MISSIONARY OPERATIONS.

IN

CHINA. *

BY THE REV. JAMES W. ALEXANDER, A. M.
Professor of Rhetoric in the College of New Jersey.

The great work which lies before the Christian Church, is nothing less than the conversion of the world. To this her whole energies should be directed; on this her resources should be expended. In this sublime enterprise every faithful minister is employed; and in preparation for it, every candidate for the sacred office should be labouring day and night. But the effort must not be a blind or improvident outlay of power. In order to husband the talents consigned to the Church, she must wisely take counsel, as to the points where the greatest impression may be made, and the most lasting and diffusive influences propagated. Under this plain indication of Providence, it is evident that no time

* The article which follows lays no claim to originality. The writer has felt no scruples in adopting the statements, and occasionally the words, of the following works: Reports of London Missionary Society. Missionary Herald. Gutzlaff's Voyages, and especially The Origin and History of Missions, by Messrs. Choules & Smith, also William's Missionary Gazetteer.
REV. ROBERT MORRISON, D.D.

CANTER, CHINA.
should be lost in the endeavour to win over those great and populous countries which use a common language; and it is for this reason that so much interest begins to be felt in the spiritual welfare of China.

Great as the dense population of China has been reckoned to be, there is good reason to think that most of our geographers make too low an estimate. The census made by the government, and published in 1825, gives a grand total of three hundred and sixty-two millions, four hundred and forty-seven thousand, one hundred and eighty-three. "This statement," says the Anglo-Chinese Kalendar, "will probably serve to set at rest the numerous speculations concerning the real amount of the population of China. We know, from several authorities, that in China, the people are in the habit of diminishing rather than increasing their numbers, in their reports to government." These three hundred millions speak a language, perhaps the most remarkable on earth. With a few exceptions, it is entirely monosyllabic; as indeed all the tongues of the adjacent countries radically are.* The diversities of meaning are denoted by a wonderful variety of accent, so that the same syllable, variously uttered, may have five different significations. And, in place of alphabetical characters, the Chinese employ symbols, each of which stands for a single word: of these characters there are about eighty-thousand; so that it is the labour of half a life-time to learn how to write the language perfectly.

The religion of China is a gloomy superstition, or

* See Biblical Repertory for January, 1834.
medley of superstition, often approaching to blank Atheism. Thousands of idols, and idolatrous rites are in use. There is no established religion, and a new image is introduced without scruple; even the bust of Napoleon has been found, enshrined and worshipped. Their Gods are (to use a Chinese simile) "in number like the sands of Hang river." Every region, every caste, every locality, every profession, and almost all the divisions of labour, have their appropriate deities. The future state, which is promised to devout worshippers, is a merely sensual elysium. The female sex is degraded to a very pitiable condition. Infanticide prevails to a horrible extent. "She addresses prayers, and offers sacrifices to the spirits of departed kings, sages, heroes, and parents, whether good or bad. She has set up her idols at the corners of the streets, on the sides of the highways, on the banks of canals, in boats and in ships. Astrology, divination, geomancy, and necromancy, everywhere prevail. Spells and charms every one possesses; they are hung about the neck, or stitched up in their clothes, or tied to the bed-posts, or written on the doors; and few men think their persons, children, shops, boats, or goods, safe without them." In a word, they have "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."

The London Missionary Society was formed in the year 1795, and began at a very early time to contemplate an assault upon the stupendous idolatry and Atheism of South Eastern Asia. Year after year they kept this object steadily in view, as we find by their
annual reports. At length, they were enabled to alight upon a man, fully suited to accomplish their plans, in the person of the Rev. Robert Morrison, whose name has since become dear to the evangelical churches throughout the world. The tastes and pursuits of this gentleman, had, for a long time, pointed out such a field as the most appropriate for his exertions, and he was induced to prepare for the great undertaking, by addicting himself to philological studies, partly at Gosport, under the direction of Dr. Bogue, and partly in London, where he was assisted by a native of China. The first grand object of Mr. Morrison, was the translation of the Bible into the Chinese language. He arrived at Canton, September 4, 1807, and immediately set about the acquisition of the language. Yet he found time, very shortly after his arrival, to labour more directly for the souls of the Chinese, by personal address. He soon discovered that he had plunged, at once, into a flood of idolatrous superstition, which surrounded him on every side; and he could scarcely open his eyes without beholding the grossest neglect of the true God, and the basest worship of imaginary powers. "The Lord promised the land of Canaan, (says he, in his Journal,) to his ancient people, but they had to fight for it, when they went in to possess it: and thus it is with the possession of the heathen, which is promised to the Lord Jesus Christ; his people must fight, with the spiritual weapons he has appointed." He read the Scriptures to all who would hear, and made his explanations of Christian phrases serve as expositions of the truth. He transcribed a Chinese and Latin dictionary of 1100 pages; remon-
strated, daily, with individuals upon their idolatry, and
translated a number of native works, for his improve-
ment in the language. Yet, this refractory tongue
almost disheartened him. "With respect to the diffi-
culty of the Chinese language, (says he,) my opinion is
this—that a child in China learns to speak its mother
tongue as easily as a child in England; but a Chinese
boy does not learn to write his mother tongue to the
same extent, and with the same ease, as an English or
a French boy; and for an Englishman to learn to speak,
read and write Chinese, is much more difficult to him,
than to learn to speak, read, and write, any other
language of which I have any knowledge, from its
being, in its nature, dissimilar to all other languages."

