“OPIUM PUSHING AND BIBLE SMUGGLING”:
RELIGION AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF
BRITISH IMPERIALIST AMBITION IN CHINA

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“OPIUM PUSHING AND BIBLE SMUGGLING”:
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Abstract

by

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In the early decades of the nineteenth century, British missionaries disrupted the century-old tea-trade triangle by their insistence on penetrating the closed Chinese empire. Their cultural knowledge made these missionaries attractive potential allies for merchants while also giving accounts of their mission a literary appeal. Although missionary writing was intended for specifically Evangelical audiences, the influence of these works extended to popular culture and into the crafting of foreign policy for the Opium War as the political situation in China intensified due to opium trafficking.

The first chapter traces the scholarly traditions on mission and imperialism, and the missionary movement in China. It also shows that two differing perspectives on mission and empire derive from competing subcultures in early-nineteenth-century Britain: middle-class popular culture and the growing Evangelical subculture. The second chapter adapts the notions of “imagined communities” and an “imperial archive” for considering ways in which Evangelicals created literature—an “Evangelical Archive”—that formulated and maintained their conceptual unity both at home and with their missionaries and converts abroad. Aimed
at recruiting missionaries, encouraging believers, providing ethnology, and garnering support, mission narratives first emerged from the difficult mission context of China. The third chapter contrasts Evangelical representations of China with those by Thomas DeQuincey, Jesuit missionaries, and travel writers. Encoding spiritual terms for both spiritual and material subjects of attention, mission narratives assisted in coloring China as dark and depraved in opposition to Christianity’s enlightening brightness. The fourth chapter examines the work of Charles Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages*, and demonstrates a shift in the Evangelical approach to both British culture and foreign peoples, and thus a refiguring of the relationship between mission and empire. The chapter also shows how the distribution of the Gospel in China and the circulation of Gutzlaff’s writing in Britain provided justifications for the Opium War, while at the same time they revealed a growing division of opinion among Evangelicals regarding cooperation with commerce and government.

The dissertation argues that the mission in China represents a shift in British thinking about mission and empire, which reflects the achievement of Evangelical hegemony in British culture.
DEDICATION

To my wife and friend, Brooke, who has endured my neglect and has patiently suffered with me through the various stages of the dissertation process, this project is dedicated. Without her friendship, love, and constant care, I would have failed in the endeavor. In addition, as one who shares the hope and confession of the early Evangelicals represented in this dissertation, I must acknowledge the grace—the enabling power and sustenance—of my Lord Jesus Christ. To Him all my labors are dedicated, as to Him all things are due.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: IMPERIALISM, CHINA, AND EVANGELICALISM

“Go, ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

—Matthew 28.19

…an evangelical is one who preaches and lives, personally and in his ministry, in the light of the [gospel] message.

—Charles Simeon, sermon on “Evangelical Religion”

There is a destiny now possible to us—the highest ever set before a nation to be accepted or refused. We are still undegenerate in race; a race mingled of the best northern blood. …We have been taught a religion of pure mercy, which we must either now betray, or learn to defend by fulfilling. And we are rich in an inheritance of honour, bequeathed to us through a thousand years of noble history, which it should be our daily thirst to increase with splendid avarice, so that Englishmen, if it be a sin to covet honour, should be the most offending souls alive….

—John Ruskin, Lectures on Art

Following from the commingling of the three ideas represented above, nineteenth-century Christian mission to foreign peoples has drawn to itself the near unanimous condemnation of recent scholarship for serving as the handmaiden of British imperialism, an image that Brian Stanley in The Bible and the Flag has called “one of the unquestioned orthodoxies of general historical knowledge” (12). The Evangelical commitment to follow faithfully the perceived prescriptions of the Bible, with special attention to spreading the gospel, coalesced with a broad moment in the history of
worldwide cultural collision to produce a century of religious activity unprecedented in
the West. The scope of this activity—the extent of the going, the making of multi-
national disciples, the preaching and the living on the other side of the world, the
cherished destiny, the honor of the task and finally its offending defense—would have
been impossible to conceive without the birth, growth, and eventual strength of empire.
As the Rev. William Ellis suggests in his introduction to one missionary’s work, the
power of technology, of arms and organization, of material and intellectual production,
seemed to open “before them a wide door, and effectual” for bringing into the domain of
Christendom all those nations to which Christ had commanded his disciples to go (xc).

Exposing the recklessness of British power and coercive cultural influence
exercised to the disadvantage of non-European populations in the nineteenth-century has
been the honorable task of postcolonial critics—both political and literary—particularly
over the last quarter of the twentieth century. More often than not, these critics of
oppressive cultural interaction consider the role of Christian missionaries as complicit in
the imperial project that took its characteristic “civilizing” approach. Despite general
agreement concerning a mutually constituted relationship between the missionary
movement and the spread of empire, there is, however, significant variety in the degree to
which critics have assigned agency, intent, and effect to mission activity. Studies of
empire that include in their purview the place of Christian missions have tended to divide
into two groups depending upon their view of whether the adoption of Christianity has
been ultimately either negative or positive for the colonized people. There are long
traditions of both interpretations, each originating in the nineteenth century itself.
A journalistic debate in the first decade of the nineteenth century usefully illustrates the diverging directions of the two traditions of criticism concerning missionary activity. Responding to the public discussion on the mutiny of sepoys at Vellore in 1806, Sidney Smith’s article in the *Edinburgh Review* for April, 1808, “Indian Missions,” takes a pointedly negative view of Evangelical missions and missionaries, arguing that not only are their efforts resulting in violent reaction from otherwise peaceful natives, but that these Indians are better off without the version of Christianity brought by the ignorant Baptists (who he anachronistically names Anabaptists). Dismissively, he writes, “But if a tinker is a devout man, he infallibly sets off for the East. Let any man read the Anabaptist missions; — can he do so, without deeming such men pernicious and extravagant in their own country; and without feeling that they are benefiting us much more by their absence, than the Hindoos by their advice?” (180).

Representing the view of religious rationalism within the Church of England, Smith’s understands nonconformist missions and missionaries as ultimately a plague on everyone, both British and native.

Replying to Smith’s censure of mission, Robert Southey’s article in the *Quarterly Review* for February, 1809, “Account of the Baptist Missionary Society,” takes a more sympathetic position toward missionary activity in India. Whereas Smith explores the belief that devout Hindus may be better off without Christianity, Southey assumes their need for conversion and consequently sympathizes with the aims of the Evangelical mission. In arguing that although not “the best that could be imagined—they are the best that can be found” (222), Southey contends, “The efforts which they are making to disseminate the Gospel are undoubtedly praise-worthy, and though not always wisely
directed, not more erroneously than was to be expected from their inexperience in the arduous task which they have undertaken, and from the radical errors of their system of belief” (195). Although not an Evangelical himself, Southey takes the role of advocate for mission because he considers the overall effects of their efforts as a positive and praise-worthy alteration for converting Indians.

While both Smith and Southey assume empire and discuss mission without any critical awareness of the intrinsically exploitative posture of the British power position, their arguments on this political crisis foreshadow the opposing viewpoints on mission that developed through the colonial period and became sharpened in postcolonial debate. These viewpoints are recognizable as the roles of prosecutor and advocate, each with characteristic accents of abuse and apology respectively.

I. The Missiological Perspective

Following from Southey’s position, the more widely accepted tradition until the 1960s was that of the advocate, what I call the missiological perspective.1 This scholarly approach to the study of Western mission, following Southey’s defense, assumes thoughtful agency and benign intent on the part of missionaries, looks for and affirms positive outcomes from cross-cultural interaction, and is concerned to identify where the mission has been accomplished in the sense of a permanent indigenous Christian population. Despite their positive sympathy with missionary goals and results, the

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1 My term missiological perspective should be distinguished from missiology, “the study of the salvation activities of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit throughout the world geared toward bringing the kingdom of God into existence” (Verkuyl 5). The missiological perspective is a historiographical grouping of studies interested in Christian missions as historical events, and who interpret those events as positive. Although their worldviews may be informed by missiology, their writing is not primarily concerned with the spiritual realm. For a discussion of distinctions between missiology and secular scholarship, see Stanley Skreslet, “Thinking Missiologically about the History of Missions.”
missiological perspective is not necessarily uncritical of mission methodology. On the contrary, one aim of such work is to show how missionary activity has produced anger and backlash in native populations and to determine the errors in mission methodology that resulted in such responses.

The missiological perspective owed its enduring strength to the long establishment of British missions through the nineteenth century and to the entrenchment of Evangelical hegemony in Britain and the United States which I will discuss later. During the century, the vigorous activity of British missionaries abroad merged into the stream of unquestioned cultural assumptions that Stuart Hall has described as “Ruling or dominant conceptions of the world… that accumulate the symbolic power to map or classify the world for others… [and] acquire not only the constraining power of dominance over other modes of thought but also the inertial authority of habit and instinct. It becomes the horizon of the taken-for-granted: what the world is and how it works, for all practical purposes” (44). The running of the mission machine—raising support, sending out missionaries, receiving reports, and sending support—helped form the horizon of where Britain extended. As an accepted conception, the cooperation of mission with empire was not a matter for critical examination, except for those in the missionary societies considering how to improve mission methods for new populations (and for colonial populations groaning under the yoke of Western exploitation).

Perhaps the first British writer to step from strict missiology to the more critical missiological perspective was the English missionary Roland Allen. His first book, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* (1912), was the product of his experience during the Boxer Rebellion in China, a political crisis that challenged his thinking on how
missionary methods appeared to the natives. Pointing to the Boxer’s perception of missionaries as agents of British imperial advance, he argues that the Western approach of establishing mission stations and adhering to a policy of paternalism in church structure is a form of ecclesiastical imperialism. Following the arguments of Henry Venn early in the nineteenth century, who urged a policy of native church-planting that would be self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating, Allen’s work radically conflicted with his contemporaries’ practice of maintaining white leadership in indigenous churches. Nevertheless, Allen’s work firmly established a missiological perspective that was at once critical of obvious missionary collusion with empire and at the same time assumed the larger good of mission.

Allen’s work precipitated discussions within the Western Christian community regarding the sustainability and practicality of mission in the modern world. Even as Western empires began to show weariness, liberal theologians, particularly in America, began to question whether Christianity were not but one of many ways to salvation. The prevailing view at the World Missionary Conference in Jerusalem of 1928 was later expressed in notable report, *Rethinking Missions* (1932), whose principle author was the philosopher William Ernest Hocking. The report argues that the missionary task changes over time. With self-reflective honesty, the report foregrounds the history of Protestant mission in both its positives and negatives, including the “fact . . . that their work has tended to create a receptivity to the products and ideas of the country of their origin . . . [and] the preaching of Christ has at times been the prelude or the pretext for exploitation by other hands” (11). The new task of mission is not to convert, but to aid the maturation of various religions and bring each into a worldwide fellowship with its
own unique place. Although this argument was virulently opposed by continental theologians influenced by Karl Barth’s systematic theology, both the liberal authors agitating for change and their orthodox opponents were agreed in their hostility to secularism. In this agreement against secular infringement, despite their contrasting views of the aim of mission, the liberal and orthodox students of mission and empire maintained a missiological perspective that interpreted positive results from missionary activity and took for granted that mission would and ought to continue in some form.²

In the 1950s and 1960s, as colonies began to assert their independence, the debate over mission and empire realized new levels of complexity. At the same time that leaders of the Asian and African socialist movements vocalized long-standing resentment against colonial administration and cultural rapacity, there were other voices both native and British interested in the honor of the early missionaries. In the face of the political and cultural backlash, adherents to the missiological perspective were anxious to preserve the dignity of their own religious heritage. Their difficult task was the separation of good motives with bad results, and poor methods with perceived providential outcomes.

Many in the earliest generation of nationalist leaders who had received their education from British institutions tended to retain this sympathy towards the history of Christian mission despite calling for an end to foreign leadership in that area (Thorne 11). Perhaps the most notable expression of this critical sympathy was delivered by Kwame

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² Despite the influence of this theological debate on mission societies, the most well-known and still the most comprehensive scholarly treatment of the history of missions and empire, Kenneth Scott Latourette’s seven-volume History of the Expansion of Christianity (1938), dominated the subject in the first half of the twentieth century. Although firmly within the missiological perspective, Latourette’s history takes a step beyond the hagiographic affirmations of previous writers attempting such a sweeping project. This work takes into account the criticisms raised by Allen a generation earlier and continually queries imperial mission methodology by presenting negative consequences to culture and politics along with results that missionaries considered positive.
Nkrumah, leader of the Convention People’s Party in the Gold Coast (later Ghana). In 1957, Nkrumah gave public honor at the Ghana assembly of the International Missionary Council to “the great work of missionaries in West Africa,” particularly those who had died “for the enlightenment and welfare of this land” (qtd. in Stanley 16). At the same time, Nkrumah and other nationalist political leaders were vocally critical of missionary paternalism reflected in the continued presence of white Christian authority where national churches were already established.\(^3\)

The missiological perspective was not without its native defenders in the academic realm as well. Among the most noted African academics writing historical apology for mission, the Nigerian J.F.A. Ajayi argues in *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891—The Making of a New Elite* (1965) that Church Missionary Society mission work in his country was primarily responsible for positive development in native education and the growth of an African governmental impulse, particularly through the indigenization policies of the CMS director Henry Venn. In an even earlier unpublished essay, “Henry Venn and the Policy of Development,” Ajayi makes what has become a standard critical move among those holding the missiological perspective by dividing missionaries into good and bad. In his own terms,

Missionaries who set out to change a people’s religion and beliefs are, by definition, reformers and must be regarded as Developers. On the other hand, there were many missionaries who denied that they had any business promoting civilization in other countries. The idea of the Developers was in fact not so much missionary as mid-Victorian, arising out of the influence the Abolitionists exerted upon people’s thinking towards Africans, as well as the confidence of the

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\(^3\) Other examples of national leaders expressing debt to mission schools were ten of the seventeen cabinet members in Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta’s first government who were educated at Alliance High School in Kikuyuland; the political elite in Nyasaland educated at the Livingstonia Mission; and in the South African National Congress, the Zulu Christian Albert Luthuli held fast to his religious upbringing. Further discussion of this subject is explored by Adrian Hastings in *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975* (1979), esp. 95-97, 150-151.
Victorians in their progress and the assurance that others would approximate to their civilization in so far as those others progressed. (qtd. in Warren, To Apply 16)

In agreement with African socialists, he affirms that there were missionaries who manipulated and committed cultural homicide, yet in an effort to distinguish his own Christian heritage, Ajayi presents a tradition of missionary dissent—faithful missionaries as opposed to the civilizing mission of "Developers."\(^4\)

With such assistance coming from native adherents to the missiological perspective, Western scholars in this tradition developed a much more nuanced reading of mission history during the 1960s that could include a large degree of moral condemnation within arguments that, taken as a whole, constitute support for mission.\(^5\) Chief among these are Canon Max Warren and Bishop Stephen Neill. Speaking from within the Christian mission tradition, their works engage criticisms from secular writers from the emerging postcolonial world by agreeing with points of censure while also pressing for inclusion of the positive perspective.

As contemporaries in the Anglican church and educated as theologians, Warren and Neill wrote as academic historians following several decades of experience as missionaries. The son of an Irish missionary to Northern India, Warren inherited the

\(^4\) Similar to Ajayi’s critical sympathies, another Nigerian, Emmanuel Ayankanni Ayandele, writes more explicitly in *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914* (1966) about the social and political benefits of mission activity in Nigeria that were not eclipsed by overweening British policies. For more recent sympathetic postcolonial readings of Christian mission, also with biographical connections to the missions, see especially Mrinalini Sebastian, “Reading Archives from a Postcolonial Feminist Perspective” (2006); and R.S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolicial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters* (2001)

\(^5\) Despite this evidence for occasional agreement between writers from postcolonial sites and Western critics, Susan Thorne asserts that historical debate over colonial-era Christian expansion has been split between metropolitan scholars and “Historians of colonized or formerly colonized societies [who] have typically viewed foreign missions as an expression of the exigencies of colonial rule, a theologically and politically undifferentiated agency of the British colonial state” (25). The effort of several nationalist leaders and scholars, however, was precisely to differentiate between theology and politics.
mission life and went to Nigeria with the Church Missionary Society as an adult before tuberculosis forced his retirement home. As Secretary of the CMS and then Canon of Westminster, Warren produced a prodigious amount of missiological work, but his two most notable studies, *The Missionary Movement from Britain in Modern History* (1965) and *Social History and Christian Mission* (1967) adopt the more removed and critical missiological perspective. In agreement with his African contemporaries Ajayi and Arandele, and perhaps drawing from his own experiences in India and Nigeria, Warren provides a practical manifesto for writing within a missiological perspective:

> this book [is] designed to form a unity showing in the modern missionary movement the interaction of political, social, and economic and religious factors. …In thus setting the story of Missions in their historical context, it is hoped that some of the false romanticism surrounding the missionary enterprise will be dissipated. A frank admission of the ambivalence of the missionary contribution in modern history will not detract from, but rather enhance, the record of its genuine achievement. (*Social History* 11-12)

This confidence in the positive results, both spiritually and temporally speaking, while at the same time acknowledging the dark and sometimes wicked activities of British missions, characterizes Warren’s historical accounts as well as typifying the missiological perspective as a whole. With similar balance, Warren may also be credited with firmly establishing as part of the missiological perspective the idea that the Church is engaged in a mutually constitutive relationship with society wherever the Church is active, or in his own words, “The Church in history has often succeeded in modifying her environment: she has always been modified by it” (*Missionary Movement* 9).

Missions (1965), and Colonialism and Christian Missions (1966) consider how missional approaches have had to vary “from area to area, from period to period, and to some extent as a function of the type of missionary body engaged in the work” (8). Perhaps owing to personal experience of mission at multiple sites throughout India, Neill presents mission as a variable product dependant on the contingencies of site and personality. With special attention to the relationship between missionaries and those he terms “colonialists,” he assumes a distinction between the two and frequently posits an oppositional negotiation. Accordingly, missionaries who cooperated with or encouraged colonial authority and imperial policy are considered aberrations to a faithful standard. One remarkable feature of his work which has yet to be effectively challenged is his broad presentation of mission as a feature of colonialism wherever and whenever such political aggression has occurred. Because Colonialism and Christian Missions includes discussions of Greek, Roman, Chinese, Dutch, and Japanese colonialism as well as the Western varieties, the book suggests a connection between the two that amounts to a theory of mission wherein missionaries are not the vanguard of imperialism, but its discordant companions.

Following Neill’s productive writing career as the apologist critic of Christianity and empire, the missiological perspective was stifled by the tide of criticism from a prosecuting approach from the late 1960s to the 1990s. To be sure, denominational histories and popular evangelical writing continued to maintain an advocating argument on the history of mission and empire, such as that produced by missiologists, but professional historians and literary critics almost ubiquitously abandoned the missiological perspective.
The first to re-engage directly with secular scholarship, and still the most recent advocate of mission in studies of imperialism, is Brian Stanley’s *The Bible and the Flag* (1990). Writing against the assumed “belief that ‘the Bible and the flag’ went hand in hand in the history of Western imperial expansion” (12), Stanley urges a reassessment of the general condemnation of missionaries as ideological tools of empire. Influenced by British social historians, Stanley turns attention from political history and the “given” role of missionaries in exploitation, to the responses of particular missions when confronted with the reality of imperial abuse. In a fresh application of the Robinson and Gallagher thesis that the empire became entrenched through the contingent and reactionary use of force, Stanley shows that British Evangelicals operated their missions and interaction with empire primarily as responders and adapters to changing political circumstances. Bringing Evangelical providential theology to the fore, he suggests that this overarching view of God’s control in human affairs allowed them to persistently oppose many British policies on the growth and operation of empire while also maintaining a sincere belief that the empire had a God-given destiny (69). Not only does his reading return critical agency to missionaries, it also raises for consideration the idea that missionaries could consciously take advantage of policies they opposed due to their unique worldview.

Moreover, Brian Stanley’s argument here, as well as in his noted engagement with Andrew Porter in *The Historical Journal* concerning the relationship between “Christianity and Commerce,”6 extends again the typical argument of the missiological

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6 Porter’s article “‘Commerce and Christianity’: the Rise and Fall of a Nineteenth-Century Missionary Slogan” (1985), responds to Stanley’s earlier piece in the *Historical Journal*, “‘Commerce and Christianity’: Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860” (1983).
perspective, namely, that despite obvious abuses and cooperation with imperial ventures, missionary efforts to reshape foreign cultures according to Christian values ultimately did more to help those societies against economic exploitation than to harm them. Likewise, the tools the missionaries provided through education and organization in the long term enabled indigenous peoples to rid themselves of the empire. In forwarding this argument in a new form, Stanley recuperates the advocacy of missions that Robert Southey had formulated in his early nineteenth-century defense of Baptist mission in India.

II. “Worldly” Criticism

The second strain of criticism concerning Christian mission and empire has followed the spirit of the argument presented by Sidney Smith in his critique of mission in India. This prosecuting approach to the question, “What has been the effect of Christian mission?” can generally be classed under the heading of “worldly” criticism, following Edward Said’s use of this term in The World, the Text, and the Critic (1983). Concerned with the interaction of historically contextualized social forces, worldly criticism sets aside consideration of the spiritual as operating independently of the human world. Texts, then, must be events, or creations tied to their contexts regardless of any claims they may make to participation in a grand narrative. They are, as Said writes, “part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted” (4). In consequence of its secularism, worldly criticism cannot evaluate the activity and results of Christian mission according to its spiritual claims to operate under divine authority and to produce changes in individual lives that the people regard as

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7 Said situates this historicist critical approach in the vein of Vico, Swift, and Auerbach. See especially, The World, the Text, and the Critic (1-53).
positive regardless of temporal circumstance. Worldly criticism concerns the situations in which people find themselves, the texts that influence their actions, and the texts they create both to explain themselves and to shape their world. For this study of mission and empire, the most notable critical theory from the worldly perspective has been postcolonial criticism.

