triumphant shape in himself, in the church, in the world. An angel from heaven strengthens him. The Word of God brings cheer. The hour of weakness vanishes into a new manifestation of the divine goodness and power. He rises again to go forward in the might and company of Omnipotence. The while he sings:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me bless His Holy Name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with tender mercies and loving kindness; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.”¹³⁷

¹³⁶ [Galatians 2:16]

¹³⁷ [Psalm 103:1-5]

Chapter 12 The Story of Liu Han-Chang [Liu Hanchang]

Liu Han-Chang was a native of Penghsien.¹³⁸ Of a fierce quarrelsome disposition, a gambler and a pugilist, he was brought to Christ in a most unusual way. He first received from a friend a copy of the gospel of St. John. This he read in the evenings by lamp-light. It was all very new to him and strange. He thought what uncommon doings and what peculiar discourses these were which he read. What a great man Jesus was! When he came to the eighteenth chapter and read how Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus he struck the table in his agitation and declared that if he had been present then he himself would certainly have cut down these soldiers and let the Lord escape. Why was it, he wondered, that Jesus prohibited His disciples from rescuing Him? He could not understand this spirit of non-resistance. It was highly perplexing, especially to him who had had to drive and fight his way so strenuously through life. He felt there was a mystery somewhere; he would like to go to church and by enquiry have it cleared up.

But his friends warned him against the project. They said that the fine talk of these missionaries was like benumbing medicine; it exerted an hypnotic influence on the hearers. It were dangerous to go lest he too should get beguiled by them. They alleged there was much in christianity that was evil and harmful. That might or might not be, he thought, yet he wanted to find out what he sought to know and conceived the idea of going as a spy. He thereupon went and had his name entered at church as an anxious enquirer. From the inside he would surely find out what sort of lives the christians lived and the nature of the doctrine they believed.

He was given a Bible, a catechism and a booklet called 'The Entrance to Virtue and Wisdom.' At church he came to know the christians intimately, yet failed to find out anything vicious or evil about them. For what reason was it they were slandered? Here was another problem to be solved.

It was mystery upon mystery and the enigmas deepened as he read on through his Bible. In the Sermon on the Mount he found Jesus saying to His disciples, "resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also."¹³⁹ "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."¹⁴⁰ Also in St. Luke, "If your brother trespass against you seven times in a day and seven times turn again saying, "I repent:" thou shalt forgive him."¹⁴¹ These sayings and others commending forbearance and forgiveness with the commandment forbidding the taking of life made a deep impression on his mind seeing he had been a violent man. They ran directly counter to what he had always believed and practised; and, to use his own words, "each stuck fast in his conscience," making him ponder what they meant.

At this juncture the Chinese pastor came to his aid explaining to him the meaning of these passages. Little by little the truth as it is in Jesus Christ dawned on his dark heathen mind. It was love that carried Jesus unresistingly that night to His death – love for sinful men that constrained Him to die on their behalf. The Father had sent Him; He could not flee from the Cross; He must needs save them. The love He showed to us we should show to each other; the mercy we received from Him we were to extend to all. Anger, wrath, malice and revenge were entirely out of place with those who had become partakers of the divine salvation.¹⁴² Even as He overcame evil with good so should His followers.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ [Today's Pengzhou to the north of Chengdu]

¹³⁹ [Matthew 5:39]

¹⁴⁰ [Matthew 5:44]

¹⁴¹ [Luke 17:3-4]

¹⁴² [Ephesians 4:31, Colossians 3:8]

¹⁴³ [Romans 12:21]

A great change came over Mr Liu. The lion in him changed to the lamb. Men saw the miracle of Calvary repeated in his life. He was now sixty years of age and ere the year closed he applied for baptism and was received into the church.

In 1926 came a wild wave of anti-christian feeling. It was stirred by communist agents who for some time had been at work in this city. Chinese school teachers in large numbers were bribed to foster or wink¹⁴⁴ at Red¹⁴⁵ propaganda among the students. And even military men in high positions saw no reason to refuse handsome sums from Moscow agents to let them do as they pleased. It was thus inevitable that persecution should overtake the Chinese church. At Penghsien the streets were widely placarded with anti-christian posters. Liu Han-Chang made bold to tear several of these down. He was in no mood to let simple-minded people be deceived about the christians, as he himself had been in bygone days. But his action brought down on him the wrath of the Red Students' Union. Under a leader they attacked him one day when sitting quietly in a tea shop. Seeing they meant murder he snatched from them a knife and an iron bar, and bade them be gone. Going to the magistrate he showed him his wounds and told what had happened. But the students audaciously put the blame on him, saying it was he who attacked them with a knife. The magistrate knew well enough who the aggressors were but was in a quandary how to act. He was afraid to offend the Students' Union. He therefore vacillated in his action. A way out suggested itself in the calling of representatives from the Education Bureau and the church for consultation with him. It was a wily move. Face to face the two sides could thrash out the matter for themselves and save him the onus of offending either. The Chinese age-long expedient in such difficulties was again adopted: both sides must give way somewhat to save the honour of all concerned. So policy and not principle decided the issue. Since Mr Liu freely admitted he had removed three of the Red notices he was technically judged at fault. The church delegates, firstly, to avert general persecution, secondly, to mollify the offended dignity of the renegade students, and thirdly, to make it easy for the magistrate by relieving him of the necessity of giving protection to Mr Liu, acquiesced to his being condemned to a hundred blows on the palm of the hand and ninety days prison confinement. To the victim it was naively explained that by consenting to the sentence meekly he would be rendering a real service to his brethren and in prison he would be perfectly free from molestation. Mr Liu truly felt in evil case, but willingly, yea gladly, bowed his soul in perfect submission. Christ had gone freely to Calvary for him when He might have escaped; it was his privilege now to follow without demur or protest in His footsteps.

The magistrate, knowing that the condemned man had done no wrong, saw that the blows were light enough to cause no pain. Yet in all truth the sentence was a grim one. The Reds, of course, rejoiced. They imagined he would have a hard time behind the bars. For was he not consigned to what the Chinese term 'the tiger's mouth'? But circumstances were to show that they reckoned without Mr Liu's God. He was watching over His faithful servant. The governor of the gaol at that time was an ex-mission school teacher. He instructed the gaoler to treat Mr Liu well and let him have full freedom within. He accordingly had nought to do but study his Bible. There he read about Paul and Silas at Philippi.¹⁴⁶ His experience, he pondered, was similar to theirs. If they could rejoice in prison, why should not he? He gave himself to prayer. Morning and evening the other prisoners heard him sing hymns of praise. Another official once overheard the singing and came in to have the truth expounded to him. Evidently impressed by what Mr Liu said to him, he made, ere he left, the request that he would preach the gospel to his fellow prisoners. In this he was so assisted by the Holy Spirit day by day and realised so much of His comfort that his own sorrows vanished. Every night a Christian named Yao Hsiang-Chien [Yao Xiangqian], with more courage than others, came to cheer him. The ninety-five days of his incarceration, when his release came, actually seemed short, so real had been the sense of God's presence with him.

¹⁴⁴ [Overlook, ignore]

¹⁴⁵ [i.e. Communist]

¹⁴⁶ [Acts 16:25]

Liu's peculiar temptation in the christian life had been to pay back his tormentors in their own coin. Occasionally when deliberately maligned or treated harshly, the old self craved revenge. The new law of love at times seemed so inapplicable. Certain injustices were so glaringly provocative and so heinous that non-retaliation appeared to invite the perpetrators to their renewal. Then every nerve would tingle in anger. To keep from personal action was desperately hard. This period in prison, however, went far to correct this tendency. God could be so near while suffering like this that it was all worthwhile to have such revelations of His love and comfort. Men curiously enough sent him to gaol for their own sakes, the Lord rather sent him there for his own. For a time afterwards, to avoid further trouble from his enemies, he went to reside in another city. The church pastor here befriended him. When the anti-christian movement subsided at Penghsien he returned home. But new trials came to test him. Business declined. Yet though often and keenly distressed he never lost heart. "Fear not, only believe" in these days became his motto.¹⁴⁷ He had no desire for riches; to have enough to live on and honourably meet his debts was all he sought. He remembered how the Lord brought Job out of his distresses and those from which he was suffering were as nothing to the patriarch's.¹⁴⁸ The man who endured was blessed. Of a certainty the Lord also supplied his need, bringing him into a 'wealthy place'.¹⁴⁹ In time not only was he able to meet all his obligations, but to save as well for a rainy day over one hundred dollars which to him was truly a goodly sum.

These experiences saw him over the hill of his difficulties. Great indeed was his thankfulness to the God of all mercies. Looking back he attributed his blessing to the reading of that gospel of St. John and the close study of his Bible in prison. The Scriptures were the lodestone [magnet] that drew him to church and to Christ. Had it not been for their help, he feels, to use his own words, that his bones long ago would have gone to ashes. The good Lord saved him body and soul.

Once when the writer was assisting in a series of meetings at Penghsien, Mr Liu came for advice. He asked how he should present Christ to those who wantonly repudiated His divinity. Apparently in his humility it did not dawn on him that the great change which grace had wrought in his own life was the best witness of that truth. The same evening it happened that the address was on the healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda.¹⁵⁰ He heard then how Christ presented himself to His opponents; the obvious spoke for itself. He by the Spirit of God healed the most hopeless of men and sent him as a living witness of His power to those who denied His Messiahship. All thereby who had eyes to see could note that there was no such salvation to be had in any other; this salvation was indeed of divine power. Therefore Christ and the Father were one.

Certain it is that the citizens of Penghsien while they see this miracle of grace moving among them, have no excuse for not believing in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men. He is a man who has proved like few others the faithfulness of God in every period and vicissitude of the christian life.

¹⁴⁷ [Luke 8:50]

¹⁴⁸ [Job 42:12]

¹⁴⁹ [Psalm 66:12]

¹⁵⁰ [John 5]

Chapter 13 The Story of Jacob Jang [Jacob Zhang]

There is nothing so refreshing in this world as to meet with those who are sincerely thankful. Many are so prone to forget benefits. What comes they take for granted. True gratitude is a rare virtue. Murmuring and complaining on the least occasion can be universally heard; it is seldom we find men and women habitually cheerful. In adversity the temptation is strong to commiserate ourselves and say, "all these things are against me."¹⁵¹

Pastor Jacob Jang had his faults and failings as all men have more or less; successes and disappointments came to him as to others but the fragrance which lent charm to his life was that he never could forget the goodness of God in saving him and putting him into the ministry. He could say, "He found me in a desert land and in the waste howling wilderness; He led me about, He instructed me, He kept me as the apple of His eye."¹⁵² "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast shown unto Thy servant."¹⁵³ "My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day."¹⁵⁴ "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only."¹⁵⁵

We knew him from the time he was a lad at school. His family were led to the truth by a neighbouring farmer. After sunset his parents and grandparents were wont to attend daily worship in this man's house. To it he used to accompany them. His young ears heard much of the truth and from this time, though frequently urged by relatives to worship idols, he positively refused to do so. He knew they were all dead gods, utterly unable to help anyone.

The whole family rejoiced at finding the way of Life. It was a glad thing at last to have God and hope in their lives. But, strange to say, death came to claim first his father, and soon afterwards his grandfather and grandmother. These bereavements were hard to bear. Moreover they were perplexing. The boy reasoned that since the latter two had grown old their going was only in the course of nature but why should his beloved father have been taken seeing he was only fifty years of age and his mother left to struggle alone on the farm? What did God mean by these sorrows He sent to them?

The Divine purpose slowly unfolded itself. His mother secured work for some years at the mission station. By this means he came into frequent contact with the missionaries and found the opportunity of attending a mission school. This altered the whole course of his life. He became fired with the idea of becoming a preacher. He and two others of a like age began to pray in private that God would lead them accordingly.

When fourteen years of age he was baptised. This was a red-letter [memorable] day to him. Every detail of the proceedings burned itself into his memory: the questions he had to answer, the kindly appearance of the missionary's face, the writer's attendance at the ceremony and the joy that he was now a church member in full standing.

After this first step, if his ambition was to be realised, he knew that he must apply himself to his studies. To do this he required to remain at the mission school and such was his full intention. The purpose, however, had presently a rather sharp and unexpected testing. An anti-christian movement began in the region which sent a flutter of agitation through the churches. This scared the young and inexperienced pupil. No startled rabbit bolted back to the safety of its warren with more precipitancy than he to the quiet retreat of the old farm whither his mother had returned sometime previously.

¹⁵¹ [Genesis 42:36]

¹⁵² [Deuteronomy 32:10]

¹⁵³ [Genesis 32:10]

¹⁵⁴ [Psalm 71:15]

¹⁵⁵ [Psalm 71:16]

No doubt he had treated the missionary rather crudely [ungraciously] but it felt so fine to be home again. And his mother naturally was glad to see him. Yet what about his prayers at Chengtu for Divine guidance? It looked as if all now were to go unanswered. Nevertheless he could not forget the wish born in his soul to be a herald some day of Christ's evangel [gospel].

The threatened trouble soon blew past; he saw he need not have been so afraid but, since he had returned, his only plan was to resume work in the fields and wait on the future. By and by to his delight hope again waited on him. Another missionary who visited his district announced a coming Bible class to it any [to which any] might go who could meet their own travelling expenses. Jang hurried home to tell his mother. Might he go? "No, you are needed here," she said. Such a reply might have daunted him had he not learned the value of prayer. That evening and at midnight, as well as the next morning, he besought the Lord, if He wanted to use him in His service, to make his mother willing to let him go. Nothing whatever indicated any change in her until supper-time when she suddenly remarked that since there was no urgent work at present to be done on the farm he might start on the morrow to attend these Bible classes. His joy on hearing this was so great that he felt like dancing.

When the series of lectures was over he found he could remain at the mission station as the missionary's factotum. The engagement suited his purpose exactly because he could continue to benefit from the classes at the station while he could remit part of his wages to his mother to engage help on the farm.

Everything went smoothly for him until the Boxer troubles arose in 1900; missionaries then had to flee to Shanghai for safety. Thrown out of employment, he resolved to turn to business for a livelihood. The meeting and dealing with people at large brought him valuable experience. He obtained a new insight into human nature which sharpened his wits and cured him of his country rawness. So well did he succeed in barter and bargaining that the impulse became strong to continue indefinitely piling up his profits. But the good Angel who had charge over him in all his ways,¹⁵⁶ once he had learnt the necessary lessons intended, led him firmly back to the path of his first love. A consignment of goods he sent by boat was shipwrecked. The heavy loss incurred brought him suddenly to himself. He resolved to return home. Here he found a letter awaiting him from the missionary. He had returned from his sojourn in Shanghai and wished to re-engage him. Now Mr Jang understood the meaning of the boat disaster: the Lord was calling him back to Bethel.¹⁵⁷

For several years after this he acted as his benefactor's constant companion. With increasing blessing to himself and advantage to the work, he assisted him in his various activities whether at the central mission station or in the country on his preaching tours. He took his turn at speaking, relieved him in various fag [basic] duties and aided in the treatment of the sick. They were labourers together in the noblest service on earth. The daily call was for compassion on the ignorant and on them that were out of the way, even on the unthankful and those who opposed themselves to the truth. They wrought [did all] as Christ's representatives to fallen, debased humanity, seeking to win men back to truth and righteousness.

This manner of service constituted his initial training to the ministry. It was the more profitable in this respect because he found it had an unexpected side; evil men rose up against him. While he sought faithfully to do the will of Christ he found himself slowly surrounded with enemies who were the cause of many a temptation to bitterness and the manifestation of an unforgiving spirit. It required a constant supply of grace to enable him to overcome.

Jealous, envious men kept attacking his life and character in whispered asides or open insinuations. These alleged delinquencies came, as they were meant, to the ears of his employer. It was well for Jang that the missionary had a prejudice in his favour and said or did nothing before making a personal investigation. One of the accusations was of gambling by card playing. His

¹⁵⁶ [Psalm 91:11, Exodus 23:20]

¹⁵⁷ [Bethel – the place where Jacob met with God in Genesis 28]

accusers on this occasion overdid themselves, they forgot that, having been reared in a christian home, he had not learned how to play cards. When this fact came forth their whole evil purpose was exposed. Jacob did not forget in his vindication to return praise to the Heavenly Father who so signally saved him again for the work to which he felt called.

