

10100 Native Converts

WANG :
A CHINESE CHRISTIAN.

BY THE
RT. REV. W. W. CASSELS,
Bishop of Western China.

NEW EDITION.

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RIGHT REV. W. W. CASSELS, BISHOP OF
WESTERN CHINA.

"For this cause WE ALSO, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you."—COL. i. 9.



ONE of the most remarkable of the Christians connected with the little Pao-ning Church in North-east SICH'UEN is a man of the name of Wang Tsong-ih.

Originally belonging to the Ma family, he was, in early life, adopted by the Wangs, who seem to have given him a fairly good education. Later on, he obtained an appointment in the army, and served in several engagements in the province of YUN-NAN at the time of the Mohammedan rebellion.

He had a good position, but lived a wild and reckless life, and ultimately was dismissed from his regiment for opium-smoking, which was a breach of military discipline. Returning home to a district proverbially immoral, notwithstanding the hundred temples from which it derives its name, he continued for a while his evil life ; so much so, that, as he has often said, there was no sin of which he was not guilty. But soon Wang's dormant conscience began to awake ; he grew dissatisfied with his evil life and longed for something better.

Various plans were pursued in order to bring peace to his restless heart. First, he tried a Buddhist receipt ; he became a vegetarian, and learnt to recite incantations, in the vain hope of accumulating merit and appeasing the cravings of his conscience. Then he went on Confucian lines, and for some three years travelled about preaching the published sermons on the moral maxims of the Sacred Edict ; getting thereby, no doubt, sufficient money

to pay his travelling expenses, but certainly getting no satisfaction for his aching heart.

Later on, he heard of the Roman Catholic place in our city ; and, applying there for some teaching, he was instructed to buy a yellow candle which he was to burn, reciting certain prayers three times a day from books with which he was furnished. But, as I have heard him say, the so-called converts there were utterly unchanged in their lives, and were guilty of sins which even he felt to be wrong.

After another year or two his steps were led, thank GOD, to the *Fuh-ing T'ang*, as the Missionaries' houses and chapels are generally called, which had only recently been opened in the city of Pao-ning. Here he heard the Gospel for the first time, and in this case, as in so many others, it was the exhortations of a native Christian, who was himself but starting on the Christian life, which chiefly moved him. He bought a couple of Christian books, and studied them at home. Later on he returned again, re-

ceived a little further instruction, and purchased a New Testament.

Now, it was his ambition to possess an Old Testament; but the book was comparatively expensive, and money had also to be provided for his road expenses into the city, a distance of over thirty miles. His circumstances at this time were such that it was no easy thing for him to save money; but so eagerly did he desire the precious volume that he stinted himself of his necessary food until at last he had got together sufficient money, and was able to come in and make his purchase.

It was about this time that Mr. Beauchamp, accompanied by a native Christian, first visited his house, on one of his many itinerations.

Wang himself was away, but his wife was at home, and they were invited in. They found every sign of idolatry removed, and in the place where idolatrous scrolls generally hang they found new scrolls, one with words to the effect that the SUPREME RULER was the one true

GOD, the other saying that the LORD JESUS CHRIST was the one only SAVIOUR. And instead of the usual incense vase there was placed the treasured Bible and other Christian books.

Mrs. Wang told the visitors that every seventh day her husband spent the day in reading the Bible, and would hardly even cross the threshold for fear of breaking some command in which he had been instructed. There was a little grandchild there who could repeat some Christian hymns and had learnt to pray.

Until this time we knew but little about Mr. Wang; but at Christmas, 1891, we invited him, with our other native Christians and catechumens, to come and spend two or three days with us. It was then that he came out on the LORD'S side very clearly.

Just before Christmas, Mr. Cecil Polhill-Turner arrived at Pao-ning on his way to Sung-p'an where he was hoping to open a station for work among the Tibetans. On his way to us our brother had been daily

asking the LORD to provide a native companion for him, who would be a help on this expedition into an entirely new district. He mentioned the matter to me. My difficulty was that it was contrary to our practice to employ our Christians or catechumens, if it could possibly be avoided, for the reason, so well understood in China, that the witness of Christians (especially in small and young churches) who have been taken into employ is so much less powerful than that of those who are entirely independent. I felt, however, that if our brother's prayer was of the LORD, He would find a way to answer it without causing any hurt to our little church. So we prayed for guidance, and took no further step at that moment.

