

What a Chinaman thinks of China.

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IT is no exaggeration to say that nothing is more serious and critical than the present situation of China. She is suffering from internal strife and external pressure. It is difficult to bring order out of the chaos into which she has fallen. Selfish militarists still hold the sway in her government; her people are constantly disturbed by bandits and ill-disciplined soldiers; official corruption and social evil are everywhere rampant; while her morality is at a low ebb and her old religion loses its grip. Indeed, China seems to be in a hopeless condition, and discouraging circumstances have often overwhelmed many a Christian who labours and prays for her with despair.

What is the real trouble with China, then? It is true that at present nobody can prophesy what she will be the next moment. For China now is in the transitional stage of reorganisation and reconstruction. The chaos and restlessness are due partly to the conflict between the old traditions and the Western ideals, and partly to the consequent desires for reform. It is like the sudden bursting of a huge shell under great explosive forces. These forces are the various new activities—political, intellectual, social, and religious.

With regard to politics in China, the picture is a dark one. But this is a natural consequence of change, and we Chinese have to face it. In the past, China had been uninfluenced from abroad for four thousand years on account of geographical isolation. All on a sudden, and quite without preparation, her isolation was destroyed through the wonderful inventions that enabled nations to communicate easily with the most distant countries, and she could no longer govern her people by the closed-door policy. But on account of the ideal of liberty, and the rise of the democratic spirit, and the new situation caused by losses of territory, the ancient despotic government was suddenly overthrown, and a republic was founded. As the majority of her people have little experience, and take no interest in the new system of government, the ambitious militarists have taken advantage of this opportunity and constantly wage war with each other for their own ends. On the one hand the militarists are too selfish to lose their grip on the government; on the other hand,

Young China struggles in vain for an ideal republic; while the great mass of the people suffer immensely without knowing the real cause of their trouble. This is why China is in such a chaotic condition.

At the root of all these troubles there are two potent influences—universal greed for gain, and ignorance on the part of the people. Were all the military governors like the Christian General Feng, who seems to be a real model of Governor, there would not be so much trouble. Therefore the Christian Church in China is confronted with a greater task than ever before to supply the spiritual forces that shall educate the people in both the rights and duties of citizenship in a modern State, and set before the leaders a loftier vision of sacrifice for the sake of others.

But it needs time to develop a healthy political condition in China, as we can understand if one remembers the long course of steady development of constitutional government in England, the bitter experience and struggle of France in passing from a despotic government to its present constitution, and the benefits which Americans enjoyed from their ancestors, and which enabled them with such speed to develop so prosperous a country.

In China there are not only political but also intellectual changes. It is an amazing thing to observe the change of China's attitude towards Western civilization. Not long ago most European writers criticised the Chinese as the most conservative people in the world, as always referring back to time immemorial and despising what is modern. So they said, "What was good enough for his great-grandfather, according to the Chinese, was good enough for him." This is no longer the case with Young China, which is swinging too much to the other extreme. To-day, anything with a modern stamp is good, and people have such a keen appetite for western civilization, that they are in danger of swallowing what is bad as well as what is good.

A new movement, like what is called the Renaissance in Europe at the end of the Middle Age, has broken out in China. At first this movement was only a revolution in Chinese literature, but now it gives the people a new conception of religion and philosophy, it encourages criticism about social problems, it develops the Chinese language, and provokes inquiry into Christianity, hitherto regarded as a foreign hostile religion. This is the first time that Chinese have begun to think independently without seeking some shelter in the past, and therefore naturally some of them are iconoclastic in outlook, impatient in enterprise, and superficial in thought.

The motto of this movement is, "Let us save the country by science and democracy." But western civilisation is destructive

without religious teaching and moral ideals. To prevent this movement from going astray, Christian leaders have strongly asserted the claims of spiritual religion. On the one hand, there are those who have Christian ideals and interpret western civilisation as a product of Christian thought; and on the other hand are those who are overcome by materialism and explain western civilisation as a natural result of evolution. This struggle has been carried on more furiously than the political one. The victory or defeat of Christianity in China does not only concern China, but also the whole world.

When we come to the social life of China, we find the same two forces wrestling—the old traditions and the new ideals. There is no more perplexing and difficult problem confronting the Church than the harmonizing of the new and old ideas. First of all we have the breakdown of the old patriarchal family. In developing a new system of family life along the model of the West, whose best points are the spirit of freedom, self-determination, and spontaneity, we can easily destroy the beauty of filial duty, the comfort of the parents in their old age, and the protection of the young. Many a family has experienced much injury in passing from one form to the other. The most successful compromise can be found only in Christian families. The parents are bringing up their children to be self-dependent, while the children love their parents with filial spirit. The new sense of responsibility and the old spirit of filial duty are in such a harmony so as to make the family life most beautiful.

Christianity has rendered a great contribution not only to family life but also to the position of women. The women of China begin to have not only a true place in social life, but exercise leadership in public and professional activities. Ideas that resulted in the humiliation of women in any form are not so popular as they once were. Of course, there are some people who have gone too far in their reaction against bad practices of the past. It needs careful consideration in reform in order that there may be no fear of losing the old chastity, and that women may be entirely free in social life.

In connection with the social life of China, there is another difficulty—the industrial problem. She is now passing through the most difficult period of industrial evolution, when the machinery of the factory takes the place of manual labour in the home. The life in simple village homes is rapidly changing into the life of crowded industrial centres. Without a proper labour organisation, Chinese labourers are falling into a condition of industrial slavery, while the capitalists, excited by the desire of gain, have often treated men unjustly. Among other modern perplexities, this industrial evil is a great challenge to the Church

in China. To prevent this evil a Christian sentiment and a public opinion must be created in the labour world.

As for the religion of China, in the old classical writings there is a Supreme God who is universally but vaguely understood. Confucius emphasises ethical consequences rather than religious teaching. Over the mind of the mass Buddhism has a considerable sway, on account of its appeal to self-interest: virtue has its reward and vice has its punishment. Taoism in the original form is a system of thought or of mysticism. But Taoism in its daily clothes is nothing but superstition.

On account of a closer contact with other nations, China has become a hive of ideas and thoughts. The minds of the people are in a sceptical condition, and their thought is mingled, the old with the new. In a recent religious movement, this result may be seen. This movement is called Tao Yuan, which is a combination of five religions—Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity. In fact, they have lost the old and have not received the new. It is a great opportunity to give a clear vision of Jesus Christ and bring them into a closer relation with God.

After all, China needs Christianity to strengthen her leaders, to lift up her people, and to give a clear vision of love and service. If only China has Christianity, no matter how chaotic the political condition is, and no matter what happens for a while, there is a future for her, and there will dawn a brighter day. The evangelisation of China has important bearings on the evangelisation of the world. The task of the Church is a difficult one, and will take time, but those who trust in God and follow His guidance will surely carry it to success.

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THACKERAY has an amusing sketch of a proprietary chapel in the West End of London, belonging to Jews, where Charles Honeyman conducted fashionable services according to Church of England ritual, while Sherwin stored his wines in the cellars beneath. If Baptists read *Vanity Fair* when it came out, what would they think of their chapel in Percy Street, which showed the same combination? Some one else has vainly tried his pen in the couplet:

The Spirit above, the Spirit of Love:
The Spirit below, the Spirit of Woe.