Due to the long cultural dominance of religious sensibilities, a purely secular criticism of Christian mission and empire remained a prophetic intellectual endeavor until the national movements in the colonial world began to raise protest against the paternal role missionaries had often played under Western rule. Tied to independence movements in areas where European missionary work had made a cultural mark, postcolonial criticism represented an alternative critique to the positive perspective of leaders like Nkrumah and Lithuli and scholars like Ajayi and Arandele. As with those who kept a sympathetic spot for missionaries, this turn to a worldly critique of mission frequently involved some personal relationship with it. The life of Eduardo Mondlane of Mozambique illustrates well the emergence of postcolonial critique from the crucible of mission and colonialism. Brought up attending a Swiss Reformed missionary school, Mondlane had early ties to the Swiss Reformed mission from America that were only strengthened when he met his future American wife at a Christian youth camp in Wisconsin in 1951. Becoming the first president of the FRELIMO liberation movement in 1962, he turned increasingly to Marxist solutions for the establishment of a postcolonial Mozambique. In the tide of African socialism, he saw no role for Christian

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8 Hannah Arendt’s bold study of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, esp. part two, *Imperialism* (1951), still ranks amongst the most perspicacious arguments about the development of imperial ideology. Although she does not extensively address the problem of faith and imperialism, she does present a brief discussion of mission as both a tool for the colonial power and a traitor to its ideology (75).
theology in a political liberation that required decisive breaks from a Western presence (Mondlane x-xxix). As with Mondlane, the political nature of postcolonial critique necessarily engages those Western institutions, like mission schools, that produced mixed results as both culturally domineering but paradoxically empowering. The critical literature of postcolonial areas is likewise inherently connected to mission influence, however distant. As Said expresses in the very concept of “worldly” criticism, texts are involved in the world as events and cannot escape their connection to political moments (The World 4).

Keyed by Frantz Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth (1961), postcolonial writers have consistently faced the fragmented self of the postcolonial person, perhaps a Christian convert, perhaps educated in mission schools, who cannot find a home either in the West or native land. In both The Wretched of the Earth and the earlier, though less comprehensive Black Skin, White Masks (1952), Fanon points out the experience of identity fragmentation, which he calls “self-division” and explains as a mental disorder, and argues explicitly that such confusion results directly from “colonialist subjugation” (Black Skin 17). These “psycho-affective injuries” to former colonial subjects have been traced to numerous imperial acts on the part of British colonists, not least the erasure of national consciousness and the robbery of dignity associated with culture (Wretched 218). It is not surprising that postcolonial writers following Fanon have frequently associated African self-division with the mission enterprise, which consciously attempted a

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9 It should be noted that Fanon himself was significantly influenced by other African socialist leaders such as the Senegalese writer Leopold Senghor (and through him Aime Césaire of Martinique), Kenyan Jomo Kenyatta, and the poet Keita Fodeba of Guinea, yet Fanon has been the writer to whom most subsequent postcolonial theorists have traced their conceptual framework.
refashioning of individual identity. The effort of Christians to “be not conformed to this world” but instead to be “transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12.2) implies an intentional subversion of culture and division of the self.

Literary critics in the wake of postcolonial reaction have had regular recourse to the argument that missionaries were in collusion with other Western agents for the destabilization and exploitation of the larger part of the world. Perhaps because they were “hunting for bigger game,” postcolonial criticism took missionary activity as a granted part of the larger object of their criticism, i.e. Western powers. The more politically conscious the writer, the less was the missionary movement examined with focus.

For critics of empire in literary studies, Edward Said’s foundational work *Orientalism* (1978)—certainly with interest well beyond the religious—makes use of Christian mission as a touch-stone reference for larger political forces with which they were embroiled. Reading mission as foremost a part of empire, Said considers the formation of mission societies as part of “a complex apparatus for tending [the] interests” after which “the expansion of Europe” could follow (100). But *Orientalism* is concerned with larger categories of discourse than the writing of a subset within the empire, and the written works of missionaries do not enter into his discussion. With a slightly different turn in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), missionary work and resulting Christian community crop up at three points as illustrations of failed potential for “mutuality,” or

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10 Fanon’s psychological assessment of damages as including mission activity for arraignment and condemnation also found ripples beyond the strictly political sphere. Joining the political movements of liberation and affirming the condemnation of mission history in non-European lands, “liberation theology” aimed to bring consciousness of and repentance from the church’s history of oppression and complicity with colonial power. Formulated by the Peruvian Catholic Gustavo Gutiérrez in *A Theology of Liberation* (1973), liberation theology called for a practical application of the Gospel to “the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation” (ix).
the recognition that benefit had gone both ways between colonizer and colonized.\footnote{The work of C.L.R. James in \textit{The Black Jacobins} most effectively articulates the shared benefit and, as a simple matter of fact, the now mingled intellectual heritage of colonizer and colonized.} The inclusion of missionaries in both these works is incidental, however, to their central arguments, and despite their powerful impact on the study of empire at large, they have had only indirect influence on the study of Christianity and empire.

Said’s work is nonetheless important for the study of religion and imperialism because of the extent to which his work has set terms for worldly criticism of empire within literary studies. His argument in \textit{Culture and Imperialism} for (re)reading novels with an eye towards the shape given them by the real world influence of colonization, peripheral resistance, and national movements, which he calls reading “contrapuntally,” has made a permanent mark on literary criticism of empire (51). This basic shift of bringing both metropole and colony into the same analytical frame has been among the key theoretical moves for postcolonial critics of the 1990s and has profoundly altered the way scholars consider mission and imperialism.

Parallel to Said’s work and in many ways following the line of thought in \textit{Orientalism}, a number of literary critics began to consider the material productions of empire—including literature but not limited to it—in their complicity with an imperial project. Yet in the same way that missionaries and missionary writing function as an assumed item for Said, his contemporaries also employ a missionary trope, perhaps accurate at times, but nevertheless without nuance.

For the most part, references to mission work are in passing, as in the work of John Curtis Perry, Peter W. Stanley, and James C. Thomson’s popular press book \textit{Sentimental Imperialists} (1981), which suggests that “the search for profits and the search
for souls” has generally occurred “in close tandem” (44). Similarly, given John
MacKenzie’s definition of propaganda in Propaganda and Empire (1984) as “the
transmission of ideas and values from one person, or groups of persons, to another, with
the specific intention of influencing the recipients’ attitudes in such a way that the
interests of its authors will be enhanced,” an entire chapter on missionary writing would
have been instructive. Instead, he is content to put missionaries and their writing in the
background of living illustrations of “‘moral’ imperialism,” among those called upon and
pointed out by their contemporaries whenever moral authority was required. Most
significant for his use of missionaries as a trope, however, has been Homi Bhabha in The
Location of Culture (1994), who has come in for pointed criticism on this issue by recent
critics. Anna Johnston has been particularly sharp in her criticism of Bhabha. In “The
Bookeaters: Textuality, Modernity, and the London Missionary Society,” she argues that
despite his notable turn to precise “moments” as points of departure, Bhabha remains
imprecise in his asides about missionary activity historically and in fiction, to the point
that they remain theoretical constructs rather than real agents writing active texts.12 Most
recently, Bernard Porter’s attempt to recuperate a more benign picture of empire in The
Absent-Minded Imperialists (2004) paints missionaries, again broadly speaking and
without specificity, as among those producing unintentional results: “what if there was no
conscious intention by the provider to ‘dominate,’ either with the connivance of the
recipients or not?” (10).

In her Missionary Writing and Empire 1800-1860 (2003), Johnston points out the figure that in
The Location of Culture, Bhabha makes “no less than seventeen references to missionaries…be they
fictional, historical, or theoretical” (30).
Among literary critics less associated with theorizing empire and more concerned with textual activity in the formation of thought and attitude, several others have focused on singular figures as representative of missionary thought and writing. David Livingstone’s *Missionary Travels and Researches* (1857) has come under the greatest scrutiny. In his foundational work on the role of popular literature in establishing an “imperial ideology,” *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (1988), Patrick Brantlinger reads Livingstone’s work as a non-fiction quest romance that helped formulate the myth of the “dark continent.” For Christians supporting missions at home, the myth was necessary to maintain the image of desperate need for mission work, the bringing of light to the darkness. He likewise argues that Livingstone’s work performed the task of satisfying a thirst for real-life heroes in an easily accessible and pleasurable narrative form, at the same time offering a “striking example of how humanitarian aims could contribute to imperialist encroachment” (181). Brantlinger’s book, however, is concerned with literary tropes rather than comprehensive presentation of ambiguities and ambivalence within missionary texts, with the result that the adventurer-explorer-missionary Livingstone comes in as the archetype missionary and his *Missionary Travels* as the arch-typical missionary text. Following Brantlinger’s treatment in a now standard work on travel writing, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), Mary Louise Pratt considers Livingstone among the “principal producers of Africa for European imaginations…that is, of ideology in connection with the European expansionist project there” (141). As the most notable missionary figure of the period, Livingstone stands in for the mass of missionaries and hundreds of texts they produced from vastly different regions during the nineteenth century.
Such hasty generalizations of mission and empire based on singular examples or accepted dismissals have come under criticism primarily from historians and anthropologists in a recent reemphasis on the role of Western religion overseas. Perhaps the most startling study for its interdisciplinary impact has been the work of John and Jean Comaroff in their monumental study of missionaries among the Tswana in South Africa, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1994).\(^\text{13}\) Employing a theory of mutual constitution in an anthropological sense, the Comaroff’s study is “concerned at once with the colonizer and the colonized, with structure and agency” (11). They explore ways in which the “missionary imperialist” thesis has distortingly oversimplified the cultural dialectic between the Tswana and the missionaries, a relationship actually characterized by mutual aid and dependence (8). While acknowledging imperial thinking and activity on the part of missionaries, they give renewed attention to the testimony of both missionaries and natives in the expression of real religious motives on both sides. Furthermore, within a confined geographical site they are able to show how the relationship between missionaries and locals, as well as between missionaries and imperial authorities, shifted over time.

Responding to the Comaroff’s call for better scholarly treatment of the missions as a variegated phenomenon rather than assume the missionary-imperialist thesis, several British and Australian historians have reopened the broader question, from a secular critical perspective, about the relationship of empire and mission. Catherine Hall’s *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (2002), owing significantly to earlier theorists in bringing colony and metropole into the

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\(^{13}\) The Tswana were the very group among whom Livingstone lived during his first decade in South Africa.
same analytical frame, considers missionary activity in Jamaica and their written representations of the colony to the metropole. In mobilizing support for mission to Jamaica, Methodist and Baptist missionaries appealed to their denomination’s belief in a universal need for Christ, but at the same time they inscribed racial hierarchies. Perhaps harkening back to the divided self of the colonized suggested by Fanon, Hall also shows that missionaries managed to maintain a sense of superiority to the African slaves while also defending them against their white oppressors.

Historian Susan Thorne takes a more unidirectional approach to the study of mission and empire in *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in 19th-Century England* (1999). As a social historian in the tradition of Cultural Studies, she reads the letters and publications of the London Missionary Society as among the primary shapers of an imperial mindset “from the bottom up” (5), in which “the imaginative relationship to the empire encouraged by missions contributed…to some of the central developments of British social history in this period,” including developments in class consciousness, gender relations, and race thinking (7).

Following Susan Thorne’s study and complementing her focus on metropolitan culture, Anna Johnston has produced a number of studies concerned with various sites of the London Missionary Society mission.14 Her most comprehensive work, *Missionary Writing and Empire 1800-1860* (2005), concerns patterns of missionary attitudes in Polynesia, Australia, and India, and argues that the careers of missionaries show a class-conscious group of laborers who found in mission work a way to gain standing and moral

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authority in British society, even at the cost of living in isolated regions of British settlement. In addition to observations on missionary interaction with colonial officials, Johnston has gone further than any other critic in exploring ways that British missionary publishing played a role in imperial policy. As a literary critic, her examinations of particular missionaries, such as William Ellis and Lancelot Threlkeld, provide important insights into missionaries’ shifting rhetoric depending upon contingencies of the colonial situation. This dissertation extends and complicates Johnston’s approach in Missionary Writing and Empire and “British Missionary Publishing” by adding considerations of Evangelical theological reflection and motivation which are generally absent from Johnston work.

In my attempt in this dissertation to reclaim the role of theology and practical religion for the study of imperialism, I aim to bring together the two traditions of criticism on mission and empire: the missiological perspective and worldly criticism. By confining my study to the material culture of the missionary movement, including pamphlets, published sermons, hymns, missionary poems, review journals, and longer missionary writings, I am indebted to the tradition of worldly criticism, particularly the work of those in cultural studies. But with an interdisciplinary attention to practical theology and personally articulated religiosity, my work adopts elements of the missiological perspective.

The tone of this dissertation most closely resembles that of historian Andrew Porter. Taking a broad approach to mission and empire, Porter’s Religion versus Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914 (2004) makes a chronological assessment of the changes in the relationship between mission and
Engaging other secular historians of missions including Catherine Hall, Kathleen Wilson, and Susan Thorne for their lack of attention to the stated motivations of the missionaries, he asserts the importance of understanding their theology—without, of course, defending it. By heeding “views about the millennium, biblical interpretation, the course of Roman Catholic and Islamic expansion, the criteria for or evidences of conversion,” historians can better understand the shifting “relations not only with their home constituency but with both government and local peoples overseas, whether Christians or not” (13). His assumption is that whether or not anyone else was moved by their belief, and whether or not we give credence to such belief today, their biblical faith was the most significant motivator for missionary decisions and actions.

Along with Porter’s work, my discussion of mission and empire complements another scholarly effort arguing for an end to the simplistic aphorism, “first the missionary, then the Consul, and at last the invading army,” first formulated by J.A. Hobson in his early critique of imperialism. A collection of scholars under the editorship of Norman Etherington most recently produced a volume on Missions and Empire (2005) as a companion to the five-volume Oxford History of the British Empire. This collection aims to fill in the notable absence in the OHBE of mission as an important part of that history. At the same time, the contributors take pains to suggest the tenuous and variable relationship between mission and empire as each writer brings out the shifting and never secure place of missionaries at differing imperial sites. Etherington states the problem thus: “although mission and the official Empire were quite different operations, they play

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15 The account of imperialism by the British journalist J.A. Hobson in Imperialism: a Study (1902) was the first thorough study of the subject as an object for critical reflection. His argument that imperialism is intrinsically tied to capitalist expansion has remained cogent since its publication.
related parts in a larger drama—the spread of modernization, globalization, and Western cultural hegemony” (4). In their attempt to be comprehensive, part of the problem they encounter is that mission and empire were never coterminous. Missions were always active beyond the official boundaries of empire, while within imperial bounds missionaries were often not welcome. The editors ultimately determined “to concentrate attention on all regions that at one time or another belonged to, or might well have become part of, the formal Empire. As a result Christian missions to South Asia fall within the purview of the volume, while the greater part of China…is omitted” (5). This decision, and the general tendency in studies of British imperialism suggested by it—specifically, the absence of systematic treatment of British imperialism in China—represents one of the major interventions of my dissertation.

III. The Place of China in Studies of Imperialism

This brief historiographical overview of studies on religion and imperialism reveals a number of consistent approaches to the issue that are problematic. As the introductory essay in Missions and Empire suggests, defining what historical situations belong in the discourse on imperialism is a matter for theoretical formulation. On the one hand, critical theorists must attempt as broad a range of imperial situations as possible in order to identify consistencies and patterns among them. On the other hand, awareness and countenance of regional variation and chronological change in policy demands close attention to local specificity. And no writer can accurately cover the full range of imperial activity. As Etherington formulates the difficulty, “Casting the geographical net too wide would locate the book among histories of the expansion of Christianity and risk losing sight of Empire altogether. Setting the bounds too narrowly, for example at the
boundaries of formal Empire, would omit important chapters in the story” (5). Critics must either privilege their definition of imperialism, or allow their site choice to circumscribe a definition for them based on the exigencies of the site. What my review of the literature shows is that theoretical formulations have generally determined which sites of British activity will be included in or excluded from the discussion.

Drawing on early definitions of imperialism formulated by Hobson and later by Lenin in *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916) and Joseph Schumpeter in *The Sociology of Imperialism* (1918), postcolonial and cultural critics have varied in the stress given to different expressions of imperialism but have generally agreed on the principle that imperialism implies dominance of a stronger nation over a weaker one. As in Schumpeter’s explanation, in which imperialism figures as the “object-less disposition of a state to expansion by force without assigned limits,” the use of force—conceived either militarily, economically, or culturally—implies a power dynamic weighed heavily in favor of the imperialist. In *Rule of Darkness* (1988) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Patrick Brantlinger and Edward Said, respectively, provide complementary statements of imperial thinking that cover the range of postcolonial paradigms for imperialism. Brantlinger extends the exploration of power imbalance with his concept of imperial ideology, which need not actually concern the taking of land or the conquering of people, but can remain largely in the imaginary. Imperial ideology is a theory of self in relation to one’s nation and other nations; it includes a commitment to the established order, a theory of racial superiority, and a desire, variously interpreted, to spread the light of one’s civilization. Said in *Culture and Imperialism* stresses the material side: “At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land
that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others. For all kinds of reasons it attracts some people and often involves untold misery for others” (7). Taken together, these articulations of imperial practice and discourse cover the underlying understanding that imperialism implies unequal power distribution and an assumption of supremacy.\textsuperscript{16}

A quick scan of several basic events of British interaction with China during the nineteenth century suggests that at least some familiar traits of imperialism were certainly at work in this tumultuous relationship. In 1807, a group of British sailors incited a drunken brawl that resulted in a large mob of local Chinese forcing them to retreat into the British factory. They eventually sallied out against the mob and killed one Chinese man. The incidence was eventually dropped by the Chinese after a two-month stoppage of the trade. In 1808, fears of a French invasion of Macao prompted the British Admiral Drury to bring three ships of the line past the outer defenses of the bay and take control of Macao. Again in 1810 another shore brawl resulted in the death of a Chinese and the suspension of the trade. A formal embassy under Lord Amherst in 1816 was summarily dismissed without even an audience with the Emperor. One far-fetched hope of this embassy, to secure further sites of trade along the China coast, was illegally pursued by private traders in opium, a practice that increased dramatically in the 1820s.

Political incitement grew more marked after the end to the East India Company monopoly on the China Trade brought the appointment of a British consul in Canton—

\textsuperscript{16} It may also be noted that in nineteenth-century studies, the discourse on imperialism and colonialism excludes conflict between Western nations. For example, although the balance of military power during the War of 1812 was decidedly on the side of the British, the United States is rarely considered a subject of British imperialism in the nineteenth century.
without the approval of the Chinese. The sudden and belligerent appearance of Lord Napier at Canton in 1834 resulted in his immediate ignominious ejection and, through a consequent illness, his death. In 1838, the contingent of British traders and government officials under the supervision of Captain Elliot were forcibly detained in the British factory until they surrendered all the opium aboard British ships. In 1839, the Indian army was dispatched to China in order to claim indemnity for the costly loss of thousands of pounds of opium obtained and destroyed in the previous incident. This first Opium War lasted three years, and the Treaty of Nanking (1842) gave Britain access to five treaty ports along the coast. The Second Opium War, or Arrow War, 1856-1860, was precipitated by the Chinese boarding of the Arrow, a trading vessel manned by Indian Lascars but flying a British flag. The treaty in 1860 gave the British access to the interior of China, ten more treaty ports, the right to establish embassies, and the required payment of indemnities for the cost of both wars. From 1860 to 1900, at least eight further incidences were settled through gunboat diplomacy. Finally, Chinese anti-foreignism erupted in 1900 with the Boxer Uprising. This violence and the British backlash served as justification for a more significant British military presence in imperial China until its collapse in 1911.

Despite this signally troubled history, Britain’s relationship with the empire of China in the nineteenth century remains virtually unexplored in the literary analysis of imperial discourse I described above. There are several possible reasons for this neglect of China in the literature of imperialism. Addressing this vacancy in the critical literature

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For the sake of consistent recognition, throughout this dissertation I will use the spellings of Chinese words that were common in the 1830s rather than their current spellings in *pinyin*, i.e. Peking instead of Beijing, Canton instead of Guangzhou.
through his recent work, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (2003), James L. Hevia provides one explanation for why the discussion of outright Western imperialism has been avoided in East Asian studies. He contends that the pioneers of East Asian studies, foremost among them John K. Fairbank at Harvard, “sought to steer a course between the ‘extremes’ of Chinese nationalism and European reaction” (9). The net result of their argument, very like the arguments from the missiological perspective in Africa, was to show that Western influence in China produced positive results in Asia by helping stagnant Chinese society towards innovation and modernization. Missionaries figure prominently in Fairbank’s *The United States and China* (1958) and *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800-1985* (1987) as the unselfish side of Western influence bringing positive stimuli to Chinese inclusion in the emerging globalization.\(^\text{18}\) Because conflict was elided, his argument effectively erased China from the map of Western imperialism in East Asia.

Scholarly revisions of these early characterizations in East Asian studies have, according to Hevia, swung to the other extreme of what Paul Cohen has called “China-centered” history. Students of Chinese history focusing especially on the period 1842-1945 have produced remarkable histories of individual actors and group movements based entirely on a Chinese archive. While efforts of both Western and Chinese scholars have discovered a rich history of competing elements within Chinese society during this period, Hevia argues that they have presented “more or less the same West with which Fairbank and his students dealt” (11). He explains this idea more fully:

\(^{18}\) For an earlier explanation of this erasure of Western imperialism from China, but along the same lines as Hevia’s, see Tani Barlow’s article “Colonialism’s Career in Postwar China Studies,” in the inaugural edition of *positions* (1993).
[scholars have not] broken with the China-West binary that has animated much of the discussion of Western imperialism in China, nor have they placed the actions of Euroamerican nations in China into a global context. It is as if Fairbank’s insistence that colonialism did not apply in the China case has precluded any comparison between, for example, the east coast of China and British and French establishments in South and Southeast Asia, or in Africa. (11)

Focused firmly on Chinese society and its actors, their picture of Western activity in nineteenth-century China remains unproblematic. At the same time, by isolating the study of Chinese history from larger operations on the global scene, the cultural collision between the empires of China and Britain remains excluded from wider considerations of imperialism.

