

2007

Religion beyond the empire: British religious politics in China, 1842-1866

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RELIGION BEYOND THE EMPIRE:
BRITISH RELIGIOUS POLITICS IN CHINA, 1842-1866

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of History

by
Joshua Thomas Marr
B.A., Northwestern State University, 2004
December 2007

Acknowledgements

The list of people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude is too great to list in great detail, so I hope that the following short comments do justice to the people who helped and encouraged me in the writing of this thesis:

Dr. Veldman – You had the patience and kindness to stay with me throughout this endeavor, despite my various attempts to change or modify my thesis topic. Despite my sometimes lackluster performance, both in-class and with this thesis, you encouraged me and motivated me to always do my best. The debt of thanks that I owe to you for your help is much greater than I can put into words here. I know that I will be a better scholar and writer for having you as my major professor.

Dr. Lindenfeld – It was both a pleasure and an honor to TA for you for two semesters. I have learned so much from you from those TA classes that I hope I can take with me whenever I have classes of my own. Your help and guidance to me with the writing of this thesis, from your especially from our independent study, is greatly appreciated.

Dr. Henderson – You are, by far, the smartest and most wonderful professor I have ever had the privilege of meeting. I have enjoyed immensely the classes I have taken under you. Your impressive knowledge of every topic imaginable, from Chinese/Japanese history to Italian opera to Canadian politics, has impressed me to know end, and your victory at the Phi Alpha Theta Jeopardy game is proof of that.

To my family – Mom, Dad, Rachel, and Granddaddy (and, of course, our four cats). You've put up with me for twenty-five years now, and have encouraged me throughout all of life's endeavors along the way. The love and support you've given to me, throughout the whole of my graduate school experience, has helped make the writing of this thesis possible.

My friends in the History Department and the TAs on the third floor of Himes Hall, I also owe a great deal of gratitude and thanks. Adam Pratt (my office-mate), Jennifer Mizzell, Chris Childers, Carron Fillingim, Kim Reynolds, Jessica DeHart, Sharyn Schmitz, Sam Cavell, and Megan Knopf: you guys have been great friends to me through the highs and lows of these past three years. We suffered through many seminars, classes, and hour-long office chats together, and I think that latter is what I will miss the most. My fellow NSU alumni and two-year roommate Julia Grenier helped keep me sane on numerous occasions, most of which revolved around our bi-weekly trips to Almazas for Greek food. Marc Patenaude, despite the fact that he's a Canadian, provided much guidance in helping me remember and meet all of the guidelines and time-tables regarding the writing, defense, and submission of this thesis.

And last, but certainly not least, my non-Graduate School friends: James Barnes, Bonnie Waldemarson, Aimee Goodson, Alisha Gascho, Annie Li, Leisha Kenlock, and Christian Parks. You have all been such good friends to me and have provided me with the much-needed support to see this thesis through to its completion.

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Abstract

Nineteenth-Century Britain was known for its political and military power – the British Empire – but also for its religious fervor. This religious spirit was prominent in England and throughout the British Empire, through the creation of Protestant mission organizations that sent missionaries throughout the world. China presented a unique mission field for early British missionaries, as it was not a formal part of the British Empire and it had such a large population of people who had never been exposed to Protestant Christianity. The years 1842 to 1866 were the formative period of the British Protestant mission in China. It was during this time that these missionaries first began the task of building the foundation for a Christian mission among the Chinese people. Examining the interactions between the Protestant missionaries and Catholic missionaries – who had been in China since the sixteenth century; interactions between the Protestant missionaries themselves; and between the Protestant missionaries and the Chinese people provides an important insight into the difficulties faced by this early British Protestant mission. These interactions are also important in setting the stage for future missionaries who arrived in China in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this Master's Thesis is to examine British Protestant missionaries in China and the various problems that they faced in their interactions not only with the Chinese, but with other Westerners and with each other. The broader topic itself – Protestant missionaries – is a topic that has been the focus of many historical works, each with its own particular approach. This thesis is, in large part, a response to one of the more prominent works in this area, Andrew Porter's *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914*. Porter provides a detailed discussion of the interplay between British Protestant missionaries and the British empire itself, covering both Britain's formal colonial holdings, as well as areas of informal British control and influence, over a period of more than two centuries. In doing so, Porter shows how these missionaries, as agents of the empire, were sometimes helpful in promoting the expansion of and stability within British territories; often, however, they found themselves at odds with, and even a hindrance to, Britain's imperial policy. The breadth and detail of Porter's overall discussion, however, limits just how much Porter says about Protestant missions in China; this discussion, paired with a discussion of Islam, makes up a chapter that is only thirty-five pages long. Furthermore, his focus on religion within the context of the empire, while a very important and informative discussion in its own right, leaves much to be said about the missionaries and their own perceptions of themselves as "Agents of God." I propose to shift focus from "imperial politics" – missionaries as agents (or sometimes opponents) of imperial growth and expansion – to a study of "religious politics" – the problems and perceptions of missions work in China from the missionaries' own perspectives. In the chapters that follow, I will discuss three distinctive categories of conflict and interaction that

shaped “religious politics” in China: with other Westerners (particularly Roman Catholic missionaries in China), with other Protestants, and with the Chinese themselves. Together, these conflicts and interactions provide a glimpse into the Chinese Christian world.

This thesis focuses on the period from 1842 to 1866. British Protestant missionaries had been in China since 1807, when Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society arrived on the island of Macau just off of the Southern coast of China. In 1842, the Treaty of Nanjing brought the three-year Opium War between England and China to an end. In this arrangement, China was forced to pay \$21 million to the British, and five port-cities were opened for foreigners to reside in and conduct business. This latter stipulation meant that missionaries were now free to live and set up mission stations on mainland China; they had done so prior to this treaty, but lacked any legal grounds for recourse if they were threatened or persecuted. The British had resorted to gunboat diplomacy to force the Chinese emperor’s hand when diplomatic or economic grievances arose; it was unclear, however, whether the British would react similarly over a religious dispute. In 1866, James Hudson Taylor, prominent British missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Missions society, referred to the work of these early missionaries as “preparatory” in nature; they gained the initial Chinese converts and began the crucial task of translating the Bible into Chinese. It was from the laboring of these early missionaries that a strong Protestant mission would be built upon by succeeding missionaries. The ending date for this study, 1866, corresponds with the end of the Taiping Rebellion, a Chinese political movement which lasted more than fifteen years and was heavily influenced by

Western Christianity.¹ After British and French forces defeated the Chinese Imperial forces in the Arrow War, a small-scale conflict involving the Chinese confiscation of a British merchant ship, the Treaty of Tientsin of 1858 was signed. This treaty, which was not formally acknowledged by China until the 1860 Peking Convention, gave British and French agents, both religious and other, more power and freedom to move throughout Chinese lands. New port cities were opened up for residential and economic purposes and a special clause was included that provided formal protection for missionaries and teachers of both Protestant and Catholic faiths. Furthermore, the British included in their treaty a “Most Favored Nation” clause, which meant that any provision China granted to another foreign power via treaty would also apply to Britain and British subjects. These concessions opened wide the door for many more missionaries to come to China and help spread the Christian gospel there. However, the various political uprisings taking place throughout China hindered many missionaries from arriving until after 1866, when the largest of the rebellions, the Taiping Rebellion, was ended by a coalition of Western and Qing Imperial forces. No longer restricted to a handful of port-cities or hindered by a lack of security in the interior provinces, missionaries after 1866 moved beyond the preparatory phase and into church-building.²

¹James Hudson Taylor, *China: Its Spiritual Needs and Claims*, 2nd Ed. (London, James Nisbet, 1866), 17-18; Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840-1842; Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the Way by Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976), 361-63. The five treaty ports were Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo, and Shanghai; Dun J. Li, *The Ageless Chinese* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1878), 395-396; S. Y. Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 323-24. The year 1866 is the date that Teng attributes to the end of the Taiping Rebellion, as it is the last year in which the Taipings were numerous enough to acted in a concerted, militaristic manner (when they captured and held the city of Chia-ying).

²Li, *The Ageless Chinese*, 3rd Ed., 393-396; John Shaw Burdon to Unknown, Shanghai, 22 November 1858, C CH/O 22, Special Collections, Birmingham.

The first category of “religious politics” that British Protestant missionaries encountered when they arrived in China was the conflict between their version of Christianity with that of the Roman Catholics who had been there since the sixteenth century. The Society of Jesus was one of the prominent Catholic orders working in China. However, the Rites Controversy had tarnished the Jesuit image in Chinese missions. Jesuit missionaries had allowed their converts to continue to practice certain religious rites, such as the worship of one’s family ancestors, that would normally not have been allowed under the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Jesuits thought that by granting accommodations on certain matters, the Chinese would become more open and receptive to Christianity. In 1704, Pope Clement XI acted against the Jesuits by stating that the forms of accommodation promoted by the Jesuits were irreconcilable with the teachings of the Catholic Church and that they must be stopped. The Yung-cheng Emperor of China, successor of the famous Kangxi Emperor, responded to this Papal declaration in 1724 by banning the preaching of Christianity in China. This ban, though an imperial edict, was difficult to enforce at the local level. Many Catholic mission stations continued to exist throughout the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century.³ When British missionaries arrived in the early nineteenth century, they found themselves faced with a problem; how did they help the Chinese to distinguish Protestant Christianity from the Christianity of the Catholics? The Catholics had been established in China for more than two centuries, so British Protestant missionaries had their work cut out for them in terms of carving out their own niche within China.

³Li, *The Ageless Chinese*, 383-84; John K. Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 222; Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963).

To explore the second category of “religious politics,” conflicts among the various Protestant missions and denominations in mid-nineteenth century China, I use a case study of the Delegates’ translation of the New and Old Testaments of the Bible. When delegates from British and American missions were selected by their peers to provide a newer translation of the Bible into colloquial Chinese, conflict arose between the delegates and other missionaries in China. The missionaries split across both national and denominational lines over the issue of which Chinese character should be used for the Christian God. Two factions emerged, with each side using any number of Chinese classics and Western sources to argue for the validity of their own choice and against that of their opponents. This conflict was a crucial event in the history of British missionaries in China, as this debate and its outcome set the stage for future translation controversies.

Conflict and complications between British Protestants and the Chinese is the third and final category of this survey of “religious politics.” Here, the Taiping rebellion serves as my case study. The story itself is simple enough: in 1836, Hong Huoxiu, a young Chinese man from a poor, rural family, received a Protestant religious tract while in Canton for the second level of his civil service examination. Hong’s failure on the examination, both in this year and the next, took its toll on the young man; after that second failure he suffered from severe medical problems that resulted in a series of visions. In these visions, Hong found himself in Heaven with the Christian God and discovered that he was this God’s second son, the younger brother of Jesus Christ. Hong’s mission, as it was conveyed to him by God, was to stamp out all idol-worship and to return China to its true, Christian-based religion. The Taipings took on a political motive as well when they added the overthrow of the existing Manchu dynasty to their list of

missions; this political (and subsequently, military) phase of the rebellion lasted for about sixteen years, from 1850 to 1866. On the surface, the rise of the Taipings seemed like a miracle in the making to British missionaries. A divinely-inspired, home-grown Chinese Christian movement was under way and was on the verge of possibly overthrowing the ruling Manchu dynasty. The Taiping Rebellion, however, ultimately presented missionaries with one of the greatest difficulties they faced in China: how should they react to a Chinese movement that claimed to uphold the fundamental tenets of the Christian religion, but showed signs of being anything but Christian in nature? Because the rebellion formed in the interior of China, where few missionaries dared to venture, they at first knew very little about it. They had to rely on the observations of merchants and seamen for their understanding of the Taipings. As the Taipings expanded their movement outward into other parts of China, they came into increasing contact with the missionaries and other foreign dignitaries. Slowly missionaries realized the non-Christian aspects of the movement; they were particularly and understandably distressed about Hong's claim that he was the Second Son of God. In examining the letters and publications of British Protestant missionaries who were in China during this rebellion, I show the variety of missionary responses to the Taipings.⁴

Together, these distinctively different categories of “religious politics” provide a useful study of the formative years of British Protestant missions in China. It is my hope that this

⁴Jonathan Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996.), 23-34, 51-65. For more on Hong's early years and the ideological foundations of the Taiping rebellion, see also: Jonathan Spence, *God's Chinese son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996), 23-34, 51-65; Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 34-42.

discussion of “religious politics” in China will help to create a more complete picture of the nineteenth-century British missionary experience in China.

Setting the Stage: Chinese and Missionary Backgrounds

It is surely high time that this most interesting and venerable empire had the gospel proclaimed in its purity and soul-saving power. Long enough has it been left in the thralldom of sin and Satan. No other nation has been left for so many centuries to suffer in darkness, and to prove how unable man is to raise himself without Divine revelations and Divine regeneration.⁵

- Rev. James Hudson Taylor
China: Its Spiritual Needs and Claims

Despite this initial condemnation of China’s ability to “save itself” without the grace of the Christian God, James Hudson Taylor spent the next three pages of his letter praising the Chinese people for all of their inventions – from firearms and gunpowder to printing and paper. Chinese civilization was, in Taylor’s opinion, far superior to those of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. It was likely this fascination that attracted Taylor to the Chinese and the Protestant missionary work going on there; as a young boy, he took a personal interest in the missionary work of Karl Gützlaff, a Rhenish missionary who was one of the first European Protestant missionaries to travel to China, and Taylor forwarded what little money he could collect to help Gützlaff’s mission.⁶ Several other missionaries echoed sentiments similar to Taylor’s: they admired the Chinese and wanted to help win them over to Christ. But who were these missionaries who took such a passion for mission to a place far from their homes in

⁵Taylor, *China: Its Spiritual Needs and Claims*, 6-7.

⁶Ibid, 7-9; James Hudson Taylor to Geraldine, n.d., CIM/JHT - Box A, SOAS Archives, London.

England? What were their social and religious origins? What missionary societies were they associated with?

Religion was one of the more powerful, if not the most powerful, of the forces that affected and influenced almost every aspect of nineteenth-century British society. As Kenneth D. Brown remarks, “The great social institutions of Parliament, the law, the armed forces, the universities, and the schools were dominated by an Anglican Church whose elevated constitutional and social status was symbolized in a monarch at once head of both Church and State.”⁷ This Anglican domination, however, was not destined to last. As the nineteenth century progressed, it brought with it a change in the relationship between the Anglican church and the British state; Anglicanism remained the official religion of England, but from a social standpoint it was becoming just one of a number of Protestant denominations in England, albeit still the most powerful. A political shift also accompanied this change in relationship, as the Anglican monopoly on political offices was ended in 1828, when politicians of the Protestant faith were accorded equal status to their Anglican counterparts in Parliament.⁸

The evangelical movement reshaped British culture in the years between 1780 and 1850. This movement placed a renewed stress on the pastoral and ministerial role of clergymen, where their focus was on saving individual souls. Evangelicalism brought a new emphasis to British Christianity: foreign missions, the salvation of souls throughout the British Empire and beyond. Evangelicalism spurred both Anglicans and Nonconformists to action and, though the

⁷Kenneth D. Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1.

⁸Frances Knight, *Nineteenth Century Church and English Society*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-3

denominations varied in their approaches and responses to evangelicalism, it was the driving force behind almost all British missionary movements in the nineteenth century.⁹

Despite its overwhelming influence, the Anglican Church had a difficult time of finding enough properly-educated men (that is to say, men who received their education from the two ancient and prestigious universities of Oxford and Cambridge) to fill all of its offices throughout England. This shortage opened the doorway for many young men from lower-middle class families to eventually gain employment through the Church. These men, with their basic level of schooling, did not have to attend either of the Anglican-run universities to be eligible for employment with the established church. The independent nature of Baptists and Congregationalists made ministerial work easier for the denominations as a whole, as these denominations lacked the over-arching church hierarchy of the Anglican Church. However, ministerial work was not necessarily easy for the aspiring ministers themselves. Generally, a new Baptist or Congregationalist minister was in charge of funding his own church almost completely, charged with renting his own housing as well as finding suitable building in which to gather his congregation (that he himself would have to build almost from scratch).¹⁰

Given that there was a demand for clergymen in England in the nineteenth century, and based on the fact that many of these lower church positions were increasingly being filled by men from families who were not wealthy enough to afford an education at Oxford or Cambridge, it can be inferred that many of the missionaries who went throughout the Empire to do their religious work were probably from the lower -middle class of British society. Unfortunately, the missionaries themselves are not of much help to us in uncovering their social standing back in

⁹ Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry*, 6-7; Alan Haig, *The Victorian Clergy* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 13-14.

¹⁰ Haig, *The Victorian Clergy*, 27-28, 121-24; Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry*, 63-64.

