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1907.

## ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.\*

REV. JOHN TUCKWELL, M.R.A.S., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read and confirmed.

ELECTION.—Dr. H. L. Underwood, Erzeroom, Turkey, was elected Missionary Associate.

The following paper was then read by the author :—

*MENCIUS.* By Rev. F. STORRS TURNER, B.A.

**B**ORN one hundred and seven years after the death of Confucius, Mencius was the saviour of Confucian orthodoxy in an age when it seemed to be nearly extinguished by opposition and neglect. After ages, therefore, coupled together the names of the great master and his posthumous disciple as though they had been joint founders of the national religion. Strictly speaking, Confucius himself did not originate his doctrines; his function also was to defend, expound, and hand on the teachings of the wise and heroic kings of preceding ages, whose deeds and speeches were sung in the Chinese book of psalms and recorded in the histories. The origin of Chinese religion belongs to prehistoric times. Mencius is, comparatively speaking, a modern, rather than an ancient sage. He was the contemporary of Plato and Aristotle. He was born in 372 B.C. and died at the age of eighty-four in 288 B.C.

Rightly to appreciate the man and his work, we must have some knowledge of the land and the people to which he belonged. Moses, Zoroaster, Socrates lived in a world wherein great nations contended for supremacy, Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece. China, on the contrary, cut off from the Western world more effectively by the deserts and mountain ranges of Central Asia, than by the Eastern Ocean, was a world by itself, which had not

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\* Monday, May 27th, 1907.

the slightest knowledge of those remote regions. Three centuries later, when Buddhism entered China, these two isolated worlds began to hold intercourse; but in the time of Mencius, China with the regions occupied by savage races on her borders and the Eastern Sea were a world apart. And this China was but a fraction of the China of the present day; it extended about 1,000 miles from longitude  $110^{\circ}$  nearly to the Pacific coast; and some 700 or 800 miles north and south of the Yellow River. Peking, Shanghai, and Canton were outside Mencius's map of China. This region was divided into about a dozen large, and perhaps a hundred small states called kingdoms, dukedoms, and baronies. Politically, its condition was like that of Europe in the feudal age. War was the chief and best loved employment of the petty monarchs and nobles; who were practically independent, though nominally all subjects of the one and only sovereign, who by Divine right reigned over the whole world—not by virtue of fabulous descent from the gods, but selected on account of his merits to be ruler of all under heaven. Two such dynasties had passed away, Confucius and Mencius lived under the third, the Chow dynasty, which, however, in their time possessed only a small territory and was surrounded by larger states, nominally vassals, but really independent, and each of them aspiring to swallow up all the rest and achieve the throne of the world. War, then, was the life-work of all the governing classes. The nobles, riding in chariots, the common soldiers marching in ranks, armed with spears and bows, advanced to the sound of drums, and retreated when the gongs were struck. A winter campaign was in the natural order of things. Cities were walled round to resist sieges. But the people were civilised: they tilled the ground, bred horses, cattle and sheep, wove wool and silk; they had books and schools; they smelted metals and engraved jewels; they worshipped a Supreme Ruler, and spiritual beings animating mountains and rivers, and with these the spirits of their deceased parents and ancestors. In this feudal China, Confucius and after him Mencius, travelled from court to court teaching the doctrines of the ancient sages, and trying to win the kings and lords whom they visited to imitate the wise and benevolent monarchs of the past.

One remarkable difference between the careers of Confucius and Mencius is this—Confucius had no rivals, no opponents, never engaged in controversies. The historian, Sz-ma Ts'in relates a story of his meeting with Laou-Tsze, the founder of Taouism, at the Court of Chow; but the story is doubted. Whether it is true or not, there was no disputing; Laou-Tsze

was a mystic who made no effort to gain disciples, and he did not conceal his contempt for what seemed to him the vain efforts of Confucius to convert the world. On his part, Confucius, according to the story, treated Laou-Tsze with profound respect, though he did not understand him. Between the two men there was not any hostile feeling. Mencius, on the contrary, was a fighter all his life; and once one of his disciples said to him, "Master, the people all speak of you as being fond of disputing; I venture to ask whether it is so?" Mencius replied, "Indeed, I am not fond of disputing, but I am compelled to do it. I am alarmed by the spread of perverse teachings which delude the people."\* Of these heretical sects some mention must be made presently.