What Hevia notes as a weakness in East Asian Studies is even more neglected in analyses of imperialism that take nineteenth-century Britain as a starting place. Perhaps more than any other reason for the exclusion of China from studies of British imperialism has been the reification of Western expansion as an irresistible force—militarily, economically, and culturally. Critics have shown greater interest in areas where the might of British culture or its armies have exploited and eventually won over native systems, particularly fragmented societies. Although the British fought and won two wars in China during the nineteenth century, the fact remains that they were fighting another imperial power over issues of trade. The possibility remains that, had the war concerned the possession of Chinese land and formal British colonies, the outcomes may have been different in a more protracted war with the millions of China. 19  That the

19 At the conclusion of the first Opium War, large militias of local Chinese formed around leaders not associated with the Qing government and stood in defiance of both British and Qing imperial governments. These militias posted warnings like the following: “We are the children of the Celestial Empire, and are able to defend our homes. We can exterminate you without the aid of the mandarins, and the measure of your crimes is full. Had we not been hindered in our design by the agreement concluded with the authorities, you should have felt the arm of our citizens. Dare not again to offend us, for we will make an example of you; and, when you see an enemy in every creek and corner, escape will be
empire of China was never considered part of nor a desirable possession of that other empire on which the sun never set has, as a matter of methodology, left it out of the scholarly discourse on empire. Where the Robinson and Gallagher thesis of “free trade imperialism” would naturally have brought China into the discussion, the eclipsing of their thesis in favor of Foucauldian readings of power relations has cooled attention to economic explanations. The interesting power dynamic of the British-Sino relationship in the nineteenth century keeps it from falling nicely into definitions of British imperialism but, if considered in the earlier phases in which this relationship took shape, also forces some reevaluation of how we understand the development of thinking about empire in nineteenth-century Britain.

In this dissertation I adopt Hevia’s characterization of British efforts to stabilize their interests in China in the latter half of the nineteenth century as a back and forth interplay of “resistance and accommodation” between British and Chinese authorities (26). By “provincializing Europe” as one people among a world of peoples, as Dipesh Chakrabarty has described in Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference (2000), we can consider the elements of British culture and Chinese society as competing powers operating in a dynamic of give and take, rather than an irresistible force overwhelming a passive people, which would be a gross distortion of events in China during this period. In this way, we can not only imagine but also read of real failures by British imperialists to impose their own unique, and from the perspective impossible” (Davis 124). This proto-nationalist movement was quelled only by the timely intervention and quick diplomacy of a Mandarin, who assured both the locals and the British of their secured interests.

Similarly, the successful break of China from Western influence through the Cultural Revolution has destroyed possible cultural memory of “divided selves.” Consequently, the psychological theories of Frantz Fanon and Leopold Senghor, among others, have not seemed applicable to the imperial situation in East Asia, despite the dominance of their theory for the African context.
of the Chinese, very strange practices. We can also seriously consider the perspective, predominantly represented in Chinese records, that their imperial tradition and civilization had far greater cultural power in East Asia than any influence the British might have. If the history of British imperialism can be set against Chinese observation of it, then the details of that history can strike us as strangely unique. Like Hevia’s *English Lessons*, my dissertation considers issues of representation and distribution of information in the era just prior to that covered in his work. Whereas Hevia’s analysis covers the writing of treaties and their translation, military practices of material destruction and plunder, and the distribution of information about China, I analyze the most significant and pervasive texts that described China for British readers in the period from 1800 to the Opium War—texts produced by Evangelical missionaries.

The British presence in China during the first half of the nineteenth century cannot be read, much less understood, without reference to Evangelical missionaries. It was missionaries who wrote about China for the public, translated China’s classical texts, and served as the link between mono-lingual English speakers and Chinese speakers in Canton. Before the 1807 arrival of the first missionary in China, there was only one British man, Sir George Staunton, able to speak Chinese. At the onset of the Opium War in 1839, the number of British men resident in the East and able to speak Chinese could be counted on two hands, and of those, all but Sir John Francis Davis and Hamilton Lindsay were connected with Evangelical mission. In the three decades preceding the Opium War, missionary knowledge of the Chinese language gave them the power of political representation, as every translation in either direction had to pass through their hands. At the same time, they also exercised the power of cultural representation through
a literary monopoly on presenting “the real China” to the British public, particularly to a religious public. This dissertation explores the pivotal role of Evangelical missionaries as communicators of China to the West, and of the West for China.

The central role of mission in this cross-cultural relationship is in itself reason enough for enlarging the place of mission and empire in the broader study of imperialism. That British influence in nineteenth-century China must necessarily touch on missionaries suggests that the two projects were intertwined in interesting ways, so much so that without the operation of certain Christian missionaries, one cannot imagine how the British would have ended up possessing Hong Kong, maintaining a favored nation status, and operating trade throughout the country. This literary history establishes their connection. At the same time, the history of missionaries in China suggests another aspect to the relationship of mission and empire. While missionaries were active in the interests of their homeland, they were also eager to secure what they perceived to be the best interests of the Chinese. Often arguing against empire and the activities of British agents, missionaries frequently allied themselves with natives against British imperial authority.

It is in their own texts that these divided loyalties show themselves most markedly. While this study could be approached historically or anthropologically, I aim to bring together the approaches of historian Susan Thorne in Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in 19th-century England (1999), Patrick Brantlinger in Rule of Darkness (1988), and the recent work of literary critic Anna Johnston in Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860 (2003). Thorne’s work reads missionary texts as a function of and producer of class and national consciousness. Not
interested in the sites about which missionaries wrote, her work concerns the domestic role of missionary organization in galvanizing religious society for a place in an imperial culture. Brantlinger’s work likewise considers the metropole but extends observations beyond Evangelicals to the popular effect of imperial ideology encouraged by missionary texts. My examination of certain missionary texts provides a powerful illustration of his argument for the appeal and cultural power of what he terms “quest romances.” In contrast to these metropolitan perspectives, Johnston focuses on mission work in the empire itself. Writing about missionaries in India, Polynesia, and Australia, she considers the socio-political context of each region followed by analyses of the writing produced from the particular circumstances of that context. Following from this principle, the aim of this book is to establish that the political and social role of missionaries differed between sites, and that their activities shifted in focus according to the contingencies of their location and rendered them adaptive and sometimes ingenious in their attempts to reach native populations with the gospel. Within the imperial sites concerned in her study, she concentrates on missionaries who were self-conscious about their class situation and economic prospects and were often astonishingly adept at keeping their central mission boards happy while maintaining a safe diplomatic position abroad.

Adopting Johnston’s pioneering approach to missionary writing as a distinct genre, I aim to bring together the strengths of Thorne’s domestic consideration and Brantlinger’s ideological observations with Johnston’s principle of close scrutiny of mission adaptability at a specific site. By reading missionary texts within their intended genre and according to the specific cultural work they performed, I show that
missionaries in China were part of a two-way influence between jockeying empires. This project also seeks to fill a gap left by Johnston’s otherwise excellent study of missionary writing. Her work falls in line with the tradition of worldly criticism describing the behavior, language, and motives of missionaries with seemingly little attention to the evangelical culture from which the missions came. In keeping with the common scholarly practice of banishing missionaries’ beliefs and spiritual motivations to what Dipesh Chakrabarty has called “minority history,” these two studies largely ignore the complex Evangelical social network and its “nonrational” motivations (98). The actual mission that propelled the subjects of these works, as conceived and expressed by the Evangelical community, receives only the slightest attention. I contend that one is unable to translate effectively the language and thought of Evangelical missionaries without giving some attention to their theology and culture. Although avoiding a missiological perspective, my study takes from that tradition the argument that “what men think about their eternal destiny necessarily and profoundly affects their actions in temporal affairs” (Hilton ix), or at the very least, a writer’s worldview supplies a characteristic way of talking and thinking that connects him or her to a group in a mutually shaping dynamic.

Because much of the secular criticism on mission and empire avoids discussion of theological motivation, critics such as Brantlinger and Johnston have tended to miss the larger goals of the mission within the Evangelical framework. At the same time that missionaries acted as a cog in the wheel of informal or free trade imperialism, their public writing reveals a separate and distinct Evangelical hegemonic project. Like other Evangelicals at home, missionaries were seeking to transform societies—both British and
foreign—by the reshaping of worldview. Antonio Gramsci’s critical reflections on civil society are especially helpful for understanding these Evangelical efforts.

As this dissertation will show, in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century, believers in evangelical ideology became aware of themselves as a distinct group within British society, and they took upon themselves the goal of social transformation. This is the moment that Gramsci characterizes as “that in which one becomes conscious of the fact that one’s own ‘corporate’ interests, in their present and future development, go beyond the ‘corporate’ confines—that is, they go beyond the confines of the economic group—and they can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups” (2:180). Conscious that their ideology had a scope beyond the interests of their subculture, Evangelicals strategically sought changes in the moral fabric of British society as a whole.

Although through the political leadership of William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect in Parliament this became the most political moment of the Evangelical hegemonic project, they nonetheless understood that transformation must also ferment among the lower segments of society. Through Evangelical preaching and teaching among the working class—their tract distribution and Sunday schools—and their evangelization within middle-class parishes, Evangelicals enacted a belief that a group “can (and must) ‘lead’ even before assuming power; when it is in power it becomes dominant, but it also continues to ‘lead’” (I:136); it takes its “development from below, from the people to the cultured class” (I:179). Rather than force change through legislation, they achieved cultural hegemony by leading and persuading the wider culture that Evangelical belief and practice was beneficial for all. As Joseph Buttigieg explains,
“What distinguishes hegemony from domination is precisely the symbiotic relationship between the government (which is frequently identified with the State in mainstream political theory) and civil society a relationship, then, that cannot be analyzed in any meaningful way if one starts with a conception of civil society as something separate from and opposed to the State” (“Contemporary Discourse” 33). As in the case of the Evangelical movement, the Evangelicals did not attempt political change until they had begun to effect changes in civil society.

The way that Evangelicals developed their cultural hegemony in the first half of the century was through the slow and tireless reformation of what Gramsci calls “common sense,” or the “most widespread conception of life and morals.” (Gramsci I:173). 21 Neither rigid nor static, common sense can be molded by and modified by “criticizing, suggesting, admonishing, modernizing, introducing new “clichés” (I: 173), and none proved more effective at providing such social critique and the development of resonant phrasing that captured the affections of the lower and middle classes than did the Evangelicals. Through several decades of popular tract publications, review journals, and religious biography combined with ministerial efforts of street preaching, practical ministry to the poor, and teaching on a Christian’s alienation from the world, Evangelical leaders created a cultural of common sense transformation.

Consciously and pointedly sharing, explaining, and inculcating a countercultural Biblical worldview, Evangelicals assumed the superiority of this mission above any earthly government or social constructions. As this dissertation will show, it was this logic that allowed them to justify their divided loyalties to the British empire and to the

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21 For further discussion of cultural hegemony and the Evangelical use of “common sense” in aid of a hegemonic project, see chapters Two and Four.
Chinese with whom they allied themselves, but at the same time caused a cognitive
dissonance that frequently forced the questioning and reevaluation of their mission in
China.

IV. Evangelicalism in the Early Nineteenth Century

Every real and genuine endeavour to regulate our lives, and to try our actions by
the Gospel-standard, is now-a-days branded with the appellation of enthusiasm or
hypocrisy; and all attempts to promote, by the only practicable means, the
extension of Christianity is called fanaticism.
—“Defence of Missions,” The Christian Observer, June 1817, No. 186

A study of the Evangelical relationship to British imperial pressure in the
nineteenth century demands some exploration into the identification and functioning of
Evangelicals within their own domestic society. Even a glance at nineteenth-century
religion must leave an impression of how intensely the Evangelical worldview
persistently pressed itself into the larger culture of Britain. It refuses to be missed.

From the very inception of the British Evangelical movement in the eighteenth
century, it was branded with terms of abuse—“enthusiasm,” “fanaticism,” “Methodism,”
and “hypocrisy”—and by the turn of the century, when Evangelicalism had spawned a
missionary movement, these epithets encompassed an even greater scope of activities
largely disdained by the secular and literary elite. But disdain for Evangelicalism did not
come exclusively from secular society; in fact, its most vehement critics were within the
established church and were men who maintained the rational spirit of the preceding
century. Conversely, it was against these religious rationalists of the Church of England
that Evangelicals primarily aimed to define themselves, employing terms like “real and
genuine,” and evoking a “Gospel-standard,” as in The Christian Observer quotation
above, or “Real Christianity” contrasted with the practice of “Professed Christians,” as in
the title of William Wilberforce’s famous work, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes of this Country contrasted with Real Christianity* (1797).

That Evangelicals tended to define themselves over and against numerous Others and what they deemed worldly practices does not explain who they actually were. One may say a great deal about who they weren’t without forming a clear or accurate picture of who they were. This problem of defining Evangelicalism has exercised scholarly effort for many decades, and no single explanation has satisfied everyone, but if this study is to clarify a complex relationship of mutual and refracting influence between Evangelicals and the imperial culture of Britain, then some workable understanding of the Evangelical subjects of this study must be established.

Those who have written on British Evangelicalism have, in the main, followed one of two approaches depending upon how they have chosen to define the term “Evangelical.” In the tradition of late nineteenth-century historians, and following the work of G.M. Young in *Victorian England, Portrait of an Age* (1937), one approach to the study of Evangelicalism has been to privilege the effects of the movement—its social contributions, characteristic attitudes, political influence—on the public life and thinking of Victorian England. By concentrating on effects, one implicitly defines Evangelical by working back towards causes and their personal loci. Consistent with this approach is a definition of “Evangelical” restricted to a discernable party within the established church. Historians and literary critics who have adopted this definition have thereby prioritized class and political dynamics above personal and theological dynamics, the former tending to distinguish Anglicans from Dissenters whereas the latter dissolves the differentiations.
A brief survey of studies based on an Anglican Evangelical focus reveals the diversity even within this particular approach.

Among the more noted studies of Evangelicalism, most recent work has in one way or another responded to Ford K. Brown’s extensive study *Fathers of the Victorians* (1961). In this iconoclastic work, Brown argues against the traditionally received view, passed among later Evangelicals, that such a thing as an “Evangelical Revival” ever existed. Rather than emphasizing theological sympathies between Methodist, Dissenter, and low-church Anglican, Brown forcefully argues that the tremendous influence of Evangelicalism in Victorian society was owing to a strategic, tireless campaign on the part of an influential set of leaders within the established church and organized by William Wilberforce. Discounting the efforts of Dissenters and Methodists as “based only on moral and religious principle,” and “doomed in advance” by their inability to gain political influence among the mighty (3), Brown emphasizes the “carefully planned, ceaseless proselytizing in the ranks of the great,” along with societal establishments for reform, which doubled as propaganda machines and powerful fundraisers (5). These fathers of the Victorians sought, and succeeded in their efforts, to change British society through the organs of “the world.”

In the context of the academic atmosphere in British universities in the early sixties, Brown performed a role in the history faculty similar to a Leavisite in the English faculty. With the characteristic moves that would be countered by social historians and Cultural Studies, he passes over a common person’s experience of Evangelical culture and highlights the political moves and social strategies of the great among the Evangelical leaders. Although much that he finds unpleasant about Victorian culture he
traces to Evangelical efforts, he raises up their powerful representatives as masters of the middle-class social network. His concern is with a group of influential people and the reform of society and manners that they fostered. The beliefs that bound them to others of lesser standing must be set aside as clouding the issue of what they accomplished in the public realm. With such an approach to Evangelicalism, Brown avoids the trouble of defining Evangelical altogether, leaving it implicit that the authors of the great “moral campaign” define the quintessential Evangelical.

In response to Brown’s reading of Evangelical influence, which some have called “perversely prejudiced” (Jay 9), several historians and literary scholars have attempted to fill out the picture of a widely disseminated Evangelicalism within the Church of England and based on the “principles and practices of vital religion” (Bradley 16). In The Call to Seriousness: the evangelical impact on the Victorians (1976), Ian Bradley affirms Brown’s view of strategic planning by Evangelical leaders such as Wilberforce but argues that their efforts found success due to a cultural moment in which an increasingly complex industrial society opened a space of vulnerability among a previously artisan people. Evangelical teaching and practice met a felt need for acceptance and stability, as well as for a sense of usefulness that was being erased by industrialization. Consistent with other British social historians of his time, Bradley turns attention from the great men to the common and argues that the success of Evangelical projects of reform and social networking emerged from their social permeability. Although members of an Evangelical church would certainly be divided socially, there was a period each Sunday that brought a factory worker on level with a barrister. And outside the church building, evangelism by a cottager or mill-worker was as valuable as that by an M.P., when considered within a
Biblical framework. Bradley recognizes that the practices and beliefs of the Anglican Evangelicals were also present among Dissenters, but his study is concerned with Anglicans due to their public roles, which prior to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 were barred to Dissenters.

Another important study that approaches Evangelical influence from the narrower perspective of an established church phenomenon is Elisabeth Jay’s exceptional work, Religion of the Heart (1979). Although she does recognize that there were commonalities of thought between Anglicans and non-Anglicans, she ultimately avoids the question by calling “evangelical” (with a small ‘e’) all those of like mind theologically—both inside and outside the establishment—while reserving “Evangelical” (with a capital ‘E’) for the social grouping within the Church. Subtitled “Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel,” her study is uninterested in the links between the two groups based on the explanation that “novelists were primarily concerned to demonstrate religion operating in a social context,” which was connected to larger religious concerns about church polity and social status within the established church (16). It was not that Dissenters were not involved in social networks and did not affect society, but on the whole Dissenters seemed not to have impressed themselves on the experience of those who actually wrote novels. Exploring mid- to late-century novels such as the Vicar of Wrexhill, Vanity Fair, Middlemarch, and Jane Eyre, Jay reads back to the underpinning Evangelical doctrines and popular influence with which the novels engage. In this way, Jay identifies a powerful Evangelical influence on Victorian writers who operated in a culture saturated with that movement’s language and propriety.
A number of other macro-studies of the Victorian Church and its influence, as in that of G.M. Young already mentioned, also adopt a restricted definition of Evangelical.\textsuperscript{22} In each of these works, the starting point for dealing with Evangelicalism is the public impact on discussions of class, ecclesiology, and politics. It is not surprising that these writers employ the understanding of Evangelical as exclusively Anglican, given that the arenas of class, ecclesiology, and politics are the primary points that divided Anglican and Dissenter.\textsuperscript{23} The focus thereby determines the definition.

All of the aforementioned works trace support for their understanding of Evangelical, in greater and lesser degrees, back to two nineteenth-century texts. The first is an article by W.J. Conybeare in the \textit{Edinburgh Review} for 1853, entitled “Church Parties,” in which the writer differentiates between the Low-church, High-church, and Broad-church parties. Of the first of these parties, Conybeare writes, “the most influential in recent times has been that which is termed Low Church by its adversaries,

\textsuperscript{22} Owen Chadwick’s multi-volume standard work \textit{The Victorian Church} (1966), with its de-emphasis on the minutiae of theological questions, glosses over the ties of Anglican Evangelicals with nonconformists and defines the Evangelicals primarily according to their ecclesiology and politics, which is in keeping with the focus of his work as a whole. L.E. Elliott-Binns’s \textit{Religion in the Victorian Era} (1964) similarly considers lines of division between groups such as Methodist and Evangelical, rendering it a church party term. Likewise, A.O.J. Cockshut’s study of \textit{Religious Controversies of the Nineteenth-Century} (1966) makes practical use of the narrower view of Evangelical due to its exclusive concern with Church of England controversies, despite his passing observation that “the most powerful religious movement of the time, Evangelical movement, cut right across the barrier between Anglican and dissent” (1).

\textsuperscript{23} Using a definition of Evangelicalism restricted to the established church, scholars who write on the social and political influence of Dissenters often obscure the fine links across the lines of established church and nonconformity. In \textit{Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel} (1975), in many ways a nonconformist companion volume to Jay’s \textit{Religion of the Heart}, Valentine Cunningham argues against a tradition of gross misrepresentation of Dissenters that can be traced back to false images in novels. By separating Dissenters from Anglican Evangelicals, Cunningham shows Dissenters as targets of ridicule even by those theologically similar to them within the Church of England. Numerous other studies focus on patterns of nonconformity at the local level. The division of nonconformity along denominational lines has inevitably produced a plethora of circumscribed studies of Baptists, Quakers, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc. Although such works tend to assume similarity of theological emphases with low-church Anglicans, their denominational specificity makes their approach consistent with an understanding of Evangelical as an Anglican party.
and Evangelical by its adherents. It originated in the revival of religious life, which marked the close of the last and the beginning of the present century” (274). He goes on to explain the rise of what he terms the “Evangelical party” from the long despised Methodists—again a party within the Church—into a respected and well-represented group of Anglican churchmen. Avoiding reference to those clergy and laymen like George Whitfield and Rowland Hill who criss-crossed the lines of church establishment, Conybeare’s leading lights of the Evangelical party are firmly middle-class churchmen with significant social and political influence: Charles Simeon, William Wilberforce, Zachary Macaulay, and James Stephen. Conybeare’s contemporary William Gladstone adopts his usage of the term Evangelical party in his later article for the Quarterly Review in 1879, “The Evangelical Movement; Its Parentage, Progress, and Issue.” Gladstone’s contribution is in the main noted for his estimation of the very limited extent of Evangelicalism within the Church at the turn to the nineteenth century, and of its limited consolidation in the early decades through the foundation of religious Societies, giving them “the organization of a party” (211). Their rapid extension in the 1830s he traces to the popularity of their anti-Tractarianism.

Each of these nineteenth-century comments on an Anglican Evangelical party gives primacy of place to the Evangelical relationship with the Church of England as a whole, which both writers describe as sometimes beneficial, sometimes subversive. Conybeare and Gladstone provide balanced discussions of Anglican Evangelicals, but the scope of their arguments—the former intended as a consideration of church parties and the latter exclusively invested in a national church—prohibits a definition of Evangelical that could extend to Dissenters. Scholars who have relied on Conybeare and Gladstone
for critical explanations of nineteenth-century Evangelicalism, without considering how the Evangelical party of the established church may have been linked with Dissent, have tended to concentrate on the public influence of exclusively Anglican Evangelicalism.

