

## ABSTRACT

Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangyan* and Its Impact on the Taiping Movement

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Scholars of the Taiping Movement have assumed that Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言 (*Good Words to Admonish the Age, being Nine Miscellaneous Christian Tracts*) greatly influenced Hong Xiuquan, but very little has been written on the role of Liang's work. The main reason is that even though hundreds of copies were distributed in the early nineteenth century, only four survived the destruction which followed the failure of the Taiping Movement. This dissertation therefore explores the extent of the Christian influence of Liang's nine tracts on Hong and the Taiping Movement. This study begins with an introduction to China in the nineteenth century and the early missions of western countries in China. The second chapter focuses on the life and work of Liang. His religious background was in Confucianism and Buddhism, but when he encountered Robert Morrison and William Milne, he identified with Christianity. The third chapter discusses the story of Hong especially examining Hong's acquisition of Liang's *Quanshi liangyan* and Hong's revelatory dream, both of which serve as motives for the establishment of the Society of God Worshippers and the Taiping Movement. The fourth chapter develops Liang's key ideas from his *Quanshi liangyan*

and compares them with Hong's beliefs, as found in official documents of the Taipings. The fifth chapter describes Hong's beliefs and the actual practices of the Taiping Movement and compares them with Liang's key ideas. Even if Hong and his leaders received the new ideas of Christianity, they compromised their traditional culture. Furthermore, they tried not only to combine Chinese culture with Christianity, but also to believe in Christianity as far as they could understand it. This study finds that even though the *Quanshi liangyan* may have given the Taiping Movement its religious form and driving force, the theological vision of both Liang and Hong also emerged from their Chinese culture, which energized the Taipings. The Taiping Movement resulted from a deliberate synthesis of Christian ideas and native Chinese practices.

Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangyan* and Its Impact on the Taiping Movement

by

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A Dissertation

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### *Objective, Scope, and Methodology*

Liang Fa (梁發, 1789-1855),<sup>1</sup> also known as Liang Afa, was an associate of Robert Morrison (1782-1834) and William Milne (1785-1822), the first Protestant missionaries to China. In 1816, when baptized by Milne, Liang became the second recorded national Protestant Christian in China.<sup>2</sup> In 1823, appointed as a native evangelist by Morrison, and then in 1827, when ordained as a native preacher by Morrison under the auspices of the London Missionary Society, he became the first recognized national Protestant minister in China.

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<sup>1</sup>Liang was known generally as Liang Gongfa (梁恭發) or Liang Afa (梁阿發). Cf. “He [Liang Fa’s father] called him ‘Fa’ (‘Faat’ in Cantonese) one of the common meanings of which is ‘sent’” [George H. McNeur, *China’s First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855* (Shanghai: Kwang Hsueh Publishing House, 1934), 10]. The affixed ‘A’ commonly preceding the name ‘Fa’ is added in the Cantonese style “for the sake of euphony to names which consist of only one word or of which only one word is familiarly used” [Ibid.; Emily Hahn, *China Only Yesterday, 1850-1950: A Century of Change* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), 51]. Cf. “Liang’s full name is Liang Fa; the name Liang A-fa was a colloquial one used particularly by the missionaries” [Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (Taipei: Rainbow-Bridge Book Co., 1973), 15n].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. “Liang A-fa has often been wrongly spoken of as the first Protestant convert in China. Even competent authorities such as Dr. S. Wells Williams, Dr. J. Legge and the Rev. Wm. Gillespie made this mistake. They were naturally followed by later writers. The letters of Morrison and Milne, however, leave us in no doubt that the first convert was Tsae A-ko [Cai Gao (蔡高) or Cai Yagao (蔡亞高)], the younger brother of Low-heen [Cai Luxing (蔡盧興)], Morrison’s assistant” (George H. McNeur, *China’s First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 21).

Liang was born in 1789 in Gaoming County (高明縣) of Guangdong Province (廣東省). At the age of eleven he enrolled in the village school, where he studied for four years.<sup>3</sup> Although his formal education was relatively brief, this experience was sufficient to develop his self-studying ability.<sup>4</sup> In 1804, he went to Canton, the capital city of Guangdong Province, to make his fortune. There, he tried the trade of a writing brush maker,<sup>5</sup> but ultimately took up the occupation of a blockcutter for printing. In 1811 or 1812, he was engaged to engrave the blocks used for the New Testament translation of Robert Morrison. There is no evidence that Liang heard the gospel at first from the mouth of the missionary. Perhaps, “his earliest contact was through reading the blocks he was employed to engrave.”<sup>6</sup>

The man who won Liang for Christ was William Milne who arrived from the London Missionary Society to join Morrison in his missionary work.<sup>7</sup> Morrison fully supported Milne’s plan to set up a Chinese mission in Malacca, where the Dutch nominally ruled but the British actually controlled. In 1815, when he sailed for Malacca, Milne took with him the printer Liang, recommended as a capable and faithful workman

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<sup>3</sup>See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion of his formal education and that he learned to read and write.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 7-11.

<sup>5</sup>Some scholars describe incorrectly his first trade as a pencil maker. See Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Missions Press, 1867), 21.

<sup>6</sup>Bobby E. K. Sng, *I Must Sow the Seed: Liang Afa, China’s First Preacher* (Singapore: Trinity Theological College, 1998), 1.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 13-16.

by Morrison. A few months after arriving in Malacca, Liang attended regular indoor meetings for employees. And sometimes he looked at the Scriptures and heard them explained, but he did not fully comprehend their meaning. Meanwhile, he heard Milne preach the doctrine of atonement through Jesus, and asked what was meant by Jesus making atonement for sin. The missionary told him that Jesus was the Son of God sent into the world to suffer for the sins of human beings in order that all who believe in Him might obtain salvation. Then Liang determined to become a disciple of Jesus and requested baptism in 1816.<sup>8</sup>

After his conversion to Christianity, Liang wrote many tracts explaining his understanding of Christianity from the teachings of Morrison and Milne to fellow Chinese.<sup>9</sup> In 1836, in Canton, among them, a set of nine tracts, the *Quanshi liangyan*

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<sup>8</sup>In his journal under the date of Sabbath, November 3, 1816, Milne wrote: “At twelve o’clock this day I baptized, in the name of the adorable Trinity, Leang-kung-fah [Liang Fa], whose name has been already mentioned. The service was performed privately, in a room of the mission-house. . . . Finding him still ste[a]dfast in his wish to become a Christian, I baptized him” [William Milne, *Journals, 30 December 1815-4 January 1817* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 13). Cf. London Missionary Society, *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 4, [From the Year 1813] to the Year 1817 (London: Williams and Co., 1818), 412-13; William Milne, *A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China: (Now, in Connection with the Malay, Denominated the Ultra-Ganges Missions) Accompanied with Miscellaneous Remarks on the Literature, History, and Mythology of China* (Malacca: Anglo-Chinese Press, 1820), 177]; George H. McNeur, *China’s First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 23-26; Walter H. Medhurst, *China: Its State and Prospects, with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel* (London: John Snow, 1838), 306-10.

<sup>9</sup>The title and contents of only a few of Liang’s writings are known: *Jiushi lu cuoyao luejie* 救世錄撮要略解 [A Brief Explanatory Abstract of the Plan of World Salvation (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1819)]; *Shuxue shengli luelun* 熟學聖理略論 [A Brief Explanatory Statement of Perfect Acquaintance with the Holy Doctrine (Canton: Religious Tract Society 1828)]; *Zhenli wenda qianjie* 真理問答淺解 [Simple Explanations to the Questions and Answers of the Truth (Malacca: Anglo-Chinese Press, 1829)]; *Shengjing rike chuxue bianyong* 聖經日課初學便用 [Convenient Uses of

(勸世良言), titled in English, *Good Words to Admonish the Age, being Nine*

*Miscellaneous Christian Tracts*, was given to Hong Xiuquan<sup>10</sup> (洪秀全, 1814-1864), also known as Hung Siu-tshuen or Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, the future leader of the Taiping Movement (太平天國, 1851-1864).<sup>11</sup>

Hong Xiuquan, a descendant of Guangdong *Hakka* (客家)<sup>12</sup> immigrants from northern China, was studying to be an officer of the Qing government. In August 1836, he traveled to Canton to take the required examination for the second time. During his

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*Introductory Bible Sunday Classes* (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1831)]; *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言 [*Good Words to Admonish the Age, being Nine Miscellaneous Christian Tracts* (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1832)], and *Qidao wen zanshen shi* 祈禱文贊神詩 [*Prayers and God-praising Poems* (Macao: Albion, 1833)]. Cf. Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 22-25.

<sup>10</sup>The Pinyin system of transliteration has been used in this book with the exception of some names—such as Macao or Canton—which are most familiar in English.

<sup>11</sup>This Chinese phrase translates into English as *Tianguo* 天國 (Heavenly Kingdom) of *Taiping* 太平 (Great Peace). The Taiping Movement sought to fulfill the ideals of the Chinese political tradition, along with the realization of a Kingdom of Heaven in which all worship the one true God. This movement, one of the most devastating rebellions in Chinese history, lasted for almost fourteen years (1851-1864) and resulted in over twenty million casualties [Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power, 1850 to the Present* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 19].

<sup>12</sup>This Chinese phrase translates into English as “guest settlers.” Other Chinese, in southern China, whose ancestors had come from northern China much earlier, referred to the Hakkas as guest people, because during the seventeenth century Guangdong Hakkas arrived there between the late Ming Dynasty and the early Qing Dynasty (Jen Yuwen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 10-11). Cf. “After the Manchus conquered China, most of the guest settlers remained unsundered for more than twenty years. They had a strong feeling against the Manchus and an equally strong feeling for restoring China to the Chinese. They were full of nationalistic sentiment and revolutionary spirit” [Ssu-yu Teng, *New Light on the History of the Taiping Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 50].

stay in Canton, Hong acquired the nine Christian tracts<sup>13</sup> and took them home on his return from the unsuccessful examination. After a superficial glance at their contents, he placed them in his bookcase. Hong did not consider them to be of any particular importance. After failing his third examination in 1837, he became ill. While he moved in and out of consciousness Hong had a strange dream which he could not understand.<sup>14</sup> In 1843, just after failing his fourth examination, a cousin, Li Jingfang (李敬芳), told Hong that Liang Fa's tracts were extraordinary and differed greatly from other religious books.<sup>15</sup> Hong began to read them closely and carefully. As a result, he believed the dream he had in 1837 promised him leadership in the Kingdom of God, and he began to worship the Christian God.<sup>16</sup> Hong Xiuquan took Liang Fa's teachings to heart and added them to the religious and moral ideas of what became the Taiping Movement.

Scholars of the Taiping Movement have assumed that the work of Liang Fa greatly influenced Hong Xiuquan, but very little has been written on the role of the

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<sup>13</sup>The date of Hong Xiuquan's acquiring the *Quanshi liangyan* is disputed. Theodore Hamberg says "1836," adding a footnote, "It may also have been some time before that period" [Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection* (Hong Kong: China Mail Office, 1854), 8]. George H. McNeur states "before August 1834," adding a sentence, "Before the distribution of books in front of the examination hall at Canton was hindered by the police in August 1834 a set of tracts written by A-fa himself had been given to a young candidate named Hung Siu-tsuen" (*China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 75). The date will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. Cf. John Foster, "The Christian Origins of the Taiping Rebellion," *International Review of Mission* 40 (April 1951), 158.

<sup>14</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 9-12.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

*Quanshi liangyan* specifically. Scholars have not studied the nine tracts for two reasons. Even though hundreds of copies were distributed in the early nineteenth century, only four survived the destruction which followed the failure of the Taiping Movement.<sup>17</sup> Usually, brief references to the works are based on Walter H. Medhurst's summaries in "Connection Between Foreign Missionaries and the Kwang-se Insurrection,"<sup>18</sup> in the *North China Herald*, No. 160 (20 August 1853) and No. 161 (27 August 1853). A translation of the titles of the nine tracts and of their section headings was printed there and was cited and used by Theodore Hamberg in his work, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*. Hamberg's "quotes"<sup>19</sup> were used by later writers. The second reason is due to the official People's Republic of China's view of the Taiping Rebellion. Communist scholars maintain that the Taiping Movement was primarily a peasants' rebellion or a class war that "took religious forms" only secondarily and they have not studied the influence of the tracts on Hong Xiuquan.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>The London Missionary Society has two copies. Harvard University has a copy. All of these copies were printed in Canton, in early 1832. But the New York Public Library has another copy printed in Malacca, in late 1832, which contains an additional five-page table of contents. This later edition printed in Malacca has twenty Chinese characters in each line, while the earlier edition issued in Canton has twenty-four Chinese characters in each line. But both were printed with wooden blocks using the same characters.

<sup>18</sup>At the beginning, the Taiping Movement was known unofficially as "Kwang-se [Quangxi] Insurrection" or "Kwang-si [Quangxi] Insurrection," for they rebelled against the Qing government in Guangxi Province (廣西省).

<sup>19</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 17-19.

<sup>20</sup>James P. Harrison, *The Communists and Chinese Peasant Rebellions: A Study in the Rewriting of Chinese History* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 165.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the following question: What is the extent of the Christian influence of Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangyan* on the ideology of Hong Xiuquan and the Taiping Movement? Church and secular historians who could not gain access to the *Quanshi liangyan* have assumed that almost all of the religious and moral ideas of the Taiping Movement were derived from the work of Liang Fa. Of course, the *Quanshi liangyan* had an enormous influence on the religious and moral system of the Taiping Movement. However, Liang Fa and Hong Xiuquan were part of their own Chinese culture. In this study, I propose that even though the *Quanshi liangyan* may have given the Taiping Movement its religious form and driving force, the theological vision of both Liang Fa and Hong Xiuquan also emerged from their Chinese culture, that the Taiping religion—*Bai Shangdi Hui* 拜上帝會 (Society of God Worshippers)<sup>21</sup>—which energized the Taiping Movement resulted from a deliberate synthesis of Christian ideas and native Chinese practices.

The period from 1800 to 1865 covers the first Protestant missionaries' presence in China, Liang Fa's conversion and his effort in writing Christian tracts, Hong Xiuquan's conversion and his struggle for the Society of God Worshippers, and the Taiping Movement. This era will be the focus of this study. However, the background study will extend into the eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>This Chinese phrase translates into English as *Hui* 會 (Society) of *Bai Shangdi* 拜上帝 (God-worshipping or God Worshippers). Cf. Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: Norton & Company, 1996), 80, 96.

<sup>22</sup>The presence of foreigners and their victory in the first Opium War contributed to the conditions which impelled many Chinese, including members of the Society of God Worshippers, to rebel against the Qing Dynasty, which had been established two centuries earlier by Manchu invaders. Cf. John K. Fairbank, *The Great Chinese*



In order to answer this question, I will look at three types of primary materials. The first type of material will be personal, professional, and scholarly writings, including letters and journals, of those individuals who influenced Liang Fa, Hong Xiuquan, and the Taiping Movement. These primary sources will be examined at (1) the Council for World Mission<sup>23</sup> Archives of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, (2) the Chinese Collections of Harvard-Yenching Library, (3) the Asian Collections of the Library of the Congress, and (4) the Far Eastern and Russian Institute of the University of Washington.

The second type of material will be contemporary narratives on Christian missions and the Taiping Movement from the first half of the nineteenth century. This list of authors includes but is not limited to the following names: William Dallas Bernard, Lindesay Brine, Joseph Callery, William Dean, Karl F. A. Gützlaff, Theodore Hamberg, James Legge, Augustus F. Lindley, Donald MacGillivray, J. Milton Mackie, Thomas Meadows, John Ouchterlony, Robert Philip, Alexander Wylie, and Melchior Yvan.

The third major source will be periodicals published in English in China of that time: monthly *Chinese Repository* (Canton, 1832-1851), weekly *China Mail* (Hong Kong,

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*Revolution, 1800-1985* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1986), 65 and Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 221-26.

<sup>23</sup>The London Missionary Society merged with the Commonwealth Missionary Society (formerly the Colonial Missionary Society) in 1966 to form the Congregational Council for World Mission. At the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972 it underwent another name change, becoming the Council for World Mission (Congregational and Reformed). The CWM (Congregational and Reformed) was again restructured in 1977 to create a more internationalist and global body, the Council for World Mission. Now the records of the London Missionary Society are held at the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

1851-1853), and weekly *North China Herald* (Shanghai, 1851-1853). These periodicals were published for the use of Protestant missionaries working in southern China. At that time most of the information and ideas relating to Hong Xiuquan, the Taiping Movement, or the connection between Christianity and the Taipings were circulated through these periodicals. Reliance on these periodicals is necessary for an understanding of the Taiping Movement because the Qing officials destroyed the literature of the Taipings. Although this information comes from a Western perspective, the periodicals provide insight that cannot be found anywhere else.

### *China in the Nineteenth Century*

It was not until nearly the middle of the nineteenth century that increased pressure from the Western countries began to make itself felt in China. Proud of its civilization and disdainful of the Western barbarians, the government attempted to preserve both China's political and cultural independence.<sup>24</sup> But increased pressure from the West first came from Britain. Britain, which led the industrial revolution, had become the leading commercial power in South and East Asia. The British had conquered India and Burma, had established a presence in Singapore and on the Malay Peninsula, and were increasing trade with China. British trade, dominating that of all

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<sup>24</sup>At its root was "the assumption that China was the 'central' kingdom and that other countries were peripheral, removed from the cultural center of the universe." Even in the late eighteenth century "Chinese descriptions of foreign countries continued to contain an exotic blend of mystical tales and fantasy in which foreigners were often likened to animals or birds and were described in patronizing or deliberately belittling language" [Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 119].

other Western countries in China, was monopolized by the East India Company.<sup>25</sup> Thus, by the late eighteenth century there was a flourishing triangular trade of goods between China, India, and Britain. The most important exports to Britain from China were tea,<sup>26</sup> raw silk, chinaware, rhubarb, lacquered ware, and cassia; while imports from Britain to China included woolens, lead, tin, iron, copper, furs, linen, and various knickknacks. The most important imports to Britain from India were raw cotton, ivory, sandalwood, silver, and opium; while exports to India from Britain included nankeen cloth, alum, camphor, pepper, vermilion, sugar, sugar candy, drugs, and chinaware.<sup>27</sup>

#### *The First Opium War (1839-1842)*

In 1834 the monopoly which the East India Company had enjoyed in British trade with China was terminated.<sup>28</sup> The British refused to conduct relations with the Cohong<sup>29</sup> merchants through the East India Company. As a result, trade with China

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<sup>25</sup>The East India Company, granted a license by Elizabeth I on 31 December 1600, was an early English joint-stock company that was formed initially for pursuing trade with the East Indies, but that ended up trading mainly with the Indian subcontinent and China. Cf. Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 143.

<sup>26</sup>Tea accounted for ninety percent to ninety-five percent of the total exports to Britain from China at that time (Ibid., 148).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 149.

<sup>29</sup>Cohong or *Gonghang* 公行 (combined merchant companies) was the Chinese import-export monopoly in Canton during the Qing Dynasty. Over a time of about one century, before the First Opium War, the trade contacts between China and the Western countries were performed exclusively via the Cohong. It was a guild of merchants that was authorized by the Qing government to handle trade, particularly rights to trade tea and silk, with the West. They were the only group at the time authorized trade, giving them control of all foreign trade in the nation. Cf. William Gillespie, *The Land of Sinim or China and Chinese Missions* (Edinburgh: Myles Macphail, 1854), 57.

was thrown open to all British merchants. This step was followed by greater pressure on China and by friction between China and the outside world. The Qing government resented and opposed any effort to enforce open trade and to open their tightly closed doors. They wanted to remain isolated in their self-contained sufficiency.

British efforts were not for legitimate trade only. At an early date opium began to prove the most profitable commodity to import to China. The drug was grown in India, and, although known in China, the Qing government had officially forbidden its importation. In 1839 the Qing Court ordered Commissioner Lin Zexu (林則徐, 1785-1850)<sup>30</sup> to confiscate all opium in Chinese warehouses or on British boats in Chinese harbors. Lin mobilized all the traditional forces and the local Confucian gentry. As a result, “[b]y mid-May 1839, over 1,600 Chinese had been arrested and about 35,000 pounds of opium and 43,000 opium pipes had been confiscated; in the following two months, Lin’s forces seized a further 15,000 pounds of the drug and another 27,500 pipes.”<sup>31</sup> British merchants protested at this interference with their “legitimate” trade, and clashes between the British and Chinese troops followed.

British military superiority was evident during the armed conflict. British warships wreaked havoc on coastal towns; such ships as the *Nemesis* were highly mobile and able to support a gun platform with very heavy guns. In addition, the British troops were armed with modern muskets and cannons, unlike the Qing forces which had less

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<sup>30</sup>Lin Zexu was a Chinese scholar-official during the Qing dynasty. He is most recognized for his conduct and his constant position on the high moral ground in his fight against the opium trade. Cf. Lydia H. Liu, *The Cash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 229-42.

<sup>31</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 151.

effective firearms and artillery.<sup>32</sup> After the British took Canton, they sailed up the Yangtze River and captured the tax barges, a devastating blow to the Qing government as this seizure slashed the revenue of the Qing Court in Beijing to a small fraction of what it had been. In 1842 the Qing government sued for peace, which concluded with the Treaty of Nanjing negotiated in August of that year and ratified in 1843. The treaty consisted of twelve main articles and its principle provisions were as follows:

*Article 1.* Stipulated peace and friendship between Britain and China, and “full security and protection for their persons and property within the dominions of the other.”

*Article 2.* Determined the opening of five Chinese cities—Canton, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Ningpo, and Shanghai—to residence by British subjects and their families “for the purpose of carrying on their mercantile pursuits, without molestation or restraint.” It also permitted the establishment of consulates in each of those cities.

*Article 3.* “The Island of Hong Kong to be possessed in perpetuity” by Victoria and her successors, and ruled as they “shall see fit.”

*Article 4.* Payment of \$6 million by the Qing “as the value of the opium which was delivered up in Canton.”

*Article 5.* Abolition of the Canton Cohong monopoly system and permission at the five above-named ports for British merchants “to carry on their mercantile transactions with whatever persons they please.” The Qing were to pay \$3 million in settlement of outstanding Cohong debts.

*Article 6.* Payment to the British of a further \$12 million “on account of the expenses incurred” in the recent fighting, minus any sums already received “as ransom for cities and towns in China” since August 1, 1841.

*Article 10.* At the five treaty ports listed in Article 2, all merchants should pay “a fair and regular Tariff of Export and Import Customs and other Dues.” Once those fees were paid, only fair and stipulated transit dues should be paid on goods conveyed to the interior of China.<sup>33</sup>

This treaty was imposed by the victor upon the vanquished at gunpoint, without the careful deliberation usually accompanying international agreements in Europe and

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 157-58.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 158-60. Cf. Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 190.

America. A most ironic point was that opium traffic,<sup>34</sup> the immediate cause of the war, was not even mentioned—the question of its future status cautiously avoided by both side. This is the “unequal treaty” of the First Opium War when there was still a threat of military action, and was the most disgraceful event in all the Western political actions against China.<sup>35</sup>

#### *The Taiping Movement (1851-1864)*

After China’s disastrous defeat in the First Opium War, the Qing Dynasty became more corrupt and weaker than ever, and there was widespread misery and poverty among the common people. In terms of the political situation, the defeat in the First Opium War resulted in unrest in the ruling class of the Qing government and a severe loss of national prestige. In the economy, the outflow of silver overseas and the soaring prices of domestic commodities caused by opium smuggling threatened people’s livelihood in China. Social disorder prevailed after the First Opium War, and domestic opposition to the old system and old powers emerged.<sup>36</sup>

In 1843, inspired by the ideas of Christianity from Liang’s *Quanshi liangyan*, a young man named Hong Xiuquan from Guangdong Province advocated human equality and called for the overthrow of the rulers of the Qing Dynasty. His organization

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<sup>34</sup>Article 4 mentioned not the future of opium traffic but the payment by the Qing government to British merchants for the opium which Lin Zexu had confiscated in Canton.

<sup>35</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1929), 371.

<sup>36</sup>Robert A. Scalapin and George T. Yu, *Modern China and Its Revolutionary Process: Recurrent Challenges to the Traditional Order 1850-1920* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 74.

quickly attracted many adherents, the number of which amounted to over several thousands in 1849,<sup>37</sup> and they established a religious organization called the Society of God Worshippers.<sup>38</sup> Most believers of the Society of God Worshippers were tenants, farmers, labors, and mine workers from Guangxi Province.<sup>39</sup> The core members were Hakkas from Guangdong or Guangxi Province who had much to do with the Taiping Movement because they were often cheated by the original residents and the Manchus and they frequently had to fight against them for subsistence.<sup>40</sup>

On 11 January 1851, on his thirty-eighth birthday, Hong Xiuquan initiated a peasant uprising in Jintian (金田) Village, Guiping County (桂平縣), in the present-day Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (廣西壯族自治區), and declared the establishment of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the Taiping Dynasty.<sup>41</sup> The

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<sup>37</sup>In 1848 Feng Yunshan (馮雲山, 1815-1852), the first convert and companion of Hong Xiuquan, was arrested and charged with sedition. "His accuser was Wang Tso-hsin, a member of the local gentry, whose indictment extended to the whole Society of God Worshippers: They have used the strange book for the worship of *Shang-ti* in order to band together, and they have desecrated the gods of the country. I beseech your grace in dealing strictly with this matter. . . . They have confused the people and have gathered together several thousand men in order to follow the 'Old Testament' of the barbarians, rather than the law of the Ch'ing Dynasty. . . ." [Philip L. Wickeri, "Christianity and the Origins of the Taiping Movement: A Study of the Social Function of Religious Symbols," *Ching Feng* 19, no. 1 (1976): 25].

<sup>38</sup>Feng Yunshan formed the Society of God Worshippers in Guangxi Province after a missionary journey there in 1844 to spread Hong's ideas. In 1847 Hong became the leader of this secret society. Cf. Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 80, 96.

<sup>39</sup>Robert A. Scalapin and George T. Yu, *Modern China and Its Revolutionary Process: Recurrent Challenges to the Traditional Order 1850-1920*, 17-19.

<sup>40</sup>Ssu-yu Teng, *New Light on the History of the Taiping Revolution*, 50.

<sup>41</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 165; Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1971), 42.

Taiping army won many battles against the army of the Qing Dynasty while growing from an army of about twenty thousand to one of several hundred thousand. In March 1853, the Taiping army occupied Nanjing. Hong made the city his capital and changed its name to *Tianjing* 天京 (Heavenly Capital).

Since our Heavenly Father, God, created heaven and earth, there have been those in each dynasty who usurped titles and handed them down to their descendants. But studies show that these men were not men who held the Heavenly mandate. Hence, regicide and usurpation were frequent, and chaos and change continued until the present. Our T'ien Wang [*Tianwang* 天王 (Heavenly King)], having personally received God's mandate, shall eternally rule over mountains and rivers. The righteous uprising in Chin-t'ien [Jintian (金田)] signaled the formation of a valiant and invincible army, and our establishment of the Capital at Chin-ling [Jinling (金陵)]<sup>42</sup> lays an everlastingly firm foundation. The Capital is called the Heavenly Capital, in consonance with the Heavenly mandate, and the state is called the Heavenly State, in consonance with God's will. Now that the establishment of the Capital has been completed and the country restored to peace, the T'ien Wang has issued an edit inviting counsel from the various officials.<sup>43</sup>

The Taiping army, winning victories everywhere, marched northward and westward to secure and expand its domain around the capital of Tianjing. In September 1856, when the Taiping Movement was developing vigorously, a power struggle took place among the leaders. It lasted two months and severely weakened the Taiping leadership. The Qing government took this opportunity to organize a full-fledged counterattack. The Taiping army's most powerful enemy was the Xiang army (湘軍)<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Chin-ling or Jinling (金陵) was another name for Nanjing during the short-lived Southern Tang dynasty (937–975).

<sup>43</sup>Ho Chen-ch'uan, "A Treatise on the Establishment of the Heavenly Capital in Chin-ling," in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, ed., Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1971), 253.

<sup>44</sup>The name, Xiang, was taken from the Hunan Province where the army was raised. The army was financed by local nobles and gentry, as opposed to the centralized Manchu-led Qing Dynasty.



organized and led by Zeng Guofan (曾國藩, 1811-1872).<sup>45</sup> The Western powers even organized the Ever Victorious Army<sup>46</sup> to help the Qing government suppress the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. In order to turn the tide, Hong Xiuquan selected a group of young generals, who did achieve some things, but not enough to change the destiny of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. In late 1863, the Xiang army besieged Tianjing. On 3 June 1864, Hong Xiuquan died of an illness, and in July Tianjing was captured by the Xiang army. After 14 years of conflict, the religious peasant uprising of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, that cost more than twenty million lives, was finally quashed.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Zeng Guofan was one of several Confucian-educated scholars who were alarmed by the Taiping threat to their own ancestral homes and distraught at the Taiping Movement's use of Christianity to attack the whole structure of the Chinese value system (Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 177).

<sup>46</sup>The Ever Victorious Army consisted of Chinese soldiers trained and led by a European officer corps. Though the Ever Victorious Army was only active for a few years, from 1860 to 1864, it was instrumental in putting down the Taiping Movement. It was the first Chinese army which was trained in European techniques, tactics, and strategy. As such, it became a model for later Chinese armies (Ssu-yu Teng, *New Light on the History of the Taiping Revolution*, 297).

<sup>47</sup>Christianity played a significant role in the development of the Taiping Movement. For this reason, there was an initial welling of missionary enthusiasm for the Taiping cause. By the time the army had captured Nanjing and had met several foreign emissaries, there was an overall consensus that Taiping Christianity was a good thing. But by 1856, just after starting of the Second Opium War, the tide of opinion had turned against them. Their Christianity began to be widely denounced as imposture and heresy. In addition, the signing of the treaties of Tianjin separately with Britain, France, Russia, and the United States in 1858 assured the missionaries of a lawful status as long as the Qing Dynasty remained in power. Because of this, the missionaries no longer felt greatly concerned with the success or failure of the Taiping Movement. Cf. John B. Littell, "Missionaries and Politics in China: The Taiping Rebellion," *Political Science Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (Dec. 1928), 580 and John S. Gregory, "British Missionary Reaction to the Taiping Movement," *Journal of Religious History* 2 (1963), 216.

### *The Second Opium War (1856-1860)*

In October 1856, Qing officials boarded the *Arrow*, owned by Chinese, and with a Chinese crew, but registered in Hong Kong, having a British captain, and arrested most of its crew on suspicion of piracy in Canton. The British officials demanded the release of sailors, claiming that because the ship had recently been British-registered, it was protected under the Treaty of Nanking.<sup>48</sup> As China insisted that it did not fly the British flag at that time, negotiations eventually broke down and the Second Opium War or the Arrow War broke out between England and the Qing dynasty. Soon after this, France joined England, later followed by Russia and the United States. The powerful Western fleets carried war to the north, and they captured Tianjin, and threatened Beijing. Faced with fighting the Taiping army and the Western powers, the Qing government was in no position to resist the West militarily. The Emperor bowed to necessity and treaties were negotiated separately with each Western power in 1858.<sup>49</sup>

There were some differences between the treaties and the interpretation of them, but basically they were all the same: in addition to according permission to foreigners to travel in the interior beyond the Treaty Ports, now increased to sixteen cities, the Qing government guaranteed toleration of Christianity and protection of Christians in the practice of their faith, not only for missionaries but for Chinese Christians also.<sup>50</sup> Clearly the door had been opened for the peaceful penetration of China by Christian

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<sup>48</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *The Chinese: Their History and Culture*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1964), 280-81.

<sup>49</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 179-180; Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 206-07.

<sup>50</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 274.

denominations, but those peaceful forces were entering with a hedge of all too warlike bayonets behind them.<sup>51</sup>

Here we see the irony of history. It is a historical fact that it was under the security of the “unequal treaties” that missionary activity and Western residence became possible all over China. While this meant a much quicker geographical spread, it built up such barriers as to make the gospel itself seem clouded with ulterior motives. It is a tribute to the faith of the missionaries that Christianity endured and flourished in spite of these dire handicaps. Most missionaries opposed not only the opium traffic but also other unworthy practices of the early traders who were generally ignorant of the traditions of the land whose peace and quiet they were disturbing. Yet the missionaries did take advantage of concessions won to make their residence and work possible in the vast interior.<sup>52</sup>

*The Early Nineteenth Century Missions of Western Countries in China*

In the nineteenth century, the number of Christian missionaries rapidly increased. Roman Catholics had an advantage over Protestants as they had been in China since the sixteenth century and there were Roman Catholics in practically all the provinces.<sup>53</sup> Their orders and societies already in China added to their staffs and several new organizations commenced operations. The Jesuits, who had led in the missions of the

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<sup>51</sup>Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 2d ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 274-75.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>53</sup>Cf. George H. McNeur, *The Missionary in Changing China* (Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co., 1935), 73-81.

sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries but whose Society had been suspended by papal order in the late eighteenth century, were reconstituted and re-entered China. The main Roman Catholic organizations active in China were the Congregation of the Mission (Lazarists), the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, the Order of Brothers Minor (Franciscans), and the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.<sup>54</sup> Roman Catholic missionaries were almost entirely from the continent of Europe, the majority of them French or French-speaking.<sup>55</sup>

The number of Protestant missionaries grew more rapidly than did Roman Catholics, and by the 1830s, even before the First Opium War, many of the major European and American Protestant churches began sending their missionaries to China. Protestant work was represented by missionaries from the London Missionary Society with Robert Morrison in 1807, William Milne in 1813, and Walter H. Medhurst (1796-1857) in 1817; The Netherlands Missionary Society (1827); the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1830); the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions (1835); Board of Foreign Missions of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States (1835); the Church of England Missionary Society (1837); and the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (1838).<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 162-65, 167-70, 173, 314-15.

<sup>55</sup>Jean-Pierre Charbonnier, *Christians in China: A.D. 600 to 2000*, trans. M. N. L. Couve de Murville (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 323-25.

<sup>56</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, v-vi.

*The London Missionary Society in China (1807)*

In 1795, the year the London Missionary Society (LMS) was founded, Europeans knew less about China than they did about India. Very soon after the organization of the Society, some churches became interested in China and the Chinese people because of the discovery of an ancient Chinese manuscript in the British Museum.<sup>57</sup> In 1798, William W. Moseley, a pastor in Northamptonshire, came across a manuscript of most of the New Testament translated into Chinese, probably by early Jesuit missionaries, which had been gathering dust in the British Museum. He immediately printed 100 copies of this “Manuscript of Sloane” and sent a copy to all the Church of England bishops and the new mission agencies.

In 1805, Joseph Hardcastle (1795-1815), the Treasurer of the LMS, suggested setting up a mission field in China. It was known that direct preaching of the gospel would be difficult and dangerous, if not impossible. But it was possible to learn Chinese, of which at that time only one British subject, George Thomas Staunton (1781-1859),<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>“This was discovered by the Rev. W. Moseley, a Congregational minister. It contained the greater part of the New Testament, but by mistake had been lettered. *Evangelica Quattuor Sinice*. On a blank leaf is this note:—‘This transcript was made at Canton in 1737 and 1738, by order of Mr. Hodgson, who says it has been collated with great care and found very correct, given to him by Sir Hans Sloane, Bart., in 1739.’ The collection of Sir Hans was the foundation of the British Museum. Mr. Moseley published a treatise on translating the Scriptures into Chinese. In 1805 Sir G. T. Staunton was thought to be the only Englishman who knew Chinese. His book on Lord Macartney’s Embassy to Peking came out in 1798 and must have drawn people’s attention to China” (Donald MacGillivray, ed., *A Century of Protestant Missions in China (1807-1907)* [Shanghai: American Presbyterian Missions Press, 1907], 1).

<sup>58</sup>Staunton was brought along, at the age of eleven, on the 1792-1794 Macartney embassy of Britain to the court of the Qianlong Emperor (乾隆帝). On that journey he studied Chinese with the mission’s interpreters, making him the only member of the embassy fluent enough to converse in Chinese with Qing officials. He continued his work in China as he entered adulthood, making his way up the ranks of the East India

had sufficient knowledge; and this meant that the whole Bible could be translated into Chinese. In view of the respect for age, which was a considerable factor in Chinese social life, the Directors of the LMS decided to place an experienced missionary in charge of this work, and the name of Dr. J. T. Vanderkemp (1747-1811),<sup>59</sup> a well known South African missionary, was suggested. When, however, the year 1807 came, only Robert Morrison, a twenty-five years old Scot, was found ready to go. He had acquired some knowledge of the Chinese language from a Cantonese named Yong Sam-tak or Rong Sande (容三德),<sup>60</sup> whom he met in London.

Mr. M. continued to prosecute his studies at Gosport, until the month of August 1805, when he returned to London, in order to obtain some knowledge of Medicine and Astronomy, which, it was hoped, might prove useful to him in his mission; and to acquire as much of the Chinese language as should be found possible in this country. He accordingly attended the lectures of the late Dr. Blair, on Medicine, and under his direction walked St. Bartholomew's hospital. Having also obtained an introduction to the late Dr. Hutton of Greenwich, he pursued with his usual ardour the study of Astronomy. He resided at this period with Mr. Smith of Bishopgate Street. From thence he was accustomed to walk to the Observatory—(he afterwards lived at Greenwich),—himself carrying the necessary mathematical instruments for observation. . . . Besides these engagements, he was also employed in studying the Chinese language with Yong-Sam-Tak, a native of some education, who will be often mentioned in his journal and letters. He was introduced to this young foreigner through the influence of Dr. Moseley of Clapham; from him he

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Company to become chief of the Canton factory in 1816. Cf. George T. Staunton, "Notes of Proceedings and Occurrence During the British Embassy to Peking in 1816," in *British Travel Writing from China, 1798–1901*, vol. 1, *Early Encounters, 1798–1824*, ed., Elizabeth H. Chang (London: Pickering & Chatto Publishers, 2009), 26-374.

<sup>59</sup>Eliza Morrison, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, and Longmans, 1839), 69.