England, as many missionaries seldom, if ever, made references to these topics in their correspondences and writings home. The requirements for being a missionary to a foreign country were strict enough to ensure that the majority of missionaries chosen consisted of persons who were relatively well-off economically and who had a strong religious background. In 1854, the Chinese Evangelization Society, a non-denominational society founded by Karl Gützlaff, published its *Fourth Annual Report*. The fourth section of this report pertains to the societies methods and requirements for selecting persons to do missionary work. Under this section, the very first remark reads as follows:

A person applying to become a Missionary, shall undergo such examinations by the Board, by Ministers and Medical men, as may be deemed requisite; and the Candidate shall produce testimonials from his Minister and other christian [sic] men as to his character, and shall also, if required, give a written statement of his doctrinal views, and give written answers to such questions as may be put to him by the Board. And every Missionary shall practise [sic] without receiving fee or reward of any kind from any person whomsoever.¹¹

In the opinion of the Chinese Evangelization Society's directors, missionary candidates needed at least a basic educational background in both secular studies (writing and grammar) as well as in religious studies. This sentiment was not necessarily shared by the missionaries already in China, who frequently wrote home to their mission societies to request that more missionaries be sent over. A letter by B. Broomhall to the secretary of the China Inland Mission society, dated 1888, gives his support for the sending of missionaries who had not received any kind of formal university education in religious studies. Broomhall contended that anyone with a standard English education and who was desirous to see God's work done would prove to be comparable to a missionary who was fully grounded in theological and doctrinal studies from one of England's more prestigious universities. Furthermore, Broomhall pointed out that other

¹¹*The Fourth Annual Report of the Chinese Evangelization Society, 1854* (London: 1854), 20.

societies, such as the Anglican-run Church Missionary Society, had earlier made the decision to send lay missionaries to their mission stations in India; a similar initiative on the part of the China Inland Mission to its stations in China, he asserted, would prove beneficial. The China Inland Mission, founded by James Hudson Taylor after he left the Chinese Evangelization Society in the mid-1850s, was a non-denominational society and was therefore a latecomer to the missions' field in China.¹²

The strategies and tactics of Victorian British missions also contributed to the mindset of the persons who were undertaking these religious endeavors, particularly in China. Henry Venn, a prominent Anglican and Foreign Secretary for the Church Missionary Society in the mid-nineteenth century, supported the idea that missionary churches established in foreign lands should be self-sustaining, independent churches; the congregations of these churches would be responsible for almost every aspect of their church's operations, with the Church of England itself having little or no direct control. These foreign churches would also be led by native pastors and clergymen, who again would be supported both financially and spiritually by their respective church. According to C. Peter Williams, the idea of self-sustaining native churches became an accepted part of this British missionary strategy, particularly from the years 1840-1870. The Church of England was not the only Christian denomination to accept this strategy; it was also popular with other British Protestant denominations, as well as with some Catholic missionary societies. Its popularity with Baptist and Congregationalist societies is easily evident, given the independent and localized nature of these denominations' churches.¹³

¹²B. Broomhall to Unknown, 27 March 1888, CIM 45a, SOAS Archives, London. The letter itself does not list to whom the letter is addressed, though since it is held in the collection of correspondences to the China Inland Mission, it was likely written to James Hudson Taylor, the secretary of the China Inland Mission at this time.

¹³C. Peter Williams, *The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church: A Study in Victorian Missionary Strategy*, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1990) xiii-xv.

Most of the British missionary societies whose records were used and whose missionaries were studied in the writing of this thesis hail from the Anglican Church. Of the twenty-seven British Protestant missionaries whose names appeared on the Delegates Committee debate list of 1851 [See Appendix A], which provided the missionaries' names, location, arrival date in China and on which side of the Delegates' Committee debate they sided, twenty-four were from Anglican missionary societies, while the other four were from Nonconformist societies.¹⁴ The London Missionary Society was the first Anglican society to place a missionary in China, sending over Robert Morrison in 1807, with the Church Missionary Society not sending missionaries until the middle of the nineteenth century. Both of these maintained prominent and successful mission stations throughout the nineteenth century. The non-denominational China Evangelization Society also had a missionary presence in China, most notably through James Hudson Taylor, though the CES ultimately collapsed shortly after Taylor left them to found his own China Inland Mission. Taylor's main sticking point with the CES was his refusal to solicit funds to help support himself and the mission station he had been charged with in China; under the China Inland Mission, which flourished in the latter half of the century, Taylor made it clear that he and other CIM missionaries would subsist solely on whatever money was freely donated to them.¹⁵ Taylor's initiative took Henry Venn's "self-sustaining church" tactic to the next level by requiring the missionaries to undertake efforts to create mission stations large enough to support not only the native church, but that church's residing missionaries as well. By the end of

¹⁴As this list was attached to a letter dated 1851, it falls roughly halfway within the time period covered by this thesis. Since no lists of missionaries in China, Anglican or Nonconformist are available at any regular interval (indeed, such lists seem rare in most missionary archives), I feel confident in inferring that the information provided in that chart is an accurate estimation of the proportion of Anglican to Non-Conformist British missionaries in China.

¹⁵Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion*, 38; *China Inland Mission*, CIM/JHT Box A, SOAS Archives, London. This document was a typed insert that was placed on top of the materials in the specified box, and it consists of a simple overview of the China Inland Mission, from James Hudson Taylor's leaving the Chinese Evangelization Society up into the twentieth century. No author or date are provided, though the last date mentioned in the text is 1951.

the nineteenth century, the China Inland Mission had become the popular mission of many aspiring missionaries, and it became the second largest British Protestant missionary society.¹⁶

Many missionary societies encouraged the incorporation of a medical and educational emphasis along with their religious mission. It was hoped that the combination of healing the Chinese physically and spiritually would be the easiest way to win converts to Christianity. These medical missionaries, it was believed, would also be able to penetrate into the interior of China, where few non-medical missionaries were willing to venture, due to persecution and general distrust of foreigners in general. The medical relief that these medical missionaries provided won them the respect and admiration of the Chinese, and it was through this that a bridge towards Christianity would likely be built. On the educational front, many mission stations incorporated, or at least tried to incorporate, some element of Western-style religious and secular education in the hopes of building a native ministry in China from the ground up. For the China Inland Mission, this use of schools for evangelical purposes is made most clear. CIM schools were focused primarily on elementary education, with the hope being that by teaching the children the fundamentals of Christianity, the parents of these children would be more likely to convert as well. The CIM established many girls' schools, with the intention that these girls would later grow up to be good, Christian wives for the young male converts who served more practical roles for the mission station (such as translators and scribes). Other missionary societies, such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel's station in Peking, were not entirely open to letting non-Christian children into the schools. W. Brereton, the SPG missionary in charge of this station, rationalized the problem by stressing the financial difficulties the school faced in providing food, lodging, and education for their Christian students as well as many non-converted children as the reason for limiting enrollment. Despite varying

¹⁶Ibid; Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?*, 194.

approaches, Missionary societies quickly noticed just how influential a medical missionary or a children's school would be for their mission stations throughout China.¹⁷

Hence, the Christian missionary played a number of roles. More often than not, particularly in the case of early missions to China, the missionary was a man, as the mission field was considered too dangerous for a woman to travel and live on her own. This missionary man was a religious man, first and foremost, charged with the task of leading the Chinese people to the truth that was Christianity. But even in this regard, the task before the missionary was varied and diverse; he was sometimes a medical man or educator, a translator, an orator, a traveler, a business man (in managing his own affairs and those of his mission), and the caretaker of the Chinese people, both converted and non-converted. Regardless of his educational upbringing, the religious service in China to which the missionary had been called was unlike anything that he had seen while in England.

¹⁷*The Fourth Annual Report*. A small pamphlet was inserted into the bound copy of the annual report, and it is from this document that the information on the medical missions was derived; James Hudson Taylor, *After Thirty Years: Three Decades of the China Inland Mission* (publication information not provided), CIM 379, SOAS Archives, London.

Chapter 2: **The “Other” Christian Church: Protestant Perceptions of the Roman Catholic Mission**

Remember that you have not only the Chinese system but the Romanists to contend with. The Church of Rome has already laid enormous foundations on these two centuries old, She is building at an astonishing rate. We console ourselves by deriding her insincerity. But in many ways she contrasts favorably with our churches, no only in zeal but in some Vicariates in patience. In any case she counts her thousands to our scores: say to our hundreds: but we may not say so.¹⁸

T. Wade to Mr. Bullock

As 1555, a trading settlement was established at Macau, an island just to the south of the Chinese mainland. This settlement, along with the mainland port city of Canton, became an important and popular destination for missionaries to begin their work with the Chinese.¹⁹ By 1579, Roman Catholic missionaries from the “Society of Jesus” were coming to China to work among the people there. These Jesuits took up the appearance of Buddhist priests, figures that were widely recognized and occasionally admired throughout China, and started their missionary work among the lower, uneducated classes. This approach reflected the Jesuits’ belief that “accommodation” was the best method for converting the Chinese masses to Christianity; that is, by finding a similarity (or similarities) between themselves and the Chinese, the Jesuits would bridge the gap between the two cultures. China’s large Buddhist population, or at least the Jesuits’ perception of such, was an important factor in determining the Jesuits’ initial missionary tactics.²⁰

¹⁸T. Wade to Mr. Bullock, Peking, 20 March 1874 SPG CLR #79 China, Vol. 1, Rhodes House, Oxford University. Wade was a missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts whose mission station was in Peking; Bullock was the Foreign Secretary to this society.

¹⁹D. E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 4-5.

²⁰Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions & Universal Civilization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 3, 39,42.

This “Buddhist” strategy soon became problematic. First, the Jesuits soon realized that Buddhism was not native to China, but rather originated in India and then traveled north into China more than a millennia before the Jesuits had brought their Christianity. Second, Buddhism did not prove to be as popular with the masses as the Jesuits had first assumed. Many Chinese, and most notably the well-to-do benefactors of the Jesuits, were not practitioners of the Buddhist faith and often looked at Buddhist priests warily. And finally Buddhism, for all its similarities to Christianity (such as its claims to being a universal religion that undercut all local religions and beliefs), was not a distinct enough “other” to serve the Jesuits’ cause. Buddhism was not, at least in the Jesuits’ mind set, the ideal summation of “Chinese-ness;” it could not serve as an adequate Eastern counterpart to the West’s Christianity, as the Jesuits had hoped. The Jesuits were looking for something distinctively Chinese with which to associate themselves, in order to help them promote Christianity to the Chinese people.²¹

Hence, the Jesuits turned to the traditions of China’s learned scholar class, the literati. This shift can, in large part, be attributed to Matteo Ricci and Michele Ruggieri, two Italian Jesuits who arrived in China in the late sixteenth century. Initially receptive of the Jesuit accommodation of Buddhism, Ricci and Ruggieri, for the first few years of their service in China spent their time translating a wide variety of Chinese texts into European languages, most notably Latin. This translation work put the Jesuits, as well as their supporters in Europe, in contact with the historical sage-scholar of Kongzi (transliterated “Confucius” by the Jesuits), and led to the next stage in the Jesuit effort. In this second stage, the Jesuits sought accommodation with what they perceived as the “Confucian” religio-political tradition. Several Chinese scholarly texts, many of which were attributed to or inspired by the teachings of Kongzi, were the basis for many Chinese rites and ceremonies, and it was to these that the Jesuits looked to as

²¹Ibid, 46-47.

a viable alternative to Buddhism. Furthermore, the knowledge imparted by these works was not well-known by the Chinese masses, but rather was the focus of the learned elites of Chinese society. A shift in accommodation from Buddhist priest to Chinese scholar allowed the Jesuits to interact with and become a part of a native Chinese tradition, from which they could exert their missionary force into converting the Chinese to Christianity, beginning with the literati elites.

Ricci spoke of this shift:

To gain greater status we do not walk along the streets on foot, but have ourselves carried in sedan chairs, on men's shoulders, as men of rank are accustomed to do. For we have great need of this type of prestige in this region, and without it would make no progress among these gentiles: for the name of foreigners and priests is considered so vile in China that we need this and other similar devices to show them that we are not priests as vile as their own.²²

The Jesuits had elevated themselves from the lower social strata in China to the upper and, with this shift, many Jesuits spent a considerable amount of time in Peking, the Chinese capital city where political power was most concentrated.²³

Not all Catholic missionaries in China were from the Society of Jesus; other societies, such as the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians, had agents at work elsewhere in China by the seventeenth century. These missionaries did not follow the Jesuits' approach of "accommodation" and spent their time laboring among the lower classes throughout China. This decision was partially out of choice, but partially out of necessity. Many of these non-Jesuit societies were of the opinion that large-scale conversion was the best way to win China to Christianity, which was best achieved by working in the provinces. That the Jesuits arrived in China before these other societies meant that they had first choice in how they chose to interact

²²Quoted in Johnathan Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1984), 114.

²³Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism*, 9-11, 33-35; Spence, *Memory Palace*, 160, 212-22.

with the Chinese; even if other Catholic missionaries had wanted to have close ties with the scholar class, it is doubtful that the Jesuits would have shared their political power.²⁴

The work of Roman Catholic missionaries in China has been the focus of several historical studies. In *The Spirit and the Flesh in Shandong, 1650-1785*, D. E. Mungello looks at the efforts of the other missionary societies in Shandong province in the northeastern part of China. The title of the work is an indication of the material it covers; Mungello himself states that it “was chosen to highlight the antithesis between the spirituality and moral ideas that inspired these Christians and the human weaknesses and temptations that brought about their downfall.”²⁵ Another of Mungello’s works, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800*, looks at the interaction between China and the Western world, with Catholic missionaries serving as the intermediaries between the two. This cultural exchange, while by no means steady or constant, went both ways, though the period from 1500-1800 on the whole tended to flow more from China to the Western world than vice versa. While Western missionaries in China met with opposition from various classes in China, the information on Chinese culture and society that these missionaries sent back home was eagerly anticipated and received. Any discussion of the Confucian tradition during the late-Ming and the Qing dynasties should also include a discussion of the impact that Jesuit missionaries had on both the tradition itself as well as their interactions with the Chinese scholarly elites. In *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization*, Lionel Jensen argues that Confucianism was “constructed,” at least in part, by the Jesuits. According to Jensen, these Jesuits looked favorably upon the ancient Chinese sage Confucius and constructed around him the image and mythos of a complex religio-political system, which they believed to be inherently Chinese. The Chinese

²⁴D.E. Mungello, *The Spirit and the Flesh in Shandong, 1650-1785* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 1-3; Mungello, *Great Encounter*, 18-22.

²⁵Ibid, 3.

themselves also helped to construct the modern image of Confucianism, but only during the past century and a half. Their goal was entirely different from that of the Jesuits, as the Chinese tried to construct a “universal” Confucian tradition, one that spoke not only to the Chinese, but to the entire world. Such an assertion placed Confucianism on the same level with the dominant monotheistic religions of the world. Though Jensen’s overall argument can be viewed as exaggerated, in regards to both parties’ roles in “constructing” Confucianism, it does show that the Jesuits took great interests in the Confucian tradition and saw it as a viable alternative to Buddhism.

While many books discuss Catholic missionaries in China, few examine the interaction between Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries. The Catholics had been establishing themselves and their missions throughout China for over two hundred years before the first British Protestant missionaries set foot on Chinese soil at the turn of the nineteenth century. Even then, the number of Protestant missionaries in China did not greatly increase until after the Treaty of Nanjing of 1842 provided five open treaty-ports for these missionaries; the Treaty of Tientsin of 1858 would later grant these missionaries the right to live and promote their religion throughout China and not just in the designated port cities. *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, a collection of essays edited by Daniel H. Bays, is one of the few studies that does, in some way, explore the differing opinions and relations between Catholic and Protestant missionaries. Though no single essay deals with these interactions, the collection as a whole examines several important topics – from the treatment of women to missionary attempts to create and foster an indigenous Christian tradition in China – and how both groups of missionaries dealt with them.²⁶

²⁶ Bays, Daniel, ed. *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999).

After the Yung-cheng Emperor, the successor of the Kangxi Emperor, banned the preaching of Christianity in China in 1724, the Roman Catholic missions were forced into an underground existence. This imperial edict retracted the freedom to preach their religion throughout the empire that Catholics had worked hard to gain from the Kangxi Emperor several decades earlier. Christianity was now officially labeled as a heterodox religion, a stigma that would last for more than a century. As a result, Christians in China, both native and foreign, were subject to persecution in many regions of the Chinese empire. The Catholic missionaries in particular were the target of several verbal attacks from learned Chinese scholars. One such incident was the assertion from the Fukien literatus, Chang Chen-t'ao, that the reason Catholics had access to large amounts of money was because they practiced alchemy. Supposedly, Catholic priests would harvest body parts from their dying practitioners and, through magical practices, produce silver from these organs. Catholicism also suffered due to its similarities, at least in the eyes of the Chinese, to Islam. So when Muslims in western China began to rebel near the end of the eighteenth century, the Chinese also began to scrutinize possible political motives of the Catholics and their missions in China.

