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In the Eye of a Tornado

Lessons to Be Learned from Critiques of Christian Missionaries

LAUREN F. PFISTER

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES UNDER
SEVERE SCRUTINY

While reflections on the 200th anniversary of Morrison's arrival in southeastern China should rightly reconsider the historical and cultural significance of that singular event, I would like to consider a selection from a wider range of missionaries—both European and North American Protestant and Catholic missionaries in China during both the 19th and 20th centuries—in the light of three critical interpretive perspectives. While it is right to underscore some of the immense intellectual, spiritual and inter-cultural contributions that a good many of these religious figures made during the past 200 years, I sense that there are some important and revealing lessons for us to learn when missionaries' lives and works are weighed also in the light of Chinese Marxist criticisms, Orientalist evaluations, and post-colonial reflections.¹

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¹ Here I prefer to keep the hyphen in the term “post-colonial,” reflecting the more narrow and historically appropriate meaning of this term rather than its “postcolonial”

To choose this particular approach is often difficult for the researcher, as it certainly has been for me, because it requires at times a will to listen accompanied by no small amount of patience and courage to ask tough questions. It is like standing in the eye of a tornado, watching from within that eerily calm haven the terrifying effects of the whirling winds which are tearing other things apart before one's very eyes. Nevertheless, this interpretive challenge is taken up in order to follow initially harsh and sometimes seemingly unfair arguments to their conclusions, leading to a new understanding (or at least a broader grasp) of what these critical arguments intend to claim as well as what they might reveal or leave unaddressed. This has not been an easy hermeneutic or dialogic task for me personally, and so I must appeal to colleagues from the very beginning for your patience and constructive criticisms.² As a result, in pursuing this route of discussion I believe it hermeneutically proper to indicate from the very beginning that I have found good reasons not to accept these critical perspectives as the only valid ways to assess missionary activities and their literary output.³

extension into many other contexts that were not actually colonized or even semi-colonized. Reflections on the significance of this shift in meaning have been discussed by Bill Ashcroft, who edited a "post-colonial studies reader" in 2003 and was the first to make me sensitive to that difference. See his "On the Hyphen in 'Post-Colonial,'" *New Literature Review* 32 (1996): 23–31.

² The ill-at-easiness I have felt came in part because I was not originally trained as a historian, though I have taken historical cases seriously in all of my philosophical and religious research, and because of the rigorous hermeneutic training I received from a Protestant seminary (Denver Seminary, established by the Conservative Baptist denomination) in the USA in the 1970s. Also, I needed to learn more about Marxism of various sorts, particularly once I came into the Chinese world to teach, to learn much more from Chinese sources about various aspects of Maoist doctrines and subsequent developments. Most of my learning in this realm has not come from contemporary political studies, but from studies in the history of Chinese philosophy and, even more specifically, translation work involving Feng Youlan's 馮友蘭 mature analysis of Mao's role in the contemporary developments of Chinese philosophy in the seventh and last volume of Feng's *Zhongguo zhexueshi xinpian* 中國哲學史新篇 (*New Edition of a History of Chinese Philosophy*), published independently in Hong Kong in 1992 as *Zhongguo xiandai zhexueshi* 中國現代哲學史 (*A History of Contemporary Chinese Philosophy*). In this process I have benefited from discussions and correspondence with a number of Chinese philosophers and intellectuals over the past twenty years, a good number of European sinologists, and a few special graduate students whom I have had the privilege to engage on a deeper level. Some of their names and works will be referred to in subsequent footnotes.

³ In the conclusion to my two volume study of James Legge (Li Yage 理雅各, 1815–97), I have addressed explicitly the Orientalist critique. In this I share with Norman Girardot the use of a new term, "Sinological Orientalism," in talking about Legge's own way of addressing issues that have been highlighted by critical Orientalist scholarship. Because Legge lived in Hong Kong during its colonial period, and offered his own critical Christian views of classical Ruist ("Confucian") and Daoist teachings, there

Nevertheless, over the years of my own efforts in research into cross-cultural religious and philosophical dimensions in the works of “missionary-scholars,”⁴ I have become sensitized to insights and challenges drawn from these interpretive perspectives—some are undeniably negative and critical, while others are ultimately positive because of what is revealed in the process of research and reflection as unanticipated by such forms of critical hermeneutics (reflecting their inherent “hermeneutics of suspicion”). As a consequence, I find they have helped me “see” what may be camouflaged, hidden, or left unaddressed in studies relying on other interpretive standpoints. For this purpose, I would like to share some of these matters and offer them for colleagues’ consideration.

CHINESE MARXIST CRITICISMS

Obviously, sources for Chinese Marxist criticisms of Christian foreign missionary activities and Chinese Christian persons and institutions are numerous, multiform, and ideologically motivated. They were preceded by traditional forms of criticisms,⁵ but sharpened by Marxist historical materialism and its principled rejection of religious life as anything authentic or constructive. A representative figure in the recent

are patterns of thought in certain of his works that also reflect various levels of colonial influences as well as anticipate Chinese Marxist critiques of these same traditions. See my *Striving for “The Whole Duty of Man”*: James Legge and the Scottish Protestant Encounter with China (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 2:221–43.

⁴ Those persons I would count as “missionary-scholars” are Chinese missionaries who applied systematic methods to understand Chinese texts and persons, and so were able to produce important interpretive materials that often became foundational for sinological studies in both European and North American university settings. The key foreign missionaries whom I have studied over a period of about two decades from this angle have all been Protestants, and include James Legge, John Chalmers (Zhan Yuehan 湛約翰, 1825–99), Ernst Faber (Hua Zhian 花之安, 1839–99), and Richard Wilhelm (Wei Lixian 尉禮賢 [the family name changed to 衛 after 1924], 1873–1930).

⁵ Such as Chinese scholars’ criticisms of Catholic doctrines, as found in the published polemical writings of Chinese Catholic intellectuals such as Xu Guangqi 徐光啟, Li Zhizao 李之藻 and Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠, as well as in the caricatures promoted in popular literature and inflammatory rhetoric displayed in derogatory placards spread throughout various regions of the late Qing empire, documented in Paul A. Cohen’s relatively early work entitled *Christianity and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Anti-foreignism, 1860–1870* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963).

Chinese Marxist critique of Christian missionaries, whose works have had an undeniably important impact on this dimension of the study of Christianity in late 20th- and early 21st-century Chinese intellectual circles, is Gu Changsheng 顧長聲. A historian by training and Seventh Day Adventist in background,⁶ Gu became known initially for his critical assessments of Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant missionaries through two major Chinese works⁷—*Missionaries and Modern China* (*Chuanjiaoshi yu jindai Zhongguo* 傳教士與近代中國) and *From Robert Morrison to Leighton Stuart: Critical Biographies of Protestant Missionaries Who Came to China* (*Cong Ma Lixun dao Situ Leideng: lai Hua xinjiao chuanjiaoshi pingzhuan* 從馬禮遜到司徒雷登——來華新教傳教士評傳).⁸ Gu's works contain a relatively more informed basis for historical judgments, applying Marxist and other ideological critiques to these materials, but also adjusting in various degrees over time toward a culturally sensitive reading of texts after he had access to even more original sources and opportunities to dialogue with other non-Chinese scholars.⁹ Other revealing perspec-

⁶ I want to thank Prof. Philip Wickeri for informing me about Gu's religious background. Though some may find it strange that those with a particular monotheistic religious background could also employ Marxist critiques in their assessment of 19th-century Protestant Christian missionaries, this kind of self-critique of one's own or similar religious traditions by indigenous scholars is not only done in China, but also in other traditions where colonialism and/or imperialism have been at work (such as in the cases of those who espouse liberation theology). Though there are far more "traditional" forms of principled Marxist criticisms based on straightforward atheistic critiques of the "distorted and reversed worldview" inherent in any religious consciousness, I know of no other Chinese scholar influenced by Marxist ideology for so many years who has also produced monograph length studies of Christian missionaries in China. The further fact that each version of Gu's monograph has been published many times within mainland China makes his work also a representative piece, representative because it was accepted in each version by political censors at various times and has been read by many Chinese intellectuals.