Another difference between the two is that next to nothing is known of Mencius' personal appearance and character. The teachings of Confucius were written down by his disciples after his death, and these held him in such loving memory that they have described his ways of walking and lying in bed, his clothes and his food, going into details, telling us, for instance, that he always ate ginger at every meal. They descend to trivialities which provoke a smile. Mencius wrote down his own teachings, or superintended their compilation by his disciples. So in his case the man is almost lost sight of; we have to be content with ignorance of his personality, with one exception; the man who could speak so plainly and faithfully to kings and nobles had the courage of a martyr, although, as it happened, he was never in danger of his life, as Confucius was, at least once.

The teaching of Confucius is summed up in the Five Virtues—Love, Justice, Propriety, Knowledge, Fidelity; and in the Five Relationships, Prince and Minister, Father and Son, Elder and Younger Brother, Husband and Wife, Friend and Friend. Mencius, no doubt, accepted all of these. To him, as to all Chinese, they were axiomatic; so certain that it was quite unnecessary to assert belief in them. This makes the difference between the teachings of the master and his successor the more striking. Mencius hardly ever draws attention to the last three virtues, while he incessantly insists upon the first two. From the first chapter of his book to the last, Love and Justice are his watchwords. If we do not fall into the mistake of attributing to him a Christian concept of the Fatherhood of God, we might say that his life-long motto

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\* Legge's *Chinese Classics*, vol. ii, pp. 154-160.

was *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*. "You have come so far to see me," said King Wei to him, "surely you bring some plan with you by which my kingdom will gain?" The philosopher replied, "I bring Love and Justice; why need your Majesty utter that word, Gain?"\* In the course of several interviews with this and other rulers, Mencius' one aim was to get them to see that not gain-seeking but the practice of Love and Justice was the only road to safety, to conquests, to attaining universal supremacy. The third virtue, Propriety, or Politeness, and the fourth, Knowledge, or Wisdom, are frequently mentioned, but rather as developments or manifestations of the first two than as co-ordinate cardinal principles. There is a fourfold description of human goodness which Mencius frequently employs. The fifth virtue, Truthfulness, or Fidelity, is not overlooked, but is referred to as meaning the reality or sincerity of the preceding four. Mencius is ever falling back on Love and Justice as the fundamental and all-embracing virtues.

We shall fail to do justice to Mencius if we omit to mention what may be called his special doctrine, the original and inherent *goodness of human nature*. This is not a new discovery, it is the text of the Chung Yung, or Doctrine of the Mean. But Mencius laid special stress upon it, and in that way made it his own. This doctrine, on first hearing, may seem a denial, not only of Bible teaching, but of the universal confession of sin, which is directly or indirectly found in all ages and among all races of mankind. Such a view, however, could only be maintained by one ignorant of Mencius' real meaning. He, no less than Confucius, was deeply convinced of the Fall of Man from his nature as given by Heaven, that is, by God. Indeed, it is just on purpose to convince men of their moral lapse that Mencius labours to call up within them that inward sense of the good and the right, which is the true nature of man as it ought to be. Perhaps the best way to grasp the Mencian doctrine is to listen to his discussions with the great heretics, Yang and Mih.

"Yang's principle," Mencius tells us, "was 'Every man for himself,' that is, pure egoism; if he could have benefited the whole world by plucking out one hair from his head he would have refused to do it."† From the fragments of Yang's teaching this is a harsh, but not an incorrect description of Yang's views, which were worse than negatively immoral. In

\* Legge's *Classics*, vol. ii, p. 1.