<sup>60</sup>William Milne, *A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China: (Now, in Connection with the Malay, Denominated the Ultra-Ganges Missions) Accompanied with Miscellaneous Remarks on the Literature, History, and Mythology of China*, 55-56; Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China* (Nettetal, Germany: Steyler Verlag, 1999), 32.

obtained his first insight into the Chinese language; and in him he found a specimen of that proud and domineering temper for which his nation is so proverbial.<sup>61</sup>

Morrison transcribed with his own hand the “Manuscript of Sloane”<sup>62</sup> above mentioned, and also carried a manuscript of a Latin and Chinese dictionary lent him by the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge. The LMS changed its original plan of sending an old and experienced missionary to China. Young Morrison was instructed to land in Canton<sup>63</sup> and to make the translation of the Scriptures into Chinese his first objective.

*Robert Morrison.* In 1804 Robert Morrison offered his services to the London Mission Society while he was a student at Hoxton Academy in London and was trained as a Congregational minister. He was ordained in 1807 and sailed as a single person for Canton via New York, because the East India Company refused to take him as a passenger on any of its ships bound for China. He therefore went to the United States to find an American ship heading for the Far East. Morrison embarked for China via

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>62</sup>Cf. “It was known that the Catholic missionary Jean Basset (ca. 1662-1707) of the Missions Étrangères [the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris] had translated the New Testament (or parts thereof), but only in 1945 could it be proven that the manuscript in the British Museum was (at least partly) identical with Basset’s translation” (Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China*, 28).

<sup>63</sup>William Milne, *A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China: (Now, in Connection with the Malay, Denominated the Ultra-Ganges Missions) Accompanied with Miscellaneous Remarks on the Literature, History, and Mythology of China*, 54; Eliza Morrison, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*, vol. 1, 69.

America on 31 January 1807<sup>64</sup> and reached Macao on 4 September, from whence he proceeded to Canton.<sup>65</sup>

China, beginning in 1715, placed severe restrictions on foreigners who wanted to enter, even to trade. Authorized visitors could stay only in the restricted residential area that the Qing government allowed them southwest of Canton during the trading season from August to May. They had to reside within thirteen designated rows of buildings, known as “hongs” or factories, located along the waterfront.<sup>66</sup> No foreigner was allowed within the city wall nor could any travel to the interior. Each year, at the conclusion of the trading season, foreign merchants had to withdraw from their Canton factories to Macao. The teaching of the Chinese language to non-Chinese was forbidden. In 1811, moreover, came an Imperial edict relating to Christianity: death for printing, preaching, or baptizing Chinese nationals into the foreign religion; imprisonment for spreading it privately; and exile for following it.<sup>67</sup>

From this time forward, such European[s] as shall privately print books and establish preachers, in order to pervert the multitude, —and the Tartars and Chinese, who, deputed by Europeans, shall propagate their religion, bestowing names, and

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<sup>64</sup>The fact that the policy of the East India Company, which had a monopoly over the China trade since 1600, was not to carry missionaries, and because there were no other ships available that were bound for China, he was forced to stop first in America. Cf. Robert Morrison, *Journals, 23 February 1807-12 May 1807, From England to Philadelphia* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 1) and *Journals, 12 May 1807-1 September 1807, From New York to Canton* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 2).

<sup>65</sup>Robert Morrison, *Journals, 4 September 1807-4 October 1807* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 3).

<sup>66</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 5; Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 142-50.

<sup>67</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 177-78.



disquieting numbers, shall have this to look to; —The chief or principal one shall be executed; —whoever shall spread their religion, not making much disturbance, nor to many men, and without giving names, shall be imprisoned, waiting the time of execution; —and those who shall content themselves with following such religion, without wishing to reform themselves, they shall be exiled to He-lau-keang, &c.<sup>68</sup>

To solve his entry problem, Morrison joined the East India Company as a translator in 1809.<sup>69</sup> At the beginning, the company had opposed his coming to China on the ground that his mission work might affect its trade with China. But the company needed someone competent in the Chinese language to translate letters and documents. From Morrison's viewpoint, the move meant that he was assured of being able to stay and work in Canton and Macao without questions being asked by the Chinese authorities.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, his priority in coming to China was not so much to preach the gospel and make converts, tasks forbidden by the Qing government, but to study the language thoroughly, to compose a practical Chinese dictionary, and to translate the Bible.<sup>71</sup> He could accomplish all these things under the shelter of the East India Company. He translated the complete New Testament in 1813 and printed two thousand copies of it in 1814: "I am particularly happy to inform you that the New Testament is completed, and

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<sup>68</sup>London Missionary Society, "Chinese Edict Against Christianity," *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 3, [From the Year 1805] to the End of the Year 1812 (London: Williams and Son, 1813), 459-60.

<sup>69</sup>Morrison worked as a translator for the East India Company until his death in 1834.

<sup>70</sup>William Milne, *A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China: (Now, in Connection with the Malay, Denominated the Ultra-Ganges Missions) Accompanied with Miscellaneous Remarks on the Literature, History, and Mythology of China*, 79, 80; William J. Townsend, *Robert Morrison, the Pioneer of Chinese Missions* (London: S.W. Partridge, 1890), 85-87.

<sup>71</sup>Bobby E. K. Sng, *I Must Sow the Seed: Liang Afa, China's First Preacher*, 32.

that 2000 copies of it are printing; we have had the pleasure of seeing and of sending away to Malacca, to wait there till summer, about 100 complete copies of the Chinese New Testament. Blessed be the Lord!”<sup>72</sup>

*William Milne.* In 1813 William Milne arrived from the LMS and joined Morrison in his missionary work. He landed at Macao on 4 July 1813 and was smuggled into the foreign factory area in Canton.<sup>73</sup> There he began his studying of the Chinese language. By the end of the year it was evident to both Morrison and Milne that it was not the time to establish a mission in Canton. Even the Portuguese at Macao did not want Protestant missionaries. So, in February 1814, Milne set sail for Batavia or present-day Jakarta, capital of Java. The six-month tour made him realize that large communities of Chinese lived in different parts of the Malay Archipelago. Earlier, on his voyage from England, he had stopped briefly at Malacca and had been impressed by the large numbers of Chinese who lived there.<sup>74</sup> A visit to the city this time enabled him to study the local conditions more carefully. The resident officer-in-charge, British

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<sup>72</sup>William Milne, “Letter from Canton, 16 January 1814” (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 1B, no. 3B); London Missionary Society, *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 4, [From the Year 1813] to the End of the Year 1817 (London: Williams and Co., 1818), 127.

<sup>73</sup>Cf. William Milne, *Journals, 4 September 1812-7 December 1812, From England to Cape Town* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 9) and *Journals, 13 December 1812-26 January 1814, From Cape Town to Canton, including stay at Macao* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 10).

<sup>74</sup>William Milne, *Journals, 31 January 1814-6 February 1815* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 11).

Major William Farquhar (c. 1770-1839),<sup>75</sup> welcomed Milne to settle there and promised that every assistance would be given to enable Milne to set up the mission. With this assurance, Milne returned to Macao and discussed his plan with Morrison in September 1814.<sup>76</sup>

Morrison fully supported Milne's plan to set up a Chinese mission in Malacca. It was a strategic move that would influence the mission work in China. Perhaps, from the converts made in Malacca or different parts of the Malay Archipelago, there might be those who would return to their homeland and be bearers of the gospel in China. Also, now that the New Testament had been translated, Morrison and Milne agreed that they would cooperate to complete the translation of the Old Testament. If they were not able to preach the gospel openly in China, they could at least provide the written word for a later generation to preach. Morrison and Milne completed the translation of the Old Testament in the Chinese language in 1819, and Morrison finished his *Anglo-Chinese Dictionary* in 1821.<sup>77</sup>

On 22 May 1815 Milne landed at Malacca, where he was received by Major Farquhar. At the same time, the chief members of the Dutch Church requested him to

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<sup>75</sup>Farquhar was an employee of the East India Company and officially appointed the resident officer-in-charge in December 1813. And for several years he held the position, in charge of both civil and military offices, until the Dutch returned in September 1818. During his tenure there he assisted in missions around the region.

<sup>76</sup>William Milne, *Journals, 13 December 1812-26 January 1814*; London Missionary Society, *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 4, 127.

<sup>77</sup>On the completion of his *Anglo-Chinese Dictionary*, the Senate of the University of Glasgow conferred on Morrison the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

take charge of the Christian congregation there.<sup>78</sup> Shortly after arriving at Malacca, Milne established an orphanage or school for poor Chinese boys.<sup>79</sup> Then, beginning in August, he started publishing a monthly Chinese magazine named *Cha shisu meiyue tongji zhuan* 察世俗每月統紀傳 (*A Monthly Record of the Sentiments and Morals of Society*): “It contains short essays on the doctrines of the gospel, —Scripture histories and anecdotes from other books—general subjects—occasional lines in poetry, &c.”<sup>80</sup>

Morrison and Milne never forgot that the primary purpose of their coming to the Far East was to reach China. From the beginning Morrison and Milne usually preached every Sunday at their home or office in Canton or Macao. Morrison secretly admitted and baptized the first Chinese Christian Cai Gao (蔡高, ?-1818) or Cai Yagao (蔡亞高).<sup>81</sup> Milne won Liang Fa for Christ and baptized him in 1816.<sup>82</sup> In November 1818, the foundation stone of a seminary, which they proposed to name the Anglo-Chinese College

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 312.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid. The first 100 copies of the magazine were printed on 5 August 1815. Later, a number were published monthly, with 500 copies of each number. The magazine ran for seven years, from 1815 to 1821.

<sup>81</sup>The first convert, Cai Gao, “who had been baptized by Dr. Morrison, and who was constant in his attendance to receive instruction, died of a pulmonary complaint, in October last” [London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-fifth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: F. Westley, 1819), 17]. Cf. William Milne, “Letter from Macao, 24 September 1814” and “Letter from Macao, 27 September 1814” (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 1B, no. 3C).

<sup>82</sup>William Milne, *Journals, 30 December 1815-4 January 1817*; London Missionary Society, *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 4, 412-413; Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun* 熟學眞理論 (*Statements of Perfect Acquaintance with the True Doctrine*) (Canton: Religious Tracts Society, 1832), 22.

or Ying Wa College (英華書院), was laid in Malacca. Milne was then appointed the headmaster. The main purposes of this college were “to impart the knowledge of the English language, and the principles of the Christian religion, to Chinese youth, and the instruction of Missionaries and others in the language and literature of China.” It proposed to admit in the first class, “eight students, all single men.”<sup>83</sup> Within the first year, seven Chinese students sought admission. Not one was a Christian.<sup>84</sup> On 2 June 1822, William Milne died at only thirty-seven years of age.<sup>85</sup>

During the first twenty-five years of the LMS mission’s existence only ten Chinese nationals were baptized. Among them was the remarkable convert Liang fa, whose services to Christianity in China were very great.<sup>86</sup>

*Walter Henry Medhurst.* On 12 June 1817, Walter Henry Medhurst arrived at Malacca;<sup>87</sup> he had replied to an advertisement for a printer to join the mission at Malacca and was accepted by the London Missionary Society. He immediately relieved Milne of

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<sup>83</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-fifth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 30. Cf. London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-sixth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: F. Westley, 1820), 29-30.

<sup>84</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-seventh General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: F. Westley, 1821), 29.

<sup>85</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-ninth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: F. Westley, 1823), 33-35.

<sup>86</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 21; Donald MacGillivray, ed., *A Century of Protestant Missions in China (1807-1907)*, 3.

<sup>87</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-fourth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: Williams and Co., 1818), 8-9.

the burden of the printing office. He procured a printing press and fonts of English and Malay type and taught printers how to set up in English and Malay and use the press. Medhurst was ordained at Malacca in 1819, and left for Penang and then Batavia for work among the Chinese emigrants, and finally, after the first Opium War, for Shanghai in 1843. At Shanghai he founded the London Missionary Society Press, laying the foundations of a successful mission.<sup>88</sup>

*The Aftermath of Morrison's Death.* Morrison was seized by a serious illness at Canton and died there on 1 August 1834, when he was fifty-two years old. After Morrison's death he was not immediately replaced, and the LMS, like other mission societies, seemed to have given up on China.<sup>89</sup> Between 1808 and 1842 it was very difficult for missionaries to gain a footing in China and to preach Christianity, but after the Treaty of Nanking (1842), the number of Christian missionaries rapidly increased.

*The Netherlands Missionary Society (1827)*

In 1827, the Netherlands Missionary Society (NMS) sent Karl F. A. Gützlaff (1803-1851) to Batavia, where Medhurst helped him with Chinese and Malay. However he left the NMS in 1828 and went to Malacca and assisted the LMS. He went Canton in 1831 and acted as a translator for the East India Company.<sup>90</sup> In 1834 he published *Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832 and 1833*, an

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<sup>88</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 213, 247.

<sup>89</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Forty-Second General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: Westley and Davis, 1836), 22.

<sup>90</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 216-17.

introductory essay on the history, policy, and religion of China, Siam, Korea, and Ryukyu.<sup>91</sup> He wrote that along the way he handed out tracts which had been prepared by pioneer missionary to China, Robert Morrison.

Shortly before his death, Morrison himself was aware of the need for a revision or even a new translation of the Bible.<sup>92</sup> As a result, after Morrison's death, in 1840, Gützlaff cooperated in the new translation of the Bible into Chinese with Walter H. Medhurst, Elijah Coleman Bridgman (1801-1861),<sup>93</sup> and John Robert Morrison (1814-1843).<sup>94</sup> The translation of the Hebrew part was done mostly by Gützlaff, with the exception that the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua which were done by the group collectively. Later this translation, completed in 1847, was adopted by Hong Xiuquan of the Taiping Movement. Gützlaff assisted in negotiations during the Opium War of 1840-42. In 1844 he organized *Fu Han Hui* 福韓會 (The Chinese Evangelization Union) or *Han Hui* 韓會 (The Chinese Union),<sup>95</sup> which had more than one thousand

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<sup>91</sup>Cf. Charles Gützlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832 and 1833 with Notices of Siam, Corea, and the Loo-choo Islands* (London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, 1834).

<sup>92</sup>Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China*, 43.

<sup>93</sup>Bridgman was the first American Protestant missionary to China.

<sup>94</sup>John Robert Morrison was the second son of Robert Morrison and became a translator, diplomat and missionary in China and the Far East, most closely associated with Canton and Hong Kong. He participated in the negotiation of the Treaty of Nanking and was appointed the first Colonial Secretary of Hong Kong [Alain Le Pichon, ed., *China Trade and Empire: Jardine, Matheson & Co. and the Origins of British Rule in Hong Kong, 1827-1843* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 145].

<sup>95</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 55.

members at its peak, for training Chinese people as “native missionaries.”

Unfortunately, his ideas outran his administrative ability, and he wound up being victimized by his own native missionaries. They reported back to him false accounts of conversions and the number of New Testaments sold. While some of Gützlaff’s native missionaries were genuine converts, others were opium addicts who never traveled to the places they claimed. Eager for easy money, they simply made up conversion reports and took the New Testaments which Gützlaff provided and sold them back to the printer who resold them to Gützlaff.<sup>96</sup>

Though he did much in spreading Christianity and Western culture, Gützlaff was more interested in China’s political, economic, and military affairs and had helped the Western aggression. He himself even joined in the first Opium War in 1840 by acting as a translator and guide, and assisted in the negotiations of the “unequal treaties” between the Qing government and foreign governments in 1842.<sup>97</sup>

*The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1830)*

In 1830, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) sent Elijah C. Bridgman to China.<sup>98</sup> He was the first American missionary to China, and came on behalf of the Congregational Churches. He sailed from New York on 14

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<sup>96</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 254.

<sup>97</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 55-56.

<sup>98</sup>Murray A. Rubinstein, *The Origin of the Anglo-American Missionary Enterprise in China, 1807-1870* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 282.



October and arrived in Canton on 25 February 1830.<sup>99</sup> He lived in the American commercial residential area and started to study Chinese with the help of Morrison and Liang Fa.<sup>100</sup> The work Bridgman did was mainly concerned with translation, publication, and education. He published books on China's politics, history, people, and culture in English, and translated into Chinese books on the history and geography of American and European countries and introduced Western culture and technology to the Chinese people.<sup>101</sup>

After the First Opium War, the United States government sent a special envoy to China and compelled the Qing government to sign the Treaty of Xiamen between the United States and the Qing government in 1844.<sup>102</sup> Bridgman acted as the secretary and interpreter for the United States delegation and attended the signing of this unequal treaty. After that, he moved to Shanghai and became the first president of the Shanghai Arts and Science Association, which set up a library and a museum in Shanghai with the library becoming well known throughout the Far East for its large book collection.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>At that time another American missionary, David Abeel (1804-1846), sailed representing the American Seaman's Friend Society, to be chaplain to the many American sailors in Chinese waters. He arrived in Canton in 1830, later evangelizing in Java, Malacca, Siam, and Singapore. In 1833 he relocated to Europe (Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 216-17).

<sup>100</sup>Murray A. Rubinstein, *The Origin of the Anglo-American Missionary Enterprise in China, 1807-1870*, 287.

<sup>101</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 218.

<sup>102</sup>Donald MacGillivray, ed., *A Century of Protestant Missions in China (1807-1907)*, 252.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*

*The American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions (1835)*

The Baptists were the second American group sending missionaries to the Chinese people. In 1835 the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions (ABBFM) appointed J. Lewis Shuck (1812-1863) and his wife, Henrietta Hall (1817-1844), both from Virginia, missionaries to China.<sup>104</sup> On 15 March 1835 they reached Penang and arrived at Singapore after two weeks. There they started to study the Chinese language and also gained some knowledge of the Far East. In September, they reached Macao, where they settled, after Shuck had paid a ten-day visit to Canton. In Macao, the Shucks were joined in 1837 by Issachar J. Roberts (1802-1871),<sup>105</sup> an independent missionary from Tennessee who later joined the ABBFM. There they awaited impatiently a British victory in the First Opium War and moved to Hong Kong in April 1842 even before the peace treaty opened five “treaty ports” (Canton, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Ningpo, and Shanghai ) and Hong Kong to foreigners. In Hong Kong they established the first Christian church in China. Henrietta Shuck, the first American woman in China and the pioneer of the “woman’s” mission, directed a school for Chinese children until her death in 1844, at the age of twenty-seven, at the birth of her fifth child.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 90.

<sup>105</sup>Roberts left the United States, as a missionary for China, about the beginning of 1837, in connection with a special association termed the Roberts Fund Society, arriving at Macao on 1 May 1837. Cf. Issachar Roberts, “a self-educated preacher, raised in the passionate religious world of tent revivals and covered-wagon services, independent-minded, free of supervision and bored with rules,” came from the Tennessee town of Shebyville in 1837 at the age of thirty-five to work at Gützlaff’s side (Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 62).

<sup>106</sup>Shuck was not the first to found a mission school in China nor the first to teach

Unhappy with Shuck and anxious to get to the mainland China, Roberts moved to Canton in 1844 and became the first Westerner to live outside the protected foreign factories in that reputedly anti-foreigner city. After the American Baptists had divided over the slavery issue in 1845, Shuck and Roberts can be credited with founding the Southern Baptist mission in China. However, in 1851, the Mission Board severed its connection with Roberts,<sup>107</sup> not only because his supporters in the Mississippi Valley nearly broke with the Southern Baptist Convention, but also for his indifference to Bridgman's attempting suicide.<sup>108</sup>

Roberts was the only Baptist known to have influenced Hong Xiuquan. In 1847 Hong spent several weeks under his instruction. But Hong withdrew without receiving the ordinance of baptism. Roberts refused or postponed Hong's request for the rite, perhaps due to a misunderstanding.<sup>109</sup> Then Roberts almost forgot Hong. Meanwhile,

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girls, as is widely believed, but she was the first American to do so. Mary W. Gützlaff, second wife of Karl Gützlaff, had a school for blind boys and girls in her home in Macao as early as 1835. And then, in 1839, Henrietta Shuck had some fifteen boys and girls living and studying with her own children. Cf. Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 221 and Arthur Waley, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958), 228.

<sup>107</sup>Henry A. Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1880), 87.

<sup>108</sup>Elijah C. Bridgman's health had been declining for some time, and on 1 December 1850, Sabbath morning, in a fit of insanity, he committed suicide by cutting his throat with a razor. Bridgman needed Roberts' help. Roberts, however, did not arrive there, only by sending his note: "Let the dead bury the dead, I must preach the gospel. Mr. B. has enough of his own Board to attend him" [Southern Baptist Convention, "Report of the Committee on the Case of I. J. Roberts," *Proceedings of the Fifth Biennial Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, Convened in the City of Montgomery, Alabama, in May 11th, 12th, 14th, and 15th, 1855* (Richmond: H. K. Ellyson, 1855), 83].

<sup>109</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of*

during a visit to Hong Kong in September 1852, he learned from a Swedish missionary and author, Theodore Hamberg (1819-1854), that the latter had been recently visited by a native from the interior, who had left some important documents in his possession.<sup>110</sup> On examining the documents, Roberts discovered that Hong Xiuquan had become the leader of a great religious and revolutionary movement in western China.<sup>111</sup> The native from the interior was Hung Jin or Hong Rengan (洪仁玕, 1822-1864), afterwards distinguished as the *Kanwang* 干王 (Shield King), the second in power at Nanjing. A few days after the capture of Nanjing by the Taiping army, a messenger appeared in Canton with a letter from Hong Xiuquan himself, addressed to Roberts, inviting him to come to Nanjing and help to propagate the gospel. This reached Roberts on 11 May 1853, and the missionary left Canton on 5 July, embarked at Hong Kong on 13 July and reached Shanghai on 30 July. However, it was very difficult to get to Nanjing from Shanghai and he was obliged to defer his plan. After remaining in Shanghai fifteen months, he left for the United States.<sup>112</sup>

Roberts returned to China, arriving at Canton in the beginning of 1856, unconnected with any mission society, but with the necessary funds being raised by

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*Hong Xiuquan*, 93.

<sup>110</sup>Perhaps, at this time, Roberts heard again from Hamberg about Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangyan* and its impact on Hong Xiuquan. Cf. Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*.

<sup>111</sup>Walter H. Medhurst, "Connection Between Foreign Missionaries and the Kwang-se Insurrection," *North China Herald*, No. 160 (20 August 1853).

<sup>112</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 95.

voluntary contributions. On the outbreak of the troubles in Canton at the end of 1856, in the midst of the Second Opium War, he was obliged to leave with the other foreigners and went to reside for a time at Hong Kong. But he returned to his old station at Canton about the end of 1858. In 1860 the way to Nanjing seemed to be opening up, the Taiping army having captured Suzhou and the principal cities between that and Nanjing. Accordingly, in September, Roberts again arrived in Shanghai and made his way up to Suzhou. There he was introduced on 22 September to Li Xiucheng (李秀成, 1823-1864),<sup>113</sup> distinguished as the *Chungwang* 忠王 (Faithful King), the Commander-in-chief of that place, who treated him well and sent an escort with him to Nanjing. Leaving Suzhou on 4 October, Roberts reached the capital of the Taiping Movement on 13 October and met the Heavenly King. There Roberts was well received and accepted a post as advisor to Hong Rengan, the Foreign Minister at the Taiping Court.<sup>114</sup> However, remaining there more than fifteen months, he was dismayed to find that the beliefs of the Taiping Movement departed widely from his “own” Christianity. He left in January 1862 on board the British gunboat *Renard* following a dispute with Hong Rengan, and was thereafter fiercely critical of the Taiping Movement.<sup>115</sup>

During the first half of the nineteenth century there were pioneer Protestant missionaries who worked diligently with the Chinese. By the latter part of the century

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<sup>113</sup>Li Xiucheng was one of eminent military leaders of the Taiping Movement. He was executed by Zeng Guofan after interrogation in 1864.

<sup>114</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 285-88.

<sup>115</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 96.

Protestant missionaries outnumbered those of the Catholics. The majority were British, as was natural in view of the British predominance in foreign trade.

*Religious or Secular Features of Early Missionary Activities*

From the time Protestant missionaries first came to China, they attached great importance to disseminating Christianity by preaching through both letters and words. The early missionaries like Morrison, Milne, Medhurst, Gützlaff, and Bridgman, had all translated the Bible and Christian literature into Chinese. In order to achieve a concerted and coordinated translation, the British and American missionaries established a Committee for Bible Translation in 1843<sup>116</sup> and published the *Delegates' Version* or the unified Chinese version of New Testament and Old Testament successively in 1859<sup>117</sup> and 1862.<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, it was not enough to carry out missionary activities with only a translation of the Bible and Christian literature in Chinese. The early missionaries tried to introduce the cultural outlook of the West to Chinese people through books, reading materials, articles in the magazines and newspapers, and brochures written by themselves. They wrote many books and brochures introducing Western knowledge ranging from the history, geography, politics, and economies of various countries to solar and lunar eclipses to the heliocentric theory.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China*, 77-78.

<sup>117</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 266.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, 430.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 297-99.

In early times, missionaries spent most of their energy gaining a solid foothold for preaching in China. The reason why they began practicing medicine was because they wanted to break their estrangement from the Chinese. There were two main reasons to practice medicine: one was to convince Chinese people of the value of Western medicine; the other was to remove Chinese people's prejudice against Christianity.<sup>120</sup> In 1834 the ABCFM sent the first medical missionary to China. In February, Peter Parker (1804-1888) arrived at Canton. He was the first missionary doctor in China. In 1835, he set up a clinic, the Ophthalmic Hospital, and successfully cured many patients' eye problems, sometimes surgically. His work got the "magic" of Western medicine across to Chinese people and greatly enhanced the missionaries' reputation in China.<sup>121</sup> At the end of 1843, in Shanghai, William Lockhart (1811-1896)<sup>122</sup> of the LMS established a clinic at the southern gate of the city and treated as many as ten thousand patients in two years. After the Second Opium War, the missionaries established many clinics even in China's hinterland.<sup>123</sup>

However, practicing medicine required professional knowledge and training and could only be exercised by a small number of missionaries. Therefore, running schools was a more common activity among missionaries. At the very beginning, some

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<sup>120</sup>William Lockhart, *The Medical Missionary in China: A Narrative of Twenty Years' Experience* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1861), 134-37.

<sup>121</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 218.

<sup>122</sup>Lockhart was a medical missionary to China. He founded the first Western hospital in Shanghai, which was known the Chinese Hospital. Now the hospital is named of the Renji Hospital (仁濟醫院), and is one of the most famous hospitals in China. Cf. *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, 452-60.

missionaries set up very simple shabby houses to teach children about the Bible as well as basic arts and science. With the increasing ability to do missionary work, some missionary societies encouraged their missionaries to build upgraded and specialized schools, like the Anglo-Chinese College in Malacca.<sup>124</sup>

To force open China's door, some missionaries were doing missionary work for Christianity on the one hand and serving the cause of the Western invasion on the other. They bore many responsibilities and played different roles on different occasions.<sup>125</sup> For example, Karl Gützlaff dressed like a sailor and gone to north China to scout for information many times, and when the First Opium War began, he simply devoted himself to working as the interpreter and guide for the commander of the British invading army. In the spring of 1842, when the British army occupied Ningbo and Zhoushan, he was appointed governor of the local administration. Gützlaff went to Shanghai soon after the British army seized it. On behalf of the British army, he issued notices to reassure the public and extorted as much as 300,000 taels of silver from the then Shanghai governor for redemption of the city. In June of that year, he took part in the seizure of Zhenjiang. Then, in the peace talks between the British government and the Qing government, he participated in the drafting and signing of the "unequal" Treaty of Nanjing. In the next year, he acted as translator when the United States government and the Qing government signed their first "unequal" treaty or the Treaty of Xiamen.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 214-15.

<sup>125</sup>Cf. Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 209-11.

<sup>126</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 55-56.



In summary, in the early nineteenth-century, since Protestant Christianity was introduced to China by Robert Morrison in 1807, Protestant Christianity was not only restricted in various forms by the Qing Dynasty, but was also unknown to the vast majority of Chinese people. Missionaries did not hesitate to resort to non-religious means to facilitate their activities. During this period the main features of their mission work were (1) translating the Bible and Christian literature into Chinese, (2) disseminating Western modern science, (3) practicing medicine, (4) running several kinds of schools, and (5) sometimes joining invasive activities with the shared goal of forcing China's door open.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Liang Fa and His Chinese Christian Tracts

According to George H. McNeur, an anonymous British consular official in China in 1930s said to him that “all Morrison’s converts were his own employees, insinuating that they professed Christianity to keep their jobs.”<sup>1</sup> This suggests that all converts of Robert Morrison (1782-1834) were drawn from among his own Chinese servants or household staff. The implication is that their profession of faith was motivated by self-interest. The critics are either ignorant of the actual facts or willfully blind to the truth.<sup>2</sup> It is true the men<sup>3</sup> baptized by Morrison were, or had been, in his employ. For this reason they enjoyed the opportunity of regular Christian instruction in their own language, and were in constant contact with a prominent Christian missionary.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>George H. McNeur, *The Missionary in Changing China* (Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co., 1935), 102.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. “It is doubtful if he could have lived there [in China] at all if it had not been for the protection of the East India Company” [S. Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Education, Social Life, Arts, Religion, & c., of the Chinese Empire and Its Inhabitants*, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (New York: John Wiley, 1849), 331].

<sup>3</sup>Morrison could not convert or baptize any Chinese woman during his stay in China. Cf. “After all his toil, and faith, and prayer, he only saw three or four converts, no churches, schools, or congregations publicly assembled” (Ibid.).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Robert Morrison’s statement on the first convert, Cai Gao (蔡高): “When he [Cai Gao] was twenty-one he came to my house, and heard me talk of Jesus; but says he did not well understand what I meant. That was my first year in China. Three years after, when I could speak better, and could write, he understood better: and being employed by his brother [Cai Luxing (蔡盧興)] in superintending the New Testament for the press, he says that he began to see the merits of Jesus were able to save all men in all ages and nations, and hence he listened to and believed in him” [Eliza Morrison, *Memoirs*

The very few that sought baptism did so at grave personal risk, and were only received after long probation and careful teaching.<sup>5</sup> Not only did they place themselves under the ban of the Chinese authorities by their acceptance of the Christian faith, but they were ostracized by relatives and friends.

Liang Fa (梁發, 1789-1855) was not a member of Robert Morrison's household staff. He was a blockcutter in a printing establishment near the foreign factories in Canton, and was engaged through Morrison's assistant and Chinese-language tutor Cai Luxing (蔡盧興) to engrave the blocks used for printing Morrison's Chinese New Testament.<sup>6</sup> After his conversion to Christianity and being baptized by William Milne (1785-1822), Liang wrote many tracts explaining his understanding of Christianity to fellow Chinese. How did Liang make contact with Christianity? Why did he write so many Christian tracts for them? What made him one of the early, influential Chinese Christians?<sup>7</sup> This chapter will focus on Liang Fa's life and work in order to answer to these questions.

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*of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, and Longmans, 1839), 408-09].

<sup>5</sup>On 16 July 1814, at least six or seven years after his contact with Christianity, Cai Gao was baptized by Morrison: "At a spring of water issuing from the foot of a lofty hill by the sea side, away from human observation, I baptized, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the person [Cai Gao] whose character and profession has been given above" (Ibid., 410).

<sup>6</sup>George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855* (Shanghai: Kwang Hsueh Publishing House, 1934), 19.

<sup>7</sup>Laing Fa was already well known to the Western countries before the Taiping Movement. Cf. "In 1841 part of his [Liang Fa's] story was told by Dr. Peter Parker before the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States. His name appeared in the report of a commission presented to the British House of Commons in 1847" (Ibid., 6).

*A Cutter of Wooden Block*

Liang Fa was born in 1789 in Gulao Village (古勞村),<sup>8</sup> Sanzhou Town (三洲司), Gaoming County (高明縣), which is about seventy miles distant from Canton or present-day Guangzhou City (廣州市), and is in Guangdong Province (廣東省). Coming from a poor family, his parents could not provide any kind of education for him but made him work on the family's farm. At the age of eleven, however, they did enroll him in the village school, where he studied for four years<sup>9</sup> and memorized the *Sanzijing* 三字經 (*Three Character Classic*),<sup>10</sup> the *Sishu* 四書 (*Four Books*),<sup>11</sup> and the *Wujing* 五經

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 11; Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Missions Press, 1867), 21.

<sup>10</sup>The *Three Character Classic* or *Trimetric Classic* is a Chinese classic text. It was probably written in the thirteenth century and attributed to Wang Yinglin (王應麟, 1223-1296) during the Song dynasty. The work is not one of the traditional Confucian classics, but rather the embodiment of Confucianism suitable for teaching young children. It served as a child's first formal education at home or school until the latter part of the nineteenth century. With the short and simple text arranged in three-character verses, children learned many common characters, grammar structures, elements of Chinese history and the basis of Confucian morality. Cf. Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China: From Lu Xun to Mao Zedong* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 14, 37.

<sup>11</sup>The *Four Books* or *Four Canonical Books* are Chinese classic texts that Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200) selected, in the Song dynasty, as an introduction to Confucianism. They were, in the Ming and Qing dynasties, made the core of the official curriculum for the civil service examinations. They are *Daxue* 大學 (*Great Learning*), *Zhongyong* 中庸 (*Doctrine of the Mean*), *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects* or *Analects of Confucius*), and *Menzi* 孟子 (*Mencius*). Cf. Alexander Wylie, *Notes on Chinese Literature: With Introductory Remarks on the Progressive Advancement of the Art and a List of Translations from the Chinese into Various European Languages*, 6-7.

(*Five Classics*).<sup>12</sup> Although his formal education was relatively brief, this experience was sufficient to develop his self-studying ability of reading, writing, and engaging others in debates.<sup>13</sup>

By 1804, his parents could no longer support him and so, at the age of fifteen, Liang left his family and village and boarded the ship for Canton, the capital city of Guangdong Province, to make his fortune. There, Liang found work with a maker of Chinese writing brushes, but very soon left this occupation and apprenticed himself to a man who cut blocks for printing.<sup>14</sup> He was bound as an apprentice to one master for four years, and shortly after completing his apprenticeship, he left for a neighboring village to work as a journeyman printer.<sup>15</sup>

In 1810, Liang was called home because of his mother's death.<sup>16</sup> Staying at his home village for the funeral, he realized that the lack of business opportunity had not

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<sup>12</sup>The *Five Classics* are ancient Chinese books used by Confucianism as the basis of studies. These books were compiled or edited by Confucius or Kong Zi (孔子, 551-479 BCE) himself. They are *Shijing* 詩經; (*Classic of Songs*), *Shujing* 書經; (*Classic of History*), *Liji* 禮記 (*Classic of Rites*), *Yijing* 易經 (*I Ching* or *Classic of Changes*), and *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*). Cf. Ibid., 1-6.

<sup>13</sup>Bobby E. K. Sng, *I Must Sow the Seed: Liang Afa, China's First Preacher* (Singapore: Trinity Theological College, 1998), 1.

<sup>14</sup>Printing from wooden blocks had been done in China from the beginning of the seventh century.

<sup>15</sup>George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 14-15.

<sup>16</sup>According to the journal of Milne, on 3 November 1816, she was survived by her husband, Liang, and another son. There are no more sources about Liang's family in detail, so we do not know the names of his parents or his brother. Cf. William Milne, *Journals, 30 December 1815-4 January 1817* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 13) and London Missionary Society, *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 4, [From the Year 1813] to the Year 1817 (London: Williams and Co., 1818), 411.

changed. On the other hand, commerce in Canton was growing vigorously and there was always the prospect of employment. And so, on completion of his filial duties to his late mother, giving her a funeral in the best style, with quantities of burnt paper money and lavish presents to the Buddhist priests, he returned to Canton. He, though in debt, soon learned that merchants there paid well those who were useful at printing. He had already learned how to carve Chinese characters on wooden blocks, an art used in printing documents. “It was a skill that not only ensured him steady employment but would change the course of his life.”<sup>17</sup>

### *First Protestant Missionaries to China*

In 1795, the London Missionary Society [LMS] was formed, and, in 1807,<sup>18</sup> they sent out Robert Morrison as the first Protestant missionary to China. At this time China was the world’s most populous nation and it represented one of the last major unreached frontiers for Protestant Christian missions.

Robert Morrison, son of James and Hannah Morrison, was born 5 January 1782, “at Buller’s Green, Morpeth, in the County of Northumberland,” England, whence “he was moved with his parents, in 1785, to Newcastle-upon-Tyne,” where his early life was spent.<sup>19</sup> He was reared in a religious home and at fifteen or sixteen passed through the experience of conversion and joined the Presbyterian Church. He was very studious and by his reading had his attention directed to missions. Early in 1804, “he resolved to

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<sup>17</sup>Bobby E. K. Sng, *I Must Sow the Seed: Liang Afa, China’s First Preacher*, 2.

<sup>18</sup>C. Silvester Horne, *The Story of the L.M.S.* (London: London Missionary Society, 1908), 122-24.

<sup>19</sup>Eliza Morrison, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*, vol. 1, 1.

offer himself to the Directors of the London Missionary Society,”<sup>20</sup> and the earnestness of his purpose is shown by the fact that while still a student in London he began the acquisition of the Chinese language through a manuscript in the British Museum<sup>21</sup> and with the aid of a Cantonese named Yong Sam-tak or Rong Sande (容三德).<sup>22</sup> Because of the East India Company’s hostility to missions he was obliged to go to America and seek passage to China on an American ship. In 1807 He sailed from New York and arrived in Macao on 4 September, and he proceeded to Canton on 7 September.<sup>23</sup> There he continued his study of the language with the help of two Chinese Roman Catholic Christians, Abel Yun or Yin Kunming (殷坤明)<sup>24</sup> and the son of Le Sëensǎng or Li Xiansheng (李先生).<sup>25</sup> Morrison was married in February 1809 to Mary Morton and the same day accepted the appointment of translator from the East India Company.<sup>26</sup> It

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>21</sup>See Chapter One for a detailed discussion of the manuscript.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 69.

<sup>23</sup>Robert Morrison, *Journals, 4 September 1807-4 October 1807* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 3).

<sup>24</sup>Cf. “Sir George Staunton proposes to introduce me to Abel Yun, a Roman Catholic Chinese from Peking, as an instructor. Abel at present does business for the missionaries, and has some oversight of the [Roman Catholic] Christians in the city and suburbs of Canton, who, according to Le Sëensǎng, amount to about 3000” (Eliza Morrison, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*, vol. 1, 163).