⁷ More cautiously, one should say that Gu's writings provide very little information about the Russian Eastern Orthodox missionaries, because there were relatively few materials to reflect upon. The details in most of his studies reflect an abiding interest in Protestant missionaries and their societies from Europe and North America, while there are also a good number of brief references to various earlier Roman Catholic (and especially Jesuit) missionaries in China during the mid and late Ming dynasty. Though he does mention a number of Catholic orders and some of their key institutional involvements in the Qing and post-Imperial periods, his emphatic focus of study has been the Protestant missionaries and their traditions.

⁸ *Chuanjiaoshi yu jindai Zhongguo* 傳教士與近代中國, 1st ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1981); *Cong Ma Lixun dao Situ Leideng: lai Hua xinjiao chuanjiaoshi pingzhuan* 從馬禮遜到司徒雷登——來華新教傳教士評傳 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1985).

⁹ The first volume mentioned above has now appeared in three different editions (1981, 1991 and 2004), and has progressively involved revisions that require more careful

tives can also be gleaned from the study of other documents, political and literary, but I will take up the work of Gu Changsheng as sufficiently representative for this realm of critical assessments of Christian missionaries.¹⁰

In a synoptic statement added to the third edition of his *Missionaries and Modern China* (2004), revealing a more balanced assessment of Christian missionary activities from the late 16th century to the mid-20th century, Gu Changsheng first lists six wide ranging cultural contributions, followed by six thoughtfully stated negative judgments, several of which include quotations from biblical sources to justify his assessments also on the grounds of what are understood to be parts of a value system reflecting a Christian worldview.¹¹ To these he adds a Chinese translation of a statement published by the National Committee of American Protestant Churches dated August 31, 1951, which includes a similar list of positive and negative assessments of American

comparative study than I have been able to complete so far. The most obvious changes are the addition of two chapters in the second edition (chapters 16 and 17) dealing with the translation and distribution of the Chinese Bible (pp. 431–49) and the role of missionaries in modern Sino–Western cultural exchanges (pp. 450–60). How much of the main text previous to the addition of these chapters was changed in both the second and third editions should be studied, but it is not obvious that very much has changed, in spite of the claims made by the author in the additional preface accompanying the second edition. In the third edition published in Shanghai in 2004, an additional subsection is added to the 17th chapter, constituting a critical response to the section regarding Protestant activities in the Qing dynasty in *The Cambridge History of Late Qing China* in five pages. Much more significantly, Gu added to this third edition a brief but very significant 18th chapter, entitled “Chuanjiaoshi dui Zhongguo de gongxian yu cunzai de wenti” 傳教士對中國的貢獻與存在的問題 (What missionaries contributed to China and remaining problems) (pp. 430–35). It is this final addition which will be a source of numerous reflections in the balance of this paper.

¹⁰ From political sides, there have been a good number of works considering the political repercussions of the early Rites Controversy among Catholic missionaries (focusing at times on the interactions between the papal authorities and the Ming and Qing imperial courts) as well as the unequal treaty period (focusing on the “religious cases” [jiaoran 教案] and various wars that took place (with the Opium Wars of 1839–42 and 1858–60 and the Boxer Rebellion of 1900–1901 taking precedence due to the massive scale of their destructive impact). More recent studies about the legal conditions of religious citizens in the People’s Republic of China have been documented with great detail and insight by the recently deceased Donald E. MacInnis (1920–2005). From the angle of Chinese literature touching biblical themes, the recent collection of essays by Marián Gálík illustrates how this can be a very revealing area of study. See his *Influence, Translation and Parallels: Selected Studies on the Bible in China* (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 2004). Footnotes in this volume identify not only many Chinese sources, but also other similarly minded sinologists whose works have significant interpretive influences.

¹¹ This and the following descriptions refer to the 18th chapter of Gu’s *Chuanjiaoshi yu jindai Zhongguo*, 3rd ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2004), 430–35.

Protestant Christian missionary activities and institutions in China.¹² Significantly, these involve seven positive and seventeen negative “instructive lessons” (*jiaoxun* 教訓) to be drawn from the general experience of American missionaries in China over an unspecified period of time. A final paragraph reflects briefly on the departure of foreign missionaries from Mainland China between 1948 to 1951, and the subsequent stabilization and growth of Chinese Christian church communities in the later 20th and early 21st century.¹³

*Foreign Christian Missionaries and Their
Questionable Political Involvement*

Certainly one of the major criticisms of Chinese Marxist critiques of Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries has been their collusion with European and North American governments during and after their stay in Chinese contexts as missionaries. Among Gu Changsheng’s six criticisms of Christian missionary activities, four of them relate to different aspects of Christian missionaries working in conjunction with foreign political powers.¹⁴ This political connection is sometimes

¹² Unfortunately, Gu provides no footnote to indicate the archival or published source for this document, or any further assessment of the authors or background of this summary statement.

¹³ In regard to the extent of the growth of Christian communities, Gu indicates that between 1950 and 2004 they increased tenfold in numbers, from just over three million to a total of 30 million. There is no documentation he offers for these numbers, though it would be considered a conservative estimate by other scholars. This issue is a matter of great contention among all sources, because of the diversity of accounts of those who make guesses about the number of non-authorized or semi-authorized Christian communities in other parts of China. For example, David Barrett and his collaborators assert in their *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) that the numbers they estimate (including categories of sectarian groups not normally associated with any orthodox strand of Christianity in general) stand at above 85 million.

¹⁴ These involve his first three and the fifth points. The first indicates strategies seeking to obtain power through association with governing authorities or by means of military action against those Chinese or Manchurian governing authorities; the second refers to the use of force and even “tit-for-tat” measures that encouraged some Chinese Christians (especially during the Boxer Uprising) to become involved in violence against perceived non-Christian Chinese “enemies”; the third involves a certain group of missionaries who served as informants and military advisors for their own countries’ military leaders and governments, and so taking part in the colonial intention to “split China up” among various foreign powers; the fifth point opposes the imperialist intentions of some missionaries who took no regard for the separation of church and state, which Gu takes to be a fundamental biblical principle. These com-

overlooked or even praised as appropriate by foreign writers when dealing with these missionaries' lives, but from a critical perspective adopted by Marxist Chinese scholars, this choice of mixing Christian missionary work with specific foreign national interests has always led to deep suspicions about the real motivations behind various missionary institutions and enterprises. In the following I will make a few representative points on this score in an outline form.

Issue: Government collusion and political critiques of religious missionaries.

