

PROTESTANT MISSIONS IN CHINA
1807-1907

THE OPENING DOOR OR
CHINA AWAKENING

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CENTENARY TRACTS

No. II.

Canton, China
Canton Missionary Conference Committee
Robert Morrison Memorial
1906

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When Dr. Morrison died the door of entrance into China was still closed, locked and barred. But twenty-seven years of lonely toil had not weakened his faith or dimmed his hope. In his last letter he writes "I wait patiently the events to be developed in the course of Divine Providence. The Lord reigneth. If the kingdom of God our Saviour prospers in China all will be well; other matters are of small importance."

His work had not been in vain. Though only three or four converts had been made, yet, inside the closed doors, he had left that Word of God which will regenerate all China.

When he died, only two missionaries remained in the country, the Rev. Dr. E. C. Bridgman and Dr. S. Wells Williams. They were confined to the "Foreign Factory Site." It was eight years more before there was any semblance of the door giving way, and then not willingly from within but pried open by a strong arm from without through the war between England and China in 1839-42.

It was a matter of joy to the whole Christian world that the Gospel could have access to China, because the treaty of Nanking had opened five ports to foreign residence. The door kept on opening until China's last desperate effort "The Boxer movement" failed to keep back the powerful influences that were coming in like a flood from Western Christian lands. China is no longer asleep but awake, thoroughly awake.

We may fairly consider the period of opening and awakening as the sixty years from 1840 to 1900 when China, after her sore experience, yielded to the inevitable.

Two doors needed opening. *First*, a door of entrance into the country; *second*, a door of entrance into the hearts of the people.

The first was opened in the main by political events. Up to 1842 the foreigner lived only in Canton, and there almost like a prisoner. Merchants could trade with Chinese only through thirteen Chinese firms. Missionaries attempting to propagate Christianity were, by the letter of the law, liable to the penalty of death.

At Nanking August 29th, 1842, a treaty with Great Britain was signed containing these two important provisions (1) Foreigners were allowed to reside at the five ports Canton, Amoy, Fuchau, Ningpo and Shanghai. (2) Were allowed to carry on mercantile transactions with whatever persons they pleased. Missionaries could reside at five treaty ports, which was a great gain.

In the treaty with the United States, signed near Macao July 3rd, 1844, there were two important additional stipulations. (1) Foreigners were not only permitted to hire and rent houses and land for residences, but also sites on which to establish hospitals, halls for worship, and cemeteries. (2) Article 18th made it lawful for citizens of the United States to employ scholars, and people of any part of China to teach any of the languages of the Empire and to purchase all manner of books. Previously Chinese could teach the language to foreigners only by stealth, sometimes at the risk of life.

The French treaty, signed at Whampoa October 23rd, 1844, contained essentially the same provisions as the others.

Kiving was the Imperial Commissioner who signed all the above treaties. This Chinese Statesman, aware of what was being done to extend Christianity, is said to have brought forward a proposition for its toleration. Kiving addressed the throne as follows: "On examination it appears that the main object of the religion of the Lord of heaven is to encourage the good and suppress the wicked. It is therefore right to make request . . . to grant

that hereafter all nations and foreigners without distinction who teach and practice the religion of the Lord of heaven and do not excite trouble by improper conduct be exempt from criminality." The Emperor's reply, received December 28th, 1844, was "Let it be according to the counsel of Kiving."

After 1844 the door was open to this extent. Foreigners could reside at five cities and move about freely in four of them. In Canton, where most foreigners were, they were still kept outside the walled city. For fourteen years more, no foreign foot could pass its guarded gates. They remained inviolate till December 29th, 1857, when the soldiers of Great Britain and France with heavy tread tramped through them and then held them for three years. The limit to which foreigners might go from the open ports was fixed at a day's journey going and returning. It seems to us now a narrow opening but this is what was said at the time by those best qualified to judge. "Looked at from any point of view, political, commercial, moral or intellectual, it will always be considered as one of the turning points in the history of mankind, involving the welfare of all nations in its wide reaching consequences."

Fourteen years after the above treaties, came the treaties, signed at Tientsin June 2nd, 1858, with Great Britain, France, The United States and Russia. They stipulated: "The principles of the Christian religion as professed by the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches are recognized as teaching men to be good, to do to others as they would have others do to them. Hereafter those who quietly profess and teach these doctrines shall not be harassed or persecuted on account of their faith." It was distinctly stated that this included Chinese converts. It also stated: "The Chinese Government considering the Christian missionaries as worthy men who do not seek

worldly advantage, will permit them to propagate Christianity among its subjects, and will not hinder them from moving about in the interior of the empire."

Dr. Williams writes: "This period of negotiation at Tientsin in 1858, was a remarkable epoch. The sole great power of paganism was being bound by the obligations of a treaty extorted from its monarch by a handful of men in possession of the entrance to the capital." "The twenty fourth of October, 1860, saw the ending of the seclusion of the Chinese from their fellow men." The right of residence for foreign Ambassadors in Peking and for merchants to trade though not to live in the interior, had been secured.

After prolonged effort, in 1893 foreign Ambassadors obtained admission to the presence of the Emperor, and for the last ten years Missions and missionaries have been given the right to buy land and reside in the interior. The *door of entrance into the country* is now wide open.