† pp. 158, 340.

forcible language he describes the hardships and sorrows which the pursuit of virtue and the welfare of others entails, adducing the great saints of China, Shun, Yu, Chow-Kung and Confucius as examples. On the other hand, he sets forth in glowing terms the riches, power, and sensual indulgences which the two most wicked sovereigns in Chinese story enjoyed, and gives his commendation to the careers of the successful monsters of vice and crime. At the best his teaching may be summed up in the suggestion, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"; but it seems to go further and say, "Stick at nothing to gratify your desires, only do not miss your mark." Against such a doctrine Mencius had only to appeal to the witness of the human conscience, even as the apostle Paul pointed out, that the heathen who had no knowledge of the law of Moses, yet had the law of right and wrong in their own hearts. It was in this sense that he maintained the goodness of human nature. Some people have said of Confucian teaching that it is nothing but morality; it is not religion; and this seemed to imply that this moral sense is of slight value, and its maintenance and development of no great moment. But when they hear the vile and horrible tenets of this Chinese advocate of selfishness and vice, will they continue of the same opinion? For myself, I rejoiced greatly when I first became acquainted with the high and pure morality of Confucius and Mencius, and frequently quoted their best sayings when preaching to the Chinese; but now looking back, I am afraid I did not then sufficiently esteem these great teachers of morality, nor rate highly enough the good influence they have exercised over so many generations of their countrymen. When one tries to imagine what China would have become had the teachings of Yang prevailed over those of Confucius, we can realise the incalculable blessing which the "mere morality" of the sages has been to its people. Not that I admit the mere morality: I shall presently show you that Confucianism is a religion as well as an ethic.

From Yang, the advocate of unscrupulous selfishness, we turn to the other extreme, Mih, the apostle of universal love and self-sacrifice. "The philosopher, Mih," says Mencius, "loves all equally. If, by rubbing smooth his whole body from crown to heel he could have benefited the world, he would have done it."\* The loss of one's hairs to save the world seems a small sacrifice, but we must understand, I suppose, that this rubbing off was to be the result of life-long toil for the public

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\* p. 340.

good, like that of Yu on the Yellow River to prevent inundations. At first sight Mih's doctrine seems quite Christian. Mencius objects, not to the self-sacrifice, but to the loving all equally. His objection is like that afterwards, and to-day, brought against Buddhism—it acknowledges the claims of neither king nor parent. It is only fair to Mih to point out that he does not in so many words assert that the love given to all men was to be without difference of degree;\* and this has been recognised by great Chinese scholars.† Nevertheless, the language of Mih is not sufficiently explicit, and the interpretation given to it by Mencius may well have been that which was actually accepted by the Mihist sect. Not to love one's own parents more than another man's parents, one's own wife than his wife, one's own children than his people, is a precept which evidently would serve as an excuse for the neglect of moral obligations, and open the door to evil. It reminds one of the Jewish rabbi's teaching about Corban, whereby discharge of duty to God was made a justification for not fulfilling duty to parents. There was a third philosopher, one Tsze-moh, who contended for a medium view between the opposite teachings of Yang and Mih; exactly what this mean between the extremes was, Mencius does not tell us; perhaps it was something like Herbert Spencer's contention that egoism and altruism are both right and both obligatory. But Mencius, while admitting that Tsze-moh came nearer to the right, regarded his view as narrow-minded, because it left no room for adapting conduct to the exigency of circumstances.‡

Mencius opposed these heresies by asserting his great doctrine that human nature is good, and contains within itself a safe guide to right conduct. He unfolds this fundamental truth in a chapter which I will abridge to the utmost possible. Mencius said, "All men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others . . . My meaning may be illustrated thus:—if men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well they will without exception feel alarm and distress, not as a ground on which they may gain the favour of the child's parents, nor as a ground on which they may seek praise, nor from fear of blame if they show callousness. From this case we may perceive that the feeling of pity is essential to man, that the feeling of shame is essential to man, that the feeling of self-surrender is essential to man, that the feeling of right and wrong is essential to man. The first feeling is the origin of love, the second is the origin of

\* p. 132.