After the Chinese were defeated by Western Powers in the Opium War of 1842, Catholicism was soon relieved of its heterodox title and freed from persecution, at least on a limited basis. The French, not wanting the British to have a monopoly on trade and contact with China, began to assert themselves militarily and diplomatically in China. With this new French influence, Catholic missionaries were allowed to legally establish themselves in the port-cities, and their converts were protected from harassment and persecution. In 1846, Catholics gained further concessions from the Chinese with the aid of their French champions; the preaching of Christianity was to be tolerated throughout all of China's provinces and any property that had

been confiscated from Catholic missions, unless otherwise in use, was to be returned to its original Christian owner. The former concession was most important, since earlier Catholic missionaries had not been restricted to the port-cities, so there were Catholic missions spread throughout China. While these concessions were granted by the Chinese Emperor, there was no guarantee that they would be upheld and carried out in every province in the empire. Despite this possible concern, Catholic missions were able to breathe a little easier, knowing that, in the French, they now had a powerful and influential Western Power to aid their cause in China.²⁷

The relationship between British Protestant missionaries and their Roman Catholic counterparts in China was heavily influenced by certain key events in the history of the Western Powers. Anti-Catholicism had been popular in England during the eighteenth century, and as a result it carried over well into the nineteenth century. D. G. Paz attributes this strong sense of anti-Catholicism to “three fundamental ideas: that of the Protestant Constitution, that of the Norman Yoke, and that of Providentialism.”²⁸ The “Protestant Constitution” was the belief that Roman Catholicism legitimized the reigns of the absolute monarchies on the Continent. Continental absolutism contrasted with the various civil and political liberties that the English had claimed in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution of 1688; for the English, Roman Catholicism meant absolutism and Protestantism guaranteed political liberty. Moreover, many English believed that a Roman Catholic’s allegiance to the Pope clashed with the loyalty that should be reserved for king and country. The concept of the “Norman Yoke” played off of this same fear. According to this popular myth, for several centuries following the Norman Invasion of 1066, these invaders had ruled as absolute monarchs over the conquered Anglo-Saxon peoples of England. The self-governing methods of the Anglo-Saxons, suppressed by the Normans,

²⁷Cohen, *China and Christianity*, 12-14, 20-22, 31-33, 65-66

²⁸D.G. Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 2.

resurfaced after the Protestant Revolution and the Glorious Revolution. Again, Catholicism meant Continental repression; Protestantism guaranteed liberty. The final component to British anti-Catholicism, providentialism, was the belief that events played themselves out in accordance with the will of God. According to this national myth, British society, both at home and throughout the empire, was flourishing because it was blessed with the favor of God. Anglicans, moreover, added that British prosperity was also a result of the fact that the Anglican Church was the official Church of England. Both Anglicans and Nonconformists believed that British prosperity and power proved that God supported their Protestant endeavors and not those of the Roman Catholics on the European continent.²⁹

Roman Catholics in the British Isles were a minority and, prior to 1829, were effectively disenfranchised and were disbarred from holding public office. With the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, Roman Catholics could run for political office, both at the local level, as well as in Parliament. This act was less of a concession to better the standing of Catholics throughout Britain, and more of a measure designed to placate the unrest among the Catholics in Ireland and make its governance easier for Parliament. Irish Catholics did not like that they were governed without representation by an Anglican Parliament, so many Catholic priests and laymen participated in acts of civil unrest to agitate Parliament. It worked, at least in some capacity, as the Irish Catholics were pacified enough that they did not erupt in outright rebellion. However, the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 also had a negative impact on Catholicism in Britain; it instilled in British Protestants the fear of a growing Catholic movement not only in Ireland, but in England as well.

²⁹Ibid, 1-4.

Because of this fear, British anti-Catholicism permeated the denominational divide, as is seen by British Protestant reactions to the happenings with the Catholic church in England. In 1850, Roman Catholic Pope Pius IX appointed Nicholas Wiseman, the vicar apostolic to the Central District of England, to the position of Cardinal Archbishop. In doing so, Pope Pius restored the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England for the first time since the Reformation. This move also allowed the Pope to assert some measure of direct control over how the Roman Catholic Church was organized, such as how the names of clerical dioceses were named, as the British Catholic diocese used the same names as their Anglican counterparts. Protestants referred to the reestablishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy as the Papal Aggression, and many British reacted strongly to the Pope's attempt to try and have an influential voice in London, the center of British politics and the symbol of their social liberties.

When a letter by England's Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, openly denounced Roman Catholicism and the Pope's feeble attempt to extend his sphere of control, the British people joined in protest and denouncement. In the final months of 1850, some of these protestors even sought to petition the Queen to formally ban Catholicism, on the grounds that its existence in England threatened the established Church. Some of the larger Protestant organizations in the British Isles, such as the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Scotland, along with several Nonconformist churches joined in the protests, some of which turned violent. The public demanded some kind of legislation to counter "Papal Aggression." Lord Russell sought some form of peaceful compromise with the Pope himself, but Queen Victoria and several prominent politicians did not share his sentiment. In the end, and after much debate, the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill was enacted in 1851; this bill forbade anyone from assuming the title of an English

church or from trying to transfer property belonging to a church office. Unfortunately for those British with strong anti-Catholic sentiments, the act itself was never enforced.³⁰

The interactions between Catholic and Protestant missionaries in nineteenth-century China must be set within the context of the anti-Catholic sentiment prevalent in mid-Victorian England. Though it is unclear whether the British Protestant missionaries, before leaving for their mission stations in China, were outspoken on the topic of anti-Catholicism, the precedence for underlying tension between Protestants and Catholics in China was set. However, nineteenth-century Catholic and Protestant missionaries were not likely to run into each other in very many Chinese locations. Most British Protestant missionaries remained at or close to the five treaty-ports, whereas their Catholic counterparts had well-established missions located throughout the interior. Where Jesuit missionaries had once flocked to Peking as the location through which they could gain power and prestige through the Qing Imperial court, the London Missionary Society had to wait until the early-1860s before it had a missionary, Rev. Joseph Edkins, stationed near the capital (in the city of Tientsin). Where interactions between Catholics and Protestants did take place, the responses varied from outright opposition to indifference and, even in some instances, to amicability.³¹

An example of the British Protestant missionaries' opposition to the Roman Catholics can be seen in the former group's early support for the quasi-Christian Taiping Rebellion. In an attempt to assert his own version of "Christianity" throughout China, the Taiping leader, Hong Xiuquan, made it his personal goal to remove and destroy the idols in every temple in China. Roman Catholic cathedrals, with their images of Christ and the Virgin Mary, were themselves

³⁰Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism*, 8-12, Walter L. Arnstein *Protestant Versus Catholic in Mid-Victorian England: Mr. Newdegate and the Nuns*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982), 48.

³¹Joseph Edkins to Arthur Tidman, Peking 4 June 1861, CWM/LMS - Incoming Correspondences - North China Box #1, Folder #1, Jacket B, SOAS Archives, London.

not exempt from Hong's destructive ways. This anti-Catholic sentiment by the Taipings meant that, if the Rebellion succeeded in its goal to overthrow the reigning Manchu Dynasty, the Protestants would have little trouble gaining favor with the Taiping leaders. Furthermore, the Taipings themselves were aware of the distinctions between Protestant and Catholic religions.³² Rev. Henry Reeve, serving under the Church Missionary Society, in commenting on the Taipings' views of the differing forms of Christianity, said that "His lordship himself [Bishop Burdon, the Bishop of China from the Church Missionary Society] could not have distinguished more clearly between Protestant & Romanish Xtianity [sic]."³³

The simple wording of a passage of a missionary report on the state of Roman Catholic missions is also a good indication of how that particular missionary regarded the Catholics. In a letter to Mr. Venn, Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, Rev. William Armstrong Russell provided a brief report of the political state of Ningpo in the early part of 1852. This port-city was under siege by a unidentified band of pirates who were wreaking havoc on the city and its surrounding areas. No sooner had this force been quelled (albeit peacefully) than an uprising occurred on the island of Ohusan, in which several Catholic Churches were destroyed.³⁴ Russell explained that the people of Ohusan wished to expel the Catholics from the island, because of their "relentless oppression of the people there." When this matter was settled, thanks to intervention by the French consul, and the Catholics were allowed to return to their property, Russell commented that the Catholics were "restored to their former unrestrained license to commit their wanted excesses upon the people." Russell did not indicate that he had actually

³²Rev. Henry Reeve to the CMS Secretaries, Shanghai, 20 September 1853, C CH/O 71, Letter #2, CMS Archives, Birmingham.

³³George Smith to Archbishop, Hong Kong, 23 May 1853, C CH/O 3b #28, CMS Archives, Birmingham.

³⁴I believe this to be the small island to the north of Ningpo, however I have yet to find a map of China that actually gives a name to that small island. Russell notes that the uprising takes place on an island, so it seems like the logical choice, since the island is within close proximity to the city besieged by pirates.

been in contact with the people on the island or that he read an official report of the incident, so it can be inferred that anti-Catholicism underlay his description of the incident.³⁵

Similarly, the *Fourth Annual Report of the Chinese Evangelization Society, 1854*, also presented the Catholic Church as a negative force which the Protestant missionaries would have to overcome. The report made a plea for missionaries to help promote Protestant Christianity in China. “If messengers of truth do not enter the country,” the report stated, “the Roman Catholics will exert themselves to destroy the good work already begun, and if they succeed in their attempt, they will, if possible, expel Protestant Missionaries.”³⁶ In this example, as with many others, no specific example of a Roman Catholic threat to British missionary interests in China appears, save only the possibility that the Catholics would gain the favor of the leading powers in China by working to have the Protestants expelled.

Among those Protestants who were more curious about (or at least not openly hostile towards) the state of Catholic affairs was W. C. Milne of the London Missionary Society. In correspondence to his society’s secretary, Milne devoted a sizeable portion of the letter to providing the details of a new Catholic cathedral that was under construction in Shanghai. Included in this description were the dimensions of this new chapel, as well an estimation of its costs and of how many people it could seat. Milne’s purpose for such a lengthy discussion was most likely twofold: first, he sought to provide the society members in London with an idea of what kind of competition the LMS missionaries faced from the Catholics in Shanghai. Second, Milne was attempting to show how much money the Catholics had devoted to the construction of

³⁵Rev. William Armstrong Russell to Mr. Venn, Ningpo, 21 February 1854, C CH/O 72, Letter #9, CMS Archives, Birmingham.

³⁶*The Fourth Annual Report of the Chinese Evangelization Society, 1854* (London: 1854), CIM 210, SOAS Archives, London.

the chapel, in the hope that the LMS would be able to fund the construction of a similar Protestant church.³⁷

An example of a missionary with an indifferent opinion towards the Catholics can be seen in Rev. J. Edkins of the London Missionary Society. Edkins was the first LMS missionary to seek a permanent station in the Chinese capital of Peking. He failed in this effort, because of wider diplomatic turmoil. Chinese resentment of the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing as an “unfair” Treaty, in that it granted foreigners a privileged status in the five port cities, led to increased tensions between the Chinese and Western Powers. In 1856, a Chinese challenge to the sovereignty of British merchant-ships was made when Chinese agents boarded a British ship (one owned, however, by a Chinese man) and accused its captain of piracy. This act led to the short “Arrow War,” which the British and their allies easily won. The resulting treaties, the Treaty of Tientsin of 1858 and the Peking Convention of 1860, further extended the privileges held by British Protestant missionaries. While the governments of foreign powers, such as England and France were formally allowed to have their ministers reside in the Chinese capital, Christian missionaries of all faiths were now free to move throughout the entirety of the Chinese empire. The Treaty of Nanjing had tried to restrict foreigners (missionaries in particular) to only the five port-cities (although the few who ventured farther inland were not punished). With these new treaties, signed at the Peking Convention in 1860, the missionaries had formal permission to leave their stations.

This short period of political conflict in northern China presented a difficulty for Edkins and other Protestant missionaries. Sir Frederick William Adolphus Bruce, brother of James Bruce, the eighth Earl of Elgin, was the British plenipotentiary for Northern China at this time

³⁷W. C. Milne to Tidman, Shanghai, 18 March 1850, CWM/LMS Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #2, Jacket D, SOAS Archives, London.

and was in charge of representing British interests to the Manchu Emperor in Peking.³⁸ Bruce refused to allow any passports to be issued to missionaries wishing to enter Peking; his reasoning was that such an act, coming not long after the Peking Convention, would deter the Emperor from returning to the capital city. The emperor had fled Peking after seeing the display of military force by Western Powers during the Arrow War, and it was this fear of a sizeable Western presence in Peking – both military and religious – that made him leery of returning to the capital city. Bruce was concerned that a large missionary presence in the capital would prove a hindrance to British goals of cooperation with the Qing dynasty. Despite this ban on passports for missionaries, Edkins reported that a group of Catholic missionaries had been permitted to reside in Peking at this time and that they were freely and openly conducting their religious affairs. The British and French ambassadors in Peking recognized that the Catholic missions owned property in the city and thus admitted them to see to the care of these stations. Edkins resented the fact that the Catholics were allowed into Peking when he and his fellow Protestants were banned, but he did not blame or disparage the Catholics. He found fault instead with the politicians, and Bruce in particular. Frustrated, Edkins finally settled on the nearby city of Tientsin as the location for his mission station.³⁹

When a group of Protestant missionaries in and around Peking in the 1860s proposed that the Protestants in the region agree on which Chinese characters were to be used to represent “God” and “Holy Spirit” in their religious tracts and sermons, many missionaries voted in favor of using those terms preferred by the Roman Catholic missionaries. Edkins, now with his station

³⁸ Both Frederick Bruce and his brother, James Bruce, were active as political agents in China in the 1850s and early 1860s, though I think it is safe to infer that Frederick is the one to whom Edkins and other missionaries make reference. Had they referred to James Bruce, they would have used his title, Earl of Elgin, as it would immediately clarify whom they were talking about.

³⁹J. Edkins to Tidman, Tientsin, 4 June 1861, CWM/LMS - North China - Box #1, Folder #1, Jacket B, SOAS Archives, London; J. Edkins to Tidman, Tientsin, 5 December 1861, CWM/LMS - North China - Box #1, Folder #1, Jacket B, SOAS Archives, London; Li, *Ageless Chinese* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1978), 394-397.

in the north, was one of the missionaries who agreed with this proposal. These Catholic characters (which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter) appeared in almost all of the Catholic literature that had been printed in China during the Church's nearly three hundred years there. Presumably, then, these characters were not as unfamiliar to the Chinese as some of the alternative characters suggested by some Protestant translations. These missionaries who favored using the "Catholic" character argued that association with the Catholics could, then, benefit the Protestants. But many Protestants feared that their converts would be misled into thinking that the printed materials were Catholic in origin and not Protestant.⁴⁰

Edkins is also the source for some of the more colorful and interesting stories of Protestant interactions with Catholics. On December 25, 1852, Edkins met with a Catholic priest before he (Edkins) was to preach to a congregation. The two missionaries quickly got into a doctrinal debate on some of the more notable differences between their faiths: the Catholic practice of worshipping Mary, the correct number of sacraments, and whether or not the Pope was God's religious authority on Earth. The debate was cut short when Edkins got up to address the Chinese who had gathered for his sermon, but quickly resumed soon after. At this point, the discussion turned sour when the priest became frustrated and exclaimed, "Tell Dr. Medhurst from me that he is doing great mischief by coming here, and teaching doctrines different from what have always been received, and that it is very much to be deplored."⁴¹ Dr. Walter H. Medhurst, the person whom the Roman Catholic priest spoke of, was medical missionary sent by the London Missionary Society to China in 1817. No specific acts of "mischief" perpetrated by Medhurst were listed, so it is unclear to what the priest was referring. Medhurst, however, was

⁴⁰ Rev. J. Edkins to Dr. A. Tidman, Peking, 14 May 1866 CWM/LMS - North China Box #1, Folder #5, Jacket B, SOAS Archives, London.