The way opened for his taking a theological course. The teacher belonged to a robust mental and spiritual type and under him he made remarkable progress. The association with fellow students of different temperaments smoothed away his rough corners and corrected partial views which saved him from a lack of Scriptural symmetry. Graduating with honours he returned for a time to his former station. At this time he married again. His first wife died early of a decline. The one he now happily found had been to a mission school almost from her infancy and, therefore, never had bent the knee [bowed] to an idol. To him it was wonderful. He believed she was sent to him from Heaven in answer to his prayers for a christian help-meet.

After a year he was appointed to another sphere. Larger opportunities now tried [tested] his powers. No one could have wished for a better field. The situation was pleasing, the people well disposed and the mission buildings nicely adapted for work. Be it said to his credit that he proved worthy of his charge; success followed his labours. The blessing sprang from relying solely on Divine help through the stress he laid on Bible study and Bible classes. He made it his purpose to feed Christ's lambs and sheep.¹⁵⁸

A matter of church government led to misunderstanding. Missionaries have to see that all things are done decently and in order. Anything unseemly has to be avoided. Where East meets West opinions sometimes differ. A number of church members disagreed with the foreign viewpoint. [For them it] was too rigid. Jang's duty under the circumstances should have been to interpret the higher moral intention of his colleague and doubtless he tried in a way but not perfectly. The tendency is always strong to take sides with one's own countrymen and the line he now took was not cut clear enough. In what followed he took umbrage and sought another appointment.

The station to which he removed brought him even greater difficulties. A renegade christian had great influence in it. The better class of church members was sorely distracted, the others half dead. To heal the breach was well nigh impossible. He was only able to alleviate some of the worst symptoms and cheer on a faithful minority. God in His mercy who knew the frailty of man's human frame did use him for these ends and the accomplishment was not small. Yet the church did not prosper numerically.

Difficulty came upon difficulty. The Revolution of 1911 made residence unsafe in the interior for missionaries and by consular request they had to leave temporarily. Then came great trial for Jacob Jang. When remittances were sent to him to disburse among mission employees in that section of the province the church renegade and a companion came with a suggestion that he should retain part of the money sent and divide the remainder among themselves. To the missionary society they could report that this amount had been robbed in transit. Mr Jang positively refused to assent [agree]. Every cent was faithfully forwarded and, though robbers at that time were springing up everywhere like mushrooms, nothing was lost. The pair were deeply chagrined. To think that this money was passing through the station and though they were church members they could find no way of fingering [stealing] any of it; it was exasperating. To be sure what a deluded simpleton Jacob Jang was! And he remained obdurate. Finally they came to his house to curse his perversity. They struck him and spat on him. It was hard to bear, harder still not to retaliate. His good wife seeing his agitation, stroked his hand sympathetically to keep him calm.

Could he have seen that day that the renegade a few years hence was to die a felon's death and that his accomplice would yet repent and do a good christian work before passing on how different his feelings would have been! But these things were hid from him. Or he might have

¹⁵⁸ [John 21]

recalled the two malefactors [criminals] at Calvary on whom God respectively revealed His judgement and mercy.

After three years, at his own request, he was given an outstation to work where success or failure should lie entirely at his own door [be his own responsibility]. The field was new; he need not build on another man's foundation. The people in general, he noted, to be as wicked as the race before the Flood¹⁵⁹, but, as a herald of the Cross, he reckoned that emphasised his call. As never before he felt face to face with the powers of darkness. How should he begin? By preaching, of course; many were ready to listen. By the sale of gospels and tracts; plenty were willing to buy. By meeting and chatting with all comers in the tea-shops; there was never any lack of curiosity. Month after month passed yet the impression made seemed negligible. Could anything be done to speed on the good work? Yes. He opened a school for children. In their minds, fresh and impressionable, he could hope to implant the truth with lasting results. Slowly a few now, and a few again among the elderly people came forward for baptism. It was indeed gratifying to have visible evidence that his work was not in vain. A church was organised.

The success he obtained spurred him on to seek more. A new venture suggested itself. He had seen missionaries dispensing medicine to the sick and making converts among them. He would adopt the same plan with the same end in view. The healing of men went further than anything else in the breaking down of prejudice and the opening of hearts to receive the gospel. A committee was formed to raise subscriptions from the public to carry out the scheme.

Any foreign missionary could have told him that the project for him was highly dangerous. In the first place he had not the medical qualifications to run a dispensary properly. His wisest plan would have been to give away medicines unobtrusively to those he knew he could help effectively. In the second place the use of questionable money could scarcely bring a blessing. The end did not justify the means. But being alone the native love of a stir and a crowd coupled with the desire to make greater headway carried him off his feet.

Patients came to him in large numbers. One told another that the pastor made no charge for treatment, neither did he expect a fee. Those he treated ran no risk of being poisoned by medicine as they often were by those of their own doctors. He believed in washing wounds, not in smearing them over with an adhesive mass of unclean plaster. And his quinine did cure malaria. The only deterrent was that one had first to sit down and listen to a harangue [lecture] on his foreign religion.

The pastor thought all was going well until it transpired that the Treasurer of the committee for collecting dispensary funds was sidetracking a large percentage for his own use. A church investigation disclosed his guilt. But no one could induce him to disgorge. When this became known the whole good work fell into disrepute.

The blow to Christ's cause in the place was serious for the church and for Mr Jang himself. The delinquent ever afterwards bore him the most rancorous hatred for exposing his dishonesty. In the community he had lost what the Chinese call 'face' and that he could not forgive. This man, hereafter, lay and waited and watched for the opportunity for revenge. The church people kept true to their pastor. As they increased in numbers he and they came to see the desirability of being independent of foreign mission money. This gave them a conscious strength through the need of working together. They wanted to show that their faith in Christ was so real and so vital to them that they were willing to deny themselves for it.

Their pastor blossomed out into a religious writer; his name could be seen at the end of articles in church magazines. If at times somewhat diffuse, what he wrote was never without good matter. Once he secured first prize for a tract on repentance. His example incited one of his flock to write a companion to it on man's need of Christ which had also a large circulation.

Frequently the Bible society from him had requests for consignments of gospels – always a good criterion of the life of a church. He was keen on evangelization and recognised that without the

¹⁵⁹ [Genesis 6-8]

distribution of the Word it was doubly difficult. It had to be read as well as preached and preaching which did not lead men to read the Scriptures and teach them how to study the Scriptures was futile.

The church maintained its testimony strong and uncorrupted. The people in that region had no excuse if they turned not to the Lord. The lamp of life hung high enough for all to see who sought Heavenly direction. When the first gale of communism blew destructively through the land its fury raged severely in this town. It was the hour and power of darkness when Satan was bent on destroying Christ's cause in China. A gathering of nearly one thousand youths and men clamoured for the immediate destruction of church property. A christian who overheard their intention ran to warn the pastor of his danger. "Fear not," he told them, "they that be with us are more than they that be with them."¹⁶⁰ He went into the church and cast himself on the Lord in prayer. No one came near. It transpired that strife and division in the band before it reached the church had aborted the whole wicked design.

Much of the secret of Pastor Jang's success in christian work lay largely in the 'sweet settled repose of affection' he found in his home life. 'Great thoughts, great feelings came to him there unawares.' His good wife knew how to send him forth inspired for the battle. She had a large vision of its Divine importance. While she lived no crushing trouble came to him. After her death the enemy returned to try him severely. Contrary to the general custom of his countrymen he deferred marrying again. It took time for grief to assuage itself and he dare not take another in her place except in the Lord. While he waited and prayed the opportunity of his erstwhile enemy for revenge came. A story was spread about the incongruity of his household arrangements though these had been made in consultation with his best friends. The story, if innocuous in itself, led on to sinister suspicions which grew as they were related to definite assertions. When these were known abroad his enemy appeared in the open to harass him and bribed the only witnesses, an old serving woman and her husband, who could have absolutely cleared him. The united effect of all this staggered him. His friends rallied to his side urging him not to yield in the least to the traitor for his purpose was to destroy his influence. Jang, nonplussed and weary at length with the persistence of the attack, consented finally to a compromise for the sake of a promised peaceful settlement. But he found instead that his enemy with diabolical glee used this as proof of an indirect admission of blame. He thus found when too late that it was a crucial mistake for the sake of peace to resolve to be 'at charges with him.'¹⁶¹

The Lord did not forget his servant. He who raiseth up all those that 'be bowed down'¹⁶² ceased not to be gracious. He made it known as He did to David when he took refuge among the Philistines and to Peter when he grew afraid at the raging of the waves that He knew how to deliver the godly out of their temptations and restore to them the joy of His salvation. On this occasion he sent a friend who through a long experience of heart bitter persecution knew how to sympathise with and help a sorrowing brother.

In the account of his many experiences which Pastor Jang wrote for us he acknowledges feely the mistakes he made at one time or another through over-confidence and self-will. He sought too much to carve out his own way instead of waiting more on God for guidance. It was the old Chinese notion of the superiority of the scholarly man that thus weighed with him and because of this he procured needless difficulties for himself. The symbol of wisdom in China is a figure standing solitary with one foot on the back of a fish while the other foot is raised. Kuei Shing, the god of literature, is similarly represented in the temples. The idea is that the man of learning attains to a pre-eminent position among his fellow men. He excels all by his wisdom, his superior demeanour, his gracious equanimity and his self-reliance. In him alone is conserved the power to control the fluid masses of humanity. The symbol is a favourite one and extensively used. The figure may be a man or

¹⁶⁰ [2 Kings 6:16]

¹⁶¹ [Acts 21:23-25]

¹⁶² [Psalm 146:8]

bird but the import is the same. In paintings, embroideries, bronzes, and porcelains the Chinese produce it in many ways. But experience taught this christian teacher the truth of the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."¹⁶³ Solomon spoke truly when he said, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths."¹⁶⁴

We wish we could say that uniform prosperity followed Mr Jang latterly but the fact remains that in order to augment his stipend business cares forced their claims on him. His real work then suffered. But no complaint escaped his lips to us. Adversity could not dampen his trust in God or lessen his thankfulness for the mercy that called him to the christian ministry. If now he has retired, what he has sought to accomplish will be had in everlasting remembrance, and what he has suffered make all the greater to him the joy that will be hereafter.

'Do you know what you are saying?
All the days are dark to you –
Never comes a lift or lightning –
Never strength to smile them through.

Do you know God's saints are chosen
Oftentimes to suffer sore,
That the crown may be more golden,
When the suffering is o'er?

Do you know He gives them sorrow,
Makes it often sharp and long,
That their voices may be sweeter,
When they sing the 'glad new song'?

By Alfred Norris

¹⁶³ [Jeremiah 10:23]

¹⁶⁴ [Proverbs 3:5-6]

Chapter 14 Cases of Sudden Conversion

Are sudden conversions possible in China? Many deny that they are. It is thought that a man cannot divest himself so rapidly of his inherited religious misconceptions and take in sufficient gospel at the first hearing to produce this saving change in the soul. Doubtless this is generally the case, but not always. Instances are on record of new hearers who verily believed straightway unto salvation. There is no limit to the power of the Spirit of God when the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus, is simply and faithfully presented.

1. A soul-hungry woman in West China set out on a heathen pilgrimage to burn incense before the idol shrines on the famous Buddhist resort of Mount Omei [Emei]. This favourite method of gaining soul-saving merit was the best she knew. Such a quest with a band of others like-minded brings no little mental exhilaration by the way. The effort of the journey, the arduous nature of the climb and the repeated prostrations engender a sense of accomplishment which is apt to deceive the seeker into a false hope. Nevertheless, to the thinking sort a dull reaction is apt to come. The hollowness of the attainment makes itself felt. After all, what has been really gained? There is lacking that authoritative assurance which can only produce genuine peace of heart.

This woman, after limping down the myriad stone steps of Mount Omei's descent, saw on coming to the city of Kiating [Leshan] an open door through which people were entering into a preaching hall. Her poor bound feet were aching sorely, she needed a rest, therefore she followed them in to listen.

Yes! What was that the speaker said? It sounded so self-evident, so convincing and so sweet to the ear. There was one God and Father over all, who was the Lord of heaven and earth; He was the most High: of course it was true. And a real Saviour from heaven who removed the burden of sin and gave eternal life to weary repentant souls: that seemed in accordance with what one would expect of an equitable and gracious God. "Here at last," she said to herself, "is the unmistakable way of life and salvation." From that instant she cast herself unreservedly on Jesus Christ. Her soul which, like her aching feet, had been so long bound and crushed and imprisoned found immediate liberty. The finding of an all-loving and all-righteous God together with the knowledge of sin forgiven brought the peace which all her travel and climbing, her bowing and beseeching had failed to give. Within one short half hour, suddenly and unexpectedly she had found what her soul had so long craved. Her feet still ached, what of that? Her heart sang. How marvellous the change!

2. A number of women from a wild marauding tribe on the border of Tibet crept one night into a gospel meeting in the Chinese border town of Songpan. More unlikely persons to receive the gospel readily would have been hard to find. All were uncouth and unkempt; they were clad in dark coarse homespun garments; they wore no shoes, had no head-dress and their stolid faces betrayed no sign of intellectual capacity. That evening we spoke through an interpreter – a half-caste woman, a leper but an excellent christian. Quietly they sat listening as sentence by sentence she translated the address given. The old, old story was related very simply. There was no attempt at eloquence or of producing excitement but only an earnest endeavour to make the listeners clearly understand the message given. Slowly it became evident that something was happening. Several in the company, including a woman over seventy years of age, began to wipe their eyes. The news of a free pardon for sin made them weep for very joy. Their iniquity had been laid on the crucified Lamb of God and washed white in His cleansing Blood. Eternal life was theirs through the infinite love of God. Had Christ been visibly present they would, like Mary of old, have washed His feet with their tears and dried them with their hair.¹⁶⁵ So greatly were they affected. In their speedy conversion that evening we had another effective illustration of the power of the gospel to do its own work when plainly and

¹⁶⁵ [Luke 7:38]

clearly presented. It wrought its work at once and that despite the most adverse of circumstances. Six days afterwards the old lady and thirteen women of her race made their confession of Christ by baptism. Their faith was so self-evident and strong that no one could forbid the administration of the rite. Great was the rejoicing that day. The story of redeeming love they took back to their own people where others soon joined them in the profession of the same faith.

3. Chang Jong-Yuin [Chang Zhongyun], an elderly merchant, happened to be passing the mission-hall in Chengtu one Sunday evening when he received a tract and an invitation to enter. He paused a second, made a remark to his son when the two thereupon turned and walked in. The discourse that evening was on the cross as the manifestation of divine judgment and saving righteousness. By the death of Jesus Christ, Son of man and Son of God, who there made His soul an offering for sin, we saw sin condemned and the mercy of God revealed. 'He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.'¹⁶⁶ Eternal life could not be earned. God was not to be bribed by a show of human merit. No one could establish his own righteousness but Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believed in Him. To those who accepted the saving righteousness of Christ, God imputed not sin. We were justified by faith and had peace with God through the blood of Christ's cross. The only way therefore of salvation was an unreserved faith in Christ's name. The wages of sin was death but the gift of God was eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.¹⁶⁷ Mr Chang sat spell-bound [enthralled]. Not a word did he miss. Everything said was to him a welcome surprise. His soul leapt up to the message. From the platform it was easy to see from the earnest look on his face that the Holy Spirit was dealing with him.

The same evening it happened that by way of contrast we held up to view a small brightly painted idol, pleasing in front but hollow behind, worm-eaten and contemptible looking. What was the choice to be, the mercy and truth of God as revealed in Jesus Christ or the empty creeds and inventions of man as represented by this carved, decaying and ludicrous object? Did they prefer the conceits and vagaries of a heathen ritual to the certainty of "Thus saith the Lord"? When the appeal was made for those who chose to accept Christ to come forward and enrol their names, Mr Chang was the first to step to the front.

He never afterwards faltered in his belief. Every Lord's Day he came faithfully to church. His eager, intelligent face was always an inspiration to all. More and more he gloried in this free unmerited justifying righteousness which came down from heaven unto all and upon all who would accept it by faith and thanksgiving. To the end of his life no one was more staunch than he in his love to the Lord who redeemed him at such tremendous cost.