<sup>25</sup>It means “a teacher from the Le or Li family. Cf. “The son of Le Sëensǎng will, I believe, aid me in the Canton dialect, and the character. He also is a professing [Roman Catholic] Christian. His father was twelve years in Portugal, at the college of the Jesuits, where he was preparing to be a priest; but, on coming to this country, he married, and in time became a security merchant. The Mandarins oppressed him—he failed, and now, in his seventieth year, is a poor man” (Ibid.).

<sup>26</sup>S. Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography*,

made his position in China more secure.<sup>27</sup> Now, under the shelter of the East India Company and England, he could study Chinese, compose a Chinese dictionary, and translate the Bible.

As Xavier had attempted an entrance to the Middle Kingdom in alliance with Portuguese commerce and diplomacy, so the first Protestant missionary to China became closely associated with a British trading company and the government of England. Morrison, however, always thought of himself as primarily a missionary and never allowed his service to the Company to take precedence over his first calling. It was fortunate that he was by disposition a student, for with the other avenues to the Chinese so nearly closed, it was through preparing literature that the foundations for his successors could best be laid. He had an unusual capacity for hard work and so was able successfully to carry on his two tasks.<sup>28</sup>

By September of 1810 Morrison's translation of the New Testament had reached the point where printing might begin.<sup>29</sup> He decided to start with the Book of Acts, and to print a thousand copies.<sup>30</sup> The arrangement for printing was made through Morrison's

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*Government, Education, Social Life, Arts, Religion, & c., of the Chinese Empire and Its Inhabitants*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, 326.

<sup>27</sup>William Milne, *A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China: (Now, in Connection with the Malay, Denominated the Ultra-Ganges Missions) Accompanied with Miscellaneous Remarks on the Literature, History, and Mythology of China* (Malacca: Anglo-Chinese Press, 1820), 79, 80; William J. Townsend, *Robert Morrison, the Pioneer of Chinese Missions* (London: S. W. Partridge, 1890), 85-87.

<sup>28</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1929), 212.

<sup>29</sup>Robert Morrison, "Letter from Macao, 7 January 1811," (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 1B, no. 2A); London Missionary Society, *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 3, [From the Year 1805] to the End of the Year 1812 (London: Williams and Son, 1813), 457.

<sup>30</sup>Before leaving London in 1807, Morrison had transcribed a Chinese manuscript by Jean Basset, a Jesuit priest to China during the seventeenth century, in the British Museum containing a Harmony of the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Pauline epistles. And he was convinced that in the translation of a book like the Acts of the Apostles theological and ecclesiastical differences would not interfere with making a good translation (George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 17).



assistant and tutor Cai Luxing. At this time Liang worked as a blockcutter in a printing establishment near the foreign factories in Canton, and, in 1811 or 1812, he was engaged through Cai to engrave the blocks used for the Gospel of Luke and the Pauline epistles.<sup>31</sup>

Getting the Bible printed presented a formidable task.<sup>32</sup> Chinese law did not allow foreigners to print works in the local language, least of all anything to do with Christianity. The whole process of block carving, printing the pages, and binding them into a volume, therefore, had to be carried out in complete secrecy. Liang and his fellow Chinese workers knew the dangers they faced in helping Morrison to do so but they were desperately in need of employment and the pay was generous.<sup>33</sup>

To Morrison there came in time encouraging support from England. The British and Foreign Bible Society helped with the publication of his translations of the Scriptures.<sup>34</sup> The LMS sent as many reinforcements as could be used. The first to come was William Milne (1785-1822), a Scot, and like Morrison, a man of scholarly tastes and linguistic ability. Milne and his wife, Rachel Milne, arrived in Macao on 4

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>32</sup>Morrison translated the New Testament completely in 1813 and was printing two thousand copies of it in 1814: "I am particularly happy to inform you that the New Testament is completed, and that 2000 copies of it are printing; we have had the pleasure of seeing and of sending away to Malacca, to wait there till summer, about 100 complete copies of the Chinese New Testament. Blessed be the Lord!" [William Milne, "Letter from Canton, 16 January 1814" (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 1B, no. 3B); London Missionary Society, *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 4, 127].

<sup>33</sup>George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 17; Bobby E. K. Sng, *I Must Sow the Seed: Liang Afa, China's First Preacher*, 6.

<sup>34</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 213.

July 1813,<sup>35</sup> and were almost immediately ordered by the authorities to leave, an action possibly taken at the request of the Roman Catholic clergy.<sup>36</sup> Milne smuggled himself in the foreign factory area in Canton, and then, at the end of the trading season, in February 1814, he set sail for Batavia or present-day Jakarta, capital of Java. The six-month tour made him realize that large communities of Chinese lived in different parts of the Malay Archipelago. Later, in 1815, at the advice of Morrison, he established his mission at Malacca, where British control and a Chinese population numbering about four thousand gave opportunity for Chinese language study and missionary activity.<sup>37</sup>

On 12 June 1817, Walter Henry Medhurst (1796-1857), an English Congregationalist printer, arrived at Malacca, sent out, like Morrison and Milne, by the LMS.<sup>38</sup> He later left for Penang and then Batavia for work among the Chinese emigrants. Energetic, vigorous, and an earnest student of the Chinese language, he was a prominent figure among the early Protestant missionaries. Medhurst's principal labour

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<sup>35</sup>Cf. William Milne, *Journals, 4 September 1812-7 December 1812, From England to Cape Town* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 9) and *Journals, 13 December 1812-26 January 1814, From Cape Town to Canton, including stay at Macao* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 10).

<sup>36</sup>Walter H. Medhurst, *China: Its State and Prospects, with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel* (London: John Snow, 1838), 260; William Milne, *A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China: (Now, in Connection with the Malay, Denominated the Ultra-Ganges Missions) Accompanied with Miscellaneous Remarks on the Literature, History, and Mythology of China*, 97; Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 122-25.

<sup>37</sup>William Milne, *Journals, 31 January 1814-6 February 1815* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 11).

<sup>38</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-fourth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: Williams and Co., 1818), 8-9.

for several years, as one of a committee of delegates, was in the revision of existing Chinese versions of the Bible.<sup>39</sup>

*Liang Fa's Baptism in Malacca*

Long before Liang became a Christian, though he knew himself to be a sinner, he did not know how to be saved. He went every new and full moon to the Buddhist temple, and prayed to the gods to protect him. But though his body worshipped the gods, his heart still cherished evil thoughts and desires, like cheating and lying.<sup>40</sup> His previous contact with Morrison and exposure to the New Testament through the blocks he engraved, had some effect. They at least provoked questions.

Liang had not been engaged for only the printing of the New Testament with Morrison. Even in his brief stay in Canton Milne had made such rapid progress in his mastery of Chinese that he was able to write a treatise on the life of Christ. After the style had been corrected by Morrison the blocks were engraved by Liang, and the book, *Qiushi zhe yanxing zhen shiji* 求世者言行真史記 (*Treatise on the Life of Christ*), was printed in February 1815 in Canton.<sup>41</sup> At this time had Liang been deeply moved by the gospel? Following is Milne's opinion of Liang in his journal on 3 November 1816:

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<sup>39</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 344.

<sup>40</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun* 熟學真理論 (*Statements of Perfect Acquaintance with the True Doctrine*) (Canton: Religious Tracts Society, 1832), 14, 15; Walter H. Medhurst, *China: Its State and Prospects, with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel*, 308-09.

<sup>41</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 14.

He belongs to the province of Canton, is a single man, about 23 years of age,<sup>42</sup> and has no relation living, except a father and brother. He can read a plain book with ease, but has had only a common education; is of a steady character, and frugal habits. His temper is not so sociable and engaging as that of many other Chinese. He was formerly stiff and obstinate, and occasionally troublesome. Of late there has been scarcely any thing of this kind to complain of. He came with me from Canton, in April, 1815, to Malacca. He told me the other day, that he was employed in printing my *Treatise on the Life of Christ*. Whether he had been seriously impressed with the contents of that book, I am not able to say.<sup>43</sup>

A few months after arriving in Malacca, Liang sought help from an unknown Buddhist monk. The monk immediately sent him a volume of prayers, and suggested that he repeat them. According to the monk, if Liang recited them a thousand times, he would cancel all the debts of his former life. So Liang began to repeat the prayers. But one evening, while sitting alone, it came into his mind, that he had committed many real sins, and could hardly expect to obtain forgiveness by reciting prayers without performing a single virtuous action.<sup>44</sup>

Liang became very anxious about his spiritual state. He attended regular indoor meetings for employees held by Milne, but his heart was not interested. Sometimes he looked at the Scriptures and heard them explained, but he did not fully comprehend their meaning. Meanwhile, he heard Milne preach the doctrine of atonement through Jesus, and asked what was meant by Jesus making atonement for sin. The missionary told him that Jesus was the Son of God sent into the world to suffer for the sins of human beings in

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<sup>42</sup>At this time, Liang was 28 years old according to Chinese tradition (Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 15). It means he was 27 years old.

<sup>43</sup>William Milne, *Journals, 30 December 1815-4 January 1817*; London Missionary Society, *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 4, 411.

<sup>44</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 15; Walter H. Medhurst, *China: Its State and Prospects, with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel*, 309.

order that all who believe in Him might obtain salvation: if someone believes in Jesus, God will receive him or her as His adopted child, and in the world to come will bestow on him or her everlasting life.<sup>45</sup>

On returning to his room he thought: “I am a great sinner, and if I do not depend on the merits of Christ, how can God forgive me?”<sup>46</sup> It was clear that his struggle over sin and guilt could not be resolved by the traditional prescriptions of Chinese religions. He came to believe that only in the gospel could he find grace of God and forgiveness of his own sin by God. Then he determined to become a disciple of Jesus and requested baptism.<sup>47</sup>

At baptism Milne asked Liang the following questions, and Liang’s answers proved he had as a firm foundation which would keep him “a new man” through the next forty years of his life.

*Question 1.* Have you truly turned from idols, to worship and serve the living and true God, the creator of heaven and earth and all things?

*Answer.* This is my heart’s desire.

*Q. 2.* Do you know and feel that you are a sinful creature, totally unable to save yourself?

*A.* I know it.

*Q. 3.* Do you really, from your heart, believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and Saviour of the world; and do you trust in him alone for salvation?

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<sup>45</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 17-21; Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection* (Hong Kong: China Mail Office, 1854), 15.

<sup>46</sup>Walter H. Medhurst, *China: Its State and Prospects, with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel*, 310; Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 15.

<sup>47</sup>William Milne, *A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China: (Now, in Connection with the Malay, Denominated the Ultra-Ganges Missions) Accompanied with Miscellaneous Remarks on the Literature, History, and Mythology of China*, 177.

A. This is my heart's desire.

Q. 4. Do you expect any worldly advantage, profit, or gain, whatever, by your becoming a Christian?

A. None: I receive baptism because it is my duty.

Q. 5. Do you resolve from this day till the day of your death, to live in obedience to all the commandments and ordinance of God; and in justice and righteousness of life before men?

A. This is my determination; but I fear my strength is not equal to it.<sup>48</sup>

Liang was the first convert for Milne's mission. The occasion so impressed him that Milne left a careful record of the event. In his journal under the date of "Sabbath, November 3, 1816," he wrote:

At the twelve o'clock this day I baptized, in the name of the adorable Trinity, Leang-Keung-Fah [Liang Fa], whose name has been already mentioned. The service was performed privately, in a room of the mission-house. Care had been taken, by private conversation, instruction, and prayer, to prepare him for this sacred ordinance: this had been continued for a considerable time. Finding him still steadfast in his wish to become a Christian, I baptized him. The change produced in his sentiments and conduct is, I hope, the effect of Christian truth, and of that alone,—yet, who of mortals can know the heart? Several searching questions were proposed to him in private; and an exercise suited to the case of a heathen candidate for baptism, composed and given to him to read and meditate upon.

On my part, the ordinance was dispensed with mingled affection, joy, hope, and fear. May he be made faithful unto death; and as he is the first fruits of this branch of the mission, may an abundant harvest follow to the joy of the church, and the honour of Christ.<sup>49</sup>

Since his baptism, some private means have been used to increase his knowledge; to impress his heart more deeply; and to strengthen his faith.

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<sup>48</sup>William Milne, *Journals, 30 December 1815-4 January 1817*; London Missionary Society, *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 4, 411-12.

<sup>49</sup>William Milne, *Journals, 30 December 1815-4 January 1817*; London Missionary Society, *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 4, 412-13.

After his baptism, Liang continued to work with Milne as a printer and he trained young Chinese printers. He also wrote articles for *Cha shisu meiyue tongji zhuan*, Milne's monthly Chinese magazine. He used a pen name *Xueshanzhe* (學善者, student of virtue or one who learns to do good)<sup>50</sup> or *Xueshan jushi* (學善居士, retired student of virtue).<sup>51</sup> In June 1817, Walter Henry Medhurst arrived at Malacca, procured a printing press and fonts of English and Malay type, and taught printers to set up in English and Malay and to use the press. The printing of the Chinese Bible and tracts from blocks continued under Liang's supervision.<sup>52</sup>

In April 1819, Liang returned to China to visit his family and to find a wife. He found his family and friends wholly given to idolatry. He took his Chinese Bible, not yet quite complete, and prepared a tract which included a few of the clearest and most important portions of Scripture that deal with God as Creator, the sin of idolatry, and the need of repentance and faith in Christ (2 Timothy 3:15; Hebrew 2; James 1-5; 1 Peter 3, 4; 2 Peter 2; and 1 John 1:8, 9). It also contained the Ten Commandments and three hymns and prayers.<sup>53</sup> Liang entitled it *Jiushi lu cuoyao luejie* 救世錄撮要略解 (A

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<sup>50</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 22.

<sup>51</sup>Cf. Alexander Wylie, *Notes on Chinese Literature: With Introductory Remarks on the Progressive Advancement of the Art and a List of Translations from the Chinese into Various European Languages*, 22.

<sup>52</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-fifth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: F. Westley, 1819), 29-30.

<sup>53</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 22.

*Brief Explanatory Abstract of the Plan of World Salvation*).<sup>54</sup> With thirty-seven leaves or seventy-four pages, but it was the first tract composed and printed by a Chinese Christian.<sup>55</sup>

Liang took the manuscript to Canton and showed it to Morrison. Having received the missionary's approval he printed two hundred copies which he intended to take back to the country and circulate among his fellow villagers.<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately the authorities heard about Liang's activities, arrested him, and destroyed the blocks and books, before he could leave Canton.<sup>57</sup> After two days Morrison procured his release. But Liang was beaten thirty blows on the legs with a five-foot long bamboo rod and released only after paying a fine of seventy dollars,<sup>58</sup> precious money he had earned in Malacca and meant for his family.<sup>59</sup> The beating and fine did not dissuade Liang from continuing to spread the gospel.

In the spring of 1820, he returned to Malacca. There was much to be done at Malacca. Morrison had translated the New Testament in 1813, and, at last, on 25

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<sup>54</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 25.

<sup>55</sup>George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 33.

<sup>56</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 25.

<sup>57</sup>Robert Morrison, "Letter from Canton, 14 November 1819," (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 2, no. 1B).

<sup>58</sup>“銀子七十餘員” (about seventy dollars of silver) (Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 25).

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 25-26; Robert Morrison, "Letter from Canton, 26 November 1819," (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 2, no. 1C).



November 1819, Morrison and Milne completed their translation of the Old Testament.<sup>60</sup>

On that day Morrison wrote to the Directors of the LMS and the following were his concluding paragraphs.

To have Moses, David, and the Prophets—Jesus Christ and his Apostles—declaring to the inhabitants of China, in their own language, the wonderful works of God, indicates, I hope, the speedy introduction of a happier era in these parts of the world; and I trust that the gloomy darkness of pagan skepticism will be dispelled by *the day-spring from on high*; and the gilded idols of *Budh*, and the numberless images which fill this land, will one day assuredly fall to the ground, before the forces of God's word, as the idol Dagon fell before the ark.

These are my anticipations, although there appears not the least opening at present. A bitter aversion to the name of our blessed Saviour, and to any book which contains his name or his doctrine, is felt and cherished. However, this does not induce me to despair.<sup>61</sup>

The major task now was the carving of those Chinese characters and the printing of the Chinese Bible. That task was interrupted when Liang had to return to Canton towards the end of 1820. His wife Li-shi (黎氏),<sup>62</sup> whom he had married on his previous visit, was about to give birth. Great was his delight when a boy Jinde (進德) was born. While Liang was home, Li-shi confessed Jesus Christ as her Savior. She was the first known Protestant woman in China to make such a profession for the cause of Christ. But how was she to receive the baptism which had been so precious an

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<sup>60</sup>The portion between Deuteronomy and Job had been done by Milne, while the rest by Morrison. Cf. London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-fifth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 26 and *The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-sixth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: F. Westley, 1820), 20-21.

<sup>61</sup>*The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-sixth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 20-21; Eliza Morrison, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, and Longmans, 1839), 11-12.

<sup>62</sup>It means “a woman from the Li family.”

experience for him? The long journey to Morrison in Macao or Milne in Malacca with the little child seemed impossible. Should the ordinance of initiation to the church be delayed? It is not clear how the decision was reached, but finally Liang baptized her.<sup>63</sup>

In 1821, Liang returned to Malacca, this time to be enrolled as a student at the Anglo-Chinese College.<sup>64</sup> He brought three new workers back with him to expedite the work. The text of the Chinese Bible, comprising twenty-one volumes, had to be cut and printed in three phases. By 20 May 1823, the printing of the Old and New Testaments was finished.<sup>65</sup> Morrison and Milne could proudly say that the whole Chinese Version of the Scripture was ready.<sup>66</sup>

#### *A Native Evangelist*

On 2 June 1822, William Milne died at thirty-seven years of age.<sup>67</sup> Just three years earlier, cholera had taken the lives of his wife, Rachel Milne, and two young

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<sup>63</sup>According to Liang's autobiography, she did not seek re-baptism by a missionary. It is not clear whether Morrison discount her baptism because Liang did it. Cf. Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 27; George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 36.

<sup>64</sup>He studied one-and-a-half years till 1823. See Chapter One for a detailed discussion of the college.

<sup>65</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirtieth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: F. Westley, 1824), 46-48.

<sup>66</sup>In fact, the first Chinese Bible was completed by Joshua Marshman (1768-1837) a Baptist missionary to India, in 1822-1823. He was assisted by Johannes Lassar, an Armenian born and educated in Macao. Owing to a lack of good scholarship, the translation never gained wide acceptance. Cf. Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China* (Nettetal, Germany: Steyler Verlag, 1999), 56-57.

<sup>67</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Twenty-ninth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: F. Westley, 1823), 33-35.

children. In 1823, Morrison visited Malacca twice to assess the situation. He stayed there for five-and-a-half months but could not make a conclusive decision.<sup>68</sup> With all the uncertainties in Malacca, Liang felt that it was time to return to Canton. And so in 1823, he was reunited with his father, wife, and young son. On 20 November, he presented his son Liang Jinde to Morrison for baptism.<sup>69</sup>

In December, Morrison returned to England with copies of the Chinese Bible, his first visit home in sixteen years. He left China with sadness: three years earlier, his wife, Mary Morrison, had died. Before leaving China, Morrison appointed Liang as a native evangelist of the London Missionary Society and placed all the mission affairs in Canton under his charge.<sup>70</sup>

In quitting China for Europe, it was a subject of deep regret to Dr. Morrison, that it was not in his power to leave behind him a Representative of the Society, who should fulfil[!], during his absence, those services which he himself had been accustomed to discharge in the capacity of Missionary. This regret was, however, in some degree mitigated, by Dr. Morrison feeling himself justified, after a careful review of the whole case, in affording to a Chinese Christian a sanction to his endeavours to promote Christianity among his own countrymen, in China. The Native in question was accordingly dedicated by prayer, and the laying on of hands, to the work of an Evangelist; but he will, at the same time, pursue his secular calling as the means of support, receiving only a small annual stipend for the duties performed by him in discharge of his sacred official obligations.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirtieth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 46-47.

<sup>69</sup>Robert Morrison, "Letter from Canton, 20 November 1823," (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 2, no. 2C).

<sup>70</sup>Liang Fa was officially registered as "Native Teacher" (1824-1828) and "Native Assistant" (1831-1837) in the reports of the Directors to the General Meetings of the London Missionary Society.

<sup>71</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirtieth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 45.

*A Native Preacher*

On 19 September 1826, Morrison, re-married to Elizabeth Armstrong, returned to China. He made his home in Macao but each year, from August to March, he proceeded to Canton. He was still employed as a translator by the East India Company which gave him freedom of travel and the right to live in China.<sup>72</sup>

In 1827, Liang was ordained by Morrison as a preacher and the London Missionary Society welcomed him: “It will rejoice the hearts of the members of the Society to be informed, that Leang-a-fa, the Chinese Convert, mentioned in former Reports, has been ordained to preach the Gospel to his countrymen.”<sup>73</sup> In a letter to the London Missionary Society on 18 September 1827, Liang manifested his own resolution to evangelize fellow Chinese, and, then, expressed grateful thanksgiving to God and the London Mission Society:

The men of my country are blindly bigoted to the worship of idols, and know not the only true God, nor do they know that man has a precious soul. Hence my heart is stirred up with intense desire to learn perspicuously the righteous principles of the true way, that I may exhort and teach my countrymen to reject the false and revert to the true; then shall I not render nugatory God’s grace in preserving me, and our Lord’s energies in redeeming and saving the world; nor shall I forget the heart which induced the teachers of your honoured country to cross the ocean ten thousand miles, and come to my poor country, and, with a painful and intense expenditure of mind, translate the true principles of the Gospel. Besides, for upwards of ten years there has been, in this cause, a great expenditure of gold, all which indicates the abundance of love and benevolence, flowing forth to others from the true believers of your honoured land. And those of this land who shall believe in the Lord, will all look up with gratitude to, and feel the benefit of this great beneficence.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Robert Morrison, “Letter from Canton, 5 November 1826,” (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 2, no. 2E.)

<sup>73</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirty-fourth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: Westley and Davis, 1828), 23.

<sup>74</sup>Liang Fa, “Letter from Canton, 18 September 1827,” (Council for World

From his days in Malacca, Liang had realized the special role that small volumes of Chinese Christian tracts could play. They could be composed to meet specific needs. Large numbers could be printed in a short time and they could be passed on discreetly in places which forbade open evangelism. In 1828, Liang wrote several Christian tracts in Chinese. Two of them are as follows: *Shuxue shengli luelun* 熟學聖理略論 (*A Brief Explanatory Statement of Perfect Acquaintance with the Holy Doctrine*)<sup>75</sup> and *Zhenli wenda qianjie* 真理問答淺解 (*Simple Explanations to the Questions and Answers of the Truth*).<sup>76</sup> The former tract, nine leaves or 18 pages, was an autobiographical sketch of the author's Chinese religious life, conversion to Christianity, baptism by Milne, and subsequent circumstances. The latter tract, 14 leaves or 28 pages, was a catechism on the Ten Commandments and the duties of a Christian.<sup>77</sup>

Over the next five years, a handful of persons came to know the Lord through the work of Liang. It must be remembered that, for the average Chinese, Christian teachings about creation, the fall of human beings, the incarnation of God, atonement for sin, the resurrection, and second coming, all sounded very strange. Neither Confucian classics nor Buddhist scriptures had prepared their minds for these novel doctrines.

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Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 2, no. 3B); London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirty-fourth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 24. It was originally written in Chinese, but translated into English by Morrison.

<sup>75</sup>The British Library has a copy and Harvard University another.

<sup>76</sup>Harvard University has a copy.

<sup>77</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 22.

Most persons dismissed the evangelist after a while. But a few, like the Athenians in Paul's time (Acts 17:19), inquired further.<sup>78</sup>

One such person who stayed to inquire further was Kwu Tinchong or Gu Tianqing (古天青). In 1828, on a journey back to his home village, Liang led the young school teacher to Christ. Somewhat more educated than most villagers, Kwu showed potential for service in the cause of the gospel. After Liang baptized him,<sup>79</sup> the two opened a small village school together hoping that it might be a witness to the gospel:

Leang-a-fa, whose appointment to the ministry of the Gospel was mentioned at the last anniversary, has removed to a village about 100 miles from Canton, but continues steadfast in his profession. It is peculiarly interesting to observe, that this native convert, who, during Dr. Morrison's absence in Europe, endeavoured in every way possible to make himself useful to his countrymen, is still giving evidence of the sincerity of his profession, by the zeal he manifests for the glory of God, and the salvation of those around him. His time has been spent in speaking to the people in the country the word of life. Nor has this been without a blessing: for we are informed, that two young men had listened attentively to Afa's instructions; and that one of these men, who is of the learned profession, having been converted to the truth, had received the rite of baptism. It is encouraging to learn that this new convert continues faithful to the Lord. Afa and he intended, in the beginning of the year, to open a charity-school in the village where they reside, and to introduce Christian books into that school. Should they succeed, it will be the *first* attempt of the kind has been made in the interior of China.<sup>80</sup>

But this new experiment did not work. The villagers opposed their efforts, saying that the two taught a wicked superstition and the school would mislead the children. They were also accused of selling the country to foreigners. The school was closed and the two were forced to leave the village. It was a demonstration of what the

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<sup>78</sup>Bobby E. K. Sng, *I Must Sow the Seed: Liang Afa, China's First Preacher*, 24.

<sup>79</sup>Robert Morrison, "Letter from Canton, 4 February 1828," (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 2, no. 3B.)

<sup>80</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirty-fifth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: Westley and Davis, 1829), 20.

Chinese Christians thought of the importance of learning, and of the essential harmony between ancient Chinese tradition and the Christian religion. But this new innovation was unsuccessful.<sup>81</sup>

One conversion that brought special joy to Liang was Kew Agang or Qu Ya'ang (屈亞昂). They had known each other since their Malacca days when Kew had worked as a junior printer. Showing interest in the gospel but never quite ready to be a Christian, he was finally led to Christ by his longtime friend. In 1830, Morrison baptized Kew, and in 1832,<sup>82</sup> appointed him as a "Native Assistant."<sup>83</sup> In the middle of that year, Liang and Kew made a six-week journey inland from Canton covering two-hundred-fifty miles, "for the purpose of instructing their countrymen in the knowledge of Christ, and

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<sup>81</sup>Cf. "But the time had not arrived when such an innovation could pass unchallenged. After a few months opposition was stirred up. It was said that A-fa was disseminating a wicked superstition, and that his purpose was to sell China to the foreigners who employed him. The school was broken up, and A-fa had to flee for his life to the shelter of Macao. Nothing further is known of Teacher Kwu [Gu]" (George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 50).

<sup>82</sup>"About the beginning of 1830, Dr. Morrison, at Macao, baptized a Chinese of the name of Kew-ha-gang, who, it was intended, should assist Leang-a-fa in the distribution of tracts, which Afa had printed in the interior. Leang-a-fa, the first fruits of his labour, Dr. Morrison describes as dead to this world and living unto Christ, is occupied in studying the Scriptures, writing and printing tracts, and visiting from house to house, testifying to his countrymen the Gospel of salvation. He also teaches Agong and their two sons" [London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirty-seventh General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: Westley and Davis, 1831), 25]. Cf. George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 51-52.

<sup>83</sup>Kew Agang was officially registered till 1837 as a "Native Assistant" in the reports of the Directors to the General Meetings of the London Missionary Society. Cf. London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirty-eighth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: Westley and Davis, 1832), 28 and London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Forty-third General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: William Tyler, 1837), 25.

distributing religious tracts among them, which had been written and printed by themselves.”<sup>84</sup>

In February 1830, two American Congregational missionaries, Elijah Bridgman (1801-1861) and David Abeel (1804-1846), sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,<sup>85</sup> arrived in China. Morrison had the pleasure of welcoming them.<sup>86</sup> They heard of Liang and requested a meeting with him. On 25 March 1830, they met in the home of Morrison.<sup>87</sup> A year later, Bridgman agreed to take Jinde, Liang’s eleven year old son, under his wing and to educate him. Jinde, a bright young man, fluent in English and Chinese, seemed to represent China’s Christian future.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirty-seventh General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 25. There is a journal written by Liang recording his work from 28 March till 6 November 1830 in the London Missionary Society Archives. He wrote that most of the time Kew associated with Liang was the six weeks spent together in the mission trip. Cf. Liang Fa, *Riji yanxing* [日記言行, *Journal of Leangafa: From 28 March till 6 November 1830* (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 14 and no. 14A)].

<sup>85</sup>The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was organized by American Congregationalists in 1810. Like the London Missionary Society, its early missionaries came from various denominations. Cf. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *First Ten Annual Reports of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, with Other Documents of the Board* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1834), 9-14.

<sup>86</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirty-seventh General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 25.

<sup>87</sup>Robert Morrison, “Letter from Canton, 26 March 1830,” (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 3, no. 1A).

<sup>88</sup>Bridgman maintained a lifelong relationship with Jinde and supported him. Later Jinde assisted Bridgman when he became Secretary of the American Legation to China in 1844 and again when he was translating the Bible in 1848. After the death of his father, Jinde was formally received into the Baptist church fellowship by Bridgman.



In 1831-1832, Liang was engaged in printing the *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言 (*Good Words to Admonish the Age, being Nine Miscellaneous Christian Tracts*)<sup>89</sup> at the expense of the Religious Tract Society.<sup>90</sup> It consists of nine small tracts or books.<sup>91</sup> The Harvard University copy is bound in a yellow paper cover on which is printed, in English, the bibliographical data including the date of publication. Each page has eight

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Cf. Eliza J. G. Bridgman, *The Life and Labors of Elijah Coleman Bridgman* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1864), 167; Eliza J. G. Bridgman, *Daughters of China: Or, Sketches of Domestic Life in the Celestial Empire* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853), 83-84.

<sup>89</sup>The London Missionary Society Archives has two copies. Harvard University has a copy. All of these copies were printed in Canton, in early 1832. But the New York Public Library has another copy printed in Malacca, in late 1832, which contains an additional five-page table of contents. This later edition printed in Malacca has twenty Chinese characters in each line, while the earlier edition issued in Canton has twenty-four Chinese characters in each line. But both were printed with wooden blocks of the same characters.

<sup>90</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirty-ninth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: Westley and Davis, 1833), 19. The Religious Tract Society, founded in 1799, was the original name of a major British publisher of Christian literature intended initially for evangelism. The founders were of the same type of evangelicals who founded the London Missionary Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society, for example David Bogue (1750-1825) and George Burder (1752-1832). Cf. William Jones, *The Jubilee Memorial of the Religious Tract Society, Containing a Record of Its Origin, Proceedings, and Results, A.D. 1799 to A.D. 1849* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1850), 11-45.

<sup>91</sup>Volume 1 is entitled *Zhenzhuan jishi wen* 真傳救世文 (*True Accounts of the Salvation of the World*); Volume 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun* 崇真闢邪論 (*Statements of Following the True and Rejecting the False*); Volume 3, *Zhenjing shengli* 真經聖理 (*Sacred Teachings from the True Scriptures*); Volume 4, *Shengjing zajie* 聖經雜解 (*Miscellaneous Explanations of the Holy Scriptures*); Volume 5, *Shengjing zalun* 聖經雜論 (*Miscellaneous Statements of the Holy Scriptures*); Volume 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun* 熟學真理論 (*Statements of Perfect Acquaintance with the True Doctrine*); Volume 7, *Anwei huofu pian* 安危獲福篇 (*On Obtaining Happiness Whether in Peace or in Peril*); Volume 8, *Zhenjing geyan* 真經格言 (*Excellent Sayings from the True Scriptures*); Volume 9, *Gujing jiyao* 古經輯要 (*Important Selections from the Ancient Scriptures*).

lines of twenty-four Chinese characters. There are 236 leaves or 465 pages, about 90,000 characters, in all. The page layout of the book is pleasing to the eyes. And common people must have appreciated the presence of punctuation marks, which were rare in Chinese publications of that time. Liang's poor literary style, however, shows his lack of a thorough education, and his extensive biblical quotations and endless repetitions would not have enticed Confucian classical scholars to read his work.<sup>92</sup>

In addition to Liang's original compositions, the *Quanshi liangyan* contains excerpts from the Morrison-Milne's Chinese translation of the Bible: Genesis, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Matthew, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Hebrew, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation. These Scriptures are accompanied by Liang's commentaries. There are ten homiletic essays by himself and an account of his Christian conversion.<sup>93</sup> The *Quanshi liangyan* introduces such biblical themes as Noah and the flood, redemption by Christ, the Sermon on the Mount, and teachings of St. Paul.<sup>94</sup>

The ideas are predominantly Christian, but are mingled with elements of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and folk beliefs. After his conversion to Christianity, from the Scriptures Liang adopted the concept of an almighty and omnipresent God who created heaven and earth in six days and who is king of kings, and ruler of all nations.

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<sup>92</sup>Ssu-yu Teng, *Historiography of the Taiping Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 2.

<sup>93</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 4-15.

<sup>94</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 4, *Shengjing zajie*, 16-19; vol. 3, *Zhenjing shengli*, 12-17; vol. 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun*, 26-31, and vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen*, 18-25.

Under this almighty and omnipresent God, all nations, races, and individuals are equal. All other religions must be renounced and all idols destroyed.<sup>95</sup>

Liang carefully explains heaven, hell, the Final Judgment, the Ten Commandments, the observation of the Sabbath, and the importance of filial piety for Christians. He strongly condemns the use of wine and opium, witchcraft, covetousness, adultery, and stealing. Women should not wear makeup or jewelry and should be quiet and obedient, not meddlesome, and have an upright and severe deportment.<sup>96</sup> The *Quanshi liangyan* not only condemns the Qing dynasty's religious and secular culture, but also offers a blueprint for the redemption of both Chinese society and the individual by the Almighty and Omnipresent God of Christianity.

In October 1833, the imperial literary examination of Guangdong Province was held in Canton.<sup>97</sup> Liang and two colleagues stood at the entrance to the examination hall and distributed Christian tracts, including the *Quanshi liangyan*, to the candidates. At this time, according to Walter H. Medhurst, the *Quanshi liangyan* could have been given to Hong Xiuquan, the future leader of the Taiping Movement.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 3, *Zhenjing shengli*, 8-11, 21-24.

<sup>96</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 9, *Gujing jiyao*, 18-21; vol. 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun*, 10, 14; vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 9-12; vol. 8, *Zhenjing geyan*, 7-10; and vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 20.

<sup>97</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Fortieth General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: Westley and Davis, 1834), 21.

<sup>98</sup>“The insurgent chief had in the first instance nothing but Afa's books before him: as far as we know, this was the original source of his information on religious matters, from the year 1833 to 1846; during which time he pondered over these books again and again, whilst he made them his textbooks in instructing his followers” [Walter H. Medhurst, “Connection Between Foreign Missionaries and the Kwang-se Insurrection,” *North China Herald*, No. 161 (27 August 1853)]. The date of Hong

The unremitted labours of Afa meet with a favourable reception from his countrymen. The Government of China patronises education, and confers honours and office as the reward of literary merit. The schools are annually inspected by Commissioners appointed by Government, and a general public examination is triennially held in each of the provincial cities of the empire. At these seasons the students from the towns and villages of the province repair to their chief city to compete for distinction and rewards. The population of the province of Canton is 19,000,000. An examination of the candidates of the district of Kwang-chou-foo, in this province, for literary honours, was held at Canton in October last. Leang-a-fa and two of his companions, urged by the motives which the Gospel supplies, entered the city at this time, distributing portions of Scripture and Tracts among the assembled multitudes of students who had come to the provincial city from towns and villages a hundred miles distant. In the most public manner Afa and two of his pupils presented them with religious books, which they received with great avidity; and many, after examining their contents, came back for more.<sup>99</sup>

### *A Turning Point in Early Christian Missions in China*

The year 1834 was a turning point in early Christian missions in China. First, on 1 August 1834, Robert Morrison died: “On 1<sup>st</sup> August, Dr. Morrison closed his labours on earth, and departed to be with Jesus. This mournful event took place at Canton.”<sup>100</sup> Twenty-seven years earlier, he had come to China alone to commence the work on behalf of Protestantism, and later translated a complete Chinese Bible with the help of his colleague William Milne. Nevertheless, subsequent to the death, his little flock of native Christians became exposed to much persecution by the Chinese authorities, and

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Xiuquan’s acquiring the *Quanshi liangyan* is disputed. In the next chapter the date will be discussed in more detail.

<sup>99</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Fortieth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 21-22.

<sup>100</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Forty-first General Meeting of the Missionary Society* (London: Westley and Davis, 1835), 26.

were punished with fines and imprisonment.<sup>101</sup> Their release was only procured by the payment of a large sum by John R. Morrison, son of the late Robert Morrison and now an official translator for the British Government.<sup>102</sup>

Second, on 16 August 1834, trade relations between Britain and China were severed, owing to the insistence of William John Napier (1786-1834),<sup>103</sup> the British Superintendent of Trade, that he should be permitted to communicate directly with the Chinese authorities, and not be forced to use the customary medium of the Chinese *hong* or factory merchants. The year before, the British Parliament had ended the East India Company's monopoly of the China trade, and, on 25 July 1834, Napier arrived at Canton with three frigates: the *Imogene*, the *Andromache*, and *Louisa*.<sup>104</sup> As a result, "All trade with Britain was stopped and all Chinese who assisted them as interpreters, compradors,

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid. Cf. Walter H. Medhurst, "Connection Between Foreign Missionaries and the Kwang-se Insurrection."

<sup>102</sup>He was already appointed as a translator for British merchants in Canton in 1830. Cf. Robert Morrison, "Letter from Canton, 14 November 1830."

<sup>103</sup>Lord Napier was a British Navy officer, politician and diplomat. In December 1833, upon the ending of the East India Company's monopoly on trade in the Far East, he was appointed as the first Chief Superintendent of Trade at Canton. He arrived at Macao on 15 July 1834, and Canton ten days later, with the mission of expanding British trade into inner China. Lacking the necessary diplomatic and commercial experience, he was not successful in achieving the objective. Having failed to secure a meeting with the Viceroy of Canton who refused any form of correspondence with an alien, and being refused any further trade concessions, Napier became in favor of military actions, including the proposal of taking over Hong Kong. He sent two frigates, the *Imogene* and the *Andromache*, towards Canton, where they were lost. He then accepted defeat and left for Macao, where he died of a fever in less than a month's time. Cf. W. Travis Hanes and Frank Sanello, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2002), 26-32.