† p. 133.

‡ p. 341.



justice, the third is the origin of propriety, the fourth is the origin of the knowledge of morality. Men have these four principles just as they have their four limbs. If only they allow them to develop, it will be like the kindling of fire or the bursting forth of a fountain. Fully developed, these four principles will suffice for the protection of all mankind; if they are not allowed to develop, a man will not even discharge his duty to his father and mother.”\*

Add to this another, but this time a short chapter. Mencius said, “One’s own self contains everything. To examine one’s own personality with sincerity is the greatest possible joy. Striving to fulfil the law of loving one’s neighbour as oneself is our nearest approach to the attainment of love.”† Again, “Honour virtue and delight in justice, so you may be perfectly satisfied.” The following quaint illustration is forcible, as it is amusing: Mencius said, “I like fish and I also like bear’s paws. If I cannot have both, I let the fish go and take the bear’s paws. Life I like, and justice I like; if I cannot have both, I will give up life and keep justice. I wish to live, but there is something which I desire more than life, therefore I will not save my life in wrong ways. Death I hate, but there is something I hate worse than death, therefore there are occasions when I will not avoid danger.”‡ This reminds us of the Elizabethan song,

“I could not love thee, dear, so well,  
Loved I not honour more.”

“All men,” said Mencius, “have this mental nature.”

Besides these two notable heretics, Yang and Mih, Mencius encountered other opponents. The philosopher Kaou disagreed with his belief in the goodness of human nature. Kaou held that man is naturally neither good nor bad, but can with equal ease be turned, or turn himself, in either direction. Human nature, in his view, was like willow-wood, out of which either a cup or a bowl can be made. Mencius pointed out that “before you can make a cup or bowl you must injure the willow-tree. Must you injure and do violence to men in order to make them loving and just? Your words would lead men to regard love and justice as calamities.” “Man’s nature,” said Kaou, “is like water flowing down; open a channel for it to the east, and it will flow to the east; open a channel to the west, it will flow to the west. Man’s nature is indifferent to good and evil, just as

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\* p. 77.

† p. 327.

‡ p. 287.

the water is indifferent to east and west." But Mencius retorted, "Will water flow indifferently up or down? Man's nature tends to goodness, as water tends to flow downwards."\* One of Mencius' disciples objected: "Some say that man's nature may be made to practise good or to practise evil, as under the good Kings Wan and Woo they loved what is good, and under the bad Kings Yeu and Le they loved cruelty. Others say that the nature of some is good, and the nature of others is evil. Hence under the saintly Kings Yaou and Shun there were bad men like Seang and Koo-Sou; while the tyrant Chow had good relatives and ministers. And now you say, 'The nature is good.' Are all these wrong?" Mencius replied, "From the feelings proper to it, it is constituted for the practice of what is good; this is what I mean by saying that the nature is good. If men do what is not good, the blame cannot be imputed to their natural capacity."† Then he reiterated his assertion of the natural feelings of pity, shame, reverence, and conscience.† After we have heard all that Mencius had to say, we cannot feel satisfied. That man is made to be good, that he knows his duty, that he can choose the right and reject the wrong, Mencius affirms repeatedly. He also admits that most men are overcome by circumstances and bad examples. Yet he insists that to make the right choice is as easy as turning the palm of the hand upwards, or lifting a feather. He perceives the *ideal* of human nature, he maintains the categorical imperative of duty; he does not, like St. Paul, confess the inward struggle, "the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not that I do . . . with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." Mencius is a teacher of the moral law, but he has no gospel to proclaim.