Another group of scholars, while also having recourse to these two texts, have adopted an approach concerned primarily with intellectual currents, based on theological differentiations. In their explanations of what makes the Evangelical party unique, both Conybeare and Gladstone point to certain theological emphases in Evangelical thought. For Gladstone, Evangelicalism has been marked by the attempt to bring back, “on a large scale, and by an aggressive movement, the Cross, and all that the Cross essentially implies, both into the teaching of the clergy, and into the lives as well of the clergy as of the laity” (207). Consistent with this observation, Conybeare discusses more extensively “tenets which became, and have since continued, the watchwords of the Evangelical camp...first, ‘the universal necessity of conversion,’ and secondly, ‘justification by faith.’ A third was added, to which subsequent controversy gave more than its original prominence, namely, ‘the sole authority of Scripture as the rule of faith’” (276). While Conybeare did not consider these tenets within the realm of Dissent, a number of critics have arrived at a signally different definition of Evangelical by tracing these theological tenets and their spread through personal networks and popular thought, rather than privileging politics. If a socio-political focus has led scholars to a restricted definition of Evangelical as a party of Anglicanism, then a focus on intellectual history and theological influence has led others to a broad definition of Evangelical that unites certain Anglicans with Dissenters under a common banner, while also obscuring important differences between the ecclesiastical groups.
Typically, studies that employ this broad definition of Evangelical begin their discussions by laying out a common theological framework similar to that used in Conybeare’s article of 1853. Yet, they have had to bear in mind that an attempt to distinguish Evangelicals from their contemporaries, whether those within the established church or nonconformist, proves abortive if based simply on their theology. Even in 1879, Gladstone notes that Evangelicalism “has not had, and in truth it hardly could have, what can with any strictness be called a theology” (235). In his Hulsean Prize Essay, “Evangelicalism 1785-1835” (1962), Haddon Wilmer points out that twentieth-century attempts to identify Evangelicalism by a conservative hermeneutical approach and belief in substitutionary atonement are inconclusive because these beliefs were widely held in their age, including by their high church opponents. Not only did the Tractarians and Puseyites retain a high view of Scripture, they went perhaps even further than did the Evangelicals in the intellectual battle for faithfulness to Biblical revelation. Through the subsequent work of Doreen Rosman, who extended and modified Wilmer’s argument in her foundational work Evangelicals and Culture (1984), his unpublished essay has affected a more nuanced succession of scholarship on Evangelicalism.

In agreement with Wilmer (and the much earlier Gladstone), Rosman picks up the language of emphasis by which Conybeare had marked out the Evangelical party rather than trying to distinguish them by exclusive, defining doctrines. As he had identified “tenets which became…watchwords” for the Evangelicals, Rosman marks out Evangelicalism by the relative “weight” to which they assigned certain doctrines of orthodox Christianity. While acknowledging that other non-Evangelical Christians also affirmed the particular doctrines, she highlights the Evangelical stress on “original sin
and the need for redemption…and soteriology centred upon the Cross” (10). To these emphases on depravity and crucicentric soteriology, she adds a stress on conversion and on the activity of the Holy Spirit in individual lives, both in the process of conversion and in daily life. With these theological emphases as the distinguishing features of Evangelicalism, Rosman works outward to a circle of Christians who formulated their lives according to these teachings in all realms of life. Contrary to the approach beginning with social and political influence, this approach leads Rosman to define Evangelicalism as a pan-ecclesial movement encompassing sections of the established church and all of Dissent, excepting Unitarians. With this starting point, she establishes common Evangelical attitudes towards literature, art, entertainment, and other popular cultural norms. Her painstaking research in the societal records, the various religious journals, private letters, published memoirs, and treatises of Evangelical piety reveals lively debates within Evangelical circles and a general hardening, as the century wore on, towards popular culture.

In service of his argument that the dominant theology of Evangelicals formed the economic theory and policy of Victorian Britain, in *The Age of Atonement* (1988), Boyd Hilton also identifies a common set of theological stresses that mark out Evangelicalism. With refreshing candor, Hilton concedes what previous scholars had tried to avoid, that “The word ‘evangelicalism’ is seriously inadequate, being in some ways too vague and in others too precise”; nevertheless, he proceeds with an argument based more generally on “a gamut of attitudes and beliefs, the evangelical Weltanschauung” (7). He describes this worldview as follows:

A sharp discontinuity exists between this world and the next. God transcends this world, and his providence is responsible for everything that happens in it. His
creatures are all in a state of natural depravity, weighed down by original sin, and life is effectively an ‘arena of moral trial,’ an ethical obstacle course on which men are tempted, tested, and ultimately sorted into saints and sinners in readiness for the Day of Judgment. Then, souls will be despatched either to Heaven or to Hell, literally conceived as states of eternal felicity and everlasting torment. The all-important contractual relationship is directly between each soul and its maker, and such intermediaries as priests and sacraments are of relatively little significance. The organ of redemption is the individual conscience, and the means are provided by Christ's Atonement on the Cross, which purchased ransom for the sins of all mankind. Justification comes through faith in that Atonement, and through faith alone, for though good works, sanctification, and holiness are important, they cannot precede faith. Rather, faith in the Atonement sanctifies the sinner as well as justifying him, and so prepares his heart for the Heaven which will be his home. (8)

As in Rosman’s account, Hilton draws out the emphases on depravity through original sin, universal need for personal redemption and life conversion, crucicentric soteriology, and, which Conybeare had early identified, justification by faith alone. He leaves out an emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit, which he argues became a point of contention between “‘moderate’ and ‘extreme’ factions within evangelicalism” (10). His characterization of those emphasizing the Holy Spirit—the extremists—becomes a necessity in his argument to distinguish moderate Evangelicals according to their beliefs about the millennial reign of Christ. He equates moderate Evangelical post-millenarianism with laissez-faire attitudes to government involvement with trade and social responsibility. Laissez-faire economics would encourage men’s personal depravity to lead them more easily into desperate straits and a state of repentance. Although government should not encourage national evil, neither should it interfere in the natural operations of common people. While acknowledging the influence of Evangelical contribution, especially via Thomas Chalmers, to economic policy, a number of scholars
have countered Hilton’s negligence in failing to treat Holy Spirit activity as also part of moderate evangelicalism.  

Published the same year as Hilton’s work, Deryck Lovegrove produced *Established Church, Sectarian People, 1785-1830* (1988), an account of British dissent during roughly the same period covered by Doreen Rosman. Although Lovegrove proceeds without a theological definition of Evangelicalism, he argues that the moderate Calvinism of Dissent was derived through personal encounters and relationships between Dissenters and itinerant Methodists; it was this link, via the Methodists, that created a consistent Evangelicalism amongst Anglicans and nonconformists. This hybrid character of Methodism, somewhere between Anglicanism and nonconformity, has been pointed out by P.E. Sangster in his study of Rowland Hill. Lovegrove’s emphasis on the shift towards evangelism in formerly high Calvinistic Dissenting congregations reveals how central the Methodists were in bridging the gap between church and chapel. His account provides a further nuance to Evangelicalism with his implied definition that to be Evangelical was also to be evangelistically minded, that is, intent on preaching the Gospel. As this emphasis was shared by Anglican and Dissenter alike, his study of nonconformist faith at the turn of the century again cuts across the divisions of establishment and dissent.

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24 Although David Bebbington’s *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (1989) was in the press before Hilton’s book was published, Bebbington nevertheless counters Hilton’s complete dichotomizing of Spirit-minded extremists and moderate Evangelicals. He affirms a division between pre- and post-millenarianism, but considers the difference as emerging not from ignorance of the Spirit among post-millenialists but from a “heightened supernaturalism,” via Romanticism, among the pre-millenialists (75-97).

Completing the late 1980s flurry of studies on British Evangelicalism was the comprehensive work by Evangelical historian David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (1989). Bebbington’s book, conceived in reaction to the tendency in Brown, Jay, and Chadwick to “deny the ‘common spiritual parentage’ of Anglicans and non-Anglicans within the movement” (Bebbington 278), has become the standard account of British Evangelicalism. It begins by describing a basic problem with any attempt to define the movement or its adherents: it changed over time. As the famed reformer Lord Shaftesbury stated late in life, “‘I know what constituted an Evangelical in former times…I have no clear notion what constitutes one now’” (Bebbington 2). In describing any long-lasting group, there is ever the obstacle that membership changes over time, and as membership changes so change its emphases and attentions. Under the leadership of men like John and Charles Wesley, George Whitfield, and Howell Harris, the Evangelical Revival of the 1730s operated in reaction to theologies, ecclesiastical norms, and social and political circumstances that were not present at the turn of the next century. As Gladstone noted long ago, some of the criticisms of eighteenth-century Evangelicals—specifically, of absentee clergy and neglected parishioners—could not be ignored by the church hierarchy, who sought to address the problems, so that by the generation of Wilberforce, Bickersteth, Chalmers, and Simeon, there were different concerns than those present to the earlier generation, and vice versa. In this way, the profound success of the Evangelical movement continuously and cyclically addressed, eliminated, and created new problems and loci of concern. In order to address the difficulty, Bebbington resorts to basic characteristics that he suggests are present among all those claiming to be Evangelical or who are described
as such. In his own words, “There are…four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical religion: conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism” (3). His macro-study of Evangelicalism, pan-ecclesial in its theological character, traces the history of the movement through its various iterations, yet always displaying these several emphases.

Since the publication of Bebbington’s book, every study that treats Evangelicalism specifically has had to interact with his definition in some way. To its detriment, however, his definition may suffer from a tendency to soften the harsh edges of Evangelical belief. In a more recent study of Evangelical Dissent, *The Dissenters: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (1995), Michael R. Watts describes Evangelicalism in a way that absorbs Bebbington’s priorities but re-introduces the edge that made them an irritation to many people:

The chief characteristic of nineteenth-century religion was Evangelicalism, the belief that every man and woman was heir to the sin of Adam and destined to spend eternity in hell unless justified by faith, through the personal experience called conversion, in the sacrifice which Christ had made on his or her behalf on the cross at Calvary. Instead of being damned to suffer eternal torment in the fires of hell, those men and women who experienced conversion believed that they would, after death, enjoy everlasting bliss in heaven. (1)

Clearly, Watts emphasis on the belief in total depravity and original sin returns to the parameters of Evangelicalism the sense of urgency that led them, so vociferously in the first third of the nineteenth century, to mount a global evangelistic campaign for the conversion of the world, including the Protestant homeland, the realms of Popery, and the
domains of the heathen. Although his encyclopedic study pertains primarily to the extent and influence of Evangelical Dissent in Britain itself, he makes clear that the domestic spread as well as the worldwide missionary endeavors of Dissenters were due in greatest measure to tireless efforts to convert the eternally lost to a Christocentric life through a crucicentric message.  

In the main, the goal of each of the above studies of nineteenth-century religion has determined the approach to Evangelicalism and dictated how they have defined the movement and its adherents. If the aim of their research was political history or an older strain of social history, that is, to determine in what measure and how Evangelicals influenced public policies and polite manners, then the subject group of interest would necessarily be Evangelicals with public power, i.e. the party within the Church that included the Clapham Sect and the Recordites. If, on the other hand, the study followed a newer trend of social history, championed by the History Workshop in Britain and best represented by E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working-Class* (1963), then the research aims begin at the popular level and necessarily work from popular definitions. As in Cultural Studies, such social history demands a broad range of research and includes the maximum of contexts. This depth and breadth of research clearly

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26 In the first chapter of Watts’ book, “‘Expect great things from God…’: The Expansion of Dissent, 1791-1851,” he devotes a full 158 pages to the evangelistic impulse as it derived from basic Evangelical beliefs about depravity and the necessity of conversion for eternal life.

27 G.M. Trevelyan defined this kind of social history in *English Social History* (1944): “Social history might be defined negatively as the history of a people with the politics left out” (vii). It remains, therefore, concerned with the official, public, and middle-class history of society. Political history, more obviously, “is conventionally defined as the study of all those aspects of the past that have to do with the formal organization of power in society, which for the majority of human societies in recorded history means the state” (Tosh 72). Any history of the Church of England as an official institution of the English state, i.e. Owen Chadwick’s *The Victorian Church*, falls within political history. In “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914” (1983), Eric Hobsbawm groups the older form of social history with traditional political history under the term “official” or loosely “political” (263).
distinguishes the social histories of Evangelicalism represented by Rosman, Hilton, Lovegrove, Bebbington, and Watts, who have determined a definition of Evangelicalism rooted in popular conversation about Evangelical membership and how they defined themselves in private and in print. Because these more recent works have begun by asking how Evangelicals defined themselves, they have tended to privilege theological identification because those were the grounds on which Evangelicals sought to distinguish themselves from their non-Evangelical countrymen.

In this dissertation, I follow these social historians in their attempts to read Evangelical culture as broadly as possible within a circumscribed period and based on a query of popular self-definition. In order to maintain consistency, the investigation must have meaningful limits chronologically, given that the certum taken for granted by those in a specific cultural moment are necessarily on shifting ground. What is assumed in one era becomes contested in the next. For this study, I set 1795 as a terminus a quo. For this earlier limit I adopt Rosman’s reasoning that the early 1790s marked a distinct new phase of Evangelicalism in Britain. Leaders of the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival were dying—John Wesley in 1791, the Countess of Huntingdon and the Rev. John Berridge in 1793—while new leaders were emerging, with Charles Simeon beginning his first sermon class in 1790. The Clapham community came together in 1792, the same year in which William Carey published An Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens and the Baptist Missionary

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28 Auerbach looks back to Vico in distinguishing between philosophy and philology: “philology investigated what the various peoples regarded as true at each cultural stage (although this truth was a product of their limited perspective) and what accordingly formed the basis of their actions and institutions. Vico calls this the certum (the certain or established); the certum is subject to historical change” (Literary Language 16). I adopt this critical perspective regarding the truths of Evangelical culture during this period.
Society formed. The undenominational *Evangelical Magazine* was inaugurated in 1793, followed by the foundation of the Missionary Society in 1795 along similar undenominational lines. At the inaugural meeting of this Society, they contemplated a mission to China, the site I have chosen for demonstrating the dialectic of Evangelical literature (Milne, *Retrospect* 43). One probable cause for the immediacy of China in the minds of the Missionary Society was that the early 1790s also signaled new efforts on the part of the state to make official connections with imperial China (Cranmer-Byng xi, 3). The embassy to the imperial court at Peking led by Lord Macartney, who had departed in late 1792 and returned in 1794, was no doubt present to those formulating global mission endeavors. In this connection of international mission to China as both Evangelical and diplomatic, events of the early 1790s clearly signaled new developments in the relationship between the empires of Britain and China and foreshadow the prominent role that Evangelicals would play in that emergent relationship.

As a *terminus ad quem* for this study, I have chosen 1845 as another point around which the interests of imperial Britain and the British Evangelical mission simultaneously took another momentous turn in their relationships with China. With the Treaty of Nanking in 1843, five “treaty ports” were officially opened to foreign settlement and commerce. As explained by W.C. Milne soon after the events, “No sooner had the treaty of Nanking been signed and sealed, than the eyes of Protestant missionaries, who were already stationed on the outposts of the empire, turned in the direction of Shanghai, as being ‘a great door and effectual opened unto them’” (495), and immediately two missionaries “moved up thither in December, 1843, contemporaneously with her Majesty’s consul, who planted the British flag at the same port” (496). This simultaneous
arrival of the Bible and the British flag, with the missionaries’ interpretation that war provides “a great door” for their work, signals a significant shift in the attitudes and operations of Evangelicals both on the frontiers of the British empire and at their metropole. For the missionaries who came to reside in the treaty ports, the new open access to thousands of Chinese residents changed the way mission could be done, and at the same time permanently shaped the way missionaries understood themselves and the way they were viewed in the eyes of the Chinese.

Following Rosman and Hilton, who have also recognized this chronological slice as meaningfully distinct for Evangelical culture, I analyze the culture using the terms Evangelical (capitalized) and evangelical (lower-case) with two distinct nuances. I distinguish between an abstract “evangelical Weltanschauung” (lower-case) and the people, Evangelicals (upper-case) who moved in and out of operational belief in that worldview.29 I make this distinction because fellowship in the Evangelical ranks could shift even within this historical moment—as in the case of John Henry Newman—whereas the evangelical worldview remained stable in theological content, albeit variant in practical application.

V. Evangelical Literature and the Gospel

Despite attention to historical events, ideas, documents, and influential people, this project concerns literature, and specifically what the literature of Evangelicals reveals about them and about their role in nineteenth-century British imperialism. While my method is explicitly historical, it is more particularly philological in the tradition of Erich

29 By worldview, I understand “a cognitive network of beliefs, attitudes, habits, memories, values, and other elements that conditions and renders meaningful the world in which [one] lives” (Hurley 184).
Auerbach. Following the methodology of *Mimesis*, I “locate a point of departure
[Ansatzpunkt], a handle, as it were, by which the subject can be seized…[which is] a firmly circumscribed, easily comprehensible set of phenomena whose interpretation is a radiation out from them and which orders and interprets a greater region than they themselves occupy” ("Philology" 14). For this period 1795-1845, what has been variously called “the Age of Atonement,” “the old Evangelicalism,” and “the Age of Societies,” my point of departure is what Evangelicals considered the distinguishing mark of their faith, “the Gospel,” from which also emerges a working definition for Evangelicalism that is provided by the texts themselves.\(^3^0\)

This term, “the Gospel,” is so prominent a feature in the archive of Evangelical publications that its precise meaning(s) are not often clear. In general, an attempt to get hold of nineteenth-century Evangelical language often results in puzzlement. The experience is not unlike that which Wittgenstein has described in *Philosophical Investigations*, “Someone coming into a strange country will sometimes learn the language of the inhabitants from ostensive definitions that they give him; and he will often have to guess the meaning of these definitions; and will guess sometimes right, sometimes wrong” (13). One reason for finding it difficult to clarify subtle meaning in reading Evangelical works is that their inter-connected literature was self-selecting; that is, only those works conversant in Evangelical vocabulary could find a home with Evangelical readers. Without conscious attempt, they developed a distinctly Evangelical vocabulary of coded words, like “the great change” to refer to conversion, or “serious”

\(^{30}\) “Age of Atonement” is a term used by Boyd Hilton in *The Age of Atonement*; the “old Evangelicalism” was first used by Conybeare in his article on Church parties for the *Edinburgh Review* (1851) and was adopted by R.W. Dale in *The Old Evangelicalism and the New* (1889); and Ian Bradley uses the phrase “the Age of Societies” in *The Call to Seriousness*. 
and “earnest” to mean faithful.\footnote{See Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, esp. 19-28.} Their contemporary non-Evangelicals, in contemplating the isolating language of Evangelical writing, could explain its development as the product of their literary exclusivity. Commenting on a selection from the Evangelical canon, one reviewer points out their intellectual isolation: “An *Index Expurgatorius* cannot be published in England; but as their people read nothing but what is recommended to them, an Index *Commendatorius* answers the same purpose.”\footnote{“On the Evangelical Sects,” *Quarterly Review*, vol. 4, no. 8, November (1810): 506.}

Among the coded words without a fixed meaning, “the Gospel” held the prime position within Evangelical thought. Following scriptural precedent, the Gospel traditionally took the simple, undelineated meaning, “good news [about Christ]”.\footnote{Etymologically, “gospel” derives from Old English *godspel*, meaning “good message.” For Anglo-Saxon monks of the early Middle Ages, this was the term used for translating ευαγγέλιον, from which is also derived Evangelical, evangelism, and evangelistic.} It was in this sense that it was employed by the noted Baptist minister Andrew Fuller in his book, *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation* (1785), in which he moderated high Calvinist beliefs by arguing that this good news required willful acceptance in order to be efficacious. In agreement with this explanation suggesting a willed response to the “news,” the highly respected MP from Yorkshire, William Wilberforce, turned attention to differences between self-professed Evangelicals and other Christians based on their differing conceptions of the Gospel. He argued that varying interpretations of the Gospel provided an explanation for differing behavior, thereby giving the Gospel itself a more active character as part of a dialectic between person and Spirit-actuating doctrine.

In his *Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in This Country Contrasted with Real Christianity*
Wilberforce discusses the “peculiar doctrines of the Gospel,” as the “grand distinction which subsists between the true Christian and the Religionists” (166). It was towards establishing this distinction that his book was devoted, as he writes in the conclusion to his central chapter, “the main distinction between real Christianity, and the system of the bulk of nominal Christians, chiefly consists in the different place which is assigned in the two schemes to the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel” (175). In its shortest form, Wilberforce describes the doctrines of the Gospel as “the corruption of human nature—the atonement of the Saviour—and the sanctifying of the Holy Spirit” (163).

More extensively, he expands with emphasis that by the Gospel, a man knows that,

...holiness is not to PRECEDE his reconciliation to God, and be its CAUSE; but to FOLLOW it, and be its EFFECT. That, in short, it is by FAITH IN CHRIST only that he is to be justified in the sight of God; to be delivered from the condition of a child of wrath, and a slave of Satan; to be adopted into the family of God; to become an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, entitled to all the privileges which belong to this high relation; here, to the Spirit of Grace, and a partial renewal after the image of his Creator; hereafter, to the more perfect possession of the Divine likeness, and an inheritance of eternal glory. (166)

Wilberforce’s description of the doctrines of the Gospel, emphasizing natural depravity, justification by faith in the atoning death of Christ, conversion and sanctification through the Holy Spirit follows what Doreen Rosman and David Bebbington have described as the qualities essential to Evangelicalism. For Wilberforce, then, all those descriptors by which scholars have described Evangelicalism can be summed up by love of the doctrines of the Gospel, which is more often foreshortened as simply “the Gospel.” As he underscores it, “to the real Christian…THOSE peculiar doctrines constitute the center to which he gravitates! the very sun of his system! the soul of the world! the origin of all that is excellent and lovely! the source of light, and life, and motion, and genial warmth, and plastic energy!” (175). To be Evangelical is to be Gospel-minded.
Although his *Practical View* was thought by publisher Thomas Cadell to have so little popular appeal that Wilberforce might want to suppress his authorship, the work became so influential that by 1826 it had gone through fifteen editions in Britain and twenty-five in the United States.\(^\text{34}\) This work, which became the practical manifesto of Evangelicalism, gave to that movement the sense that the Gospel could, in addition to describing spiritual truth, also become a signifier for a group of people. If one were versant in the Gospel and could claim the Gospel as precious to one, then one could be Evangelical, regardless of denominational affiliation.

Wilberforce was not the only influential Evangelical to provide nuance to the term Gospel. In one of the most popular sermons of the early nineteenth-century, preached before the University of Cambridge in March, 1811, Charles Simeon of Trinity Church, Cambridge, likewise gives centrality of position to the gospel as the defining mark of an Evangelical, “one who preaches and lives, personally and in his ministry, in the light of the apostle’s message” (53).\(^\text{35}\) This message, which Simeon considered and taught as very simple, was to tell others “of Christ and his dying for the sins of men, then [one] will be assured ‘that none that come unto him shall be cast out.’ Then [one] will be assured that he has purged us ‘by his blood from all sin’” (54). This gospel focuses on imputed righteousness, given by faith in the efficacy of the atonement, without which there will be condemnation. So important ought this message to be to every Christian, that Simeon warns his hearers with a quotation from the Apostle Paul, “‘Woe unto us if we preach not


the gospel!’” (52). Not surprisingly, Simeon follows Wilberforce in making gospel-mindedness *sine qua non* for an Evangelical, as he says, “if a scoffing and ungodly world were to make glorying in the cross of Christ a matter of reproach, should those who are so reproached abandon the gospel for fear of being called evangelical?” (54). Of course, the assumed answer is, no; one should embrace the name evangelical *because* it implies devotion to the Gospel. If anything, the scoffing of the “ungodly world” was understood to confirm one as following the true message. A false message, a worldly gospel, would not be “a stumbling stone and rock of offense” (Romans 9.33).