<sup>104</sup>Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 175.

hired servants, water-carriers, boatmen and so on were denounced as traitors.”<sup>105</sup> Now there was no more shelter for the East India Company or the missionaries.

Third, in 1834, the imperial literary examination was held in Canton. For three or four years Liang had been circulating the Christian tracts, and, this year, on 20 August, Liang and three colleagues, Woo Achang, Chow Asan, and Leang Asan, stood at the entrance to the examination hall to distribute tracts to the candidates.<sup>106</sup> On the first day, over five thousand tracts were handed out. These were received gladly by the candidates without any sign of disturbance. The next day five thousand more were distributed to the candidates. On the third day, after several hundred copies had been given out, the Chinese authorities arrested Woo Achang and brought him, with the tracts, before a magistrate. However, the magistrate dismissed the case as being of little importance.<sup>107</sup> In the past, implementation of the edict against evangelization had been uneven, depending upon local conditions and any new directives from the central government. The matter would have rested had it not been for Napier’s posted statement in Chinese, describing the state of relations between Britain and China.

The Chinese authorities could not believe that foreigners could write and print Napier’s document in Chinese.<sup>108</sup> They assumed that some local Chinese must have assisted the foreigners. As Woo Achang, Liang’s companion charged with circulating

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<sup>105</sup>Bobby E. K. Sng, *I Must Sow the Seed: Liang Afa, China’s First Preacher*, 35.

<sup>106</sup>Walter H. Medhurst, *China: Its State and Prospects, with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel*, 278, 281.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 278-79.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, 279.

Christian tracts, had recently been brought before the magistrate, Liang and his co-workers must have assisted Napier in preparing the document. The magistrate issued a stern proclamation and the Chinese authorities began apprehending persons and seizing property. Liang recalled the events that followed:

On the twenty-fifth, the chief magistrate sent officers to my house, and seized Chow Asan, with his partner Akae, and brought them up for trial. Akae refused to afford any information, when the magistrate commanded the attendants to give him forty blows on the face, which rendered him unable to speak. When Chow Asan was examined, he disclosed everything. The next day, the magistrate sent a number of men in pursuit of me, but being unsuccessful in their search, they seized three of the printers, with four hundred copies of the scripture lessons, and the block, which were taken to the office of the chief magistrate.<sup>109</sup>

Chow Asan's confession revealed to the authorities the full extent of what was still illegal, the printing of religious literature in Chinese. Liang and his colleagues, of course, had no dealings with Napier and his document but the Chinese authorities did not know this. They were determined to put an end to all operations that threatened the state. A hundred soldiers were sent to Liang's home village in Gaoming County to search for him and other members of his family. Failing to find them, the soldiers arrested other clansmen and destroyed property.<sup>110</sup>

In Canton, confusion and panic reigned. The printing operation was closed. To avoid detection, a quantity of metallic type used for printing the Scriptures and Christian literature was melted down and valuable blocks were destroyed. Workers who had not been arrested fled the city. The infant church of fourteen converts was dispersed. Bridgman's secret school, comprised of seven boys, was broken up. Under these

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<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 280-81.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 281.

circumstances, Liang and his son, Jinde, departed for a season to Malacca, then to Singapore.<sup>111</sup>

Liang Fa did not regard Singapore as a strange island. In his early days at Malacca, Liang had seen a number of the LMS workers who had gone there first, for a time of orientation and language study, and later dispersed to other stations in the region. In 1834, Singapore missionary life strengthened with the arrival of missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Their intention was to establish a permanent station from which workers would go to other parts of Southeast Asia. Peter Parker (1804-1888), the first Protestant medical missionary to China, later famed for his work in Canton, opened a clinic in the Telok Ayer area and treated hundreds of patients over a six-month period.<sup>112</sup> Others started elementary schools for boys, reaching a total enrolment of three hundred at their peak. But the most important work was printing. Earlier, in Canton the Americans set up a printing press but with the 1834 crackdown, they decided to transfer all Chinese printing to Singapore. The ABCFM agreed to buy from the LMS its large printing press there. Liang, by now well-known for supervising printing of the Chinese Bible, agreed to assist the new enterprise.<sup>113</sup> His son, Jinde, was to continue his education under the care of the Americans.

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<sup>111</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Forty-first General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 26.

<sup>112</sup>Bobby E. K. Sng, *I Must Sow the Seed: Liang Afa, China's First Preacher*, 40.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.



Peter Parker, after a stint in Singapore, arrived in Canton in August 1835 and opened a clinic, later called the Ophthalmic Hospital.<sup>114</sup> The clinic was soon drawing three hundred patients per month. Four students studied under him. They watched him lance abscesses, excise tumors, and remove cataracts.<sup>115</sup> Parker formed the Medical Missionary Society (MMS) which hoped to remove whatever suspicions and contempt the Chinese had toward foreigners through the provision of good medical care and, in more favorable circumstances, to provide opportunities for missionaries to share the gospel. After the ministry in exile, in July 1839, Liang returned to Canton and, in 1840, began his ministry at the hospital by working as an evangelist. In his 1845 report, Parker noted with thankfulness the progress of the hospital and the ministry of Liang:

Our interest may be more easily conceived than expressed, as we have openly declared our object and the truths of the Gospel; or when we have looked upon the evangelist Liang Afah, and thought of him fleeing before the executioner of the imperial mandate to decapitate him, and of his long banishment from his native land, now returned from exile, earnestly and boldly declaring the truths of the gospel in the city[Canton] from which he had fled. Well did he call upon his audience to worship and give thanks to the God of heaven and earth for what he had done for them. With happy effect he dwelt upon the Savior's life and example, and pointing to the paintings and illustrations of curse, suspended around the hall of the hospital, informed his auditors that these were performed by his blessing and in conformity to his precepts and example; at the same time declaring the great truths which concerned them still more, that their souls had maladies which none but Christ himself could cure.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 82; Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: Norton & Company, 1996), 9.

<sup>115</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 218.

<sup>116</sup>Peter Parker, "Thirteenth Report of the Ophthalmic Hospital at Canton, including the Period from the 1st January 1844, to the 1st July 1845," *The Chinese Repository* 14, no. 10 (Oct. 1845): 461

Benjamin Hobson (1816-1873) of the LMS, who come to China in 1839<sup>117</sup> and worked in the MMS hospitals in Macao and Hong Kong, set up a dispensary in a western suburb of Canton. Since Robert Morrison's death in 1834, no LMS ministry had continued in the city. Hostility against the British was particularly strong, but Hobson believed that medical work could pave the way for a new beginning. It did not take long for the dispensary to gain acceptance by the Chinese. Extension of premises became necessary. Rooms were added for in-patients, living quarters were provided for the staff and a chapel was added.<sup>118</sup>

In 1848, when Hobson invited Liang to be an evangelist at the Hospital of Merciful Love, Liang readily agreed. At the hospital patient's attendance averaged one hundred-fifty daily and its weekly chapel service attracted two hundred. Four days in the week, Liang was at the hospital ministering to the spiritual needs of the patients, sometimes preaching, sometimes handing out tracts, but always praying.<sup>119</sup> On Sundays, he conducted the service in the chapel of the Hospital of Merciful Love in the morning and went to the Ophthalmic Hospital in the evening, now managed by the American Presbyterians, to help. Liang continued steadfast in the faith till his death on 12 April 1855.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 125.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid. Cf. Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 269.

<sup>119</sup>George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 103-104.

<sup>120</sup>For the death of Liang Fa, see Benjamin Hobson, "Letter from Canton, 13 April 1855," (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South

### *Summary*

Liang Fa was the first Chinese Protestant minister and evangelist. Liang was born in Gaoming County of Guangdong Province. Coming from a poor family, he quit formal studying at the age of 15 and went to work, first as a brush maker, then in printing, in Canton. In 1810 or 1811, he was employed in a printing house in the city. Even though it was illegal at the time to print materials related to Christianity, Robert Morrison sought Liang's help to print the Chinese version of the Bible that he and William Milne translated. It was through these close contacts with Morrison and his associate, Milne, that Liang began to have some understanding of the Christian faith. In 1815, as a result of the restrictions against the preaching of Christianity in China, Milne moved to Malacca and continued his missionary work among overseas Chinese. Liang was employed by Milne and went with him to Malacca. Gradually, Liang became a devoted Christian. He was baptized by Milne on 3 November 1816.

Liang's interest in evangelism continued to grow. In 1823, he was appointed as a native evangelist by Morrison, and in 1827, ordained as a native preacher under the auspices of the London Missionary Society. Liang went with another Chinese Christian, Kew Agang on a two hundred fifty mile trek in 1830, distributing Christian tracts. Liang's evangelising eventually went beyond Guangdong to Singapore and Malacca. He also started writing tracts and pamphlets introducing Chinese people to Christianity. One of the tracts was the *Quanshi liangyan* (1832), which might have prompted Hong

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China, Box 5, no. 4B) and, his son, Leang A-tih, "Letter from Canton, 23 August 1855," (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 5, no. 4B).

Xiuquan to establish the Society of God Worshippers. Hong later became the leader of the Taiping Movement which tried to establish a theocracy.<sup>121</sup>

In 1834, Liang's missionary work was threatened by the imperial Chinese government and he fled to Malacca, then to Singapore. He returned to China five years later at the dawn of the First Opium War. Liang did not support the war. He argued that if Britain waged war against China, the Chinese would not believe in the Bible and the British missionaries any more.<sup>122</sup> His effort was in vain. After the war, Liang continued his ministry as an evangelist in Canton. There he died in 1855. In the process of expanding the campus of Lingnan University—formerly Canton Christian College and now Zhongshan University—it came to light that his original grave was on property purchased for the expansion. He was reinterred in the center of the college campus on the site reserved for the college chapel. The site was dedicated 7 June 1920.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>Cf. Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 2004).

<sup>122</sup>George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855*, 85-86.

<sup>123</sup>“In the Summer of 1918 the annual conference of preachers from different parts of the Kwangtung province gathered at the Christian College. Mr. [W. K.] Chung conducted them to Liang A-fa's grave on Phoenix Hill, and as they stood around that hollowed spot—the first Christian group since the burial so long before—the present generation of evangelists was brought into touch with their noble predecessor, who had been almost completely forgotten. When the graves in that area removed the remains of Liang A-fa were reinterred at the centre of the college campus, on the site reserved for the college chapel. This now sacred plot was dedicated on Founder's Day—June 7, 1920. The second General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China met at Canton in 1930 and the delegates went on pilgrimage to the grave. The Moderator—Dr. C. Y. Cheng—conducted a memorial service and planted an *arbor vitae* (a tree of life)” (Ibid., 120).

The legacy of Liang Fa cannot be measured in terms of the numbers of new Christians with whom he worked. His ministry has to be seen in the context of the times in which he lived. By looking at these, we shall better appreciate certain aspects of the gospel which continue to speak to the church today. There was no evangelist or missionary like Liang, who placed emphasis on the production of Christian tracts to explain his understanding of Christianity to fellow Chinese.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Hong Xiuquan and His Connections with Christianity

The self-proclaimed Heavenly King, Younger Brother of Jesus Christ, and God's Chinese Son, Hong Xiuquan (洪秀全, 1814-1864), is an enigmatic character not only in Chinese history but also in Asian church history. He was from a Hakka (客家) peasant family in Guangdong Province (廣東省). The early history of the Hong family dates to the period when the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) controlled central China. During the seventeenth century, in order to avoid civil war, the family moved to Huaxian (花縣) or Hua County of Guangdong<sup>1</sup> and so Hong was a Hakka or guest settler:

The guest settlers had much to do with the [Taiping] revolution because they were often cheated by the original residents of Kwangsi and Kwangtung and they frequently had to fight against them for subsistence. They still spoke their own language which was different from the local dialect but closer to the common language. Most of them lived in mountainous areas, working hard for a bare livelihood. Gradually, they were characterized for a firm and strong spirit, brave in fighting and rich in independence and adventurousness. Both the men and the women, simple and naïve, were arduous workers who could stand any hardship because they were compelled to do so by their environment. Their women never had their feet bound and their ability to work hard was equal to that of the men. This was also necessitated by their economic environment. They had strong group spirit and organizing power which was another result of their historical environment. After the Manchus conquered China, most of the guest settlers remained unsundered for more than twenty years. They had a strong feeling against the Manchus and an equally strong feeling for restoring China to the Chinese. They were full of nationalistic sentiment and revolutionary spirit.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: Norton & Company, 1996), 26, 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ssu-yu Teng, *New Light on the History of the Taiping Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 50. Cf. Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (Taipei: Rainbow-Bridge Book Co., 1973), 10-11.

Four times in his life—in 1828, 1836, 1837, and 1843—Hong sat the civil service examinations at Canton, but each time he failed to become a scholar-official.<sup>3</sup> Though educated in the Confucian Classics, in 1843, he renounced traditional Chinese institutions in favor of reforms that reflected Protestant Christianity, which he understood imperfectly.<sup>4</sup>

The family name of the Heavenly King was really Hong (洪) and his original given name was Huoxiu (火秀).<sup>5</sup> In many Chinese histories Hong's family name was reported as Zhu (朱), Jiao (焦), Zheng (鄭), and some histories assert that Hong was adopted later. After the discovery of the genealogy of Hong's family as a result of field investigations by Chinese scholar Jen Yu-wen at Hong's birthplace, the real name of the Heavenly King has definitely been attested.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 13, 15, 19; Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 30, 46, 59-60.

<sup>4</sup>Robert. H. T. Lin, *The Taiping Revolution: A Failure of Two Missions* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979), 6-9.

<sup>5</sup>Upon attaining the age of manhood, Hong was given the name Hong Renkun (洪仁坤), marking his relationship to the Hong family. Then, after his illness and strange visionary experiences in 1837, he adopted Hong Xiuquan (洪秀全), his third name, as his literary name. Cf. Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection* (Hong Kong: China Mail Office, 1854), 5; Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 12; Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 49.

<sup>6</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 11. Jen Yu-wen has gathered sufficient evidence, including inscriptions on the tablets in Hong's ancestral temple and notations in Hong's clan record, to establish conclusively that Hong is the authentic family name of the Heavenly King.

*The Early Life and Education of Hong Xiuquan*

On 1 January 1814 Hong was born as the third son and fourth child of Hakka parents Hong Jingyang (洪競揚) and Wang-shi (王氏)<sup>7</sup> in Hua County of Guangdong Province.<sup>8</sup> According to the Chinese calendar the date of Hong's birth is the tenth day of the twelfth moon of the eighteenth year of Emperor Jiaqing (嘉慶帝, 1796-1820). The exact date of Hong's birth remained a matter of conjecture for many years with no less than nine different dates appearing in Chinese and foreign sources. Some Western authors have given the date as 1813.<sup>9</sup> These writers seem to have relied on Theodore Hamberg.<sup>10</sup> The explanation for Hamberg's mistake may be that the eighteenth year of Emperor Jiaqing corresponds for the most part to 1813. The correct date was worked out by Jen Yu-wen. He computed the date from the Chinese calendar of Hong's early activities recorded in the Taiping document, *Taiping tianri* 太平天日 (Taiping Heavenly Chronicle).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>It means "a woman from the Wang family."

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 12; Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 3-5; Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1966), 21.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas T. Meadows, *Desultory Notes on the Government and People of China, and on the Chinese Language: Illustrated with a Sketch of the Province of Kwang-Tung* (London: Wm. H. Allen, 1847), 74; Lindesay Brine, *The Taiping Rebellion in China: A Narrative of Its Rise and Progress Based on Original Documents and Information Obtained in China* (London: John Murray, 1862), 64; William J. Hail, *Tseng Kuo-fan and the Taiping Rebellion, with a Short Sketch of His Later Career* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), 33.

<sup>10</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 5.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 10; Franz Michael and



The population of Hong's village was about four hundred people, most of whom belonged to the Hong clan.<sup>12</sup> When Hong was six years old he was enrolled in the village primary school and was described as a diligent and bright student with a very good memory. He showed such promise that his family sacrificed to provide him a traditional education in the Confucian Classics. It was hoped that Hong would be successful in the literary examinations and thus be able to pursue a career as a government official and so bring honor and a chance for a better life for his immediate family and other relatives. For five or six years he learned by heart *Sishu* 四書 (*Four Books*)<sup>13</sup> and *Wujing* 五經 (*Five Classics*)<sup>14</sup>, *Xiaojing* 孝經 (*Classic of Filial Piety*),<sup>15</sup> and many model essays and poems. He also studied some history and other books.<sup>16</sup>

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Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 21 and Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, eds., vol. 2, *Documents and Comments* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1971), 51-76.

<sup>12</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 4.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Chapter Two, 11n.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Chapter Two, 12n.

<sup>15</sup>The *Classic of Filial Piety* is a Confucian classic treatise giving advice on filial piety; that is, how to behave towards a senior, such as a father, an elder brother, or ruler. It is not known who actually wrote the document or when it was written. It is attributed to a conversation between Confucius or Kong Zi (孔子, 551-479 BCE) and a disciple named Zeng Zi (曾子, 505-436 BCE). Cf. Alexander Wylie, *Notes on Chinese Literature: With Introductory Remarks on the Progressive Advancement of the Art and a List of Translations from the Chinese into Various European Languages* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Missions Press, 1867), 7.

<sup>16</sup>The major primary source for details on Hong Xiuquan's early life is the translated biography, written by his close associate and kinsman, Hong Rengan (洪仁玕, 1822-1864), that appears in Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*. Major works on the Taiping Movement that include Hong's early life and career are Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary*

Hong placed first in the district preliminary examination when he was about twelve. This distinction qualified him to take the triennial provincial examination at Canton. If selected at that stage he would be granted the title of *Xiucai* (秀才), also called *Shengyuan* (生員), or government scholar, which would admit him to the lower stratum of the gentry class. Moreover, he would be enrolled in a government school to prepare for subsequent examinations, the successful candidates of which could hope to receive appointments as officials.<sup>17</sup> In 1828, Hong made the thirty-mile trip to Canton for the provincial examination accompanied by his father. When he failed the examination, his family's financial straits did not permit further full-time study, so he helped with farm work. However, in 1829, a wealthier friend invited Hong to study for a year as his companion and the following year Hong returned to his village and was hired as a village school teacher.<sup>18</sup> This was an unusual alternative, instead of full-time study, for educated young men who failed to attain the *Xiucai* degree.

From the age of sixteen to twenty-nine, from 1830 to 1843, Hong was engaged in being a village school teacher. During these years he lived surrounded by his family and he married twice. His first marriage, at about eighteen, to Lai-shi (賴氏), a Hakka girl of the Lai clan, resulted in two daughters but following the birth of a son both mother and infant died. And, then, he married another Lai-shi (賴氏) from the same Lai clan.

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*Movement*, 10-28 and Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 21-31.

<sup>17</sup>Chung-li Chang, *The Chinese Gentry* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), 4-5.

<sup>18</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 5-6.

Later, in 1849, this second wife gave birth to a son. The son, Hong Tianguai (洪天貴), also known as Hong Tianguifu (洪天貴福), became the Young King or Junior Lord, heir to the Heavenly Kingship.<sup>19</sup>

*Hong Xiuquan's Contact with the Quanshi Liangyan*

In 1836, when he was twenty-four years old, Hong Xiuquan went to Canton for his second attempt at the provincial examination,<sup>20</sup> but he failed. According to Hamberg's biography of Hong, one day while he was walking in the street, he saw a Western man "dressed according to the custom of the Ming dynasty, in a coat with wide sleeves, and his hair tied in a knot upon his head"<sup>21</sup> with a middle-aged Chinese interpreter at his side. A large number of Chinese people gathered around him, and without waiting for a question from their side, this man revealed their desires. Hong approached him, intending to ask if he would receive the *Xiucui* degree, but he prevented Hong by saying: "You will attain the highest rank, but do not be grieved, for grief will made [make] you sick. I congratulate your virtuous father."<sup>22</sup> The next day he met with two men in the street. One of them had in his possession a set of Christian tracts,

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<sup>19</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 40.

<sup>20</sup>There is some disagreement whether this second attempt was made in 1833, 1834, or 1836. See Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 8; Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 13; and Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 36. Jen and Teng give 1836 as the year and Hamberg suggests that this year is possibly correct.

<sup>21</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 8.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

the *Quanshi liangyan*, consisting of nine small volumes, the whole of which he gave to Hong. Hong brought them on his return home, and after a cursory examination, placed them in his bookcase,<sup>23</sup> without considering them to be of any particular importance. Seven years passed between his receiving the tracts in 1836 and his studying their contents carefully in 1843.<sup>24</sup>

The case for the date of Hong Xiuquan's receiving the *Quanshi liangyan* is disputed. One possible date is 1833. In October 1833 Liang Fa (1789-1855) and two of his companions went to Canton to distribute the tracts to literary examination candidates.<sup>25</sup> Another possible date is 1834. On 20 and 21 August 1834 Liang and three colleagues, Woo Achang, Chow Asan, and Leang Asan, distributed tracts to the candidates in Canton. On the third day, however, the metropolitan authority interfered in the distribution and arrested Woo Achang, but the magistrate dismissed the case. Then, Chow Asan and his partner Akae were arrested again on 25 August, and the

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<sup>23</sup>Many sources of the Taiping Movement note that after Hong received this set of Christian tracts, he put them away without examining them at all, but Hamberg states that Hong gave "a superficial glance at their contents" before putting them aside for many years (Ibid., 9). Cf. Yuan Chung Teng, "Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 13, no. 1 (November 1963): 56; Jen Yuwen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 15; and Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 51.

<sup>24</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 8.

<sup>25</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Fortieth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, (London: Westley and Davis, 1834), 21-22. Cf. Thomas T. Meadows, *Desultory Notes on the Government and People of China, and on the Chinese Language: Illustrated with a Sketch of the Province of Kwang-Tung*, 75; J. Milton Mackie, *Life of Tai-ping-wang, Chief of the Chinese Insurrection* (New York: Dix, Edwards, & Co., 1857), 61; and Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864* (Madison, WS: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), 12.

following day officials arrested three printers. At the printer's shop four hundred copies of Christian tracts were confiscated, with the wooden blocks from which they were printed were destroyed. Liang managed to escape.<sup>26</sup> With a good knowledge of these facts George H. McNeur argued that Hong received his copy of the *Quanshi liangyan* "[b]efore August 1834," that is, 1833 or early 1834, affirming, "[b]efore the distribution of books in front of the examination hall at Canton was hindered by the police in August 1834 a set of tracts written by A-fa himself had been given to a young candidate named Hung Siu-tsuen."<sup>27</sup>

The date of 1836 accepted here can be seen in Theodore Hamberg's, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*. In most ways Hamberg's book is the best source because it is based on the testimony, both oral and written, of Hong Rengan, kinsman and early convert of the Heavenly King, with every sign of care and critical judgment on Hamberg's part as the interviewer. He states "1836," adding a footnote, "It may also have been some time before that period."<sup>28</sup> Two sets of Hong Rengan's brief written notes have survived and in recent years been published in Chinese and then translated into English. Of these, "Hung Hsui-chuan's Background,"<sup>29</sup> as

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<sup>26</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Fortieth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 26.

<sup>27</sup>George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855* (Shanghai: Kwang Hsueh Publishing House, 1934), 75.

<sup>28</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 8.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Hong Rengan, "Hung Hsui-chuan's Background," in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, 3-7.

Hamberg's source, probably written in 1852 or 1853, seems to say "1836."<sup>30</sup> While the other "The Confession of Hung Jen-kan,"<sup>31</sup> in 1864, says "1837."<sup>32</sup> The date 1836 has now become even more accepted with the discovery of the document itself, that is, "Hung Hsui-chuan's Background."<sup>33</sup>

If we establish the date beyond doubt as 1836, who was the Western missionary or foreign man? Jen Yu-wen confirmed who he was by compiling a list of all European and American missionaries known to have been working in Canton at the time and then eliminating those who could not have been the missionary Hong Xiuquan heard.

"Edwin Stephens"<sup>34</sup> remained the only possibility."<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Spence also insists that

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Hong Rengan, "The Confession of Hung Jen-kan," in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 3, *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1971), 1507-1530.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 1514-1515.

<sup>33</sup>The date 1837 as mentioned in the confession might have been an unintentional mistake on Hong Rengan's side, or it might have been made intentionally in order to show that Hong Xiuquan's ascent to heaven during his illness in 1837 had nothing to do with the tracts, since there would then be no time in between for Hong Xiuquan to study them. Most scholars do not support this position. Cf. John Foster, "The Christian Origins of the Taiping Rebellion," *International Review of Mission* 40 (April 1951): 158; and Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 24.

<sup>34</sup>His correct name is Edwin Stevens (1802-1837), and he was a pioneer missionary among the international seafaring communities of Canton and Whampoa. He was appointed by the American Seaman's Friend Society, in 1832, as their chaplain at the port of Canton, and affiliated with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1836. Cf. Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 84-85.

<sup>35</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 14. Cf. "The missionary was probably Edwin Stevens" [Yuan Chung Teng, "Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and

the missionary was Edwin Stevens who lived on the edge of Canton, and who died in 1837:

Hong's description of the foreign man is vague, and the words he ascribes to him elusive. But everything about this stranger points to Edwin Stevens, returned a few months before from the longest of his coastal trips. In the early spring of 1836 Stevens has taken on a new calling in addition to his formal title of chaplain for the Seaman's Friend Society—that of “missionary to the Chinese”—and a friend lists “distributing Bibles and tracts” as now foremost among Stevens' interest. And yet despite his several years in China, Stevens still needs an interpreter, for he finds the language vexingly hard.<sup>36</sup>

Some Western scholars assert that the Chinese interpreter was Liang Fa himself,<sup>37</sup> but this entails fixing an earlier date for the distribution of the tracts, usually given as 1833 or 1834, since Liang was not in Canton between 1835 and 1839. Nor is it Liang's friend and assistant, Kew Agang, who distributed the tracts with Liang to the literary examination candidates in 1833 and 1834. Kew left Canton, in 1834, forced to flee after his local enemies denounced him to the metropolitan authority for dealing too closely with the foreigners.<sup>38</sup> Nor is it either of those two men's sons, for Liang's son fled to Malacca,<sup>39</sup> and Kew's son was held in jail instead of his fugitive father.<sup>40</sup> If we

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the Taiping Rebellion,” 56n].

<sup>36</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 31.

<sup>37</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 99n.

<sup>38</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 11-12.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

agree the date is 1836, the interpreter's identity definitely excludes Liang and his son, and Kew and his son, with the name of the Chinese interpreter still unknown.<sup>41</sup>

### *Hong Xiuquan's Illness and Visions*

In 1837 Hong made his third attempt at the provincial examination, and a third time he failed to be selected as *Xiucan*.<sup>42</sup> The blow to his ego and dreams for a government career proved too great a strain for his mind and body. Deeply grieved and discontented, he once more returned home without any hope. Feeling very ill Hong engaged a sedan-chair with two stout men who carried him to his native village. At home his condition worsened. He, therefore, called his parents and other relatives to assemble at his bedside, and addressed them: "My days are counted, and my life will soon be closed. O my parents! [H]ow badly have I returned the favour of your love to me! I shall never attain a name that may reflect its lustre upon you."<sup>43</sup> After uttering these words, he shut his eyes and lost all strength. All present thought he was going to die. Instead of dying, Hong claimed to have a spiritual experience which he recounted after he regained his strength.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Cf. Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 14; and Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 31-32.

<sup>42</sup>Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 22. Michael gives a three-part rationale for Hong's failure. First, the examinations were difficult; second, there were many—sometimes a thousand or more—aspirants; and third and last, the number selected to become *xiucan* was usually small, perhaps a dozen.

<sup>43</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 9.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*



Hong claimed that, when his eyes were closed, he was transported to “a beautiful and luminous place,” of the high heaven, where an old woman cleansed him in a river. He went with a large number of old men, some of whom were ancient Chinese sages, into a building in which his internal organs were replaced with “others new and of a red colour.” The incisions closed immediately and left no scars. In a large audience hall too beautiful to describe he approached an imposing old man<sup>45</sup> “with golden beard and dressed in a black robe.” This old man wept over the large number of people on earth: “All human beings in the whole world are produced and sustained by me; they eat my food and wear my clothing, but not a single one among them has a heart to remember and venerate me; what is however still worse than that, they tell of my gifts, and therewith worship demons; they purposely rebel against me, and arouse my anger. Do thou not imitate.”<sup>46</sup> Thereupon he gave Hong a sword, with a command “to exterminate the demons, but to spare his brothers and sisters,” a seal “by which he would overcome the evil spirits,” a yellow fruit to eat, and the ensigns of royalty.<sup>47</sup>

He also heard “the venerable old man” with the black robe blame Confucius for failing in his books clearly to expound the true doctrine:

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<sup>45</sup>In the earlier publications recording Hong’s visions (for example, Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 1854), Hong saw only an old man and a middle-aged man standing behind him. In the later publications (Hong Rengan, “The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle,” 1862) the old man was interpreted as God, and the middle-aged man as Jesus Christ. Obviously the story was invented to provide help for Hong’s religious politics.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 10; Hong Rengan, “The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle,” in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, 54.

<sup>47</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 10.

The Heavenly Father, the Supreme Lord and Great God, ordered that three classes of books be put out and indicated this to the Sovereign [Hong Xiuquan], saying, “This class of books consists of three records which have been transmitted from that former time when I descended into the world, performing miracles and instituting the commandments. These books are pure and without any error. And the books of this second class are the accounts which have been transmitted from the time when your Elder Brother, Christ, descended into the world, performing miracles, sacrificing his life for the remission of sins, and doing other deeds. These books also are pure and without error. But the books of the other class are those transmitted from Confucius. They are those books which you read when in the world. These books contain extremely numerous errors and faults, so that even you were harmed by studying them.”<sup>48</sup>

The Heavenly Elder Brother, Christ, also accused Confucius: “You created books of this kind to teach the people, so that even my own blood brother, in reading your works, was harmed by them.”<sup>49</sup> After seeing that all the people in the high heaven pronounced him guilty, Confucius secretly fled down from heaven, with the intention of joining with the head of the demons. The Heavenly Father, thereupon, dispatched Hong Xiuquan to go with the angels to pursue Confucius and to bring him, bound and tired, before the Great God. This time Confucius seemed much ashamed and confessed his guilt. As a result, the Great God granted that he be permitted to partake of the good fortune of heaven, but that he never be permitted to go down to the world.<sup>50</sup>

The sickness and visions of Hong continued about forty days. During his sickness he, as his mind was wandering, used to run about his room, leaping and fighting

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<sup>48</sup>Hong Regan, “The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle,” in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, 56-57.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

like a soldier engaged in battle.<sup>51</sup> His constant cry was, “Slay the demons! [S]lay the demons! [S]lay, slay; there is one and there is another; many many cannot withstand one single blow of my sword.”<sup>52</sup>

Hong’s return to lucidity was marked by definite changes in his behavior. First of all, he changed his name to Xiuquan (秀全). Hong’s original name was Huoxiu (火秀). The transliteration of Jehovah in Chinese is *Yehuohua* 爺火華 or *Yehuohua* 耶火華,<sup>53</sup> hence he could not keep the letter of *Huo* 火.<sup>54</sup> If he kept it, he violated taboos. So he retained the letter of *Xiu* 秀 from his first name Huoxiu (火秀), and *Quan* 全 he adopted because he thought it comprised two elements that can mean “*Wang* 王 (king) of the *Ren* 人 (people).”<sup>55</sup> Though he did not understand the meaning

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<sup>51</sup>The actual period of illness was probably only four or seven days [Cf. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 23; and C. A. Curwen, *Taiping Rebel: The Deposition of Li Hsiu-ch’eng* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 90]. As suggested by Ssu-yu Teng, the forty days of Jesus Christ’s fasting is frequently mentioned in Liang’s tracts, and so Hong’s illness would later be declared to have lasted the same length of time (*New Light on the History of the Taiping Revolution*, 53-54). Or, as concluded by P. M. Yap, the stupor state lasted only a few days, but the twilight state, during which the degree of his lucidity varied, could have extended over a month or more [“The Mental Illness of Hung Hsiu-ch’uan, Leader of the Taiping Rebellion,” *Far Eastern Quarterly* 13 (May 1954): 298].

<sup>52</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 11.

<sup>53</sup>Cf. Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen* 真傳救世文 (*True Accounts of the Salvation of the World*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1832), 1.

<sup>54</sup>Hong Rengan, “The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle,” in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, 59.

<sup>55</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 19. Some Western

of all he experienced in his vision, he was convinced he was destined to be a ruler as promised by the old man. Second, he behaved differently than before his experience. He became more serious, as befits royal responsibility, and he acquired an unswerving belief in his own mission. For the time being he continued teaching in his own and nearby villages.<sup>56</sup>

Six years later, in 1843, he made his fourth attempt at the provincial examination, but he was no more successful than before.<sup>57</sup> No seizure followed this failure and he only expressed his extreme anger at the Qing government and Manchu officials in particular. Between his third and fourth attempts the First Opium War had been lost, unequal treaties between China and Western countries had been signed, and the weakness of the Qing dynasty became apparent.<sup>58</sup> While Hong was teaching later that year in another village, one of his cousins, Li Jingfang (李敬芳), visited him. Li was, like Hong, educated but unsuccessful in several attempts at attaining the *Xiucan* degree. Li found among Hong's books the Christian tracts, Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangan*, which Hong had received but did not read carefully for six or seven years. Li was fascinated by them

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scholars assert that Hong decided to use *Quan* 全 because of the juxtaposed meaning of its element is surprising for an educated Chinese, for, though the top element is usually written 人, the radical is actually number 11, *Ru* 入 (to enter), not number 9, *Ren* 人 (people). But it is clear that, even educated Chinese, including Hong, already knew it, they always accepted Hong's method. He would be "king of the people," but would not like to broadcast this secret.

<sup>56</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 50.

<sup>57</sup>Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 24.

<sup>58</sup>Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 190.

and urged Hong to read them. That Hong Xiuquan did so was a pivotal point for Hong and for China.<sup>59</sup>

In those poorly translated Scriptures and simple homilies written by Liang, Hong found the key that expained the visions he had experienced six years earlier. The old, golden-beared man was God; the middle-aged man whom Hong called Elder Brother was Jesus. The demons he had been commanded to destroy were the idols worshiped by most Chinese. When this much became clear, Hong studied the tracts carefully to complete both his knowledge of Christianity and what his own life's mission would be. But this was not simple, for there was no one to help him or a full translation of the Bible to guide him. He struggled with awkward translations, disconnected narratives, and unintentionally ambiguous passages. For example, God, "the highest Lord of all," sent fire to destroy two cities with curious names. With fire God destroyed every trace, every house, and finally every person except the family of Lot. "Lot had a wife, and two daughters, and [G]od saved all four; till Lot's wife looked back at the blazing cities and was turned to salt." So only three remained.<sup>60</sup> Liang's book stopped there. Liang did not say "what happened at the end" of each story in his tracts.<sup>61</sup> Hong accepted the lack of an ending as proof of the tracts' authenticity, because the ancient mystery texts of Chinese history were similarly abstruse. Hong used his own

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<sup>59</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 20.

<sup>60</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun* 熟學真理論 (*Statements of Perfect Acquaintance with the True Doctrine*) (Canton: Religious Tracts Society, 1832), 15.

<sup>61</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 33.

imagination to supply what the tracts left out, and, not surprisingly, he developed some ideas quite different from what Liang intended.<sup>62</sup>

Hong, however, saw no inconsistencies between the religious ideas he derived from the tracts and from the interpretation he gave to his visions. Despite the later efforts of missionaries like Issachar Roberts to show him the true meaning of the words on which he based the Taiping Movement, he varied little from his initial, idiosyncratic conceptions. These ideas allowed him to put his past failures and frustrations behind him and to dedicate himself to the great task that he was convinced had been given to him.<sup>63</sup> Li also caught Hong's enthusiasm and, after baptizing each other,<sup>64</sup> the two of them destroyed all the idols in the village. They returned to Hong's village and converted Hong Rengan and Feng Yunshan. Both of them were Hong's cousins who, like Hong and Li, had been educated but had failed the provincial examination more than once and were village school teachers. After baptizing Feng and Hong Rengan, all four began testifying to their families and friends of this new faith or new religion, and many idols were smashed. They went to nearby villages with the message of a new religion. They destroyed idols and pulled down Confucian and ancestral tablets in family halls and schools. Hong Xiuquan, not surprisingly, lost his teaching position in early 1844 because of these activities.

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<sup>62</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 20-22; and Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 22.

<sup>63</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 22.

<sup>64</sup>P. M. Yap suggests Hong Xiuquan's conversion was a religious experience extending over a period of six years, that began in his visions in 1837 and was not completed until his reading of the tracts in 1843 ("The Mental Illness of Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, Leader of the Taiping Rebellion," 302).

Hong Xiuquan and Feng Yunshan left for Guangxi, where they made over a hundred converts. Whether their activities at this stage were primarily religious or revolutionary is a matter of disagreement among some scholars.<sup>65</sup> After returning alone to his own village late in 1844, Hong continued to proselytize. He was more circumspect in his behavior and his teaching position was restored. He used the next two years, 1845 and 1846, to reflect upon and elaborate the religious ideas he had developed from his study of Liang Fa's tracts.<sup>66</sup>

Unknown to Hong, Feng Yunshan had gone to other villages and cities in Guangxi Province. After having to resort to manual labor to support himself, he secured a position teaching in a private family school. He worked zealously to convert the rich and the poor to his new religion. Feng succeeded almost everywhere he went, and he even converted his wealthy employer and his whole family. Seeing that some organization was necessary to hold the allegiance of these converts, he formed them into village branches of what he called *Bai Shangdi Hui* 拜上帝會 (The Society of God Worshippers). These branches were in the region called Zijing shan (紫荊山) or the Thistle Mountain in Guiping County (桂平縣) of Guangxi Province. Feng used the

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<sup>65</sup>Jen Yu-wen suggests that the trip to Guangxi in 1844 "was to look for a suitable place for making preparations for the uprising" (*The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 24). But Ssu-yu Teng asserts that Hong "had not yet reached the crossroad" (*The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 41-42).