'I take, O Cross, thy shadow
For my abiding-place;
I ask no other sunshine than
The shining of His face:
Content to let the world go by,
To know no gain nor loss -
My sinful self my only shame,
My glory all, the Cross.'¹⁶⁸

4. During the life-time of our Lord, if men marvelled at the stupendous works which He wrought, He, in turn, marvelled that their blind unbelief, their failure to read and respond to the many tokens brought near to them of the divine goodness and mercy, seemed strangely

¹⁶⁶ [Romans 4:25]

¹⁶⁷ [Romans 6:23]

¹⁶⁸ [From a hymn by Elizabeth Cecilia Clephane. Beneath the cross of Jesus. Verse 5]

inexplicable. How often He bewailed the unwillingness of men to repent. But when someone more in earnest than others ventured to turn to Him in contrition and trust, how greatly He rejoiced.

The following letter speaks for itself. It was written by a young man, a high school graduate, who surprised even the missionary by the alertness of his faith. He was another who chanced to attend a meeting in the mission hall already mentioned. The address he heard was on the raising to life of the widow's son at Nain.¹⁶⁹ Straightway he saw himself spiritually as dead in trespasses and sin and as much in need of the life-giving Saviour as the man whom Christ awoke to life. At once, therefore, to the same command "Young man, I say unto thee, arise"¹⁷⁰ he also paid heed and sat up and began to talk. At least, he began to write and this is what he wrote:-

'Beloved Pastor and Preacher of Eternal Life,

Last night I heard you and your colleague, the Rev. H. J. Openshaw, preach in the East Street mission hall. What you said made me feel the great weight of my sin. At the same time it brought me ease and encouragement. I felt that if I did not accept the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ I should be adding sin to sin. Beloved Pastor, you pointed out my errors last night and gave me a book of Scripture. On my return home I read it straight through and was assured that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Saviour. And I write to say that I repent of my sin and believe that Jesus is the Saviour of men. I pray to Him to give my soul eternal life and the hope of heaven.

The Lord Jesus says, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand."¹⁷¹ This makes me fear, for if I do not repent and pray to Him I shall increase my guilt and be consigned to the miseries of hell. Life is short. Though I am only twenty years of age I know its uncertainty.

The great majority of Chinese refuse to repent and believe in Jesus. Hence our social evils go on growing worse. The Szechuanese suffer most because of this. If only all would believe in and follow the Lord Jesus we should see none of the present day struggles and civil wars and selfish commotions. Cheating would cease and international comity set in. Is not this what the Lord Jesus means by the Kingdom of heaven? When it comes society will be like a pleasure garden. O that my Chinese countrymen would believe and follow the love of the Lord Jesus so that our civil wars might cease.

But many of our Chinese scholars refuse to believe in Jesus and speak evil of Him. They do this to their own hurt. Now I personally do not fear (them) for I know that repentance and faith in Jesus saves me. I write to you now because the impulse is strong on me to do so. Please excuse me. Am I troubling you? I am but a mere youth in need of instruction and direction. I should like to have a Bible to read. Can I have one?

With greetings,
Li Tong-Si'

We sent the Bible to him. The following Easter he made one of fifteen from the hall who joined the church by baptism and was the brightest among them all.

¹⁶⁹ [Luke 7:11-17]

¹⁷⁰ [Luke 7:14]

¹⁷¹ [Matthew 4:17]

5. Conversions do not necessarily follow a cut and dried order. Time, place, circumstance with the disposition or need of the individual contrive to give to each its own particular colouring. Occasionally they occur in the strangest way yet their very oddity cannot be used to question their reality.

An aged farmer in China bought a copy of Genesis. The colporteur from whom he purchased the copy recommended it to him. The book contained, the farmer saw, considerable matter, had an interesting title and was cheap in price. He found its perusal uncommonly interesting. There was nothing like it in the whole range of Chinese literature. The name of God was frequently mentioned and His dealings with men every where prominent in its pages. He was not an obscure or remote deity but had an intimate care in human well-being. He hated evil and loved righteousness; men could not sin with impunity or go unrewarded when they strove to order their lives aright. Each day as he read more his interest increased; there was always something fresh and progressive to claim the attention. The old man had not the academic discernment to detect the full import of its narratives or to analyse what the divine revelations to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob fully meant but when he came to the story of Joseph he felt immediately at home. Its reality, inimitable pathos and outcome strangely moved the conscience and the heart. Therein shone the light and truth of the goodness of a divine over-ruling righteous Providence. "Ah," he declared, "this book is indeed the Word of God." The vision that burst on his soul awoke something eternal within him.

If the name conversion be denied to the new frame of mind this man now found himself in, the vision, at least, destroyed all his past trust in the common heathen cults and left his soul crying eagerly for more light. Though he could not have expressed his longing in exact terms it was for a definite experience of the same salvation that Joseph had. "The first time," he said to his sons, "you see that colporteur again buy from him a copy of each kind of book he has for sale and bring them back to me." This they did. Besides Genesis, therefore, he read the four Gospels, Acts and Romans. The reading of these brought him to church. Here he had all his questions answered when the light of his morning illumination came to its noon-day fullness in the face of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 15 The Story of Daniel Deow [Daniel Diao]

The only China that most foreigners know is the China of the treaty ports and a small strip of land along the coast and the lower stretches of her rivers. But that is not the real China. The real China lies behind the ports, practically unknown, unrepresented and unsung. Pass in beyond her maritime boundaries and you find a frugal, industrious, hard-working people; in the main well-disposed and kindly unless when duped by evil officials or agitators, wondrously patient and forbearing under their rulers, and, notwithstanding the pock-marks left on their character by ages of idol-worship, yet know how, if given half a chance, to discuss reasonably the pros and cons in any case of mutual difficulty.

Daniel Deow, the Bible Society agent at Chungking [Chongqing], gathers up unto himself all the quiet, patient, hard-working characteristics of his countrymen without their common faults. Blow what wind there may he is found on his job. You can invariably depend on him. He makes no fuss, much less any pretence. He goes about his work earnestly and anxiously as one that takes a delight in it for its own sake. His aim is to see it faithfully done and the knowledge that it is better done by him and at less cost to the society than others could do it, constitutes his reward.

Daniel acquired his christianity in the mission school. What he learned there gripped him so firmly that he had no choice left if he was to be honest with himself but to give himself to Christ's service. The decision naturally changed the whole course of his life. It gave him a new principle of conduct. Love and not self-seeking became the dominant factor in all that he did.

Early in his career he went to the A.M.E.M. hospital as gospel dispenser to its indoor and outdoor patients. The genial and far famed Dr. J. H. McCartney was then in charge. He was an all round genius, a man who did two men's work, and he also excelled in this respect that he strove to give to all his patients a knowledge of the gospel. For four years Daniel assisted him loyally in this capacity.

The Rev. W. C. Hooker was able to secure his services as a helper in the work of the American Bible Society. In this post Daniel showed himself to be most proficient. A preacher by instinct, he was no mere counter-server. He had the true missionary spirit and thus kept up the dignity of his work. This with an [in] addition to his capability for figures made him an invaluable worker. For another four years he remained here gaining the respect of all.

At Chungking the National Bible Society of Scotland also maintain an agency; the province being so vast that no single society can pretend to meet a tithe of its needs. Now it came to pass that he transferred his services to Scottish work. That they valued his services is evidenced by the fact that he remained in the agency for five years. He might have stayed indefinitely with it had it not been for the outbreak of the European War. Then the agent felt called to go home. Mr Deow therefore accepted a post in connection with the Asiatic Petroleum Company. The change to secular work, however, did not dampen his christian zeal or make him less diligent in his work. His English master took note of this. The christian employee was a man among men.

Though necessity led him away from the Bible Society work, his heart remained in it. After three years he made this plain in a singularly effective fashion. The A.B.S.¹⁷² depot clerk had defaulted leaving Mr. Hooker sorely [desperately] in need of a reliable helper. What was to be done? In the hour of emergency his thoughts turned to the faithful Daniel. No one could find any fault with him save the heathen in the matter of his religion. Going personally to him he frankly explained the situation. When Daniel heard that the Lord had need of him, it was enough: he returned to the service of the A.B.S. at half the salary he was receiving from the A.P.C.¹⁷³

In 1921 came the tragedy of Mr Hooker's death by drowning. It was after this that Mr Deow and the writer, having to collaborate in the work of the Chungking sub-agency, became fully

¹⁷² [American Bible Society]

¹⁷³ [Asiatic Petroleum Company]

acquainted with each other. The arrangement that at first was temporary became in the exigencies of the field a permanent one. From being depot keeper he rose to be an active co-worker.

The higher duties put him on his mettle. At once he rose to their call. There was no fussy elation with him, rather a greater seriousness because of the heavier responsibility. Being well-known among the churches and having much past experience as a guide, he succeeded beyond our expectation. If at first a trifle diffident we personally gave him the encouragement he needed. The word of cheer went far to increase his confidence. When he found, moreover, that his evangelical views met our full support, no troubles or hindrances could hinder him. He went forward rejoicingly.

He rested in another security which though it rendered his life unusually lonely was markedly beneficial, in that it prevented heathen enemies from attacking him where defence is often difficult. They could not malignantly scrutinise his private life, that was pure beyond doubt. Only those whose souls have lived among lions, whom the psalmist describes as the sons of men 'that are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows and their tongue a sharp sword,'¹⁷⁴ will fully appreciate this. Neither could anyone do him an injury under pretence of rendering him a kindness. For he did not drink, smoke or gamble. Money with him held only a secondary consideration. There was no way of enticing him or inciting him into an indiscretion. The net and the pit alike failed to catch him. To inveigle him within their toils was an impossibility. God thus saved him from the reproach of them that would swallow him up.

As time went on he not only kept up his end of Bible Society work but did more: he increased the circulation of Scriptures in East Szechuan year by year until it doubled and trebled itself. True he could not equally increase the preaching part of the work for the office claimed most of his time. Still all he did was conspicuously proficient. His book-keeping showed care and exactness. At first it was wholly done in native style but to save us from going through reams of Chinese figures every half year he learnt to do it in English. He showed he could adapt himself to circumstances meeting requirements which would have stumbled many another in a similar position. This and the economy he practised certainly elicited our admiration.

In the Chinese language there is no exact word for honesty. The word cannot be neatly translated. Certain words approach nearly to it but only nearly. The best equivalent is the expression that 'one's hands and feet are clean.' That is, they are clean from illicit gain, what in China is called 'the wealth of the unrighteous.' Daniel Deow knew well the meaning of honesty without the exact words, the Lord had taught him. He believed in it absolutely, he professed it and we had evidence he lived it. One went to him in vain for a long list of extraordinary experiences or wonders in his life; he could not recount what some others could in this line. But his hands and his feet were clean. He himself was a walking wonder, one among a thousand, a prodigy among the heathen, 'an honest man, the noble work of God.'

We were exceedingly fortunate in having the services of such a sub-agency manager. Few could have shouldered the responsibility so well, especially when the Red menace grew serious. Chungking became then a great communist centre. The anti-foreign ill-will which the Moscow agents stirred up in the city and its environs was indescribable. Foreigners were cursed, given the name of dogs, spat on, stoned and in a number of cases had their property wantonly attacked. The feeble policy of the Chinese government practically encouraged the campaign. It gave license to these agitators to do as they liked. 'The rats found they could nibble the cat's ears without danger,' and how they enjoyed it!

It became the fashion to decry everything foreign. The christians were truly in evil case. [in a difficult situation] Yet Daniel though briars and thorns¹⁷⁵ beset his path never flinched. He cast his burden on the Lord. No missionary could have acted more sagaciously than he. He took every

¹⁷⁴ [Psalm 57:4]

¹⁷⁵ [Ezekiel 2:6]

precaution not to protrude himself in dangerous places. At length he had the satisfaction of reporting that the premises had escaped attack; the worst was over.

Nevertheless he was never free from care of some sort. A grave cause of anxiety came from the frequent fires that occurred in the city. The narrow nature of the streets made the spread of a conflagration very easy and its extinction very difficult. House after house, often street after street, would go before the terrifying devastation could be arrested. For instance, one fire alone destroyed two thousand homes. The Bible House being in a central street occasionally ran serious risk of perishing also. Once when the flames were travelling fast in its direction Mr Deow with others in intense earnestness kept beseeching help from on High. 'The roaring devouring god of vengeance' came almost to the back wall before his power was stayed. The wind then changed and their united prayers were answered. In these repeated holocausts the appearances were that the Chungking people were being visited for their sins.

Yet greater sorrows were in store. The city and district passed under the domination of a corrupt set of officials whose afflictions made the people groan terribly. In the country districts the trouble became aggravated by the presence of numerous bands of robbers. Not infrequently military officials connived at their operations. Under such conditions the management of Bible Society work was no sinecure. Colporteurs had to study both how to dodge the bandits in the country and companies of Red students in the towns. All these cares fell on Daniel. He had, he once wrote to us, "to be constantly in prayer that the men might be saved from these outside dangers. Previous to the revolution the conduct of the work was easy. But after it, if one general is not fighting another is. Between soldiers and bandits there is no rest for anyone. The local officials are continually under various pretexts demanding money. The land-tax is being collected a generation ahead of time. And on top of all, there has come this subversive communism. Please pray for my country that rest from civil strife may come so that the people may have the gospel preached to them and be led to God."

From time to time we sent him a consignment of evangelical tracts. He liked to have these. Their free distribution assisted much in the sale of his gospels and contributed besides to a readier appreciation of their meaning. Nothing pleased him better than to assist preachers in a gospel campaign. Every Spring and Autumn he went on a journey round the mission stations and outstations. When robbers were reported near he hid his dollars in the pages of his books. But it was rare he suffered any loss. All welcomed him on these journeys. He carried a breeze with him. The churches had to think of effort and progress when he came. The circulation of the Scriptures, he insisted, was the greatest of all missionary work. Man by searching could not find God. The human heart without the moving of God's Spirit through the Word upon it continued in darkness. It was the Scriptures alone that could produce conviction of sin and reveal to men their need of Jesus Christ. Consequently the more they were read and preached the sooner would the country be evangelised.

What applied in evangelisation applied equally to growth in grace. Christians could only become strong by diligence in Bible reading. Mr Deow, therefore, in his periodic visits to the churches took care to remind them of this. When the Word of Christ dwelt richly in the heart, men's lives became beautiful and fragrant with the blessing of Heaven. Failure to witness for the Truth arose because of the lack of 'the burning fire shut up in the bones.'¹⁷⁶ The blessed were those whose delight was in the Law of the Lord, who meditated on it day and night and consequently able to bring forth fruit in its season.¹⁷⁷ The leaf of the student of Scripture never withered; his soul prospered in whatsoever he did.

To bring decision after such an appeal he carried pledge cards which he asked Christians to sign. The pledge was simply that there would be a daily endeavour to read a portion of the Word of God. Since it was the means of soul-sustenance divinely given, it was spiritual suicide to neglect the Scriptures. Nothing else could take their place. His asking church members to sign was no more than

¹⁷⁶ [Jeremiah 20:9]

¹⁷⁷ [Psalm 1:2-3]

asking each to take care of his or her moral and religious health that they might serve the Lord unto all well pleasing.

Daniel, notwithstanding various efforts of his critics to remove him from his work still continues faithful in it. In season and out of season his zeal for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God never flags. He knows that unless it first comes any outward semblance of national prosperity would only be a sham and a delusion. The heart of man must first be rectified by a return to God before civil cohesion can come. In the words of Confucius the sage, 'one cannot carve wood that is rotten or plaster a wall that is built of dung.' Righteousness alone is able to exalt a nation. He therefore puts first things first: he seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.¹⁷⁸

On the Lord's day you will invariably find him in church with his brethren or wherever they proceed to bear their witness. On week day evenings you may meet him at the bed-side of the sick, conducting worship in some home, or anon [another time] visiting the prison with gospels and tracts for its inmates. On the street one might find it hard to distinguish him, as far as outward appearances go, but not so the angels in heaven. They know him to be one of the elect of the earth,¹⁷⁹ a chosen instrument to take the gospel to multitudes who but for his Bible Society labours would never have had the chance of receiving it.

¹⁷⁸ [Matthew 6:33]

¹⁷⁹ [Mark 13:27]

Chapter 16 The Story of Ho Kin-Shan [He Jinshan]

What's in a name? In China much in every way. The first essential is that it should be acceptable. If it is good, pleasing, or high sounding, then *prima-facie* [accepted as correct until proved otherwise] all is well. Whether it be a personal name or a man's reputation or what is asserted of anything this holds equally true. A virtuous or agreeable name is held of greater account than reality itself. Given that, one has boldness to face the world unabashed, and the onus is on you if you dare to question what it represents or portends.