Simeon’s words here point back to a consistent emphasis in Evangelical faith by setting up a double equation. In the second clause, “the gospel” that must not be abandoned stands in for “the cross of Christ” mentioned in the first clause. The gospel that must not be abandoned is the same “glorying in the cross” for which they have been reproached. The gospel equals the glorying in the cross, both of which are tied implicitly, he says, to the scoffing appellation “evangelical.” Not only, as in Bebbington’s analysis, is crucicentrism an Evangelical emphasis, for Simeon crucicentrism can alone define Evangelicalism.

But Simeon’s frequent teachings on the Gospel explore other valences that reinforced tendencies latent in Protestantism and that gave Evangelicalism its unique shape. In another famous sermon, which has been conventionally titled “The Glory of the Gospel Above that of the Law,” Simeon finds other layers of meaning in Paul’s theology surrounding εὐαγγέλιον.36 Explicating a passage in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, he calls the gospel “a remedy” for disobedience to God (60); “the gospel is also ‘the ministration of

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the Spirit’…producing holiness and comfort in all who truly receive it” (61). This comfort comes because the gospel “both frees us from the dominion of sin and liberates us from all its penal consequences” and produces holiness because “the gospel also transforms the soul into the divine image” (63). As in Wilberforce’s explanation of the Gospel as a life-changing message, Simeon speaks of the Gospel as distinctively active, almost alive. In this single sermon he explains it as treating the problem of depravity, bringing salvation by grace through faith, supplying the Holy Spirit, producing sanctification, and restoring the believer to the image of his Creator. Simeon’s concept of the Gospel thus interprets, as a single term, Pauline doctrine. Comprehending a whole hermeneutic in the single term and associating it with a group was a move characteristic of the sixteenth-century Reformers. Referring to those who had re-emphasized the Pauline doctrines, especially of salvation by grace through faith, Luther called them “evangelici (short for evangelici viri, ‘evangelical men’), in German ‘die Evangelischen’” (Stott 29).

Further developing this equation of the Gospel with the Pauline doctrines, Simeon draws out Paul’s teaching in the 2 Corinthians passage on the new dispensation as opposed to the Old Testament Law. The Apostle explains the passing away of the Old Covenant because it has been replaced the New, and Simeon explores this teaching, explaining that “the gospel also, as being God’s last dispensation, will endure forever. The Law, which was only introductory to it, is abolished” (63). This scriptural binary, Old Law and New Gospel, sets up a subtle shift latent in Protestantism: the mergence of the abstract, ethereal message of the Gospel with the concrete, written message, i.e. the New Testament scriptures. The metonymical slide is a simple one. Anciently, the Law of
the Hebrew scriptures was a written Law, recording the conditions of a covenant, or testament. The words covenant and testament were interchangeably applicable in reference to the Jewish Law. In the Apostolic Age, Christian teaching explained the “good news” that the death and resurrection of Christ inaugurated a New Covenant, fulfilling and replacing the Old. In doing so, they referred to and eventually collected the Apostles’ writings as those illuminating and belonging to the New Covenant, or New Testament, yet with the understanding that it was the ethereal message of the gospel contained in their writings that was set beside the Old Covenant, not the writings themselves—there was no New Covenant equivalent for the stone tablets of Moses.37 Evangelicals, however, followed the Reformation call for sola scriptura as the basis for the Christian faith, and metonymically understood the physically existing writings of the Apostles—in which the message was recorded—as the “good news” message itself. In this way, the Gospel about Christ became inseparable from the writings explaining it. Given this absolute connection between written word and saving message, it is not surprising how much Evangelicals emphasized the Bible and its distribution and why they spearheaded a great move for the increase of literacy among the poor.

These various inflections of the Gospel as an idea gave early nineteenth-century Evangelicalism that shape that has distinguished it as among the most powerful forces within the culture of the British empire. This dissertation explores how several inflections of the Gospel idea so influenced Evangelical missionaries that it simultaneously provided the structure for their writing, in which it repeatedly secured their access to and

37 The Reformation desire for concrete defense against visible structures of power tended to blur the biblical teaching concerning the new covenant, that God would “put it in their minds, and write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31.33).
relationships with the evangelical believing part of British society, and also became the most signally volatile cause of their political role in the conflict of empires now known as the Opium War.

The Gospel as a theological concept presented as a life-changing story provides the starting point for Chapter Two. In this chapter, I consider how the nineteenth-century Evangelical archive reveals a clear conception of the Gospel as the one true and foundational story, within which every person has a place and about which every person needs to know. The Evangelical archive also shows that this belief not only became the rational justification for the missionary movement in the early nineteenth century but also gave those missionaries a characteristic way of talking about themselves and their activities abroad. This chapter defines a unique form of writing, what I call “provocations,” and considers how these works gave further shape to the Evangelical archive. Within the domestic context of the early century, as novels grew in popularity and Evangelical leaders expressed concern about their pernicious influence, the writing of missionaries emerged as the Christian competitor to novels because, unlike novels, they were true. Furthermore, even as they told true stories of real people, their subject matter concerned the telling abroad of what they held to be the one overarching true story, the Gospel. The coinciding emergence of these two forms—the novel and missionary provocations—is anything but coincidence. Finally, in the absence of novels about China, and given the relative ignorance of the British about life in China, provocations were the most popular and perceived reliable source about the Far East in the early half of the nineteenth century.
In the third chapter I analyze provocations for their encoding of Evangelical terms useful for interpreting the British empire according to a Christian worldview. The Gospel as a coding word, or shibboleth within Evangelical culture itself, reveals the power of such concepts to divide the world spiritually, not only domestically but also internationally. I employ the sense of “cultural work” used by Jane Tompkins in Sensational Designs: the Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860 (1985) to show how provocations should be “conceived as agents of cultural formation rather than as objects of interpretation and appraisal” (xvii). As my term suggests, these texts provoked a distinct audience to think about the world in a specific way and to respond according to assumptions shared by author and audience. Authoritative within their Evangelical realm, provocations almost exclusively gave expression to the popular image of China in Britain prior to the large-scale encounter with that nation in the Opium War. Encoding spiritual terms for both spiritual and material subjects of attention, provocations assisted in coloring China in opposition to Christianity. This spiritual vocabulary, picked up by later provocation writers in other regions of empire and adapted for political ends, played no small part in the ideological justifications for which the British empire has been so justly condemned.

Chapter Four turns attention to a third inflection of the Gospel, as a material object. Provocations, along with the Evangelical archive, reveal that the Gospel as text, translatable and distributable, was uppermost in the minds of missionaries in China. A number of Evangelicals came to think of the textual Gospel as a cultural possession that came with a corollary responsibility to give. Popular possession of this text had to result in a stimulus to growth within the scale of civilizations. Ambiguity about China’s place
in that scale could be resolved by appeal to their poverty with regard to the Gospel text. The translation and distribution of the Gospel as text, therefore, became a matter of great attention. The eventual distribution of the Gospel in China, along with the reportage of these activities within provocations, had indirect but significant impact politically in both China and Britain. Through analysis of documents from the site of conflict, along with consideration of Parliamentary investigation and debate, I argue that the distribution of the Gospel in China and the circulation of provocations in Britain provided the moral justifications for the Opium War on both the Chinese and the British sides. Evangelical responses to the political work of these texts, although far from being anticipated and intended, reveal a division within Evangelical attitudes to British culture and empire.

Taken together each of these inflections of the Gospel confirms related logics of supremacy. By logic of supremacy I understand a way of thinking about difference, whether of ideas, practices, texts, or any other component part of culture that is differentiable, whereby a belief in a fundamental inequality serves as an irreducible assumption. Following from the irreducible assumption of inequality, a logic of supremacy may have relative consistency yet also touch, at points, other logics that stand inimical to it. This definition reveals the obvious link that any logic of supremacy is necessarily tied to ideology. Here I adopt Frederic Jameson’s argument in the Political Unconscious (1981) that all narrative, as in the case of provocations, is epistemological.

As a tool for thinking, what distinguishes logics of supremacy from ideologies is the self-

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38 For the purpose of clarity, my understanding of culture here and elsewhere follows both Raymond Williams notion of culture in Culture and Society 1780-1950 as “a whole way of life, material, intellectual, and spiritual” (xvi), and Stuart Hall, who has defined it as “the actual, grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific historical society…[including] the contradictory forms of ‘common sense’ which have taken root in and helped to shape popular life” (26). With reference to an individual, culture forms all that is within the known horizon of that person. As such, one can imagine that more than one culture could operate—forming and being formed—within any given geographical boundary, such as nineteenth-century Britain.
conscious focal attention of the former on difference, and in particular, on unique superiority. As Jameson suggests, ideology is frequently unconscious; a logic of supremacy is always aware of itself, thinking of itself as supreme.

That the Gospel is the one true story affecting all people everywhere is a distinctly scriptural logic of supremacy inherent in Evangelicalism, with its emphasis on scripture as the unerring and unalterable guide. In Surrey Chapel during his one trip back to Britain over a twenty-seven year period of mission work in China, Robert Morrison expressed this theological logic of supremacy even in his sermon title, “The Knowledge of Christ Supremely Excellent: the means and the duty of diffusing it among all nations.” For missionaries of the early nineteenth century, belief in the certain superiority of the Evangelical faith even over other strains of Christian practice was an ever present motivating reality. But this reality was an irreducible assumption to be taken on faith; the story of Christ and his atoning sacrifice for the world was considered a matter of revelation not subject to reason (Rosman 49). By extension, another logic of supremacy suggests that those with such knowledge of Christ have an apprehension of the world unattainable by those without such knowledge. Non-believers cannot possibly see the world for what it is because they lack the spiritual insight requisite to see through the metaphysical darkness. By their logic of light and darkness, Evangelicals were not on equal standing with their unbelieving associates. Lastly, but related, the Evangelical emphasis on the Bible as God’s revelation to humankind brought an accompanying sense of special favor to those in possession of it. Likening themselves to the ancient Hebrews, whose possession of the Torah made them a unique people, moderate Calvinists understood themselves as the new chosen people, the Elect. When extended to cross-
cultural interaction, this inherent superiority assumed by Evangelical Britons due to their
cultural possession of the written scriptures served as another logic of supremacy on the
scale of civilizations. Because the Gospel was considered the singular means by which a
people could be fully civilized, their possession of the written texts set them above
nations without it.
CHAPTER TWO

THE EVANGELICAL ARCHIVE AND MISSIONARY PROVOCATIONS

While according to the Christianity of the New Testament the Christian has all the effort, the conflict, the anguish, which is connected with doing what is required, dying from the world, hating oneself, etc., he has at the same time to suffer from the relationship of opposition to other men, which the New Testament speaks of again and again: to be hated by others, to be persecuted, to suffer for the doctrine, etc.39

—Søren Kierkegaard

It is a curious phenomenon that in the course of the nineteenth century in Britain a group of Christians could begin the century with a similar other-worldly emphasis as that expressed by Kierkegaard, but over the course of the century so affect the broader culture that their views and behaviors could later be considered the dominant and most recognizable expressions of the age we have come to call Victorian. Leaders of the Evangelical Revival taught in pulpit, pamphlet, and periodical that to be truly Christian meant radical difference from others in society, even others professing faith, for “Christians are either nominal or real” (Simeon 256). But by mid-century, the public practices that had so distinguished Evangelicals had become such a part of middle-class life that clear lines could no longer be drawn between the unregenerate and the elect. The marginal shifted to the center; the world-rejecting extremes entered the realm of standard social boundaries. This was the work of the tireless Evangelicals in the first third of the

39 “In ‘Christendom’ all are Christians; when all are Christians, the New Testament eo ipso does not exist, yea, it is impossible,” The Instant, No. 4, Copenhagen: Bianco Luna’s Press, 1855. Reprinted in Attack Upon ‘Christendom,’ 1854-1855, 149.
nineteenth century, and from their unique texts one can discern their pride at affecting such a remarkable social change.

Although he has received attention among literary scholars almost exclusively for his abolitionist rhetoric, no one represents this vision of ideological struggle and conquest more clearly than the Evangelical parliamentarian from Yorkshire, William Wilberforce. Writing not long after a conversion experience, a 28 year-old Wilberforce set the terms for the Evangelical assault and his own life’s goal: “the abolition of the slave trade and the reformation of manners” (qtd. in Belmonte xxii). Not only have later historians judged these causes to be among the most successful social revolutions of modern history, even at mid-century it was clear to critical observers that Evangelicalism had altered the character of the country.

As this chapter implies, the consciousness with which this assault on culture was undertaken can be considered a hegemonic project. Their ideological assault had been articulated in keen terms by the Baptist minister William Carey in 1792, who wrote and taught that,

Christians are a body whose truest interest lies in the exaltation of the Messiah’s kingdom. Their charter is very extensive, their encouragements exceeding great,

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40 The excellent anthology by Anne Mellor and Richard Matlak, *British Literature, 1780-1830* (1996) is perhaps the most telling example of current treatments of Wilberforce. Included in the anthology is a selection from *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1791). Although Wilberforce was widely recognized as an influential MP on matters of morality including the slave trade, he was most recognized in religious circles as the author of *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians* (1797). This neglect of Wilberforce’s profound connection to Evangelicalism appears in the anthology’s biography, where he is mistakenly called a member of the “Quaker Clapham Sect.” Those families living around Clapham Common and known as the Clapham Sect were Anglican moderate Calvinists and very far from Quakerism.

and the returns promised infinitely superior to all the gains of the most lucrative fellowship. Let then every one in his station consider himself as bound to act with all his might, and in every possible way for God. (82; emphasis mine)

Evangelical politicians like Wilberforce, Lord Shaftesbury, and Charles Grant; preachers like Charles Simeon and John Venn; writers like Zachary Macaulay, Hannah More, and William Cowper; and missionary organizers like George Burder and Joseph Hardcastle, each strove in their separate spheres to accomplish a social revolution by which the mores, values, and social practices received from the eighteenth century would be overturned through normalization of Evangelical values. While working in their individual spheres, Evangelicals were also working together, “linked in a single, if multiform, social and religious phenomenon” (qtd. in Lewis 1). This would be a thorough and ingrained revolution, a new hegemony.

In theoretical terms, the social and political activities of early nineteenth-century Evangelicals can be described effectively using Antonio Gramsci’s reflections on civil society in his Prison Notebooks. The long moment of ideological transformation that I have been describing, when Britain shifted to Victorian evangelical morality, reflects what Gramsci describes as the “unity of theory and practice,” when individuals become “conscious of being part of a hegemonic force” (3: 330). The emergence and realization of this hegemonic force in the unification of theory and practice occurs through the merging of “two theoretical consciousnesses: one that is implicit in his activity and that really unites him with all his fellow [group members] in the practical transformation of the world and a superficial, ‘explicit’ one that he has inherited from the past” (330). During the process of social transformation, men and women who attended parish churches as part of a “superficial, explicit” and “inherited” form of identification began to
grow in their consciousness of agreement with the spiritual beliefs, moral values, public practices, political stances, and social etiquette denominated as Evangelical.

As more nominal church attenders found themselves in agreement with Evangelical principles and values, a steady shift was effected in British “common sense,” which Gramsci describes as “the most widespread conception of life and morals” (I:173). “[N]ot something rigid and static” but rather something that “changes continuously, enriched by scientific notions and philosophical opinions which have entered into common usage” (173), common sense is easily subject to the most persuasive way of explaining and conceptualizing an historical moment. Through their explanation of a Gospel available to all people everywhere, with special plaudits for those who share it, Evangelicals proved highly successful at awakening new members and spreading their vision of the world. To the degree that Evangelicals operated with cohesive goals and consistent methods, their reshaping of hegemony can be considered a project.

My purpose in this chapter is to explore a part of this hegemonic project, the part occupied by the literary production of what I conceive of as an Evangelical Archive. With this term, I follow Thomas Richards, who has contributed significantly to our understanding of British thought about their empire through his book The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire (1993). Richards’s conception of an imperial archive is that novels from and about imperial sites created “a myth of a unified archive…holding together the vast and various parts of the Empire” (6). This fantasy depended on exercising an imaginative belief in an extended British nation that stretched around the world, lending “the Empire the sense of symbolic unity that it so often lacked in practice” (3). This chapter adapts that notion for considering ways in which
Evangelicals used their own literature to formulate and maintain their own conceptual unity both at home and with their missionaries and converts abroad, while at the same time rallying around their Gospel-focused literature for their dismantling of rationalist hegemony. This literature, what collectively can be understood as an Evangelical Archive, includes many more genres than missionary writing, but as with Richards’s focus on the novel in the imperial archive, missionary writing formed the basis for representing the Christian presence throughout the world.

As an exploration of an archive, this chapter simultaneously concerns a community of production and a community of reception. Evangelical missionaries sent out from their communities in Britain were educated, through the Evangelical Archive, in ways of reading, modes of expression, and most of all a worldview—or “conception of the world” in Gramsci’s terms—that shaped the literature they would later produce. By the same token, members of the Evangelical community in Britain received their notions of the foreign world and were confirmed in their theological vision by the writings of missionaries that filled up their archive through the course of the nineteenth century. For this community of avid readers, the Evangelical Archive became the intellectual crossroads for imagining and fashioning a view of and approach to what seemed an ever-expanding world.

In the wake of new historicist studies in Romanticism, there has been a growing awareness that while missionary writings are in no approximation to the Canon, they nevertheless reveal a great deal about the complexities of imperialism at the far outposts of the empire. Drawing on the recent work of anthropologists and historians, most notably Jean and John Comaroff, Catharine Hall, Brian Stanley, and Andrew Porter, two
book length studies, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in 19th-Century England* (1999) and *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (2003), by Susan Thorne and Anna Johnston respectively have turned attention to the texts produced by missionaries and to the rhetorical construct of religious imperialist attitudes. As representatives of one version of imperialist ideology, “missionaries constructed an ambiguous, ambivalent position for themselves within colonial cultures, a position negotiated in the many texts they produced” (Johnston 2). These texts contributed to the re-imagining and evolving nature of British imperialism while providing popular representations of native populations for the British public. Thorne’s work especially emphasizes how the cooperative production of missionary texts, at a crucial time in British economic and social development, also contributed to the formation of middle-class consciousness. Turning Thorne’s thesis slightly more inward, Johnston’s recent article, “British Missionary Publishing, Missionary Celebrity, and Empire” (2005), considers how missionary texts produced popular Christian heroes from the religious pioneering realms in a “mass media campaign designed to promote both the institution and the work of its missionary representatives” (31). These critical arguments have gone further than any other in illustrating the power of religious rhetoric in the nineteenth century to galvanize a support base for unprecedented activity in far off regions of the world.  

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42 Christopher Herbert’s chapter, “Savagery, Culture, and the Subjectivity of Fieldwork in Early Polynesian Ethnography,” in *Culture and Anomie* also considers “missionary literature” as foundational for the development of ethnography. He provides a reading of anthropological discourse that connects missionary work and Evangelical tradition with the discipline of Anthropology. His choice of texts illustrates my argument that vocation must not determine generic categories, as only John Williams’s text conforms to the generic conventions of provocations.

43 In a brief article introducing the new Missionary Periodicals Database produced by the Henry Martyn Centre at Cambridge University, “What Mrs. Jellyby Might Have Read; Missionary Periodicals: A
Although these studies take significant strides towards establishing a more nuanced understanding of missionaries’ roles both at home and abroad, they are unconcerned with the place occupied by missionary texts, or what I will call provocations, within an intellectual history of literary production. While Thorne explores the Congregationalist culture that made foreign mission successful, and Johnston considers how missionary writing reveals their ambivalence about empire, I explore the ground between these two critics—the imaginative space that provocations occupy within the broad strata of nineteenth-century evangelical Christian thought. Included in this neglected imaginative arena is the integral but largely ignored aspect of identity positioning based upon theological formulation. If we are to understand the texts of a group that defined itself according to the praxis of certain theological interpretations, we have to think about their theology and socio-religious rhetoric. Missionary works were produced by men with an evangelical worldview, for an Evangelical audience, and with particular religious purposes in mind. Within Evangelical culture, provocations emerged as the most popular form of extended reading because they satisfied the dictates of practical theology required of acceptable literature, but they also opened their readers’ imaginations to exciting and unknown lands on the edge of empire.

In the latter half of the chapter, I explore the formation of provocations about China and their practical function in Evangelical culture. Extending in influence beyond the Evangelical archive, missionary writings from China are significant because their role

Neglected Source,” archivist Terry Barringer suggests the importance of these sources for the study of the Victorian period, writing, “Missionary periodicals are a neglected source for an understanding of the Victorian period and especially for understanding how the Victorians perceived and portrayed the non-European world and how attitudes changed over time…The relationship of religion and empire, or the specifically religious dimensions of the imperial urge, have more often than not been ignored while missionaries, one of the largest, loudest and most influential groups involved in the affairs of the British overseas, have attracted little detailed study from students of imperialism” (46).
is particularly pronounced in the English literary history concerning China, to the extent that in British cultural interaction with China from 1800-1845, as later chapters will show, provocations performed an even more powerful political function than did the novel; in the absence of novels about China or referring to China in this period, these works complicate the virtually unchallenged notion that “the novel, as a cultural artifact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other” (Said 71).

Although Said has been abundantly supported as correctly identifying an inherent link between novel form and imperialism, this study of provocations shows that other forms of imperialism might well have their own forms of writing more suited to their ends, by which the novel is rendered redundant.

I. The Community and its Archive

Without growing entangled in the niceties of ecclesiology, I must briefly explain the definition I am using for Evangelical before moving on to consider their literary tradition. In Religion of the Heart, the definitive study on Anglican Evangelicalism and the nineteenth-century novel, Elisabeth Jay has taken great pains to distinguish Establishment believers in a certain set of doctrines from their Dissenting counterparts who believed in similar doctrines. Confusingly, while Jay uses the term Evangelical to refer to a party of the Church of England, the doctrines they shared with most Dissenters are also conventionally called “evangelical,” or “of the gospel,” as clarified by historian David Bebbington in his standard study on Evangelicalism in Modern Britain.\footnote{Bebbington acknowledges Jay’s point about certain divergent roots, but argues that, “In reality, for all their divergences, their common inheritance was far more significant than [Jay’s] usage suggests” (278). In The Age of Atonement, Boyd Hilton confines the term chronologically to refer to the “gamut of attitudes and beliefs, the evangelical Weltanschaung” of the third and fourth generations after the eighteenth-century Evangelical revival (7). Since this is the period I am concerned with, I necessarily adopt his...
Nevertheless, Jay and Bebbington agree generally on what constitutes evangelical belief. These beliefs can be reduced to four emphases: “conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and…crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross” (Bebbington 3). Bebbington argues that although beliefs about church polity ultimately divided Anglican Evangelicals and Dissenting Evangelicals, they were primarily of a shared subculture based on their worldview, on their common heritage from the eighteenth-century revival movement, their practical relational ties, and their shared emphasis on spreading the gospel. In my study, I have chosen to follow Bebbington’s use of Evangelical, primarily because the reading habits and hermeneutic theories of believers in evangelical doctrines united Anglican and Dissenter rather than divided them.