1. Roman Catholic missionaries associated with the Vatican as a political and religious entity, a constant source of critique and trauma for those missionaries and their converts, especially after 1949. French government support for Catholic missionaries was also a well-understood feature of the unequal treaty period, and complicated matters for those missionaries especially during times of unrest (such as the Boxer Rebellion).
2. Protestant missionaries not always free from political involvement. It is clear that those who learned Chinese well were regularly sought out for helping their governments as political officials. Many of their children married into families with consular figures, many of whom were themselves also Protestant Christians.¹⁵ But the most blatant examples are those such as
 - Karl Gützlaff (Carl Gutzlaff), who worked with the British military and served as a military governor in an island off of Shanghai, setting up his own spy network (as described in detail by Arthur Waley¹⁶)

ments are found in Gu Changsheng, *Chuanjiaoshi yu jindai Zhongguo* (3rd ed.), 431–32.

¹⁵ This was especially true of the children and other relatives of the earliest missionaries, starting in the 1840s and extending till at least the period following the “second” Opium War of 1860. Documentation of this trend can be followed in the British context, which certainly had the most extensive colonial government bureaucracy in the world within the 19th century, in P. D. Coates’ encyclopedic work, *The China Consuls: British Consular Officers, 1843–1943* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹⁶ See Arthur Waley, *The Opium War through Chinese Eyes* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958). This work is unusual for Waley, because he normally remained attached to translating ancient Chinese poetry along with a few pre-Imperial Ruist (“Confucian”) and Daoist scriptures. Apparently the matter became so significant to him that he could not resist writing about it. Significantly, I know of at least one reprinting by Stanford University Press that appeared in 1968, and so it seems the volume touched

- Those associated with missionaries and serving as translators and treaty negotiators in the early years, such as John Robert Morrison (son of Robert Morrison)¹⁷ in relation to the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing, and Horatio Nelson Lay (son-in-law of James Legge), who was heavily involved in the Tianjin Treaty of 1860.¹⁸
- Peter Parker and Leighton Stuart, after leaving their posts as missionaries, becoming (US) consulate figures with Christian interests.

These facts require of those of us who study Christian missionaries a more serious reconsideration of the relationship between foreign missionaries and their government officials and the implications that these carried for indigenous Christian communities in late Imperial China. Admittedly, what this Marxist position may simply overlook are those few missionaries who chose to leave their ecclesiastical posts and work instead for institutions either supported by the Qing government or as part of the Ming and Qing political institutions themselves—something which would be almost completely unanticipated by this kind of Marxist criticism. Nevertheless, even in spite of the unusual careers of certain persons—such as the former American missionary W. A. P. Martin (Ding Weiliang 丁韪良), who later became the Director of the Imperial Translation School (Tongwen guan 同文館);¹⁹ the significant number of Jesuits who served in the Astronomy Bureau of the Ming and Qing imperial courts²⁰ (especially Johann Adam Schall von Bell [Tang Ruowang 湯若望, 1591–1666] and Ferdinand Verbiest [Nan Huairen 南懷仁,

a theme that ultimately received significant attention within Anglophone audiences.

¹⁷ This fact I learned through reading an essay about John Robert Morrison prepared by Barton Starr, which I believe has been published in the most recently published version of the *Dictionary of National Biography* in the United Kingdom.

¹⁸ For other details about Lay's part in this treaty action, see Pfister, *Striving for "The Whole Duty of Man"*, 2:70, 304 (endnote 211).

¹⁹ For an account of Martin's career, see Ralph Covell, "Life and Thought of W. A. P. Martin: Agent and Interpreter of Sino-American Contact in the Nineteenth Century and Early Twentieth Century" (PhD diss., University of Denver, 1975; Ann Arbor: UMI, 1997).

²⁰ A summary of Jesuit roles in these imperial courts and their broader contribution to aspects of astronomical, geographical, and arithmetic knowledge at that time is described and evaluated by Benjamin A. Elman in two of his most recent books: *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), esp. Chap. 2 (pp. 61–221), and *A Cultural History of Modern Science in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), esp. Chap. 1 (pp. 15–35).

1623–88]), as well as the British Baptist missionary Timothy Richard (Li Timotai 李提摩太), who was the first Protestant missionary to be invited to take up a post as a political counselor to the Guangxu 光緒 emperor²¹—it must be admitted that these persons were clearly in the minority of all those who took up foreign missionary careers within Ming and Qing political contexts.

Between Emperors, Mao, and God

Questions that arise here come from not only the Marxist exposé of political interests among missionaries, but also the theological problem associated with “giving to Caesar what is Caesar’s and giving to God what is God’s.”²² The “unequal treaty” conditions set during the Opium War period and lasting well into the third decade of the 20th century undoubtedly raised problems of credibility even as it opened doors for interaction. Here the question of missionary relationships with governments and especially with mercantile interests (such as the British imperial opium trade), and the question whether there should be missionary critique of these influences, are revealing problems of the cultural inconsistency of representation between different elements of foreign countries—some missionaries and other merchants. Differences in roles *did* matter, but in the context of Qing Chinese political life these were often misunderstood.

²¹ The invitation Richard received from the erstwhile Prime Minister of the late Qing Empire and radical Ruist reformer, Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), ended up never being fulfilled. As he describes in his autobiography, *Forty-five Years in China: Reminiscences* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1916), the week that Richard was supposed to report for duty in the fall of 1898, a military coup organized by portions of the Qing army supported by the Empress Dowager ousted Kang and his followers.

²² As noted in note 14 above, Gu Changsheng assumes that the separation of church and state is a basic Christian assumption, but this is not the case, especially in European contexts where the Roman Catholic church or certain other church denominations are considered to be “national churches.” In this light it is important to notice the degree of leeway which this Caesar–God formula permits, and so it explains why there were very different attitudes about the relationship between state and church institutions across the history of Christianity in numerous cultural and historical settings, whether in Mediterranean or European settings, Asian settings (as documented by Samuel Hugh Moffett in his two-volume study of *A History of Christianity in Asia*), or in the American or African continents. More significantly, he justifies his first and second criticisms of Christian missionaries by referring to Zechariah 4:6 and Matthew 10:14 respectively, suggesting that Christian representatives on missions should not use force to present their messages to others, and that if they are not received, they should leave the area on their own accord.

*Maoist Marxism and Indigenous Chinese
Missionaries*

Another very different perspective dealing with a later period suggests that we can link up the ethical values of a liberating justice which informed and motivated the critical hermeneutics promoted by Chinese (and other forms of) Marxism with similar social and spiritual values promoted in biblically-oriented worldviews held by indigenous Chinese Christian leaders, missionaries, and ordinary church members. My own reflections on this matter consolidated into an account of one reason why Protestant forms of Christianity began to grow *during* the “Great Cultural Revolution,” and not merely after those “ten years of calamity” occurred.²³ A summary of the argument goes as follows: the accomplishment of Maoist Marxism under Mao Zedong 毛澤東 included the fact that, due to the ubiquitous presence and ideological pressure applied to learning his little Redbook, the vast majority of Chinese persons and Chinese citizens from all levels of society (including those minorities that had become sinified) had ingrained within their thoughts and desires the universal values of justice, equality, and a secular form of liberation. When the Chinese Maoist revolution proved to be a failure in not reaching its communist ideal (in spite of ideologically loaded claims to the contrary at the time), and ultimately turning upon itself destructively, as had happened in all previous European revolutions,²⁴ there was a new and pervasive thirst among many Chinese persons for fulfillments of these new culturally instilled desires and values. This is no simple impulse and response model of explaining religious and cultural change, but has involved an ongoing dialectic

²³ This has been explored in greater detail in my essay, “Brothers in the Spirit,” written for the Festschrift honoring Prof. Wolfgang Kubin of Bonn University in celebrating his 60th birthday, which took place in December 2005. As far as I know, the Festschrift has not yet been published.