In the Occident¹⁸⁰ a man has to make his own name good; in the Orient he is given a good one to begin with. To the family name is added a given or distinguishing name which carries a distinctive meaning implying some virtue or wish or superiority. Whatever we may think of the custom we have to admit at least, that here we meet the poetic spirit of the East which refuses to be bound by the prosaic in life but which seeks to interpret everything connected with it by the halo of the ideal.

The given name of the subject of this character sketch was Kin-Shan or 'Gold Mount.' It mattered not that he came of the farmer class or that his family belonged to the poorer order of society, the appellation was euphonious. Who knew that it might not also prove lucky? Certainly no one, once he heard it, would be able to forget the bearer of such a heart-stirring wish-begetting title. Besides, would he not all his days have the comfort of the designation of riches even if fate decreed that he was never to acquire them? Of that no one could possibly deprive him.

As events turned out, the name in Mr Ho's case did not fulfil its happy prediction. Misfortune rather than good fortune dogged his footsteps. Yet in the providence of The All Wise if he found not gold he was to find by his adversity what was far better. When his ploughing cattle died and farming meantime became unprofitable, he came to Chengtu for a time to seek his living. Here one Sunday an acquaintance led him to church. After the service he met the Rev. G. E. Hartwell and the Rev. O. L. Kilborn, MD. Both greeted him so warmly that he continued attendance as long as he remained in the city. During these months the truth found a deep lodgement in his heart, but like many more of his countrymen he was slow in taking a stand for Christ. He allowed that it would be good to join the church, but fear of the displeasure of his relatives blocked the way. He deemed it would be impossible to persuade them, including his mother, to cast off their old-time beliefs and see eye-to-eye with him, hence nothing could be done but to believe in secret.

In this slough of despond¹⁸¹ he remained for two or three years. The amount of censure he deserved for wallowing here so long, a Westerner would find it hard to apportion. To cut away from one's own kith and kin and move out into general ostracism was as hard for him as for the average Chinese. He needed a helping hand and a cheering word for his extrication. At his native place these were not forthcoming. Fortunately circumstances again directed his footsteps to Chengtu where he found both. The two missionaries unitedly bade him not to be afraid but believe and come out boldly for the Lord. The words struck home. To two christian helpers in the mission hospital he repeated and discussed with them what they [the missionaries] said. They in turn exhorted him not to be afraid. Such interest in his welfare brought him much cheer, and such exhortation born of experience gave him great solace. Yes, he would trust, yet cautious and timid by nature he made no immediate application for baptism. However he did so eventually and was received into the church.

His baptism brought him emancipation. A new spirit came over him. Fear no longer held him in its enervating grip. He grew bold to witness for Christ. We now find him going to kneel before his mother to plead that she renounce her heathen vanities of worship and come to church. His impulsion so far won that she did consent to go and listen. The instruction of the native preacher together with the friendly counsel and stimulating example of two elderly christian women did the

¹⁸⁰ [The Western world]

¹⁸¹ [A reference from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan]

rest. The old lady broke her vegetarian vow to the idols and with a grand-daughter was baptised by Dr. Kilborn.

With the conversion of his mother, [Mr] Ho's religious family battle was practically won. So strong are the ties of filial duty in China that while either of the grandparents survive the younger generation must take heed to his or her wishes. Since his father was dead and she was a christian, it became a matter of expected procedure for the others in the household to follow her example. This was seen to be the more reasonable as the grand dame's health surprisingly began to mend [get better]. Though she had often been sickly before, her ailments disappeared. She grew strong in body, and with her new found peace of mind she appeared altogether as a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Mr Ho after this never returned to farm work. He remained in Chengtu. Sometimes he followed business pursuits, at other times he was employed by different missionaries when a reliable man was wanted in some position or another of a subsidiary nature. One finally put him to book-selling. At this he learnt the nature of colportage work.

Dr Killam Neave, the wife of another missionary, took a keen interest in his family. To her visits to his home his mother and wife owed much of their earnestness. Her courteous sympathetic bearing left an abiding impression on their hearts. It made no difference to her that they were poor, she treated them with as much dignity as if they were the renowned of the land. By her influence a way was found for the children to attend the mission school, and even arrangements made for the bettering of Mr Ho's own position.

Her interest, however, led indirectly to his partial undoing. The Chinese assistant pastor grew jealous. He maligned him as unfit to be recognised as a church helper. The consequence was that a subsidy granted him monthly for selling Scriptures was withdrawn. He felt this unchristian-like criticism keenly. We remember how grieved he was as he explained to us the situation. But it made no difference on our side. The missionaries offered no complaint and we made our consignments of gospels to him as before. It simply meant to us that henceforth he became more intimately associated with the general A.B.S.¹⁸² work.

Had he only known it at the time, this was destined to widen greatly his sphere of usefulness. If no interruption had come, he would never have launched out as he now began to do. Enlarged opportunity and increased practice saw him blossom out into our most successful bookseller.

This was the more remarkable as he remained on our volunteer colporteur staff for some time and had few of the outward marks of a colporteur. He retained much of the appearance of the common farmer. While he was proficient enough in reading Mandarin print, or official style of Chinese in which his Scriptures were issued, he had few of those smarter smoother characteristics that come of a higher learning. Yet he constantly led men to Christ.

Was this because he was free from the temptation to lay stress on learning and had no recourse but to preach the Word only? Undoubtedly it was largely so with him. If his work evidenced one thing above another it was the sufficiency by itself of the proclamation of the gospel in its New Testament statements to convince, convict and win men. While there may be a number whose heresies or sophistries require a scholar to refute there are always many more whose consciences become awakened at the Scriptural denunciation of sin and who fully assent to their own inability to recover themselves from its domination and who, moreover, with the utmost certainty perceive in the gospel its divine adaptation to their inmost and utmost needs. It is a truism, therefore, that the first business of the church is to proclaim the gospel and not argue about it. To those who would turn from their sin and be saved the Bible presents its own credentials. The Holy Spirit enters the heart to illumine it. The Word thus commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. In other words, its saving truth is seen by the Spirit's help to be consonant with the inexorable laws of

¹⁸² [American Bible Society]

divine righteousness. Mr Ho succeeded in the measure that he did because he put the one thing needful first: in conformity with the beginning or essential nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ he acted as the herald or messenger of a God-sent message to needy sinful men.

A favourite saying of his was, "To whom should sinners go if not to Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners?" He alone could save them. It was His grace and mercy that gave repentant men peace. He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.¹⁸³ Here truly the colporteur was touching the heart of the gospel.

The Chinese know in part the meaning of grace. They have a word 'ngen' [en恩] that carries somewhat of the New Testament term of grace. The written character for it is a composite of two others meaning 'by reason of' and 'the heart' – favour that has the heart for its cause. In courts of justice when a law breaker is condemned and about to be punished it is common to hear him call out piteously to the judge, "I beseech your Honour to open grace for me." The grace here besought is a relaxation or annulment of the sentence because of the implied natural kindness in the magistrate's disposition. If he deigns to open his heart this will be shown. But though the Chinese have this idea of grace and their written character for it is so appositely constructed, they yet in practice assume that it requires to be evoked by supplication whereas [Mr] Ho could tell his hearers that the grace of God in Jesus Christ flowed spontaneously to men and was ever pressing itself on them for acceptance. It was the Heavenly Father who sought men, calling on them to be reconciled to Him when they should find not only free pardon but a kindly keeping and sustaining power in all the trials and difficulties of life.

The Chinese have also an expressive word for peace, viz., 'p'ing-ngan' [ping'an 平安] or tranquillity and rest. 'Peace is happiness', runs one of their common proverbs, happiness with them being the *summum bonum* [ultimate goal] in life. Or, in the phrasing of an allied proverb, 'when the people have peace the country prospers.' Their idea of peace accordingly includes the notion of an accompanying welfare. All this spiritually Ho Kin-Shan assured them came from the Blood of Christ's Cross. In Him we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, being delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of God's love¹⁸⁴ where we have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away reserved in Heaven for us.¹⁸⁵ As believers our present and future were abundantly assured in Jesus Christ.

Crowds never embarrassed this 'peacemaker' of ours. He rather preferred them. His sales increased according to the numbers around him. To address many brought him elation of soul. He was at home recommending his gospels. "The books of eternal life," he called them. Why did not all want them since they were so precious? They were not foreign books. Indeed and in truth they gave to all the Word of the Most High, the Lord of Heaven and earth. It was slighting Him not to read His will therein and it was at the peril of their eternal welfare to reject His message of saving love which they announced. Men's souls were as dependent on God's grace and mercy as their bodies were for sustenance on the rains He sent from Heaven to nourish the earth.

If [Mr] Ho had no fear in addressing crowds he nevertheless came to his best in dealings with individuals. This man of the one Book hit the mark oftenest [most often] when aiming his shafts at one target. His forte [ability] lay in talking not in preaching. Homelike as he was in appearance and homelike in his manner, he excelled as he entered men's homes for a homelike heart-to-heart chat over the one thing needful. On the odd occasion he spoke of these whom he had lead to the truth, the account was of one here and one there in all sorts of places.

He liked to have the presence of a missionary when selling his Scriptures. It was only now and then this could be but at such times he was highly elated. As he then looked forth on a concourse in a market or open square there came a look in his eyes which meant, "Come on now ye

¹⁸³ [1 Peter 3:18]

¹⁸⁴ Colossians 1:13,14

¹⁸⁵ 1 Peter 1:4

sceptics and mockers and opposers of christianity, what have you to say for yourselves? I have a champion with me who can answer your questions. Will you dare come forward today?"

Colporteurs in China have often to bear the brunt of the enemy's opposition because they lead the attack in the christian campaign. Being, therefore, always conspicuous, and ever defenceless they are accounted easy prey for the evil disposed. Insults, jibes and calumny are frequently their daily portion. Hence it requires a large supply of grace to enable them to pursue their calling meekly. [Mr] Ho knew how to endure patiently. The realisation was ever strong upon him that he was the servant of the *Meek* and lowly Jesus.¹⁸⁶ What grieved him most was the blaspheming of the Holy Name wherewith He was called. Once in a systematic street to street campaign we saw him rebuking indignantly one or two persons and fearing trouble went to his assistance. The men had asked him the communist question, "What sort of a thing is God?" Mr Ho in this instance could not but show his strong displeasure by a word of stern reproof.

From 1926 onwards insolent bands of Red¹⁸⁷ students were wont to attack the colporteurs in Chengtu. Protest only inflamed them the more. The very police were afraid of them. In the rush of attack gospels would be snatched away to be destroyed; and the men at such times counted themselves fortunate if they escaped from rough treatment.

Once Mr Ho and a companion had a narrow escape from severe injury. Suddenly Mr Ho found himself surrounded by a particularly fierce set of these school ruffians. The sight of the gospels aroused their fury to white heat. They cursed him, spat on him, called him a foreigner's dog and a traitor to his country. Some thought to punish him. The question was the form the punishment should take. He saw they were bent on doing him hurt. It was a nerve-testing situation yet a strange peace possessed his soul. The thought rose uppermost: "I need not fear. The Lord is with me. He can garrison me from harm." Whereupon he secretly lifted up his heart in prayer. No sooner had he done this than one man said to the others, "Hear me please. See, this is an old man. He, of course, is selling these books to make a living. Why should we punish him for that?" The effect of his words turned aside their wrath. "Well then," exclaimed another addressing [Mr] Ho, "make sure that you henceforth give up this way of making a living." And forthwith they left him.

But as they moved away they caught sight of the other colporteur in the same street who was a younger man. At him they rushed pell-mell tearing his clothes and striking him fiercely in the mouth. Mr Ho seeing this prayed now for divine succour for his friend. And again prayer was immediately answered though in a different way. An opening gave the attacked man a chance to escape which he promptly saw and bolted.

Ho Kin-Shan had also two terrifying experiences at the hands of robbers. It was prayer in both instances, he maintained, that saved his life. Throughout the years of his labours prayer became his mainstay [foundation]. It gave him strength for the day's need; it brought comfort in sorrow and difficulty; it turned darkness into light; it kept the wolf from the door [kept from starving]; it directed his paths; it helped him to despise shame and contumely [insults]; it supplied meekness to instruct those who arraigned themselves against the teaching of the Cross.

His hardest trials arose from the slights of false brethren. Because he was poor, he was looked down on. His coarser garments led them to pass him by. Because of his lack of scholarly polish he was reckoned of no account. They imagined he had no right to engage in religious work; he should have followed a secular occupation. His good work and patient endurance they valued not. They looked on the outward appearance and not on the heart. The man they thus despised while he felt it keenly, yet remembered one verse of Scripture which peculiarly sustained him: 'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.'¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ [Matthew 11:29]

¹⁸⁷ [Communist]

¹⁸⁸ [Romans 8:28]

'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.'¹⁸⁹ Ho Kin-Shan never found his mount of gold. He found instead the insurance of this promise against want. Innumerable times in the face of dire need the Lord sent His 'ravens' with bread.¹⁹⁰ The family never knew a wasteful abundance, at the same time they never came to painful penury. With thrift and diligence they won through.

One mercy of the Lord brought him no little surprise and pleasure. During his lean [poorer] years his few acres of land had been pledged away almost beyond recall. Only the legal power of redeeming them remained. It seemed hopeless as the years went by to think that the money could ever come to bring him back his patrimony. Yet so it even came to pass. In the goodness of the Lord a friend was raised up who, knowing his circumstances and his long faithfulness, advanced this as a gift. A small yearly income now accrued from the restored lands which brought a greater comfort to his household. He was instant and loud in his praise for the unexpected blessing. Because he had not sought his own ease or pleasure but out of his poverty had been making many rich, the Giver of all good had supplied his own need.

One day he will be given 'a new name written.'¹⁹¹ That will reward him for his labours and trials here. Buddhist priests in China burn mounts of paper gold and paper silver at funerals [so] that by some sort of magic alchemy their devotees may have endless riches in a future existence; our friend knows he has these in reality awaiting him in Jesus Christ, for 'eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him.'¹⁹² He endures, therefore, as seeing Him who is invisible. 'The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us hereafter.'¹⁹³

In 1932 this thought of the coming glory became keenly accentuated to him in the unexpected death of Mrs Ho. She was one of the victims in a severe epidemic of cholera that swept that year through Chengtu. How often she had welcomed him home after his preaching tours! His trials she had shared, his griefs assuaged, his faith strengthened. Few others had so earnestly sought out their neighbours to take them to church as she. Her husband's labours were her own. With such a helpmeet now in the glory-land, Heaven seemed so much nearer. It was but one step further to pass within the veil. The passing show and glitter of this world's wealth appeared to him less than ever before. Jehovah was his Shepherd. This was enough. He would not want. Goodness and mercy like twin guardian angels had followed him all the days of his life, and he would dwell in the house of the Lord forever.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ [Matthew 6:33]

¹⁹⁰ [1 Kings 17:6]

¹⁹¹ [Revelation 2:17]

¹⁹² [Isaiah 64:4, 1 Corinthians 2:9]

¹⁹³ [Romans 8:18]

¹⁹⁴ [Psalm 23]

Chapter 17 The Story of Chen Fu-Kuan [Chen Fuguan]

To one with the passion for the distribution of the Word of God there is nothing so fascinating as watching how it acts on its readers especially when they read it for the first time. He sees that different persons are affected by it in different ways. According to the individual bent of mind, the nature of the disposition or craving of the heart, one part will appeal with greater force than another. It cannot be predicted what particular book in the Old Testament or in the New, what passage, what biography, what story or what text will first awaken a saving faith. The one thing he finds for a certainty is that from Genesis to Revelation the Bible is a living, illuminating, convicting, compelling book with an inherent supernatural power, and when earnestly read by those 'willing to do His will' it never fails to enlighten the eyes, make wise the simple and convert the soul.

The story of Chen Fu-Kuan, by way of illustration, affords a plain case in point. His conversion reads as interestingly as a laboratory demonstration. An aide-de-camp [a military officer], he came to the Chengtu Mission hospital to be healed of a foot wound after a local battle. Here he was given gospels to read, followed by other single books of Scripture and finally a whole Bible. The constant study of these slowly and decisively altered the whole tenor of his life.

Another officer shared his room. In their immediate community of interest, both willingly received and read whatever christian literature was given to them. But neither for some time, though equally friendly in manner and pleasing in speech, betrayed [showed] the least sign of interest in christian doctrine. At length, however, Chen, the quieter of the two, began to talk. The unique figure of Jesus in the gospels had laid strange hold on his imagination; though generic as a man in all He did, He yet towered far above all other men in the possession of powers and moral qualities unquestionably supernatural. God, indeed, was with Him. How explain, for instance, His prescience [foreknowledge] if this were not so? He could predict what men would do. Judas, for example! He knew precisely that this disciple would betray Him and how He would do it. It was marvellous.

