

## MASTER'S THESIS

### "Bona Fide Auxiliaries": the literary and educational enterprises of Elijah Coleman Bridgman in the Canton mission (1830-1854)

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"Bona Fide Auxiliaries": The Literary and Educational Enterprises of Elijah Coleman  
Bridgman in the Canton Mission (1830-1854)

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ABSTRACT

Rev. Elijah Coleman Bridgman (1801-1861), the first American Missionary to China of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), spent his life with the Canton Mission from 1830 to 1854 and after 1854 with the Shanghai Mission. Although he moved to Shanghai in 1847 for the revision of the Scriptures, he was still a member of the Canton Mission because of his active participation and practical advice to the missionary work.

After the dramatic changes in China in 1842, his secular activities in publication and education seemed to be obsolete from the ABCFM's point of view as the Board preferred him to concentrate on direct preaching activities instead of these secondary adjuncts. This was a typical example in transformation of missionary activities from the preparation period to expansion period. The suspension of these activities particularly illustrated the decline of missionary cooperation in secular activities after 1842 owing to pecuniary problems. Although most of these secular enterprises were stopped after the 1850s, he still believed that his time and effort were well spent as those activities functioned as intermediary to bridge the East and the West. Eventually, those activities provided insights for the Chinese intellectuals to reassess their traditional values and to stimulate them to train a class of intellectuals to hasten the process of modernization. Therefore, Bridgman regarded his activities as "bona fide auxiliaries" to the preaching activities. Bridgman insisted on continuing the work believing they did not retard the direct preaching and in fact, made a significant contribution to the evangelization of China. The ABCFM, however, sustained their opinion that he should entirely devote his time to preaching or language study in order to achieve their primary goal of direct evangelism. Confusion and misunderstanding arose and long debates animated.

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