We have now to consider the question whether Confucianism is mere morality or a true religion. The religion of the Chinese, it has been said, is ancestor-worship. Little support can be found for this in Mencius. He is a good Confucianist, and on one occasion he quoted the precept about sacrificing to a deceased father, but the context shows that this sacrifice was intended to be a sign of the sincerity of the son's love and sorrow. Sacrifices to Heaven are several times mentioned. But the main fact is that Mencius, in accordance with Confucian teaching, ascribed the law of duty in man's heart to Heaven's implanting it there. The *nature* is what Heaven ordains. Mencius did not base morality upon utility; he did not say right conduct is

\* p. 271.

† p. 278.

conduct which brings advantages; he did not try to discover rules of conduct by calculation of consequences. He recognised divine causation in the human sense of moral law, adducing the book of history which says, "Heaven having produced the inferior people, appointed for them rulers and teachers, saying, 'Let these be God's helpers.'" He himself encouraged the penitent to worship, saying, "Though a man may be wicked, yet if he adjust his thoughts, fast, and bathe, he may sacrifice to God."\* And again, "Misery and happiness in all cases are brought about by ourselves; the Book of Odes says, 'Be always studious to be in harmony with the ordinances, so you will get for yourself much happiness,'"† and again, "When Heaven sends calamities, it may be possible to escape; when we bring calamities upon ourselves, it is impossible any longer to live."‡ These frequent references to God and to Heaven as the Supreme Ruler of the world seem to me to justify the assertion that the teachings of Confucius and Mencius are the outcome of a genuinely religious belief. Perhaps the reflection which Mencius makes, after noticing the humble origin of men who afterwards rose to sovereignty and to high offices, is not the least instance of this. "When Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man, it first exercises his mind with suffering, and his sinews and bones with toil. It exposes his body to hunger, and subjects him to poverty. It confounds his enterprises. By these experiences it stimulates his mind, hardens his nature, and supplies his deficiencies."§

I said at first that we have no description of Mencius's personality, except what we can gather from his teaching. But after examination of this we do learn something of him. He was a man of tact, a good reasoner, and not lacking in courage. When he wished to persuade a king or duke to good government, he began by pointing out some quality in the man which would respond to his appeal. King Wei asked him, "Can such a man as I am become a benevolent ruler?" "Yes," said Mencius. "How do you know that?" asked the King. "I heard a story about you," said Mencius. "You saw a man leading an ox past your hall and inquired, 'Where is the ox going?' The man replied, 'We are going to consecrate a bell with its blood.' You pitied it, because it looked like an innocent person going to execution. 'Let it go,' you said. The man answered, 'Shall we omit the consecration of the bell?' You said, 'Take a sheep instead.'" From this incident Mencius convinced the

\* p. 206.

† p. 74.

‡ p. 75.

§ p. 323.

King that he had a pitiful heart; and thus could pity the miseries of his people who were dying of hunger. But he did not stop there. He asked the King, "Is there any difference between killing a man with a stick or a sword?" "No," said the King. "Is there any difference between killing him with a sword, or by bad government?" "No." "In your kitchen," said Mencius, "there is fat meat; in your stables there are fat horses. But your people have the look of hunger, and on the wilds there are those who have died of famine. This is leading on beasts to devour men."\* It must have required courage to tell one of those fighting despots that he was murdering his people. Another occasion called forth a still more conspicuous illustration of fearless truth-speaking. The King of Ts'e asked Mencius about the duties of the chief ministers. "If the King has great faults," Mencius answered, "and his chief ministers are his relatives, they ought to remonstrate with him, and if he does not listen to them, after repetition of the remonstrance, they ought to dethrone him." No wonder that the King changed countenance; but Mencius said, "Do not think it strange, your majesty. You put a question to me and I dared not give other than a true answer."† That he was not clapped into prison, nor expelled the country shows the great respect felt in those times for wise and faithful advisers. The princes of the Middle Kingdom could not bring themselves to place government in his hands; but they treated him as an honoured guest and rewarded him richly.