In the conversation that followed an opportunity came to answer questions. An important one was, "What meant the Passover?" The explanation took us at once to the heart of the gospel. Gladly we made it plain how Christ fulfilled its import as the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world. He the sinless One, the Divine Son without spot or blemish, died for sin in man's stead to bring us to God. The news gave him the key to all he had read. Now he understood.

What peculiarly impressed him about the four gospels as a whole was not any seeming difference in style or narrative, but the great sameness of purpose each displayed in making known the Person and work of Jesus Christ. In this they were as one. Such an observation coming from a man who had hitherto been an entire stranger to the Scriptures was singularly acceptable as an evidence of their united power and recalled the assertion of Origen¹⁹⁵ that we had not four separate gospels but four in one.

The first in interest among the miracles of Christ he regarded as the cleansing of the leper¹⁹⁶, next the feeding of the multitude in the wilderness¹⁹⁷ and after it the walking on the waters¹⁹⁸. We could not but look up in surprise as he mentioned these, wondering what instinct of soul had led him to such a preference.

He went on to read 'The Acts of the Apostles,' and 'The Epistle to the Romans.' The Acts from its narrative character carried him forward easily, but the pace naturally slowed down in Romans. Like everyone else he had to pause here for reflection and introspection. Always a difficult

¹⁹⁵ [An early Christian theologian]

¹⁹⁶ [Matthew 8:1-4]

¹⁹⁷ [Matthew 14:13-21]

¹⁹⁸ [Matthew 14:25-33]

book for beginners and unquestionably the *pons asinorum* or asses' bridge¹⁹⁹ to many in christian doctrine, it did not deter him. He crossed easily. Naturally one was glad to see this. It proved he was neither a theological trifler nor a shallow thinker.

Most new readers in China require help in Romans. "What is meant by the Law?" they ask. Or, "Who was Abraham?" and so on. Those anxious for clear views of the plan of salvation and desirous of giving to others an intelligent statement of the hope within them find no difficulty in crossing where this simple help is given. But help is not always required. Once when informed by a man that he had finished reading the New Testament we asked if he understood it. He replied that he did not until he came to Romans. Then the light came. "But," he added, "I do not understand the book of Revelation."

'Genesis' and 'Exodus' were the next books Chen read. Our conversations these mornings were the reverse of being wearisome. We often found him sitting bathing his wounded foot in a basin of antiseptic solution preparatory to the renewal of the daily dressing, and tarried [stayed] a while to satisfy his eager craving for more information. It was apparent that he felt there was a pre-established harmony between what he read and his own soul, and he wanted to talk about the things he was daily finding.

'The book of origins'²⁰⁰ opened a window for him on old-world life and religion. God, the Creator, the Fount of all life and light and good, drew near to men in His righteous character as Jehovah, revealing to them His will and saving purpose.

The story of Joseph most of all kindled his imagination. Was there ever tragedy so unrelieved at first as with him? Or trial borne with greater fortitude? Or pathos so affecting as when he revealed himself to his brethren? Or the right more completely rewarded at last? He saw how the divine purpose ran, like a golden thread, through all his sufferings to fit him for his future great vocation. All things had been ordained to work together unto that end irrespective of what evil man might do to him.

From the book of 'Exodus' Chen learned the historical setting of the passover institution which in the gospels had excited his curiosity. With the Israelites he crossed the Red Sea and paid a memorable visit to Mount Sinai. The setting up of the tabernacle of the congregation let him into the secret how men might commune with God by virtue of appointed sacrifice. Was not that the mystery of the ages?

We made bold now to switch him on to reading the book of 'Job'. Doubtless some will question the wisdom of doing this at such a juncture in his religious instruction, but few will dare say that we did not set him to read this great literary production in the light of contemporary history with the books he had just read. Whatever the opinion offered, the plan completely justified itself. Chen revelled in the matchless beauty of this ancient ethical garden. Had all the Chinese sages been present instead in a philosophical controversy he could not have enjoyed it better. No people delight more to talk highly and righteously than the Chinese even to the point of deceiving themselves that high talk takes the place of reality, consequently he felt perfectly at home in the wordy stage-acting of the book. How anxiously he wanted between the scenes to discuss the traits of the various characters! But we refrained. It were better, we said, to let him finish the book to see what he himself could make out as regards its purpose before listening to our views.

That rectitude constitutes its own reward independent of temporal advantage Chinese scholars know well. [Chinese scholars know well that rectitude constitutes its own reward independent of temporal advantage]. Or that trial and adversity are necessary constituents in the formation of strong moral character. He had no difficulty in understanding such affirmations. For instance, Mencius, their greatest sage next to Confucius, taught that, 'When Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man, it first exercises his mind with suffering, and his sinews and bones

¹⁹⁹ [A problem that tests the ability of an inexperienced person. A stumbling block]

²⁰⁰ [i.e. Genesis]

with toil. It exposes his body to hunger, it subjects him to extreme poverty, and it confounds his undertakings. In all these ways it stimulates his mind, hardens his nature and supplies his incompetencies.' But he learned from Job what his countrymen require particularly to know, viz. [namely], that mere ethical systems at their best and man-made religions only 'darken counsel without knowledge.'²⁰¹ The light within man can only take him a limited way. When God chooses to make Himself known, as He did to Job, even such men as he have to abhor themselves and repent in dust and ashes.²⁰² Since no one is without sin, our unaided conceptions of the divine will are blurred and untrustworthy; nothing to us can take the place of the Word of God. It is only when divine illumination comes that men realise how much sin darkens the understanding, defiles the heart, blunts the conscience, destroys spiritual perception, and paralyses the will. Apart from revelation we cannot be awakened to a true sense of our unworthiness before God, and, from a sense of need, made to seek that soul-resuscitating forgiveness provided in a divine atoning sacrifice through which Job could pray for his friends and himself.

'No man can hold the christian view of God's personality and dominion without his whole intellectual nature being ennobled. He no longer looks at things superficially; he sees beyond the grey cold cloud that limits the vision of men who have no God; the whole sphere of his intellectual life receives the light of another world. The difference between his former state and his present condition is the difference between the earth at midnight and the earth in the glow and hope of a summer morning.' 'Faith turns the intellect into a temple; it sets within the mind a new standard of measure and appraisement; and lesser lights are paled by the intensity of its lustre.' 'Once he could regard the flame of a candle as sufficient without consulting the light of the sun, he could mistake a maxim for a principle and justify by usage what he never could defend by righteousness. But now that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is in him he looks at everything from a christian standpoint, he takes a spiritual view of every question, and every duty, and he is ashamed, with unspeakable shame, of the chicanery which enfeebled and disgraced his former existence.'²⁰³

The other lesson given to Mr. Chen was the fidelity of Job to God amid his, 'long agony and strife with the power of Darkness.' Far from renouncing God when Satan was allowed to touch all that he had 'Job draws near to Him, cleaves to Him with an inalienable affection and trust, and can conceive of no honour or delight comparable with being admitted to His presence, even though it be to receive his sentence from the lips of his Judge. It is the very triumph of disinterested piety and devoted love. Painful and mysteriously unjust as is the doom that hangs over him, vast and heart-shaking as is the change in all his outward conditions, his heart knows no change; his fidelity never wavers, or wavers only as the magnetic needle which, though it trembles, points steadfastly to the Pole.'²⁰⁴

We thought it advisable now to direct Mr Chen's reading for a time to the New Testament and asked him to read 'The Epistle to the Ephesians' and the first part of 'The Book of Revelation.' Our hope was that after learning more of the exceeding riches of the saints in Jesus Christ and receiving a new and higher vision of the risen, glorified Saviour, he would return to the Old Testament with a better insight and greater ability to understand what he read. He willingly agreed, for having found gold he had all the eager passionate desire of the digger to strike a richer vein.

The plan proved successful. When we next met him the scene in the fifth chapter of Revelation was all he could speak about. It had captured his interest overwhelmingly. "No man in heaven or earth or under the earth," he repeated, "was found worthy to open the book written

²⁰¹ [Job 38:2]

²⁰² [Job 42:6]

²⁰³ Volume on Job: Parker's People's Bible

²⁰⁴ The Expositor: Vol X, 1879

within and on the backside sealed with seven seals, except the Lamb that had been slain.”²⁰⁵ Having learnt before who the passover Lamb was, he understood that He was Jesus, and his eyes glistened as he spoke of Him. ‘The Lamb was all the glory in Immanuel’s land.’²⁰⁶ He pondered and wondered and rejoiced over the fact.

“Who are the four and twenty elders?” he asked. There was scarcely any need to ask whom they represented if one can join in their song: ‘Thou art worthy to take the Book, and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth.’²⁰⁷

The seals of the Book were now truly opened for Chen himself and of his own accord he returned to the Old Testament to read Leviticus. Again he surprised us by the facility he showed in finding the heart of the book. He named readily the various forms of sacrifice and proceeded to discant on [talk about] what was regarded as clean and unclean. We explained that God was holy and without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

The punishment of Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire²⁰⁸ attracted his attention in passing, but what held it fast was the sacrificial cleansing of the leper.²⁰⁹ Herein lay the prophetic background of the miracle wrought at the foot of the Mount of Beatitudes, which he had regarded as the greatest of all the miracles. The stipulated procedure had to be carefully observed. The full interpretation lay beyond him until we showed him that the ritual found its fulfilment in the death and also the resurrection of our Lord.

Before he went on to Numbers we suggested that he would do well to read Hebrews. That epistle gave at length the spiritual interpretation of the Levitical economy. He might then continue his perusal of the Old Testament uninterrupted. This he did.

It was about this time that he came to attend our meetings in the mission hall. In listening with many others to the telling of the old, old story and to the insistence laid on the need of repentance and faith, he felt an accompanying power and thrill that surprised him. There was a subtle magnetism that compelled attention with a convicting power that unmasked to the hearers their own hearts, followed by an impulse to obey the Voice which he and others felt could only be resisted by doing violence to their better selves. One evening when the address centred on the blood of Christ he made known his decision publicly. Eight texts on the theme in large print were hung up and shown in succession in order to impress each on the memories of the audience. The effect was singularly telling, and at the close when an invitation was given for would-be believers to come to the front and enrol their names, Mr Chen limped forward as the first.

If physically he still needed a crutch, spiritually he could now walk alone. He had fully found his legs in Scripture. Our delight came in watching him, his delight in returning periodically with the news of the good things he constantly kept finding.

In reading Deuteronomy, the last chapter of this impressionable and incomparable book put to him all the others in eclipse. Here Chinese predilection got the better of him. “No one knows,” he exclaimed, “where Moses is buried. His grave is unknown.” “Therefore,” we said, “no one can worship at his tomb. Worship may only be rendered to God.” Then he understood why the Lord Himself had buried His servant. In China where tomb worship is universally prevalent, astonishment on Chen’s part was natural, but the obituary appendix served well to bring home to him his first sharp injunction against this insidious soul-degrading custom.

²⁰⁵ [Revelation 5:1-10]

²⁰⁶ [From the hymn by Anne R. Cousins. The Sands of Time are Sinking: 1876]

²⁰⁷ [Revelation 5:9,10]

²⁰⁸ [Leviticus 10:1]

²⁰⁹ [Matthew 8:1-4]

We turned his attention to the twenty-eighth chapter [of Deuteronomy] that he might note in his reading of Scripture how its prophetic warnings and blessings came faithfully to pass in the after history of the Israelites according as they followed or forsook their Jehovah Saviour.

From time to time various tracts were given to Mr Chen. These served to assist him in his Bible reading. Each lent its contribution to his establishment in the faith and, moreover, taught him how the gospel could be logically presented to the minds of men. When the surge of his new emotions began to overflow we gave him a booklet on the teaching of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. He required to know that witness-bearing and preaching could not effectively be done in one's own strength.

In his first attempt at public speaking he did remarkably well; diction, matter, and delivery left little for criticism. He did not flinch in declaring the truth, and he urged his hearers to take a bold stand for Christ, and adhere to it with steadfast perseverance. In his second attempt he palpably fell short. He said nothing out of place, but there was a tone of egoism and self-confidence in his address that spoilt its incisiveness. He failed to grip his audience. The third time he spoke there was true interest manifested, but at the end he dropped half-a-note in that assurance which should characterise the believer. He had not yet learned fully to take the Scriptures implicitly at their face value. The next day we indicated this short-coming of his to him. We asked him to explain the meaning of the word 'hath'. He saw at once what we meant and with a smile accepted the admonishment. 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.'²¹⁰

The next time he spoke there was no haltering or faltering with him; it was a pleasure to sit and listen to so apt a pupil. But two days later a premonition weighed on us that all was not well with our friend, and since we were not ignorant of Satan's devices the thought came that the adversary had gained a momentary advantage over him. The next morning we found that this was even so. "Did Satan come troubling you yesterday?" we asked him. "Yes, he did," he confessed, "I went to call on some army friends and they persuaded me to take a hand at cards with them." It was easy to see he was feeling discouraged. "You did not then tell them you had become a christian?" we pointed out to him. He admitted that. Further reproof was unnecessary, he needed rather instruction and counsel. So we recalled what he had read in Hebrews that we have a great High Priest in the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. We should not throw away our confidence but come boldly unto the throne of grace and find grace to help in time of need.²¹¹ He knew our infirmities.²¹² His blood availed for us. If we confessed our sin, God was faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.²¹³ These words soothed and comforted him. "This very day, go and seek out some one and tell him the story of God's saving grace," we counselled, "as a military man you know how to strike back when the enemy attacks you, Satan dislikes nothing more than the proclamation of the gospel." That would give him the victory. The saints overcome 'by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.'²¹⁴

Other events conspired to teach him a very useful lesson. It was to beware of false brethren.²¹⁵ He saw how certain men could creep unawares into the church who yet were not of it.²¹⁶ Profession of belief did not always mean sincerity. Some men were veritable wolves in sheep's clothing [false teachers]. Such were a stumbling-block to many who would enter the church. But since he himself had seen Jesus he could not draw back. It was enough to remain on guard against these traitors.

²¹⁰ [John 3:36]

²¹¹ [Hebrews 4:14-16]

²¹² [Matthew 8:17]

²¹³ [1 John 1:9]

²¹⁴ [Revelation 12:11]

²¹⁵ [Matthew 7:15]

²¹⁶ [Galatians 2:3-5]

He found likewise that the reading of the same gospels, the perusal of the same tracts, and listening to the same gospel, would save one man but would only harden another. His first room-mate in the hospital left without evincing the slightest interest in what had thrilled Chen's own soul, and another who took his place professed a ready belief while he thought his life in danger, but speedily renounced it when his wounds were healed. Only the few made the grand decision. Christ was still the despised and the rejected of men.²¹⁷

Chen resolved he would confess Him. Easter Sunday was at hand. That day he publicly identified himself with Christ in His death and resurrection when the Lord's name was named over him.

To him the ordinance signified the cleansing of his leprosy. That he had regarded as the greatest of the miracles. We concurred with his opinion in that it represented the forgiveness of sin which indeed was the supreme miracle. Forgiveness preceded all. It did so in the nature of things. The other miracles in comparison were only broken lights or evidential demonstrations of this their chief or head, intuition therefore had not misguided him in his opinion, for sin was moral leprosy and the whole work of Christ was to remove and destroy it.

²¹⁷ [Isaiah 53:3]

Chapter 18 The Story of Ong Gwang-Ming [An Guangming]

Once in a battle fought in West China a New Testament in the pocket of a christian soldier was the means of saving his life. As he drew it forth for examination he noticed that the bullet had pierced the cover and a number of pages. Turning over the leaves to see how far it had penetrated he found that the perforation stopped exactly at the words, 'be not afraid, only believe.'²¹⁸ He naturally thought this was more than chance: the Lord in this way had sent him a special message to calm his fears and strengthen his faith on such a trying day. With regard to the subject of this present sketch [story]; one often had to tremble for him so many were the dangers and temptations he passed through but God, who watched over him continually, brought him out at last into a large place. Satan indeed desired earnestly to have him but the great High Priest who prayed that the faith of His leading disciple might not fail kept this other disciple that he too like Peter when converted might strengthen his brethren.²¹⁹

Mr. Ong when young manifested bitter hostility to all missionaries and their 'foreign' religion. When a native preacher came to reside at Kienchow [Jianzhou], his native town, it was his delight to throw stones at him. The sight of a passing foreigner excited his curses and the presence of a christian his strongest reproaches. Apparently the last person likely to be won for Christ he yet was among the first. For his native curiosity overcame him. When the Rev. S. Lewis who in after years gained fame as a Bible translator came there on a visit he bought from him a copy of Genesis. Once started to read it he had to read on. He could not lay it aside. There was a subtle grip and natural flavour about the book that drew out the interest and carried conviction. In spite of himself his old antipathies began to wane [decrease]. It was hard to resist the truth which this volume plainly taught.