On Christmas-day the HOLY SPIRIT was manifestly working in our midst, and the service, instead of closing as usual, took the form of a sort of consecration meeting at which our Christians and catechumens were found ready to yield up to the LORD, out of love to Him, various things which

might prove a hindrance to them. One, for instance, brought up his tobacco-pipe ; others resolved to give up their wine ; and so on. Witnessing this spirit with great joy, it occurred to me afterwards that possibly someone might offer to go with Mr. Polhill-Turner as a volunteer.

A day or two afterwards our brother had an opportunity of addressing our people and of stating his needs. At the close of that service, in answer to a very guarded sort of appeal, Wang stood up and declared his readiness to go.

Now, it had already occurred to us that Wang would be a very suitable man in many ways. He had been in the neighbourhood of Sung-p'an ; he could write and read well, and would thus be a help in drawing up a deed of rental ; he would not be above doing rough and menial work and acting as a servant on the road. But I felt it to be very important that he should not undertake this service lightly, or with any misapprehension of its conditions. So I pointed out in detail the hard-

ships that would be incurred ; he would have to look after the horse, and carry the baggage, and was to receive only his food.

Being still resolved to go, his offer was accepted, and he set off with Mr. Turner.

At Sung-p'an, a house was taken and Wang left in charge, whilst Mr. Turner went off into the KAN-SUH province to fetch his wife and children. They returned in May, and for two or three months Wang remained helping in the work.

After this, however, there ensued a period of drought, which was attributed to the foreigners, it being reported that Mr. Turner was seen to go outside the city gate and wave a brush across the sky, thus sweeping away the gathering clouds.

At last on 29th July the threats of vengeance broke out into open violence so terrible that we can hardly bear to tell of it even in a passing word. A crowd, which had been gathering all the morning, rushed into the courtyard, and with murderous violence and terrible curses and cruel blows, our friends were all seized and bound, and

dragged out into the street. And then stripped and wounded they were led outside the city gates, where the rabble, divided in mind, cried out :—" Throw them into the river," " Stone them," " Tie them up in the sun till the rain comes."

But before any course of action was decided on, a military official appeared, and with some difficulty persuaded the crowd to take the party up to the magistrate's residence for trial. Here they were kept for some hours in a small room, their arms still tightly bound, while the howling mob raged without.

At length the magistrate called for Wang, along with the cook who was in attendance on the Turners, and assuring them that he could not otherwise disperse the crowd, required them to be punished to appease the mob. Uncomplainingly they assented, and were taken out and beaten in the usual way across the legs till the flesh was terribly raw, and then heavy wooden collars were placed upon their necks and at last the crowd dispersed.

When asked at the beginning of the magistrate's examination who he was, Wang simply answered that he was a Christian, though if he had been faint-hearted, he might easily have disclaimed being anything but an outsider, not having received baptism at that time.

And when his master and mistress afterwards expressed their horror and indignation at his treatment, Wang only said, "Oh, it is nothing ; it was for JESUS' sake."

When the suffering missionaries had been escorted safely to a neighbouring Mission Station, Wang returned to Pao-ning.

I was immensely struck with his behaviour. There was no word of complaint against the magistrate who had beaten him so terribly ; on the contrary, he praised him, saying he had done his best to allay the riot. There was no boasting spirit because he had suffered so nobly ; on the contrary, he never mentioned the matter, until, when I found out from my letters what had happened, I questioned him to get at the details. He

said that his heart was full of peace as he stood upon the bank of the river, bound hand and foot, and expecting every moment to be thrown in. He had just one regret. He regretted that he had not yet confessed CHRIST in baptism, fearing that perhaps CHRIST would not confess him as His disciple. I assured him that he had passed through a baptism of fire.

On 25th September, 1892, he was duly admitted into the Church along with five others, one being the native teacher from whom he had first heard the Gospel.

Since that time, our friend has continued to grow in grace, and has been not a little used of GOD. On Christmas day of that year, at another consecration meeting, he was led to give up his tobacco-pipe ; and he gave the following reasons for doing so—reasons which might possibly have weight elsewhere than in China :—

1. When reading his Bible, his attention was frequently distracted by his pipe.
2. When out preaching with one of the

missionaries, his going off to get a smoke often delayed them.

3. He had just taken the Holy Communion, and it seemed inconsistent to begin to smoke tobacco directly afterwards.

4. It was a bad example for his children and grandchildren.

5. It was a useless habit.

The action was entirely his own, and appeared to be prompted by the desire to be free from a habit, which might in anyway hinder his full consecration, or prevent the full inflow of the HOLY SPIRIT to his heart.