²⁴ Here I am relying on the analysis of the European revolutions explored by Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and helpfully summarized by George Allen Morgan. Consult Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* (New York: W. Morrow & Co., 1938; repr., Providence, R.I.: Berg, 1993), with an introductory essay written by the elderly emeritus professor from Harvard, Harold Berman. A subsequent account in German, revised for an European audience, was published in the early 1950s under the title *Die europäischen Revolutionen und der Charakter der Nationen*. Morgan’s synopsis of these and other relevant works touching on Rosenstock-Huessy’s analyses of these revolutions is presented in his volume, *Speech and Society: The Christian Linguistic Social Philosophy of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1987), especially the 15th chapter on “world revolutions” (pp. 52–66).

of intellectual and spiritual conditions within post-Cultural Revolution Chinese societies that has passed through at least two generations of reconsideration, but has not yet fully resolved the internal contradictions of values within this unfulfilled “secularized salvation.”²⁵ One of the key responses in recent decades has been a renewed interest in an authentic spiritual salvation identified with the biblical message of Christ’s love and mercy, touching personal dimensions of the need for repentance and renewal as well as social dimensions which balance justice and mercy. If this account bears scrutiny, it suggests another insight that can be gleaned from Chinese Marxist accounts of Christian missions. What it indicates is a transformation of earlier Marxist critiques into a more constructive reconsideration of the role of Christian missions in the modernization of China. This should include a broader cultural shift involving Christian religious renewal in the face of failed Chinese Marxist policies, one that has influenced a relatively larger group of Chinese persons, especially among intellectuals, but also within the vast hinterland.

Significantly, this kind of interpretive transition within Chinese Christian circles, which links up Marxist ideological failures with post-Mao era religious developments, is not in any way considered in Gu Changsheng’s final reflections in the third edition of his *Missionaries and Modern China*. Instead, he lauds the self-establishment of Chinese Christians, but simply leaves the obvious fact of their immensely rapid growth rate essentially uninterpreted, even on well-known Marxist grounds of “religion serving as the heart of a heartless world.” I propose that this dialectical interpretation of an inherent cultural distortion created by sustained revolutionary destructiveness and its religious response, grounded in the continued search for answers to a new set of universal values instilled in the general inter-subjective awareness of late 20th-century Chinese citizens, deserves very serious consideration. What is so significant about this interpretive approach is that it is based on a serious consideration of Marxist influences and their inherent revolutionary contradictions, and so reveals a dimension of study that

²⁵ This understanding of Marxist ideology as a dialectically shaped obverse reflection of Christian values was recognized already by European intellectuals in the 20th century, and has been summarized in a particular way in order to reflect on modern Chinese experiences of these intellectual and spiritual revolutions in Wolfgang Kubin’s article, “‘The Sickness God’—The Sickness Man: The Problem of Imperfection in China and in the West,” in *Bible in Modern China: The Literary and Intellectual Impact*, ed. Irene Eber, Sze-kar Wan, Knut Walf, and Roman Malek, 409–28 (Nettetal: Steyler, 1999).

may prove very fruitful in cross-disciplinary studies and reflections in future years.

ORIENTAL CRITICISMS AND THE RECOGNITION OF SINOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

The fourth criticism Gu Changsheng levies against Christian missionaries in China touches a number of aspects that would be associated with some Orientalist criticisms of their work. Though a few of them became recognized sinologists, there were “many” who took up an attitude of cultural superiority, viewing Chinese persons as “half civilized heathen,” while taking themselves to be “saviors” and “teachers” to the Chinese people. In this context they tended to carry on their missionary duties under the racist assumptions of “the white man’s burden,” and so reinforced among some Chinese persons a lack of self-esteem and a fetishism toward foreign things.²⁶ This claim reflects the statement made by American evaluators that “too many missionaries knew far too little about Chinese language, customs, culture and philosophy.”²⁷ Exactly how many there were may be an important historical question, but the moral value motivating this assessment would suggest that only if there were none would it have been acceptable. In this there is an undeniably valid point, however it can be clarified in the details of historical statistics or the principles of Christian missionary policies.

Orientalism and Missionary-scholars

Those special class of missionaries Gu Changsheng does not challenge in any direct manner—the sinological missionary-scholars²⁸—

²⁶ This summary is following the claims laid out in the fourth criticism Gu Changsheng raises against Christian missionaries in his *Chuanjiaoshi yu jindai Zhongguo* (3rd ed.), 432.

²⁷ Retranslating the fourth “negative lesson” enumerated in the 1951 document prepared by representatives of the National Christian Council of American Protestant Churches. See Gu Changsheng, *ibid.*, 434.

²⁸ In this regard, Gu was aware of the university professorships taken up by James Legge at Oxford in 1876 and by Samuel Wells Williams (Wei Sanwei 衛三畏, 1812–84) at Yale in 1877 (see Gu Changsheng, *ibid.*, 418). Nevertheless, he was apparently

are those who receive rather severe blasts from Orientalist critics. So, though we might honor James Legge (1815–97),²⁹ S  raphin Couvreur (Gu Saifen 顧賽芬, 1835–1919),³⁰ and Richard Wilhelm (Wei Lixian 尉禮賢 [name changed to 衛禮賢 after 1924], 1873–1930)³¹ as among the greatest of these missionary-scholars turned sinologists and sinologues, Orientalist critics argue that they were nonetheless complicated within the paradigms of knowledge and power structures that imperialistic governments created for their own advances into China during the 19th and 20th centuries. These three monumental translators and interpreters of ancient Chinese canonical literature, being missionaries from Congregational, Jesuit, and Lutheran backgrounds, created

completely unaware of the similarly important translation and scholarly work pursued by Couvreur and Wilhelm, neither of whom are mentioned in his major work, even though both of them spent many years in China. Wilhelm lived in the German and later Japanese colony of Qingdao 青島 from 1899 to 1920, while Couvreur lived in Hebei 河北 province from 1870 until his death in 1919.

²⁹ Legge was the translator and interpreter of the notable series entitled *The Chinese Classics* (1st ed., 1861–72; 2nd partially rev. ed., 1893–95) and six volumes entitled *The Sacred Books of China* (1879–91), so that they encompassed all the key texts of the Ruist (“Confucian”) Canon: the Four Books and the Five Scriptures in addition to the *Daodejing*, the *Zhuangzi*, and some smaller and later Daoist religious “tractates.”

³⁰ Couvreur produced French and Latin renderings of almost all the same Ruist scriptures that Legge had produced in English versions except for the *Book of Changes* or *Yijing* 易經, but also produced in 1916 a version of one of the other scriptures related to ancient Chinese rites and customs which Legge had not included in his collection, i.e., the *Yili* 儀禮, which he entitled *C  r  monial*. In regard to translation of ancient canonical literature, Couvreur has taken his place along with Legge as the two most prolific translators of this sort outside of China.