⁴¹J. Edkins to Tidman, 3 January 1853, CWM/LMS - Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #4, Jacket A, SOAS Archives, London.

one of the more well-known translators among the Protestant missionaries, and he was closely associated with Karl Gützlaff on numerous occasions, so perhaps the priest's mention of Medhurst's "ill-deeds" was an attempt at slandering or discrediting a rival missionary.⁴²

While British missionaries perceived Catholicism to be an impediment to their work in China, one that was as real and active a threat to the Protestant mission as the Chinese themselves, the Catholics were rarely the opponents that the Protestants imagined. Perhaps then, the major conflict between Catholics and Protestants that superseded most others was that both sides did not understand the position of their opponent. Again, Joseph Edkins of the LMS exemplifies this point. On New Year's Day in 1853, Edkins, along with W.C. Milne, visited the newly-constructed Catholic Cathedral in Shanghai (the very one that Milne himself had written about just three years earlier). In an incident almost identical to Edkins' run-in with a Catholic priest seven days earlier, the two LMS missionaries met Mr. L'Abbe Lemaitre, caretaker of the Cathedral, and again began to debate whether the Catholic or Protestant faith was the true version of Christianity. The Frenchman spoke of the many divisions between the Protestant churches, claiming that he had heard that as many as seventy-two different interpretations of the biblical passage "Thou art Peter" were prevalent in Protestant circles.⁴³ To this assertion, Edkins and Milne responded with a discussion of how the various monastic orders that existed under the over-arching Roman Catholic Church were, themselves, divided on numerous biblical and doctrinal issues. Lemaitre contested the argument with an analogy; he equated the Catholic Church to a household; each of the different monastic orders had its own purpose and functions, but they all existed together, communally, under the banner of Roman Catholicism.

⁴² Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 271; Teng, 151.

⁴³ "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18, *The Holy Bible* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1850).

Furthermore, Lemaitre asserted that the Protestants as a whole very much misunderstood and misrepresented the Catholic Church; Protestants, for example, seldom drew the distinction between the differing types of worship accorded to God and Mary.⁴⁴

Lemaitre was correct; Protestant missionaries did misunderstand some of the religious practices of the Catholic Church and did misrepresent the Catholic Church to their Chinese audience, sometimes intentionally, sometimes not. But Catholics also lacked a firm understanding of the doctrinal traditions of their Protestant counterparts. In concluding his discussion with Edkins and Milne, Lemaitre expressed his regret that they could differ on something so crucial and important as the Bible and that these differences kept his mind from being at rest. Edkins, in an attempt to set the Catholic man's heart at rest on the subject, said "Be at not [referring to Lemaitre's mind not being at rest]...it matters not at all. The Bible, at any rate, is the same through all ages."⁴⁵ Though not entirely accurate, given Protestant and Catholic differences over which books should be included in the Bible, the sentiment behind Edkins' words is there; that Catholic and Protestant faiths share a common bond in their view of the Bible as the true, uncorrupted source of the God's Word.

Many of these Protestant missionaries did perceive Catholic missionaries as their opponents. While some, like Edkins, spoke nothing ill of the Catholic missionaries themselves, the fact still remained that Protestant or Catholic were in competition to convert the same group of people, the Chinese. While the Catholic missions might have had the upper hand in the first half of the nineteenth century, with their superior number of converts, their wide-spread mission stations, and the fact that they had been in China more than two centuries longer than British Protestants, the Treaty of Tientsin of 1858 and the Peking Convention of 1860 leveled the

⁴⁴W. C. Milne to Tidman, 3 January 1853, CWM/LMS Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #4, Jacket A, SOAS Archives, London.

⁴⁵Ibid

playing field. In their correspondences, British Protestant missionaries made little mention of early Catholic strategies for working amongst the Chinese, such as the Jesuits' "accommodation" tactics. In trying to lay the foundation for their own religious mission in China, it is a surprise that the Protestant missionaries did not at least mention such tactics. They could have done so by placing them within the context of their own Protestant tactics for converting the Chinese, citing their differences and similarities. Most likely, however, British Protestant missionaries were ready to accept and build off of the Christian foundation that the Catholics had established in China; they could then focus their energies on illustrating for their Chinese converts the distinct differences between the Christianity of Catholicism and that of Protestantism. In drawing such distinctions, Protestant missionaries hoped to distance themselves from the negative image that many Chinese had of Christianity, thanks at least in some small part to the early efforts of Catholic missionaries. So the Protestant missionaries could try to take the best that Roman Catholicism offered them, a Christian-based foundation in China on which they could build their own Protestant mission, while attempting to do away with the worst that Catholicism offered, the image of an invasive, threatening foreign religion.

Chapter 3:
Internal Missionary Conflicts:
British Protestant Missionaries and the Translation of the New Testament

However much missionaries may have been constrained by local circumstances, historians are not entitled to dismiss their motives as insignificant and of no consequence or interest. Missionaries viewed their world first of all with the eye of faith and then through theological lenses.⁴⁶

- Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire*

The differences in ideology and approach that resulted in conflict and competition between the Catholic Jesuits and the Protestants in China was but one aspect of “religious politics.” This chapter argues that, although the various Protestant missionaries in China all gathered under the banner of “Protestant Christianity” and saw the conversion of the Chinese to the Protestant religion as their mission, they hardly presented a unified body in their thoughts or actions. One important case study that illustrates the internal debates and divisions within the Protestant camp is the effort to re-translate the New Testament. With the Treaty of Nanjing of 1842 providing British missionaries the legal right to open mission stations in five established port-cities in China, it became a general consensus that the missionaries in China – those newly-sent as well as those who had resided there prior to the treaty – should look into the idea of a newer and perhaps more accurate Chinese translation of the New Testament. The various missionary stations duly appointed a committee of British and American Protestant missionaries, called the Delegates’ Committee. Who would have thought that such a simple task as finding a Chinese word to represent the Christian God would prove to be a topic so controversial that it would cause much debate and dissent within the ranks of the Protestant missions in China? The

⁴⁶Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 13.

controversy over the revised translation sharply divided not only the missionaries themselves but also entire Protestant denominations.

German-born Karl Gützlaff, in the early 1800s, was one of the earliest Protestant missionaries to set foot on Chinese soil. A Lutheran, Gützlaff had trained as a sailor and spent his first years in China employed as an interpreter in Hong Kong. Not long after his arrival, Gützlaff began to pick up the local language with ease and succeeded in translating the Christian Bible into the Chinese language, using the Greek version as the basis for the translation. The task of translating the Bible into foreign languages has always proved to be a daunting task, as the subtle nuances and word choices of the languages require elaborate deliberation and discussion to produce as accurate of a translation as is possible. The first Bible to be produced in Chinese by a Protestant missionary, Dr. Gützlaff's version, was able to hold the support of both missionaries and Sinologists and was continually printed until well into the middle of the nineteenth century. Professor Neumann, a Chinese scholar in Munich, spoke very highly of Gützlaff's translation:

Dr. Gutzlaff's [sic] version of the Holy Scriptures, from the Hebrew and Greek originals, has, in the opinion of all impartial persons who are competent to judge, made a great step in advance towards perfection. Gutzlaff [sic], moreover, has endeavoured, as much as possible, considering the very great diversity in the views of the Chinese, to avoid all words and expressions conveying ideas not altogether consistent with the originals.... The parallelisms which occur so often in the Holy Scriptures, and not unfrequently[sic] supply the place of a poetical form in other languages, are preserved throughout. This is more important, as the Chinese themselves often use this form of speech, considering it as an elegant characteristic of loftiness of style.⁴⁷

The Chinese too, to some extent, also approved of Gützlaff's earlier version of the Bible, as seen in the fact that the leaders of the Taiping rebellion actively printed copies of Gützlaff's Bible

⁴⁷ Professor Neumann, as quoted in *The Fourth Annual Report of the Chinese Evangelization Society, 1854* (London, 1854), pg 11-12.

along with their own religious tracts.⁴⁸ But not all missionaries approved of Gützlaff's translation. James Hudson Taylor, one of the most well-known British Anglican missionaries to work in China, spent his early missionary years in association with the Chinese Evangelization Society, which Gützlaff himself founded and supported. Despite this link to Gützlaff, Taylor, in commenting on Gützlaff's translation work in China, remarked that "it is a great pity that they [the Taipings] had not a better translation of the Bible than Gützlaff's; it would probably have preserved them from many errors."⁴⁹ Though these assessments of Gützlaff's translation of the Bible came after the formation of the Delegates' Committee to re-translate the Bible, the differing views show how divided missionaries and Chinese scholars were over the validity of the first Protestant translation of the Bible.⁵⁰

Robert Morrison's scriptural translations into the Chinese language were, while not as popular as Gützlaff's version of the Bible, still frequently used by missionaries and their converts. Sent by the London Missionary Society, Morrison arrived in China in 1807 and began translating the New Testament of the Bible into the Chinese language. Though little was said about the integrity or soundness of Morrison's works by other missionaries in China, the fact that the London Missionary Society waited until 1835 to encourage a newer version of the New Testament shows that the workmanship was generally approved of. However, Morrison's work was not without its faults either. Jen Yu-wen, in his work *Taiiping Revolutionary Movement*, speaks of Morrison's translations as being "often awkward and sometimes unintelligible;" attributes not favorable for a translation of the Bible.⁵¹ Subsequently, these failings on

⁴⁸ Ibid, pg. 12.

⁴⁹ James Hudson Taylor, correspondence to Chas. Bird, Esq. of London. Shanghai, Jan. 1, 1855. CIM/JHT Box 1 - #2 - Letters to CES. SOAS Archives, London.

⁵⁰ Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?*, 155. Rev. W. H. Medhurst to Rev. W. J. Boone, 22 April 1850, London Missionary Society - Central China Box #1, SOAS Archives, London. James Hudson Taylor to his father, n.d., China Inland Mission - CIM/JHT Box A, SOAS Archives, London.

⁵¹ Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p 22.

Morrison's part were reflected in the work of his Chinese assistant, Liang Afa, who summarized a collection of Bible stories from Morrison's translation into a work entitled "Good Words for Exhorting the Age."⁵²

The early missionaries in China could never agree on whether Gützlaff's or Morrison's translations were most appropriate for use; that these missionaries would be equally divided over another attempt to render the Bible into the Chinese language is perhaps not surprising.⁵³ In 1843, the Protestant missionaries in China came together in committee and agreed to undertake the task of making a new version of the Bible for circulation in China. This gathering, called the United Meeting, met in Hong Kong and included both foreign and native-born persons of the Protestant Christian faith. Its purpose was to get the ball rolling for a newer translation of the New Testament for use by Protestant missionaries. In speaking of this goal, Rev. John Stronach of the London Missionary Society, one of the missionaries elected to serve on the committee that would oversee the translation process, commented that:

Every intelligent native with whom here or elsewhere we have ever conversed has most decidedly refused to accord this quality of intelligibility [that which the missionaries in attendance at the United Meeting sought for this new translation] to Morrison's version and surely it is high time we had a translation which we could reasonably hope would benefit the people of this vast empire.⁵⁴

Portions of the New Testament were assigned for translation to various missionary stations throughout Asia, where the Chinese language was readily spoken. The Delegates' Committee, a

⁵²Ibid, 14, 22, 155.

⁵³These missionaries did not make a distinction between the various dialects of the Chinese language, and spoke instead of a "unified" Chinese language. This could be a result of the desire by many Protestant missionaries in China to present a united Protestant front in China, in which all Protestant missionaries there would support and use a uniform dialect throughout the empire. As these missionaries were mostly confined to the five port-cities established in the Treaty of Nanjing of 1842, it is also likely the dialect they would think of using would be the one most prominent in their region, that being the south-eastern coastal region of the Chinese Empire. Karl Gützlaff was renowned for his missionary and translation work in Hong Kong, so it is doubtful that Protestant missionaries seeking to draw up their own, newer translation of the Bible would use the same dialect as Gützlaff.

⁵⁴Rev. John Stronach to Rev. Tidman & Mess. Freeman, 11 January 1845, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - South China (Fukien), Box #1, Folder #1, Jacket A, SOAS Archives, London.

smaller body of missionaries elected from the larger of the Protestant missionary stations in China, was to gather and revise the various assigned translations into a condensed and standardized version of the New Testament. The Delegates' Committee itself initially consisted of four members: Revs. W. H. Medhurst and John Stronach from the London Missionary Society, Rev. E. G. Bridgman from the American Board of Missionaries, and Rev. W. J. Boone from the American Episcopal Board.⁵⁵ Revs. Boone and Medhurst represented the Shanghai missions, with Rev. Bridgman representing Canton and Rev. John Stronach, Amoy. Rev. W. C. Milne, another missionary from the London Missionary Society who was stationed in Shanghai, was appointed as the fifth member of the committee in 1848, though he was not accorded with the voting privileges that the other four delegates held. Rev. Milne, in a letter to the Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society, Rev. Arthur Tidman, explained the situation by saying that "he [Milne himself] sat - not as a delegate from us [London Missionary Society], but as delegated by the whole body of Protestant Paedobaptists[sic] missionaries in Ningpo and Shanghae."⁵⁶ The fact that Rev. Milne was not given voting privileges within the committee meant that the Committee only had four voting members and could therefore become deadlocked

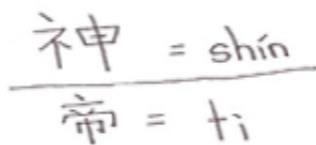
⁵⁵"For and Against Shin," included in Revs. Medhurst, Stronach, Milne to Tidman, 18 Nov, 1851, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China - Box #1, Folder #3, Jacket C, SOAS Archives, London.

It is unclear why both British delegates to this committee were from the London Missionary Society and why other societies, such as the Church Missionary Society, were not represented. One possible reason for this could be that the London Missionary Society had its agents in China several decades before these other societies. When a list was circulated of the Protestant missionaries in China and how they sided on the translation debate [see Appendix A], the missionaries who drew up the list made certain to include the date of arrival in China for each of the missionaries listed. This shows that at least some of the missionaries associated with this debate were of the opinion that the length of time the missionaries had been in China was somewhat reflective on how they sided on the debate. The two British representatives, Medhurst and Stronach, had been in China for several years (or in Medhurst's case, several decades) before the first Church Missionary Society missionary, Rev. J McClatchie, arrived in China in 1844.

⁵⁶Rev. W. C. Milne to Tidman, 24 April 1848, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China, Box #1, Folder #2 Jacket A.

in terms of votes over a controversial matter, with no clear indication of who or what person or society, if any, could break such a tie.⁵⁷

The committee itself met soon after the delegates were elected and, upon establishing a few ground rules and setting its agenda, began the task of translating the Bible, beginning with the New Testament. Following Gützlaff's example, the Delegates' Committee viewed the Greek text of the New Testament, which Gützlaff himself had used for his initial translation, as the best medium through which to proceed with the translation. Almost immediately, the delegates found themselves faced with a crucial issue. In Matthew 1:23, the delegates came across the word *DEOS* for "God" and were divided as to how the word should be translated into Chinese.⁵⁸ Dr. Bridgman, an American missionary, advocated the use of the Chinese character *Shin*, while Revs. Medhurst and Stronach promoted the use of *Te*.⁵⁹



Handwritten Chinese characters and their romanizations: 神 = shin and 帝 = ti.

Figure 1: Protestant Characters

A similar debate had taken place two centuries earlier among Roman Catholic missionaries who, in attempting their own translations of the Bible into Chinese, discussed whether or not it was appropriate for the missionaries to use ancient Chinese characters to

⁵⁷Several letters throughout the London Missionary Society Archives' holdings refer to the fact that Rev. Milne did not have the voting privileges of the other four members of the Delegates' Committee, yet none of them, including Milne's own letters on the subject, provide any kind of reason as to why this was so.

⁵⁸Matthew 1:23 "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." *The Holy Bible* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1850).

⁵⁹The spelling varies between "te" and "ti", depending on the missionary's own personal preference for the romanization of Chinese characters. However, the characters themselves, written in conjunction with the romanizations, are identical in each of the missionaries' correspondences..

represent the God of Christianity. Though the characters chosen by Catholics were different from those chosen by later Protestants, the issue was one that fostered much discussion and discourse between Jesuit and other Catholic missionaries in China.⁶⁰ That the Delegate's Committee of Protestant missionaries had similar discussions on this topic, then, is not at all surprising.⁶¹ The committee, in deliberation over which word was better, decided to have a verbal as well as written debate between its members. For the written discussion, the arguments for each word were submitted before the committee, which then allowed a set period of time for the supporters of the opposing word to provide counter arguments. Finally, a rejoinder was presented by the committee members in favor of the particular word. As Revs. Medhurst and Stronach reported in a correspondence to the Local Committee of the London Society Missions, "the whole amounted to about 600 closely written pages containing many quotations from the Chinese Classics and European writers bearing on the question, and embracing a mass of information on the subject likely to assist in forming a judgment, and calculated to be of service in further discussion on this important topic of enquiry."⁶² After much deliberation, the delegates remained evenly divided over which word should be used. At this point, the committee decided that the written arguments for each character, after being revised by their respective supporters, should be presented to the various Bible societies for their opinion. As these Bible societies were the main contributors of the funds necessary to print the Bible into Chinese, the delegates agreed that such societies should mediate this conflict. Mail traveled slowly from China to both Britain and the United States, so the committee members also decided that, once they had

⁶⁰Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West*, 20.