Some month's later Wang's son was baptised, and the young man's testimony on that occasion is worth repeating. "When first my father came home," he said, "and began exhorting us to believe the Gospel, I thought to myself, 'Well, you are a fine sort of person to come and preach to us ; you have never done a good thing in your life. But as for me, though I can't say I am free from sin, yet I have always stopped at home and done my farming, and lived a respect-

able life.' But," he added, "in a short time I began to see that my father's life was quite changed, and then I believed what he said."

But his life and testimony have been used to others, too. His wife and daughter-in-law have, after the usual full probation and examination, been admitted into the Church, and several others in his neighbourhood have also been brought to the LORD through him.

One, for instance, is a man named Wei, who had practised sorcery and exorcism for 45 years, and had also taught pupils these black arts. On one occasion he was led by Wang to come into Pao-ning, bringing with him his idols, his books of sorcery, and his divining sticks, which he burnt publicly on the LORD's day.

A month later, when this man returned to attend our Sunday services, I asked him in our testimony meeting, whether he had made up his mind and intended to serve the LORD. The little, old man, who has a big head and large eyes, drew himself up to his full height, and with just a

touch of indignation, exclaimed :—" Am I going to serve the LORD ! Why, when I burnt my books and idols, I gave myself to the LORD. I *am* the LORD'S."

To shew how diligently this ex-sorcerer has studied the New Testament, I may mention that he has written in larger characters the numbers of the verses throughout the whole New Testament, in order that with his poor eyesight, he may more quickly catch sight of them.

"I must keep reading this Book," he says, "or else I cannot keep the devil out of my heart, having served him so long."

Visits which have from time to time been paid to Wang's house show increasingly that his family (which includes several grandchildren) is being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD.

"One glance into Wang's little thatched cottage," writes Miss F. M. Williams, referring to a visit, "was enough to show that it was a Christian's home . . . His son came in from the fields, where he had

been working, with a gospel of St. Mark in his hand. They insisted on keeping us to their dinner of rice and sweet potatoes, and when I spoke of leaving, the son said: "Do not go until we have prayed together."

"As the next day was Sunday, I arranged to go up again from the market and have a service, and though the Wangs' house is in quite an isolated spot, far away among the hills, they had gathered together about forty people, and we had a good time.

"Wang had previously suffered a good deal of petty persecution from the neighbours. While he was having his Sunday services they would destroy his ripening crops, and so on."

Later on Miss Kölkenbeck writes:—"We had a good time at *Peh-miao-ch'ang* (The Hundred Temples' Market) and at Wang's home. A man named Li Wan-yüen came to us for medicine, and pressed us to visit his home. We did so, and they entertained us very hospitably. They are such nice people, and very well-to-do. After dinner, while having a talk, he asked

how he was to worship GOD. I told him the first thing would be to destroy his idols.

“‘How am I to do that?’

“‘Put them in the fire, they are only wood,’ I answered.

“‘Shall I do it at once?’

“‘Certainly, the sooner the better.’

“So he immediately stood up on a stool, and got down his *Uen-chang Lao-ie* [the god of literature].

“Our Christian coolie and servant spoke very nicely to him, encouraging him to trust only in GOD, and telling him their own experience on similar occasions. So the idol was chopped up and set fire to, as well as all idolatrous papers, etc. Then we sang a hymn and had prayer. . . . The idol was destroyed in the presence and with the full consent of Li’s wife, grown-up son, daughter-in-law, and other children, besides two married daughters who had returned on a visit, and a good many neighbours—no one raising objection.

“It will be an opening for future work, and I hope to visit them soon again.

“Wang was not with us ; he had strained his back the day before, and so was not able to go on as had been arranged. He was much cheered by the news, and no doubt the LORD kept him in the district to be a help to Li Wan-yüen. He is very bright as usual.”

More recently our friend has been helping in the work at Kwang-yüen.

We have told the story so far without comment of our own, but a few remarks burn for utterance in conclusion.

First. See here one instance (and the story of many another Christian would bear it out) that GOD is blessing His work, and give Him, oh ! give Him, the honour due unto His Name ! Let full, unstinted praise go up to our GOD, for He is with us in our work, hearing prayer, and granting the presence and power of His blessed SPIRIT.

But, *secondly*, what a trumpet-call to renewed effort we have in this little story ! For twenty years, as Wang has said, he *sought* the way of life and found it not.