<sup>66</sup>See Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 26-27; and Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 42-45, for a discussion of this early work. Jen states that it is "impossible so far to determine just when, where, and how the idea of an ethnic conflict first germinated in Hong's mind" (27). Ssu-yu Teng admits that the writings, even though discussed in more detail, do not indicate more than Hong's profound conviction in his destiny to establish a new religion based on a higher concept of righteousness. Thus Teng has better support for his conclusion that Hong's revolutionary ideas evolve later.

most promising adherents in each village as branch leaders to coordinate recruitment, copy and distribute Hong's tracts, and to be responsible personally to him as their chief director.<sup>67</sup> There was a large number of converts, about two thousand, and the majority were Hakkas and from the Yao (瑶)<sup>68</sup> tribes. The security afforded by the mountainous terrain was not lost on Feng,<sup>69</sup> who probably earlier than Hong, appreciated the possibilities for launching a rebellion against the Qing dynasty from this area. At this time, however, Hong Xiuquan was completely unaware of these developments. He and Hong Rengan went to Canton in March 1847 to learn from Issachar Roberts more about Christianity.

#### *Hong Xiuquan and Issachar J. Roberts*

Issachar J. Roberts (1802-1871) was, as far as is known, the only Western missionary to instruct Hong Xiuquan.<sup>70</sup> He left the United States as an independent missionary for China, at the beginning of 1837, in connection with a special association

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<sup>67</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 32; and Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 48.

<sup>68</sup>Yao is the upland people group living in the mountains of Hunan and northern Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces. In the early years of the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), the Yao began to migrate southward to escape from the invading Mongols and the Chinese immigration encroaching from the north. From the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, agitated by the opium trade and disturbed by revolts in Southern China, some of them migrated into Thailand, Cambodia, and the highlands of Laos.

<sup>69</sup>Feng's organizational plan reflected patterns in use by Chinese secret societies of that time (Ibid, 34 and Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 29).

<sup>70</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 95; and Yuan Chung Teng, "Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion," 56.



termed the Roberts Fund Society. Arriving at Macao on 1 May 1837, Roberts worked with J. Lewis Shuck (1812-1863), the first American Baptist missionary, independently.<sup>71</sup> For his first five years in China, he worked among the lepers at Macao. When his fund became insufficient for his work there, he labored for a time as a saddler, even after joining the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions in 1841. At Macao Shuck and Roberts awaited impatiently a British victory in the First Opium War and moved to Hong Kong with William Dean (1807-1895), in April 1842, before the peace treaty opened five treaty ports and Hong Kong to foreigners.<sup>72</sup>

Roberts was periodically incapacitated by Hong Kong's climate, and he had been relegated to a minor position by J. Lewis Shuck and William Dean. These two missionaries were embarrassed by Roberts' rough, uncompromising ways. Unhappy with his Baptist colleagues in Hong Kong and anxious to get to mainland China, Roberts moved to Canton in May 1844 and became the first Westerner to live outside the protected foreign factories district in that anti-foreigner city.<sup>73</sup> The American Baptist

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<sup>71</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 90.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 94-95.

<sup>73</sup>Cf. "Roberts, a self-educated preacher, raised in the passionate religious world of tent revivals and covered-wagon services, independent-minded, free of supervision, and bored with rules, is first to return, renting a little house just outside Canton's walls. Despite the treaty provisions the virulence of anti-foreign feeling makes it impossible to reside within. Dressing in Chinese clothes, working with a local convert tied by loyalty to him in person as well as to his redeemer, Jesus Christ, Roberts restlessly prowls the countryside, preaching in the Hakka dialect he has been studying, and distributing religious tracts" (Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 62).

Board of Foreign Missions was on the point of dismissing him<sup>74</sup> when the division of Baptists in the United States in 1845 over the slavery controversy intervened. He was accepted by the Foreign Mission Board of the new Southern Baptist Convention as a missionary, but because he received some funds from Baptist churches in the Mississippi Valley, he was not considered a regular missionary of the convention. His new colleagues,<sup>75</sup> sent out when the new board adopted China as its first mission field, were initially impressed with Roberts' zeal and the experience he had acquired through almost ten years of continuous service in China. Soon, however, they began to tire of his idiosyncrasies.<sup>76</sup>

Unable to live with the strained relations developing with yet another set of colleagues, Roberts helped organize the Canton Mission Society, an independent agency, to help support his work. But he retained his connection with the Foreign Mission Board in order to draw a regular salary. Nevertheless, he moved to another part of the Canton suburbs, in spite of the fact that foreigners were still not permitted inside the city

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<sup>74</sup>A request for his return to the United States had been received, but Roberts rejected it and stayed in China.

<sup>75</sup>Cf. "Samuel C. Clopton was appointed for China on September 1, 1845. George Percy, a personal friend and classmate of Clopton, was appointed in November. Mr. Clopton married the next April; Mr. Percy married in May; and both with their brides for China on June 22, 1846" [J. Winston Crawley, "East Asia," in Baker J. Cauthen and others, *Advance: A History of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1970), 78-79].

<sup>76</sup>Two of the main reasons for the dissolution of his connection with the Southern Baptist Convention were his "erratic" behavior and his "falling into difficulties with nearly everyone who worked with him." Despite these personal idiosyncrasy, his Christian devotion was never questioned. "He always remained an uncompromising Fundamentalist in his religious belief" (Yuan Chung Teng, "Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion," 55-56).

walls. He established his Uet-tung Chapel in a rough area near the waterfront but well away from the foreign factory area. Though he availed himself of his right under the Treaty of Wangxia (1844)<sup>77</sup> to erect a church, he conveniently neglected to have his new location approved by officials of the Chinese and American governments with “due regard to the feelings of the people in the location.” Some of his Chinese neighbors resented his presence and were particularly disturbed at the belfry he erected and the bell that rang from it.<sup>78</sup> Roberts was not concerned. He was convinced that he was doing God’s will, and therefore God would protect him and provide for him. His mission in China, and in life, was to bring the Chinese to a saving knowledge of the Lord. He felt that a little local controversy would serve to spread the news that a foreign missionary was operating there.<sup>79</sup>

In late 1846 a Christian convert from Canton visited Hua County and urged both Hong Xiuquan and his cousin Hong Rengan to visit Roberts at his chapel and hear his preaching. But both of them were too busy with their own teaching to accept.<sup>80</sup> The

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<sup>77</sup>The Treaty of Wangxia was an unequal treaty between the Qing government and United States, signed on 3 July 1844. The treaty was modeled after the Treaty of Nanking, but differed in being more detailed. Among other things, it contained the right to buy land in the five treaty ports and erect churches and hospitals there; and, as a show of goodwill towards the Qing Empire, the Opium trade was declared illegal, and the United States agreed to hand over any offenders to China. Cf. Luo Zhufeng, ed., *Religion under Socialism in China*, trans. Donald E. MacInnis and Zheng Xi'an (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), 42.

<sup>78</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 92.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 92-93.

<sup>80</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 30-31 and Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 93.

same man, Moo-li-pan, who told the Hong cousins about Roberts also told one of Roberts' assistants, Choo-thau-hing, about Hong Xiuquan and his new religion that seemed similar to Christianity. Early in 1847 the assistant wrote to the Hongs and invited them to visit Roberts in Canton: "Having heard from Moo-li-pan that you, honoured brother, about ten years ago received a book, the contents of which agree with the doctrine preached in our chapel here, we the Missionary and the brethren will rejoice if you would come hither and assist us by preaching in the chapel.<sup>81</sup> This is our sincere wish."<sup>82</sup>

In March 1847, Hong Xiuquan and Hong Rengan accepted the invitation.<sup>83</sup> They were probably the most highly educated Chinese who had ever presented themselves to Roberts to study Christianity. Following his customary practice, Roberts asked each of them to write about themselves, their family connections, birthplace, education, convictions, and the reason for becoming an inquirer. Hong Xiuquan wrote of his illness, his visions, and his interpretation of them, probably based on the Liang's tracts. He was described by Roberts as "about five feet four or five inches high, well built, and would weigh, perhaps, one hundred and sixty pounds; round faced, regularly

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<sup>81</sup>The invitation to preach must be considered as a Chinese expression of politeness.

<sup>82</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 31.

<sup>83</sup>Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 95; Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 28; Yuan Chung Teng, "Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion," 56; Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 29; Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 92.

featured, rather handsome; a middle-aged man, and gentlemanly in manners.”<sup>84</sup>

Roberts’ brief biography of Hong Xiuquan written in 1856 closely parallels part of the account Hong Rengan wrote for another missionary, Theodore Hamberg, who used it as the basis for his book, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*.<sup>85</sup> Hamberg showed Hong Rengan’s account to Issachar Roberts and Walter Medhurst in 1853.<sup>86</sup> Medhurst also wrote an article titled “Connection Between Foreign Missionaries and the Kwang-se Insurrection” in the *North China Herald* based on Rengan’s account. It is not certain that the account of his life Hong Xiuquan wrote for Roberts in 1847 was the one Roberts used as the basis for the biography he wrote in 1856, but Hong’s story probably impressed him.

Hong Rengan left Canton shortly after his arrival,<sup>87</sup> but Hong Xiuquan, Roberts reported in 1856, remained at Roberts’ chapel for “about two months, joined our Bible

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<sup>84</sup>Issachar J. Roberts, “Tae ping Wang,” *Putnam’s Magazine* 8 (October 1856): 380.

<sup>85</sup>Hong Rengan, “The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle,” in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, eds. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, 51-76.

<sup>86</sup>Walter H. Medhurst, “Connection Between Foreign Missionaries and the Kwang-se Insurrection,” *North China Herald*, No. 160 (20 August 1853). Cf. J. C. Cheng, ed., *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1963), 2.

<sup>87</sup>Cf. “Having continued their studies about a month, Mr. Roberts sent two of his Chinese assistants, Choo and Tsen, with the Hungs to their native place. Here they preached a few days and then returned to Canton, but Hung-Jin [Hong Rengan], who was well aware that two other assistants of the name Wang, also engaged by Mr. Roberts, were making intrigues to prevent new brethren from being employed, for fear of losing their own situations, did not again go to Canton, but remained at home and studied medicine” (Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 31).

class, committing and reciting the scriptures, and receiving instructions for two hours daily with the class.” Hong asked to be baptized and join the church. Roberts appointed a committee of Chinese members of his chapel “to examine his [Hong’s] case, and report to the church.” The committee went to Hua County to talk with Hong’s family and friends and reported that his account of visions and activities against idols appeared genuine. Hong underwent a public examination of his personal faith, and his testimony was apparently well received. “We were on the point of receiving him,” Roberts reported, when the church moderator reminded Hong, “There is no certain employment, nor pecuniary emolument connected with becoming a member of the Church, we ought not to do so from sinister motives.” Hong had obviously counted on being hired as an assistant after his baptism. Roberts would not guarantee him a position, because he immediately suspected that Hong might be insincere. So Roberts postponed Hong’s baptism “indefinitely.”<sup>88</sup> Hamberg, however, gives Hong Rengan’s account of how Roberts’ assistants deceived Hong Xiuquan into asking for employment.<sup>89</sup> Hong Rengan told Hamberg that Wang-ai and Wang-khien were jealous of Hong Xiuquan who was better educated and who, if baptized, might replace them. They persuaded Hong Xiuquan to insist on a small stipend and Hong, running low on funds, fell into the snare. He was unaware how much Roberts disliked “rice Christians,”<sup>90</sup> but the assistants knew about this side of their employer’s nature.

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<sup>88</sup>Issachar J. Roberts, “Tae ping Wang,” 382-383.

<sup>89</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 31-32. Cf. Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 28; Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 46.

<sup>90</sup>A rice Christian is someone who has formally declared himself or herself a

About the time that Hong was forced to leave Roberts because he could not afford to stay longer, a Cantonese mob broke into Roberts' chapel on 23 May 1847. Roberts' claim for damage and his insistence on his right to an indemnity under the Treaty of Wangxia was his primary concern for several months.<sup>91</sup> Hong had other concerns, too. With a small loan from a friend in Roberts' chapel, he left Canton for Guangxi to find his cousin, Feng Yunshan, whom he had left in that province in late 1844. Hong rejoined his kinsman in the summer of 1847 and learned of Feng's success in converting over three thousand people and in organizing the Society of God Worshippers.<sup>92</sup> These converts had been taught a new set of moral principles based on a sincere devotion to God and Christ. Moreover, the focal point of all Feng's teaching had been the ascension of Hong Xiuquan into Heaven where he had received the command of God to "destroy the demons." Hong was consequently received with awe and was called *Hong Xiansheng* 洪先生 (Teacher Hong). With his presence, the Society of God Worshippers grew rapidly.<sup>93</sup>

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Christian for material benefits. It is usually not for religious reasons. The term is often used perjoratively. See George H. McNeur, *The Missionary in Changing China*, 102-103, for an explanation of early Chinese rice Christians.

<sup>91</sup>Roberts wrote that he did not know what he became of Hong "until informed in 1852, through the report of Hung-jin [Hong Rengan], that he was the leader of the great revolutionary movement which commenced in Kwang-si" (Issachar J. Roberts, "Tae ping Wang," 383). It was Hamberg that brought the account of Hong Rengan to Roberts' attention.

<sup>92</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 32-35; and Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 93-94.

<sup>93</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 29-33; and Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 49.

*From the Society of God Worshippers to the Taiping Movement*

Roberts did not believe that Hong Xiuquan had been “saved,” and so baptism, the outward sign of that inward grace, was withheld. It cannot be known whether Hong was spiritually ready to become a Christian and follow the course that Roberts had foreseen for him. Because of Hong’s literary training and natural bearing, Roberts had, within a week of Hong’s arrival in Canton, predicted:

They are here now learning daily, and I feel almost persuaded that the Lord has sent them here, and if so it will not be long until they are added to the church. Then the gospel will be preached in their native village where they say a considerable number have already abandoned their idols. Those are young men of considerable number talents, the elder about 34 or 35 years of age. Each of them has taught school several years and seems to write well.<sup>94</sup>

Without baptism Hong had no chance to earn a living and to work as a native preacher. And Hong’s “disappointment was perhaps as great as his failures in the civil service examinations.”<sup>95</sup> The series of failures—first as a candidate for a literary degree and later as a candidate for baptism—had their effect on Hong. Roberts put it more positively: “An all-wise Providence” guided Hong’s steps. “Had he gained his literary degree, to become a mandarin under the Tartar rule would have been his highest aim; had he been baptized, to become an assistant preacher under his foreign teacher was the object in view; but now how widely different his present position.”<sup>96</sup> It is not unreasonable under the circumstances to suppose that had Hong not gone to Roberts, he

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<sup>94</sup>Issachar Roberts, “Letter from Canton, 27 March 1847,” *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer* 14, no. 30 (29 July 1847): 118.

<sup>95</sup>Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 49. Cf. “[H]e felt disappointed at not being received and baptized; as he had before been as to obtaining a literary degree” (Issachar J. Roberts, “Tae ping Wang,” 383.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*



still might have established his Heavenly Kingdom of Taiping, or Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, on the ideas he had gleaned from the Liang's tracts. Having to end his study with Roberts, he was not admitted into the church and could not therefore receive ordination. Had he become a convert, assistant, and later a native Christian preacher, it is less likely that he would have become a rebel.

After Hong Xiuquan rejoined Feng Yunshen at Thistle Mountain in the summer of 1847, together the two expanded the Society of God Worshippers and its program. In the preceding years Feng had used "Hung's poems, odes, and essays, together with his own understanding of the biblical story," as the basis for the religious creed of the Society of God Worshippers. Now Hong wrote a record of his preaching activities. His writings clearly indicate that in his mind the preaching of his religious experiences and ideas was to be used to realize his political aspiration: "The demons that had to be fought were not only the evil spirits of the supernatural world but were now also the Manchus and their supporters who had misled the people, and the movement thus took on a rebellious character."<sup>97</sup>

At this time Hong Xiuquan was already using the term Taiping or "Great Peace,"<sup>98</sup> which was later to be bestowed on his rebellious movement.<sup>99</sup> He also stated that he and his followers "wrote a memorial asking the Heavenly Father, the Supreme

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<sup>97</sup>Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 31.

<sup>98</sup>Cf. Chapter One, 11n.

<sup>99</sup>Cf. Hong Regan, "The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle," in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, 51-76.

Lord and Great God, to select for them a firm stronghold where they could settle themselves.”<sup>100</sup>

Some of the writing Hong did at Thistle Mountain alludes to historical Chinese heroes. This appeal to history is another indication that he himself planned to play a historical role, in fact a greater one than the role played by the figures alluded to. These historical allusions are used as examples to demonstrate “how failure or success had depended in the past upon whether or not God’s precepts had been followed.”<sup>101</sup> The religious doctrine which Hong preached was therefore now taking on more of its political character.

The strange mixture of concepts that formed Hong’s religious teachings lent itself easily to such political application. In the direct and simple interpretation of the biblical story and the miracles, which he embellished with his own fantasies, Hong saw proof of God’s political interest in the state of mankind and in the establishment of God’s rule on earth: “The battle against evil that had started with the Flood and had been continued by Jesus Christ was now in the hands of Hung, who carried out God’s command. He had to organize the faithful, to establish on earth the heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, the Tai-ping Tien-kuo.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>101</sup>Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 32. A few years later, when these essays and poems were re-edited, most of the historical allusions disappeared, and the Taiping doctrine acquired by that time more and more the character of a break with Chinese historical tradition. It indicates that what Hong propagated was not a traditional rebellion but a religious movement that broke with tradition.

<sup>102</sup>Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 32-33.

From Summer 1847 to late 1850, when the movement acquired a more military and rebellious character, was the time during which Hong worked out and wrote down his programs. These programs were first put into practice by the Society of God Worshippers. All who joined the society, threw away their idols, and worshiped the true God. The evangelistic rallying call was “Worship God”<sup>103</sup> and “Worship God” services were perhaps an adaptation of services Hong had participated in at Roberts’ chapel. But it is difficult to give a faithful account of their form of worship, when they met together for devotion, for several alterations were introduced from time to time because of growing knowledge and experience. Accommodations to existing Chinese customs may have been introduced in the beginning, which were afterwards corrected. It is very probable that the form of worship at Nanjing or *Tianjing* 天京 (Heavenly Capital), from 1853 to 1864, was not altogether like that which was first established among God Worshippers at Thistle Mountain.<sup>104</sup> The God Worshippers, having increased in number to about ten thousand by mid-1849, were sent to villages to smash idols, temples, and shrines. They also attempted to coerce people to join their ranks. Such activities raised the opposition of the local gentry and officials. They were alarmed by the God Worshippers’ iconoclasm. Heterodox belief challenged the body of Confucian principles on which their elite status rested. It could not be tolerated: “In defending the social order against the Taiping attack, the gentry had no choice but to defend the dynasty as well.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 36.

<sup>104</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 34-35; and Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 35-36.

<sup>105</sup>Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 6-7. See also Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary*

Feng Yunshan was arrested several times as the supposed leader of the Society of God Worshippers and charged with iconoclasm. Hong did not remain at Thistle Mountain all the time. When both were absent, the society was leaderless. During these absences a natural leader emerged: Yang Xiuqing (楊秀清, 1821-1856), a Hakka with little formal education, but who “became one of the most able leaders of the Taiping Rebellion.”<sup>106</sup> Hong Xiuquan was, for the God Worshippers, their mystical leader whose words, written or spoken, were their inspiration. Feng Yunshan was the organizational genius who gave form to the spirit. Now Yang Xiuqing’s major contributions were his wealth of ideas and plans, his military talent, and his expertise in commanding and controlling people.<sup>107</sup>

Economic and political conditions in South China continued to deteriorate. The governor of Guangxi did little to stem the rising tide of banditry that followed bad harvests in the late 1840s. The God Worshippers, mainly Hakka, supported and protected each other and in time were called on to protect other Hakkas from Punti (本地) -led gangs<sup>108</sup> that roamed almost at will. When clashes occurred, Punti

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*Movement*, 35-36.

<sup>106</sup>Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 49-51.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 51. See also Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 36, 38-39. Yang also went into trances that, he claimed, allowed the Holy Spirit to speak to God Worshippers through him. Though he was careful to give deference to Hong as “the Sovereign,” Yang’s source of authority was such that it did not depend upon Hong’s dispensation. Michael concludes that whereas Hong genuinely believed in his own visions, “Yang’s actions seem to indicate that he was playing a part” (36).

<sup>108</sup>It is a rough transliteration of the Cantonese term for *Bendi* 本地 (Original locality) and refers to the Cantonese-speaking populations of the Guangdong or Guangxi

landowners and gentry appealed to magistrates or organized their own militia groups. The God Worshippers were forced to adopt at least “a semi-military organization.”<sup>109</sup> There were, in addition, corrupt officials who extorted and oppressed the peasants. Unable to protect themselves from bandits, political corruption, and the economic conditions that were grinding them down, many peasants, not only Hakka peasants but also non-Hakka peasants, turned to the Society of God Worshippers as their last hope for survival.<sup>110</sup>

In early 1850, one of the leaders of the God Worshippers was imprisoned and tortured to death on a minor charge. Hong’s forces, enlarged by former bandits, pirates, and miners, had been driven to the hills by Guangdong government troops with British naval support. Hong planned an uprising and waited for the right moment to begin his campaign. During the summer Hong and Feng sent for their families so they would not be vulnerable to government reprisals. Hong then sent out a general mobilization order to all branches of the Society of God Worshippers for a “collective camping” at Jintian (金田), a village near Thistle Mountain, in Guiping County.<sup>111</sup> In the weeks following

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provinces in South China. They are contrasted with another Han Chinese linguistic group, the Hakka, which settled in the area after the Punti peoples and followed different cultural traditions. During the nineteenth century there were a series of clashes between the Punti and Hakka peoples (Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 88).

<sup>109</sup>Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 56-57. See Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 45-48, for a description of the Taiping military system.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, 53-54.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 54-55, 57-60; and Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 56-58.

most had their entire families with them and moved to Jintian. Determined never to return to their old life, they had already sold or in some cases burned their houses and other property.<sup>112</sup>

Later that year a series of minor incidents between the God Worshippers and local government troops demonstrated to government officials the potential trouble of continuing to ignore them. An informal declaration of revolt against the local government was made by anonymous God Worshippers, probably in November or December 1850. The declaration states that the people have worshipped God, have not caused any trouble or participated in politics, but merely lived like hermits in the mountainous area. Nevertheless, foolish officials arrested their members and imprisoned them until their death. That is not all, government soldiers and local militia joined together to fight them. The God Worshippers were thus compelled to gather their heroes and thirty thousand brave men to smash their enemies along the valley of Jintian.<sup>113</sup>

A major battle took place from 31 December 1850 to 1 January 1851 at Jintian,<sup>114</sup> and the God Worshippers were victorious. Having openly resisted regular

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<sup>112</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 40.

<sup>113</sup>Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 68.

<sup>114</sup>Cf. “The Taiping forces, now with their recent recruits and bandit allies at least ten thousand strong, march a mile east of Jintian and take up three coordinated defensive positions in a wide arc between the Qing forces and Jintian, with Yang Xiuqing commanding the troops on the left flank, extending to the point where Caicun Bridge spans the Thirstle River; Xiao Chaogui on the right flank, centered on Pangu Hill; and Hong Xiuquan and Feng Yunshan commanding the center” (Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 130).

government troops and killed persons in government service—including a Manchu general, a civil official, a few gentry, several army officers, and a number of soldiers and militiamen—the God Worshippers had irrevocably committed themselves to rebellion against the Qing government.<sup>115</sup> On 11 January 1851,<sup>116</sup> his thirty-eighth birthday according to Chinese reckoning, Hong Xiuquan assembled the God Worshippers at Jiantian and solemnly proclaimed *Taiping tianguo* 太平天國 (the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace) and himself as *Tian wang* 天王 (the Heavenly King).<sup>117</sup>

### Summary

In 1836, in Canton, Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangyan*, was given to Hong Xiuquan, the future leader of the Taiping Movement, probably by Edwin Stephens. On his return to his home village, Hong brought the tracts, but after a cursory examination, placed them in his bookcase, without considering them to be of any particular importance. The following year Hong failed the government examinations again and apparently suffered a nervous collapse. During his illness he had a number of mystical visions. He was carried into heaven where he met an old man, with a long golden beard, in a black dragon

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 132; Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*, 64-65.

<sup>116</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 65. There have been various theories as to the exact date of the Taiping uprising but the date given here, determined by Jen Yu-wen, after his exhaustive study of the documents and other evidence, has come to be accepted by many Taiping scholars.

<sup>117</sup>Hong Xiuquan did not proclaim himself as *Huangdi* 皇帝 (Emperor). According to the Taiping religion, God was translated as *Huang shangdi*. So it would be sacrilegious to be called *Huangdi* 皇帝, the Chinese traditional term for emperor (Ibid.). See Vincent Y. C. Shih, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Sources, Interpretations, and Influences* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1967), 56-57, for other names or titles that could not be used because the characters were associated with the Taiping kings or other sacred words.

robe. He complained to Hong about the human beings worshiping demons rather than him. And he gave Hong a sword and a magic seal, and told him to purify China of the demons.

Several years later, in 1843, one of Hong's cousins, Li Jingfang, visited him and found Liang's tracts. Li was fascinated by them and urged Hong to read them. So Hong took the time to examine carefully the tracts he had received. Now he could interpret his earlier visions to mean that God the Heavenly Father and his Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, wanted him, Younger Brother of Christ and God's Chinese Son, to rid the world of demon worship. Hong burned all Confucian and Buddhist statues in his house and village school, and began to preach to his family and relatives about his visions. His earliest converts were his cousins and relatives who had also failed their literary examinations and belonged to the Hakka minority. They joined with him to destroy idols in small villages to the ire of local people and officials. Hong and his converts' acts were considered sacrilegious and they were persecuted by Confucians who forced them to leave their positions as village teachers. Hong Xiuquan and Feng Yunshan fled from their own Guangdong Province in 1844, walking some three hundred miles to the west to neighboring Guangxi Province, where the large Hakka population was much more willing to receive their teachings.<sup>118</sup>

In 1847 Hong studied with the American Baptist missionary Issachar Roberts for two months, in Canton, till Roberts refused to baptize Hong. It was not enough time for Hong to master the intricacies of Christian doctrine. Nevertheless, scholars who have

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<sup>118</sup>Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 25-31.



studied the Taiping documents and programs have agreed that the Christian ideas, writings, and practices to which Hong was exposed during his stay with Roberts were reflected in the Taiping religion.

Hong first saw a Chinese translation of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments,<sup>119</sup> when he studied with Roberts, who also gave him tracts to read, at least four of which Roberts had written or co-written.<sup>120</sup> Roberts may also have given Hong a translation of the Doxology, since the Taiping version of it was more similar to the Baptist version than to those used by other denominations.<sup>121</sup> The constitution of Roberts' Uet-Tung Chapel—the only Christian church Hong ever attended—prohibited opium smoking, lying, and gambling, and bound members to observe the Sabbath, to pray daily, and to love each other as brothers: “The strict moral overtones of the constitution are reflected in the Taiping version of the Ten Commandments, which they adopted as a code of behavior.”<sup>122</sup>

Roberts, true to denominational doctrine, insisted that the Chinese character *Jin* 浸 (to immerse) used to translate the word “baptize” carried the connotation of

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<sup>119</sup>This Bible would be the Medhurst-Gützlaff translation of the Bible.

<sup>120</sup>They would be followings: *Zhenli zhi jiao* 真理之教 [The Religion of Truth (Macao, 1840)], *Wenda suhua* 問答俗話 [Catechism in the Macao Dialect (Macao, 1840)], *Jiushizhu Yesu xin yizhao shu* 救世主耶穌新遺詔書 [New Testament of the Saviour Jesus (Macao, 1840)], and *Yesu Shengjing* 耶穌聖經 [The Holy Book of Jesus (Macao, 1840)] (Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications and Obituary Notices of the Deceased with Copious Indexes*, 96-97). Cf. Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 144-145.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, 72-73, 96n.

<sup>122</sup>Yuan Chung Teng, “Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion,” 58.

immersion. Article I of the Uet-Tung Constitution declares: “Whoever believes in Jesus and is baptized (by immersion) may become a member.” The Taipings used the same character to convey this meaning that Roberts did.<sup>123</sup> And Roberts’ equality of treatment for female worshippers may have impressed Hong to do the same.<sup>124</sup> These similarities between Taiping ideas and Christianity suggest that Roberts had a lingering influence on Hong himself and the Taiping religion.

It appears that Hong Xiuquan was concerned to shape his religion—and indeed all the aspects of the Taiping program—to meet the conditions he encountered, as he perceived them. If this is so, it helps explain why he stubbornly resisted suggestions from missionaries to bring his ideas more closely in line with “orthodox” Christianity.<sup>125</sup> And it puts into perspective a remark made by his cousin, Hong Rengan when he wrote that “Siu-tsuen often used to praise the doctrines of Christianity,” but, that Hong Xiuquan also believed, “Too much patience and humility do not suit our present times, for therewith it would be impossible to manage this perverted generation.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>J. B. Littell, “Missionaries and Politics in China: The Taiping Rebellion,” *Political Science Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (December 1928): 590.

<sup>124</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 27. See also Vincent Y. C. Shih, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Sources, Interpretations, and Influences*, 60-73 and Augustus F. Lindley, *Ti-ping tien-kwoh: The History of the Ti-ping Revolution, Including a Narrative of the Authors’s Personal Adventures.*, vol. 1 (London: Day and Son, 1866), 300-03 for a discussion of female equality under the Taiping Movement.

<sup>125</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 22; Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 285-288.

<sup>126</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 43.

It is clear, however, that Hong's interpretation of Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangyan* remained the source for most of the Christian elements in Taiping thought and practice. So, in the next two chapters, that influence will be discussed in more detail. Liang's tracts contained neither the entire Bible nor a clear exposition of Christian doctrine. They left large gaps that Hong and other Taiping followers had to fill if they were to produce a complete religious, political, social, and economic system. And such a complete system was essential if the Taipings were to replace the traditional Chinese system they were determined to overthrow.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangyan* and Its Impact on Hong Xiuquan

According to Robert Morrison's report<sup>1</sup> on the first twenty-five years of the Chinese Mission, in early 1832, Liang Fa composed and printed the *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言 (*Good Words to Admonish the Age, being Nine Miscellaneous Christian Tracts*) at the expense of the Religious Tract Society.<sup>2</sup> Noted in Chapter One,<sup>3</sup> there are two editions of the tracts: one is the Canton edition, printed in Canton in early 1832, and the Malacca edition, printed in Malacca in late 1832.

The Harvard University copy, probably the first edition printed in Canton in early 1832, is bound in a yellow paper cover on which is printed, in English, the bibliographical data including the date of publication: "*Good Words to Admonish the Age, being Nine Miscellaneous Christian Tracts. By Leangafa [Liang Fa] of the London Missionary Society, 1832. Printed at the expense of the Religious Tract Society. Canton, China.*" Each page has eight lines of twenty-four Chinese characters. There are 236 leaves or 465 pages, about 90,000 characters, in all. The page layout of the book is

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<sup>1</sup>It was from Canton on 4 September 1832. "During the current year, Leang-Afa has printed nine tracts, of about fifty pages each, composed by himself, and interspersed with passages of sacred Scripture. They were revised by Dr. Morrison, when in manuscript, and printed at the expense of the Religious Tract Society" [Eliza Morrison, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, and Longmans, 1839), 473]. Cf. London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirty-ninth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, (London: Westley and Davis, 1833), 19.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter Two, 90n, for a detailed discussion on the Religious Tract Society.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Chapter One, 17n.

pleasing to the eyes. There was no punctuation in ordinary Chinese publications of that time, but Liang's had commas and full stops. Liang's poor literary style, however, shows his lack of a thorough education, and his extensive biblical quotations and endless repetitions would not have enticed Confucian classical scholars to read his work.<sup>4</sup>

Liang never had the advantage of a thorough education. However, he was acquainted with the arts of reading and writing, which were indeed necessary in order to fulfill his duty as a blockcutter. With this capacity, in 1811 or 1812, Liang was hired in Canton by Morrison for the purpose of cutting the blocks for Morrison's Chinese version of the New Testament, and, in 1815, Liang went to Malacca with William Milne to do the blocks for Morrison and Milne's Chinese version of the Old Testament. At that place he became acquainted with Christianity, professed his belief in the Gospel, and was baptized in 1816 by Milne.

His having been constantly employed around books increased his acquaintance with letters. However, it did not improve his style in Chinese. The work which he was employed to print was a translation from a foreign language. Therefore, the style of a foreign tongue was too closely imitated, and many phrases were drawn up in non-idiomatic Chinese.<sup>5</sup> For instance, *Xieshen bianwei shemo* 邪神變爲蛇魔 (the corrupt spirit transformed himself into the serpent devil *or* the devilish serpent)<sup>6</sup> was intended as

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<sup>4</sup>Ssu-yu Teng, *Historiography of the Taiping Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 2; P. Richard Bohr, "Liang Fa's Quest for Moral Power," in Suzanne W. Barnett and John K. Fairbank, eds., *Christianity in China: Early Protestant Missionary Writings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 40.

<sup>5</sup>George H. McNeur, *China's First Preacher Liang A-fa, 1789-1855* (Shanghai: Kwang Hsueh Publishing House, 1934), 79.

<sup>6</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen* 眞傳救世

a translation of the serpent in Genesis 3. “The devilish serpent” is, however, a form of expression new to Chinese, and no unassisted native would think of adopting it. They had no idea of connecting a serpent with the devil.

A few years after his baptism, having been deeply moved with a desire to do something for the good of his countrymen, Liang made up his mind to compose and publish a series of Christian tracts explaining his understanding of Christianity to fellow Chinese.<sup>7</sup> In so doing, however, his lack of an early education, and his foreign style derived from a constant perusal of books composed by Europeans, became apparent. The passages from the Scripture and sometimes whole chapters of the Bible were taken almost word for word from the Morrison-Milne’s Chinese version of the Scripture, the *Shentian shengshu* 神天聖書 (*Holy Bible in Chinese*).<sup>8</sup> The explanations and

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文 (*True Accounts of the Salvation of the World*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1932), 1.

<sup>7</sup>In 1819 Liang composed and printed his first Christ tracts: Liang Fa, *Jiushi lu cuoyao luejie* 救世錄撮要略解 (*A Brief Explanatory Abstract of the Plan of World Salvation*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1819). Cf. Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun* 熟學眞理論 (*Statements of Perfect Acquaintance with the True Doctrine*) (Canton: Religious Tracts Society, 1832), 25.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Robert Morrison and William Milne, *Holy Bible in Chinese* (神天聖書) (Malacca: Anglo-Chinese Press, 1823). The New Testament had been translated by Morrison in 1813. The Old Testament was completed by Morrison and Milne in 1819. They each did a separate translation. The portion between Deuteronomy and Job had been done by Milne, while the rest by Morrison. Actually Liang included eleven excerpts or whole chapters from the Old Testament translation and nineteen excerpts or whole chapters from the New Testament translation: Genesis 1, 3-4, 6-7; Psalms 19, 33; Isaiah 1, 45, 58; Jeremiah 23; Matthew 5-7; John 3; Acts 19, 22; Romans 12, 13; 1 Corinthians 1-2, 13; Ephesians 5-6; 1 Thessalonians 5; 1 Timothy 2-3; James 5; 1 John 4; and Revelation 22. And Liang also quoted some partial texts from fifteen chapters from the Chinese Old Testament (Genesis, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, and Jeremiah) and fifty-two chapters from Morrison’s Chinese New Testament (Matthew, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Hebrew, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation).

enlargements written by Liang himself, are not unlike the work which he did to print a textbook, or the diffuse mode of address which he was accustomed to hear in preaching intended for the common people. These causes rendered his style exceedingly diffuse, and tedious with a multiplicity of words. Liang seems to have had no knowledge of the proper use and position of Chinese particles, and he took little care to construct his sentences in an idiomatic manner. To a well-educated Chinese his productions are unacceptable; on every page, in almost every line, something occurs offensive to good taste and philological propriety. It would induce a well-informed native Chinese to lay aside the book, as one which it is unpleasant to read.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless the meaning is in most parts apparent, and persons who are not very particular about the forms of expression, and only anxious to reap some spiritual benefit from the volume before them, might be inclined to re-read, and ultimately embrace Christianity and take Liang's understanding of Christian living seriously. This seems to have been the case with Hong Xiuquan. He not only adopted the *Quanshi liangyan* as his "handbook," but made it the basis of the instruction which he gave to his friends and followers.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Analysis of the Quanshi Liangyan and the Taiping Movement*

As early as the seventeenth century Jean Basset (ca. 1662-1707), a Jesuit missionary, translated most of the New Testament into Chinese and this work was the

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<sup>9</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: Norton & Company, 1996), 32.

<sup>10</sup>Ssu-yu Teng, *New Light on the History of the Taiping Rebellion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 55.

earliest known Chinese version of the Bible.<sup>11</sup> With the help of this manuscript Robert Morrison translated the New Testament completely in 1813. And, then, Morrison and Milne completed their translation of the Old Testament in 1819. At last they gave it a Chinese name *Shentian shengshu* 神天聖書<sup>12</sup> and printed the work in 1823.

At that time the officials and gentry of the Chinese government harbored many misunderstandings regarding this newly introduced Protestant Christianity and many negative remarks about this religion were passed among ordinary people. So Liang decided to quote the texts from *Shentian shengshu* with his own commentaries or homiletic essays to use for explaining Christian living as well as Christianity to fellow Chinese. The result was the *Quanshi liangyan*. It consists, as Robert Morrison stated, of nine volumes, of about fifty pages each, and each volume has a separate heading, independent of the general title. And, as there is no particular arrangement, no necessary connection between one part and another, the different volumes might be issued separately.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Volume One: Zhenzhuan Jishi Wen*

Volume One is titled *Zhenzhuan jishi wen* (真傳救世文 *True Accounts of the Salvation of the World*) and consists of 25 leaves or 49 pages. It is divided into four

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<sup>11</sup>It is the “Manuscript of Sloane.” See Chapter One, 58n and 62n, for a detailed discussion of the manuscript and Jean Basset.

<sup>12</sup>This title translates into English as “The Most High Bible” or “The Most Holy Bible.”