⁶¹Though, surprisingly, the Protestant missionaries make little mention of this earlier debate of the Roman Catholic missionaries; nothing on it appears in the missionaries' correspondences to one another and their home societies, and only a few brief comments are found in the documents of their written debate. It was not until several decades later that the Roman Catholic characters for "God" were brought up again by Protestants in Peking.

⁶² Dr. Medhurst, John Stronach to the Members of the Local Committee of the London Society Missions, 11 Dec. 1847, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #1 Jacket D, SOAS Archives, London.

submitted the arguments in writing to the Bible societies, they would resume the process of translating the Bible, with blanks left for *DEOS*/God until the debate over the two terms could finally be settled.⁶³

The “about 600 closely written pages” on this *Shin/Te* debate do not survive in their entirety (or perhaps their contents are scattered and distributed throughout several archives, both public and private, in China, England, and the United States). The London Missionary Society Archives do, however, hold a letter written by Medhurst and Stronach to the Local Committee of the London Society Missions in Shanghai. The letter provided a brief summary of the main arguments and counter-arguments for each of the two choices. Medhurst and Stronach, of course, supported one of the terms and opposed the other, and hence the letter clearly skews the debate. Nevertheless, this document does provide a useful basic synopsis.⁶⁴

The delegates who supported the usage of the Chinese character *Shin* for *DEOS*/God were Dr. E. G. Bridgman and Rev. W. J. Boone, both of whom were American Protestant missionaries to China.⁶⁵ For these two delegates, *Shin* was the best rendering for God because, as they understood its Chinese definition, *Shin* means “Divinity” and was a common term that could be applied to Protestant Christianity’s monotheistic God. They derived a major portion of this pro-*Shin* argument from tying the word *Shin* back to Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist works

⁶³ Rev. John Stronach to Rev. & Mess. Tidman & Freeman, 11 January 1845, London Missionary Society - South China (Fukien), Box #1, Folder #1, Jacket A, SOAS Archives, London. Rev. W. J. Boone to Rev. W. H. Medhurst, 16 April 1850, London Missionary Society - Central China Box #1, Folder #2, SOAS Archives, London. Dr. Medhurst, Rev. Stronach to the Members of the Local Committee of the London Society Mission, 11 Dec. 1847.

⁶⁴ Dr. Medhurst, Rev. Stronach to the Members of the Local Committee of the London Society Mission, 11 Dec. 1847, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China, Box #1, Folder #1 Jacket D, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. This document, an attachment included in the letter by the missionaries, includes a brief summary of what they perceived to be the key points of both sides of the argument and serves as the basis for the discussion that follows. The pages of the document itself consist of three columns - affirmation, response, and rejoinder, but there was no clear way to delineate actual page numbers from the document (as no page numbers were provided on it). The transcribed copy which was used for this thesis was 34 pages in length, though several pages just have information in one or two of the columns (in order to best preserve the continuity and flow of the original document).

⁶⁵ *Shin* can also be romanized as *shen*, but almost every missionary source consulted for this thesis uses the former spelling instead of the latter.

that presented a favorable case for this rendering of the English word “God.” The affirmants of the word *Te* were Revs. W. H. Medhurst, John Stronach, and W. C. Milne, all missionaries of the London Missionary Society. Their argument relied heavily on the usage of *Te* in the Chinese context; very little came from Western sources.⁶⁶

The pro-*Shin* delegates first turned to Confucian sources and to the metaphysical usage of *Shin* as a fundamental force or energy which promotes creation and growth. In this regard *Shin* is rendered as *Kwei-Shin*, with the former word referring to the vital, and often destructive, energy while the latter conveys the creative force. The pro-*Shin* delegates argued that *Kwei-Shin* carries the connotation of the force behind the creation and transformation of life, both on Earth and in the Heavens, akin to the Christian Creator-God. The pro-*Te* delegates, rejected their argument. They contended that, while *Kwei-Shin* is associated with creation and transformation, it refers only to forces that operate in nature and have some measure of control over many aspects of nature; it does not, however, connote the true source of power, at least not in a sense that is comparable to *DEOS*. From the pro-*Te* perspective, this source of power, the creating force in the universe, has its origins in *tien*, Heaven, and *te*, divinity. The *Kwei-Shin* are themselves subordinate to *tien* or *te* and therefore this character cannot serve as an adequate translation for the all-sovereign Christian God.

Study of Buddhist and Taoist sources produced similar divisions. The pro-*Shin* delegates presented evidence from Buddhist texts and Chinese histories that referred to Buddha as a *Shin*, and thus, they argued, *Shin* means “Divinity” or “Divine Being.” The pro-*Te* delegates replied that in the Buddhist and Taoist models, *Shin* refers to lesser gods and not a supreme, over-

⁶⁶ Dr. W. H. Medhurst, Rev. John Stronach, and Rev. W. C. Milne to Rev. Tidman, 18 Mar. 1850, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #2, Jacket D, SOAS Archives, London.

arching divinity. *Shin*, in the eyes of the *Te* supporters, was a closer approximation to “spirit” than to “God.”⁶⁷

The disagreement over the term *Shin* hinged on how each side interpreted its usage in the various Chinese classics; their disagreements over Western sources, however, were of a different variety. The pro-*Shin* delegates claimed that *Shin* had become the preferred term for God in the writings of Protestants working in Chinese. They compared themselves with Robert Morrison, the early LMS missionary who did extensive work with the Chinese language, and used his definition of *Shin* to corroborate their own position. Revs. Bridgman and Boone, in a further attempt to drive home their point of view, also referred to several of Dr. Medhurst’s own writings, including the two Chinese-English dictionaries that he had helped produce, which they claimed validated the usage of *Shin* for “God” in Chinese. The pro-*Te* delegates countered that numerous Protestant missionaries in China had used *Shangte* to represent God and generally used *Shin* to refer to idols or lesser gods. Neither side was willing to concede that the opposing side’s word choices were used by an overwhelming majority of the Protestant missionaries already in China; each contended that the characters they supported were more popular among both missionaries and converts. Ironically, given the intense anti-Catholicism of the Protestant mission community in China, the supporters of *Te* then suggested that, since Protestant missionaries were not the most adept Westerners at handling the Chinese language, perhaps a few Roman Catholic sources should be consulted on the matter. *Te* advocates also rejected the argument that certain Chinese texts by Morrison and Medhurst, among others, simply defined *Shin* as “God.” Such works gave multiple definitions for each word. For example, pro-*Shin* advocates cited Morrison’s definition of *Shin* as “Divinity; GOD in the sense of brethren of

⁶⁷ Ibid.

nations.” The pro-*Te* forces however, argued that Morrison’s tying of *Shin* to the “brethren of nations” was actually a constraint against translating the word as a generic term for God in the Christian verse.

The pro-*Te* delegates argued that *Te* was synonymous with *T’heen* (*tien*), the Chinese word for “heaven.” In both the Chinese language and in Chinese understanding, *Te* and *T’heen*, “Divinity” and “Heaven,” were interchangeable. Furthermore, the pro-*Te* delegates argued that because *Te* was already in use by the Chinese to represent “gods” and spiritual beings, both a Supreme Being and inferior ones, it would be less likely that its meaning would be misinterpreted. The pro-*Shin* delegates, conceded that *T’heen* did refer to “Heaven” and “Divinity” in Chinese, but they did not accept the argument that *T’heen* and *Te* were synonyms.

The pro-*Te* delegates also looked beyond religious texts to religious practices to make their case. They pointed out that Chinese emperors, when performing rites and rituals to celestial deities, donned a special robe when doing so for *Te*; such treatment was not accorded to the *Shin*. Hence, they argued that *Shin* denoted an inferior divine being, a lesser god. The pro-*Shin* translators attempted to refute this claim by noting that *Te* was merely a suffix and that its use, in context with a *Shin*, simply meant that that particular *Shin* has authority over other *Shins*. It was, they argued, similar in context to how a ruler, with his/her special title, governs over his subjects.

The application of both words within the context of the Ten Commandments also factored heavily into their wider debate, for the delegates assumed that, once this controversy was settled and the revision of the New Testament was complete, they would then commence work on re-translating the Old Testament as well. In one of their responses, the pro-*Shin* delegates claimed that because several Chinese gods with *Shin* in their name, such as *Ho Shin*, the god of Fire, had been accorded sacrifices that should only be offered to the Christian God,

Shin was then the best choice for a generic rendering of “God” into Chinese. The affirmants of *Te* replied that the worship of anything other than the Christian God, Jehovah, violated the First Commandment, so therefore the worship of spirits such as *Ho Shin* detracted from *Shin*’s validity as a term for God.⁶⁸

The proponents of both *Shin* and *Te* entered the debate with their own preconceptions about their own particular word choice and therefore hesitated to entertain the idea that the alternative word might be valid. This inflexibility in their stances is evident in each side’s offensive and defensive strategies. The pro-*Te* missionaries always translated *Shin* as “spirit” in their discussions. This translation undercut the pro-*Shin* arguments, as a word that meant “spirit” certainly could not be used to denote the Christian God if it were also to be used for every other spirit or spiritual being mentioned in the Bible. The pro-*Shin* delegates, in an attempt to place the Christian God within the pre-existing Chinese religious framework, were quick to rely on the vast assortment of examples from Chinese literature and history in which *Shins* possessed the character traits of and were accorded worship similar to what would be expected of the Christian God. Given the uncompromising practice of both sides, the path to finding a resolution to this controversy was not to be an easy one, nor was the actual resolution itself.

Road to a Resolution

By sending the written arguments for and against *Shin* and *Te* to the Bible Societies, the delegates looked outside China for help in solving this issue. Yet the delegates themselves by no means abandoned their attempts to determine the discussion’s outcome. Nevertheless, there were some subtle attempts to allow for a differing of opinions between the missionaries in China. In the letter to the London Society Missions in Shanghai, Medhurst and Stronach noted that while they would not relinquish their own position in favor of *Te*, they did not expect their

⁶⁸ Ibid, *Synopsis of the Argument for Te*.

opponents to relinquish theirs either. Medhurst and Stronach suggested that instead of trying to impose one standard term for God in all of the Protestant Bibles printed in China, the Bible Societies should decide the translation of “God” only in those particular versions of the Bible that the societies funded. In Medhurst and Stronach’s view, the division over terminology was “a serious evil for Protestant Missions,” and so they sought a compromise between the *Shin* and *Te* supporters. For most missionaries in China, and most especially those associated with the Delegates’ Committee, knew that if a definitive decision were ever to be reached on this issue, it would not be unanimous, nor could missionaries who did not agree with that decision be forced to use the standard translation against their will. In addressing this concern to the Director of the London Missionary Society, Mr. Tidman, Rev. William C. Milne stated that “Even a majority among the Missionaries cannot expect to rule the minority, unless the latter feel the force of the reasons adduced by the former, or consider the arguments so weighty as to induce them to waive their own opinions out of consideration for the judgment and experience or increased numbers of the opposite party.”⁶⁹ So the delegates continued on with their translations, leaving blanks for “God” and “Holy Spirit” in order to finish the translation.⁷⁰

As the translation process continued however, the delegates themselves became more divided and hostile toward each other. After considering the written arguments, the London-based Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society reported that *Shin* was not an adequate word for the rendering of “God” in the New Testament translations, a decision which disheartened the pro-*Shin* delegates. This event served as a spark to reignite and even intensify the tensions between the two sides. Now the missionaries began to criticize each other openly.

⁶⁹ William C. Milne to Rev. A. Tidman, 11 Apr. 1848, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #2, Jacket A, SOAS Archives, London.

⁷⁰ Dr. Medhurst, Rev. John Stronach to the Members of the Local Committee of the London Society Missions, 11 Dec. 1847

In a letter to their home missionary board, the LMS delegates charged that Dr. Boone rarely showed up for any of the committee meetings to provide input on the translation, yet he found the time to oversee a translation of the Gospel of Matthew in the Shanghai dialect. Clearly, the LMS missionaries argued, Boone's absence from the Delegates' Committee meetings was not due to illness, as Boone himself had claimed. Dr. Bridgman showed up for meetings but, according to his British colleagues at least, had little or nothing of substantial quality to offer. The LMS missionaries took credit for most of the work that went into the translation, almost to the point of being possessive over their right to its ownership. This issue of possession and ownership dominated the next phase of this controversy.⁷¹

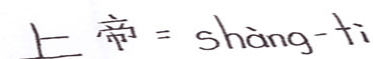
Initially, the LMS missionaries claimed that they were open and receptive to any missionary's attempt to settle the translation controversy. In a letter to the LMS Home Missions Board, Medhurst stated that he and Stronach believed that the delegates' version of the Bible belonged to the whole of the Protestant Mission in China. Therefore, "any of them [Protestant missionaries in China] who can procure funds for printing an edition shall be allowed to fill up the blanks in any way he pleased; it being understood that no one is at liberty to make alterations in anything that has been written by the Delegates and still call it the version of the Delegates."⁷² In this context, Medhurst provided an assessment of the position of Revs. Boone and Bridgman, which was that the blanks in the New Testament translation should be filled in only after all of the Bible Societies had given their input on the *Shin/Te* debate. If the Bible Societies ruled against *Shin*, then Boone and Bridgman would relinquish their claims to the Delegates' Version

⁷¹ Revs. W. H. Medhurst, John Stronach, and W. C. Milne to Rev. A. Tidman, 18 Mar 1850, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #2 Jacket D, SOAS Archives, University of London. Rev. Medhurst to Rev. A. Tidman, 11 May 1850, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #3 Jacket E, SOAS Archives, University of London.

⁷² Dr. W. H. Medhurst to Rev. A. Tidman, 11 May 1850, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #2, Jacket E, SOAS Archives, London.

and would not use it at their respective missions, feeling as strongly as they did about their own views. If, however, the Bible Societies ruled against the usage of *Te*, then, Medhurst explained, he – along with Stronach and Milne – would continue to lay claim to the Delegates’ Version of the New Testament containing blanks for “God” and “Holy Spirit.” They would look elsewhere for sources of income to finance the printing of the New Testament with their word choice filled in.

The debate over the correct word for “God” was finally settled, but not by the missionaries. When the British and Foreign Bible Society, a major contributor of funds, commissioned the printing of 10,000 copies of the delegates’ translation in 1850, the Society refused to allow *Shin* to be used to represent “God.” Rather than accepting *Te*, the British and Foreign Bible Society argued for a third alternative - the use of a Chinese transliteration for the Greek word *Theos*. When no missionaries were willing to abide by this decision, a Mr. Brandram⁷³ proposed instead *Shang-ti*, a word that, while not as widely used as either *Shin* or *Te*, did not arouse much opposition.⁷⁴



上帝 = shàng-ti

Figure 2: Compromise Character

The Corresponding Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society, stationed in Shanghai, agreed to the use *Shang-ti* in their printed works. This Committee consisted of several of the British missionaries in China: Messers Medhurst, Stronach, and Milne, as well as Messers W.

⁷³ The first few letters of the person’s name were illegible, but the best approximation that could be made by myself was either “Brandram” or “Bearndram.” Possibly either Rev. Andrew Brandram or Rev. C. Brandram, the latter being the secretary of the British & Foreign Bible Society.

⁷⁴ This character can be romanized as either *shang-ti* or *shang-te*.

Lockhart, W. H. Medhurst, J. Edkins, Wylie, Saul, Macduff, J. McClatchie, and B. Hobson.⁷⁵ In the British and Foreign Bible Society version, *Shin* represented *Pneuma*/Holy Spirit to completely fill the blanks and make the Delegates' Version ready for printing. Only two of the Corresponding Committee's eleven members, McClatchie and Hobson (from the Church Missionary Society of England and the London Missionary Society, respectively) opposed this decision. The opinions of American and other non-British Protestant missionaries in China were conspicuously absent from the report, perhaps because this Committee was charged with reporting to the *British* and Foreign Bible Society. Despite this omission (or perhaps in light of it), Medhurst acknowledged that this solution to the translation controversy would be readily accepted by most of the European Protestant missionaries in the field in China.⁷⁶ James Legge, a London Missionary Society missionary who arrived in Hong Kong in 1839, was also an ardent supporter of *Shang-ti*. A well-respected expert of Chinese linguistics credited with producing the first translation of the Confucian classics into English, Legge had influence. His support for *Shang-ti* helped arouse support for this compromise character. Legge had given his support for *Te* during the Delegates' Committee debate, and both sides had consulted his translation of the Confucian classics to support their respective word-choices, but *Shang-ti* was the character that Legge believed to be the best.⁷⁷

Boone and Bridgman, did not, however, give up. By the next year word began to surface of an "improved" translation of the New Testament, one that would use *Shin* to mean "God."