About five months afterwards a colporteur, called Chu Kia-Ko [Zhu Jiagou] passed through the town. Finding Mr. Ong reading Genesis he asked him if he were a believer in christianity. "No," he answered, "I am not a believer in your foreign doctrine." He used the adjective in its contemptuous sense. Fortunately the colporteur knew his business better than to pay heed to the rebuff. Kindly and considerately he told him of the gospel and urged him to go to the Mission Hall to hear more. Before he left he presented him with a set of the four Gospels and Acts. At the same time he took care to tell him how best to read them.

The constant study of these five books dispelled all remaining doubt. Under the gracious enlightening power of the Holy Spirit every vestige of opposition ceased. It only needed now a friend to take him to church. After his former cursing and stone-throwing he felt ashamed to go by himself. Such a friend came along in the person of another colporteur named Chin Shi-Fu [Qin Shifu]. But he only managed to go as far as the door. On three successive nights he sat here listening. On the third night the preacher noticed him and with a smile of welcome took him inside. The evening was that of the weekly prayer meeting.

The christians looked curiously at him as he entered. Was Saul also among the prophets?²²⁰ Yet all rejoiced to see him. With one accord they poured out their hearts to God for his conversion. The moving of the Spirit of the Lord was verily present as they did. The answer to their petitions they saw at once in his enrolling his name as an enquirer. From then onwards he attended worship regularly.

During the Christmas celebrations he advanced to the position of a learner. The following spring he and his mother were received into church fellowship by baptism. It was arranged that his wife should go for a course of instruction to the mission school for women which was then in charge of the devoted Miss Clara Collier.

²¹⁸ [Mark 5:36]

²¹⁹ [Luke 22:32]

²²⁰ [Acts 9]

A great yearning took hold of him. As he reflected how much he was in debt to these two colporteurs the thought came that he too would like to sell Scriptures and lead others to Christ as they had led him. This desire he intimated at the first church conference. Unanimous approval being given, he was recommended for employment to the Rev. H. G. Ramsay who was then the Bible Society agent at Chengtu.

A companion was given him and the two, fired with great enthusiasm, travelled far and wide, disseminating the Word of life. But his native district was not neglected. Occasionally he returned to preach there also. Through their labours the opening of numerous out-stations was largely facilitated. The fatigue, the hardships, the opprobrium [harsh criticism], the opposition, and the risks to health and life they reckoned not: the sufferings incurred were not worthy to be compared with the joy of preaching the gospel. It was at this period the writer first met him. The home of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay was always open to tired wayfarers and lonely missionaries, and here we were introduced to Mr Ong as one of the liveliest and best men on their staff.

One summer during the height of the stifling heat Mr. Ramsay called his men together to go aside and rest awhile on a mountain retreat. Here he invited us to assist him in giving them daily Bible expositions. We remember the joy that came over all at the unexpected largess we found in the gospels, the books of their greatest sales. In the general rejoicing Mr. Ong appeared so conspicuously that one could not help but take especial notice of him.

Such was the man. Would anyone, then, have dreamt that a period of backsliding lay in front of him? Alas! Even such was to come to pass. In China especially, Christians of outstanding earnestness become the particular targets of Satan. Folks in Christian lands have little idea how astonishingly strong is his power in heathen lands, and how oppressively deadening and soul benumbing is the seductive influence he can wield in his various temptations. A description of his disguises or methods of ingenious approach would fill volumes. Truly he is terrible when one declares war against him. With [Mr] Ong he adroitly chose an appropriate time after the death of his wife when he used the unfeeling attitude of a Chinese pastor as a stumbling-block to his faith.

A small short term loan with good security was required to meet the funeral expenses. Mr. Ramsay had at this time gone home on furlough; his successor was still on the way; under the circumstance it was only natural to ask this pastor to help in negotiating this. When he heartlessly declined, the shock was too much to bear with equanimity. Was this what he, an active christian worker, should expect from his brethren? Would it not be wiser on his part to seek a more remunerative post for a time to save himself the risk of such humiliating contingencies?

The situation was indeed a difficult one and he would be rash who sought to pass a hasty judgment on Mr. Ong for seeking what he believed to be a practical solution of it. Hard, mundane facts have to be taken into account, they cannot be ignored. If faith transcends reason it never excludes it. Even St. Paul made tents for a living.²²¹ No doubt Mr. Ong might have acted differently though humanly speaking he did not act wrongly. He might have sought the advice of a missionary. But without any explanation or giving the least inkling of his story to Mr. Ramsay's successor, he resigned his work and accepted a position in the office of the Chengtu city police. It was not that he had ceased to be a christian, it was that he was hurt over the treatment he had received. Unfortunately, he gave Satan an opportunity here to overcome him. Without being conscious of the fact he allowed his work and his church to come between him and his Lord. This is a temptation before which few have not fallen at one time or another. It was here we believe that he erred.

Oh the tragedy of his loss! Had he only known it, Christ was calling him through this trial to a higher and more intimate knowledge of His love. If instead of fainting he had given himself more unto prayer, help would have come so significantly that he could not have doubted whose hand sent it. Then what joy should have been his. 'Offer unto God thanksgiving: pay thy vows unto the Most

²²¹ [Acts 18:1-4]

High; and call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me.²²² He forgot this injunction with its correlated promise as well as the Psalmist's cries of faith: 'when my father and mother forsake me then the Lord will take me up';²²³ 'the Lord is on my side, I will not fear, what can man do unto me';²²⁴ 'it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.'²²⁵

Imperceptibly the tender glow of his earlier love began to wane. Little by little the world influence told on his spirit. And before long the tempter assailed him with another temptation which if he had been pursuing his heavenly calling could have had little power over him. For any neglect of Scripture study or preaching of the Word renders the christian an easier prey to the adversary. He falls readiest when standing still; without momentum he topples over. Whereas when the Word is daily pulsating through his soul he is full of a radiating vitality that makes him everywhere triumphant. Our friend got caught in the meshes of a questionable attachment. His loneliness led him to reciprocate the kindly feelings of a young woman who was one of two of an old man's wives. No doubt she had no choice when given over to the amorous dotard and her conjugal impressment was a violation of the laws of nature, yet [Mr] Ong's intimacy with her was unseemly and it soon snapped his connection with church life. He became for a time neither more nor less than a drifter. Even when the husband died and she became his lawful wife his aimless existence continued. He had no 'face' to return to the fold.

But the all-compassionate Shepherd who watched over His lost sheep lest the enemy of souls should destroy them²²⁶ watched also over Mr. Ong. Though he had denied Him twice, once before the church and once before the world, he turned to look on him. It could not be that one of His own should perish. He used a period of sickness to bring him back. An attack of dysentery brought the backslider down to the very gates of death. As he now reflected on his unfaithful ways the anguish of his soul far exceeded that of his body. Like the prophet Jonah he felt himself a castaway from the Divine Presence. All the billows and waves of the deep swept over him. And out of the depths of Sheol he cried unto the Lord. If God would forgive his sin and restore him to health never again would he forsake His mercy or cease to testify for Him. So he vowed.

The assurance of the Divine answer came through a unique channel. The Lord on this occasion spoke not to a fish nor through an ass nor by a flying bullet to his servant. He used a Roman Catholic convert to tell him that he should recover and be able to rise at a stated time all of which came to pass [happened] exactly.

His recovery was like a resurrection from the dead. Was it a coincidence merely that the first day he was able to leave the house he met the Bible Society clerk, Loo Jeen-Ren [Lu Jinren], on the way to church? It was the Lord's day, the day of resurrection and here was a heaven-sent friend to escort him to the Lord's house. Thereupon he went to pay his vows unto Him who had the keys of Death and Hades and had truly saved him from the grave. No better friend could he have found at this time than Mr. Loo. He belonged to the literary class, was a well-read christian and had a good social and spiritual standing. In his company he was soon active in all the work of the congregation. After such a sad interval it was like a renewing of his youth; christian service he found again delightfully refreshing. A new trial, however, came before long. The Lord as it were, led him back to the place where his retrogression began in order to see if now he could trust Him to supply his needs. Would his faith falter again or not?

He fell out of work. His wife thinking that his chances of securing it would be better if he were out of the church asked why he did not leave it for his own sake and hers. When he affirmed that the Lord who had been able to bring him up from the gates of death was able also to give them

²²² [Psalm 50:14-15]

²²³ [Psalm 27:10]

²²⁴ [Psalm 118:6]

²²⁵ [Psalm 118:9]

²²⁶ [John 10:1-17]

their daily bread she derisively enquired if he expected God to rain gold on his head from heaven. The taunt only served to intensify his prayer for help. After five days help came. A gentleman called to ask him to take care of his business and he said he did so because he knew him to be a christian. That not only silenced unbelief but led his helpmeet [wife] to reflect on the goodness of God. Though it is seldom that an unbelieving wife or husband of a believer becomes a christian, Mrs. Ong now became an exception to the general rule. If at fault at first she was more sinned against than sinning and after this experience she fully repented and turned to Christ.

Mr. Ong became the missionary's right-hand man in the church. His humility, unassuming earnestness and graceful manner commended him to all the congregation. They loved to have one with them whose message carried conviction and the dominant notes of which were the superabundant mercy and goodness of God.

In course of time another missionary took charge of the church whose views were of a [theologically] liberal order but Mr. Ong's faith was too firmly anchored on the Rock of Ages for him to be moved in the least. The newcomer had the good sense to value the fine spirit shown in the services and kept his own negations as much as possible to himself. In this he paid his helper the greatest of all compliments. He recognised there was no propensity whatever in him to distrust of any part of the Scriptures.

By and by [Mr] Ong was sent to the country to take charge of an out-station. The centre was as difficult a place for christian aggression as one could imagine. The people were peaceable enough but exceedingly hard to reach because of the hold that Buddhism had on them. Their religious perceptions were warped and perverted and so prejudiced were they to the gospel by the simulations and counterfeits of it they already had that a hearing among them was well nigh impossible. Notwithstanding conquests were made and, as was found again, they were mainly achieved by the reading of the Scriptures.

At this out-station his second wife died. When he remarried he took a professing christian woman from his native city of Kienchow. She was a widow with a son of fifteen years of age. Had she been faithful in her profession what might not the future have held for both! But he discovered when too late that she was secretly addicted to opium smoking. One wonders what he thought when he made the discovery and what he said to the middle-man, who assisted, in the marriage negotiations, in accordance with Chinese customs. But to the outside world he betrayed no sign of his daily heart-sinking. He kept up his smile and his earnest christian testimony. The joy of the Lord's service sustained him. Nevertheless he laboured under a severe handicap. He had to live what we might call a one-sided life because that without her help his influence extended mainly to men.

A city church fell vacant. Its native pastor had been unfaithful and left. To redeem its good name Mr. Ong was called on to assist. For two years all went well. The assistant pastor's consistent bearing told everywhere for good. If he was not an accomplished scholar like his predecessor he manifested the christian graces; he had sympathy and a clear insight into human nature. We saw him frequently. He seemed to regard the Bible House like his old home. He would come for Scriptures, slip into a Bible class or for a personal chat when he rejoiced in our work as if it were still his own.

A great time of rejoicing came in the marriage of his step-son. The Chinese, like other people, dearly love a wedding. The lay-pastor's face that day was a wreath of smiles. Unfortunately the marriage did not prove one of unclouded happiness. The young wife resented her mother-in-law's dominating ways. The sight in an evil moment of her opium tempted the distracted young woman to end her misery. It took but an instant to swallow enough for the purpose. What exactly followed remained a mystery. Apparently an attempt by the husband and a native doctor to revive her by slapping left bruises on the body which were visible after life was extinct. An inquest followed when these were seen and presumed to be the cause of death. The mother-in-law and son were both arrested. Anti-christian newspapers rivalled in publishing the scandal.

We shall never forget the stricken look these days on Mr. Ong's face. He was cited to appear as a witness in court. This proved the last straw. He felt he could not endure the shame of appearing thus in public and he quietly disappeared. The mother was released but the son received a sentence of two year's imprisonment.

No one for many months knew where he [Mr Ong] had gone. At last a messenger from him called at the office. He was in the West country preaching and selling medicine for a living. He asked if we would forward to him a consignment of gospels. We instead sent word to him to come and see us. This he did. After a heart to heart talk we asked him if he would care to go to a far away neglected Border city to open mission work. The pathetic eagerness whereby he accepted the offer revealed his unbounded gratitude to God for restoring him to the work he so dearly loved.

His tale was a moving one. When he left he had gone out into the 'wilderness.' He had suffered much distress, sometimes hunger and protracted difficulty but the heavenly Father never forsook him. He remained; His grace strengthened him for the conflict. As an earnest that his travail of soul was not for naught, God used him to lead one of the worst of men into the light of salvation. The meaning of all his suffering now became plain. The Lord had another and more important work for him to do. So He sent the whirlwind, the earthquake and the fire to thrust him forth.²²⁷ If these messengers were terrifying they yet revealed the tender care of Jehovah for His servant. Not one of His promises could fail; all would come to pass. His Word forever was settled in Heaven.²²⁸

John Bunyan in [his book entitled] 'Grace Abounding' relates that he 'once fell into a creek of the sea and barely escaped drowning. Another time I fell out of a boat into Bedford River but mercy preserved me alive.' Ong Gwang-Ming twice over when young had similar preservations from a watery grave. Both times he had gone down the third time before he was rescued. The Lord in His mercy saved him even as He saved Bunyan because He had a work for His servant to do. As Mr. Ong set out on his journey he remembered this mercy and, moreover, that God now had a second time reinstated him to active christian service. If an element of sadness remained in his heart over recent events a tone of new gladness was there to offset it. "I shall be true to death to this borderland commission the Lord has now given me," he wrote back to us, "I am not afraid of what any man may do to me."

It was well his courage rose to the task for he was entering a very hard field. Chinese, Mohammedans, Tibetans and Tribesmen mingled here for trade and barter, all strongly prejudiced against the gospel. Every difficulty imaginable, official, social and religious, lay in front of him.

Among the first converts was one complete family. [Mr] Ong found the husband sick and so near the entrance of the dark valley [of death] that he almost seemed already in it. A movement of the chest only remained to indicate a lingering presence of life. The sight of his desperate condition reminded [Mr] Ong of his own state once and he prayed him back from death even as he then prayed himself back. The man's whole household with him then turned to the Lord.

Owing to official obstruction it was nearly two years before we could visit this border city. A number of converts had now been made. That any had been made proved again that nothing was too hard for the Lord; such was the apathy in certain quarters and antipathy in others. Over three we particularly rejoiced, one a sturdy tribesman, the first of the Bolo [博洛] people to confess Christ, the second a half-caste tribeswoman, and the third her Chinese husband. She was a fine linguist who could act as interpreter in preaching to the Bolo while her husband knew the Hsifan (Xifan 西蕃) language and could do the same in our endeavours to win this other people. The joy of baptising these was as that of Philip in going down into the water with the Ethiopian Eunuch;²²⁹ through them we were reaching out to the peoples they each represented.

²²⁷ [1 Kings 19]

²²⁸ [Psalm 119:89]

²²⁹ [Acts 8:38]

The Bolo maintain faithfully the ceremony of offering of the first fruits. They were once taught by two "foreign emissaries" they state, to worship the Most High and this formed part of the necessary ritual. The first ears they cut not with a sickle but with shears, to present to God previous to the general reaping and ingathering. We saw, therefore, in the baptism of this Bolo man, and this christian woman-interpreter the rendering of the first fruits of the harvest of the race, an offering acceptable to God and well-pleasing in His sight.

The return of the stepson brought to our border evangelist the home companionship his lonely heart needed. Ere [before] this, Mrs. Ong had passed on [died]. Father and son became one in heart and soul. The incarceration had wrought in the young man a godly sorrow not to be repented of. He entered into the work of border evangelisation with a sincerity that gave intense satisfaction to Mr. Ong. He learnt to make himself understood in one language and settled down to master another. Thereby he could, since his father was too old to acquire three tongues [languages], assist him and serve in the good work directly himself.