<sup>13</sup>London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirty-ninth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 19.



sections. Section One is a paraphrastic version of Genesis 3,<sup>14</sup> mainly based on Morrison's translation, containing an account of the fall of man, "beginning not with the Hebrew account of Creation and the physical world that God created and blessed as good, but instead beginning with law, transgression, and judgment—all prominent themes in the succeeding pages."<sup>15</sup> It is very likely that this first section of Liang Fa's work made the deepest impression on the mind of the newly-awakened Hong Xiuquan. Liang saw Christians or "believers in God" as the domain of God. Outside this domain was a world of darkness and sin which was not of God. We find various expressions for God and evil used by Liang frequently occurring in Hong's writings.<sup>16</sup>

It has been suggested that the opening phrase *Shen yehuohua* 神爺火華 (Jehovah God *or* the Lord God)<sup>17</sup> was intended as a translation of Jehovah God. Later, Liang uses the phrase *Shemo* 蛇魔 (the serpent devil *or* the devilish serpent) for the serpent.<sup>18</sup> According to Liang's Genesis 3, there is *shen yehuohua* who created heaven and earth and all the living things. But of all the things created, the serpent is the most devious, for this serpent is none other than *shemo* or the god of evil, who has transformed himself into a serpent demon. "This is what Liang writes and Hong reads. There is no

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<sup>14</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen*, 1-6.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 2004), 64.

<sup>16</sup>Hong Xiuquan, "Ode on Repentance," in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2: *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1971), 20-21; Hong Rengan, "The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle," in *Ibid.*, 51-76.

<sup>17</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen*, 1.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

way for Hong to tell that Liang has added to the Book of Genesis his own explanation that the serpent in Eden is the god of evil, the serpent demon.”<sup>19</sup>

Section Two of *True Accounts of the Salvation of the World* describes how humankind became involved in idolatrous practices, and consists mainly of a condemnation of the idolatry of China.<sup>20</sup> Section Three is a copy of Morrison’s version of Isaiah 1.<sup>21</sup> Section Four is a transcript of Morrison’s version of Matthew 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>22</sup>

In Section One the word *Shen* 神 is used for God, sometimes with the addition of Jehovah. But in the second half of Section Two the phrase *Shentian shangdi* 神天上帝<sup>23</sup> is used for the Most High God. In Section Three, in paraphrasing Isaiah 1:9-21, Liang uses the same phrase for God, though throughout the quotation from Matthew 5-7, in Section Four, he uses *shen* alone for God.

In all the quotations and extracts from Morrison’s translation of the Scriptures, which occupy one-fourth of the whole work, Morrison used the single word *shen* for the Most High God and also to indicate Chinese gods, much like the term El is used in the Hebrew Bible. It does not appear, however, that Liang was able to satisfy himself with

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<sup>19</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 56.

<sup>20</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen*, 6-31.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 31-35.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 35-49.

<sup>23</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 28. Even in his journal Liang uses both ways of naming God. Cf. Liang Fa, *Riji yanxing* 日記言行 (*Journal of Leangafa: From March 28 till Nov. 6, 1830*) (Council for World Mission Archives, South China, Box, no.1).

this term. In his first tract against idolatry, he used *shen* when speaking of the various false beings worshipped by the heathen.<sup>24</sup> However, when he came to speak more distinctly of God, he employed the compound term *Shentian shangdi* 神天上帝.<sup>25</sup> The first part of this phrase, *Shentian* 神天, though a combination which does not occur in any Chinese classics relating to God or gods, was used regularly and systematically in tracts and preaching by Morrison and Milne,<sup>26</sup> to whom Liang was indebted for his first lessons in Christianity. So it is not surprising that he should have adopted it. *Shangdi* 上帝 also was frequently employed by Morrison, particularly towards the close of his life, and Liang seems to have thought himself more secure by combining the two, and using this compound as his usual phrase for designating God's sovereignty. Morrison, likewise, except in the translation of the Scriptures, frequently employed these terms, either together or separately. Whatever Liang did in this respect must be considered as the result, to a large degree, of his connection with those two eminent men; in the more frequent usage of a particular term in his works, we may trace the natural preferences of his own mind.

Significantly for later Protestant missionaries, Robert Morrison and William Milne rendered the biblical words for God by the Chinese term *shen*<sup>27</sup> or *shangdi*. The

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<sup>24</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen*, 6-31.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>26</sup>Even the title of the Morrison's and Milne's Chinese version of the Scripture was *Shentian shengshu* 神天聖書.

<sup>27</sup>Morrison was indebted to the "Manuscript of Sloane" when he chose *shen* for God. Cf. Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China* (Nettetal, Germany: Steyler Verlag, 1999), 37.

supporters of *shen*<sup>28</sup> held that it was the only true translation for the biblical God, even though it never had had this meaning historically because of the absence of a Chinese monotheistic faith. And they argued that the concept of *shangdi* or an “Emperor of Heaven” might create a false impression to the Chinese people that Christianity would tolerate polytheistic religious beliefs and practices as long as people acknowledged the highest being. Adopting the idea of a highest Supreme Being standing among other inferior beings in an already polytheistic culture, even if the other things were classified as false gods, might severely diminish the monotheistic doctrine of God.<sup>29</sup>

The supporters of *shangdi*<sup>30</sup> maintained that it was evident in the Chinese classics that the Chinese were monotheists and worshiped the one true God in the very beginning of their history. *Shangdi* was regarded in Chinese mythology as the creator of all things, including *shen*, which in most cases meant “spirit” and in only very rare cases “deity,” although it was used for “false gods.” So *shen* should not be used for God “but only for another person of the Trinity, namely the ‘Spirit.’”<sup>31</sup> It was apparent that the supporters of *shangdi* wanted to emphasize the authority or transcendence of God over all other beings in heaven or on earth. For them, the idea of God assumed sovereignty.

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<sup>28</sup>Cf. William J. Boone, “An Essay on the Proper Rendering of the Words Elohim and Theos into the Chinese Language,” *The Chinese Repository* 17, no. 1 (Jan. 1848): 17-53.

<sup>29</sup>Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China*, 82-85.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Walter H. Medhurst and others, “Remarks in Favor of *Shangti* and against *Shin*, as the Proper Term to Denote the True God, Addressed to the Editor of the Chinese Repository,” *The Chinese Repository* 16, no. 1 (Jan. 1847): 34-39.

<sup>31</sup>Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China*, 83.

Hong Xiuquan modified biblical ideas to serve his ambition by claiming that Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangyan* was a revelation given from God as a testimony to endorse his own actions and verify his personal vision for building up a Heavenly Kingdom on earth. The idea of the divine right of kingship associated with the term *shangdi* was evident in both the vision of Hong and the course of the Taiping Movement. *Shangdi* 上帝 (the Great God), *Huang shangdi* 皇上帝 (the Most Great God), or *Tianfu shangdi* 天父上帝 (the Heavenly Father and Great God), instead *shen* or *shentian shangdi* was the term adopted by Hong to denote the name of God in Chinese.<sup>32</sup>

One reason behind Hong Xiuquan selecting the term, *shangdi*, could be due to a limited exposure to Christian teachings through reading Liang's tracts. It means that Hong Xiuquan accepted Robert Morrison and Liang Fa's stand on using *shangdi* for the name of God denoting his supreme status and authority. Furthermore, Hong incorporated this interpretation of Christianity into the political philosophy and structure of imperial China. He transformed the identity of the Chinese Emperor from the "Son of Heaven" to the "Son of *Shangdi*" and the "Younger Brother of Jesus," and reinterpreted Chinese politics. Hong saw himself and his descendents as special instruments appointed by the Supreme Heavenly Father to govern China and established a new form of government in the Taiping Movement: "The Father and the Elder Brother have brought me to sit in the Heavenly Court."<sup>33</sup> Hong Xiuquan chose *shangdi* as the

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<sup>32</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864* (Madison, WS: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), 55; Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (Taipei: Rainbow-Bridge Book Co., 1973), 29; Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire*, 91-100.

<sup>33</sup>Hong Xiuquan, "The T'ien Wang's Comment on Edkins' Essay on God," in

term for the name of God not because he wanted to contextualize the Christian message for the Chinese people but because the term represented “a choice that fitted perfectly with the belief of the Taiping.”<sup>34</sup>

*Volume Two: Chongzhen Pixie Lun*

Volume Two is entitled *Chongzhen pixie lun* 崇眞闢邪論 (*Statements of Following the True and Rejecting the False*) and consists of 31 leaves or 61 pages. It is divided into four sections. Section One is a discourse on the text, “God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world” (John 3:17).<sup>35</sup> Section Two is a treatment of the text, “A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:23).<sup>36</sup> Section Three is a discourse against the use of familiar false spirits and wizards, based on Isaiah 8:19.<sup>37</sup> And Section Four is an essay on regeneration, based on John 3:1-21.<sup>38</sup>

Liang provided a key to the linked significance of age and action. He described how Jesus was a contemplative and hard-working child. Jesus already showed his

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*The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 3, *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1971), 1204-1205.

<sup>34</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 271.

<sup>35</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun* 崇眞闢邪論 (*Statements of Following the True and Rejecting the False*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1932), 1-19.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 19-33.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 33-50.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 51-61.

intelligence by the age of twelve. But Jesus took his time to find his calling, slowly developing his own mission as a teacher. It was not until the age of thirty, Hong's age as he read Liang's tracts,<sup>39</sup> that Jesus cast aside his old life and began to preach openly, explaining how his holy Father had sent him down to earth with specific missions, to exhort the people of the earth to repent of their lascivious and evil ways, to get rid of all their idols, false images, and Buddhist gods, and to follow only the way of the one true God.<sup>40</sup>

Hong Xiuquan and Li Jingfang decided to follow the example of Jesus and destroy all their idols and false images in accordance with the admonishment of Liang's tracts. They ordered two swords to be made, seven Chinese pounds in weight and three Chinese feet long, one sword for Hong and the other for Li. Upon the blades were engraved three Chinese characters, *Zhan yao jian* 斬妖劍 (demon-exterminating sword). And they prayed God to bless them and give success, whereupon both sang together: "With the three-foot sword in our hand, [d]o we quiet the sea and the land. Surrounded by ocean, all forming one clan, [d]wells man in harmonious union. We seize all the Demons, and shut them up [i]n the cords of the earth[.] We gather the traitors, and let them fall [i]n the heavenly net. . . ."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>In 1843, just after Hong failed his fourth attempt at the provincial examination, Li Jingfang, one of Hong's cousins, visited Hong and urged Hong to read the *Quanshi liangyan*. Cf. Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 20.

<sup>40</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun*, 4-6.

<sup>41</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection* (Hong Kong: China Mail Office, 1854), 24-25.

The reference to the era of *Taiping* 太平 (Great Peace), in the angel's mouth at the time of Jesus' birth, fit with another passage in which Liang explained the phrase *Tianguo* 天國 (Heavenly Kingdom or Kingdom of Heaven).<sup>42</sup> Liang showed that it could be used in two ways: one to describe the eternal happiness in Paradise, which would be enjoyed by the souls of all the righteous people when their physical bodies died; the other as a community within this world, formed by congregations who believe in Jesus and worship the Lord of Heaven.<sup>43</sup>

In the meantime Hong and Li continued to study Liang's tracts. However, the word of *tianguo* was like nothing they had heard before. Hong was unable to distinguish "between heavenly and earthly, spritual and material matters." Then Hong no doubt supposed the promised possession of the Heavenly Kingdom "referred to China," and that the inheritance of God's chosen people "applied to the Chinese."<sup>44</sup>

### *Volume Three: Zhenjing Shengli*

Volume Three is entitled *Zhenjing shengli* 真經聖理 (*Sacred Teachings from the True Scriptures*) and consists of 24 leaves or 48 pages. It is divided into eight sections. Section One is a teaching on the holy truths contained in the true Scriptures.<sup>45</sup> Section

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<sup>42</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun*, 19.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 24.

<sup>45</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 3, *Zhenjing shengli* 真經聖理 (*Sacred Teachings from the True Scriptures*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1932), 1-15.



Two presents the Creator of all creatures.<sup>46</sup> Section Three explains redemption by Christ.<sup>47</sup> Section Four comments on Psalm 19<sup>48</sup> and Section Five on Psalm 33:4-22.<sup>49</sup> Section Six deals with Isaiah 45:5-21.<sup>50</sup> Section Seven is on Genesis 1.<sup>51</sup> And Section Eight affirms the original righteousness of the first human beings.<sup>52</sup>

Liang explained how the Highest God of Heaven sent his own son down from heaven to earth, placing the child's spirit in the body of a young pure woman. So she would be pregnant and bring his body out into the world, even though untouched by man. She gave birth to the boy in a rustic hut, giving him the name Jesus, which translates as Savior of the World. At the time of his birth, an emissary from God appeared in the sky, calling out that no one needed to fear, for he brought good and joyful news, of the birth of a savior. And as he spoke, suddenly, from out of the clouds came a great celestial army of the emissaries of God, crying out, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth *Taiping*, Great Peace, and good will toward men."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 15-22. Cf. "If on flat ground there is a great house, extremely beautiful, then everyone knows there has to have been a builder for the house to exist, it has not appeared by accident. Now, if the trivial art of [building] a house cannot happen by accident, how much less can the great labor of [making] Heaven and Earth and the Myriad Things happen naturally?" (Ibid., 16).

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 23-34.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 34-36.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 36-38.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 38-42.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 42-46.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 46-48.

<sup>53</sup>“榮歸與神至上者，太平于地，及恩意矣” (Ibid., 31).

Liang added that since Jesus' birth took place on the same continent as China, one might expect some traces of it to be found in China's own early classics. But that would be an erroneous expectation, for these events happened in the time of Emperor Ai (哀帝) of the Western Han dynasty, and the classics had been written long before. So though in China's earliest books there can be found hints of the actions of the Highest God of Heaven, one cannot expect to find in them similar traces of his son.<sup>54</sup>

In this volume several expressions occur, in the mass of non-idiomatic phrases, which laid the foundation for some unusual modes of speech found within the books of the Taiping Movement. In Section Four, Liang introduces the following sentence: Jehovah God said, "*Chuwowai er weiyau biegeshen ye* 除我外而未有別個神也 (besides Me there is no God)"<sup>55</sup> (Isaiah 45:5). And then God said again, "*Chushenwai bingwushen ye* 除神外並無神也 (besides God there is no god)."<sup>56</sup> It is a mode of expression which could only have been derived from foreigners who were in the habit of using the word *shen* for God to indicate sovereignty. Liang might have adopted it, for he was influenced by those from whom he received his knowledge of Christianity. And we need not wonder that Hong Xiuquan, under the influence of Liang's tracts, should adopt the phraseology found therein, and write, as Liang did: "*Shentian zhiwai gengwushen* 神天之外更無神 (Besides the Great God there is no other god)."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 24

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>57</sup>Cf. Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 21 and J. C. Cheng, ed., *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1963), 3.

*Volume Four: Shengjing Zajie*

Volume Four is entitled *Shengjing zajie* 聖經雜解 (*Miscellaneous Explanations of the Holy Scriptures*) and consists of 19 leaves or 38 pages. It is divided into four sections. Section One is a discourse on the text, “Labour not for the meat that perisheth” (John 6:27).<sup>58</sup> Section Two deals with the text, “Wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself” (Rome 2:2).<sup>59</sup> Section Three is a discourse on the text, “All is vanity and vexation of spirit” (Ecclesiastes 2:11).<sup>60</sup> And Section Four discusses the flood, founded on Genesis 6-7.<sup>61</sup>

In Section Four Liang explains how *Shen yehuohua* 神爺火華 became enraged at the sins of those He has created. Only one man, Noah, found favor in the eyes of the Lord God, for Noah alone was a righteous man. Noah was already six hundred years old when the Lord God told him to build a boat, but obeyed at once, and his three sons helped him. For forty days the Lord God’s flood came on the whole earth. Except for Noah’s family inside the boat, the Lord God killed everyone. Hong connected this story with the devil’s doing and tied the concept to the work of Jesus the Elder Brother: “The Father sent down great rain, because of the belief in the demon’s words; the Elder Brother descended to redeem sins, because of the belief in the demon’s words.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 4, *Shengjing zajie* 聖經雜解 (*Miscellaneous Explanations of the Holy Scriptures*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1932), 1-10.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 10-19.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 19-31.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 31-38.

<sup>62</sup>J. C. Cheng, ed., *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864*, 82.

Volume Five is entitled *Shengjing zalun* 聖經雜論 (*Miscellaneous Statements of the Holy Scriptures*) and consists of 28 leaves or 55 pages. It is a collection of nineteen short sermons of two or three pages each.<sup>63</sup> Some may have been based on Liang's general interests, others on the Scripture Lessons of the British and Foreign School Society.<sup>64</sup>

In this volume Liang deals with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

*Shentian shangdi* 神天上帝 sent fire to destroy two cities, just as *Shen yehuohua*

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<sup>63</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 5, *Shengjing zalun* 聖經雜論 (*Miscellaneous Statements of the Holy Scriptures*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1932), 1-55: (1) "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (Matthew 16:26); (2) "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10); (3) "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16); (4) "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy" (1 John 1:9); (5) "Receive with meekness the engrafted word" (James 1:21); (6) "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years" (2 Peter 3:8); (7) "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24); (8) "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrew 12:6, 7); (9) "The kingdom of God is not in word but in power" (1 Corinthians 4:20); (10) "What advantageth it me if the dead rise not" (1 Corinthians 15:32); (11) "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35); (12) "Every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving" (1 Timothy 4:4); (13) "Take no thought saying, what shall we eat?" (Matthew 6:31); (14) "Whosoever shall call upon the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13); (15) "Not as pleasing man but God, who trieth our heart" (1 Thessalonians 2:4); (16) Paraphrase of Romans 12; (17) Paraphrase of Romans 13; (18) "Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah" (Genesis 19); and (19) Paraphrase of James 5.

<sup>64</sup>Cf. "In 1831, the Scripture Lessons of the British and Foreign School Society were printed in China, and are found a very acceptable epitome of Sacred Writ. The Rev. E. C. Bridgman, with the assistance of his native scholars, and Mr. John R. Morrison, made the extracts from Morrison and Milne's Chinese version of the Bible: Leang-Afa, with his first assistant, named above, carried them through the press: and [C]hristian merchants in China subscribed the necessary funds" (Eliza Morrison, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*, vol. 2, 473) and "Leang-[A]-fa has been engaged in printing the Scripture [L]essons of the British and Foreign School Society in Chinese. . . . On the sabbath, he explained the Scriptures to such persons as he could collect to attend to his instructions" (London Missionary Society, *The Report of the Directors to the Thirty-ninth General Meeting of the Missionary Society*, 19).

神爺火華 had sent down great rain to destroy the people of the whole earth. This Great God was angry, for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah gave themselves to lust and evil doings, leaving no depravity unexplored. But once again the Great God chose one family to be saved, that of a man named Lot. Lot had a wife, and two daughters. But his wife looked back at the burning cities and became a pillar of salt. Only three were saved. Even so, in Hong's interpretation the family values were preserved. He showed his respect to both of the families of Noah and Lot and wanted his spiritual family to save China.<sup>65</sup>

*Volume Six: Shuxue Zhenli Lun*

Volume Six is entitled *Shuxue zhenli lun* 熟學真理論 (*Statements of Perfect Acquaintance with the True Doctrine*) and consists of 22 leaves or 44 pages. It is divided into seven sections. Section One quotes Morrison's version of Isaiah 58 and explains it in detail.<sup>66</sup> Section Two comments on Ephesians 5.<sup>67</sup> Section Three contains Liang Fa's autobiography.<sup>68</sup> Section Four is a treatise on suffering reproach for Christ's sake.<sup>69</sup> Section Five comments on Acts 22, with a short preface added.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 257.

<sup>66</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 1-5.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 5-8.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 8-30. Liang entitled his autobiography itself *Shuxue zhenli lüelun* 熟學真理略論 (*A Brief Statements of Perfect Acquaintance with the True Doctrine*).

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 30-32.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 33-37.

Section Six quotes Morrison's version of 1 Timothy 2-3 and presents it in detail.<sup>71</sup> And Section 7 quotes Morrison's version of Revelation 22, with a short commentary.<sup>72</sup>

*Liang Fa's Autobiography.* In his autobiography, Liang explained his previous lack of religious understanding. He went every new and full moon to the Buddhist temple, and prayed to the gods to protect him by offering incense and reciting some of the classics of the Buddha. But though his body worshipped the gods, his heart still cherished evil thoughts and desires, like cheating and lying.<sup>73</sup> After arriving in Malacca, he attended Milne's regular indoor meetings for employees, but his heart was not interested in the scheme of redemption which Milne unfolded to them. At first, he paid little attention to this subject, not being much pleased with the doctrine. He was particularly offended with Milne's denunciations of idolatry, and though constrained to listen to him, he speedily forgot all Milne said.

After some time Liang met with a Buddhist monk, of whom he enquired how the forgiveness of sins was to be obtained? The monk immediately sent him a volume of prayers, and suggested that he repeat them; still more forgiveness would come if he gave a little money to the temple. Liang recited the prayers several times a day. But one evening, while sitting alone, it came into his mind that he had committed many real sins, and could hardly expect to obtain forgiveness by reciting prayers without performing a

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 37-41.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 41-44.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 14-15; Walter H. Medhurst, *China: Its State and Prospects, with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel* (London: John Snow, 1838), 308-309.

single virtuous action: “I am now twenty-eight years of age,<sup>74</sup> and have committed many sins; how can I expect, that by merely reciting this book, without performing a single good action, I should obtain forgiveness?”<sup>75</sup>

Now Liang became very anxious about his spiritual state. He therefore discontinued the practice of reciting prayers, and paid more attention to what Milne told him, particularly when he told Liang of the Savior. From this time he began to pray to God, to keep holy the Sabbath, and to read the Chinese Bible manuscripts regularly. When he came to passages which he did not understand, he applied to Milne for an explanation. Milne was very willing to explain the meaning to him. He therefore asked Milne about the atonement of Christ, and how Christ could save men.

Dr. Milne said that all the men of the world had left the worship of the only true God, and fallen into idolatry. They had transgressed the righteous law of God, and deserved eternal damnation. But God, the Creator of all men, not willing to destroy the whole race, according to his great mercy, caused his holy son Jesus to leave his glorious place in heaven, descend into the world and become a man, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin. Jesus taught the human being to know and worship the one Lord and Creator of the universe, and to desist from idolatry. He taught them the value of their never-dying souls, and the importance of preparing for a future judgment. He came into the world to suffer and die in order to atone for the sins of men. So every one who now believes in the atonement of Jesus and is baptized, may receive the forgiveness of all sins and be saved; but that every sinner who does not believe, will suffer the eternal punishment of hell.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Actually, in 1816, he was twenty-seven years old, but he counted his age by the traditional Chinese age reckoning: newborns start at one year old, and each passing of a lunar New Year, rather than the birthday, adds one year to the person's age.

<sup>75</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 15; Walter H. Medhurst, *China: Its State and Prospects, with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel*, 309.

<sup>76</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 16-18. Cf. Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 15.

Liang declared himself quite willing to be saved by responding to the instruction of Milne, then asked him the meaning of baptism. Milne explained: “The rite of baptism consists in sprinkling a little pure water upon the head or the body of a person. The inner or spiritual meaning of it is to wash a person clean from the pollution of his sins. By the Holy Spirit his heart may be changed, and cause him from the time of his having been baptized to love the good and hate the evil, to change his former life, and become a new man.”<sup>77</sup> It was clear that his struggle over sin and guilt could not be resolved by the traditional prescriptions of Chinese religions. Liang came to believe that he could find grace and forgiveness only in the Gospel. Then he determined to become a disciple of Jesus and requested baptism.

Liang described his own baptism.<sup>78</sup> Milne, “in a room of the mission-house,”<sup>79</sup> having again asked him several questions, read some Scripture verses and explained their meaning. He then knelt with Liang in prayer, imploring the grace and mercy of God. The prayer being concluded, he took a little pure water with his hand and applied it to Liang’s head. This ceremony was followed by another prayer, and Liang asked Milne what special mark identified those who believed in Jesus. Milne said that “the special mark of true believer is to do good with all their heart.”<sup>80</sup> Liang then returned to his

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<sup>77</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 18-20. Cf. Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 15.

<sup>78</sup>He was baptized on 3 November 1816. Cf. William Milne, *Journals*, 30 December 1815-4 January 1817 (Council for World Mission Archives, Journals, South China, Box 1, no. 13).

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.; London Missionary Society, *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, vol. 4, [From the Year 1813] to the Year 1817 (London: Williams and Co., 1818), 412-413.

<sup>80</sup>“專心行善就是信耶穌者的記號了” (Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6,



little room. And as he sat there alone, he felt a secret joy in his heart, because he had received the pardon of God for all his great sins. Liang then took the name of *Xueshanzhe* 學善者 (student of virtue *or* one who learns to do good),<sup>81</sup> and continuing in prayer and the reading of the Scriptures, gradually experienced a change of mind and heart. He himself not only abandoned the worship of idols, but he also pitied the stupidity of others who engaged therein, and desired to exhort them to throw away the idols, repent of their sins, and worship the only true God.<sup>82</sup>

Liang also described his wife's baptism in his tracts. In April 1819, Liang returned to China to visit his family and to find a wife. And, then, Liang returned to Malacca in the spring of 1820 and came back to Canton towards the end of 1820. This time his wife Li-shi (黎氏), whom he had married on his previous visit, was about to give birth and she confessed Jesus Christ as her Savior.<sup>83</sup> She became the first known Protestant woman in China, but she could not be baptized by Morrison or Milne.<sup>84</sup> So Liang instructed his wife, and finding her willing to receive the religion of Jesus, he acted according to circumstances and baptized her.<sup>85</sup> From that time he and his partner in life

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*Shuxue zhenli lun*, 22).

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>83</sup>Until that time Liang was the only Christian in his family.

<sup>84</sup>Cf. Chapter Two, 55.

<sup>85</sup>“神夫神子賦賜聖神風助我施洗禮與妻子” (in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I baptized my wife) (Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 27).

endeavored to follow the Savior, and serve God in sincerity.<sup>86</sup> Subsequently, on 20 November 1823 he and his wife took their infant son, Jinde (進德), to Morrison in Canton, requesting baptism for him also.<sup>87</sup>

In Volume Six Liang introduced his own baptism and his wife's baptism, and reported the definition of baptism that William Milne had given to him. For Hong the passages were very difficult to understand, and nowhere in the tracts did Liang write exactly what was done with water, or when, or how. In 1843, when Hong started to preach the Gospel, the man he reached first was Li Jingfang, with whom he read Liang's tracts. Now piecing the rite of baptism together from the scattered bits of information left by Liang, Hong and Li baptized each other, in a private ritual, as Liang had baptized his wife. As Hong and Li sprinkled water on each other's heads they prayed to their new true God, and promised to follow God's commands.<sup>88</sup>

#### *Volume Seven: Anwei Huofu Pian*

Volume Seven is entitled *Anwei huofu pian* 安危獲福篇 (*On Obtaining Happiness Whether in Peace or in Peril*) and consists of 34 leaves or 67 pages. It is divided into eight sections. Section One is an essay based on "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).<sup>89</sup> Section Two is a discourse

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Robert Morrison, "Letter from Canton, 20 November 1823," (Council for World Mission Archives, Incoming Correspondence, South China, Box 2, no. 2C).

<sup>88</sup>Jonathan D. Spencer, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 66.

<sup>89</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 7, *Anwei huofu pian* 安危獲福篇 (*On Obtaining Happiness Whether in Peace or in Peril*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society,

on “Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).<sup>90</sup> Section Three deals with “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven (Hebrew 12:25)?”<sup>91</sup> Section Four is a discourse on 1 Corinthians 1-2.<sup>92</sup> Section Five is an essay on 1 Corinthians 13.<sup>93</sup> Section Six comments on 1 John 4.<sup>94</sup> Section Seven is a treatise on the exemption from all calamity, and the possession of all good, obtained by the virtuous in the world to come.<sup>95</sup> And Section Eight is an essay on the misery of those who reject the Gospel.<sup>96</sup>

In Sections Three and Eight, Liang gave the Chinese a warning: the Chinese people, the people of *Zhonghuadaguo* 中華大國 (the Great Central Kingdom) or *Liyizhibang* 禮義之邦 (the country of manners),<sup>97</sup> should listen to Christian missionaries and receive the Gospel. According to him, to believe in God or to worship

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1932), 1-20.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 21-32.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 32-42.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 42-49.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 50-53.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 54-60.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 60-67.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 42.

the Most High God is not to worship evil spirits and images of gods.<sup>98</sup> People who did not believe in God should be afraid that He will cause both their body and soul to suffer misery.<sup>99</sup>

Hong and his cousin Li could have learned the meaning of Christian living from Liang's tracts. After being baptized they prayed to God and promised not to worship images of gods, not to practice evil things, but to keep the heavenly commands. They thereupon kept away from their idols and removed the tablet of Confucius, which is generally found in the schools and worshiped by the teacher as well as by students, from the schools and homes under their control. When this removal was done, they felt their hearts overflowing with joy.<sup>100</sup>

#### *Volume Eight: Zhenjing Geyan*

Volume Eight is entitled *Zhenjing geyan* (真經格言 *Excellent Sayings from the True Scriptures*) and consists of 31 leaves or 61 pages. It is divided into six sections. Section One quotes Morrison's version of Jeremiah 23:19-33 and explains it in detail.<sup>101</sup> Section Two is a commentary on the text "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).<sup>102</sup> Section Three discusses "The day of the Lord will come, as a

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 65-67.

<sup>100</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 20.

<sup>101</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 8, *Zhenjing geyan* 真經格言 (*Excellent Sayings from the True Scriptures*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1932), 1-3.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 3-14.

thief in the night” (2 Peter 3:10).<sup>103</sup> Section Four is a discourse on “They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world: we are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us” (1 John 4:5-6).<sup>104</sup> It is a long essay of 23 pages. Section Five deals with Genesis 4, mainly according to Morrison’s version.<sup>105</sup> And Section Six is a discourse founded on “Judgement must begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17).<sup>106</sup>

In Section Three Liang writes on judgment and the date of the judgment of the Lord. According to him, there would be two kinds of judgment: One is the first, small judgment just after a person’s death; the second is the great judgment on the date of the Lord.<sup>107</sup> Hong borrowed this concept and separated his “Small Heaven” in Nanjing from the “Great Heaven” of God. Just two days after the occupation of Nanjing, Hong and other leaders of the Taiping Movement agreed to found *Tianjing* 天京 (Heavenly Capital), the capital of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, there.<sup>108</sup>

#### *Volume Nine: Gujing Jiyao*

Volume Nine is entitled *Gujing jiyao* (古經輯要 *Important Selections from the Ancient Scriptures*) and consists of 21 leaves or 42 pages. It is divided into nine

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 14-28.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 29-51.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 52-56.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 56-61.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>108</sup>Ho Chen-ch’uan, “A Treatise on the Establishment of the Heavenly Capital in Chin-ling,” in Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, eds., *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, 253.

sections. Section One is selected from Acts 19.<sup>109</sup> Section Two presents Ephesians 6.<sup>110</sup> Section Three deals with 1 Thessalonians 5.<sup>111</sup> Section Four is a sermon on James 4:13: “Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.”<sup>112</sup> Section Five is a sermon on 1 Timothy 6:6: “Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.”<sup>113</sup> Section Six is a sermon on 1 Timothy 1:15: “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”<sup>114</sup> Section Seven is a commentary on Colossians 5.<sup>115</sup> Section Eight is a refutation of various evil tricks and paganisms.<sup>116</sup> And the last, Section Nine, is a discourse on the day of the judgment.<sup>117</sup>

In the last section of the last tract, Liang concluded that all the world must expect a last judgment. God’s redeemer will unroll the scrolls on which all our sins are listed and all people of all nations shall be judged. To those who believed in Jesus would come the blessings of the Most High God. To those who did not believe in Jesus would

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<sup>109</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 9, *Gujing jiyao* 古經輯要 (*Important Selections from the Ancient Scriptures*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1932), 1-6.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, 6-8.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 8-11.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, 11-14.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, 14-17.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, 17-21.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, 21-30.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, 30-35.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 35-42.

come only eternal torment in the eternal fire, with the demons as their guardians.<sup>118</sup>

Now Hong could understand the secret of his vision with Liang's tracts as "the key."

The man with the black robe of whom Hong dreamed, and with whom he fought the demons, is God the Heavenly Father. The Elder Brother who shined the golden seal upon the demons, fought at Hong's side, yet scolded him severely is Jesus the Son of God.<sup>119</sup> And since Jesus is the Son of God and Hong's Elder Brother, then Hong is literally God's Chinese Son and the Younger Brother of Jesus.<sup>120</sup>

### *Features of the Quanshi Liangyan*

The contents and ideas of the *Quanshi liangyan* are predominantly Christian, but they are mingled with some features of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and traditional Chinese folk beliefs, all of which had influenced Liang Fa in his youth. From Christianity he had adopted the concept of an almighty and omnipresent God who created Heaven and Earth in six days and who is King of kings, Ruler of all nations. Under His reign, all nations, races, and individuals are equal; all other religions must be renounced and all idols destroyed. This doctrine of the absolute power of God made a deep impression on Hong Xiuquan, who saw himself as a deputy of God or God's Chinese Son and established his own kingdom along despotic lines.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 336-37, 40-41.

<sup>119</sup>Hong Rengan, "The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle," in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, 56-57.

<sup>120</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 65.

<sup>121</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen*, 9, 15, 20, 27; vol. 3,

## God

According to Liang, God can criticize, chastise, and actually whip his sons and daughters, because whomever the Lord loves must be disciplined. This punishment must be accepted ungrudgingly, with patience and fortitude, for it will lead a true son or daughter of the Lord to self-examination, repentance, and renewal.<sup>122</sup> “Even though knives and axes are put in his body, he should obey only God’s will and should ignore the agony and suffering. If he can do so, he will indeed be delightful in the eyes of God and, in his future life, his soul will enjoy everlasting pleasure.”<sup>123</sup>

Hong Xiuquan understood the image of God this way. As God’s Chinese Son and Younger Brother of Jesus Christ, the Heavenly King was always criticizing, interfering, and terrorizing those who worked for him.<sup>124</sup> I have collated with some care the whole of his works, in order to ascertain exactly his usage of references to God and the order of their frequency.<sup>125</sup>

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*Zhenjing shengli*, 1-3, 15, 37; vol. 5, *Shengjing zalun*, 19; vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 16-17; vol. 7, *Anwei huofu pian*, 57, 61, 67; vol. 8, *Zhenjing geyan*, 47; and vol. 9, *Gujing jiyao*, 17.

<sup>122</sup>The biblical basis is Hebrew 12:5-6: “And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children—‘My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accept’” (NRSV). But Liang explains the necessity and the manner of receiving God’s punishment in detail from the Confucianist perspective. Cf. Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 5, *Shengjing zalun*, 22-25.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, 24-25.

<sup>124</sup>Cf. “In his anger, too, Hong has kicked or otherwise punished his royal concubines, even when they are pregnant” (Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 220).

<sup>125</sup>(1) *Shen* 神 has been used first for the true God, second for false gods, and third even for soul, spirit, or devil; (2) *Shentian shangdi* 神天上帝 has been used for the



## *Jesus Christ*

Liang Fa describes Jesus Christ as the son of God, who was sent to earth to be the Savior of mankind. He performed miracles, redeemed the sins of all people by His suffering and death, after three days arose from the tomb and remained on earth for forty days, teaching His disciples to spread the Gospel throughout the world, and then ascended to Heaven.<sup>126</sup>

Liang Fa's repetitive style gives his readers the impression that God and Jesus Christ frequently traveled back and forth between Heaven and Earth.<sup>127</sup> In Liang's tracts, too, Jesus Christ sometimes appeared in person in the sky in broad daylight for the conversion of unbelievers, as when He converted Paul (Acts 9:3-7). In a discourse on regeneration, based on John 3:1-21, Liang described Jesus Christ as saying, "[v]erily I tell you, I truly come down from Heaven, and truly know the Holy Spirit, which can make a man be reborn knowing new and marvelous things. Moreover, all the miracles I perform are the evidence for my divine origin. . . . From ancient times till now there has never been anyone who has ascended to Heaven and seen heavenly things. I alone, who

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Most High God; (3) *Shen Yehuohua* 神爺火華 has been used for Jehovah God. *Yehuohua* has no meaning and intends just as a phonetic translation of Jehovah; (4) *Shenfu* 神父 has been used for God the Father; (5) *Tianfu* 天父 has been used for the Heavenly Father; (6) *Shenzhu* 神主 has been used for the Heavenly Lord; (7) *Zhenshen* 眞神 has been used for the True God; and (8) *Zhu* 主 or *Shangzhu* 上主 has been used for the Lord, but *Tianfu huang shangdi* 天父皇上帝 (the Heavenly Father and Most Great God), so frequently found in the books of the Taiping Movement, does not occur in Liang's tracts at all.

<sup>126</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 3, *Zhenjing shengli*, 31-32.

<sup>127</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen*, 10; vol. 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun*, 10-11, 48; vol. 3, *Zhenjing shengli*, 8, 31; vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 24; vol. 7, *Anwei huofu pian*, 23, 27; vol. 8, *Zhenjing geyan*, 3-4; and vol. 9, *Gujing jiyao*, 19.

descend to the world from Heaven, know celestial matters, and thus I alone can talk about them.”<sup>128</sup>

The method of burial of Jesus Christ described by Liang—wrapping the body in white cloth and putting it in a newly-dug tomb<sup>129</sup>—may well have affected Hong Xiuquan’s own burial, which was entirely different from traditional Chinese burial practices: “There is no great fanfare at Hong’s death, which comes quietly on June 1, 1864. He is wrapped in a simple shroud of yellow silk by one of the palace women and buried in the bare ground, as he has taught the Taiping to do with their dead. No coffins are needed when one will rise so soon to Heaven. Hong indeed has long before ordered that coffins be abandoned and that the word for ‘death’ be tabooed amongst his followers, who should use instead the phrase ‘ascend to Heaven’ or ‘find one’s happiness.’”<sup>130</sup> The following note contains the biblical terms used to describe Jesus Christ in Liang’s tracts.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun*, 57.

<sup>129</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 3, *Zhenjing shengli*, 11.

<sup>130</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 325.