The power of armies forced China to consent to intercourse with foreign nations, but other influences were needed to open a *door of entrance to the hearts of the people*, and awaken them to new life. Some of the most important of these we must mention, but very briefly.

(1) *Personal influence of Christian men and women.* Kiving doubtless got his favorable impressions of Christianity from the earnest Christian men whom he met as interpreters in arranging the treaties, viz., Dr. Morrison's noble son J. R. Morrison, Dr. E. C. Bridgman, and Dr. Peter Parker. The latter also treated him twice during illness. In framing the treaty with the United States at Tientsin, Dr. S. Wells Williams and Dr. W. Martin were interpreters and secured the toleration clause. The influence of each was afterwards long felt at Peking; the former as Secretary of the United States Legation, and the latter

as the President of the Imperial University. In all probability the friendly attitude of Li Hung-chang towards Christianity began with his acquaintance with that sterling Christian soldier General Gordon.

To conciliate the mass of the people and make them feel that Christians from Western lands have an abiding interest in their welfare, there has been no more powerful influence than that of missionaries who have lived in the interior and travelled through the length and breadth of the land. Following this is the influence of the ever increasing multitude of Chinese Christians. The fortitude with which thousands of them, during the Boxer movement laid down their lives rather than deny their Lord has left an influence deep and wide.

(2) *Medical work.* Vaccination was introduced into China by Dr. Pearson of the East India Co. in 1795; was widely used and continued for many years. This was followed by the Ophthalmic Hospital opened by Dr. T. R. Colledge in 1827. A writer in 1834, says 'he sees in anticipation the introduction of vaccination by Dr. Pearson and in the operations of the Ophthalmic Hospital the fountain from which will spring the peaceable, gentle, and humane influence that will open the Chinese Empire to free and friendly intercourse with Europeans.' Succeeding this was the work of Dr. Parker in founding the Medical Missionary Society with its Hospital at Canton, having a world wide reputation, and followed by hospitals scattered throughout the land, ministering relief to hundreds of thousands every year. This noble work has opened the way to many hearts.

(3) *The direct preaching of the Gospel.* Begun in Dr. Morrison's house and confined there during his life, the field has since been ever broadening. Preaching in street chapels for many decades gave impressions of the truth to millions of people and led some of them to more careful inquiry. The truth is bound to waken to new life those who receive it into

their hearts. The number of those who do so receive it is multiplying with wonderful rapidity. Chinese Christians are now taking a noble part in pushing forward the work which for a long time depended almost entirely upon a few scattered missionaries.

(4) *Schools.* China from of old recognized the influence of schools and the advantage of study, but she sadly needed to have this study turned into right channels. The long and patient labor of those who have been engaged in educational work is showing its results now. What China has seen in mission schools and in other lands has led to a complete change in the manner of conducting her schools and literary examinations; the casting off a system which has held her in bondage for thirteen centuries, abolishing Government literary examinations, adopting Western methods and Western studies for her schools throughout the land, and even changing her idol temples into educational centers. All this means a complete revolution of thought.

(5) *The power of the Press.* It would take volumes to tell it all. There is the Presbyterian Mission at Shanghai with its splendid plant, a magnificent work behind it, and we trust a magnificent work ahead. The London Mission had a printing press for a long time in Hongkong. Peking, Puchai and Canton have fine Presses and there are many others. Working in close co-operation with them and distributing their issues are some invaluable organizations. There are the three great Bible Societies. Mr. Milne in 1814, distributed twenty-five copies of the New Testament to the Chinese on a voyage to Malacca, and these are noted as the first twenty-five complete Chinese Testaments ever distributed. In 1905, the British and Foreign Bible Society issued more than a million copies of Scriptures and portions of Scriptures in Chinese; add to this the circulation of the other two great Societies and who can estimate the influence exerted in a single year. The Bible is doing for

China what it has done for every other nation where it has been received, giving new life. We can only mention the Tract Societies, doing in the same way a work of inestimable value. Christian tracts and portions of Scripture were scattered along the coast of China long before there was any opportunity to preach. Then, for the last nineteen years, there has been in operation the Christian Literature Society for China which, while reaching all classes, has been especially successful in reaching the educated classes and the officials, and has done a "world of good." Its catalogue covers wide range of subjects, religious, scientific, historical, political, biographical etc., etc. Up to September 1906, this Society had put in circulation 164,086,490 pages of the very best kind of literature. We have also the Educational Association which has prepared and printed a very complete and satisfactory list of text books for Primary Schools, Academies, Colleges and Theological Seminaries. Finally newspapers commencing forty years ago with one or two small sheets have now become common in all the large cities on the coast and go far into the interior, informing the people of what is going on in their own country and throughout the world and waking them up tremendously.

It has been often said of late "You cannot hustle the East" and it might have been added and last of all China. But now to the surprise of every body she is hustling herself, and starting off so rapidly as to suggest fear that she may stumble and fall. Let us hope rather that she is entering on a high and noble career. But in her restless and changing condition, what a field for earnest and hopeful effort she now presents to the Christian world.

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Canton, China, Nov. 20th, 1906