To put the work on a good foundation care was taken to ensure a methodical distribution of the Scriptures. To this he added a periodical presenting of tracts. Gospels in Chinese served the needs of the city dwellers and itinerant traders; gospels in Tibetan went out to the Hsifan settlements and far away into the tents of the skin-clad shepherds and Lamaseries on the roof of the world. Summer caravans from Maoerkeh [Ma'erkang], Ngaba [Aba] and the wide table-lands of the grass country carried them thence when they returned with huge bales of tea on the backs of the hardy yak and half-bred cattle [犏牛]. To sow was to reap. Thousands could be reached with the printed page to whom he could not personally go and no one should lack the privilege of reading God's word to whom it could be sent. The Scriptures ever carried their challenge to men's thought; it was impossible for any man to read them carefully without feeling the force of their awakening 'Thou' and the appeal of their 'Whoever.'

It was a delight to watch how Mr. Ong could forget himself and all distinctions of race and class in the service of these non-Chinese peoples whom he met. He made no difference between one and another. It was the crowning excellence in the man. If he did complain it was about his own countrymen who having heard the truth from him held it down in unrighteousness. "Since they refuse to repent," he would say, "I must turn to the simpler minded tribesmen."

They certainly did listen better. On our arrival he would go and gather them in and after the Chinese meeting was finished shut the door to let us speak to them without interruption. These were always memorable occasions.

As a travelling companion-preacher Mr. Ong excelled any other we knew in the art of tackling [engaging in conversation] those whom he met at any time and in any place or circumstance. None came second to him in spiritual understanding. The mood for prayer never seemed to leave him. And where an individual was singled out for him to round up, he had the knack of doing it successfully.

When we saw him last great was his grief that we might never meet on earth again. Since then as great has been our thought for him in his lonely frontier post. Dangers still surround him; the difficulties of the work grow no less but no braver heart beats anywhere than his. He has vowed to keep the flag of Christ flying there till his Lord calls him home [to heaven].

Chapter 19 The Story of Ren Jen-Bang [Ren Jianbang]

Ren Jen-Bang of Tsakulao [Zagunao] on the Szechuan border we met only once, but the meeting made a lasting impression on us and to him it was fateful.

He was the secretary and trusted confidant of the Chief of the Chiarong [Jiarong 嘉绒] tribesmen who live in the fastnesses of this mountain region. A bi-linguist, a good Chinese scholar, a man of kindly nature, of outstanding integrity, with a keen penetrating mind, his equal was hard to find.

The Rev. J. Kitley of the CMS²³⁰ who lived at Maochow [Maozhou 茂州]²³¹ was probably the first missionary he and his chief were privileged to meet. They cordially welcomed him to their official residence. To such world-isolated men the coming of one from over 'the four seas' was an event of most unusual importance. He could tell so much. His appearance, the way he did things, the strange articles he used, interested all intensely. Moreover what he had to say about the Omnipresent, all righteous God and the salvation He provided for men in His Son, Christ Jesus, fairly staggered all their local cramped religious conceptions. Truly these foreigners were wonderful people. Though much, very much, about them was mysterious, they were intellectual giants whom they could not help liking as well as admiring, so kindly and gracious were they in their ways.

Some time later, Mr. W. N. Ferguson of the British and Foreign Bible Society in visiting Tsakulao with two English travellers presented Mr. Ren with the Scriptures. Here the secretary found a treasure. He was a man who could take a clock or a watch to pieces to discover its mechanism, and naturally he went searching into this library of books bound in one, to find out the purport of the whole. It did not take him long to discover that the Bible was indeed and in truth the Word of God. The evidence was on every page. Never did book speak with such authority. It gave him light. It melted the heart. It stirred the conscience. It drew forth all that was best in one. It was often deep and mysterious but that fact created an indefinable yearning to reach the crux of its message. There was never any question of not believing; the question was verily how to know more so that his faith would stand complete. He needed someone to instruct him.

As if this yearning was to be met by providential decree, it so happened that the West China churches of the Canadian Methodist Mission sent a representative to open work at Lifan, a Chinese city twenty miles away. This lay preacher on visiting Tsakulao met Mr Ren and the two naturally had earnest conversation on what lay so close to both their hearts. This was a real joy to him and he profited not a little by it. Yet his soul was not satisfied. He craved still for more light.

Naturally he sought it in the Book. Was it chance or divine guidance that now led him to a study of the gospel of St. John? It was marvellous, every word of it, but the seventeenth chapter was so unique: Christ praying alone, praying before His passion for His own. The mystery and the transcendence of such love held his soul in awe.

A few days after this a remarkable dream or vision came to him. It was on the evening of the seventh day of the fifth moon of the eighth year of the Chinese Republic [1919]. Being tired in body and in spirit, he crept upstairs, and without undressing went to rest a while on his bed. Lying there and meditating on the sufferings of Christ on the cross, he became exceeding sorrowful. All at once a star appeared flying and dancing before him. As he gazed on it and wondered, it suddenly blazed out brightly into a halo of light six or seven feet²³² broad, the brilliance of which increased in intensity and vigour towards the centre. As suddenly the likeness of the Saviour appeared in the effulgence [illumination] when he saw Him standing erect, with bare head and flowing locks, uncovered feet and in ancient dress. Though he trembled with fear he continued to gaze up reverently, but strangely found himself unable to utter one word to express his heart's adoration.

²³⁰ [Church Missionary Society]

²³¹ [Today's Mao County [茂县] in Sichuan's Aba Prefecture]

²³² [Approximately 2 metres]

While thus his combined fear and pleasure held him spellbound, the light instantly shrank and vanished, leaving him to the darkness of the four walls of the room. He groped his way to the lamp, lit it and found it was eight o' clock.

In his excitement he would have liked to have told the vision at once to his friends but they had already gathered indoors. Next day he related his experience to them. He was astonished to find that no one paid any real heed to him. Some smiled merely; some said it was simply due to his constant study of the Bible and the fact that his thoughts were so concentrated thereon and some gibed [jeered] at him. Their indifference led him to keep silence and ponder over the matter in his own heart. Christ had appeared to him. This was the only possible interpretation of the vision. And He was light. Surely He would yet give him more light.

Two months after this the writer with Mr. T. E. Plewman of the Chengtu Mission Press visited Tsakulao. Mr. Ren received us cordially. It was a red-letter day [memorable] for him to meet a missionary. His old chief had passed on [died] but he was serving his son. We were taken to the official residence to meet him. This was a pleasure indeed to us. Everything was new and interesting. The Chiarong being of a different stock [ethnicity] to the Chinese had their own customs and among themselves spoke their own language. They were sturdier, rougher, dirtier, and less suave than their neighbours but more truthful, open and loyal. Originally monotheists, they had been swamped in repeated waves of Tibetan invasion and finally become lamaists. A lamasery stood above the town. The Chief, though acknowledging Chinese suzerainty [overlordship], had all the power of a feudal lord. And his country being contiguous to independent States on the West and the Chinese on the East his secretary required to be a man of letters [educated]. Such was Mr. Ren who very ably filled this post.

It was a pleasure to meet this all-round intelligent well-read man. He had travelled widely in his day, he could give us much information we wanted, even to presenting us with a map he had made of these mountain routes. In the process of conversation he detected that the writer knew something of Chinese archaeology and spoke of an old ruined fort in the vicinity which he was anxious to date. When we visited it with him and were able to tell him its age from pottery fragments we found there, great was his satisfaction.

He did not tell of his vision nor unburden his soul then. Consequently we knew not the need of comforting him with the higher spiritual knowledge he was craving. Native reticence, supposedly, held him back. But we promised to supply his lack of christian literature on our return to Chengtu: which we did. We sent him 'Williamson's Life of Christ' – in its way a sort of theological compendium – and other books. How he revelled in reading these! At last the light in more of its fullness from the face of Jesus Christ shone over his soul. The Saviour appeared again to him, not in trance, but none the less real in all His loveliness of redemption and salvation. And his whole being became once more thrilled with the deepest adoration.

He hastened to tell us of his new found joy, by letter. He related in the letter, for the first time his vision of the fifth month. He wanted us to realise how successively and with increasing brightness the light had come to him. He had learned that God answered prayer. He returned thanks, he said, first to God as was meet [proper] for His abundant grace and further for the books which had completed his faith. If the spring were warm and the Lord willed he purposed coming to Chengtu. Then he would see us and learn more about the truth. Meantime, he assured us of his prayers.

He said, "If the Lord willed." How came this solitary believer with no church connection or outward help to possess this beautiful spirit of implicit trust in and submission to the Divine will? Who taught him this phraseology of the saints? Whence came such intimacy with the Unseen? His astonished friends saw in him a man on speaking terms with God. He had the realisation that 'our times are in His Hand.'²³³ Jesus led on. He was the good Shepherd. He would guide him with His

²³³ [Psalm 31:15]

counsel and afterward receive him to glory.²³⁴ Truly he manifested in his christian life the truth the Psalmist loved to dwell on that 'the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. He will show them His covenant.'²³⁵ 'The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will [He] teach His way.'²³⁶

The Lord's will was other than he planned. Ere the spring came he fell sick. But he knew that in life or in death he was the Lord's. The dark valley [of death] had now no terror for him; the blood of the Lamb had washed him from his sin.²³⁷ The mercy of the Lord endured forever.²³⁸ To be with Christ was far better than continuing here. The conviction grew strong on him that the appointed time was near. His loved ones nursed him tenderly. His friends no longer inattentive came to see him and listen. On the morning of the day of his decease he told them that the Lord that very day was going to take him home to Himself. He was at breakfast when he told them and his family thought him much better. Yet so it came to pass. The shades of evening fell, the night crept on apace and as if in conformity to the manner of his salvation he passed on out of darkness into the light of the glory-land to see his Saviour face to face.

"O that he had been spared to preach the glad tidings of redemption," men might lament. But the judgments of God are unsearchable.²³⁹ Sufficient here to say that soon there sprang up a small church where he lived so long. Its establishment was the direct fruit of Ren Jen-Bang's life and testimony. While it stands this lowly servant of God will not be forgotten.

²³⁴ [Psalm 73:24, John 10]

²³⁵ [Psalm 25:14]

²³⁶ [Psalm 25:9]

²³⁷ [Revelation 1:5]

²³⁸ [Psalm 136:3, Psalm 138:8]

²³⁹ [Romans 11:33]

Chapter 20 The Story of Chen Bing-Ling [Chen Bingling]

The story of Chen Bing-Ling, the preacher, first and last is that of an ordinary plain man who, because he was that, received a call to do a work which a more talented man could not have done.

At first it was his good fortune to have a relation in Chengtu who was a christian. From him he learnt, when he came to the city, the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. It was like having a friend at court, the way was made easy for him. For straightaway he was not deterred from believing the gospel by any haunting fear of the evil motives of missionaries, which its enemies were constantly raising in the minds of those likely to listen to us. Sedulously circulated slanderous tales, absurd and childishly crude as they were, proved surprisingly effective in retarding [hindering] our good work, for they kept back many of the simple-hearted from coming near us, the very class who are often the first to appreciate the value of the gospel. Chen escaped all these doubts and pitfalls. The story of redemption had its uninterrupted way with him. In his own language, he knew he was sunk in the depths of sin and felt in his heart the need of such a Saviour as Jesus Christ who could cleanse and deliver him from its defilement and degradation.

After a time a missionary engaged him to do local colportage work. This gave him vent for his readiness to preach. Out-stations were then being opened where groups of believers were gathered together for worship, and into this pioneer work he threw himself heart and soul. At a city called Wenkiang [Wenjiang] he had an experience of the divine readiness to hear united prayer, which left a strong impression on him. The wife of a christian became violently ill. Knowing that with God nothing is impossible²⁴⁰ he gathered the seven christians of the place together and prayed that she might be healed. The next morning she was fully and miraculously restored to health. It was, he affirmed, the verification over again of James 5:14,15.

Family duties took him away for some years. His widowed mother required him. When free again he returned. On this occasion he was recommended to us for employment as a full time colporteur. He thus came to join our staff. It was at the time Ong Kuang-Ming²⁴¹ left us and he took his place. We found him exactly the type of man we needed. The masses on the Chengtu plain, which has a population of 1,200 to the square mile, had to be reached slowly and methodically. In the work he proved himself as patient as the ox behind the native plough, always ready to go where he was sent, and ever willing for hard work and hardship. Everything he did cheerfully.

He had a companion colporteur called Lo Ping-An [Lou Ping'an]. Once they found Scripture selling so difficult that they ran short of funds for expenses. Want stared them hard in the face. The two retired and told their needs to the Lord, pleading the promise, "Be not afraid, only believe."²⁴² After prayer they went forth and immediately sold six or seven times more than they usually did in a day. The answer was so direct and opportune that they regarded it like the miraculous draft of fishes.²⁴³

During the European War²⁴⁴ when funds ran low the majority of colporteurs had to be paid off. For a period Chen was lent to a neighbouring missionary. He was appointed to take charge of an out-station and to itinerate amongst its surrounding villages. The church he found almost empty. Jealousies and quarrels had split and scattered its members. The situation was distressing, but he met it in the right way. He cast the burden on the Lord.²⁴⁵ Under his kindly counsel of peace and mutual forbearance one after another soon returned to worship. New members were added. The Lord was with him. He blessed all he did. By these experiences he gained confidence, not in himself

²⁴⁰ [Luke 1:37]

²⁴¹ [His story is in Chapter 18]

²⁴² [Mark 5:36, Luke 8:50]

²⁴³ [John 21:6-8]

²⁴⁴ [i.e. World War I, 1914-1918]

²⁴⁵ [Psalm 55:22]

but in the help of the Lord who was with those who served Him with a single heart. Moreover, he found that a good providence led him this way for a purpose which then lay unseen to him and to us.

To the west of Szechuan between China proper and Tibet are to be found several races of non-Mongolian origin, and among these yet another race diverse in their laws and customs. According to the tradition of this unique people, their forefathers came from afar; their trek hither occupied three years and three months. By the Chinese they are called Chiang or Chiang-Min. When we first travelled through their mountainous region, we noted they were an Asia Minor emigration and that their religious observances closely resembled those of the Old Testament. Numerous short references to them in local histories made it certain that they had been in their present habitat before the time of Christ but left one mystified as to their origin.

When the writer came to learn more of their religion, he found they had a high place worship of peculiar sanctity with an officiating priesthood. They had no idols or images, their sacrifices were offered to God, the Creator of heaven and earth. He was regarded as perfect in holiness and could only be approached by way of the altar. The people themselves stated that they were the descendants of twelve patriarchs who were all sons of the one father; the impulse, therefore, became irresistible to give them the gospel. If our own duties limited the time necessary to do this we could at least send a deputy. And just then Mr. Chen found himself providentially free to go and he was sent.

Moreover, no sooner had he set out on his appointed task than loyal friends in Brooklyn, New York, volunteered his support. It was remarkable. The Lord truly led on; who then would not follow?

The Chiang people live mostly in fort-like villages on high mountain sides. Deep ravines or valleys separate colossal ranges so that itineration calls for much hard climbing. Intensely loyal to one another they are also very suspicious of outsiders and most secretive concerning their religious beliefs. Mr Chen, therefore, had his work laid out to preach to them. But we gave him the key of approach by acquainting him with the character of their worship, instructed him as to the methods of procedure, and commended him to the guidance of the Captain of the Lord's host.

A natural factor in his favour was that he was gentle in his manner. He went to them as an ordinary individual. His simple unaffected manner disarmed doubt. There was no pretence of superiority with him because he was a Chinese. Anything of that sort would have destroyed his influence.

Again, the fact that he was a plain man shielded him from the attack of jealous Chinese officials. A kind destiny had so adapted him to the natural colourings of his environment that he could pursue his way without attracting undue attention, whereas any bright markings in his plumage would have quickly brought down on him these birds of prey. Armed with the books of Genesis and Exodus and the New Testament he went forward on his mission. With the former he could take the Chiang back to the origin of their own customs which to them lay in the obscurity of an ancient past, trace how their sacrificial ritual corresponded with that of the early Israelites, and explain how it found its fulfilment in the work of Jesus Christ whom the Father sent.