<sup>131</sup>(1) *Yesu* 耶穌 has been used for Jesus. It has no meaning as a phonetic translation of Jesus; (2) *Jidu* 基督 or *Jilishidu* 基理師督 has used for Christ. It also no meaning and intends just as a phonetic translation of Christ; (3) *Jiuzhu* 救主 or *Jiushizhu* 救世主 has used for Savior; (4) *Yesu Jidu* 耶穌基督 or *Yesu Jilishidu* 耶穌基理師督 has used for Jesus Christ; (5) *Jiuzhu Yesu* 救主耶穌 has used for Jesus the Savior; (6) *Jiuzhu Yesu Jidu* 救主耶穌基督 has used for Jesus Christ the Savior; (7) *Shengji* 聖子 has used for the holy Son; and (8) *Shenji* 神子 has used for the Son of God or God the Son.

### *The Holy Spirit*

Liang did not comment on the Holy Spirit very often in his tracts, but described it in a discourse on Acts 19. There Paul asked some disciples at Ephesus: “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” They replied negatively and had no knowledge of the Holy Spirit, even being baptized with John’s baptism. On hearing this, Paul baptized them in the name of Jesus. When, then, Paul had laid his hand on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongue and predicted future affairs.<sup>132</sup>

In Liang’s tracts, *Shenfeng* 神風 (the Wind of God), *Shengshenfeng* 聖神風 (the Wind of the Holy Spirit), or *Quanweishi* 勸慰師 (Comforter or Teacher of Encouragement) were used invariably for the Holy Spirit.<sup>133</sup> Hong saw no justification whatever for accepting this “wind” or “teacher” sent by God as God’s equal.<sup>134</sup>

### *The Ten Commandments*

In the *Quanshi liangyan*, Liang did not comment directly on the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20. But in two tracts he outlined some prohibitions that come from the Commandments. In Volume Eight, the list of prohibitions included murder, rebellion, stealing, swindling, adulterous lust, magical arts, and disobedience to one’s parents.<sup>135</sup> In Volume Two, Liang gave Jesus’ own list, as he told it to a rich

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<sup>132</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 9, *Gujing jiyao*, 1.

<sup>133</sup>*Shenshi* 神使 (the Messenger of God) is used for angel.

<sup>134</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 72.

<sup>135</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 8, *Zhenjing geyan*, 5.

young man who sought to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 19:18-19): do not kill; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do honor your parents, and love your neighbor as you love yourself. And Liang added one new prohibition of his own: do not smoke opium, a vice as bad as any of the others.<sup>136</sup>

Why did not Liang describe the Ten Commandments completely? Actually he did not include or mention any chapter or verse from Exodus or Deuteronomy. Why not? Probably he believed that keeping the Ten Commandments was very hard for Chinese people when they just set out their first journey of Christian life.

Liang toured the interior of China with a group of civil service examiners. He thus had access to the young gentry or literati at every examination center in southern China. And he distributed almost seven thousand copies of his tracts on the most important subjects. Whenever he had a chance to communicate, he preached the Gospel. On 5 March 1830, in his lodging in Canton, Liang met three Chinese and explained the Ten Commandments to them. After he had finished his discourse, one of them, whose family name was Chen (陳) responded:

There is a great deal of reason in what you say, but the Second and Fourth Commandments, it is very difficult to keep. The Second Commandment requires us not to worship images of the gods of Buddha, and the Saints, or Poosa, but we have already erected these images in our houses. If we believe in the Ten Commandments of the Most High God, we shall not be able to worship these images, but must even burn those we have dedicated. Suppose I, as an individual, would burn them, it does not follow that every one in the family would consent to this. Besides, on certain days, in the four seasons, and the eight terms, it is the constant usage to go and worship all the gods and Buddha. If one were to desist from doing so, one would be laughed at by a great many people. Therefore it is difficult to keep the Second Commandments.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun*, 20.

<sup>137</sup>Liang, Fa, *Riji yanxing* 日記言行 (*Journal of Leangafa: From March 28 till Nov. 6, 1830*). Cf. Robert Morrison, *Extracts from the Diary of Leangafa, 1830*.

Liang replied: “Other people may laugh at you for not worshipping the idols; but other people cannot save your soul. What necessity is there for being afraid of other people’s ridicule? Are you not afraid that the Most High God [*Shentian shangdi* 神天上帝] will cause both your body and soul to suffer misery? Is not this more to be feared?” Chen not only rejected Liang’s exhortation but also murmured another complaint: “Well, the Fourth Commandment also is hard to keep. If, on the Sabbath or day of rest, no work must be done, I, who labor with my hands, if, for one day, I intermit labor, it is difficult for me to pass that day.” Liang returned: “The day of worship and of rest is appointed by the most high God as a holy day, which men are commanded to keep for the purpose of nourishing the life of the soul. For, during six days you bustle, and hurry, and labour, to nourish the carnal body; the seventh is a day of rest, for the silent contemplation of God’s great goodness in daily preserving us; for self-examination; for reading the holy book; for cherishing virtuous thoughts; for worshipping God; and for thanksgiving.”<sup>138</sup>

Now Liang concluded that keeping the Ten Commandments was very hard for Chinese people when they just set out on their first journey of Christian life, and he did not describe the whole Commandments in his tracts. So Hong could not access the Ten Commandments completely until he studied the Bible with Issachar Roberts or got the Gützlaff translation which included the Ten Commandments.<sup>139</sup>

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Council for World Mission Archives. South China. Box, no.1.

<sup>138</sup>Liang, Fa, *Riji yanxing* 日記言行 (*Journal of Leangafa: From March 28 till Nov. 6, 1830*). Cf. Robert Morrison, *Extracts from the Diary of Leangafa, 1830*.

<sup>139</sup>Cf. Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 144-145; Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*:

### *The Rite of Baptism*

Liang, in his tracts, did not present any of the four Gospels' or Acts' accounts of baptism. In a discourse on Acts 19 in Volume Nine, he had Paul explain John's baptism in brief: "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus."<sup>140</sup> And then Paul baptized the disciples of Ephesus with water in the name of the Lord Jesus. Liang himself also introduced his own baptism and presented the definition of baptism that Milne had given to him, in Volume Six. Even so, the passages on the rite of baptism were very difficult for Hong Xiuquan to understand, and Hong and Li baptized each other in a private ritual, as Liang had baptized his wife.<sup>141</sup>

### *The Social Function of Christianity*

Fundamentally Liang condemned China's religious and secular culture and offered an ambitious plan for the redemption of not only the individual but also of Chinese society through Christian monotheism. Throughout his tracts, Liang praised the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent monotheistic God who loves mankind as a parent loves his sons and daughters, and he regretted that his fellow Chinese had attributed God's creative powers to idolatrous images. In Liang's view, the worship of lifeless images sacrificed "moral purity" to "pragmatic utility."<sup>142</sup> In particular, he charged that Confucians craved only success in the examinations. The Taoists were

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*Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire*, 97.

<sup>140</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 9, *Gujing jiyao*, 1.

<sup>141</sup>See Chapter Five for the rite of baptism of the Taiping Movement.

<sup>142</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 3, *Zhenjing shengli*, 8-11, 21-24.

obsessed with seeking immortality. The Buddhists selfishly quested after entrance into the Western Paradise.<sup>143</sup> Further, almost all Chinese people engaged in geomancy, fortunetelling, communicating with ghosts, and working spells to gain protection, wealth, and sons. After explaining heaven, hell, the final judgment, the observance of the Sabbath, and the importance of filial piety for Christians, Liang strongly condemned the use of wine and opium, witchcraft, covetousness, adultery, and stealing. Women should not wear makeup or jewelry and should be quiet and obedient, not meddlesome, and have an upright and severe deportment.<sup>144</sup>

In Liang Fa's opinion, all this idolatrous activity indicated a lack of serious commitment to the Chinese religious tradition and inhibited faith in God's compassionate governance. In fact, this activity was responsible for the violence, sexual licentiousness, gambling, and opium addiction for which Chinese were infamous. In spite of this evil, Taoist and Buddhist monks only fattened their purses by exploiting Chinese people's superstitions. The Taoists exhausted the Chinese people's savings by exacting excessive fees for funeral rites and temple repair. The Buddhists lived off of the Chinese people's hard-earned money in luxury and sensuality. Liang Fa also condemned the Confucianists' failure to look after the people's welfare by accusing China's wealthy of oppressing the poor.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen*, 6-31.

<sup>144</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 9, *Gujing jiyao*, 18-21; vol. 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun*, 10, 14; vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 9-12; vol. 8, *Zhenjing geyan*, 7-10; and vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 20.

<sup>145</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen*, 6-31.

One of Hong's central concerns learned from Liang's Tracts was the social function of religion in China.<sup>146</sup> Hong, like Liang, insisted that only God's morality could change his country. Hong urged his fellow Chinese to obey not only the Qing government's laws but also those of the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent monotheistic God, lest the society degenerate into chaos. Hong's Taiping Movement started from this point of view.<sup>147</sup>

### Summary

In the *Quanshi liangyan*, Liang Fa deals with subjects of the most interest to himself and his fellow Chinese. In addition to Liang's original compositions, the *Quanshi liangyan* contains excerpts from the Morrison-Milne translation of the Bible, which are accompanied by Liang's commentaries. There are ten homiletic essays by Liang and an account of his Christian conversion.<sup>148</sup> The *Quanshi liangyan* introduces such biblical themes as the creation of the universe, Noah and the flood, redemption by Christ, the Sermon on the Mount, and the teachings of St. Paul.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup>Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire*, 79.

<sup>147</sup>Cf. "Though time and place have not been pinpointed, it seems clear that the development of his revolutionary ideology arrived at a crucial point when religious elements mingled with his nationalistic and political ideas, coalescing into a theoretical basis for the religious-nationalistic-political revolution that was his life's work" (Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 28).

<sup>148</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun*, 4-15.

<sup>149</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan*, vol. 4, *Shengjing zajie*, 16-19; vol. 3, *Zhenjing shengli*, 12-17; vol. 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun*, 26-31; vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen*, 18-25.



The *Quanshi liangyan* not only condemns the Qing Dynasty's religious and secular culture, but also offers a blueprint for the redemption of both Chinese society and the individual by the almighty and omnipresent God of Christianity. In particular, the doctrine of the absolute power of God made a deep impression on Hong Xiuquan, who saw himself as a deputy of God or "God's Chinese Son," and established his rule along despotic lines. He expanded his power by combining the doctrine of Christianity with the ideology of *Shangdi*, or the Chinese Supreme God, and he organized the *Baishangdihui*, or the God-worshipping Society.

Of course, Hong Xiuquan did not obtain all his religious and moral ideas from Liang's books. On the contrary, he also adopted some native Chinese practices specifically objected to in the *Quanshi liangyan*. Practices that Hong did not adopt from Liang included the offering of three meats, drinking wine, and the burning of incense to worship God.<sup>150</sup> Singing, merry-making, and the keeping of a harem, forbidden by Liang, were not prohibited in the Taiping palace. Hong and his officers indulged in the interpretation of dreams, belief in omens in general, and the use of secret languages, superstitions which Liang said were hateful to God. Above all things, Hong himself sinned most notably against Liang's prohibition against pride and self-aggrandizement.<sup>151</sup>

Some scholars criticize Liang's style, however, as based too much on the translation of the Bible by Westerners and on missionary tracts. This is hardly just,

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<sup>150</sup> Augustus F. Lindley, *Ti-ping tien-kwoh: The History of the Ti-ping Revolution, Including a Narrative of the Authors's Personal Adventures*, vol. 1 (London: Day and Son, 1866), 318-321.

<sup>151</sup> Hong Xiuquan. "The T'en Wang's Edit to the Foreigners on His Divine Origin," in Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, eds., *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 3, *Documents and Comments*, 1127-1128.

because Liang quoted freely from the Scripture, and used the only Protestant translation then available. He was well aware that the style adopted in his tracts was far from idiomatic; sometimes he used too many characters and employed inverted and unusual phrases. The Christian tracts Liang composed reveal a style closer to the simple form of expression popular in China today than to the intricate and difficult classical model favored by the scholars of the old school. If this pioneer in Chinese Christian literature had not the education necessary to win the approval of the stylists he could at least make his meaning clear to those who read his books. The effect was always much greater when he could follow up the reading with personal explanations. It is not surprising that much of his literary work proved to be as seed dropped across his own Chinese mission fields.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Liang Fa, Hong Xiuquan, and the Taiping Christianity

Church and secular historians who could not gain access to Liang Fa's (梁發, 1789-1855) *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言 (*Good Words to Admonish the Age, being Nine Miscellaneous Christian Tracts*) have assumed that most of the religious and moral ideas of Hong Xiuquan (洪秀全, 1814-1864) were derived from Liang's Christian tracts. Of course, Liang's work was the fundamental religious and moral source of Christian teaching for Hong and had an enormous influence on the religious and moral system of the Taiping Movement. However, Liang Fa and Hong Xiuquan were part of their own Chinese culture. In this chapter, I propose that even though the *Quanshi liangyan* may have given the Taiping Movement its religious form and driving force, the theological vision of both Liang Fa and Hong Xiuquan also emerged from their Chinese culture, that the Taiping religion which energized the Taiping Movement resulted from a deliberate synthesis of Christian ideas and native Chinese practices.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Hong Xiuquan's Visions and Chinese Culture*

In 1837, Hong Xiuquan's third failure at the civil service examination resulted in a nervous breakdown. He returned home seriously ill. During this sickness he saw

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864* (Madison, WS: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), 122; Vincent Y. C. Shih, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Sources, Interpretations, and Influences* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1967), 165, 273, 285; Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 2004), 4.

visions which made a deep impression upon him. He felt himself caught up to heaven and commissioned by the old man, or the Heavenly Father, to destroy idolatry.

Henceforward Hong is said to have been more correct in conduct and dignified in manner:

With the return of health, Siu-tshen [Hong Xiuquan]'s whole person became gradually changed both in character and appearance. He was careful in his conduct, friendly and open in his demeanour, his body increased in height and size, his pace became firm and imposing, his views enlarged and liberal. His friend describes [described] him as being, at a later period, a rather tall man, with oval face and fair complexion, high nose, small round ears, his eyes large and bright, his look piercing and difficult to endure, his voice clear and sonorous—when laughing, the whole house resounded; his hair black, his beard long and sandy, his strength of body extraordinary, his power of understanding rare. Persons of vicious habits fled from his presence, but the honest sought his company. . . . As a schoolmaster he was rather severe, and kept his pupils in strict order; he was however very friendly to those whose character he approved of, and in confidential conversation he occasionally disclosed the thoughts of his heart, whereby it was evident, that the impression which his former sickness and vision had made upon his mind had not been effaced.<sup>2</sup>

As Kenneth S. Latourette suggested, however, the origin of the visions was Chinese and non-Christian: “It seems more probable that the visions sprang primarily from the religious beliefs by which Hung had been surrounded from his youth.”<sup>3</sup> Even at that time Hong believed in a God as the creator of all things, a God whom man must worship and serve. However, it was a personal God, with whom Hong had a personal relationship. This God was an imposing figure with a golden beard who sat in heaven like an emperor in a dignified posture, in a black dragon robe, with a high brimmed hat,

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<sup>2</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection* (Hong Kong: China Mail Office, 1854), 14.

<sup>3</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1929), 284.

hands on knees, and who was surrounded by his heavenly family and court.<sup>4</sup> It is only natural that Hong's views of God and heaven were informed by his Chinese ideas on the family. God had a heavenly wife,<sup>5</sup> and Jesus Christ, who as God's son played his part in the family, also had his own heavenly wife. Heaven was a beautiful place with beautiful maidens and angels, with heavenly music.<sup>6</sup>

And, in his visions, "[a]t first Hong when his eyes were closed, he saw a dragon, a tiger, and a cock entering his room."<sup>7</sup> According to Chinese tradition, the dragon is the symbol of the emperor. The tiger is the king of beasts. Even the character for *Wang* 王 (king) was plainly written upon the tiger's head. The cock is thought to illustrate five merits needed by the Chinese: "He is a civil official, as can be seen from his cap, and a military one, as is witnessed by his spurs; he has courage to face an adversity, and benevolence in calling others to share the corn; and he is faithful to his duty as herald of the approach of day."<sup>8</sup> Was this unsuccessful candidate to be a scholar-official dreaming of an empire or the throne? One morning very early, still during his illness, when Hong was about to leave his bed, Hong heard the birds singing in the trees which surrounded his village, and instantly he composed this ode and recited it:

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<sup>4</sup>Hong Rengan, "The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle," in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1971), 54.

<sup>5</sup>There was no "Heavenly Mother" in Liang's tracts.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>7</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 9.

<sup>8</sup>John Foster, "The Christian Origins of the Taiping Rebellion," *International Review of Mission* 40 (April 1951): 161.

The birds turn toward the dawn, in this resembling me;  
I'm now a king, and everything I'll do at will.  
As the sun shines brightly on my body, calamities all are gone;  
Dragon and tiger generals are helping me each one.<sup>9</sup>

Several odes that Hong composed during or immediately after his illness showed his expansive mind and new notions of grandeur and expressed his vague ambitions to conquer the land and become a ruler. These odes, though, do not yet contain the elements of Christian teaching that were soon to give Hong's restless mind a new focus. Hong, even in his new condition, made a last attempt to pass the examination in 1843 and failed again.<sup>10</sup> Just after failing his fourth examination, Hong and his cousin, Li Jingfang (李敬芳), began to study Liang's *Quanshi liangyan*,<sup>11</sup> that had been given to Hong in 1836,<sup>12</sup> closely and carefully.<sup>13</sup> However, being left to their own judgment as to the meaning, they were unable to distinguish between heavenly and earthly, spiritual and material matters. They supposed the promised possession of the Heavenly Kingdom referred to China, and that the inheritance of God's chosen nation and leader

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<sup>9</sup>Hong Xiuquan, "Ode on Hearing the Birds Song," in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, 19-20. Cf. "鳥向曉兮必如我 我今爲王事事可 身照金鳥災盡消 龍虎將軍都輔佐" (Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 13).

<sup>10</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 12.

<sup>11</sup>See Chapter Three for a detailed discussion of Li's recommendation to read Liang's tracts.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. "At the time the young student [Hong Xiuquan] did not, apparently, do more than glance them over, but, with a Chinese scholar's reverence for the printed page, took them home and preserved them" (Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 283).

<sup>13</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 13.

applied to the Chinese and Hong Xiuquan. They ordered two swords, one sword for Hong and the other for Li, and had the blades engraved with three Chinese characters, *Zhan yao jian* 斬妖劍 (demon-exterminating sword).<sup>14</sup>

### *Shamanism in the Society of God Worshippers*

During the spring of 1847, Hong Xiuquan and his cousin, Hong Rengan (洪仁玕, 1822-1864), were invited by the Southern Baptist missionary Issachar Jacox Roberts (1802-1871) to study Christianity at his Uet-tung Chapel in Canton.<sup>15</sup> Roberts was a colleague of the German missionary Karl F. A. Gützlaff (1803-1851). Roberts gave Hong Xiuquan a copy of the Gützlaff translation of the Bible, a more comprehensive translation than the Morrison-Milne version, and the complete Ten Commandments.<sup>16</sup> After Hong Rengan returned home to Hua County, Hong Xiuquan requested baptism and appointment as Roberts' assistant. But, suspecting ulterior motives, Roberts refused. Undeterred, Hong left Canton in June, still convinced he was God's Chinese Son and Christ's Younger Brother.

In August 1847, Hong Xiuquan was in Guangxi, where his evangelical ideas had taken root in the community at Thistle Mountain. Hong took charge of the Society of God Worshippers' two thousand members, encompassing a dozen local assemblies which

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<sup>14</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 24.

<sup>15</sup>See Chapter Three for a detailed discussion on Roberts' chapel and his relationship with Hong.

<sup>16</sup>Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China* (Nettetal, Germany: Steyler Verlag, 1999), 72.

Feng Yunshan (馮雲山, 1815-1852) had organized during Hong's three year absence.<sup>17</sup>

From November 1848 to June or July 1849 Hong Xiuquan was away from Thistle Mountain, petitioning Qing officials for the release of Feng, who had been imprisoned for his evangelism. During those months, in Hong's absence, charismatic shamans asserted their leadership. Among them were Yang Xiuqing (楊秀清, 1821-1856), the illiterate boss of the local charcoal workers who practiced Hakka spirit possession in the name of God the Heavenly Father, and Xiao Chaogui (蕭朝貴, ?-1852), Hong's brother-in-law and a tenant farmer who employed local Yao (瑤族) spirit journey rituals in the name of Christ the Heavenly Big Brother, both men claiming that they had received the words from God and Jesus while in trances.<sup>18</sup>

There was no grasp of the deeper theological meaning of Christian teachings, of the problems of original sin and redemption, or of the Holy Ghost and of the Trinity. The Holy Ghost became simply God's voice and was later to be used by the most powerful of Hong's lieutenants to assume command through trances in which he claimed that God's voice spoke through him. And in analogy to Christ's role of redeemer of sin, this man claimed to be the redeemer of illness for mankind, after having suffered a prolonged illness himself.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1966), 31.

<sup>18</sup>Robert P. Weller, *Resistance, Chaos and Control in China-Taiping Rebels, Taiwanese Ghosts and Tiananmen* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1994), 80; Robert A. Scalapin and George T. Yu, *Modern China and Its Revolutionary Process: Recurrent Challenges to the Traditional Order, 1850-1920* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 16.

<sup>19</sup>Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, eds., *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 33.



In the Bible or Liang's tracts, God never used a human person as a medium through whom He spoke. This quality was peculiar to a devil or demon. The personal possession of individuals by a devil or demon, nevertheless, was not utilized by the Taipings. They gave this function to God and Jesus: God took possession of Yang and Jesus took possession of Xiao. According to Vincent Y. C. Shih, "[T]he transfer of this demonic function from the devil to God was influenced by the ambiguity in the meaning of the term *shen*. A better understanding of the native climate in which the Taipings lived indicates the probability that the habit of falling into a trance, or of being possessed by God, originated in native sorcery rather than in any other source."<sup>20</sup>

By the time Hong Xiuquan returned, the frequent possessions of Yang Xiuqing and Xiao Chaogui by God and Jesus were unleashing unprecedented religious ecstasy<sup>21</sup> in the form of faith healing, dream interpretation, and speaking in tongues.<sup>22</sup> Although uneasy about restoring traditional Chinese folk ritual,<sup>23</sup> Hong endorsed shamanism<sup>24</sup> by

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<sup>20</sup>Vincent Y. C. Shih, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Sources, Interpretations, and Influences*, 327-328.

<sup>21</sup>This type of ecstasy was part of Chinese traditional religion, especially from shamanism. Cf. *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, "The Book of Heavenly Decrees and Proclamations," in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, ed., Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, 97-110.

<sup>23</sup>Hong did not believe God's or Jesus' possession of him but believe the union by blood relationship in the different way God possessed Yang and Jesus possessed Xiao.

<sup>24</sup>The Taipings' assigning of wind, clouds, thunder, and rain as symbols for their kings also derived from shamanism. At that time the worship of gods of wind, clouds, thunder, and rain was popular among the religious practices of the village people. Cf. Vincent Y. C. Shih, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Sources, Interpretations, and Influences*, 320.

dipping into local Hakka customs to forecast rain, clear weather, or draw magic charms in God's name to cure disease.<sup>25</sup>

This shamanistic power was more compelling to the faithful than the more prophetic image of Hong Xiuquan. The charisma accruing to Yang and Xiao by virtue of their possession by supernatural power imparted to the God Worshippers a confidence in divine immediacy and faith in their cause. This generated religious ecstasy capable of mobilizing an ever-increasing number of converts who, suffering from mounting social unrest and natural calamity, sought spiritual salvation, protection, and sustenance from the God Worshippers.<sup>26</sup>

### *Taiping Tianguo or the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace*

The Taiping Movement (太平天國), also known as *Tianguo* 天國 (Heavenly Kingdom) of *Taiping* 太平 (Great Peace), sought to fulfill the ideals of the Chinese political tradition,<sup>27</sup> along with the realization of a Kingdom of Heaven in which all worship the one true God. The character *Tai* 太 (great) can be rendered as “universal,”

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<sup>25</sup>Robert P. Weller, *Resistance, Chaos and Control in China-Taiping Rebels, Taiwanese Ghosts and Tiananmen*, 81-85.

<sup>26</sup>Robert A. Scalapin and George T. Yu, *Modern China and Its Revolutionary Process: Recurrent Challenges to the Traditional Order 1850-1920*, 17.

<sup>27</sup>According to *Taiping jing* 太平經 (*Classic of Great Peace*),<sup>27</sup> one of China's earliest and most relevant religious texts, “an interest in great peace preceded the beginnings of religious Daoism and also extended far beyond it” [Barbara Hendrichske, *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping jing and the Beginnings of Daoism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 5]. The *Classic of Great Peace* usually refers to the work which has been preserved in the *Daozang* 道藏 (*Treasury of Dao* or *Daoist Canon*). It is considered to be a valuable resource for researching early Daoist beliefs and the society at the end of the Eastern Han (東漢, 25-220) dynasty. Cf. *Ibid.*, 1-3.

while Ping 平 (peace) is a pictogram of a set of scales. It means the slogan of Taiping or “great peace” referred to political stability and social harmony. It sounded attractive to everyone. Barbara Hendrichske suggested that it did not point to any particular philosophy or ideology, and therefore it did not alienate anybody:

Risking oversimplification. One might say that one position stressed the ruler’s spiritual perfection and emphasized minimalist administrative procedures and strong psychological control, and that the other was mainly concerned with the moral character of a ruler and his entourage and with proper and wide-ranging administrative policies. Pursuant to this division, some thinkers were interested in the changes great peace would bring to astronomical phenomena, weather conditions, and nature in general, while others thought that social order and people’s contentment alone were signs of great peace, and that there was no reason to look for other tokens.<sup>28</sup>

Hong stated that the Chinese people in remote antiquity or in the pre-Confucian age were peaceful and their country secure. But peace ended abruptly when *Shihuangdi* 始皇帝 (First Emperor, 259-210 B.C.E.)<sup>29</sup> of the Qin (秦, 778-207 B.C.E.) dynasty and his successors were deluded by the old serpent-devil into worshipping heterodox religions and other false deities, promoting heterodox rituals, and usurping God’s status by incorporating God’s title *di* (帝)<sup>30</sup> into their imperial pretensions. This was heretical, and Hong admonished his followers to return to the true way under the Taipings. Hong

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>29</sup>Shihuangdi or “First Emperor” was a pivotal figure in Chinese history. He was king of the Chinese State of Qin from 246 B.C.E. to 221 B.C.E. during the Warring States Period. He became the first emperor of a unified China in 221 B.C.E. and ruled until his death in 210 B.C.E. at the age of 49. Cf. Kenneth S. Latourette, *The Chinese: Their History and Culture*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1964), 67-73.

<sup>30</sup>Hong Xiuquan did not use the accustomed title “Emperor” as it contained the character *di*, used in the phrase *Shangdi* or the “*Di* Above” for God, and to belong henceforth to God alone (John Foster, “The Christian Origins of the Taiping Rebellion,” 159).

Xiuquan had earlier applauded Liang's conviction<sup>31</sup> that Confucian correctness contained the root and source of the true way. But, in Thistle Mountain, Hong began to blame inter-community violence on Confucianism's vertical nature, which caused people to love those of their own village, hamlet, or clan, and dislike those of other villages, other hamlets and other clans.<sup>32</sup>

Hong Xiuquan advocated the revival of China's pre-Confucian egalitarian commonwealth of great peace and equality through the establishment of an imminent, biblical Heavenly Kingdom come to earth. Hong linked the goal of Taiping with the instrumentality of the biblical Kingdom of Heaven, described in Liang's *Quanshi liangyan*,<sup>33</sup> to envision a restored millennium called *Taiping Tianguo* 太平天國 (Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace) and ruled directly by the Heavenly Father, under Hong's vice-regency.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Cf. "Liang's traditional commitments engendered by Confucian morality led him not to a rejection of Confucianism but to a search for an actualization of Confucian value. This he found in Christianity. For Liang, Christianity not only magnified but in fact perfected Confucian morality. This conviction led him and others beyond the traditional route to salvation into Christian monotheism, which, they claimed, offered the key to China's spiritual and moral redemption" [P. Richard Bohr, "Liang Fa's Quest for Moral Power," in *Christianity in China: Early Protestant Missionary Writings*, ed. Suzanne W. Barnett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 46].

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Vincent Y. C. Shih, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Sources, Interpretations, and Influences*, 281-282.

<sup>33</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 3, *Zhenjing shengli* 真經聖理 (*Sacred Teachings from the True Scriptures*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1932), 31.

<sup>34</sup>Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 1, *History*, 33, 42.

### *The Taiping Bible*

The Gützlaff translation of the Bible became possibly the most influential Chinese version of the Bible in Chinese history, not because of its high value for the Chinese Protestant church, but because this was the version that was employed by Hong Xiuquan and the Taiping Movement.<sup>35</sup> Hong and the Taipings derived their precepts mainly from the Gützlaff translation. They followed the usage prevailing among the Western missionaries of referring to the *Jiu yizhao shengshu* 舊遺詔聖書 (*The Holy Book of the Old Testament*) and the *Xin yizhao shengshu* 新遺詔聖書 (*The Holy Book of the New Testament*) respectively.<sup>36</sup>

The materials in the British Museum and the Bodleian Library seem to indicate that the Taipings, immediately after their occupation of Nanjing in 1853, printed the first twenty-eight chapters of Genesis under the title *Jiu yizhao shengshu*. Two other editions are found in the British Museum, of which one, the *Jiu yizhao shengshu*, published apparently in 1853, contains all the fifty chapters of Genesis and forty chapters of Exodus; while the other publication, the *Xin yizhao shengshu*, probably published in the same year, contains all of Matthew.<sup>37</sup> The fullest versions of the Taiping Bible were represented by the *Qinding jiu yizhao shengshu* 欽定舊遺詔聖書 (*The Authorized Holy*

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<sup>35</sup>The Taipings referred to God as *Tianfu huang shangdi* 天父皇上帝 (the Heavenly Father and Great God) was a direct borrowing from Gützlaff's revision of the Medhurst-Gützlaff translation of the Bible (Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 55).

<sup>36</sup>Later on the Taipings received some complete copies of the Bible in Chinese from the diplomats and the missionaries who visited them now and then.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 133; J. C. Cheng, ed., *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1963), 81.

*Book of the Old Testament*) and, the *Qinding qian yizhao shengshu* 欽定前遺詔聖書 (*The Authorized Holy Book of the Former Testament*),<sup>38</sup> both of which bore the date 1853. This Old Testament edition consists of the entire first six books from Genesis to Joshua. And the *Qinding qian yizhao shengshu* contains all the books of the New Testament.<sup>39</sup> Their contents agree substantially with the Gützlaff translation, but Hong had made a great many annotations on the margins of the different books, which throw much light on his personal conception of Christianity.<sup>40</sup>

Shortly after the establishment of the Taiping capital in Nanjing in 1853, “these editions were considerably changed and also furnished with explanations.”<sup>41</sup> Because it alone taught monotheism, the Bible took precedence over all other books. Yet the Taipings’ preference for the Bible never included belief in its divine authority. This doctrine had not been discussed by Liang in his Christian tracks, the Bible being referred to as containing the principles of salvation, which allowed Hong to take a somewhat detached view of some doctrines because of “a choice of terminology that could be easily

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<sup>38</sup>The Taipings changed the name of the New Testament to the Former Testament because they considered their leader Hong Xiuquan’s *The Book of Heavenly Decree and Proclamations* (1852) as the “Latter Testament.” It is also referred as the True Testament, to be read together with the Taiping Old and New [Former] Testament. For it, see “The Book of Heavenly Decrees and Proclamations,” in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, 97-110.

<sup>39</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 133; J. C. Cheng, ed., *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864*, 81.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 81-82.

<sup>41</sup>Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China*, 72.

misinterpreted,”<sup>42</sup> for example, the doctrine of the Trinity. Baffled by many passages, Hong Xiuquan once commented on the First Epistle of John:

The Father knows that there are some mistakes in the records of the New [*Sic*] Testament, and thus has sent down the Eastern King as a witness that the Holy Ghost is the Wind of God, the Eastern King. He also knows that the people on earth mistakenly think that Christ is God. Thus God has sent down the Eastern King to prove the existence of the Divine Father. Thus Christ has sent down the Western King to prove the existence of the First Son. Hence, the Father is the Father; the Son, the Son; the Elder Brother, the Elder Brother; the Younger Brother, the Younger Brother; one in two, and two in one. Immediately upon their descent the titles and ranks have been fixed. If you should suppose that Christ is God, there would be another God. How could the mind of the Great Elder Brother be at ease? Now the Great Elder Brother descended upon earth, and issued an edict instructing Me Myself: “My brother Hsiu ch’üan, you shall not call yourself Emperor [God]; only the Father is indeed the Emperor [God].” Then Great Elder Brother then spoke as the Son of the Father. Moreover, I Myself ascended to the High Heaven, saw the Heavenly Father, the Heavenly Mother, the Great Elder Brother and the Heavenly Sister-in-law many times. The proofs and evidence are just too many. In Heaven and on Earth it is the same. The things heard are not quite equal to those seen.<sup>43</sup>

With regard to biblical authority, the Taipings believe in biblical errancy, not inerrancy. Unlike the Protestants who cited the supreme authority of the Bible in their opposition to Catholic claims of papal infallibility and a divine teaching function, Hong believed in his personal and absolute mandate from God to direct the moral and spiritual affairs of the world. There was no need to refer to the Bible for further sanction.<sup>44</sup>

Ever vigilant on moral matters, Hong eliminated all references to Noah’s drunkenness and nakedness,<sup>45</sup> deleted the story of Lot’s daughters making him drunk and seducing

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 75.

<sup>43</sup>J. C. Cheng, ed., *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864*, 89.

<sup>44</sup>Samuel H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. 2, 1500-1900 (Maryknoll, MD: Orbis Books, 2005), 299.

<sup>45</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of*

him,<sup>46</sup> and censored Judah's incestuous relationship with Tamar.<sup>47</sup> The story of Jacob represented a double offense to Hong's Chinese sensibilities, not only because of Jacob's deceit but because of improper filial relations. Therefore, Hong had to scrap the original story and rewrite it completely. As Jonathan Spence explains, "In Hong's version the family values are preserved, and no central deceit is practiced. Jacob does not make Esau 'sell' his birthright in exchange for the food to stay alive. Instead, speaking as a respectful younger brother, Jacob gives Esau a brief lecture on the need to respect his birthright, and then agrees to 'divide' it with him in exchange for the pottage that Esau craves."<sup>48</sup>

### *The Ten Commandments*

The Ten Commandments were not all accepted by the Taiping leaders at the same time. The final list was a combination of Eastern and Western ethics. At first, because Hong did not have the Gützlaff translation which included the Ten Commandments, Hong had to use his ingenuity and imagination to make up a list of ten Heavenly Precepts with only the information from Liang's *Quanshi liangyan* to work with. His first attempt at this is seen in "An Ode on the Origin of Virtue and the Saving of the World,"<sup>49</sup>

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*Hong Xiuquan* (New York: Norton & Company, 1996), 255-256.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 256.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 257.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Hong Xiuquan, "The Taiping Imperial Declaration," in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, 25-31. "The Taiping Imperial Declaration" consists of three parts. The first part, titled "An Ode on the Origin of Virtue and the Saving of the World," discusses



in which he pointed out six offenses or wrong courses of action. These actions were licentiousness, disobedience to parents, the murder and maiming of people, robbery and thievery, witchcraft and sorcery, and gambling. Hong then included the smoking of opium and geomancy in the list, but it seems apparent that, as late as 1845 and 1846, he did not yet have a complete list of the Ten Commandments.<sup>50</sup>

After his stay of about two months with Issachar J. Roberts, Hong Xiuquan should have learned the Ten Commandments, but upon his return home in 1848 he did not put them on the nine wooden rods used for chastising evil-doers.<sup>51</sup> Eventually, Hong published the Ten Commandments in 1852 in a special book entitled *Tiantiaoshu* 天條書 (*Book of the Heavenly Commandments*),<sup>52</sup> which included additional

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worship of God and warns against the six offences above. Appended to this first part is “An Ode on the Hundred Correct Things,” which illustrates with Chinese historical examples the virtue of being correct. The second part, titled “An Exhortation on the Origin of Virtue for the Awakening of the Age,” preaches tolerance and harmonious living in society. The third part, titled “An Exhortation on the Origin of Virtue for the Enlightening of the Age,” develops the theme that God is the true deity and that the worship of demons will result in suffering in hell. Since these odes and essays were actually composed early in Hong’s career between 1844 and 1845 or between 1845 and 1846, they are important sources of information on Taiping religion in its formative period. Cf. Jean Chesneaux, Marianne Bastid, and Marie-Claire Bergere, *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution*, translated by Anne Destenay (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 90.

<sup>50</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 29.

<sup>51</sup>“Among his own clansmen, Siu-tshuen [Hong Xiuquan] introduced the use of nine wooden rods for chastising evil doers, and upon each rod the five punishable offences were written: 1. Beat the adulterers. 2. Beat the female seducers. 3. Beat the disobedient to parents. 4. Beat thieves, robbers, and gamblers. 5. Beat all vagabonds plotting evil” (Ibid., 41-42).

<sup>52</sup>Cf. Hong Xiuquan, “The Book of Heavenly Commandments,” in Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, eds., *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, 111-124.

information he had acquired from the book of Exodus in the Gützlaff Bible. The Heavenly Precepts follow.

The First Heavenly Commandment is “Honor and worship the Great God.”<sup>53</sup> The commentary remarks that “[t]he Great God is the Universal Father of all nations of the world. All men are given birth and nourished by him, all men are protected by him and all men ought, therefore, to worship him respectfully morning and evening, and to acknowledge his grace.”<sup>54</sup> Hong changed “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” to “Honor and worship the Great God” in order to suit the Chinese custom which stressed honor and worship. Hong’s expression is much weaker than that in the Gützlaff translation or in the other missionary translations, but the lack of severity here is compensated for in the other ordinances.

The Second Heavenly Commandment is “Do not worship perverted gods.”<sup>55</sup> The commentary remarks that “all besides the Great God are false gods, deceiving and harming mankind; they must on no account be worshipped. Whosoever worships the whole class of false gods offends against the Heavenly Commandments.” False gods or corrupt demons most easily delude “the soul of men.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>第一天條 崇拜皇上帝 (Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 62). Cf. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3).