These studies of Mr. Morrison were pursued, how-
ever, with the greatest secrecy, and all who assisted
him appeared to do so with trembling. A quarrel
between the English and Chinese, forced him, for a
time, to Macao. On his return he was, in 1809,
appointed Chinese translator to the English factory
at Canton. This situation he accepted, in order to
secure his residence and his support, and to acquire the
language more fully. Persevering in his labours, he
felt more and more the imperative nature of the demand
which is made on Christians, by the unconverted world,
and "his spirit was stirred within him" at their idol-
tries. "O blessed God! (he cries,) of thine own infinite
mercy, renovate a guilty world!"

A remark is incidentally made in Mr. Morrison's
journal, which deserves special notice: speaking of
American missionaries, he says, "There would not be
the same national and political objections to them, that
there are to the English."

In 1810, the laborious missionary had the Acts of the
Apostles printed in Chinese, at an enormous cost; for
the demand was increased, in proportion to the danger
incurred. Three ambassadors, from the Le-ki-yo islands,
arrived just in time to carry copies of the newly printed
work to their own nation. The acquisitions of Mr.
Morrison enabled him, at this time, and for many
subsequent years, to be greatly useful to Europeans,
in a civil and political point of view. It was his dis-
tinction to be the first Protestant missionary to this
great empire, and the translator of the Scriptures into a
language read by more than three hundred millions of
the human race; he could not, therefore, fail to be in
earnest. In 1812, it was said by those qualified to judge,
that his acquaintance with the Chinese language sur-
passed that of any other European. During this year he
completed a Chinese grammar, and printed his transla-
tion of the Gospel of Luke, a catechism, and a tract, on
the Way of Salvation. An imperial edict was directed
against him, about this time, by which it was made a
capital offence to print religious books, or institute
Christian preaching. Yet he was not disheartened:
"When I am dead, (said he,) God may raise up some
Chinese who will re-publish these, and thereby pro-
claim to the millions of his countrymen, the unity of
God, the redemption that is in Christ, with all the
preceding and consequent doctrines, and these may lead
to the eternal life of many."

In 1813, the Rev. William Milne arrived at Macao,
as an additional labourer in this great field; and soon after, Mr. Morrison was permitted to complete the great work of translating the whole New Testament into the Chinese language. Although not allowed to preach publicly, or penetrate the interior provinces, he expounded the Scriptures in his own dwelling, and exercised a salutary influence in his daily walks. Such was the value set upon his grammar and dictionary, that the East India Company gave directions to have it printed in three volumes, folio. In 1814, Mr. Morrison accompanied the British Embassy through six provinces of China, and enjoyed an opportunity which had hitherto been denied him, of witnessing the inmost peculiarities of manners and religion. In 1815 a man was baptised, on a credible profession of his faith, and a number more appeared to be impressed by Divine truth, though they were deterred by the fear of persecution from a public avowal.

In these labours of benevolence, Mr. (now Dr.) Morrison was not straitened by any sectarian or illiberal prepossessions. He thus expresses himself, (1817.) "I have translated the Morning and Evening Prayers just as they stand in the book of Common Prayer, altering only those which refer to the rulers of the land. These I am printing, together with the Psalter, divided for the thirty days of the month. I intend them as a help to social worship, and as affording excellent and suitable expressions for individual devotion."—"Additional helps may be afforded, if they shall not be fully adequate. The heathen, at first, require helps for social devotion; and to me it appeared, that the richness of devotional
philosophy, the elevated views of the Deity, and the explicit and full recognition of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, were so many excellencies, that a version of them into Chinese, as they were, was better than for me to new model them. The Church of Scotland supplied us with a Catechism; the Congregational churches afforded us a form for a Christian assembly; and the Church of England has supplied us with a manual of devotion, as a help to those who are not sufficiently instructed, to conduct social worship without such aid."