The three main LMS missionaries – Medhurst, Stronach, and Milne – again writing in tandem,

⁷⁵When and how this Corresponding Committee was formed is unknown, at least from its limited discussion in the correspondences of the missionaries. However, since all of its members were British missionaries, it is probable that the committee was formed in an attempt for the missionaries to reach a compromise of their own on the translation controversy; a compromise that the British and Foreign Bible Society would agree with.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, Dr. W. H. Medhurst to Dr. A. Tidman, 13 Nov. 1850, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #3, Jacket A, SOAS Archives, London.

⁷⁷Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 269-271.

doubted whether such an “improved” translation would have any value. These LMS missionaries did not worry about the possibility of the rival translation presenting any real competition. They explained that their translation of the Old Testament was about halfway finished, whereas their counterparts of the “improved” translation, even though they had access to the notes and aides that the delegates had used, were still working on Genesis. In 1852, a public criticism to the Delegates’ Version of the New Testament was printed in China. The delegates were led to believe that the Ningpo missionary, Rev. Culbertson of the American Presbyterian Board, wrote the critique, but while they were in the process of printing up their own reply, they received a letter from Mr. Culbertson identifying Dr. Boone as the author. The Delegates rejected Boone’s arguments as inferior and easily refuted; they concluded, however, that Boone’s behavior demanded that the delegates sever all ties with him.⁷⁸

Even Protestant missionaries who were not directly involved with the Delegates Committee and its translation were still very much interested in this controversial topic, though as they were not privy to all of the discussions and writings of the delegates themselves, their comments on the subject are, unfortunately, not quite as colorful. James Hudson Taylor, the prominent missionary who would later found the China Inland Mission, commented on the controversy in one of his correspondences with the Chinese Evangelical Society’s board director. Taylor was disheartened by comments made by Rev. W. Lobscheid of the Rhenish Missionary Society which were conveyed in a correspondence with the CES’s board director, General Pearse. Lobscheid had equated the Delegates’ translation with the Confucian classics and declared it therefore not fit to be called the “Bible.” Taylor took these comments to be a “direct

⁷⁸Dr. W. H. Medhurst, Rev. John Stronach, and Rev. W. C. Milne to Rev. A. Tidman, 18 Nov. 1851, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1 - Folder #3, Jacket C, SOAS Archives, London., Rev. W. C. Milne to Rev. A. Tidman, 4 June 1852, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #3 Jacket E, SOAS Archives, London.

insinuation that the De. Version [Delegate's Version] is not the Bible, & is so looked on by all who have seen it here [China]. And with all their faults [those of the Delegates], you should not voluntarily irritate those who are more thoughtful & supportive of your own missionaries than the Society which sends them out seems to be, if not more wishful.” [underlining in the original].⁷⁹ In an attempt to discredit Lobscheid's comments, Taylor charged that Lobscheid had limited his study of the Chinese language solely to the dialect in Shanghai and thus did not have the linguistic skills to judge the Delegates' version. Conversely, Rev. Thomas McClatchie of the Church Missionary Society of England supported the term *Shin* for the translation of “God” even up to 1853 and used the writings of some of the Taiping rebels to justify his word choice.⁸⁰

Continuing the Controversy: The Post-1860 Debate

This translation controversy was the first of many debates regarding Bible translations. Throughout the next several decades, Protestant missionaries stationed all over China would time and again re-assess their position on the best approximation for “God” in the Chinese language – and would almost always make reference to the debates of the Delegates' Committee. Although these later discussions on the translation of “God” into Chinese were not nearly as in-depth or significant as the Delegates' Committee debate, they are useful in showing first, how decisive an issue this proved to be and second, that even after all the consultations between Protestant missionaries in China, both British and American, as well as societies abroad, the topic itself remained contested.

In 1866, Rev. J. Edkins, a missionary from the London Missionary Society, reported on a debate in Peking on the rendering of “God” in Chinese. The context for this debate, Edkins said,

⁷⁹The letter itself is very charged, due to Taylor's growing dislike of the way the Chinese Evangelization Society treated its missionaries. He would later leave the society altogether and form the China Inland Mission.

⁸⁰Dr. James Hudson Taylor to Gen. Pearse, 4 Dec. 1854, China Inland Mission/James Hudson Taylor Box 1 - #2 - Letters to CES, SOAS Archives, London., Rev. Thomas McClatchie to -----, 16 August 1853, C CH/O 62, Letter 74c, University of Birmingham Special Collections Department.

was a movement “to attempt union among the Protestant missionaries in regard to certain controversial terms.”⁸¹ To achieve this goal of unity, the Protestant missionaries stationed in Peking, with the exception of one, decided to use the Roman Catholic terms for “God” and “Holy Spirit” on a temporary and experimental basis in their next printing of the Bible into Chinese.⁸² These terms, *Tienchu* for “God” and *Shing Shin* for “Holy Spirit” replaced *Shang-te* and *Shin*, respectively.

天主 = tien chū
聖神 = shèng shén

Figure 3: Catholic Characters

In explaining this decision, Edkins cited the popularity of these new terms throughout most of China, due in large part to the labors of the Roman Catholic missionaries that had been there much longer than their Protestant counterparts. Given the anti-Catholic sentiment that permeated China at this time (both among missionaries and the Chinese people), some missionaries feared that this association with Romanist characters by the Protestant missions would prove to be a difficulty, but Edkins simply stressed that the missionaries and their Chinese workers would have to be diligent in stressing to the Chinese people that the printed materials were Protestant in origin.

Both the London Missionary Society and Church Missionary Society missionaries in Peking supported the proposal to adopt the Catholic terms. Edkins also seemed confident that the Methodist New Connection, with its missionaries stationed in nearby Tientsin, favored the

⁸¹ Rev. J. Edkins to Dr. A. Tidman, Peking, 14 May 1866 CWM/LMS - North China Box #1, Folder #5, Jacket B, SOAS Archives, London.

⁸² Ibid, though the name of the dissenting missionary is not given in this, or any other letters regarding this decision.

proposal as well. The only real opposition came from the British and Foreign Bible Society, which supplied funds for the printing of religious tracts and Bibles, but its opposition was not stringent. The British and Foreign Bible Society did not mind if missionaries used these new characters, so long as the missionary societies to which they belonged requested the materials from the British and Foreign Bible Society (as opposed to buying them from American presses).⁸³

Two decades later, in 1886, the discussion resurfaced among missionaries in China, though with a slightly different twist as well as a different proposed outcome. In 1869, a group of Protestant missionaries had been elected by their peers to translate the New Testament into the Northern Mandarin dialect. This committee consisted of five missionaries: Revs. Adkins and Burton, from British societies (not specified) and Revs. Martin, Blodget, and Schereschewsky from American societies (not specified). Some time later, Schereschewsky translated the Old Testament into the northern dialect. This completed Northern dialect version gained the support of missionaries from many different denominations, from Mr. Wylie of the London Missionary Society to Mr. S. Dyer of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to even the Episcopalian Bishop George Moule. Given this support, and again in a effort to promote a sense of unity among the Protestant missionaries in China, W. Wright, a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, proposed to the British and Foreign Bible Society that the southern Chinese dialect be dropped altogether in favor of the northern dialect.⁸⁴ Wright acknowledged the hard work that Dr. Medhurst of the London Missionary Society had put into his translation of the Bible into the Southern Nanking dialect almost two decades before, but he still believed that

⁸³ Ibid; Rev. J. Edkins to Mullens, Peking, 25 May 1866. CWM/LMS - North China Box #1, Folder #5 Jacket B. SOAS Archives, London.

⁸⁴ The term “southern dialect,” at least in this context, probably refers to the dialect spoken in and around Hong Kong. This was where many early missionaries did their work, as well as the mission home of Karl Gützlaff, who provided one of the earliest translations of the Bible into Chinese.

one version of the Bible for the whole of China would be in the best interest of all missionaries there. He wrote to the British and Foreign Bible Society to request its opinion on the matter, largely because the society published many religious texts used in China.

The only other mention of this effort was contained in a letter by missionary W. Brereton of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Though Brereton was in favor of using of the Northern Mandarin dialect at his own mission station in Peking, he felt that the decision as to whether this dialect should be used throughout China was best left up to the missionaries in mid- and lower-China, where that particular dialect was not as common as in the north. Furthermore, Brereton pointed out that only twenty years had passed since the Bible had first been translated into the northern dialect, so he wondered if that time period was truly long enough to determine whether a new translation was warranted.⁸⁵ Though this incident was less of a translation controversy and more of a Protestant realization of the complexities of Chinese culture and language, it illustrates how the earlier translation work, undertaken by Gützlaff, Morrison, and the Delegates' Committee, was now being taken to the next stage by being translated into different dialects of the Chinese language.

The conflict that surrounded the Delegates' Committee's attempt to provide a new translation of the Bible into Chinese in the late-1840s helped set the stage for the next several decades of the missionary movement in China. As China was forced into giving concessions to Western powers, more and more missionaries flocked to China in an effort to promote the gospel. Though many of the missionaries who participated in the Delegates' Committee were no longer in China in the latter part of the century, their legacy became an integral part of the missionary movement. Future missionaries, from both British and American societies, looked

⁸⁵ W. Wright to the British and Foreign Bible Society, 14 January 1886. CLR #79 - China Vol. 1, pg 211-212. Rhodes House, Oxford; W. Brereton to Mr. Tucker, 10 March 1889. CLR #79 - China Vol. 1, pg 213-215. Rhodes House, Oxford.

back at these earlier debates on the translation of “God” and used them as the basis for their own judgments and practices.

Chapter 4: The Taiping Rebellion: Origins and Missionary Perceptions

We repudiate, however, the idea that the [Taiping] rebellion was a Christian movement in any sense of policy influenced directly by Christian teaching and principle; and it was well that Christian Powers had the chief hand in suppressing this utterly un-Christian movement.⁸⁶

– Archdeacon A. E. Moule
*Ningpo, Ancient and Modern Under
the T'ai-pings 1861-1863*

After discussing some of the conflicts faced by British Protestants in China, with both Catholic and other Protestant missionaries, the third and final phase of this survey of “religious politics” looks at British Protestant relations with the Chinese themselves. Here, the Taiping Rebellion serves as my case study. By examining the missionaries’ reactions to and interpretations of this large-scale movement - a movement whose leaders claimed the doctrines of the Christian religion as one of its central foci - we can better understand the state of Christianity in China at the level of the Chinese themselves.

Hong Xiuquan, the leader of the Taiping Rebellion, was born some fifty miles north of the city of Canton in 1804, with the given name of Huoxiu. Hong and his ancestors were Hakka. The Hakka were a subgroup of the Han Chinese who migrated southwestward from the Chinese “cradle of civilization” [the area around the mouth of the Yellow River] almost two millennia ago.⁸⁷ Due to this association and the fact that the Hakka had always been loyal to the ruling Chinese dynasties, they were therefore allowed to take part in the civil service examinations to seek government employment. Hong came from humble origins; his father was the head of his local village and a farmer, but the family was poor and rested its hopes on Hong, who showed

⁸⁶ Archdeacon A. E. Moule, *Ningpo, Ancient and Modern Under the T'ai-p'ings 1861-1863* (Shanghai: North-China Daily News and Herald, Ltd., 1909), 9. Found in CIM #374, SOAS Archives, London.

⁸⁷ Nicole Constable, “Christianity and Hakka Identity,” in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Bays (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 159-160.

signs of being smart enough to possibly attain a government position through the examinations. His performance at the local level examinations was good enough to warrant his trip to Canton for the next round of examinations, those at the prefectural level.⁸⁸

It is at this point in Hong's story that the historical facts become unclear. Apparently, Hong came into contact with a "foreign man," a missionary, and received a number of Christian tracts. In *God's Chinese Son*, a study of the life of Hong Xiuquan and the evolution of the Taiping movement, Jonathan Spence states that "Hong's description of the foreign man is vague, and the words he ascribes to him elusive...[b]ut everything about this stranger points to Edwin Stevens."⁸⁹ The Rev. Edwin Stevens, graduate of Yale University, was made chaplain of the American Seaman's Friend Society in Canton. In Canton Stevens first met Liang Afa. A convert since 1816, Liang had worked with a variety of different missionaries laboring in China, from Scottish Protestant Missionary William Milne to his association with the London Missionary Society, most notably with William Morrison. It was under the auspice of the LMS that Liang penned "Good Words for Exhorting the Age," which was a collection of some religious passages that Liang himself had quoted from Morrison's version of the Bible, as well as Liang's own commentaries on these passages. This tract was first distributed in 1819 by Liang himself and was distributed by him and other missionaries after that date. Stevens began traveling with Liang around Canton and the surrounding areas, handing out copies of Liang's "Good Words for Exhorting the Age" and preaching wherever he could gather a crowd. Liang Afa, however, was not the interpreter who accompanied Stevens to Canton in 1836, when Hong

⁸⁸Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 23-33; Moule, *Ningpo, Ancient and Modern*, 10-11. These two works together provide a good summary of Hong's background and family heritage.

⁸⁹Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 31.

and Stevens met. Most likely, Liang was not in Canton that year, for after he had been arrested by the Chinese government for distributing Christian tracts, he moved to Malacca.⁹⁰

By the time Hong failed the civil service examinations in Canton in 1836, he had received several Protestant tracts but had set them aside without much thought. The following year, Hong again took the exams and yet again failed them; his failure took its toll and Hong was forced to bed with a prolonged illness. During this illness, Hong had a vision in which he traveled to Heaven and there met his heavenly father and his older brother, as well as his own celestial wife and children. His heavenly father charged Hong with the task of destroying the demons on Earth. He also requested that Hong change his given name to reflect this divine mission that he had been given. So Hong styled himself “Hong Xiuquan,” using the character *quan* that stood for “completeness.” Upon waking from his fever, Hong recounted the visions to his family members, only to be labeled a madman by them. But several years later, Hong remembered his religious tracts, and it is from these tracts that the revelations of his dream were made clear to Hong.⁹¹

⁹⁰Ibid, 14-20, 31; Jen Yuwen, *Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 22. Jen Yuwen accords with Spence’s assertion that Stevens was the foreign missionary with whom Hong met. Jen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 14 (in footnote #12).

Arthur Evans Moule, a missionary for the Church Missionary Society who served in China for the latter half of the 19th century, made no mention of Hong’s meeting with Stevens in Canton in 1836. Instead, in his *Ningpo, Ancient and Modern Under the T’ai-p’ings 1861-1863*, Moule claimed that Hong’s first meeting with a foreigner occurred three years earlier, again in Canton. “In all probability,” states Moule, “this was [Robert] Morrison,” who had been in China from 1807 until his death in 1836. Moule, *Ningpo Ancient and Modern*, 11.

A search of WorldCat and several other scholarly search engines turn up no results for this document, yet a bound copy of it is found within the holdings of the China Inland Mission’s Archives held at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. Furthermore, Spence’s bibliography of works cited makes reference to a “Personal Recollections of the T’ai-p’ing Rebellion, 1861-1863” by Archdeacon Moule, published in Shanghai in 1898. Though Spence does not directly use Moule’s work in his discussion of this foreigner, the appearance of the source in Spence’s bibliography infers that he had read the work, at least in some capacity. Both works focus on the Taiping Rebellion from 1861-1863 and were printed in Shanghai just eleven years apart, so there is a bit of uncertainty as to which of these documents by Moule, if either, correctly identifies which foreign missionary and Chinese interpreter Hong met in the 1830s and when exactly the meeting took place. *Ningpo, Ancient and Modern* in the SOAS Archives was the only one of Moule’s sources that I was able to consult, though Spence’s assessment that Stevens was the missionary still seems likely and probable.

⁹¹Spence, *God’s Chinese Son*, 46-51, 134.

Liang Afa's tract about a benevolent creator-god and demons, most probably a summary of the early chapters of Genesis, was enough to convince Hong of the validity of his visions and of the task that he had been given in them. Early on, Hong remained devoted to the foreign religion that he knew very little about. Hong believed that the heavenly father from his dreams was, in fact, the Christian God, and that the older brother from the dream had been Jesus Christ; this belief legitimized for Hong that he was a divine person on a divine mission. In the 1840s, Hong established in Guangxi a Society for Worshipers of God, a group that became the foundation of the later Taiping movement, and began preaching against the various local gods. In 1847, Hong came to Canton to visit Issachar Roberts, an American Protestant missionary from Tennessee, to seek formal baptism. Roberts, a strict missionary who did not baptize converts if there was any suspicion that the rite was being sought for financial gain or employment, was initially open to Hong's request, but later became skeptical of Hong's motives. Rather than wait for Roberts' approval, Hong left Canton and met up with his old friend, Feng Yunshan, an early convert to the Society of Worshipers of God that Hong had established.