³¹ Though not as systematic and devoted to ancient canonical literature as either Legge or Couvreur, Wilhelm produced texts that have remained the standard German versions of ancient Chinese canonical literature in Ruist and Daoist contexts. Though he did not produce as many of these texts as Legge and Couvreur did, Wilhelm did provide annotations and updated polylingual bibliographies for most of his renderings, something which Legge had also produced in abundance, but which Couvreur never provided. In regard to ancient literature, Wilhelm produced and published versions of the *Analects* (*Konfucius Gespr  che*, 1910), the *Mencius* (1914), and unusual versions of both the *Book of Changes* (*I Ging: Buch der Wandlungen*, 1924) and a selective and reorganized version of classical accounts of Chinese rites (*Li Gi: Das Buch der Sitte des   lteren und j  ngeren Dai*, 1930) from among the Ruist scriptures; regarding Daoist scriptures, he also produced versions of both the *Daodejing* (1911) and most of the *Zhuangzi* (1912, but missing the last seven chapters of the standard text). Beyond these, Wilhelm produced an immense corpus of non-canonical renderings from wide ranges of literature in ancient, medieval, and some relatively modern works. Unquestionably his most popular rendering has been that of his restructured version of the *Book of Changes*, which has been translated into at least nine other languages and published in fifteen different countries.

the largest sources of classical Chinese literature in English, French, and German respectively.³²

Basic to the Orientalist critique of any literature produced by intellectuals of other cultures, including these missionary-scholars, is that they misrepresent the text and the culture which they portray through their writings and translations. Though the very matter of “representing” was an epistemological problem that Edward Said himself took to be an insurmountable problem (and so his account of Orientalism has been criticized as being methodologically suspect³³), nevertheless, there is a serious question about whether or not there was any reason to doubt his claims in relationship to these major Chinese missionary-scholars mentioned above.

Did Legge, Couvreur, and Wilhelm willfully distort the ancient Chinese scriptures in their renderings? Or placed in even a broader perspective, did they intentionally or even unintentionally—because of their own cultural and religious biases as well as their own methodologically determined avoidance—refuse to understand and engage with Chinese indigenous scholarship related to these canonical texts? While we should always assume that any attempt at understanding a foreign culture is hermeneutically difficult and requires an overcoming of many previously unknown factors and easily misunderstood values and events, it should be emphatically stated that these problems are increased immensely when the foreign culture is also an ancient one, portrayed in an ancient script and language that may not be currently understood by the majority of indigenous people among whom a Christian missionary lives.³⁴ Much to the surprise of Orientalist assumptions,

³² Several qualifications of this general claim need to be added in order to make the statement more precise. Richard Wilhelm not only did renderings of ancient canonical texts, but also produced German translations of more recent and even modern Chinese texts in different forms of literature, philosophy, and other areas. In addition, most scholars will know that both Legge and Couvreur presented not only translations of the ancient Chinese scriptures, but also a standardized Chinese version of these texts as well. In the case of Couvreur, he regularly added to the French rendering a parallel Latin rendering. In this sense their overall contributions are not limited merely to the textual and linguistic limits suggested in the more general statement made above.

³³ James Clifford is a noted critic of this epistemological problem in Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, as found in his chapter “On Orientalism” in *The Predicament of Culture*, 255–76 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), a fact highlighted by Zhang Kuan in his essay “The Predicament of Postcolonial Criticism in Contemporary China,” in *Chinese Thought in a Global Context: A Dialogue between Chinese and Western Philosophical Approaches*, ed. Karl-Heinz Pohl, 58–70 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), esp. p. 64.

³⁴ In this vein I take seriously many of the points raised by Hans-Georg Gadamer when

it is clear that James Legge purposefully engaged and worked with the Chinese scholar Wang Tao 王韜 (1822–97) for a period of about ten years.³⁵ In Wilhelm’s case, it is well known that he intermittently worked with Lao Naixuan 勞乃宣 (1843–1921) on the text of the *Book of Changes* during the period of Lao’s post-revolutionary exile (as a

he describes the challenges of coming to understand the biblical texts, which involves not only the distance of an ancient text, but also the immense authority that this scripture holds for scholars within the field. As a consequence, there has normally been produced a wide range of commentarial traditions, the “effective history” of the canonical work itself, that needs to be considered by any sensitive scholar who would intend to understand the meaning of that scripture. This is a major point raised in his famous volume of philosophical hermeneutics, *Truth and Method*.

³⁵ To his credit, Gu Changsheng was aware of Legge’s relationship to Wang Tao, and had some very general sense that this Chinese Christian scholar (and admittedly a very inconsistent Christian at that, especially during his later years when he returned to Shanghai) had been a source of help for Legge in handling “difficult passages” and preparing notes (*Chuanjiaoshi yu jindai Zhongguo* [3rd ed.], 420). Though Wang came into contact with Legge through unforeseen circumstances, Legge recognized the unusual opportunity to work with a young Chinese scholar, and so hired Wang to work with him, so that his Chinese scholarly friend ended up producing at least four different commentaries to various Ruist texts over the period of the nine years they worked together (from 1863 to 1872). Nevertheless, the nature of the influence of Wang on Legge’s scholarship was more complicated than some have assumed, including Gu Changsheng. For example, though Paul A. Cohen was able to identify the places where Wang’s works were cited by Legge in various notes within the later volumes of his *Chinese Classics*, he did not reveal that about half the time (depending on the text) Legge disagreed with Wang’s assessment and explanation of various passages. Details about this more dynamic and interactive give-and-take are presented in my article, “The Response of Wang Tao and James Legge to the Modern Ruist Melancholy,” *History and Culture*, no. 2 (Hong Kong: Department of History, Hong Kong Baptist University, 2001): 1–20. A Chinese version of this article appeared as “Wang Tao yu Li Yage dui xinrujia youhuan yishi de huiying” 王韜與理雅各對新儒家憂患意識的回應, in *Wang Tao yu xiandai shijie* 王韜與現代世界, ed. Lam Kai Yin and Wong Man Kong, 117–47 (Hong Kong: Xianggang jiaoyutushu gongsi, 2000).

Another factor that Gu Changsheng was unaware of in the case of Legge was that the four years that Hong Ren’gan 洪仁玕 (1822–64) spent in Hong Kong (1854–58) were under the tutelage not only of James Legge but also of his co-pastor and the first Chinese Protestant theologian, He Jinshan 何進善 (1817–71, also known in Cantonese spelling as Ho Tsun-sheen and later as Ho Fuk-tong [He Futang 何福堂]). In this sense, Legge was not only involved for about ten years with at least one Chinese scholar of traditional Ruist scriptures, but also helped to nurture the first major Chinese Protestant scholar before he went to Oxford. More about Ho Tsun-sheen can be found in my article, “A Transmitter but not a Creator: The Creative Transmission of Protestant Biblical Traditions by Ho Tsun-sheen (1817–1871),” in Eber et al., *Bible in Modern China*, 165–97. A Chinese version of this essay has also appeared more recently, “Shu er bu zuo: jindai Zhongguo diyi wei xinjiao shenxuejia He Jinshan (1817–1871)” 述而不作：近代中國第一位新教神學家何進善 (1817–1871), in *Shengjing yu jindai Zhongguo* 聖經與近代中國, trans. and ed. Tsoi Kam-to, 132–62 (Hong Kong: Hanyu shengjing xiehui, 2003). Fuller details about his life and works are also presented in selective passages of my larger work, *Striving for “The Whole Duty of Man”*.

pro-Manchu oriented Chinese scholar in the German colony of Jiaozhou 膠州, where Wilhelm lived), amounting to a period of at least six or seven years (from 1912 to 1919). Recent research has revealed that Wilhelm also worked with several other Chinese teachers and informants, among them some other high ranking scholars.³⁶ The case of Couvreur is less certain, because he took no effort in any of his brief prefaces to each of his translations to refer to any of his Chinese teachers, co-workers, or even the works he employed in preparing his translations.³⁷ The fact that Couvreur lived and died in China, serving as a Catholic missionary priest and sinological translator in a town about 150 miles south of Beijing, suggests that there should be more to learn about his institutional connections, his contacts with Chinese Catholics and other scholars, and his habits of scholarship than are now currently available.