And here it may not be unsuitable to interpose a remark concerning the work of scriptural translation. Its value is not sufficiently appreciated. Yet no portion of the missionary labour is more momentous. It is the very word of God, the unadulterated truth of inspiration, which is thus conveyed, not merely to the circle who may be reached by the voice of a solitary preacher, however zealous, but to the millions who read a common language; and propagated, not during the brief life of a missionary, but from generation to generation. Let our prayers ascend for those of our distant brethren who are engaged in this toilsome and often disheartening employment. The lonely translator, enfeebled by a torrid climate, and looking for success only at the distance of years—uncheered by the witness of converted heathen, and wearied by the greatness of his task, is destitute of those delightful excitements which are granted to his fellow-servants, in posts of greater actual effort or peril. Another remark seems here to be called for; it is in the way of remonstrance with those students of theology, who neglect the study
of the Hebrew and Greek originals, because they intend to be foreign missionaries. Let us hear Dr. Morrison:

"I beg leave again to suggest, that to aid in the translation of the Scriptures, some person who has devoted much of his life to Bible learning, should come out. Young men are evidently best fitted for learning to speak a foreign language, and go forth to preach the Gospel; but in the important work alluded to, it is devoutly to be wished that some who have been liberally educated, and have found their meat and their drink for ten or twenty years in the study of the original Scriptures, would come to the help of the Lord."

In the year 1819 Dr. Morrison wrote a little work entitled, a "Voyage round the World," in order to communicate to the vulgar Chinese, some notions of geography, and also to insinuate the essential truths of Christianity. "To this (says he) I added a map of the world, which so greatly delighted my Chinese printer, that he made some copies for himself; but in copying that part in which I mentioned Judea, where Jesus, the Saviour of the world, was born, he obliterated the name of Jesus, I believe, through fear." On the 25th of November, in the same year, the translation of the whole Scriptures was, by the blessing of God, completed. Dr. Morrison thus expresses his feelings upon the occasion:—"To have Moses, David, and the Prophets,—Jesus Christ and his Apostles,—using their own words, and thereby declaring to the inhabitants of this land, the wonderful works of God, indicates, I hope, the speedy introduction of a happier era in these parts of the world; and I
trust that the gloomy darkness of pagan skepticism will be dispelled by the day-spring from on high; and that the gilded idols of Buddah, and the numberless images which fill this land, will, one day, assuredly fall to the ground, before the power of God's word, as the idol Dagon fell before the ark."

Ever since the year 1813, we learn from the reports of the Society, there has been regular preaching, in English and Chinese, either at Macao or Canton. In December, 1823, Dr. Morrison sailed for his native country, where he arrived in March, 1824, having previously enjoyed the satisfaction of designating a native convert to the work of an evangelist. On returning, he arrived at Macao, September 19th, 1826. During his absence, several useful works had been prepared by his native co-adjutor, Le-ang-a-fa. Among these is a sketch of the gradual illumination of his own mind. The labours of this Chinese preacher have not been fruitless. Two young men who had enjoyed his instructions, have been converted to the truth, and one of them has been baptized. In 1830, Dr. Morrison baptized a Chinese of the name of Kew-ha-gang, who, it was intended, should assist Afa in the distribution of tracts.

It must be evident to the reader, that the hopes of the church, with regard to China, very much rest, under God, upon the impression made by books and other documents. And in accordance with this, Dr. Morrison has of late addressed himself chiefly to comments upon the Chinese Scriptures; a work which he deems indispensably necessary. He writes under date
of January 10th, 1831. "I regret that a wide door is not opened to send the words of eternal life through the whole length and breadth of China. Where we cannot send whole Bibles, we can yet distribute portions of the Lord's word. Three modes are in operation. The British and Foreign School Society's Scripture Lessons; Dr. Hawker's Scripture Help to Prayer; and Sheet Tracts, containing only Scripture quotations. I have a confidence and a hope in the pure text of holy Scripture, derived from divine inspiration, as far superior to any human composition, for the salvation of the heathen. Yesterday, Le-ang-a-fa wrote out, for a sheet tract, that inimitable exhibition of the vanity of idols, contained in Isaiah, chap. xliv, which happened to be the lesson of the day, and was read by us in our little native congregation. Afa (as we abbreviate his name) explained the Scriptures to his aged pagan father in the morning; and mentioned, with grateful hope, that the old man's heart was somewhat softened; he listened to the word, and knelt down to join in prayer to the living and true God, through Jesus Christ."

To this it may be interesting to add, that Afa, in company with Agong, travelled about two hundred and fifty miles into the interior, for the purpose of communicating Christian instruction, by tracts and in other ways. The London Tract Society have authorized him to print eighteen thousand tracts at their expense. In pursuance of this commission, seven thousand were circulated, chiefly in the interior. "Le-ang-a-fa has exposed the vain superstitions which delude the minds of the Chinese, in a manner," says Dr. Morrison,
“which no European, now living, with whom I am acquainted, could equal.”