Their intolerance of the local Chinese gods meant that Hong and his followers soon found themselves at odds with the Chinese Imperial army. Hong reacted by adding the ruling Manchu dynasty to list of demons on Earth he was to fight. Hong came to believe that just as the Manchus had invaded China from the north and conquered it almost two centuries earlier, so the removal of these invaders would allow for Hong to establish the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in 1851. This kingdom was not only to be the next imperial dynasty, but also the beginning of a new era for Hong and the Chinese. Anti-Manchu sentiment had been running high for almost a century, as was evident from the popularity of such movements as Heaven-and-Earth Society (also referred to as the Triads), who frequently robbed Imperial treasuries and storehouses in the

south-eastern provinces of China. Many of the adherents of Triads and other anti-Manchu political sects joined the Taiping movement, swelling its ranks. Many armed conflicts between Hong's followers and the Imperial forces of the Qing Dynasty resulted.

At its height, the Taiping movement had wrested control of several of the eastern-central provinces from the Imperialist forces. After an attempt in 1853 to capture the Qing capital of Peking failed, most of the efforts of the Taipings focused on outward expansion from their capital at Nanking in Jiangsu province. One city that the Taipings attempted to capture on several different occasions was the port-city of Shanghai. Though earlier plans to capture this city had failed in 1860, the Taipings marched on Shanghai in force in 1862. Western Powers were already unreceptive to the attempts at friendship offered by the Taipings, partially due to the religious failings of the Taipings' Christianity, but mainly due to their having gained more favorable concessions from treaties with the Qing government in 1858 and 1860. More pressing, however, was that Western political and religious agents in Shanghai owned and maintained property in Shanghai, property that might be damaged or destroyed in a prolonged conflict between Imperial and Taiping forces. With the military support of the Western Powers, the Qing forces are able to wear down the Taiping forces, and the Taipings were forced to return to Nanking. Here, the Taipings were able to survive until 1864, when they lost both Hong Xiuquan and Nanjing in the summer months. The movement itself died out soon after.⁹²

The Taiping Rebellion is one of the most notable events in modern Chinese history and therefore has been explained from many different perspectives. Jonathan Spence's *God's Chinese Son* focuses on the evolution of Hong Xiuquan as both a religious figure and a political revolutionary. Spence shows how Hong's Taiping kingdom amalgamated various Christian,

⁹²Ibid, 62, 64-65, 84-85, 92-93, 133-34 211, 216, 278, 300-02, 325-26, 331; Moule, *Ningpo, Ancient and Modern*, 11-12.

Buddhist, and Chinese institutions and values. Jen Yuwen's work, which pays particularly close attention to the military aspects of both the Taipings and the Western Powers, goes further than Spence in stressing the revolutionary aspects of the Taipings. Yuwen relies primarily on Chinese sources to determine the political, economic, and social structures within the movement. For Yuwen, the Taiping "rebellion" was not only an actual revolution, but even the "forerunner of the National Revolution of 1911."⁹³ The Taipings' interactions with Western Powers have also been the subject of several historical works. For example, in *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, S.Y. Teng provides a general overview of the Taiping Rebellion and the Western response. However, in a work of some four hundred pages, Teng devotes only ten pages to "Taiping Relations with British Missionaries." Despite this brevity, Teng's analysis of the relations with British missionaries is one of the best written to-date.

While the Taiping movement was not solely a Christian movement, its Christian origins and influences warrant it at least some mention in any overview of the history of Christian missions in China. Yet in *Religion Versus Empire*, Andrew Porter does not discuss the Taipings in detail. Porter is explaining the interplay between religion and empire throughout the British Empire and China, of course, was not a British imperial possession. Yet China, or at least part of China, fell within the "informal" British Empire after British gunboats helped to pry open China in the Opium Wars.⁹⁴ A discussion of the Taiping Rebellion is also absent from *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, a collection essays edited by Daniel Bays.

⁹³Yuwen, *Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 8.

⁹⁴Porter, *Religion Versus Empire*, 11. In his introduction, Porter states that his work will provide "a commentary on various missionary beliefs and their implications for the approaches of missions both to empire and the world beyond British control." However, China receives just a brief eleven-page mention in a chapter entitled "New directions: the challenge of the 'faith missions', China and Islam. Of these eleven pages, only a page and half focus on the Taiping Rebellion and British responses to it.

The essays in this collection cover a wide range of topics, from Catholic to Protestant missionary stations, from Northern China to Southern China and everywhere in-between, and from native Han Chinese responses to Christianity to the reaction of minority peoples. While these omissions might simply be due to the fact that the Christian aspects of the Taiping Rebellion were not genuine, many of the missionaries in China, at least during the early years of this movement, had a generally positive and optimistic outlook for the purity of Hong and native “Christian” movement.

For roughly the first three years of the movement, Hong and his followers kept to the interior parts of China, building up their base of support. Their actions took place far from the eyes of the Protestant missionaries in China who, despite the fact that the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing established five open port-cities in which missionaries were allowed to live and work, were only slowly expanding their mission stations outside these five treaty ports. Thus, as British missionary Arthur Evans Moule correctly noted, “Comparatively little is known from personal observation of the religious character of the [Taiping] movement during the years that elapsed between their first taking up arms and their contact with foreigners at Nanking [Nanjing], at Soochow [Suzhou], and at Ningpo [Ningbo].”⁹⁵ It was with the Taipings’ capture of Nanjing in the early months of 1853 that foreigners, both missionaries and political figures, from Britain and other Western powers, came into contact with Hong’s proclaimed “Christian” movement.⁹⁶

During the early years of the Taiping movement, Hong’s opposition to the reigning Manchu dynasty earned him a friend or two among Western political leaders in China, who saw the rebellion as a chance to gain more favorable concessions in China; Hong’s pro-Christian stance, meanwhile, gained him friends among the Protestant missionaries. Support for the

⁹⁵Moule, *Ningpo, Ancient and Modern*, 12.

⁹⁶*Ibid*, 11-12; Fay, *The Opium War*, 362-365; Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion*, 91.

Taipings can be seen in the correspondences from the missionaries who were serving in China during this time. George Smith, Bishop of Victoria for the Church of England during the years of the Taiping Rebellion, was one such missionary. In a correspondence to his archbishop, Smith related the friendly relations between British representatives and Hong's followers. Persons such as Sir George Bonham, British plenipotentiary in China, received missionary tracts printed on presses owned and operated by the rebels themselves. Furthermore, the Taipings assured the missionaries that after the successful overthrow of the Manchu dynasty, the new dynasty would grant foreigners free access throughout the entire country. Smith ended his letter with an earnest warning to both the Church of England and British political leaders:

[i]f Britain - and above all, if Britain's Church neglect the call & arise not to her high behest as ambassadors of Christ & the heraldress of the cross among her Eastern empires (for three empires are now convulsed and shaken before the force of Anglo Saxon Christendom) then the page of history will hereafter record the melancholy fact that like Spain, Portugal, & Holland, who each enjoyed their brief day of supremacy & empire in these Eastern seas and then sank into insignificance & decay; -so Britain, wielding the mightiest sceptre of the ocean & ruling the vastest colonial empire of the world, failed to consecrate her talents to Christ; &, ingloriously intent on mere self-aggrandizement & wealth, fell from her exalted seat in merited ignominy & shame.⁹⁷

Other missionaries echoed Smith's sentiments about the good intentions of the Taipings during the early years of the rebellion. Letters to the secretaries of their respective societies reported how the Taipings treated the English almost better than they treated the Chinese; Englishmen were even allowed to visit the Taiping capital of Nanjing to examine the offensive and defensive measures the rebels had installed to protect their base. In addition, Hong's mission to stamp out all of the demons and idols throughout China led him to adopt an anti-Roman Catholic stance. Relations between the Taipings and Roman Catholics were, then, virtually non-existent, and so

⁹⁷Bishop George Smith to Archbishop (of Canterbury?), Hong Kong 23 May 1853. C CH/O 3b #28, CMS Archives, Birmingham.

competition with Roman Catholics did not factor into the British Protestant missionaries' response to the Taipings⁹⁸

The Taipings' support and publication of their own adapted version of Ten Commandments also earned them many friends with Protestant missionaries. Though containing only brief summaries of the Biblical Commandments, the Taipings' version still maintained the core tenets of the Old Testament text. For example, to the seventh Commandment the Taipings added the prohibition of the smoking and selling of both opium and tobacco. Their conviction against the smoking of either drug was so strong that it even affected foreigners who visited the Taiping camp. Rev. W. Milne of the London Missionary Society related one such tale in which foreigners, upon putting cigars in their mouths to smoke, felt so moved by the Taipings' objections that they immediately threw the cigars away.⁹⁹

The Taipings also printed and distributed Karl Gützlaff's version of the Bible throughout their ranks. While missionaries such as W. Medhurst preferred the Delegates' Version of the New Testament to that of Gützlaff's, no complaint could be made about the fact that the Bible was in circulation among the rebels. Moreover, missionaries and their societies no longer had to bear the entire burden of finding the financial resources necessary to print copies of the Bible and other religious tracts; such works could now be obtained through the Taiping presses in Nanjing.¹⁰⁰

Protestant missionaries in China also viewed positively the appointment of Hong Xiuquan's cousin, Hong Ren, to the post of prime minister of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸Ibid; Rev. Henry Reeve to Secretaries of the C.M.S., Shanghai, 20 September 1853. C CH/O 71, CMS Archives, Birmingham; Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 193; George Smith to Archbishop, Hong Kong 23 May 1853.

⁹⁹W. Milne to A. Tidman, Shanghai, 6 May 1853, CWM/LMS Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #4, Jacket A, SOAS Archives, London.

¹⁰⁰Medhurst to Tidman, Shanghai, 29 December 1853. CWM/LMS Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #4, Jacket B, SOAS Archives, London.

¹⁰¹Hong Ren's name can also be romanized as Hong Jen or Hung Jen, and he has also been referred to as

Hong Ren, who had settled in the port-city of Shanghai before his cousin's movement began, was employed by Revs. Medhurst and James Legge of the London Missionary Society. Rumors of the Taipings' divergence from the Christian teachings, particular Hong Xiuquan's claim to being God's second son, had reached British missionaries prior to Hong Ren's appointment, but many were reassured that, with this learned pupil of Medhurst and Legge now assigned such a high position of power within the movement, the Taipings would return to the righteous path of Christianity in all of its aspects. Indeed, some of the reports from Hong Ren appeared favorable towards Christianity. Hong Ren claimed that his initial reason for accepting the position and moving to Nanjing was to see to the conversion of all Chinese people to the religion of God the Heavenly Father. Hong Ren reported to his missionary friends that he found his cousin to be very wise and enlightened, but as he was quick to point out, the knowledge he [Hong Ren] had gained from these missionaries was more influential than anything learned from discussions with Hong Xiuquan.¹⁰²

The rise of Hong Ren within the Taiping camp strengthened the missionaries' optimistic hopes about the movement. These favorable opinions of the Taipings lasted as far as 1856, by some missionary accounts. Rev. W. Lobscheid was one of the last to hold out hope that the Taiping movement was one that was divinely guided by God himself. Andrew Porter asserts even by 1860, these positive views of Hong Xiuquan and the Taiping rebellion still held sway over several missionaries and British politicians. Some British missionaries, however, displayed early disapproval of the idea that Western powers, particularly the Protestant Church and its missionaries, should lend their support, whether military or verbal, to the Taipings. With the

Jen-kan, among a few other names. "Hong Ren" was the rendition most popular among the British Protestant missionaries examined in this study, so I have opted to use their spelling here.

¹⁰²Richard Lovett, *History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895*, Vol. II (London: Oxford University Press Warehouse, 1899), 517; Rev. Joseph Edkins to Rev. Tidman, Shanghai, 30 July 1860 CWM/LMS Incoming Correspondences - North China Box #2, Folder #3 Jacket A, SOAS Archives, London.

publication of Taiping religious tracts confirming the earlier rumors that Hong Xiuquan was claiming to be the second son of the Christian God, many missionaries concluded that neutrality was the best course of action. In the words of Medhurst, “matters have proceeded too far already for Europeans to be able to clear themselves in the eyes of the Chinese of all connection or at least sympathy with the insurgents.”¹⁰³ But the situation grew even more complex with the French abandonment of neutrality. By 1854, the French were aiding Imperialist forces near Shanghai in preparing for possible attacks by rebel forces.¹⁰⁴

Also disheartening to missionaries were some of their own observations made while visiting several areas controlled by Taiping forces, including Nanjing. Rev. Wylie of the London Missionary Society was most taken aback by the lack of organized worship by the Taipings. Upon visiting Nanjing, Wylie noted that the only form of worship partaken of by the Taipings was a simple grace said before each meal. Many of the Taipings failed to keep the Sabbath; most followers of Hong Xiuquan did not even know which day *was* the Sabbath. Another break with Christian tradition was the practice of polygamy. Many wealthy Chinese scholars and officials were known to have several consorts, and Hong Xiuquan himself had over thirty wives. Even Hong Ren, held in such high regard by many missionaries, had at least one consort by 1860.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Medhurst to Tidman, Shanghai, 1853, CWM/LMS Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #4, Jacket B, SOAS Archives, London; Porter, *Religion Versus Empire*, 209; James Hudson Taylor to Gen. Pearse, Shanghai, 18 November 1854, CIM/JHT Box 1 - #2, SOAS Archives, London.

¹⁰⁴This group of rebel forces threatening Shanghai were probably not associated with the Taipings. However, French involvement against these rebels meant that the French were aiding with Imperialist forces, which did not bode well for the Taiping forces who were also at war with the Imperialist armies. The Taipings, as well as other Protestant missionaries in China might well have been worried about possible repercussions from this French aid, despite the fact that the French had not openly sought conflict with the Taipings, nor aided any Imperialist forces directly engaged with the Taipings.

¹⁰⁵Wylie to unknown, Shanghai, 3 March 1859, CWM/LMS Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #2, Folder #2, Jacket C, SOAS Archives, London.

By 1860, then, views on the Taipings among Christian missionaries varied widely. Some denied the validity of the Taipings' claim to be Christian while others hoped to purge the movement of its heretical beliefs to produce a true Chinese Christianity. John Griffin and Joseph Edkins, two London Missionary Society missionaries stationed in Shanghai, were two who hoped to be able to "right the ship" of Taiping Christianity. By maintaining their support for the Taipings, these missionaries thought they could exert some influence and help spread Westernized Protestant Christianity. Edkins was a friend of Hong Ren's and, after an extensive correspondence with him, was encouraged to travel to Shanghai in the summer of 1860 to pay him a visit. The goals set out by Edkins and Griffin were simple enough;

[t]o persuade the Tai ping chiefs to resign their pretensions to a special divine revelation among themselves...to advis[e] fuller instruction in Christianity to be given to all the adherents of the Tai ping dynasty, by urging them to prevent all robber like deeds of violence by their followers,...by inculcating justice, mercy and charity, by giving them copies of the Scriptures and other books, and by furnishing them with additional information on religious faith and practice.¹⁰⁶

This trip allowed Edkins the opportunity to meet with Hong Xiuquan and discuss several theological issues. Most notably, Edkins stressed to Hong Xiuquan the divinity of Jesus Christ, in an effort to convince the latter to drop his own claims of being having a similar divine status. Hong Xiuquan indulged Edkins in numerous debates, both in-person and through correspondences, on this and many other matters, though it is unclear whether Edkins believed he had been successful in his attempts to persuade Hong.¹⁰⁷ Another benefit to Edkins' and Griffin's visit to Nanjing was that the missionaries were able to see first-hand some of the effects of this rebellion. The fighting between the Taipings and Imperialists had taken its toll on the civilian population; Griffin asserted that the majority of the atrocities, from civilians killed to

¹⁰⁶Rev. Edkins to Tidman, Shanghai 30 July 1860.

¹⁰⁷Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 288-89.

towns and fields razed, were committed by the Imperial forces. Edkins and Griffin found, however, that the Taipings, despite extensive territorial gains, had not been able to establish a sense of order and stability to help them gain the support of the people.¹⁰⁸

The religious character and impact of the movement was then clear. Hong Ren acknowledged to Edkins and Griffin that Hong Xiuquan was mistaken in believing himself to be God's second son, but he assured his missionary friends that the leader of the Taipings was a religious man whose intentions were good; Hong Xiuquan worshiped the Christian God and read from his Bible regularly. Hong Ren requested foreign missionaries to be sent to Nanjing to instruct the Taiping followers there. He also promised to provide buildings for the missionaries to preach and live in and to require all those under him to attend the religious services provided. While thankful for these reassurances and offers, Edkins and Griffin, like most missionaries by this time, were steadily losing faith in the prospect of an uncorrupted Taiping version of the Christian religion.¹⁰⁹

By 1860, missionary correspondences generally avoided the topic of the Taipings. It is probable that most missionaries followed Edkins and Griffin in focusing on their own mission statements rather than wishfully hoping for the Taiping leaders to change their ways. Instead of answering Hong Ren's request for missionaries to be sent to Nanjing, Edkins and Griffin turn their attention to the work at their own mission station in Shanghai. The Taiping chiefs were also becoming less benevolent to the local people under their rule. Archdeacon Moule, accompanying a fellow missionary on a food-relief mission to distribute rice in the countryside near Ningpo, was met by a group of people pleading for help and relief from the Taiping forces. Villagers were being forced to pay a head-tax to the chiefs; "seven cash a day for a youth, ten

¹⁰⁸Rev. Edkins to Tidman, Shanghai 30 July 1860.