I should also note my adherence to an idea of “Evangelical culture,” while taking into consideration Christopher Herbert’s deconstruction of culture as a meaningful signifier in *Culture and Anomie* (1991). As I explain below, Evangelicals understood themselves as spiritual participants in what Herbert describes as “a dominant trait, genius, [and] stylistic principle presiding over every dimension of [their] life [as] a people and giving every custom a primary character of expressivity” (202). Where Herbert argues that any idea of culture, at least in an anthropological sense, is based on unobservable and mystical qualities to which social practices are linked through a sort of willful self-deception, Evangelicals affirmed the existence of and actively pursued this mystical notion. They thought of themselves as part of an invisible unity—the Church. Despite a

qualifiers. In my use of “evangelical,” the word with a lower case refers to the beliefs, which can be analyzed independently from people who held them, “Evangelicals” with an upper case.
retrospective recognition that those calling themselves Evangelical, even in their most cooperative moments, were actually fragmented in belief and ambivalent about many Evangelical customs, the astonishing fact of their perceived unity through the Holy Spirit of God and the dictates of the Bible shows the power of this theoretical construct to create and maintain an independent culture.

Those studying the nineteenth century, and especially scholars in Victorian studies, readily admit the powerful influence of Evangelicalism on British society, not only at the personal level but more generally on demography and the social mores of the period. This influence, which Owen Chadwick has called “the strongest religious force in British life” (1:5), would be hard to deny given that by 1853, over a third of the Anglican clergy were Evangelical, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, J.B. Sumner. Likewise, according to the Religious Census of 1851, Congregationalists in England had more than quadrupled since 1800 and Methodists had tripled, while the population had only doubled in that time.45 The obvious conclusion is that the Evangelical movement proved exceedingly fruitful in the first half of the century. But results of the movement were not confined to those participating in Evangelical churches. Social historians of every persuasion have noted that the activism central to Evangelical culture continually pushed them to move against popular practices that struck them as inimical to their worldview. As Wilberforce frequently contended, “The tree is to be known by its fruits: and there is too much reason to fear that there is no principle of faith when it does not

45 Statistics taken from Bebbington (106-108). Donald Lewis also reports that by 1844, according to a never-published report prepared for the editor of the Times, the majority of the eighty-nine leading London clergy were Evangelicals (5). This was a drastic shift if we can believe Gladstone, who recalled in 1878 that before 1830, “not a single London parish, west of Temple Bar, was in the hands of the Evangelical party” (213).
decidedly evince itself by the fruits of holiness‖ (126), whether that be by battling slavery and child labor, or alcoholism and the opium trade. Likewise, within the realm of literature we can also see the impact of the Evangelical assault. As Patrick Scott has shown in “The Business of Belief: The Emergence of Religious Publishing,” the market share of religious books between 1801 to 1835 was roughly 22.2 percent, but between 1836 and 1863 their position rose to 33.5 percent (Jay, *Religion 7*). These figures suggest that not only were they increasingly active politically, but their motivational ideas were fomenting in a specifically Evangelical intellectual conversation.

Given the extent of the population that Evangelicals composed and their pervasive impact on society at large, it is the more surprising that no thorough study has been conducted on their literary culture. Many studies of Victorian literature assume the influence of Evangelicalism on nineteenth-century culture as an age of reform, expansion, and moralism, to the degree that Victorian manners and domestic sensibilities are connected intrinsically to Evangelical values. It is less often recognized among scholars of literature, however, that prior to the Evangelical reforming influence finding its way into law—and likewise into popular fiction—this group maintained a conscious separation from mainstream social practices and argued for such a position in their extensive publications. United by an “enthusiasm” for evangelical faith, “paedobaptist and anti-paedobaptist, Churchman and Dissenter, and in some cases even…Arminians and Calvinists” set themselves in an oppositional stance toward the rest of society (Lovegrove 37). One hears the counter-cultural note in the very title of William Wilberforce’s famous treatise, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in This Country Contrasted with*
Real Christianity (1797). Their separation did not go without notice by the rest of society either. Robert Southey’s article on the rise of “Evangelical Sects” in the Quarterly Review of 1810 shows the general estimation of this group as a marginal, though peculiar subculture: “they form a distinct people in the empire, having their peculiar laws and manners, a hierarchy, a costume, and even a physiognomy of their own.”46 There was no doubt in the minds of either Southey or Wilberforce that the “prevailing religious system”—and in that religious age we might as easily say the prevailing ideology—was not Evangelical Christianity.

Separation and distinctiveness had been a significant part of Evangelical discourse since the earliest days of the Evangelical Revival. In the midst of mass conversions, often with an extreme emotional element, church leaders were immediately forced to consider the real from the counterfeit. Read widely both in America and England, Jonathan Edwards’s Treatise Concerning Religious Affections (1746) attempts to show, in the wake of the trans-Atlantic Evangelical Revival, that there are no absolute signs “to enable any certainly to distinguish true affection from false in others; or to determine positively which of their neighbors are true professors, and which are hypocrites” (153); nevertheless, his treatise drives towards the point that “Christian practice or a holy life…is the principal sign by which Christians are to judge, both of their own and others’ sincerity of godliness” (166). Harkening back to Calvin’s teaching on the Elect, Edwards maintains that none can know the eternal destiny of anyone else, yet the sudden influx of professing Christians required him and other pastors to make distinctions within their congregations. They feared that should too many of the new believers fall away, the

legitimacy of the message and the remaining faithful might be undermined. Their conclusion to this problem was to bring together “profession” and “appearance endowed with Christian grace and piety,” or in other words, behavior (Edwards, An Humble Inquiry 184). As with Edwards, this teaching marked the Methodist movement in Britain under John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitfield. Their emphasis on holiness and praxis of faith, which marked eighteenth-century Evangelical teaching in general, reached the apogee of its dissemination in the first half of the nineteenth century with the discourse of distinctiveness: the real versus the counterfeit and the serious versus the vain.47

The general tenor of the Evangelical Archive makes distinctiveness of life (behavior) and emphasis on the Gospel the grounds for recognizing and maintaining a community of saints—an invisible Church—very like what Benedict Anderson has called “imagined communities” in his study on nationalism, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1983). In the abstract, the spiritual communion of Christians was based on shared adherence to the “peculiar doctrines of the Gospel,” which became the “grand distinction which subsists between the true Christian and the Religionists” (Wilberforce 166). As in Anderson’s account of imagined communities, this worldview could theoretically remove the barriers between classes in a “deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). Where belief and piety are the only grounds of admission, and these qualities are set against an equally broad Other, anyone could be welcomed into the community of believers. Perhaps even more important for their community consciousness

47 The turn towards seriousness is the focus of Ian Bradley’s book on the early nineteenth-century Evangelicals, The Call to Seriousness (1976), in which he argues that in their theology Evangelicals were reacting against the “worldliness and complacency” of eighteenth-century England and against the “vague, undemanding concept of Christianity” taught in the Established Church.
than parish life was their emphasis on the impending millennial reign of Christ on earth, followed by the perfect kingdom of heaven forever. In a spiritual iteration of Anderson’s conception of the imagined community of a nation, which must be “imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (7), Evangelicals believed in an imminent future community that would include anyone who had acknowledged the resurrection and rule of Christ. This spiritual nation would be limited, yes, but only by choice. In his Age of Atonement (1988), historian Boyd Hilton has noted the significance of eschatology in shaping Evangelical attitudes towards culture and political economy. Because Evangelicals especially concerned with the millennial reign of Christ also believed that admission to the Kingdom required hearing of the good news of free salvation, they were all the more compelled to take the Gospel to all the nations of the world. As many as possible needed to hear the Gospel before Christ returned to earth. For this lofty goal of world evangelization, divisions of denomination and church polity were set aside in an unprecedented and fleeting agreement on the importance of upholding and spreading the Gospel message. 48 As one missionary to China expressed it, “I solicit the prayers of CHRISTIANS OF EVERY DENOMINATION. For I do not go forth to publish the peculiarities of a sect, or to seek the triumph of a party; but ‘to preach the acceptable year of the lord,’ and to seek the promotion of TRUTH and HOLINESS among men . . .” (Milne, Memoirs 19).

48 In Lighten Their Darkness (1986), Donald Lewis revises an older emphasis in historical scholarship of nineteenth-century British religion on divisions between the established church and amongst various bodies of dissenters. He maintains that there was a great deal of theological, polemical, and social cooperation between the strains of Evangelicalism, arguing, “The key factor—the hinge upon which such early cooperation turned—was a shared concern for urban evangelism” (2). My study can be understood as a colonial complement to his more localized thesis.
This appeal to unity across class and denomination was all the more easily performed because members of the upper, middle, and working classes each maintained their separate social groups and frequented churches of their favored ecclesiology. As historians Michael Watts and Deryck Lovegrove have abundantly shown, the division between church and chapel was more often than not a division between classes, with an additional rural versus urban element respectively. Mixing between class and location was the labor of a select few itinerant preachers, such as the Anglican Rowland Hill, who were noticeably atypical. In reality, cross-class agreement and communion remained largely in the theoretical, or imagined realm, through the means of the written word. Although members of the upper and middle class are well noted for their acts of service and generosity to members of the working class, these acts were more often conscious stretches across real divides. This type of service reminded Evangelicals that their spiritual unity was indeed in the realm of the imaginary and so required all the more emphasis on their shared beliefs as expressed through their writing.

For many Evangelicals, the choice of church often depended on the question: “Do they preach the Gospel?” The preaching and enthusiastic reception of the Gospel became the determining marks for inclusion or exclusion in the ranks of “true Christians.” As the Rev. Edward Bickersteth wrote, “But depend upon it the great reason why men do not understand their bible, is because their hearts are unrenewed by divine grace. How can an earthly, sensual, worldly-minded man, enter into the meaning of the pure, holy, and heavenly truths of the gospel?” (qtd. in Jay 70). Again adding to Evangelical exclusivism, believers were advised to find a church that preached the Gospel, even if it meant a break with tradition. In George Eliot’s “Janet’s Repentance,” the new Evangelical curate Mr.
Tryan attempts to “obtain authority from Mr. Prendergast, the non-resident rector, to establish a Sunday evening lecture in the parish church, on the ground that old Mr. Crewe did not preach the Gospel” (182). Though Tryan succeeds in his request, despite some grumbling from various quarters of the community, oftentimes such attempts were successfully opposed by anti-evangelical clergy and parishioners. If the expedient of an evening evangelical service was not granted, people went over to dissenting churches. Even Simeon, convinced Anglican churchman as he was, “could not blame a man for turning to [Dissent] ‘where the Gospel truth is not declared in the Church pulpit’” (qtd. in Lewis 12). In Memoirs of the Rev. William Milne, Milne explains his own move from the Kirk of Scotland to a dissenting body:

I would not have left it had I found the preaching in the place . . . equally evangelical and edifying as among those with whom I united. It was not, however, the difference between that preaching which was chiefly legal and moral, and that which is evangelical and spiritual . . . but it was the very different effect which I felt produced in myself, and saw displayed in others by these two ways of preaching. (9)

This “very different effect” that he “felt produced in [himself], and saw displayed in others” was sufficiently apparent to alarm his family, who believed that he was “under the influence of certain feelings, which were exceedingly dangerous . . .” (10). It is not surprising that Evangelicals, willing to turn from their own families for the sake of “that which is evangelical and spiritual,” should place an exceedingly high value on their communities of faith.

The emergence of an Evangelical Archive became the effective means for supporting a spiritual community that must otherwise remain almost entirely an abstraction. Imaginatively connected as a unified group with thousands of people they
would never meet, and set over and against a “worldly” Other, Evangelicals found a network of connection within their distinct periodicals, pamphlets, published sermons, and finally provocations. Like Anderson’s emphases on print-capitalism and unifying vernaculars in the early phases of national consciousness, Evangelicals utilized their own distinctive print material and theological buzzwords to unite scattered families and congregations in a cohesive network.

Their attempts to inculcate a distinctively practical evangelical faith ranged from private devotional practice to corporate instruction and activity. On one hand, Evangelical teachers believed that a person’s practical holiness began with a change of heart, from which their tastes and behaviors would take shape. As Wilberforce explains, “our becoming true Christians” depends upon a “thorough change, a renovation of our nature,” from which “good dispositions” and right action flow (Practical View 41). This directional flow from the heart to the mind was thought to reflect the real concerns of God, as Lord Shaftesbury considered in his diary, “God cares little for man’s intellect, he cares greatly for man’s heart” (527). By surrendering one’s heart to the Spirit of God, the mind would follow and form what Hannah More described as a new “disposition, a habit, a temper: …not a name but a nature: it is a turning the whole mind to God” (qtd. in Bradley 20). Evangelical phraseology typically cast this sanctifying work of the Spirit as a sort of passive reception, or internal surrender, by a person’s will to the influences of God’s Spirit. God himself must be the teacher.

On the other hand, Evangelical leaders taught extensively on the importance of active obedience to God’s standards. Charles Simeon considered this paradox of the passive and active as central to teaching the Evangelical faith:
[It] consists of two aspects: of being in Christ for salvation, and of obedience to the law for his sake. Christ must be set forth as the only foundation for a sinner’s hope. Likewise holiness in all its aspects must be insisted upon. A sense of Christ’s love in dying for us must be inculcated as the mainspring and motive for all our obedience. (Sermon 1933, 51; emphasis mine)

While the possibility and force for obedience derives from Christ, the actuality of holiness in life derives from obeying what is taught. In consequence, Evangelical pastors and writers carried a great burden, as Simeon expresses it, for insisting upon and inculcating how that life should be lived. Though God must change the heart, he calls faithful men, in their own vernacular, to “use means” to change the mind.

This heavy-handed philosophy of ministry, for which Wesley and Whitfield among dissenters and Simeon among the Established church are given credit for disseminating, imprinted every part of the Evangelical approach to faith. In particular, Evangelicals elevated the role of teaching to the central place in their public practice. Sermons, and the art of sermonizing, became the special realm of Evangelical authority.49 In consequence, typical believers looked to sermons—both delivered and written—for their primary aid of practical instruction in their worldview. This popular practice of hearing sermons, especially given on special occasions, should not be overlooked as a shaping force on the culture, in attendance rivaling the emergence of popular sports in the twentieth century. An exciting preacher passing through town was certain to draw a crowd. Reflecting on his college days in Oxford, William Gladstone remembers going “twice to the Baptist chapel at Oxford, once to hear Dr. Chalmers, and once to hear Mr. Rowland Hill,” two men who were among the most revered teachers among the

49 Elisabeth Jay points out that some Evangelicals retrospectively considered that they had “attached a somewhat excessive importance to this part of the service,” a point that was noted particularly strongly after the Oxford Movement’s mission to bring the sacraments back to the center of worship (122).
Evangelicals (231). Similarly, Ian Bradley points out that when Leigh Richmond preached at a Sheffield parish church in 1814, “3,500 people managed to get into the church to hear him, leaving many others outside, and when he subsequently preached at three services in Bradford the congregations were estimated at two, three and four thousand respectively” (65). Not only did these popular preachers bring an audience, but even local preachers who were known to give a good sermon might speak to thousands. In the early years of Simeon’s ministry, Rev. John Berridge wrote to John Newton, “He preaches at a church in the town which is crowded like a theater on the first night of a new play” (qtd. in Stott, “Introduction” xxx). Turning rhetorical art to the advantage of their ideological efforts, Evangelical leaders taught their hearers in a comprehensible medium that could be understood by anyone. They were rewarded by rapt attention and an expectation from their congregations that they would guide them in the rule of faith.

Another didactic method developed by the Wesleys and adopted for the Evangelical community at large was the use of hymnody for instruction and encouragement. Perhaps more than any other aspect of Evangelical culture, even for those departing from the faith later in life, the singing of hymns echoed in the childhood memories of many in the nineteenth century. With regular rhythms and a poetry of experience, “singing hymns was an essential part of the excitement and sense of expectation” in Evangelical services (Watts 180). Hymns composed in the eighteenth century, particularly those by Charles Wesley who wrote an astounding 6500 hymns in his lifetime, remained part of the church services throughout the nineteenth century. With such lasting impact, Ian Bradley calls hymn-singing the “most important new

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50 Even at the turn of the twentieth century, 500 of Wesley’s hymns were still in regular use, including the still-popular “Hark! the herald angels sing!” and “Christ the Lord is risen today” (Watts 181).
feature which the Evangelicals introduced into the services of the Church of England” (64), and James Martineau considered that the Wesleyan hymnbook was, “after the Scriptures...the grandest instrument of popular religious culture that Christendom has ever produced” (qtd. in Watts 181).

What is perhaps most significant about hymns within the Evangelical archive is that they were educational devices, which David Bebbington considers “part of the [Evangelical’s] vast educational campaign” (68). The lasting impact of hymns was largely due to their unique combination of aesthetic appeal and instructional value. In his article on the Evangelical Sects in the Quarterly Review, Robert Southey noted the astute way in which Evangelicals used music both to create a sense of unity and to instruct. He explains their approach:

[Evangelicals have] always kept in view the sound principle, that all the congregation shall join in praises to their Creator, and therefore he has introduced few tunes but what may quickly be caught by the ear. ... They tell their preachers to preach frequently on singing, to recommend their tune books everywhere, often to stop the people short in their hymns, and ask them, ‘Now, do you know what you said last? Do you speak no more than you feel?’ ... (505)

In order to achieve the larger goal of instilling doctrines among the many, they set their theological poesy to catchy melodies. By enjoying lyrical theology with the music of exciting songs, the people were more apt to imbibe deeply the gospel message contained in the hymns. But lest their teaching slip by the singers, preachers were to draw the attention of the congregation to the meaning of the songs.

As in all genres of the Evangelical archive, hymns concentrated most on what historian Martin Spence has characterized as “praise and adoration to a merciful God” or “the proclamation of the Gospel” (1). Whether in gratitude for salvation or for proclamation, at least some portion of the Gospel story provided the subject matter for
almost every hymn of the early nineteenth century. Hymns like C. Wesley’s “And can it be,” John Newton’s “Amazing Grace,” and Isaac Watts “When I survey the wondrous Cross,” were all meant to encourage in the singers an emotional attachment to the Gospel story that was to shape their worldview. By engaging the emotions, hymns were designed to aid sanctification both from the heart and the mind. Stirred with love and gratitude for God’s mercy, people became excited about serving their Savior. At the same time, they were challenged in the mind by theological tenets carefully woven through the poesy, which were, as Isaac Watts noted, “in effect, a little body of experimental and practical divinity” (qtd. in Jay 125).

While sermons and hymns formed the corporately experienced side of the Evangelical archive, private reading was also crafted to engage the hearts and minds of the faithful. Certainly, few individuals could afford a personal subscription to a periodical or a full folio volume, but a regular subscription by a church or chapel enabled perusal by the entire congregation. The Preface to the inaugural issue of the *Evangelical Magazine* in 1793 displays consciousness of its expectedly wide audience and circulation, as “Thousands read a Magazine, who have neither money to purchase, nor leisure to peruse, large volumes” (1). Church libraries, reading groups, or even the parlor of the minister’s home, could cheaply serve as the Evangelical substitutes to the new circulating libraries that made available secular journals and novels.51

The tendency towards separation through the medium of reading was by no means missed by their secular contemporaries. “No works in this country,” writes one critic in

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51 Kathryn Sutherland, in “‘Events…have made us a world of readers’: Reader Relations1780-1830,” even mentions a group of working-class men in Gainsborough who made a joint subscription to the *Eclectic Review* through the 1820s (14).
the Quarterly Review, “are so widely circulated, and studied by so many thousand readers, as the Evangelical and Methodist Magazines, and...we have no hesitation in saying...that they tend to narrow the judgment, debase the intellect, and harden the heart” (508). The underlying complaint was that an Evangelical subculture, while manifestly benefiting its members, also undermined the national spirit and weakened the total fabric of British society. In addition, they were doing their work at an alarming rate. To the extent that the Evangelical journals achieved their object of nurturing a subculture with an evangelical worldview, they were the more despised by the non-Evangelical and secular portions of society.

The writings of missionaries, which I call provocations, owe their unique form, style, and thematic focus to this discourse of distinctiveness, from which their writers were cultivated and rhetorical devices developed. When the earliest missionaries to China, Robert Morrison and William Milne, reached the country in 1807 and 1813 respectively, they were expected to report to their supporting society, the London Missionary Society, about their activities and progress. Naturally, this correspondence fell into the idiom of their Evangelical culture. Their longer productions, as well as those of their missionary successors, likewise adopted the forms and rhetoric of Evangelicalism, which the Evangelical Magazine affirmed as ordered by “the true spirit of the Gospel.”

52 In writing of their own histories in foreign lands, missionaries knew they were on safe ground with their specific audience as long as they adhered to the principles of truth in story that had become the grounds of acceptable literature for their religious cohort. In particular, if their own stories might reflect the Gospel story, in which

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the lines of righteousness and unrighteousness are sharp and through which “the glad tidings of salvation [are conveyed] to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,” then they could definitely be assured of having honored their God in word as well as deed.

II. The Measure of Literature

The missionary concern for explicit separation of good and evil and the promotion of the Gospel in literature was as much a part of their cultural training as the doctrines they were taught to espouse. In many ways the widely disseminated treatise of William Wilberforce, which functioned as a practical textbook for the movement, set the operative standard for what he called the “Real Christianity” of Evangelicals. Attempting to cover all the realms of social life, he naturally provides a principle for entertainment:

Religion prohibits no amusement of gratification which is really innocent. The question, however, of its innocence, must not be tried by the loose maxims of worldly morality, but by the spirit of the injunctions of the word of God; and by the indulgence being conformable or not conformable to the genius of Christianity, and to the tempers and dispositions of mind enjoined on its professors. (284)

According to the principle that a Christian “desires to please God in all his thoughts, words and actions. . . . No calling is proscribed, no pursuit is forbidden, no science or art, no pleasure is disallowed” (247). His articulation of guiding scriptural principles—“the spirit of the injunctions of the word”—leaves the way open for private judgment, including an appreciation for varying personalities and levels of spiritual maturity. What could be innocently and righteously enjoyed by one brother ought to be avoided by another brother of different disposition. Spiritual discretion and self-awareness would always be required. Likewise, much in the realm of art could not be considered in itself
sinful, but contained in it the seeds of destruction, or as Bunyan had it, set one in the way of Vanity Fair or Doubting Castle.