It would be easy to enlarge upon such a theme, but the object of this brief sketch has been chiefly to exhibit facts; and these press upon us to such a degree, that our limits forbid any extended comment. Yet we cannot forbear to urge, that this great enterprize calls loudly for the prayers, counsels, contribution, and effort, of all who love the souls of men.

Long since the operations of Dr. Morrison were in successful progress, public attention has been fixed by the remarkable labour of the Rev. Charles Gutzlaff, a missionary in the same field. In this servant of Christ, (as pictured to us in his own accounts and the descriptions of others,) we observe an indefatigable perseverance, an immovable faith, an undaunted zeal, and a childlike reliance on God, such as have scarcely been surpassed since the apostolic age. Long may his life be spared, and his work prospered! Charles Gutzlaff is a native of Stettin, in Prussia. It is about eight or nine years since he preferred “the reproach of Christ,” as an Asiatic missionary, to honour and promotion in his own land. To a thorough acquaintance with Christian truth, he unites knowledge and skill as a physician, and a faculty for the acquisition of foreign languages and manners, which is truly astonishing. In more than a single instance, he has passed for a native among various people speaking the Chinese language. He went to Asia under the patronage of the Netherlands Missionary Society, but his own property has furnished his principal support. After labouring at a
translation of the New Testament, in Siam, he turned his attention to China. His method has generally been to sail in Chinese coasting vessels, touching at various ports, and often gaining access to the interior; addressing the people, and distributing religious tracts.

In 1831 Mr. Gutzlaff visited, in a junk, the maritime provinces of China, viz: Canton, Fo-chan, Chang-tong, and Manchou Tartary, every where disseminating the truth. He afterwards entered the service of the East India Company, and revisited most of the same ground, besides going to Corea, Lo-choo, and other places. He presented a copy of the Bible to the King of Corea, and communicated Christian books to a number of Japanese. In 1831, he completed a second voyage, hazarding his life, in a number of instances. On his third voyage, he embarked on the 20th of October, 1832, and returned on the 29th of April, 1833. And at the latest accounts, he was engaged in a fourth voyage, of which we may, before long, have the particulars in this country. "I know very well (says he in a letter,) the risk I run; but also, the Lord's saying, 'He that loses his life for me shall find it.' Shall I doubt to embark in the most dangerous undertaking, so long as the mighty Saviour opens the door, which nobody can shut?"

Mr. Gutzlaff contributes largely to two periodical works, which promise much to the Christian improvement of China. One is in the English language, and is called the Chinese Repository. The other, which is in Chinese, was commenced last August. Both are printed in Canton. The demand for the latter, of
IN CHINA.

which he is the editor, is very encouraging. He is also engaged in various works, illustrative of the languages of South Eastern Asia. The Repository for September, 1833, speaking of Mr. Gutzlaff’s recent voyage, says, that the demand for books is great indeed. He was supplied with about fifteen thousand tracts of various kinds; these were in boxes of a thousand or two thousand each. In more than one instance, when he opened a box, its whole contents were immediately taken. We cannot but hope that the Lord will raise up a number of holy men to go in and possess this land. There is indeed good news of a new co-adjutor; as the Rev. Herman Rottger, one of five Dutch missionaries appointed to the Moluccas, has resolved on entering the Chinese mission. His language is striking:—“I am also on fire,” says he, “to enter the combat against the empire of darkness, where the prince of this world holds his seat in China. And I desire and hope that my fire will not cool from the length of time which will elapse before I reach the celestial empire.”

An American Mission has been established at Canton, by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, at the earnest solicitation of Dr. Morrison. The Rev. Elijah C. Bridgman, sailed from New York in the autumn of 1829, accompanied by the Rev. Daniel Abeel; the latter being under the direction of the American Seamen’s Friend Society. Mr. Bridgman has been assiduously engaged in learning the language. A printing press, with the necessary types and appointments, was presented by the Bleecker
street Church, of New York, and is called, in memory of their lamented pastor, the Bruen Press.

Enough has been stated, even in this meager sketch, to awaken the interest of American believers, in the Chinese Mission. And as these pages may meet the eye of many who are in preparation for the Gospel Ministry, the question should be seriously pondered by every candidate, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" It may be the duty of some who peruse this paragraph, to enter upon the path of Morrison, Milne, and Gutzlaff. The day, we trust, is gone by, when there was weight in the narrow plea of selfishness, ignorance, and unbelief, that foreign missions rob the church of her strength. We hesitate not to believe, that the more the church gives, of men and means, to the cause of Christ, the more she will have of both. The treasure is inexhaustible, because God ensures the enterprise.