¹⁰⁹Ibid

cash for an adult, and off with your head and down with your house in flames if you refuse to pay.”¹¹⁰ European neutrality had also ended when the British and French naval forces sided with the Imperialists in several sorties along the Yangtze River, turning British attention away from religious hopes for the Taipings and towards the political and military defeat of this force. With other Western Powers extorting their own treaties from the Chinese, each with their own economic, political, and religious benefits, the British were eager to solidify their own position in China. One final factor that might explain the lack of missionary discussion on the Taiping rebellion was the fact that several other mission stations had other problems to worry about, such as the many independent political rebellions that affected them far more directly than the Taipings.¹¹¹

From this discussion of the British Protestant views and interpretations of the Taiping Rebellion, the mind set of these early missionaries to China becomes more clear. These Protestant missionaries, in trying to establish themselves and their religion in this foreign land, were presented with a problem of Hong Xiuquan and the Taipings. While the emergence of a native-born Christian movement in China first appeared as a godsend to missionaries who were trying to lay a solid foundation for their religion, the Taipings proved to be anything but. However, throughout most of the fifteen years of the Taiping Rebellion, many missionaries were optimistic that some good would come from this movement: even if the Taipings were not genuinely Christian in nature, Protestant missionaries would be able to work with Hong and his followers to correct whatever false doctrines or teachings they supported. Unfortunately for the missionaries, events did not play out the way which they hoped. Many missionaries corresponded and conversed with the Taipings throughout the rebellion, but they effected no

¹¹⁰ Archdeacon Moule, *Ningpo, Ancient and Modern*, 22.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 21-24.

major changes in Taiping religious beliefs. After Western Powers gained further concessions from the Qing government in 1858 and 1860, missionary contact with the Taipings began to lessen. Not only had the stubborn, unchanging nature of the Taipings begun to wear down the missionaries' resolve to work with this movement, but if the Taipings succeeded in their goal of overthrowing the Qing dynasty, these missionaries would lose their newly-won right to travel and promote their religion freely throughout the Chinese empire.

The Taiping Rebellion serves as a good ending point for this early, foundation-laying phase of the Protestant mission in China. When the last remnants of the Taipings died out in 1866, many missionaries who were closely associated with the Taipings had been in China for two decades or more. The new treaty concessions opened China wide for a new surge of Western Protestant missionaries to travel to China, so many of these older missionaries retired from their mission work. These missionaries had provided a foundation on which they hoped to build a strong, Protestant Church in China. When the Taiping Rebellion failed to give these missionaries a sizeable Christian population with their own home-grown Christian movement, it became apparent that the task of converting the Chinese would require much hard work and perseverance. The influx of new missionaries in the 1860s and 1870s provided the manpower by which this Protestant Church could be built.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

We are here [in China] to disciple this people and our success will be measured by the extent to which we persuade them to accept Christ as their Savior and master. Breaking down prejudice, winning confidence, dispelling superstition, exploding fanciful ideas, these do not represent the work which we have to do...Any ordinary Westerner can succeed in doing these things and yet be miles from winning the people to Jesus. Unless we have persuaded the people to accept Christ as their Savior then whatever else we may have done we have failed.¹¹²

- "Secrets of Success", 1908
Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
(author unknown)

With the last remnants of the Taiping Rebellion losing their stronghold in 1866, the road for missionaries in China opened wider than before. Though the Taiping Rebellion did turn some Chinese off to the teachings of Christianity, its end served to stabilize the political situation in China – or at least to create a perception that China was now a more stable and safe mission field – which encouraged more missionaries to take up service there. That same year, James Hudson Taylor remarked that the missionary work done prior to his writing the second edition of his *China: Its Spiritual Needs and Claims* was of a preparatory nature. The pre-1866 missionaries were laying down the foundation on which other Protestants could build a strong Christian church in China. Though their converts were few in numbers, the various missionary societies had established strong mission stations in several cities in China. In their interactions with another Christian sect, with various denominations under their own Protestant banner, and with a Chinese attempt to make Christianity inherently “Chinese,” British missionaries labored

¹¹²“Secrets of Success” 1908., found in the Papers of S. Pollard, WMMS MicroFiche Box #29, China, H-2723, SOAS Archives, University of London.

to find a place for themselves and their religion in a large country that, at times, had very strong anti-foreigner views.¹¹³

The three categories of “religious politics” that have been discussed here are, by no means, the entirety of religious interactions. Several other interactions between missionaries and other people deserve greater study. These other categories include the dialogues between missionaries and both the British government and the Chinese people about the Opium trade or the movement of British religious trends throughout the British Empire. The three categories that have been chosen provide a broader understanding of the expansion and mission activities of early British Protestant missionaries in China. In their interactions with the Catholics, the Protestants faced the problem of trying to distinguish between their own form of Christianity and that their Roman Catholic counterparts. This was especially important in the formative years, when the task of translating texts and building mission stations were first undertaken by Protestants. The Catholics were the Protestants’ religious opponents in China; while there were not any serious physical or doctrinal disputes that brought the two groups into direct confrontation with one another, both were in competition to try and convert the Chinese people to their form of Christianity.

Flowing into this is the focus on intra-Protestant relations, particularly surrounding the efforts to undertake a newer translation of the Protestant Bible in the mid-nineteenth century. Again, the work of this time period is, as Taylor described it, of a “preparatory nature.” The lengthy debate among the Delegates’ Committee members themselves, as well as with other Protestant missionaries, over the translation of the New Testament provides a nice example of this foundation work. That Protestant missionaries from two countries and a variety of different denominations and missionary societies had such a difficult time selecting the Chinese

¹¹³Teng, *Taiiping Rebellion*, 324; Taylor, *China: Its Spiritual Needs and Claims*, 2nd Ed., 17-18.

character(s) to use to refer to the Christian God is an indication of just how crucial the tasks of these early missionaries were. These missionaries were trying to establish their own missionary strategies that they felt would be most beneficial to conducting the work in China. They knew that their work in China would lay the foundation on which future missionaries would be able to win increasingly more Chinese to the Protestant cause, so they wanted to be certain that their foundation was solid. The fact that the Delegate's Committee's written debates on the Translation Controversy was almost 600 pages long shows just how seriously these missionaries regarded their work.¹¹⁴ In consulting a myriad of Chinese and Western sources in their debates and by consulting with other missionary societies in England and the United States (such as those that provided funding for the printing of Bibles and other religious tracts), they sought to do a thorough job of translating the Bible with the hopes that future missionaries would not have to devote such tedious efforts to translation and could instead focus on a more hands-on converting of the Chinese people. Though divisions between the Delegates' Committee members hindered any attempts at unity, the work that they collectively undertook did prove beneficial to the overall Protestant mission in China. When other such missionaries ran into their own problems with biblical translations several decades later, they could look back upon the detailed debates of the Delegates' Committee and use these as the basis for framing resolutions to their own translation problems.

Finally, their response to the Taiping Rebellion provides perhaps the best example of the mind set of the Protestant missionaries in regards to their early converts and the prospect of a home-grown Chinese Christian movement. The records of these missionaries provide us with first- and second-hand accounts of the Taiping movement from the eyes of some people who had

¹¹⁴Medhurst & Stronach to the Members of the Local Committee, 11 Dec. 1847, London Missionary Society Incoming Correspondences - Central China Box #1, Folder #1, Jacket D, SOAS Archives, London.

a vested interest in how the rebellion would play itself out. More importantly, perhaps, the missionary reactions to the Taipings show how the missionary mind set was beginning to change from focusing on laying a Protestant Christian foundation in China to one of actual church-building. These missionaries were initially optimistic and hopeful that the Christianity professed by the Taipings was genuinely Protestant in nature, as this would deliver to them hundreds of thousands of Chinese Christians on whom a sizeable Chinese Protestant Church could be built and maintained. Even the revelations of the Taipings' unorthodox version of Christianity did not deter all of the British missionaries from giving up on Hong Xiuquan and his movement. Many of them, such as Edkins and Griffin of the London Missionary Society, still held out for the possibility that, with the proper teaching and guidance from trained missionaries, the Taipings could be led to Protestant Christianity. In the 1860s, however, this optimism began to wear thin. With the Treaty of Tientsin of 1858 and the Peking Convention of 1860, missionaries of all denominations were now free to openly preach their religion throughout the empire and not just in the initial five treaty ports that the Treaty of Nanjing of 1842 had accorded them. Since the Taipings were proving stubborn in giving up their misguided religious beliefs, British Protestant missionaries realized that it would be in their best interests to work on converting the Chinese on their own instead of holding out hope that the Taipings could be swayed. The two new treaties ensured that China was now open for missionaries of all denominations, allowing more British Protestant missionaries to come to China and build upon the mission foundations planted and fostered by these earlier missionaries.

Through this study of "religious politics" of British Protestant missionaries in China from 1842 to 1866, the mind set of these missionaries becomes clear. These missionaries realized that their work was of a preparatory nature, and so their correspondences to their respective societies

reflected the issues and concerns that they were most concerned with. They wanted to firmly establish a strong, Protestant presence in China, but they wanted to do so in the correct way. They were deliberate and thorough in addressing whatever problems they were confronted with in their missionary work. If they were charged with laying the foundation for a British-influenced Protestant Church in China, the missionaries were careful to ensure that the foundation would not have any substantial crack in it, cracks which might complicate future missionary work.

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Appendix A
Translation Debate Missionary List

PRO-SHIN

| NAME | SOCIETY | DATE OF ARRIVAL | STATION |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Rev. E. G. Bridgman, DD | American Board | 1829 | Canton |
| Mr. S. W, Williams | American Board | 1834 | Canton |
| Rev-d Dyer Ball M.D | American Board | 1838 | Canton |
| Rev-d P. Parker M.D. | American Board | 1834 | Canton |
| Rev-d J. Bridgman | American Board | 1844 | Canton |
| Mr. S. Bouney | American Board | 1845 | Canton |
| Rev-d A. P. happer, MD | American Presby Board | 1844 | Canton |
| Rev-d J. B. French | American Presby Board | 1846 | Canton |
| Rev-d J.J. Roberts | American Baptist S. Com. | 1836 | Canton |
| Rev-d W. Deane | American Baptist Miss. Union | 1834 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d J. Johnson | American Baptist Miss. M. | 1848 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d M. G. White | Methodist Episcopal U.S.A. | 1847 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d J.D Collins | Methodist Episcopal U.S.A. | 1847 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d M. S. Macleay | Methodist Episcopal U.S.A. | 1848 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d Steph. Johnson | American Board | 1833 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d Lyman Peet | American Board | 1839 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d S. Cummings | American Board | 1847 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d Baldwin | American Board | 1847 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d A. Doolittle | American Board | 1850 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d W. Welton | Church Missionary Society | 1850 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d S. Culbertson | American Presby Board | 1844 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d T. L. Way | American Presby Board | 1844 | Ning-po |
| Mr. D. B. Mc'Cartee, M.D. | American Presby Board | 1844 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d J. W. Quarterman | American Presby Board | 1846 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d H. V. Mankin | American Presby Board | 1849 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d W. Martin | American Presby Board | 1850 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d S. Martin | American Presby Board | 1850 | Ning-po |
| Mr. Coulter | American Presby Board | 1849 | Ning-po |
| Mr. J Macgowan, M.D. | American Baptist Miss. Union | 1843 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d J.J. Goddard | American Baptist Miss. Union | 1839 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d E. G. Lord | American Baptist Miss. Union | 1847 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d J. H. Hudson | English General Baptist | 1845 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d W. Tarrow | English General Baptist | 1845 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d B. H. Bobbold | Church Missionary Society Eng. | 1848 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d W. A. Russell | Church Missionary Society Eng. | 1848 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d F.F. Gough | Church Missionary Society Eng. | 1850 | Ning-po |
| Rev-d W. J. Boone | American Episcopal Board | 1837 | Shang-hae |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|-----------|
| Rev-d E. Syle | American Episcopal Board | 1845 | Shang-hae |
| Rev-d J McClatchie | Church Missionary Society Eng. | 1844 | Shang-hae |
| Rev-d J. L. Shuck | American Baptist S. Con. | 1836 | Shang-hae |
| Rev-d M. T. Yates | American Baptist S. Con. | 1847 | Shang-hae |
| Rev-d George Percy | American Baptist S. Con. | 1846 | Shang-hae |
| Rev-d S. Carpenter | American Sabb. Soc. | 1847 | Shang-hae |
| Rev-d N. Whitmer | American Sabb. Soc. | 1847 | Shang-hae |
| Rev-d C. Taylor | American S. Episcopal Meth. | 1848 | Shang-hae |
| Rev-d J. Wight | American Presby Board | 1849 | Shang-hae |
| see note 8.1 | | | |
| Rev-d E. T. R. Moncrief, | S.S.D. Chaplain | 1850 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d W. Holderness | Seaman's Chaplain | 1850 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d M. G. Odell | Teacher in Bishop's School | 1850 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d J Hobson | Chaplain | 1849 | Hong Kong |

ANTI-SHIN

| NAME | SOCIETY | DATE OF ARRIVAL | STATION |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Mr. B. Hobson, M.D. | London Missionary Society | 1839 | Canton |
| Rev-d J. Gilland | London Missionary Society | 1846 | Canton |
| Rev-d J. Legge | London Missionary Society | 1839 | Hong Kong |
| Mr. H. J. Hirshberg | London Missionary Society | 1847 | Hong Kong |
| Mr. M. Cole | London Missionary Society | 1844 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d Theodore Hamberg | Miss. Soc. Basle | 1847 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d B. Lechler | Miss. Soc. Basle | 1847 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d F. Genach | Rhenish Miss. Soc. | 1847 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d Lobscheid | Rhenish Miss. Soc. (Flemish?) | 1848 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d Throne | Rhenish Miss. Soc. (Flemish?) | 1850 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d C. Gutzlaff | Nether. Miss. Soc. | 1827 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d Dr. Smith | Bishop of Victoria | 1844 | Hong Kong |
| Rev-d Alex. Stronach | London Missionary Society | 1838 | Amoy |
| Rev-d John Stronach | London Missionary Society | 1838 | Amoy |
| Rev-d W. Young | London Missionary Society | 1835 | Amoy |
| Rev-d T. Gilfillan | London Missionary Society | 1848 | Amoy |
| Mr. Hislop M.D. | London Missionary Society | 1848 | Amoy |
| Rev-d E. Doty | American Board | 1837 | Amoy |
| Rev-d J. Talmage | American Board | 1847 | Amoy |
| Rev-d W. C. Burns | Presby Ch. Soc. Eng. | 1847 | Amoy |
| Mr. T Young, M.D. | Presby Ch. Soc. Eng. | 1849 | Amoy |
| Rev-d M. Jackson | Church Missionary Society Eng. | 1850 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d Elquist | Swedish Miss. Soc. | 1849 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d Fast | Swedish Miss. Soc. | 1849 | Fuh-Chow |
| Rev-d W. H Medhurst, D.D. | London Missionary Society | 1817 | Shang-hae |
| Mr. W. Lockhart, M.D. | London Missionary Society | 1838 | Shang-hae |
| Rev-d W. C. Milne | London Missionary Society | 1839 | Shang-hae |

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|------|-----------|
| Rev-d W. Muirhead | London Missionary Society | 1847 | Shang-hae |
| Mr. Wylie | London Missionary Society | 1847 | Shang-hae |
| Rev-d J. Edkins | London Missionary Society | 1848 | Shang-hae |
| Rev-d B. Jenkins | American Methodist Ch. S. | 1849 | Shang-hae |
| | | | |
| Leang-a-fah | London Missionary Society | 1827 | Canton |
| Ho-chin-sn | London Missionary Society | 1838 | Hong Kong |

Appendix B
Chinese Characters for “God”

神 = shén
帝 = dì

Figure 1: Protestant Characters

上帝 = shàng-tì

Figure 2: Compromise Character

天主 = tiān chǔ
聖神 = shèng shén

Figure 3: Roman Catholic Characters

Vita

Joshua Marr was born in 1982 in Lafayette, Louisiana, though he spent most of his life in the northern part of the state. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Northwestern State University of Louisiana in May 2004, graduating *Summa Cum Laude*. As of 23 September 2007, Joshua will be living in Changsha in China's Hunan province for a year, teaching English at Changsha University of Science and Technology.