While all these factors appear to present an outright challenge to the Orientalist criticism that these missionary-scholars had no intention to engage contemporary Chinese scholars in the context of their own preparations, learning, and translation work, and did not seek to represent China in any authentic manner—especially in the cases of Legge and Wilhelm—it is hermeneutically appropriate to continue to keep these skeptical questions before us. In fact, both Legge and Wilhelm

³⁶ This research has been pursued by a group of six scholars (four German sinologists, one Chinese German scholar, and this author), with the intention of producing at least one new volume based on these new findings in the coming years, for the University of Washington Press. One of Wilhelm's first teachers during the first decade of the 20th century was a Chinese medical doctor, but later he had contact with a good number of notable Chinese scholars in the German colony. Later on, after the conclusion of World War I and the change in German government, Wilhelm took up a post as a cultural advisor to the new German ambassador to China, and was able to arrange to have an office in Beijing University as a researcher in the German faculty during the academic year of 1923–24. Due to all these factors, it is now undeniable that Wilhelm had significant contact with many contemporary Chinese scholars and also collaborated with several of them in working out some of his major translations.

³⁷ Up to this point I have had no opportunity to consult Jesuit colleagues who would possibly have access to archives and other data that would provide new insights into Couvreur's life, relationships, and study habits. David Honey identifies Couvreur as the first of three major 19th–20th-century Jesuit sinologists, pointing out that he received the Prix Julien for outstanding work in Chinese literature four times. (Legge had received this international prize in 1873, the first year it was offered, for his *Chinese Classics*.) In one other spot in Honey's wide-ranging account of the history of Chinese philology he adds evaluations drawn at least partially from another noted French sinologist, Paul Demiéville (1894–1979), that Couvreur's translations rarely departed from the interpretive positions of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) and never “essayed any original interpretation or personal criticism.” Consult David B. Honey, *Incense at the Altar: Pioneering Sinologists and the Development of Classical Chinese Philology* (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 2001), 41–42, 211.

had to struggle beyond a number of inherent cultural and religious biases which they initially brought with them to their different Chinese contexts, and both lived within colonial contexts which would raise other suspicions about their way of life and access to “authentic understanding” of Chinese persons and indigenous canonical scholarship. For these reasons it is worthwhile to explore these matters even further.

Problems in Characterizing Sinological Orientalism

When one looks more carefully at the careers, translations, and commentarial notes produced by Legge and Wilhelm, there are reasons to remain cautious about being too sanguine regarding their sinological achievements, especially during their earlier periods of missionary-scholarship. Hermeneutically speaking, both men had to overcome complex inter-cultural situations. This involved what some have recently described as a sinological form of Orientalist distortion, or more simply, “Sinological Orientalism.” In the case of Legge, there was a manifest amelioration of his initially more harsh and critical Christian attitudes, expressed in the prolegomena to the first volume of his *Chinese Classics* published in 1861, attitudes that were explicitly rejected only later in the period after 1873.³⁸ Significantly, Wilhelm took up a more independent and non-confrontational approach within his missionary, educational and pastoral roles. Ultimately, he claimed to have not been involved with the conversion of any singular Chinese person, but certainly had been associating with various Chinese Christians and other missionaries throughout his time in China as both a missionary and a member of the German consulate in the early 1920s.³⁹ As a consequence, we should understand that Sinological Orientalism takes serious account of the limiting and distortive possibilities of alternative cultural and religious worldviews within these missionaries’ lives as

³⁸ This I have documented in great detail and in partial contrast to the account presented by Norman J. Girardot in his major tome, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge’s Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), in my article, “From Derision to Respect: The Hermeneutic Passage within James Legge’s (1815–1897) Ameliorated Evaluation of Master Kong (‘Confucius’),” *Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung* 26 (2002): 53–88.

³⁹ Wilhelm’s own very unusual approach to missionary work has been characterized recently in another of my articles entitled “Protestant Ethics among Chinese Missionaries, Problems of Indigenization, and the Spirit of Academic Professionalization,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 2, no. 1 (March 2005): 93–114.

they interacted with Chinese persons, but also realizes that missionary-scholars could and did learn new ways to address, understand, and portray Chinese canonical texts that have proven to be far more constructive than Saidian forms of Orientalist criticisms would anticipate. In this light it is particularly important to highlight that Sinological Orientalism can account for both the initial negative and overly critical assessments most of these missionary-scholars harbored and, in addition, the fact that they were able to overcome these biases and distortions to reach a level of engaged and sympathetic understanding that was a tribute to their interrelationships with key Chinese teachers and collaborators. In this way, not only that a major lesson regarding the troubles of “coming to represent” can be gained from Orientalist criticisms, but a new appreciation for the actual interpretive achievements of major missionary-scholars can be underscored, reevaluated, and employed to challenge the more skeptical Orientalist epistemological assumptions.

*Being Cautious about Claims of
Ruist Secularism*

Inherent in many of the Orientalist accounts as well as in relevant discussions among contemporary Chinese philosophers and other scholars is the assumption that the Ruist traditions, which were the dominant ideology for the last 700 years of the Imperial era in Chinese dynastic histories, were completely void of any religious character. Missionaries were divided, but it is notable that Legge and Couvreur both argued for a monotheistic presence within the ancient traditions. Legge focused on the presence of the terms Shangdi 上帝 and Di 帝, especially in the *Shijing* 詩經, but also in other literature;⁴⁰ Couvreur added within his longest introduction to any Chinese scripture a thorough description of Heaven (“*Le Ciel*”) and the Supreme Lord (“*Le Chang Ti*”) to his *Cheu King* (*Shijing* or the *Book of Odes*).⁴¹ Ironi-

⁴⁰ Legge’s initial discoveries came in 1852, and then he wrote consistently about these matters in various places, most prominently in his comparisons between Christian and Ruist religious traditions, in 1877 and 1880. A critical review and assessment of Legge’s account of this Chinese monotheism has been made very recently by Wang Hui 王輝 in his PhD dissertation completed at Hong Kong Baptist University, which was given the title in an earlier version, “A Postcolonial Perspective on James Legge’s Confucian Translation: Focusing on His Two Versions of the *Zhongyong*” (2006).

⁴¹ Find these lengthy statements in Séraphin Couvreur, 詩經 *Cheu king: Texte chinois*

cally, this question itself has reemerged with a new vigor among various Chinese philosophers and scholars within and outside of China during the last twenty years.⁴² As a consequence, there remains a very basic set of questions: Is Ruism religious or not? Is it a religion or not? Assumptions denying any religious dimension have often been churned out of a manifestly intense dialectical opposition to “Western” forms of “religion,” and so have been countered even within sinological circles on the basis of other (not explicitly Christian) standards of cultural and religious assessment. This being the case, there are important reasons to reassess the assumed secular monolithic nature of Ruist traditions, and instead to replace these putative “secularist” perspectives with a more subtle and diversified account of multiform Ruist traditions that are more representative of their historical manifestations.