Before the end of the first year the Lord opened the hearts of several men to believe. These were induced to come to the writer's home at Chengtu as his guests for two months of Scripture study. From that time forth these men never looked back. One of them soon joined Mr. Chen as a companion preacher.

For a number of years in the winter season fresh groups of catechumens²⁴⁶ were brought down for this purpose. This periodically clinched the labours of the two preachers. Nevertheless the work, though encouraging, was slow. The majority of the Chiang were illiterate. Here lay the greatest drawback. Another came from the opposition of the Chinese in the valleys. They as merchants and

²⁴⁶ [Young Christians receiving instruction]

money-lenders were reverse [averse] to the gospel being given to the Chiang on whom they depended for trade and usury. The Chiang feared their ill-will.

A third draw-back was the forcing of the farmers to grow the opium plant. The officials did this to gather the lucrative tax on its production. Where the drug was scraped and gathered men began to smoke it, and when they smoked it, preaching became fourfold more difficult.

As if these difficulties were not enough, the two evangelists had to labour against the envy and spite of some Chinese false brethren who were jealous of their measure of success. Evil stories were circulated about the work and when a chance came, these descendants of Alexander the coppersmith²⁴⁷ wantonly set vexing obstructions in their way. Since both knew the work was of the Lord the evangelists continued prayerfully at it through good and evil report. Together like the oxen in the Chiang fields, they were yoked to a plough which was none other than a cross, and patiently they bore it without murmuring and repining. In due season they knew that by the grace of God they would reap if they fainted not.²⁴⁸

On two occasions Mr. Chen visited other neglected border spheres. On each he not only experienced much hardship but also great personal danger. By prayer and trust in God he won through, and had the peculiar satisfaction that many were given the Scriptures and the offer of eternal life, who otherwise would have remained in darkness and in ignorance of the way of life.

It was on the second journey that he and his companion found themselves hemmed up [in] with robbers in front and robbers behind. To proceed was as difficult as to retreat. In their predicament they found a lodging in a small village where the people listened so gladly to the gospel that they remained ten days with them. Obviously it was God's doing; they being in the way, like Abraham's servant, the Lord led them.²⁴⁹ When they were able to proceed, they found their prayers for safety abundantly answered: no one molested them anywhere. On reaching the region to which they wanted to go the hill men gave them a cordial welcome, and again they were able to tell forth the story of redeeming love.

Such incidents were vital tests of Chen's christian character. He did not flinch through unbelief. He was willing to hazard [risk] his life for the sake of the Lord Jesus. In every time of danger his resource was in prayer.

Twice over afterwards we personally saw him tested in ways which doubly endeared him to us, and where many another in similar circumstances would have failed. On these occasions threatening opposition crept in where open attachment to the missionary suggested serious loss and personal harm. Our friend never for an instant quivered in thought or quavered in act. Scarcely would he leave our side. His one thought was to shield us from danger. He let us see how in an hour of crisis an ordinary man could manifest the most extraordinary loyalty.

Perhaps some may disagree with the statement that he was an ordinary man. If so we are merely using the common opinion of him. Can anyone whom God has cleansed be called commonplace? Are not his feet beautiful upon the mountains who bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth peace and salvation; that saith unto men, Thy God reigneth!²⁵⁰ And this was exactly Chen Bing-Ling's work: publishing the good tidings to these mountaineers that their Redeemer had come and borne away their sin, and now lived for evermore to make intercession for them.²⁵¹

Among his labours he had the privilege of erecting a house of worship for those who believed his report. What greater honour could a man have? And there it stands as a call to these children of an immemorial past to awake and arise and shake themselves from the dust of their

²⁴⁷ [2 Timothy 4:14]

²⁴⁸ [Galatians 6:9]

²⁴⁹ [Genesis 24:27]

²⁵⁰ [Isaiah 52:7]

²⁵¹ [Hebrews 7:25]

worn-out ritual, to put on the strength and beautiful garments of the Lord's righteousness.²⁵² It serves also as a monument of the grace of God who can call a very ordinary man and equip him to do an extraordinary work.

²⁵² [Isaiah 61:10]

Chapter 21 The Story of Isaac Whiteheart

“An Israelite, indeed, in whom there is no guile.”²⁵³

Isaac Whiteheart, the Chiang preacher, became known widely for the qualities of character which our name for him signifies. Among his people his whiteness, in reference to character, denotes moral purity, even as blackness with them is a designation for vileness or infamy. Isaac, like his patriarchal namesake, lived his life in the fear of the Lord, and consequently acquired a reputation for transparency of conduct and generous dealing.

He was one of the first to turn to Christ after the gospel was preached in his neighbourhood. The reading of the books of Genesis and Exodus primarily won him. He noted with great interest that these books gave him the origin of the religious observances of his race. The similarity between the sacrifices of the Chiang groves of the high place and those of the early Israelites was so close that their original unity could not be denied. The reading later of Leviticus confirmed his opinion while the study of the gospels and the Epistle to the Hebrews made everything plain.

By invitation he and others came down to Chengtu for a period of intensive Bible study. Under the daily expositions given of New Testament truth his faith went forward by leaps and bounds. Since he had a scholarly mind in addition to his love of the truth, he readily grasped the doctrines presented, and pursued them eagerly because of their saving benefit. Before he returned to his native mountains he had written a tract for his countrymen on ‘The Origin and The End of Paying Vows.’ It explained the meaning and purpose of sacrifice and showed how these were fulfilled in the work of Christ. Paying of vows was their name for the celebration of sacrifice.

His people had lost their own art of writing. Only traditional statements remained of their early history. For these they were mainly indebted to their priests who handed down from one generation to another a knowledge of their religious ritual and its rationale. To regain an intimate enlightenment of the origin of their olden-time worship filled him with ecstasy. He could not cease rehearsing [recounting] all it meant to him.

As we made known to these Chiang Bible students the riches of the grace in Jesus Christ,²⁵⁴ they in turn related to us the particulars of their priestly functions. Their name for God was Abba Chee, the Father Spirit. He was the One true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, infinite in holiness, goodness and truth. Only by way of sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood could men approach Him. Even a priest dare not pray without presenting the blood of the atoning lamb. This information naturally enabled us the more to give to them the New Testament interpretation of the various Levitical offerings. To explain that Christ was the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world²⁵⁵ was like using their own religious phraseology; they understood at once what the announcement meant.

Isaac went home with his higher faith and his special tract. Far and near he told his fellowmen whose they were and of the fulfilment in Christ of their ancient sacrifices. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ.²⁵⁶ Jesus was none other than the Heaven-sent Saviour whom their forefathers had long expected and bade their children expect. In Him men saw fulfilled the design of all their sacrificial predictions.

Seeing Isaac’s intelligence and zeal we persuaded him to accompany Chen Bing-Ling²⁵⁷ in his preaching tours, and for a time he did this. The two laboured successfully in harness together. Every winter when farming operations were at a standstill they selected a band of men to come and live

²⁵³ [John 1:47, Psalm 32:2]

²⁵⁴ [Ephesians 1:7]

²⁵⁵ [John 1:29]

²⁵⁶ [John 1:17]

²⁵⁷ [His story is in Chapter 20]

with us at Chengtu for a term of Bible study. In this way the work took firm root among the Chiang people.

But, after a time, Isaac formed a plan of his own. He wanted to see lads given an education that they might the better be able to read and expound the Scriptures. For some years, therefore, he brought a class of boys and young men to attend the mission school at Chengtu. He hired a house for them to live in and stayed with them there as a fatherly superintendent. The money for the project he raised privately. Not a penny did he seek from us, though finally we were able to let him have a small hall in our premises rent free.

During the July-August vacation, he came evangelising with us among his native villages. Doors then opened everywhere for the gospel. In many a hamlet and on many a flat house roof we related together the story of redemption in Jesus Christ.

It was on one of these itinerations he asked a priest to let us see the Sacred Roll. The Roll as representative of their lost Scriptures is always taken to the grove and high place when sacrifice is made. But the man refused; he was afraid. Isaac, nothing abashed, took us to meet the priest in the next village and he consented. Now for the first time we were initiated into the mystery of its significance.

It is a Roll of plain white paper in the form of an ancient volume of the Law. It has a personal name, Abba Malach, literally, "the Father Sent." To the name there is often added the prefix of "My" or "My own." It therefore betokens a person sent of the Father, and is at once greatly revered and intimately regarded. For He is the expected Sin-Bearer who is to put through the reality of their present provisional sacrifices.

A tiny skull or death's head inserted in one end of the Roll makes this intention plain. Its presence though admittedly a late priestly innovation yet effectively conveys its distinctive import. Isaac watched us keenly and delightedly as we sat and marvelled at this esoteric priestly information. Sometime afterward he succeeded in purchasing a Roll for us where the priesthood had died out of the family.

On every Chiang housetop and on every altar in the high places stands a small piece of conical white rock which is emblematic of the holiness of God. It marks, with the altar of sacrifice, the chosen place of worship. Isaac could tell us perfectly its significance in their early religion but could not trace its exact counterpart in the Old Testament. The stone is not worshipped neither has it a divine name but since its presence is always a sign of the reverence which should be paid to God he surmised that it stood as a miniature Mount Sinai. It was there that Jehovah spoke the ten words to Israel, and, while He spoke, the mount was covered with cloud and fire.²⁵⁸ The custom of the Chiang priests at a sacrifice was to cover the White Stone with a cloud of cypress incense. The analogy was obvious. While admitting the ingeniousness of the surmise we could scarcely follow him in the conclusion. He naturally knew nothing of the use of stones and pillars in ancient Semitic religion. We rather surmised that the Chiang in their continued use of a white conical stone had preserved an innocent relic of that worship which goes far to interpret the many allusions in Scripture of God being the rock of salvation to His people. In the Chiang groves there are present none of the Canaanite corruptions; they have neither images or pillars or any trace of idolatry. Besides no immoral taint is allowed in the ritual and all defilement of body or clothing is utterly prohibited. Everything unclean is sedulously banished.

Isaac, on another occasion, rendered to us an important service; he found a priest willing to let us witness a sacrifice. Strangers and idlers are prohibited from visiting the high place, he could not conduct us there, but this was a private offering, and for once a concession was made. All we saw fully corroborated what he had told us previously of its substitutionary character. At the close when the priest received the shoulder of the lamb as his allotted portion he drew particular attention to the fact that the custom was the same as enjoined in Leviticus 7:32, 34.

²⁵⁸ [Exodus 19-20]

A farmer friend once invited us both to a feast. Before it began it occurred to us personally that the lamb slain for the main dish might have been first presented in sacrifice. A casual visit to the housetop where the White Stone stood confirmed the supposition, but for conscience sake we asked no questions! It was unique, we imagined, for a European and a missionary at that, to eat of a "Jewish" sacrifice.

What set the seal on our investigations and confirmed Isaac's contentions most of all was the discovery of their use of a Nehustan [Nehushtan] pole.²⁵⁹ The priests among their traditions preserve the story of the lifting up of the brazen serpent on a standard to bring life and salvation to the people. One of these old Nehustans [Nehushtans] Isaac secured for us. The serpent coils round it in life-like fashion. Only the tip of the pole is missing. Isaac assured us, however, that the tip was never carved nor had a likeness of any sort. It was round in form. This one apparently had once a brazen knob which on account of its age had come off. It too came from a family from which the priestly functions had ceased.

When our friend preached to the Chinese he knew how to adapt his language to their needs. Since idols were taboo to him, he could denounce their worship with more force. Yet he never lost sight of the cross. None knew better than he that it was not enough for a man merely to cast aside his false gods. Nothing short of a vital relation to the living Saviour could bring life. His early religious conceptions helped him to a true understanding of this truth. On one occasion at Chengtu after listening to a Chinese student preacher expatiate on the Cross, we asked him his opinion of the sermon. "Ah," he replied, "he has not arrived there himself." He meant that the speaker had failed to present its vicarious aspect because he himself had no understanding of that truth.

This Chiang of the Chiang showed himself uniformly considerate to the Chinese and could labour whole-heartedly with them, nevertheless he never felt completely at home in their midst. The age long oppression to which his people had been subjected by the more numerous race had left its mark. Over and above this no Chiang could shake off the feeling of remembrance that the Chinese looked down on them because they belonged to a different racial stock. But we never found a Chinese who had an evil word to say of him. The fact, we knew, sprang from his pacific tendencies; he preferred to suffer loss rather than raise resentment by a pressing of his rights.

Many were our deliberations on how best to evangelise his fellow-countrymen. He admitted that Chiang preachers would do best, but lest the Chinese should misconstrue their intention and charge them with the propagation of a foreign religion, he advocated the use of Chinese evangelists as well.

Great was his joy when men and women came forward for baptism. All his own household including his mother pressed forward into the kingdom. One here, one there, occasionally a whole family, fearing neither official displeasure nor the criticism of man, joined them at the communion table. The chief hindrance lay in the inability of the majority to read the Chinese Bible in which alone the printed Word came to them.

A severe earthquake one August afternoon wrought widespread devastation in the land.²⁶⁰ Isaac's house in the deep sequestered valley was in great danger from crashing rocks. But no boulder struck it. And strange to say, no Chiang christian anywhere suffered harm. There was great rejoicing at this. One man saved himself by sheltering close to the face of a perpendicular cliff. All the dashing debris from the steep mountain side above bounded harmlessly over his head.

A great landslide the same day in the upper gorge of the Min River dammed up the waters of this tempestuous river. Six weeks later the dam burst. A wall of water fifty to sixty feet²⁶¹ high rushed down the narrow valley, carrying death and destruction to everything in the bed of its wild course. Isaac that night chanced to be sleeping at the house of a friend in a town on the east bank of

²⁵⁹ [Numbers 21:4-9, 2 Kings 18:4]

²⁶⁰ [The 1933 Diexi earthquake, estimated 7.5 magnitude, in Mao County, Sichuan]

²⁶¹ [15-18 metres high]

this river. A servant girl fortunately heard the roar of the oncoming rush of water and wakened the household. He leapt instantly from his bed, and gaining the door he saw a man passing that instant with a torch in his hand. He followed him up the mountain side to a place of safety. When the morning light came he and his friends saw that the house with others beside it had been entirely swept away. The Lord obviously had more work for His servant to do.

The following year gave proof of this. Rare success attended the summer preaching tour.²⁶² Converts came in from numerous villages to acknowledge Jesus as the Redeemer of Zion. One hundred and twenty-seven Chiang men and women were then received into the church by baptism. The joy of the occasion was heard afar off. Many shouted aloud for joy. As children of the Lord and moreover, as dwellers of a mountainous region deeply intersected with rushing rivers, they could sing: "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep; O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light." Psalm 36:5-9.

When we left West China for the homeland²⁶³ Isaac repeatedly charged us to tell the church in the West of the existence among the West China mountains of a remnant of Israel, and seek the prayers of God's people for the prosperity of Christ's work amongst his countrymen. In this brief outline of his life we have sought to do as he requested and will as future occasion offers.

We are well aware that the mere keeping, by a race or a tribe, of the Old Testament-like customs does not warrant such people being classed as either of Semitic descent or as related to Israel. Different communities far removed from each other do have Old Testament observances who certainly are neither of Semitic origin or belong to Israel. In the West China borderland itself there are alien ethnic groups who follow such rites. But in the case of the Chiang no one who knows them intimately can doubt that they form a remnant of the true stock of ancient Israel. Their features, laws, regulations, habits and traditions establish the fact. Personally we long clung to the supposition that they sprang from a race akin to the Hebrews but of a different line until the preponderance of evidence forced us from it and made us agree with Isaac Whiteheart's own view.

The study of their ancient religious beliefs and observances is exceedingly interesting both for the increased light it brings to many parts of our Old Testament and for the assurance it offers of the genuine antiquity of rites and doctrines which some have tried to ascribe to a post-exilic date. The Chiang people, as the Chinese call them, centuries before Christ had grouped themselves to the West of China in three main divisions. On the Chinese and on especially the other races in this region they exerted a strong religious influence. Distinct traces of this are still present in Szechuan being seen in customs borrowed from them, while whole tribes, if we are to accept the facts presented, adopted nearly in full their superior faith. Owing to conquest and absorption by the Chinese only a mere tithe of their original numbers now remain and that in the mountains where they are hard to displace. The reader knowing now their origin and identity will readily understand the joy it was to take the gospel to such an interesting people and to win for Christ such a man as Isaac Whiteheart.

²⁶² [Summer of 1934]

²⁶³ [Thomas Torrance retired at the end of 1934 after almost 40 years in China and returned to Scotland in 1935]