Mencius was at heart a democrat: the rulers, whether dukes or princes or kings, in his opinion existed for the people, and were only justified by the well-being of the people. "The people," he said, "are the most important element in the state; the spirits of the land and grain are the next; the sovereign is the least important . . . . When a prince endangers the altars of the spirits of the land and grain, he is deposed and another is appointed. When the sacrifices have been duly offered, if there comes drought or inundation the spirits of the land and grain are deposed and others appointed in their place."‡ This treatment of the inferior divinities as merely the servants of mankind is to us a strange notion, but it accords with Chinese ideas. The emperor will decree such changes in the spirit-world, and in Chinese belief, Heaven, the Supreme Ruler, also judges emperors and rulers by results. If the people do

\* p. 9.

† p. 268.

‡ p. 360.

not enjoy peace and prosperity, then by Heaven's decree, the dynasty is changed.

But with this immense respect for the people, Mencius was not an anarchist. There were anarchists in China then. We read that one Heu Hing with some scores of followers came to a little kingdom where Mencius was which for the time had a good prince. He asked and received a grant of land, and his example was followed by other immigrants. But the newcomers were not content. Heu Hing complained. "The prince of T'ang is indeed a worthy prince, but nevertheless he has not heard the true doctrine. Good princes should themselves till the soil along with their people, and should cook their own food, as well as carry on the government. But the prince of T'ang has his granaries, and arsenals, and treasuries; that is, he oppresses the people to feed himself. "Now can he be thought a good prince?" Mencius said, "I suppose Heu Hing sows and eats the produce." "Yes," they said. "I suppose he weaves and wears his own cloth. Is it so?" "No. He gets it in exchange for grain." "Why does not Heu weave it himself?" "That would interfere with his farm-work." "Does he make the iron pot in which he cooks his food, and his plough-share?" "No, he gets them in exchange for his grain." The business of the handicraftsman can by no means be carried on along with the business of husbandry." Mencius retorted, "Is the government of the empire the only business which can be carried on along with the practice of husbandry . . ." There is the proverb, Some labour with their minds and some with their muscles. Those who labour with their minds govern those who labour with their muscles, and those who labour with their muscles provide food for their governors. This holds good everywhere.\*

Some people imagine that China is a stereotyped country always looking back to the past, never progressing, never even desiring progress. But the China of the time of Mencius was evidently fermenting and in process of evolution. So it has been ever since, and is at this day, when the new leaven of Christian truth has entered its mass, and already works mightily there, soon we may hope to leaven the whole lump. We English and other Europeans are very ignorant of Chinese history and of the living Chinese. If we knew them better we should esteem them more highly. They have not been a God-forsaken race until we found the way to their shores. The

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\* pp. 123, 125.

only great race and empire which has maintained itself for thousands of years, while Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome fell into decay and passed away; we may well pause and wonder for what destiny this great, civilised, industrious people has been preserved until now. It were well if we had practised towards them the love and the justice which Mencius regarded as Heaven's ordinance for all mankind. Unhappily Christian nations have gravely wronged China in the past. It is time for us seriously to consider the claims of China to just treatment, and to atone as far as possible for the wars and oppression she has suffered at our hands. And to get into this wholesome state of mind, we must reflect that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him." "He made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation"; and surely there is a divine purpose in the events which have brought four hundred millions of Chinese into practical relations with Europe and America not for the Chinese only, but also for the western world, which cannot but be greatly affected by the conjunction. The future we cannot foresee; to do justice and love mercy to all men is our best preparation for whatever destiny lies before us.

The CHAIRMAN, in conveying the thanks of the Meeting to the author for his interesting paper, invited discussion.

#### DISCUSSION.

Professor ORCHARD.—We are indebted to the author of this interesting paper for making us better acquainted with one of China's great men, a man who to uprightness of character united intellectual acumen.