And he is but one of millions left to grope in heathen darkness all their lives, and then, at last, fall into impenetrable gloom.

The elder of a market-town in our district, said to a Christian who was starting on the three days' journey to Pao-ning : —“ Go, and tell the Missionary that he must send a preacher here to teach us the way of life, otherwise we shall all be lost, and in the lost world we shall make our cry against those who refused to come and teach us ! ”

Oh ! that this little story might prove to be a trumpet-call to renewed consecration to GOD for the evangelisation of China, in the case of many who read it !

And *lastly*, we are burdened with an intense desire to lay this man Wang and all the native converts upon the hearts of GOD's people as an object of earnest and continued prayer. Oh ! how little many of us have risen to our responsibilities, or enjoyed our privileges as intercessors ! GOD have mercy upon us, and help us, lest these neglected responsibilities and unused privileges rise

up in judgment against us ; lest through our fault the work is being weakened—poor tried and tempted ones stumbling into the hands of the oppressor, when they might have been strengthened to stand out manfully for GOD !

It has often been noticed that when the history of such a man as this is made public for the encouragement of GOD's people, the evil one makes a special attack upon him to cause him to fall. Shall we not be beforehand this time, and earnestly uphold this brother with our prayers ?

NOTE TO NEW EDITION.

Some time after the foregoing was written, Wang did fall, by resuming the use of opium, though we cannot doubt that he was restrained by GOD in answer to prayer, from plunging more deeply into sin. When his fall became known among the workers in China and the friends of the Mission at home, there was much prayer made to GOD by many of His people, that the power of Satan might be

restrained, and our brother be brought back into fellowship with CHRIST and with the Church.

The following account from Rev. C. H. Parsons gives the briefest outline of GOD'S answer to prayer, in Wang's full confession and restoration. In the midst of our praises we must not forget that the evil one will continue to plot against him, and that he will need our prayers quite as much now for his upholding as before he did for his uplifting.

"The restoration to fellowship of Wang Tsong-ih—who had to be suspended, early in the year (1897), for opium-smoking—was a most touching scene. He asked to be allowed to sing a hymn (" I think upon my sins "), and then, amid his tears, spoke of his past life ; his time at Sung-p'an with Mr. Cecil Polhill-Turner ; his fall, when he took opium to allay neuralgia ; and the LORD'S subsequent dealings with him—how the house at Peh-miao-ch'ang, where he had been smoking, fell down, injuring him, and

leaving a mark on his head which he will very likely carry for life. He realised this as GOD's voice, and we saw in it an answer to our cries to GOD for our much-valued brother. He quoted Micah vii. 8, 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy : when I fall, I shall arise,' etc. All of us felt that we had a very blessed meeting that afternoon."

Our latest letters from the Pao-ning district speak of our brother as being actively engaged in the work of carrying the Gospel into new districts.

F.A.S.

May, 1898.

China Inland Mission.

London: Newington Green, Mildmay, N.

Toronto: 632, Church Street.

Melbourne: 267, Collins Street.

Origin.—The Mission was formed by Rev. J. Hudson Taylor, M.R.C.S., in 1865, with the object of carrying the Gospel to the millions of souls in the *Inland* Provinces of China.

Methods.—(1) Candidates, if duly qualified, are accepted irrespectively of nationality, and without restriction as to denomination, provided there is soundness in the faith on all fundamental truths, (2) The Mission will not go into debt; it guarantees no income to the Missionaries, but ministers to each as the funds sent in will allow. Thus all the workers are expected to depend upon GOD alone for temporal supplies. (3) Neither collections nor personal solicitation of money are authorised.

Agency.—The staff of the Mission in May, 1898, consisted of 773 Missionaries (including wives, and Associates). There are also over 600 Native Helpers, some supported from Mission funds, and others either provided for by themselves or by native contributions.

Support.—The Missionaries and Native Helpers are supported, and the rents and other expenses of Mission premises, schools, &c., are met, by contributions sent to the Offices of the Mission, without personal solicitation, by those who wish to aid in this effort to spread the knowledge of the Gospel throughout China. The income for 1897 was about £45,000 from all sources.

Progress.—More than 300 stations and out-stations have been opened and are now occupied either by Missionaries or Native labourers. Since 1865 more than 10,500 converts have been baptized; and there are now (1898) over seven thousand communicants in fellowship.



Wei, the ex-sorcerer, referred to on pages 14-16.