*Need for a Self-reflective Turn among
Chinese Scholars?*

A final but important further reflection revolves around the historico-cultural assumptions and ideological camouflage that some contemporary Chinese scholars may hide within criticisms like those stated by Gu Changsheng at the beginning of this section. If as scholars we agree to employ a standard reflecting the value of basic human rights and the value of all Chinese persons—whether peasants or gentry in traditional society, and whether Communist cadre or Chinese minorities in contemporary China—it is also appropriate to ask more questions about the role of the traditional three teachings in how they performed on the same scale. In addition, what exactly counts as the honorable portions of “Chinese culture” which are to be upheld should be spelled out, since it is an undeniable fact that Chinese Marxist ideo-

avec une double traduction en français et en latin, une introduction et un vocabulaire, 4th ed. (Ho Kien Fou [Hejian Fu]: Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1896), xxi–xxvii. Significantly, this is followed by comments related to the ceremonies to deceased parents.

⁴² Witness to this development has occurred within China by the compilation of essays by Ren Jiyu 任繼愈 debating these themes in his *Rujiao wenti zhenglun ji* 儒教問題爭論集 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2000). In English there have been published in recent years several major works that assert positive accounts of Ruist (“Confucian”) spirituality, though these accounts are not at all the same and not even necessarily compatible with each other. See Tu Wei-ming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds., *Confucian Spirituality*, Volumes 1 and 2 (New York: Crossroad, 2003–4) and the two volume work edited by Xinzhong Yao, *RoutledgeCurzon Encyclopedia of Confucianism* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

logues also made wide-ranging blasts against exploitative elements in traditional Chinese culture, at times being anticipated by the more informed and scholarly missionary-scholars many decades earlier. So, for example, the thoughtful, carefully articulated, and balanced assessments of Legge's renderings of ancient Chinese historical canonical literature (specifically, the *Shangshu* 尚書 and *Zuo Commentary* [*Zuo zhuan* 左傳] to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Chunqiu* 春秋]) by the highly regarded historian, Liu Jiahe 劉家和, which take these cultural and historical factors into account, provide a more self-reflective hermeneutical method as well as a foundation for further studies balancing both critical and constructive sides to these evaluations.⁴³ From a broader perspective, these critical questions about the general nature and multiform way of the penetrating abuse of power within various power structures, taken up by critics of the non-hyphenated "postcolonial" line of critical hermeneutics (that is, involving historical and cultural situations even outside of explicit colonial settings), would putatively applaud this kind of self-reflective understanding on the part of contemporary Chinese scholars.⁴⁴ So, then, it is appropriate to move toward the last and final stage of our reflections, dealing with the more standardized "post-colonial" criticisms of Christian missionaries.

POST-COLONIAL REFLECTIONS

Within Chinese circles in the 1990s it was the discussion of Edward Said's *Orientalism* that provoked further reflections on the cultural phenomena associated with a post-colonial (or "postcolonial") con-

⁴³ Find these kind of assessments in four chapters devoted to evaluating James Legge's translations and interpretations in the middle of the recently published volume of significant essays by Prof. Liu: *Shixue, jingxue yu sixiang: zai shijieshi beiqing xia duiyu Zhongguo gudai lishi wenhua de sikao* 史學、經學與思想：在世界史背景下對於中國古代歷史文化的思考 (Beijing: Beijing Shifandaxue chubanshe, 2005), 104–240.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that this also may not be the case. Some writers in the post-colonial vein would only speak about the flaws of non-Chinese foreigners, and would feel that applying the same standards to Chinese scholars or officials in any period would be inappropriate, because they are among those who have suffered under the oppressive conditions of the "postcolonial" powers. Nevertheless, when their own range of criticisms goes beyond historical and cultural bounds to embrace non-colonized settings, it seems all the more justified to ask them as well as Chinese scholars to take up this self-reflective step.

sciousness.⁴⁵ Though there might be some problems in arguing how the Qing empire in the 19th century was itself made into a “colony” in any normal sense of the term, it is the case that small portions of Chinese territory were taken at various times by foreign powers as their own colonial outposts. British, Portuguese and German colonies did exist in various parts of China—in Hong Kong and Weihaiwei 威海衛, in Macau, and in Qingdao 青島—not to mention the Japanese colonialization that took place in encroachments in Qingdao, Manchuria, Taiwan, and that ultimately led to China’s involvement in World War II. In addition, the Marxist category of a “semi-colony,” based primarily on mercantile involvement that involved “unequal treaties” and so unfair advantages, is also regularly cited as a justification for using this form of argumentation. So, on the basis of all these settings, and especially in the cases where Christian missionaries later took up residence within these colonial contexts, there are significant justifications for adopting a post-colonial reflection within contemporary Chinese settings.

Gu Changsheng addressed this kind of problem in his sixth criticism of Christian missionaries: they tended to dominate over their Chinese converts, not allowing them to take up their rights as leaders or responsible persons within Christian institutions.⁴⁶ Though this tends to reflect a “postcolonial” attitude more than an explicit “post-colonial” critique, we should consider some concrete cases where these charges appear to have some weight.

*Examples of Colonial Privileges and Their
Religious Implications in Hong Kong*

For example, in the case of Hong Kong, there were distinct privileges granted to those involved with Anglican forms of Christian life, especially in the early colonial period. The Anglican Bishop was within the hierarchy of leaders who could take over the position of the colonial Governor in the case of any unexpected problems; in addition, special privileges related to education and the promotion of “Anglified” Chinese persons made their presence attractive to various Chinese

⁴⁵ The description of this development is presented by one of the key advocates of the value of post-colonial thinking in the People’s Republic of China, Zhang Kuan. See his article (and note the dropping of the hyphen in “post-colonial”), “The Predicament of Postcolonial Criticism in Contemporary China” (see note 33 above).

⁴⁶ See Gu Changsheng, *Chuanjiaoshi yu jindai Zhongguo* (3rd ed.), 432–33.

converts during the colonial period.⁴⁷ In contrast, other Christian traditions, such as the Roman Catholics, who were focused on the role of the papal authority in Rome, had a very different orientation; though given freedom to practice their beliefs and establish their communities in the British colony, they were not given such privileges. This was even more the case for independent Protestants such as Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, especially during the early years of the colony. For example, James Legge, a Congregationalist and senior missionary of the London Missionary Society in Hong Kong during the period from 1843 to 1867, was not able to bury or marry members of the congregation of Union Chapel until the 1860s, because these ceremonies had to be presided over by an Anglican clergyman.⁴⁸ Other factors that could be considered are the “brain drain” of bilingual Chinese citizens to England, their return as colonial subjects,⁴⁹ and questions regarding levels of corruption among higher officials, even including certain Christian figures, within these conditions. One of the very odd cases in this regard during the early decades of Hong Kong’s history was the public indictment of a Prussian missionary and former “Inspector of Government Schools” in Hong Kong, Wilhelm Lobscheid, for becoming involved in a network where coolie labor was hired and then sent off in terrible conditions to various places in Australia and South America.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See for example the documentation provided by Gilliam Bickley in her paper, “The Establishment of the Colonial Bishops Fund and its Impact on the Establishment of a Bishop’s See of Victoria, Hong Kong, China, and Saint Paul’s Missionary College, Hong Kong, in Association with the See,” in the collected papers of *The Third Symposium on the History of Christianity in Modern China: History of Christianity in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Center for the Study of Modern History at Hong Kong Baptist University and the Research Center on Christianity and Chinese Culture at the Alliance Bible Seminary, 2003).

⁴⁸ The contrastive roles able to be adopted by “Dissenter” or “Nonconformist” Protestants within the English colonial setting are a major interpretive emphasis in my two volume work on James Legge. While instances of these matters occur throughout the work, there is a particular point of interest raised in the “Conclusion” under the theme of “Millennial Momentum: Nonconformist Influences in Heavenly and Earthly Kingdoms,” (*Striving for “The Whole Duty of Man”*, 2:229–35).