I was struck by what Mencius says (toward the end of the paper) concerning "the spirits of the land and grain": "When the sacrifices have been duly offered," *i.e.*, when the people have

performed their religious obligations, "if there comes drought or inundation, the spirits of the land and grain are deposed and others appointed in their place." Presumably this is done by the Supreme Ruler. The idea that God has set angels over various provinces of nature and holds them responsible for the way in which they execute their office, seems to receive some support from the eighty-second Psalm, where rulers bearing the appellation of "gods" are rebuked for abuse of their position.

That Mencius could assert the doing of right to be quite easy shows that his knowledge of human nature was more theoretical than practical. Evidently he permitted his theory to blind his eyes.

The greatest service rendered by him to mankind was that he stood for Will-freedom and the Divine supremacy of Conscience, and thus for Absolute Morality. Herein lies his chief claim to admiration and gratitude.

We shall agree with the author that we are debtors to the countrymen of Mencius. "Unhappily Christian nations have gravely wronged China in the past." Let our present action be to set forth that Gospel of which Confucius and Mencius were ignorant. Let us tell the Chinese, as they feel after God, if haply they may find Him, that He is Spirit, that He is Light, that He is Love, and is not far from every one of them. Let us tell them that He has come to man, to redeem and save and bless him through the atonement and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rev. JAMES THOMAS (Secretary, British and Foreign Bible Society).—I rise to express my deep sense of obligation to the reader of the paper, who has brought before us, within a narrow compass, the important teaching of one of China's greatest men. It was not an easy task which the writer of the paper set before himself. Those who have listened to it are very liable to conclude that because it is so exceedingly clear and apparently so simple that the task had few, if any, difficulties. Whereas, on the contrary, the subject in itself is not at all easy.

We have been given a picture of the condition of China in the days of Mencius, and we have had represented the task which that great sage set before himself. Primarily he sought to be a reformer of kings and rulers, but the plans he pursued have enabled us very

clearly to trace the doctrines he held and his methods of applying them. I will not refer to his political doctrines, or the methods he followed in his endeavour to reform rulers and courts, but his doctrine of God is remarkable. The books which Confucius edited and passed on, the great books which commonly bear his name, were not, as is well known, written by him. These same books, which Mencius made the foundation of his teaching, were pervaded with high monotheism. Indeed, China presents a striking illustration of the falsity of that teaching so rife in modern days that the religious condition of ancient men was that of fetishism or polytheism. China to-day abounds in idols, but the idolatry we see there is a degradation and a debasement of the conception of God which is found in all the ancient literature of the land. All the great attributes of the Jehovah of the Old Testament are found to be the attributes of Shang-ti, the Supreme Ruler of ancient China.

Mencius' doctrine of man has also been very clearly set forth in the paper. The reader of the writings of Mencius would conclude that the Ideal Man was one who dwelt in love, who lived with propriety, who walked in righteousness, who, when he rose to office, practised his principles for the people's good, but, if disappointed in reaching office, practised his principles for himself alone. He was one who could not be led by riches and honour into a life of dissipation, and who could not be made to swerve from the right by poverty or low estate: one who could not even be forced by want from the qualities of greatness; he was an Ideal Man. The nature of man he held to be good; the tendencies of man's nature were towards goodness; the constituents of his nature were benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom. Men have these four principles just as they have four limbs. But the writer of the paper has shown us that if we interpret these things naturally and literally we misunderstand the teaching of Mencius, just as in our own day if we interpret the doctrine of "total depravity" literally it would be contradicted by common-sense; for if men were totally depraved they could not possibly get worse and worse. What is really meant by the doctrine is that there is not a single faculty of man's nature or power of his mind which has not been exercised in wrong-doing, so that in this sense his nature is totally depraved; and Mencius was only



too conscious of the fact that men did not live in accordance with what he set forth as the principles of human nature. The writer of the paper has shown with great clearness what the doctrine of Mencius is, and I wish most sincerely to thank him and to congratulate ourselves on having heard a paper which few could have prepared.