For the critically-minded Wilberforce and others educated in the habit of self-reflection, principles of holiness could theoretically encompass a broad array of literature and entertainment. Lord Shaftesbury, with his frequently painful self-awareness, is an apt example of the prudent Evangelical reader, able to enjoy literature from classical antiquity up to contemporary poets. The common Evangelical, however, was eminently practical in the pursuit of righteousness. Without any finely nuanced theological defense, he or she wanted to be told what was acceptable and what was not. For the most part, the crafting of taste for the Evangelical subculture became the special duty of the Evangelical journals: The Evangelical Magazine, Baptist Magazine, Missionary Magazine, Methodist Magazine, Eclectic Review, Christian Observer, Christian Guardian, and The Record.

Although subscription lists reveal significantly overlapping readership, each journal catered specifically to certain theological or ecclesiological bents.

Recognizing that the secular journals of the day had an increasing popularity and influence with middle-class readers, but at the same time finding their own worldview antagonistic to these popular periodicals, the multitudinous Evangelical societies set up subscription lists reveal cross-denominational readership, but more tellingly the list of philanthropic contributors, typically printed at the back of the last issue for the year, show that the cause of mission was sufficient to encourage financial support across denomination and theological emphasis. Contribution is inherently tied to circulation and readership because contribution entailed receipt of the society’s publication, much like membership in an academic organization.
their own monthlies and quarterlies to counteract the influence of the secular journals and to provide reading that would fit easily within the bounds of “innocent” entertainment.

The preface of the Eclectic Review in 1807 shows their conscious purpose to rival their secular counterparts:

To arouse the Christian world to a perception of the important influence which literature possesses, in obstructing, or accelerating, the progress of religious truth and human happiness, was the primary object, and to a very encouraging degree has been the result, of their disinterested efforts. It is, happily, no longer necessary to urge, that the customary employment of such an engine against the interests of Religion and Morality, is the clearest of all arguments for adopting it in their defence. [emphasis mine]

Conceiving themselves on the side of righteousness against the pernicious influence of the Edinburgh Review, Blackwood’s Magazine, and the Quarterly Review, Evangelicals turned to their own periodicals for interpretations of current events, for news of movements in the Church, for reports of missionary labor at home and abroad, and for recommendation on what other material would be suitable reading matter.

In the course of the Evangelical hegemonic assault, this development of countercultural and oppositional print material represents what Gramsci considered the “most patently ‘political’ phase” of hegemonic change (2: 180). Explaining the phase, he writes,

it is the phase in which previously germinated ideologies come into contact and confrontation with one another, until only one of them—or, at least, a single combination of them—tends to prevail, to dominate, to spread across the entire field, bringing about, in addition to economic and political unity, intellectual and moral unity, not on a corporate but on a universal level—the hegemony of a fundamental social group over the subordinate groups. (2: 181)

While later battles in the chambers of Parliament played out the confrontation of ideologies between the Evangelicals and the religious rationalists, the real battle for hegemony and “common sense” had already taken place in popular publications. As
historian David Hempton has pointed out in “Popular Evangelicalism and the Shaping of British Moral Sensibilities, 1770-1840,” the success of the Clapham Sect and Recordites in Parliamentary campaigns and legislation was due in large part to “formidable connectional machinery, [and] a huge publishing operation” (19). In the years of Wilberforce’s greatest political successes against the slave trade, “over 95% of all Wesleyan Methodists signed petitions” (16). The eventual domination and spread of Evangelical values and moral unity, their cultural hegemony, was intimately connected to their archive, and in particular, their review journals became the organs for disseminating ideological education.

Although the various journals each had a particular emphasis—the Christian Guardian, for example, tended toward Calvinism while the Christian Observer was Arminian—they were nevertheless held together by basic evangelical doctrines. They were enabled, therefore, to share articles, reviews and reports, and the same piece might even be printed simultaneously in several of the journals. One example is the simultaneous printing in the Evangelical Magazine (in London) and the Missionary Magazine (in Edinburgh), both of February 1806, of an excited editorial announcing the intention of the London Missionary Society to send Robert Morrison as the first missionary to China. It was typically in this area of spreading the Gospel that the societies and journals found most unity, as the common impulse for mission revealed their own close kinship, as well as a sense of alienation from the rest of society. As one

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55 The Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, or London Committee, was formed for the purpose of “procuring such Information and Evidence, and for distributing [Thomas] Clarkson’s Essay and such other Publications, as may tend to the Abolition of the Slave Trade.” Thoroughly Evangelical in membership, the Committee included Wilberforce, Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and Charles James Fox. All of them were “peculiarly suited to the task of mobilizing public opinion against the slave trade” (Oldfield 332). For an extensive treatment of the galvanizing of popular support, see Drescher, “Whose Abolition? Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave Trade.”
writer in the *Christian Observer* put it, “Every real and genuine endeavour to regulate our lives, and to try our actions by the Gospel-standard, is now-a-days branded with the appellation of enthusiasm or hypocrisy; and all attempts to promote, *by the only practicable means*, the extension of Christianity is called fanaticism.”

Because they considered themselves Other-worldly, Evangelicals worked tirelessly to change their world into one more agreeable to their purview, and their journals proved to be the most effective means of coordinating a collective vision.

The Evangelical view of popular culture—already shown as antagonistic—was particularly hostile in the early nineteenth century to the growing influence of novels, which they noted were “so universally diffused, so easy of access, and of so insidious a nature, as nearly to preclude the possibility of safety” (Mangin 12). Shaped by the increasingly pervasive belief in an imminent pre-millennial return of Christ, the early quarter of the century saw a hardening attitude towards anything that was perceived as part and parcel of a perishing order. Even when the more dominant view of Christ’s return later shifted to post-millenialism, in which his return would be preceded, and therefore hastened, by the worldwide rule of Christendom, novel-reading could be cast as distracting from the spread of that Kingdom. In conformity with a strong belief in personal accountability on an impending Day of Judgment, as Ian Bradley has shown, the Evangelical teachers of the day emphasized “seriousness” of mind and the rejection of any vain expenditures of time and energy. In the face of a soon-returning Christ, there could be little place for idle use of an hour.

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57 Evangelicals were not alone in their dislike for novel-reading. In *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Coleridge takes a strikingly similar line regarding the stewardship of one’s time. Castigating the “devotees
Not only was novel-reading considered poor stewardship of one’s time, Evangelicals believed novels to be dangerous to the emotional balance and spiritual health of a reader. Leading the flock of the “serious” away from the vice-laden path of novel-reading was the irrepressible Hannah More. As one who valued reading and writing, her complaint against novels was less about misuse of time and more concerned with content and moral effect. In *Hints Towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess* (1805), she unequivocally condemns novelists, who “not only seduce the heart through the senses, and corrupt it through the medium of the imagination, but fatally strike at the very root and being of all virtue, by annihilating all belief in that religion which is its only vital source and seminal principle” (qtd. in Newell 8). It seemed obvious to More that if Evangelicals chose their reading matter according to spiritual principles, then they would steer clear of secular novels. After all, “What has Christ to do with Apollo?” But even as the Apostle Paul had to confront this seemingly obvious disjunction in worship, More also feared the invasive influence of novels among the less-discerning female Evangelical population, and in *Strictures on the modern system of female education*, she labors to illustrate how “the corruption occasioned by these books has spread so wide, and descended so low, as to have become one of the most universal as well as most pernicious sources of corruption among us” (131).

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58 With renewed attention to female authors of the Romantic period, More has received an increasing amount of scholarly attention, much of it attempting to avoid or reinterpret her extreme Evangelicalism as proto-feminism and populism. See the recent articles by Jane Nardin, “Avoiding the Perils of the Muse”; Emily Rena-Dozier, “Hannah More and the Invention of Narrative Authority”; and Kevin Gilmartin, “‘Study to be Quiet’: Hannah More and the Invention of Conservative Culture in Britain.”
In her own battle against the corrupting effects of novels, and in a truly evangelistic spirit, More went so far as to extend her hand into the lions’ den by writing a “decent” novel intended for readers in the circulating libraries. She recognized, as did the Rev. Edward Mangin, that it was “the sons and daughters of the gentleman and the tradesman…the very life-blood of the realm” who had become “the principal victims of this idle literature” (Mangin 12). As with her later efforts with the Religious Tract Society, More decided these innocents needed the Gospel message to come to them on their own terms. In a letter to William Pepys, she justifies her approach with her first novel, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*:

> I wrote it to amuse the languor of disease. I thought there were already good books enough in the world for good people; but there was a large class of readers whose wants had not been attended to;—the subscribers to the circulating library. A little to raise the tone of that mart of mischief, and to counteract its corruptions, I thought was an object worth attempting. (qtd. in Newell 8)

Although *Coelebs* was written by an Evangelical, it cannot realistically be considered an Evangelical novel because it was not intended for an Evangelical audience. On the contrary, More would have been disappointed had the work been embraced by Evangelicals but rejected by secular readers. It was a work of cross-cultural evangelism. Interestingly, the *Christian Observer* found that the anonymously published and thoroughly moralistic *Coelebs* was “‘apt to be vulgar’ and discovered in it ‘some want of taste and strict moral delicacy’” (Newell 9). Beginning their review with, “It may be very true that novels are mischievous; but we cannot allow this work to be called a novel” the

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59 Although there is no way to determine whether her work produced any spiritual effect, the book certainly reached a large number of readers, going through twelve editions within a year of its publication. Along with Coelebs, More’s morally didactic essays and tracts “reached more contemporary readers than Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, and Mary Shelley combined” (Nardin 390).
reviewers were more ready to deny that this was a novel than call a novel worthwhile reading and thereby open the broad gates that would lead to Destruction.

Following the leadership of Wilberforce and More, Evangelical periodicals were clear that their readers should not expect to find reviews of novels, implicitly suggesting that such matter was not fit for Evangelical Christians. Occasionally, when a popular novel gained repute for decency and positive moral content—as in the case of Coelebs or R.W. Cunningham’s The Velvet Cushion—reviewers of “Religious Publications” felt pressed to explain their stance more explicitly, as in 1815 when the Evangelical Magazine strongly stated, “we will guard the Christian church against affording much countenance to novels; for though they may be multiplied by the religious to an indefinite extent…yet they create so ravenous an appetite, that they will send our young people to the circulating library for trash poisonous to the soul” (17). Again, silence towards secular works was typically enough to discourage potential readers in the Evangelical network, but under pressure from the success of Scott’s Waverly novels, the Christian Observer became explicit in 1834.

It was only in our last Number that we mentioned the displeasure we have incurred by our oft-expressed opinion respecting the Waverly Novels; and as for the publications of Mr. Bulwer, Theodore Hook, Leigh Hunt, and various other popular authors, so far as our pages are concerned, it would be a secret to the world that the writers had lived, or their works been written. …we are usually as unconscious of the last new popular work of fiction as of the last edict of the Grand Lama of Thibet. …We do not, however, think that those who cannot find entertainment in argument should be deprived of a reasonable share of lighter matter; and there is always one resource in particular, which all classes of persons, the superficial as well as the most meditative, may in common avail themselves of—namely, interesting and useful narrative, especially religious biography—and we are therefore always happy to intersperse both our reviews and other papers with a large portion of this unexceptionable nutriment.60

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In this suggestion by the *Christian Observer*, there is recognition of the value of story and of a basic human tendency to delight in narrative. The reviewers were well aware that the works of Scott, Bulwer, Hook, and Hunt were widely read—even by curious Evangelicals—but they suggest by their silence that Evangelicals should have no more to do with such works than with the Buddhist Lamaism of Thibet.

Due to the popular success of secular novels, Evangelical leadership and reviewers had been forced to rethink their defensive posture against the idle hour of entertainment. Wilberforce had early seen the power of novelists to influence social mores by pretending “exact delineations of life and manners… [and] the prevalent opinions and feelings of mankind” (395). He understood that literary imagination was attractive to readers interested in the world beyond their immediate sphere.

Nevertheless, the Evangelical hermeneutic for reading Scripture supplied a model restricted to literal, linear truth through direct narrative and instruction. The beauty and didactic quality of story was admitted, but only insofar as any particular story reflected or participated in the one Grand Story, the Gospel of God’s incarnation, redemption, and eternal reign. With their understanding of human nature as made to “glorify God and enjoy Him forever,” it would be essentially natural for all people to be interested in stories that reflect the plot of redemptive history. At the same time, though, their belief that “natural man’s affections are wretchedly misplaced…wholly disordered and distempered,” suggested that the natural interest in story would be twisted so that unregenerate people would prefer corrupt and false stories rather than true and factual ones (Boston 127). Believers, on the other hand, ought to prefer true stories, especially those that encourage imitation of Christian virtue.
III. Provocations and the Domestic Cultural Context

One way to address the desire for story might hypothetically have been the production of Evangelical novels based on actual experience, along the lines of *Coelebs* but intended for an Evangelical audience—a solution that was adopted in the latter half of the century. But the early-century Evangelical mindset, with their strict understanding of stewardship, kept this approach at bay: as Newell has described their attitude, “if an evangelical Christian can write he has something more important to convey than mere imaginative fiction, whether it be in prose or in verse” (3). Evangelical orthodoxy would not permit either reading or writing about matters unconnected with God’s *actual* work in the world. The actual was too great to be passed over for the fictional.

The solution that formed itself in practice was that which was recommended explicitly by the *Christian Observer* in 1834: “namely, interesting and useful narrative, especially religious biography” (732). These interesting and useful narratives, which ranged from historical to contemporary, followed two groups of people: domestic Evangelicals and Evangelicals abroad. Both were firmly fixed within the Evangelical subculture, and both were intended to provide real models of Christian piety and action, while at the same time fulfilling the desire for imaginative entertainment that focused on a larger imagined community. These works filled the central position in the Evangelical archive of the first half of the nineteenth century.

The use of biographical narrative to instill Evangelical ideals was an ideological device as old as the Reformation, when Protestant Christians adapted traditional Catholic
hagiography but with a conscious de-emphasis on the labor of the man vis-à-vis exalting the interposition of God. Heavy-laden with didacticism and doctrinally-specific rhetoric, biographical narrative usefully complemented the straight and dry theological treatise and served as instructive pieces for an audience much wider than the philosophically educated. In this tradition, brief biographies of Evangelical saints like Calvin, Luther, and Wesley took prime position in the pages of the best-selling *Evangelical Magazine, Missionary Magazine*, and *Methodist Magazine*. Throughout the century, new Evangelical saints like Wilberforce, John Newton, Isaac Watts, and Thomas Chalmers were added to the hagiography of the Evangelical journals, perhaps providing motifs that merged into the caricatures of clerical figures in secular fiction later in the century.\(^{61}\)

These narratives of national “Protestant saints” demand investigation as the Evangelical counterpoint to domestic fiction in the early century, but my concern in this short study is with the second type of narrative, that concerning Evangelicals abroad.

When Evangelical critics recommended the reading of “interesting and useful narratives, especially religious biography,” they were trying to balance the increasingly popular desire for story with their own standards of honesty and attention to the work of God. Self-evidently, the writings of missionaries filled this bill exceedingly well. Missionaries attempted to settle in lands that few, if any, other British people might ever see, and often they were ahead of other imperial agents in making contact with foreign communities. By almost any measure, their lives were interesting (though few then or now would say enviable). It should not be surprising that narratives of their settlement

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\(^{61}\) The investigation and critique of these images is the main task of Elisabeth Jay in *Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (1979). Among the novels partaking most in caricature, she especially considers Mrs. Trollope’s *The Vicar of Wrexhill*, Anthony Trollope’s *Barchester Towers*, George Eliot’s *Adam Bede*, and Dickens’s *Bleak House*. 
and their survival (or deaths) in distant lands would be captivating for segments of the British population who were wrestling with the notion that the world contained many civilizations unlike their own, and yet highly developed. Missionary authorship likewise provided assumed honesty regarding these moments of what Mary Louise Pratt has called “first contact.”

Many other British and Continental travelers were producing narratives, and these were certainly of value to religious readers. In 1817 the Eclectic Review explained why travel writing was so popular: “Narratives of travels in distant parts of the world, come, in the present times, with a recommendation derived from the state of things nearer home.” The wars on the Continent and conflicts in the Atlantic, along with economic difficulties and the pains of industrialization, caused readers to “look away to those remote parts of the world, to which the narratives of travelers enable us to carry our imagination.”

Unlike the danger of fiction, travel writing could imaginatively transport the reader to more interesting and exciting lands away from the difficulties of a changing Europe, but at the same time remain within the bounds of honesty. But missionary writing provided the added benefits of spiritual authority—thereby assumed better vision and attention to moments of real import—along with religious instruction. In a review of six different missionary narratives from the preceding year, a writer for the Christian Observer in 1836 explores the superiority of a permanent Christian evangelist over a secular traveler.

The Christian missionary stands on higher ground than either the popular or the scientific traveler. He may, with the former, observe what is most memorable [about] the places which he visits; and with the greater advantage, because his

visit is often of long duration: while, with the latter, he may notice… the chief phenomena of natural history, botany, geology, meteorology, and so forth. But the staple of his observations will have reference to mankind in the most important of all relations: he goes out determined, like St. Paul, “to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.” (186)

Secular travelers, or even Christian tourists of a rationalist bent, might present interesting perspectives on other peoples and weigh in on the debate about the “scale of civilizations,” but their concerns lacked the theological observance most intriguing to Evangelical readers. At a moment when their view of the world was open to challenge, the presence of an Evangelical representative at the site of contact gave greater significance to how the measurement of those civilizations would play out. Even more important to readers of missionary texts than the details of “first contact” was the explicit religious content of the narratives. At least in their rhetoric, Evangelicals were interested in foreign peoples primarily because, “in darkness and the shadow of death,” native populations were in need of the “glad tidings of salvation.” Missionary writing encouraged Evangelical readers that others outside the West might be receptive to their beliefs, that their worldview had wider relevance. In the eyes of their readers, missionary narratives were as far above travel writing as the cause of the Gospel was above sight-seeing.

By setting apart the extended personal reflections of missionaries for isolated consideration, I follow nineteenth-century precedent. As revealed by the above-quoted article “Proceedings of Missionaries” in the *Christian Observer* for 1836, narratives by Evangelicals living abroad were recognized as a genre of their own, although without clear definition. The writer of this particular review calls them collectively “proceedings

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of missionaries,” later refers to them as “missionary narratives,” but also takes a cue from one of their titles, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary’s Journal in 1835*, by Archdeacon Wix, and calls them “missionary journals.” Despite a lack of consistency in nomenclature, there remains definite classification. Not only did this review require the general associating of the works for critical consideration, but the reviewer explicitly categorizes “Missionary narratives” as “a peculiar, and if well-written a most interesting and instructive, species of composition” (186). This division of “species” of composition, like “genre,” concerns relationships of essential qualities in the writing such as form, function, and literary device.

Although I generally agree with the generic considerations in Anna Johnston’s *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860*, who is perhaps the first literary critic to claim that “missionary writing conforms to an identifiable set of generic regulations,” I think it necessary to depart from the typical inclusion of these works under the broad descriptors of “travel writing,” “missionary narratives,” “missionary literature,” “missionary writing,” or “missionary texts” (6). I have chosen to call them provocations. I have already discussed how, even to contemporaries, “travel writing” fails as a misnomer for missionaries’ works because the authors were typically resident for decades in the regions about which they wrote; often they traveled very little; and usually these authors expected to die in their chosen location of exile. Likewise, the latter terms that bind the set of texts to the vocation of the writers offer an equally incongruent connection. Were this the mode of identifying forms of writing, we must have terms such as “law clerk writing,” “professor writing,” or “loaﬁng aristocrat writing.” More to the
point, though, works that comprise provocations were not all written by professional missionaries, although the largest portion certainly were.

By calling these works provocations, I aim to capture something of the tone of these works while also retaining a sense of their purpose. In what little writing has been done on mission literature, critics have thought about these writings predominantly with an eye to their representations of foreigners as subservient to propagandist cultural aims.

Anna Johnston’s overall assessment of the genre is helpful:

They are fundamentally and frankly propagandist in nature. Their aim was variously to inculcate public support for missionary endeavours; to ensure an ongoing supply of donated funds from individuals, institutions, and governments; to cultivate a community of like-minded British citizens who would stand up for missionary interests in the face of more aggressive mercantile, industrial, or territorial interests; and to encourage a community of potential missionary recruits. (6)

These texts galvanize support and encourage movement; in short, they provoke. More specifically, though, they provoke “a community of like-minded British citizens,” whom I have identified as Evangelicals, while for other segments of the general population the explicit Gospel focus of provocations was distasteful, nourishing a “sectarian spirit…at the expense of national spirit.” Among the objects for their provoking were certainly public—yet limited to their subculture—support for missionary endeavors and a supply

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64 After analysis, some readers may find that these generic considerations could be stretched beyond the evangelical to include other efforts in literature to aid an ideological assault on other hegemonies. Conceivably, then, it might be best to name them Evangelical provocations; let that be understood, and for shorthand I will retain the simpler “provocations.”

65 Southey, “On the Evangelical Sects,” 510. In “British Missionary Publishing, Missionary Celebrity, and Empire,” Johnston has erroneously argued, “The LMS publicity machine generated a vast array of material specifically designed to entice support from the general public, as well as from influential elites. In this way, the society embarked on what we would see today as an extensive mass marketing campaign” (22). It should be apparent from my discussion thus far that Evangelicals would have been appalled by any appeal to a general, non-Evangelical public. Indeed, in the 1830s some societies, including the LMS, refused donations from other charitable societies whose views were not in consonance with their own.
of funds. Susan Thorne in particular has shown that these were, in fact, tangible results of mission-focused publication. Closer to the self-conscious Evangelical purpose, however, is the provocative push that Johnston calls encouraging “a community of potential missionary recruits.” Capturing the etymological origin of the word, provocations *call forth* to action—from Latin *provocare*—those who might share the goals of the Evangelical community.