<sup>54</sup>Hong Xiuquan, “The Book of Heavenly Commandments,” 119.

<sup>55</sup>第二天條 不好拜邪神 (Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 62). Cf. “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exodus 20:4).

<sup>56</sup>Hong Xiuquan, “The Book of Heavenly Commandments,” 119.

The Third Heavenly Commandment is “Do not take the name of the Great Supreme Ruler in vain.”<sup>57</sup> Apparently the Taipings intended this to cover blasphemy more than common cursing and to implicate the Qing imperial system in the sin of blasphemy.<sup>58</sup> It was the worst recklessly to speak out the name of *Shangdi* or *Huang shangdi*. “Our exalted Heavenly Father is infinitely honorable. Those who violate the proper boundary and profane his name seldom come to a good end.”<sup>59</sup>

The Fourth Heavenly Commandment is “On the seventh day, worship and praise the Great Supreme Ruler for his favor and kindness.”<sup>60</sup> The commentary remarks that “[i]n the beginning, the Great God made heaven and earth, land and sea, men and things, in six days, and having finished his works on the seventh day, he called it the day of rest. Therefore, all men of the world enjoy the blessing of the Great God, and should on every seventh day be especially reverent and should worship and praise the Great God for his grace and virtue.” The poem added to the commandment a reminder say grace at the morning and evening meal, “[b]ut upon the seventh day, worship should be the more devoted.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>第三天條 不好妄題皇上帝之名 (Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 63). Cf. “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

<sup>58</sup>Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire*, 99.

<sup>59</sup>Hong Xiuquan, “The Book of Heavenly Commandments,” 120.

<sup>60</sup>第四天條 七日禮拜頌讚皇上帝恩德 (Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 63). Cf. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8).

<sup>61</sup>Hong Xiuquan, “The Book of Heavenly Commandments,” 121.

The Fifth Heavenly Commandment is “Be filial and obedient to your father and mother.”<sup>62</sup> Hong changed “Honor your father and mother” to “Be filial and obedient to your father and mother” in order to suit the Chinese custom which stressed filial piety. This commandment needed little adaptation for members of the Society of God. Worshippers were well nourished already on principles of filial piety.<sup>63</sup>

The Sixth Heavenly Commandment is “Do not kill or injure people.”<sup>64</sup> This commandment appeals to the principles of human brotherhood and sisterhood and mutual tolerance. Even so, since soldiers and officers of the Qing government were allies of the demons, they had to be killed. The Taiping Movement, one of the most devastating rebellions in Chinese history, resulted in over twenty million casualties.<sup>65</sup>

The Seventh Heavenly Commandment is “Do not do evil or lewd things.”<sup>66</sup> In explaining this commandment, Hong stated that “[t]he casting of amorous glances, the harboring of lustful imaginings about others, the smoking of opium, and the singing of libidinous songs” were all offenses against the Heavenly Precept.<sup>67</sup> The smoking of

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<sup>62</sup>第五天條 孝順父母 (Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 64). Cf. “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Exodus 20:12).

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>第六天條 不好殺人害人 (Ibid.). Cf. “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13).

<sup>65</sup>Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power, 1850 to the Present* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 19.

<sup>66</sup>第七天條 不好奸淫邪亂 (Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 64). Cf. “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14).

<sup>67</sup>Hong Xiuquan, “The Book of Heavenly Commandments,” 122.

opium was one of most serious and widespread social ills in China, especially among the Cantonese, at that time.

The Eighth Heavenly Commandment is “Do not steal or rob.”<sup>68</sup> This commandment recommends each to be contented with his station in life, for poverty and wealth are like determined by God: “Be contented in poverty and in your station; you must not steal; Plunder and violence are most base.”<sup>69</sup>

The Ninth Heavenly Commandment is “Do not tell lies.”<sup>70</sup> All those who speak wildly, falsely, or treacherously, and those who use coarse and vile language transgress against the Heavenly Commandment. This commandment was expanded in the poem to abandon scandal-mongering and even garrulousness.<sup>71</sup> It means Hong did not want the Taipings take advantage or trick anyone as his or her brothers and sisters.

The Tenth Heavenly Commandment is “Do not conceive a covetous desire.”<sup>72</sup> The commentary declared that “when a man engages in gambling and buys lottery tickets

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<sup>68</sup>第八天條 不好偷竊劫搶 (Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 64). Cf. “Thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:15, KJV).

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>第九天條 不好講謊話 (Ibid.).  
Cf. “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Exodus 20:16, KJV).

<sup>71</sup>Hong Xiuquan, “The Book of Heavenly Commandments,” 122.

<sup>72</sup>第十天條 不好起貪心 (Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 65). Cf. “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's” (Exodus 20:17, KJV).

and bets on names, all these are transgressions of the Heavenly Commandment.”<sup>73</sup> The Taiping measures, such as the prohibition of the smoking of opium, drinking, and gambling, seem to have been strictly adhered to in Nanjing, but outside Nanjing, the Taiping leaders, especially military chiefs, did what they wanted to do.<sup>74</sup>

The Taipings incorporated Chinese ethics into their Christianity in order to make it fit in with Chinese ways of thought and they were among the first to fuse Western and Eastern cultures. Enforced by the Taiping leaders, the Ten Commandments or Heavenly Precepts were observed by all from the high officials down to the rank and file until the Taiping Movement’s final defeat.<sup>75</sup> The Ten Commandments served as guiding principles in their daily lives and as military discipline in time of war. The better behavior and organization of the Taipings, as compared with the government troops, was due largely to the influence of the Ten Commandments.<sup>76</sup>

There were various reasons why many people joined the Taiping Movement. One reason was that the Taipings had strong ethical and moral standards of the Ten Commandments or Heavenly Precepts compared to the Qing soldiers: “The Taipings did not rape women and did not steal. In traditional Chinese society, the image of government soldiers was not good because they abused their power over the people.

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<sup>73</sup>Hong Xiuquan, “The Book of Heavenly Commandments,” 123.

<sup>74</sup>Vincent Y. C. Shih, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Sources, Interpretations, and Influences*, 491.

<sup>75</sup>The Taipings imposed a rigid discipline on members. Those who smoke opium, drink, gamble, loot, rape, and commit adultery should be executed. Cf. *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>76</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 150.

Many people on the Taipings' way to Nanjing from Guangxi, welcomed, believed in the Taiping leaders, and joined them.”<sup>77</sup>

### *The Doctrine of the Trinity*

More puzzling to Hong was the Trinity, mentioned but never explained by Liang. This mystery, difficult even for Western theologians, impressed Hong as a contradiction, for how could the seemingly polytheistic concept of “three persons in one” be reconciled with Christian monotheism?<sup>78</sup> Having found faith in the one true God, Hong turned a deaf ear to the idea of “three gods,” as the missionaries who tried to correct his interpretation came to realize.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, the fundamental Chinese ethical principle of the relative status of the superior and the inferior—that a father must be more honorable than a son—would never allow an equal footing of the two persons, to say nothing of the merger of the two persons into one identity. There was an extremely strict rule for all Taiping writings, like strict regulation for writing or engraving the characters *Shangdi* 上帝 (Emperor) or *Wang* 王 (King) in the Chinese traditional documents, that the holy name of God in any form must always be inscribed on a new line and raised four spaces above the first word of an ordinary line and that the name of Jesus Christ must be raised

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<sup>77</sup>Hong Beom Rhee, *Asian Millenarianism: An Interdisciplinary Study of the Taiping and Tonghak Rebellions in a Global Context* (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press, 2007), 277.

<sup>78</sup>Cf. Hong's annotations on the Gospel according to St. Mark and on the First Epistle General of John in J. C. Cheng, ed., *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864*, 85, 88-89.

<sup>79</sup>Cf. Griffith John, “A Letter from Rev. Griffith John,” *Missionary Magazine and Chronicle* 24 (October 1860): 270-275 and Issachar J. Roberts, “A Letter from Rev. I. J. Roberts,” *North China Herald* (4 February 1862).

three spaces, the Heavenly King and the new Kingdom two spaces, and the other kings one space.<sup>80</sup> This was entirely in accord with Chinese traditional ethics and etiquette, which would have made equal deference to God the Father and Christ the Son unthinkable.

As to the third person of the Trinity, already robbed of holy stature by translation of the names as *Shengshenfeng* 聖神風 (Wind of the Holy Spirit) or *Quanweishi* 勸慰師 (Comforter or Teacher of Encouragement), Hong saw no justification whatever for accepting this “wind” or “teacher” sent by God as God’s equal.<sup>81</sup> Ironically, the Taipings faithfully chanted, not sang, in their daily worship of God, the words of the Trinity in the Doxology taken over intact from the Baptist church in Canton,<sup>82</sup> but this represented a symbolic acceptance of a form rather than critical acceptance of the theological content. Hong explicitly rejected the doctrine of the Trinity in his annotations on biblical texts, totally convinced there could be no basis for believing in “three persons in one.” A pertinent line in his later meditations reads thus: “Of the three persons, Father and Son are one blood-vein in kinship.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (Taipei: Rainbow-Bridge Book Co., 1973), 160.

<sup>81</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 72.

<sup>82</sup>“They worship God daily under the name of Heavenly Father Shangti, and heavenly elder brother, Christ. But not according to New Testament usages. They have no regular immersion or Lord’s Supper; and the Doxology and Hymn which I taught Hung Siu-tsiuen when he was with me at Canton in 1847, I fear they are using (some of them at least) as the Jews did Moses’ serpent, worshipping them formally instead of the God whom they praise. They are at any rate now sung I presume by millions every day” [“A Letter from Rev. I. J. Roberts,” *North China Herald* (30 March 1861)].

<sup>83</sup>J. C. Cheng, ed., *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864*, 88.



Hong Xiuquan could believe the union of the Holy Father and the Holy Son into one by blood relationship, a relationship exalted in the Chinese ethical system, but not by metaphysical consubstance, a concept whose roots were buried deep in Greek philosophy. It was impossible to unite the Holy Spirit with God and Christ by even blood relationship. Hong repeatedly defended the doctrine of God's physical nature because he actually walked and talked with God in heaven. The concept of a divine family is a projection of a deeply rooted family centered culture in China.<sup>84</sup>

#### *View of the Devil or Satan*

In the writings of Hong Xiuquan and the Taipings the Genesis portrayal of the devil as a serpent was cited often<sup>85</sup> and possibly alluded to in the expressions *Shemo* 蛇魔 (the serpent devil) and *Laoshe yaogui* 老蛇妖鬼 (the old serpent and the fiendish devil). According to Liang's Genesis 3, there is *Shen yehuohua* 神爺火華 (Jehovah God or the Lord God)<sup>86</sup> who created heaven and earth and all the living things. Of all the things He created, the serpent is the most devious, for this serpent is none other than

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<sup>84</sup>Rudolf G. Wagner, *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 44-46.

<sup>85</sup>Cf. "Eve formerly heeded the demon's words and so her offspring were drowned in the great rain. At the time when there was still no death, the serpent beguiled her to disobey God's command upon the promise that she would become an immoral and divine being. After death had come into the world, the serpent again beguiled her to have children and to perpetuate herself in this way. In every generation since then most women still believe in the demon's words, thus perpetuating physical death" (Hong's annotation on Genesis 3:4, 5, 16) and "To-day the serpent and the beast are destroyed by Heavenly fire. This has come true" (Hong's annotation on Revelation 20:10) in J. C. Cheng, ed., *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864*, 82, 91.

<sup>86</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen* 真傳救世文 (*True Accounts of the Salvation of the World*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1932), 1.

*shemo* or the god of evil, who has transformed himself into a serpent demon.<sup>87</sup> The borrowing of this image from Liang's *Quanshi liangyan* is evident from the fact that the Chinese have generally excepted the serpent from a satanic connotation.

But the dragon was different. According to Western mythology, the dragon is pictured as a cruel monster, an evil creature, symbolic of sin, or the enemy of God and humanity. But the Chinese dragon is a beneficent being who rules the oceans, presides over the eastern quadrant of the heavens, and regulates the rain-fall. The dragon was revered and worshiped. The Emperor's throne was the Dragon Throne and the flag of China was the Dragon Flag. As a national symbol the dragon had been for the Chinese a sign of intelligence, beneficence, and power. The Taipings probably felt that they were doing the proper thing in adorning the title pages of official documents with twin dragons.<sup>88</sup>

Yanluo (閻羅), or Yanluo yao (閻羅妖), is the Buddhist King of Hades, the Chinese equivalent of the Vedic Yama, the king of the underworld. Hong's first encounter with Yanluo and his demons was during his visit to the heaven in 1837. After being given a sacred sword and seal, Hong received God's permission to slay demons, and he was joined by a host of angels in his great battle. With Christ himself holding Hong's seal, which both bedazzled and blinded, Hong killed demons and drove those remaining out of heaven's thirty-third level down to earth. Yanluo was able to transform himself and took on many disguises, but Hong finally trapped him and had a

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 82.

chance to finish him off. God stayed Hong's sword, giving an excuse that Hong obviously did not comprehend.<sup>89</sup>

Hong's diagnosis of the problems of Chinese society rested on the belief that the gods of popular religion were all demons and that their statues had to be destroyed. Hong conducted some iconoclastic attacks personally and the fact that there was no demonic retribution offered additional proof of his divine calling. Further confirmation of the impotence of the traditional deities was the fact that although Hong himself had sacrificed to the gods of the scholars he had failed every single civil service examination. Hong's Christian motto could be summarized as "slay the demons and their followers and worship the one true God." Once Hong had identified the Qing emperor as the one who led the people to behave like imps, worship demons and disobey the true God, the stage was set for a total religious war against all forces who would dispute God's will.<sup>90</sup>

Not long after his two months of intense Bible study under the Southern Baptist missionary Issachar J. Roberts in Canton, Hong entered a temple in Xiangzhou and destroyed its main idol. Thomas H. Reilly describes the event as follows: "He [Hong] beat it, referring to it as a demon, and ordered his followers to 'dig out the eyes of the

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<sup>89</sup>Cf. Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 6-13; Rudolf G. Wagner, *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Revolution*, 30-46. Hong was very eager to kill Yanluo, but his zeal was criticized by God, who told Hong that he should drive Yanluo out but spare Yanluo's life. If Yanluo was killed, many souls Yanluo had eaten would be killed with Yanluo (Rudolf G. Wagner, *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Revolution*, 20).

<sup>90</sup>Hong Rengan, "Proclamations on the Extermination of Demons," in Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, eds., *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, 859-869.

demon, cut off his beard, trample its hat, tear its embroidered dragon robe to shreds, turn its body upside down, and break off its arms.”<sup>91</sup> In 1862, Josiah Cox described the Taiping iconoclasm in Ningpo as follows: “In the temples we entered, the destruction of idols has been unsparing. The god of war and his satellites [satellites] lay in scattered fragments about their former shrines; here lay a dishonoured image prostrate on its nose. Another had lost its head. Others stood with bruised eyes and mouths, and ears and noses missing. Some lay about in dismembered heaps.”<sup>92</sup>

### *Baptism and the Lord's Supper*

In Volume Six of his tracts, Liang introduced his own baptism and reported the definition of baptism that William Milne had given to him. And in Volume Nine, he presented a simple discourse on Acts 19 when Paul baptized the disciples of Ephesus with water in the name of the Lord Jesus. The passages were very difficult for Hong Xiuquan to understand. When Hong started to preach the Gospel, the man he reached first was Li Jingfang, with whom he read the words of Liang's tracts and understood them. Now piecing the rite of baptism together from the scattered bits of information left by Liang, Hong and Li baptized each other in a private ritual, as Liang had baptized his wife. As Hong and Li sprinkled water on each other's heads they prayed to their new true God

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<sup>91</sup>Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire*, 95. Cf. Hong Rengan, “The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle,” in *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, ed. Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, 74.

<sup>92</sup>“Journal of Rev. Josiah Cox,” in Prescott Clarke and J. S. Gregory, eds., *Western Reports on the Taiping: A Selection of Documents* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1982), 388.

and promised to follow God's commandments.<sup>93</sup> They thereupon kept away from their idols and removed the tablet of Confucius which is generally found in the schools and worshiped by the teacher as well as by the students.<sup>94</sup>

The Taipings had a modified form of baptism, in which they washed the face and chest, or took a bath in a river. A Taiping explanation of baptism stated: "Let the suppliant kneel down in the sight of Heaven and pray to the Great God to forgive his sins. He may use a written form of prayer, and when the prayer is over, he may either take a basin of water and wash his whole body clean, or he may perform his ablutions in the river, which will be still better."<sup>95</sup> The two concepts of either immersing or washing that are shown here seem to be based on the different terms for baptism. It is possible that Hong's idea of baptism is a mixture of the concept of sprinkling derived from Liang's tracts and immersion derived from the teaching of the Southern Baptist missionary Issachar J. Roberts.<sup>96</sup>

In the visions, Hong joined the heavenly host by leaving all that was important and dear to him. He left his wife, who was pregnant, and his father. Hong was afraid of this radical departure, as it literally meant the death of his old self. However, he got a new name, a new family, and a new role within the heavenly host. His old inner life was

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<sup>93</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 66.

<sup>94</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 20.

<sup>95</sup>Hong Xiuquan, "The Book of Heavenly Commandments," 114-115.

<sup>96</sup>Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China*, 73.

crudely cut out with a knife. At the same time Hong was provided with new religious, moral, and ideological convictions by means of the scrolls that passed before his eyes. The he was outwardly cleaned in a river and ordered to do battle with demons, and received a palace in which to enjoy his rule and life.<sup>97</sup>

The Taipings had to follow this pattern. They were to break away from their families and property. Their old selves were to die. The renewal of inner life and the cleansing of the outer body were reenacted in the rite of the Taiping baptism. The inner renewal and outer cleansing was the precondition for entering into direct contact with God. Then the Taipings would become members of the heavenly host, and after victory against the Qing soldiers and demons would be rewarded appropriately.<sup>98</sup>

The sacrament of the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper is the most generally performed of all the sacraments. If the Taipings practiced baptism, why did they neglect the Lord's Supper, a symbolic ceremony of equal prominence? It is possible that Hong did not know about the Lord's Supper, for he neither mentioned it nor observed it. However, Issachar J. Roberts said on 27 June 1847: "The Chinese brethren and myself unite in the Lord's Supper. There are twelve native and six foreign communicants, making the whole fraternity, male and female, eighteen."<sup>99</sup> Since Hong did not leave Roberts until 21 July 1847, he should have been included in the twelve native

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<sup>97</sup>Cf. Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, 9-12.

<sup>98</sup>Rudolf G. Wagner, *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Revolution*, 82.

<sup>99</sup>H. A. Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1880), 85.

communicants for the Supper, and he should have had some impression of the ceremony. Hong's neglect of it could be because Roberts had not permitted Hong to take it without being baptized, or Hong may have been unimpressed with the ceremony.

Another instance of Hong's neglect is that the symbol of the cross, which was mentioned in Liang's *Quanshi liangyan*, was not adopted or carried by the Society of God Worshippers or the Taipings. The title pages of their religious books were decorated not with the cross but with the dragon.<sup>100</sup>

### *The Sabbath and Other Teachings*

The Sabbath, which fell on the Western Saturday by a miscalculation in the Taiping calendar,<sup>101</sup> was strictly observed. On that day work and business were suspended. On Friday afternoon flags with inscriptions saying that the next day was worship day and should be observed by all people were hung above all cross-roads.

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<sup>100</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 78.

<sup>101</sup>A Taiping year was divided into 366 days and 12 months. The six odd months had 31 days and the six even months 30 days. To allow for periodical correction, the Taipings were to have a special short year in every forty whose months would have only 28 days each. The indication of the year, month, and the day by cyclical signs was based on an old Chinese almanac, and that of the 24 solar terms, weekdays, and Sundays was derived from both Western and Chinese almanacs. The purpose of making a new calendar was to sharpen the fighting spirit of the Taipings. In the old Chinese almanac every day in the year was noted as lucky or unlucky, and hence suitable or unsuitable for doing something. The Taipings adopted a new calendar from which all these superstitions were excluded. Thus, the Taipings would not have cause to be reluctant to fight on any given day. The Taiping calendar, in many ways the most significant cultural achievement of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, nevertheless, suffered from an initial miscalculation: The Taipings "put the Taiping calendar one day ahead of the Chinese lunar and Western solar calendars, e.g. the Taiping Sunday was Saturday in the Western calendar. This error was never corrected" (Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 82). Cf. Ssu-yu Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 123-124.

There were three services, one was held at midnight and the other two were at noon and the late afternoon on Saturday. The services were generally held in a living-room containing a table on which there were two lamps or candles, three cups of tea, three bowls of rice, and sometimes various kinds of food as offerings to God or the Supreme Being.<sup>102</sup> The worshippers sat on two sides before the table, men on one side, and women on the other. Each service opened with a doxology, followed by a hymn accompanied by Chinese musical instruments. There were Bible reading and repetition of a creed. A written prayer was offered by a leader or an officer,<sup>103</sup> who burned the paper after reading it. An address or sermon was given. The service concluded with the repetition of the ten Heavenly Precepts, a hymn, the setting off of firecrackers, and the burning of incense. There was also daily morning and evening worship, and a grace was said before meals.<sup>104</sup>

The Sabbath service was not the only occasion for preaching. A sermon might be delivered on any day from a platform before a crowd in a newly conquered city, or before newly recruited troops, or at the beginning of a new expedition or other difficult undertaking, in order to arouse the enthusiasm of the listeners for the Taiping cause. In complete accordance with the eschatology set forth in Liang's tracts, the Taipings

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<sup>102</sup>The food offerings to God were the same as those to the idols or ancestors in China at that time. Cf. Walter H. Slote and George A. De Vos, eds., *Cofucianism and the Family* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 173; Laurence G. Thompson, *Chinese Religion: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1989), 36-59.

<sup>103</sup>The Taipings had no ordained minister.

<sup>104</sup>Augustus F. Lindley, *Ti-ping tien-kwoh: The History of the Ti-ping Revolution, Including a Narrative of the Author's Personal Adventures*, vol. 1 (London: Day and Son, 1866), 318-321.



believed in an eternal life, final judgment, and the existence of heaven<sup>105</sup> and hell.

There was not much difference between their conceptions in this respect and orthodox ones except for some additional emphases. The glorious, happy, and eternal life in heaven was promised as the crowning reward for those who fought bravely, served loyally, and died as faithful warriors for the revolutionary cause. Hell was to be for the eternal punishment of cowards, traitors, and all other undutiful and unfaithful revolutionaries. It is easy to surmise the origin of these punishments. It was from the Buddhist teaching on the origin of hell.<sup>106</sup> The ideas of heaven and hell of the Taipings, then, were a fascinating example of religious syncretism.

From the beginning to the end, there was no church organization as such in Taiping Christianity. The closest approximation was the Society of God Worshippers, which dissolved into the Taiping army after the uprising. However, the Taipings had planned to have a chapel for every twenty-five families, but they did not have a chance to fulfill the plan:

In every circle of twenty-five families, all young boys must go to church every day, where the sergeant is to teach them to read the Old Testament and the New Testament, as well as the book of proclamations of the true ordained Sovereign. Every Sabbath the corporals must lead the men and the women to the church, where the males and females are to sit in separate rows. There they will listen to sermons, sing praises, and offer sacrifices to our Heavenly Father, the Supreme Lord and Great God.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>Hong believed in thirty-three levels of heaven. It did not from Liang's tracts but from the Buddhist tradition of thirty-three levels of heaven and thirty-three levels of hell. Cf. Laurence G. Thompson, *Chinese Religion: An Introduction*, 112-126.

<sup>106</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 84-87.

<sup>107</sup>Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, "The Land System of the Heavenly Dynasty," in Franz Michael and Chung-li Chang, eds., *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, vol. 2, *Documents and Comments*, 315.

Instead, a living-room or special hall was used for worship. In every government agency, every dignitary's or official's residence, and every army headquarters, the best room in the building or house was remodeled or set aside as a hall for worshipping God. But no churches were founded in the cities or places under Taiping control, though Christianity was the state religion of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.<sup>108</sup> This seeming paradox grew out of the fact that the Taipings carried over to their worship of God some of the attitude surrounding ancestor worship in the home in Chinese tradition.

### *Summary*

Taiping Christianity was in reality a new religion manifesting orthodox and heterodox elements as well as indigenous influences.<sup>109</sup> In common with Christians everywhere, the Taipings worshipped God, acclaimed Christ the Savior, read the Bible, followed the Ten Commandments, performed baptism, and believed in heaven and hell. The Taipings also embraced some major doctrinal differences in their profession of Christianity. Some leaders practiced shamanism in the Society of God Worshippers. Hong advocated the revival of China's pre-Confucian egalitarian commonwealth of great peace and equality, and wanted to rule directly by the Heavenly Father, under his own vice-regency. Hong and the Taipings could not understand the doctrine of the Trinity. They borrowed concepts of the Buddhist King of Hades and thirty-three levels of heaven

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<sup>108</sup>Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 164.

<sup>109</sup>Cf. "At its close, as its beginning, the Tai Ping movement was a Chinese sect, displaying some interesting results of contact with Christianity, but drawing most of its beliefs and characteristics from its Chinese environment and the erratic genius of its leaders" (Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 298).

and hell. They had a modified form of baptism and neglected the Lord's Supper. The Taipings did not carry the cross or adopt it as a symbol.

Hong bears responsibility for his followers' beliefs but the charge of heresy, made by some missionaries, was irrelevant since Hong did not grasp his divergence from orthodoxy. Arguments as to the heterodoxy or orthodoxy of Taiping Christianity are therefore academic and perhaps cloud the true significance of this great religious phenomenon. Some Western scholars, searching for meaning, tend to deplore the loss of an historic opportunity to bring China into the Christian community. A very few have also perceived the instructive originality of Hong's religious thought and the profound lessons in his groping toward conciliation of Christian and Confucian principles.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

I will end this study of the relationship between Liang Fa (梁發, 1789-1855) and Hong Xiuquan (洪秀全, 1814-1864) with the same question with which I began: What is the extent of the Christian influence of Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言 (*Good Words to Admonish the Age, being Nine Miscellaneous Christian Tracts*) on the ideology of Hong Xiuquan and the Taiping Movement? I believe that what I have presented in the previous chapters supports the idea that even though the *Quanshi liangyan* may have given the Taiping Movement its religious form and driving force, the theological vision of both Liang Fa and Hong Xiuquan also emerged from their Chinese culture, which energized the Taipings. The Taiping Movement resulted from a deliberate synthesis of Christian ideas and native Chinese practices.

Hong Xiuquan, born on 1 January 1814, was the third son and fourth child of a Hakka peasant in Hua County of Guangdong Province. He showed himself a very gifted child. At great financial sacrifice his family sent him to school and provided him a traditional education in the Confucian Classics from age six to fourteen. He continued his studies independently as far as possible and was subsequently active chiefly as a village school-teacher till 1843. He applied several times for the province examination after passing of the county examination.<sup>1</sup> The passing of the province examination was

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<sup>1</sup>Hong placed himself four times in the Guangdong Province examination in Canton in 1828, 1836, 1837, and 1843. Cf. Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (Taipei: Rainbow-Bridge Book Co., 1973), 13, 15, 19; Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: Norton

a pre-condition for entering an official career and the only chance of social advancement. However, he was unsuccessful.

In 1836, while Hong was in Canton for his second examination, Liang Fa's *Quanshi liangyan* accidentally fell into his hands. He must have examined it cursorily, but did not give it further thought. In the following year he made another attempt at the examination, but again without success. Bitterly disappointed and soured by his repeated failure he fell into a trance,<sup>2</sup> which is said to have lasted exactly forty days. He lost consciousness and had visions in which an old man appeared as his heavenly father and the man's son was his heavenly elder brother. They commissioned Hong to destroy the demons in the world, especially in China. On his recovery he read Liang's Christian tracts more closely and came to believe that the figures who had appeared to him in visions were God and Jesus Christ, who had chosen him for a special mission on earth.<sup>3</sup>

The visions of Hong were extraordinarily important for the Taiping Movement from beginning to end. The suspicion that the visions were invented or changed at a later date for expressly political purpose can by no means be ruled out.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the question whether Hong really had the visions or not is of only minor importance for the development of the Taiping Movement. What is important and beyond all doubt is

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& Company, 1996), 30, 46, 59-60.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. P. M. Yap, "The Mental Illness of Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, Leader of the Taiping Rebellion," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 13 (May 1954): 287-304.

<sup>3</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection* (Hong Kong: China Mail Office, 1854), 19-20.

<sup>4</sup>For a detailed discussion of this matter, see Chapter Three, 45n.

the fact that non-Chinese, Christian ideas, spread in China by Western missionaries, were included in Hong's religion and that he got these ideas from Liang's Christian tracts.<sup>5</sup>

In the *Quanshi liangyan*, Liang deals with subjects of the most interest to himself and his fellow Chinese. In addition to his original compositions, Liang includes eleven excerpts or whole chapters from Morrison-Milne's Old Testament translation and nineteen excerpts or whole chapters from Morrison's New Testament translation. And he also quotes some partial texts from fifteen chapters from Robert Morrison-William Milne's Chinese Old Testament and fifty-two chapters from Morrison's Chinese New Testament.<sup>6</sup> Many of these are joined by Liang's commentaries. In addition, there are 10 homiletic essays by himself and an account of his Christian conversion.<sup>7</sup>

The ideas are predominantly Christian, but they are mingled with some elements of Chinese traditional religions or culture, all of which influenced Liang in his youth. After his conversion to Christianity, he adopted the concept of an almighty and omnipresent God who created heaven and earth in six days and who is King of kings,

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<sup>5</sup>Several times Hong Xiuquan himself mentioned it. Theodore Hamberg quotes Hong as saying: "These books ... are certainly sent purposely by heaven to me, to confirm the truth of my former experience; if I had received the books without having gone through the sickness, I should not have dared to believe in them, and on my own account to oppose the customs of the world; if I had merely been sick but not also received the books I should have had no further evidence as to the truth of my visions, which might also have been considered as mere productions of a diseased imagination" [Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection* (Hong Kong: China Mail Office, 1854), 21].

<sup>6</sup>The New Testament had been translated by Morrison in 1813 and the Old Testament by Morrison and Milne in 1819 separately, but these Old and New Testament was published together in the title of *Holy Bible in Chinese* (神天聖書) in 1823. Cf. Chapter Four, 8n.

<sup>7</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 6, *Shuxue zhenli lun* 熟學真理論 (*Statements of Perfect Acquaintance with the True Doctrine*), 8-30.

Ruler of all nations from the Scriptures. Under this almighty and omnipresent God, all nations, races, and individuals are equal.<sup>8</sup> All other religions must be renounced and all idols destroyed. These nine tracts also introduce such biblical themes as Noah and the flood, Satan and other evil spirits, the redemption by Jesus Christ, the regeneration founded on John 3:1-21,<sup>9</sup> the rite of baptism, the observation of the Sabbath, the final judgment, the Sermon on the Mount, so many teachings of St. Paul, and the importance of filial piety.

Liang, in his *Quanshi liangyan*, condemns strongly the use of wine and opium, witchcraft, covetousness, adultery, prostitution, gambling, and stealing. Women should not wear makeup or jewelry and should be quiet and obedient, not meddlesome, and upright and severe of deportment. Basically he does not only condemn Qing China's religious and secular culture, but also offers a blueprint for the redemption of the both of Chinese society and the individual by almighty and omnipresent God of Christianity.<sup>10</sup> In particular, this doctrine of the absolute power of God made a deep impression on Hong,

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<sup>8</sup>Apart from possible matriarchal relationships at a very early period, the position of the woman in traditional China was subordinate in every respect to that of the man. Hence, the introduction of Liang and the decision of the Taipings to regard men and women as equal was a revolutionary act of unprecedented significance. In the Taiping Movement women could enter for the state examinations and occupy the same civil or military positions as men. There were women soldiers in special women's contingents in the Taiping army. The binding of women's feet which had been practiced in China since the tenth century was strictly forbidden [Augustus F. Lindley, *Ti-ping tien-kwoh: The History of the Ti-ping Revolution, Including a Narrative of the Authors's Personal Adventures.*, vol. 1 (London: Day and Son, 1866), 300-03].

<sup>9</sup>Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 2, *Chongzhen pixie lun* 崇真闢邪論 (*Statements of Following the True and Rejecting the False*) (Canton: Religious Tract Society, 1932), 51-61.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Liang Fa, *Quanshi liangyan* 勸世良言, vol. 1, *Zhenzhuan jishi wen* (真傳救世文 *True Accounts of the Salvation of the World*), 28.

who saw himself as God's Chinese Son, and established his rule along despotic lines. He expanded his power by combining the doctrine of Christianity with the ideology of *Shangdi* or the Chinese Supreme God.

Liang's brief Christian tracts which Hong had been given to read could of course only give him a superficial idea of the Christianity. And even a two or three month study of Christian instruction which he received in 1847 from an American Baptist missionary, Issachar J. Roberts, in Canton could hardly provide him with a deeper understanding. Thus, Christianity for Hong consisted chiefly in the worship of one true God and in the rejection of other deities, including the ancestor worship which had been prevalent throughout China from the earliest times. Hong believed that this one true God could forgive wrongdoing and sin and help a person to be good, in order that he might enter paradise after his death.<sup>11</sup>

It was chiefly the ideas of the Old Testament that he took over from Liang's tracts. The deeper ideas of the New Testament and of genuine Christian ethics remained unclear to him.<sup>12</sup> The effect this belief on Hong and the Taipings was to make them strictly monotheistic and intolerant of other religions. They destroyed images, statues, and temple of Buddhism and Taoism and did not stop short of the Confucian ancestor-tablets.<sup>13</sup> Even if so, Hong and the Taipings could be free from their traditional religions

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<sup>11</sup>Cf. Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 2004), 110-16.

<sup>12</sup>Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864* (Madison, WS: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), 69-73.

<sup>13</sup>By their attack on images the Taipings gave their opponents a powerful weapon to use against them. The educated class in China at that time was still strictly conservative and Confucian and was bitterly opposed to destroy the Confucian ancestor-



and cultures. Hong borrowed the concept of thirty-three levels of heaven and thirty-three levels of hell from the Buddhist tradition.<sup>14</sup> They used to write God's name on a piece of paper, kneel before it, burn incense, light candles, pour a libation of wine, and offer food to God as those who participated in the ancestor worship from the Confucian or Taoist traditions.

As a result of the visions Hong Xiuquan regarded himself as God's Chinese Son, Younger Brother of Jesus Christ, and Heavenly King in China, called by the Heavenly Father to destroy demons on earth and to establish a Heavenly kingdom of God on earth. In practice this meant planning to destroy the Qing dynasty and the existing political system and creating a new Heavenly kingdom. The idea of the Kingdom of God had been completely secularized. The Taiping Movement had at first a marked Christian millenarianism and anti-traditional character. Gradually, however, this was broken down by many traditional vices. Different, warring factions were formed based on their different places of origin. The manifestation of traditional Chinese regionalism does not seem to have been completely taken over. Later, the close co-operation between the different leaders, that had characterized the Taipings at first, disappeared. The other leaders tried to follow the example of the Heavenly King and live in luxury, and for this they needed large private fortunes.<sup>15</sup> Thus, they violated the rules about common

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tablets. Cf. Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (Taipei: Rainbow-Bridge Book Co., 1973), 36-38.

<sup>14</sup>For a detailed discussion of this matter, see Chapter Five, 105n.

<sup>15</sup>Soon after the capture of Nanjing the Heavenly King began to preside over a sumptuous court, marked by all manner of luxury, innumerable concubines, and a dissolute way of life. This deterioration at the head naturally infected all who stood lower down the chain of command.

property and adopted the customs of the rich gentry which they had originally fought against. It was one of main reasons for the rise and fall of the Taiping Movement in China.

So what is the Taiping religion or Taiping Christianity? Vincent Y. C. Shih introduced the Taipings as developing a new ideology.<sup>16</sup> Rudolf G. Wagner expressed the role of the Taiping Movement simply as another type of Christian popular religion.<sup>17</sup> Jonathan D. Spence focused on the apocalyptic personality of Hong Xiuquan himself and did not answer “What is the Taiping religion?”<sup>18</sup> Thomas H. Reilly argued that the Taiping Movement was a popular movement of Hong Xiuquan and ordinary Chinese people who were inspired by biblical teachings from Liang Fa’s *Quanshi liangyan* and the Bible just translated into Chinese.<sup>19</sup> However, as I presented in the previous chapters, the Taiping religion emphasized the teachings of the Old Testament, especially the Ten Commandments. Only the Hexateuch and the New Testament were distributed widely and some passages were altered to give a clear message of moral purity. Then we cannot name it “a Christian Bible religion” or “a popular movement of the masses who were inspired by the Christian Bible.” The Taiping religion was an idiosyncratic adaption of specific biblical themes, mostly from the Old Testament.

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. Eugene P. Boardman, *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864*, 116-30.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Rudolf G. Wagner, *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 115-18.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, 316-32.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire*, 54-77.

Now how can I conclude that what is the Taiping religion or Taiping Christianity? Hong Xiuquan's interpretation of Christian doctrine was molded by his own social and cultural milieu, the special needs of the Taiping Movement, and a reverence for the ancient truths of Confucianism. Adaptation to social and cultural conditions was not a new approach to Christianity. However adaptation of Christianity to Eastern rather than Western culture was a different matter with problems whose resolutions are still being pursued by Chinese Christians and Western theologians. That Hong erred is hardly surprising. Nor is it surprising that the greatest distortion in Taiping Christianity arose in the ethical sphere where Hong, like Liang Fa, saw the similarities between the teachings of Confucius and Christ and missed the quintessence of Christ's message, the emphasis on God's love. The writings of Liang Fa, in the *Quanshi liangyan*, influenced Hong Xiuquan as he founded and directed the Society of God Worshippers. Hong, however, modified much of Liang's teaching and shaped a new religion based on Chinese tradition as much as on Christianity. It became a case of *Zhuke diandao* 主客顛倒 (Reverting the guest to the host) to use a Chinese set phrase, for the Taiping religion in its ethical content turned out to be more a Christianized Confucianism than a Confucianized Christianity.

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