⁴⁹ Including, for example, the son of the first Protestant Chinese theologian (Ho Tsun-sheen), who studied law in England, married an English woman, and then returned to become not only a major political figure within the colonial Governor’s executive council, but also an important agent for educational developments for Chinese students. See Gerald H. Choa, *The Life and Times of Sir Kai Ho Kai: A Prominent Figure in Nineteenth-century Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1981 [2nd printing, 2000]).

⁵⁰ This was an issue which received much attention in the local Hong Kong papers, including the *China Mail*, where I recall reading about the issue. In the end, Lobs-

Chinese Occidentalism?

Part of the impact of the discourse of colonial mentality, it is argued by post-colonialists, is that it tends to reflect itself in a subversive and submissive mentality among indigenous populations even after the return to Chinese sovereignty. Of some interest are the obvious misunderstandings that also are promoted by a post-colonial anger, and that end up replicating or even further complicating the maze of misrepresentations that can occur. For example, during the month before Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty in June 1997, a movie on the Opium War was produced by Mainland Chinese cinematographers. Within that movie, they presented a scene where a Roman Catholic priest was found as the “Christian figure” on a Protestant British vessel involved in the first Opium War, something that would have been culturally and politically impossible at that time because of the Dissenter status of all Roman Catholics in Great Britain at that time. There was no understanding among Chinese cinematographers and their consultants, and possibly no will to understand, that the role of Protestant missionaries in these 19th-century contexts was quite different, since they were apparently unaware of the extremely tense and generally uncooperative interrelationship between Protestant and Catholic missionaries during the 19th century.⁵¹ Official censors in the People’s Republic of China were apparently not concerned about these factual matters, preferring instead to allow a particular form of an ideologically loaded Occidentalism to remain in place.

Alternative Interpretations: Moral Leadership within Troubled Contexts?

While there are lessons that can be learned from post-colonial criticisms of Christian missionaries in China, they cannot provide explanations for the development of authentic Chinese Christian communities even within these distorted contexts. Is there a need, then, to be able to

schied was given a light sentence because a criminal charge would have affected his ability to retire and receive a pension in Prussia. Exact details of sources for this information are not currently available to me.

⁵¹ Another factor that I found intriguing was that the actual involvement of the son of a prominent Protestant missionary in the Treaty of Nanjing (in this case, John Robert Morrison, the son of Robert Morrison) was completely overlooked in the film, though a scene related to this treaty was briefly portrayed in the film as well.

discern differences between the transformative powers of genuinely compassionate and sympathetic missionary activities which do not follow the oppressive misuses of colonial power? Part of the reality not only of some foreign missionary activities and their related Christian institutions is that they refused to participate in the colonial privileging of religious institutions, suggesting that there were institutional contexts where Chinese Christians could grow into independent and self-sustaining Chinese communities that were not merely the result of colonial interests.

My own reflections on these matters have gained some support from an unusual source: recent studies related to “moral leadership.” As Al Gini argues, moral leadership involves a “power and value laden relationship between leaders and followers/constituents who intend real change(s) that reflect their mutual purpose(s) and goal(s).” That there are inherent inequalities and questions of power within these relationships is manifest, but it is the will of moral leaders not to take advantage of these power structures, but to employ them for the general benefit of followers with whom they share explicit purposes and goals.⁵² When this is added to the claims made by James MacGregor Burns that “transforming leadership” also leads to the empowerment of followers so that they can become moral leaders in their own right, there is suggested here a new and more constructive interpretive model for accounting for the intergenerational sustenance and growth of Chinese forms of Christianity both during and following the period of foreign Chinese missionary presence.⁵³ Another perspective involving another account of moral leadership that has received extensive attention in Christian seminary contexts in North America is the account of “servant leadership” promoted by Robert K. Greenleaf. Here the Chris-

⁵² See this definition of leadership in Al Gini, “Moral Leadership: An Overview,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 16 (1997): 323–30, here p. 324. In his article, Gini goes on to describe “five principles of power” which are not always insightful into these transformative contexts, and privileges “personal power” over any form of group power. From a Christian missionary point of view, there would seem to be a very explicit reason to support a vision of “community power and empowerment” experienced between committed Chinese Christian church members and foreign as well as local Christian missionary leaders.

⁵³ Consult James MacGregor Burns, *Transforming Leadership: A New Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003). It should be underscored that this explanation would help us understand not only the effective and transformative roles of foreign Christian missionaries, but also those who as Chinese converts became indigenous missionaries.

tian theological interest in the Incarnation and its implications is highlighted in Christian versions of this theory.⁵⁴

In particular, it also suggests new interpretations as to why there have been constructive and positive roles taken up by Chinese Christians even when Chinese Christian communities have been situated within questionable colonial or post-colonial contexts, and can add further understanding as to why even those Chinese Christians within the current People's Republic of China can and have become some of the most positive contributors to the ongoing development of contemporary Chinese society. Notably, this counters some of the previously dominant interpretive models assumed under Marxist critiques of religious life that assumed that there could be nothing positive or healthy about any religious form of life. Weberian critiques of this Marxist assumption have proven to be particularly important in developing an alternative account of these matters, but the addition of these theoretical considerations from moral leadership theory has provided an even more explicit interpretive position that has not previously been considered in this context.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

The human dimensions of Catholic and Protestant missionaries in China may not always be so candidly described by those who honor Christian missionaries as heroes and culture-exchange agents. Nevertheless, there were some important complications and compromises at times indicating some dimensions of their lives were vulnerable to cultural biases, uncharitable Christian triumphalism, and at times even straightforward foreign political interests. Did these patterns dominate? Were they illegitimate in the light of missionary policies? Could other ways of organizing missionary institutions have avoided these matters? These questions are worth asking about the past, and continue to be relevant in the present day. What I have tried to present in the preceding discussions are matters of interpretive interest which indicate the

⁵⁴ Here I am referring to Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977). A recent volume taking up this perspective from an explicit Christian orientation is C. Gene Wilkes' *Jesus on Leadership: Discovering the Secrets of Servant Leadership from the Life of Christ* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Pub. Inc., 1998).

lessons I myself have learned, and some of the more stimulating discoveries that have arisen because I sought to pursue these matters as far as I might be able to take them, whether on the basis of historical and textual data accessible to me, or because of new ideas that came to mind as a consequence of the interactions with advocates of these three forms of critical hermeneutics.

As a consequence, several new theoretical positions have been scoped out. I have come to what is as far as I know a new explanation about why there was such a rapid emergence of Protestant forms of Christianity in Mainland China during the Cultural Revolution period in the light of Chinese Marxist critiques, and have helped to shape and inform the nature of Sinological Orientalism on the basis of a critical reception of certain aspects of more general Orientalist assumptions. Finally, in the face of post-colonial assessments of missionary attitudes and institutions, I have sought to qualify some of these criticisms by asking questions about the nature of power structures within the missionary–convert relationship that can suggest other more constructive accounts of at least some of their developments. This has been done on the basis of applying the more recently articulated concept of “transforming leadership” promoted by James MacGregor Burns to the dynamics of missionary-and-convert concerns to become transformative culture agents within the contexts of Christian experience and the structures of the growing Chinese church. As colleagues will also see, I have tried to limit these claims according to my best understanding of the nature of these alternative and new accounts, but here I must leave these matters to rest for the time being and request your critical comments.