The period from 1795-1845 is remarkable for giving rise to the very possibility of a community of potential missionary recruits. The simple fact of British Evangelicals living abroad is significant in itself as indicative of an historical moment. Two streams, the Industrial Revolution and the Evangelical Revival, merged to awaken the modern Missionary Movement. The Industrial Revolution provided the impetus and motive power to the British to stretch across the globe, while the Evangelical Revival turned the attention of its believers to those who would face Judgment without trusting Christ for salvation. Fresh awareness of a world not knowing any information about Christ Jesus challenged British Evangelicals to take the Gospel abroad, to lands newly made accessible by an exploring age and now sought for capital investment. Whereas in the eighteenth century Evangelicals emphasized telling the gospel to friends and neighbors, in the nineteenth century they turned to the “heathen world” with the same message.

Recent missiological studies often date the initial turn in Evangelical thought to a precise moment: May 31, 1792, in Nottingham. It was on this day that William Carey, a Baptist preacher, spoke to a gathering of Baptist ministers on the obligation of Christians to take the gospel to foreign lands. Up to this point, the activity of British Christians
abroad had been solely focused on the spiritual needs of British subjects. With regard to non-European unbelievers, the strict Calvinism of the eighteenth-century Evangelicals had circumscribed the burden of evangelism to God himself. If it was in the Lord’s will to regenerate the world outside Christendom, then he would do it by his irresistible sovereignty. William Carey’s message to the Baptist ministers, also contained in his pamphlet *An Inquiry Into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792), ran counter to the hands-off approach and argued that the “means” God would use to regenerate the world were the people of the Kingdom, the Church universal. His well-known call on this occasion, “Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God,” rallied a sense of agency among his Baptist brethren, and resulted in the speedy formation of the Baptist Missionary Society (Neill, *History*, 261-2). Putting action behind his rhetoric, Carey became the first BMS missionary and departed for Hooghly in 1793. Carey’s boldness challenged the assumption that care for the spread of Christianity abroad should be manifested in prayer alone, and brought a radically renewed sense of human agency to considerations of God’s plan for the world.

The primary literary organ of this initial push to foreign mission, *The Evangelical Magazine*, was partially dedicated in 1793 to chronicling “the Progress of the Gospel…[which is] a species of information *entirely new, and very important*” (emphasis

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As outlined in its charter of 1788, The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, despite its seemingly evangelistic title, was instituted due to the following need: “Whereas We are credibly informed, That in many of our Plantations, Colonies and Factories beyond the Seas, belonging to Our Kingdom of England, the Provision of Ministers is very mean; and many others of Our said Plantations, Colonies and Factories are wholly destitute, and unprovided of a Maintenance for Ministers, and the Publick Worship of God; and for Lack of Support and Maintenance for such, many of Our Loving Subjects do want the Administration of God’s Word and Sacraments, and seem to be abandoned to Atheism and Infidelity; and also for Want of Learned and Orthodox Ministers to instruct Our said Loving Subjects in the Principles of true Religion, divers Romish Priests and Jesuits are the more encouraged to pervert and draw over Our said Loving Subjects to Popish Superstition and Idolatry” (*Collection* i). The Society, then, was created for preservation rather than evangelism.
mine). The obvious fertility of Evangelical culture for this move to foreign mission shows clearly in the rapid formation of a succession of missionary societies. The BMS was followed in 1795 by The Missionary Society (later the London Missionary Society), initially a broad association of all Evangelical denominations interested in overseas mission. The Established Church entered in 1799 with the Church Missionary Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804, and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1813. These mission societies financially supported a succession of men (and their families) sent to the South Seas, India, China, South America, Africa, Canada, and Southeast Asia—all within 20 years of William Carey’s message.

Works of provocation were an immediate consequence of this theological and cultural shift among Evangelical Christians, a shift that significantly coincided with increased interaction between the empires of Great Britain and the Qing empire of China. Through the final quarter of the eighteenth century, East India Company trade with China was increasing to such a degree that tea was quickly becoming an article in highest demand, occasionally being referred to as “a national necessity.” The growing importance of the trade resulted in British diplomatic efforts to establish a trade agreement and formal recognition of the international relationship. The first of these embassies, led by Lord Macartney, proved a distinct failure in obtaining any of its explicit aims, but embarking in 1792, the very year of William Carey’s plea for mission, its timing resonated within the religious sectors of the country.

IV. Protestants in the Chinese Context

The standard account of Christianity in China, from the first century to the twentieth, has been for many years the work of Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (1929). Despite the passing of more than seventy years, the work has not been superseded as an overview of the subject. More period-focused studies, however, have drawn out and explored the different approaches to China by various strands of the faith. Although the Jesuit mission to China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has received the most extended attention from historians of China, the Protestant mission in the nineteenth century has, following the lead of John K. Fairbank in *The United States and China* and *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, been of historical interest as the era of most vigorous ideological assault by Western believers. Within this century of religious assault, most work has focused on the latter half, once missionaries had a firm foothold in the country and began making deeper inroads into the culture. What has been most neglected in the scholarship on Christianity in China, and perhaps in scholarship of Sino-British relations in general, has been the first three decades of the nineteenth century when Robert Morrison, William Milne, W.H. Medhurst, and Charles Gutzlaff arrived among the Chinese.68

68 Among the excellent work on late-nineteenth-century mission in China, Paul Cohen’s *China and Christianity: the Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Anti-Foreignism 1860-1870* is the most complete scholarly study. See also Ross Forman’s dissertation *Imperial intersections* (Stanford); Hevia, *English Lessons*; Lutz *Christian Missions in China*; Evangelists of What?; Reinders, *Borrowed Gods and Foreign Bodies*; and Thurin, *Victorian Travelers and the Opening of China*.

69 In *The Origins of the Anglo-American Missionary Enterprise in China, 1807-1840*, Murray Rubinstein has attempted precisely the kind of history needed for this period. His work follows the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries in China and their faltering attempts to bring the Gospel to the Chinese. He establishes that these decades became a period of preparation rather than active mission due to the Chinese prohibitions against Christianity. While effective in its general points, the book suffers from uneven research and some stylistic hindrances that prevent the desired depth of analysis.
When Robert Morrison arrived in Canton in 1807, Christianity had become an unwelcome visitor, as were any bringing it. In what Latourette calls “the period of retarded growth,” following Kangxi’s death in 1723 and continuing through the early nineteenth century, the Catholic presence in China had begun to meet with persecution from an increasingly insecure Qing government. Perhaps due to the Rites Controversy over converted Chinese giving veneration to the dead, or to an increasing awareness of Western expansion in the course of the eighteenth century, imperial edicts were regularly issued against the practice of Christianity. Although these edicts were typically unenforced, violent persecutions occurred in 1723, 1747, 1754, 1768-69, an especially severe persecution in 1784, and a final aggressive attempt to push the religion out of the capital in 1805 (Latourette 158-75). The final general edict against Christianity in China was issued in 1811 and was enforced, piecemeal, until the Treaty of Nanking forcibly opened China to Christianity.

Much of the anxiety about Christianity appears to have derived from a general concern in the imperial government about ideological variance that might produce sectarianism. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, native Chinese sectarian movements like the White Lotus Society attempted to undermine the Manchu-dominated Qing government. The similarity of Catholic communion to the vows and practices of Chinese brotherhoods marked them out as potentially dangerous, and their obvious submission to a foreign power, the Vatican, made them doubly suspected. That Catholics catechized and trained up Chinese children rescued from the streets made their infiltration into Chinese society both significantly strong and, in the eyes of the

70 For the fullest examination of the Qing concern, especially in the eighteenth century, to consolidate and maintain authority through ceremony, see J.L. Hevia, Cherishing Men from Afar.
government, uncomfortably continuous—the exposure of infants assured that there was always a ready supply of “converts.” Anytime one of the native sects became strong or violent, the government because cognizant of other sects, including the Catholic presence. Any hint or suspicion of organized movement, as in the discovery in 1805 of a map of the dioceses in Peking, brought swift action against both foreign and native Christians.

In the several decades before Morrison’s arrival, British representatives in Canton had made a point of avoiding even the appearance of a religious presence, which had been a fairly simple matter given the exclusively commercial interests of the East India Company. Although the Portuguese had been trading at Canton since 1516, representatives of the East India Company had not established a cooperative relationship there until 1683. As the trade in tea, and “the gratification of the taste thus acquired,” gradually produced in Britain a sense of “dependen[ce] on our traffic with China for much of the comfort of a large portion of every class of society,” as well as an enormous source of revenue, the maintenance and protection of the East India Company’s trade affected everyone (Ellis iv). Indeed, by the time the Company’s charter was under consideration for renewal, it was well known that “the China trade...is now the only remaining branch of the company’s trade which still yields them a profit,” as one pamphleteer pointed out in 1812.71 The degree to which Britain’s economy depended on this trade rendered their Company’s position in China a matter of national interest, requiring governmental investment. When the trade was threatened several times due to the precarious position of Company representatives in Canton, the Court of Directors in

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London requested the King to send an embassy to the imperial court at Peking, with the minimum object of establishing a better footing for Company representatives. More reaching goals included a treaty of commerce and friendship, as well as official diplomatic representation for Britain in Peking. In *The Chan’s Great Continent*, historian Jonathan Spence reads this emerging relationship through the lens of Western accounts, including realist travel writing and the fantastical flights of “Chinoiserie.” Beyond what he calls “The Catholic Century”—roughly mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century—his account significantly avoids attention to the interaction between Western agents and the Chinese regarding any religious or ideological component until he treats the mid-nineteenth-century influence of Christianity on the Taipings. What can be missed in such an analysis is that the East India Company’s guard against Chinese suspicion was not passive, as they actively denied any religious interest in China.

During the first British embassy to the court in Peking, 1793-1794, the royal ambassador Lord Macartney felt it important to convince an imperial representative, Sung-yun, that the English had no interest at all in bringing Christianity to China:72

> [T]he English never attempted to dispute or disturb the worship or tenets of others, being persuaded that the Supreme Governor of the Universe was equally pleased with the homage of all His creatures when proceeding from sincere devotion, whether according to one mode or another of the various religions which He permitted to be published. That the English came to China with no such

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72 Although these comments received significant attention when Macartney’s journal was eventually published in 1807, most discussion at the time concerned disputes over ceremony, particularly Macartney’s refusal to kow-tow before the emperor. For original accounts of the incident, see Barrow’s *Travels in China*, as well as *Some Account of the Public Life, and a Selection from the unpublished Writings of the Earl of Macartney; Macartney’s Embassy to China*; and Staunton’s official account of the embassy, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy*. For extensive examination of the kow-tow dispute, see Cranmer-Byng’s “Lord Martney’s Embassy to Peking in 1793 from Official Chinese Documents” and the Introduction to his edition of Macartney’s *Journal*; Joseph Esherick, “Cherishing Sources from Afar”; James Hevia’s *Cherishing Men from Afar* and his response to Esherick in “Postpolemical Historiography.”
views, as was evident from their merchants at Canton and Macao having no priests or chaplains belonging to them... and that it was such persons only who were employed as the instruments of conversion... that it was true, as stated in the letter, the English had been anciently of the same religion as the Portuguese and the other missionaries, and had adopted another, but that one of the principal differences between us and them was our not having the same zeal for making proselytes which they had. (Macartney 167)

Although Macartney was likely ignorant of the new stir among Evangelicals for worldwide evangelism, he certainly knew that a growing body of “Methodists” in Britain, not only “priests or chaplains” but common laymen, were actively “employed as the instruments of conversion.” Subtly dissembling, he sought to gain an advantage on religious grounds for the British over their Portuguese and French rivals in trade. If the English were merchants only, then they might be despised as the lowest class of citizen (Morrison, Miscellany 43), but at least they would not be distrusted as ideologically dangerous. And, until 1807 and Morrison’s arrival in Canton, Macartney was representing fairly the British subjects resident in China. Although most merchants were in the Church of England, there was no Protestant minister in the Canton community (Rubinstein 76-77), nor was such a presence allowed. When Morrison sailed to Canton, he was not even permitted passage on any English ships and had to go by way of America (Morrison, Memoirs 91). The same policy of excluding a religious presence from Company territory also forced Morrison to reside initially among Americans at the Old French Factory in Canton (153), a place he was able to obtain because of a letter of recommendation from James Madison, then Secretary of State (131). The East India Company was entirely unwilling to jeopardize their ever-tenuous position with the Cohong, the organization of Chinese merchant officials charged with overseeing the Canton trade. One of the explicit goals of Macartney’s mission was to stabilize the
British position, and any assurance he might offer regarding British willingness to conform to Chinese customs was an advantage gained for the Company. By affirming Chinese religion as equally acceptable to “the Supreme Being” as European religion might be, he aimed to remove what the Chinese considered a significant barrier to cooperation with foreigners.

While Macartney’s words may have assuaged concerns of Chinese officials, his version of rationalist faith significantly irritated the Evangelicals. When the account of this conversation with the Qing official appeared in John Barrow’s *Some Account of the Public Life, and a Selection from the unpublished Writings of the Earl of Macartney* in 1808, and was recommended by the *Edinburgh Review* “to the attention of certain well-disposed persons in this island, who have conceived so earnest a desire for the conversion of our Eastern subjects” as a better perspective on religion, Evangelicals saw this representation of British religion as another example of fallen British culture and of their own opposition to it. An editorial for the *Evangelical Magazine* responded to the *Edinburgh Review* (and to Macartney, through Barrow), that “He who made, and those who applaud such a declaration, must certainly be ranked, not with Christians, but with infidels. . . . We lament that such an infidel character of our country should be given to a great Heathen nation, and that by a British ambassador!”

In Macartney’s comments and the coinciding incipient Evangelical mission, we see a marked contestation for the representation of British people to the Chinese, an example of ideologies coming into “contact and confrontation” (Gramsci 2: 180). Even as

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73 The article in the *Edinburgh Review*, “*Some Account of the Public Life, and a Selection from the unpublished Writings of the Earl of Macartney*,” quotes in full the passage from Macartney’s journal that I have quoted (317). Providing one more textual attestation, the article in the *Evangelical Magazine* for November 1808, titled “China,” also includes the complete quotation (486).
Macartney was denying any interest on the part of the British to influence the Chinese religiously, Evangelicals in Britain were forming themselves into mission societies and making plans for the evangelization of the world. Even more ironically, the very year Barrow’s life of Macartney was published, in which Macartney denies British religious interest in China, the first British missionary arrived in China. The contest of representation to the Chinese became whether the British would be viewed by the Chinese as a “mercantile people,” as the East India Company would have it, or as a “Christian nation,” as the Evangelicals wished it. What several missionaries learned, however, was that it was perhaps better to abandon the idea of a Christian nation and instead to be seen as isolated Christians among a mercantile people. The trouble came, they found, when the lines were blurred and the Chinese could not see a difference between merchant and missionary.

This blurring in the eyes of the Chinese—which I discuss at length in Chapter IV—may be the most important point for the eventual effect of mission on Sino-British relations. The Qing government, already wary about the security of its empire and conscious of both internal and external pressure, was carefully watching the activities of foreigners within the borders. The arrival of Protestant missionaries in China came at a period of Chinese history rife with anxiety and suspicion. The Chinese were not prepared to see differences within the ranks of those nations bothering their shores, nor were they interested. China was the Middle Kingdom, and at a time of internal friction the Qing rulers needed to maintain an air of complete confidence and a policy of disinterest in the tribute-offering peoples of the world.74 All the while, however, they were zealously

serious about protecting the ideological integrity of their Confucian system, without which their rule lacked functionality and legitimacy. In other words, it was actually in the interest of imperial government, in the early part of the nineteenth century, to lump all foreigners together as a dangerous threat to national stability. An external threat usefully distracted the people from internal corruption. While the East India Company and the royal ambassador were trying to present an ideologically neutral face to the Chinese, the arrival of missionaries complicated their image but also served, for a while, as a card in the hand of the Qing imperial government.

V. The Mission in China

It is not surprising that when the Missionary Society formed itself in 1795, the Chinese people were of primary consideration for an initial evangelistic venture.

Returning to Britain in 1794, Macartney’s embassy had captured the imagination of the public, particularly for his refusal to bow to the Chinese emperor in a ceremonial show of submission. Although the final determination for a first mission fell to Tahiti (then called Otaheite), the decision lay between the Pacific Islands and the Chinese, who were then very much on the minds of clergymen contemplating peoples not in possession of the Gospel message. The return of the Macartney embassy with new and trustworthy eyewitness reports of the interior combined in 1795 with the discovery by the Rev. W. Moseley, a dissenting minister of Hanley, of a manuscript in the British Museum.

75 The lingering interest in Macartney’s embassy, and the popular interpretation of his refusal to bow as a matter of national honor, can be seen in Jane Austen’s Mansfield Park (1814), in which her heroine Fanny, like Macartney, resists to bow to pressure. For a complete analysis of this moment, see Peter Knox-Shaw, “Fanny Price Refuses to Kowtow,” and Jonathan Spence, The Chan’s Great Continent (101-102). Austen’s immediate knowledge of Macartney’s incident may also have been due to the relatively recent publication of Barrow’s Life of Macartney in 1807 and its reviews in 1808.
containing the greater part of the New Testament in Chinese.\textsuperscript{76} Despite recognition that written Chinese gave access to approximately one third the population of the world, “the vastness of the work here presented, the difficulties of every order which attended any endeavour to gain access to the people, acquire their language, and introduce the doctrines of the gospel,” were, as expressed by the Rev. William Ellis, “such as to repel rather than to invite the attempt” (“Introduction,” liv). It was not lost on anyone that the Macartney embassy included no one who could communicate in Chinese, and some held the view that it could not be learned by an Englishman. Nevertheless, the prospect of a mission to the Chinese was not completely given up, spurred on by a treatise from Moseley in 1798 and several reports in the \textit{Evangelical} and \textit{Missionary} magazines concerning Catholic activity in China. As the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East formed itself in 1799, China was high on its list of priorities, and were it not for an increase in hostility towards foreigners in China, the CMS would likely have sent its first missionaries there.\textsuperscript{77}

Nevertheless, despite concerns about language difficulty, fears from the possibility of persecution, and even doubtfulness about the likelihood of access to the country, the London Missionary Society decided in 1805 that its third mission—after Otaheite and South Africa—would be to the Chinese. Largely through the persuasion of

\textsuperscript{76} According to a note on a blank leaf, the transcription was made at Canton in 1737, by order of a Mr. Hodgson, who in 1739 gave it to Sir Hans Slone, Bart., whose collection served as part of the foundation of the British Museum. In 1798, the Rev. Moseley published a short treatise on the importance of translating the scriptures into Chinese. For more on this discovery, see D. MacGillivray, \textit{A Century of Protestant Missions in China} (1); W. Milne’s \textit{Retrospect} (44); Morrison’s \textit{Memoirs} (67); and K.S. Latourette, \textit{A History of Christian Missions in China} (210).

\textsuperscript{77} At the formation of the CMS, Charles Simeon took a leading role and garnered the enthusiastic support of Wilberforce and Charles Grant (Carus 87, 97). Although he was never able to achieve the object, Simeon’s attentions were regularly drawn to the Chinese, and several times he attempted to send an Anglican minister to Canton (Carus 246-48).
the Society’s first secretary, Joseph Hardcastle, the prospect that “the word of life may be
put into a language, in which it would speak to so many myriads…approaching to the
half of the human race,” was too much an Evangelical duty to be put aside for any
reason.\textsuperscript{78} Robert Morrison, a young Scotsman of the artisan class who had relocated to
Newcastle, was chosen as the first Evangelical representative to reside among the
Chinese. As suggested above, Morrison’s direct charge was as follows: “To acquire the
Chinese language, and translate the Sacred Scriptures. To teach and to preach were not in
its immediate contemplation. The plan, if a plan it could be called, was to go to China,
and if permitted to remain, quietly to acquire a knowledge of the language; and from that
to proceed to a translation of the Sacred Scriptures” (Morrison, \textit{Memoirs} 67). According
to the strict biblicism of the Evangelicals, if the Chinese were to ever enter into the
Kingdom of God, then they would require the Gospel message. For Evangelicals, the
Gospel was inextricable from the written word, the Bible. Their first cross-
cultural task, therefore, was quite naturally the written Gospel in Chinese; only after that goal had been
completed did they believe other evangelistic efforts could be effectual.

Once the Chinese language had been learned and the Gospel translated, Morrison
and the Missionary Society could begin to think in terms of Chinese inclusion within the
Evangelical world. The fact of their possession of the Gospel as a literary product
provided the essential conceptual link between theoretical Chinese converts and the
community of Evangelicals in Britain. Even as it did in Britain, the written word would
hold together a new and expanded imagined community.

\textsuperscript{78} “On the Translation of the Scriptures into the Chinese Language,” \textit{Evangelical Magazine} 14
(August 1806): 343.
By examining the periodical reports on Morrison’s progress in China over the first decade of his residence, which appeared in the *Evangelical Magazine, Missionary Magazine*, and *The Christian Observer*, it is clear that his efforts were of only minimal interest to the editors until he had completed a useful amount of Scriptural translation. From 1806, when his mission is first introduced, until 1811 when he published a Chinese version of the Acts of the Apostles, he receives only an occasional few sentences by way of updating interested supporters. Despite receiving a stream of Morrison’s letters back to interested parties, the editors pass along the bare reminders that “Mr. Morrison…is gone to China with a view to the Translation of the Scriptures into the language of that vast empire,” or the further information that “He was pursuing, with pleasure, the study of the Chinese language.”

In 1810, an article by George Burder in the *Evangelical Magazine* on the “Present State of the Evangelical Religion throughout the World” considers of China that its missionary “cannot extend the pale of salvation where God’s revealed word affords no ground for hope” (16). Yet, with the report of his production of Acts in 1811, interest in his work—along with page space in the periodicals—increased dramatically. Reports that had been a paragraph instantly became full articles. In the first article on his successful printing of 1000 copies of Acts, attention immediately turns to the new potential for actual conversion through evangelization. The writer of this report goes so far as to explain the process:

Mr. Morrison proposes also to turn his attention to Tracts; being of opinion that they should not precede, but follow or accompany the Scriptures, as without these there is nothing to appeal to for proof or illustration. This appears the most likely way of diffusing divine truth, by putting the Scriptures into the hands of individuals privately, as in Catholic countries, where the Bible and preaching are prohibited. (353)

For divine truth to reach the Chinese people, a mere explanation of Christian principles could not suffice. With extreme biblicism, Evangelicals were convinced that without the written, intelligible Scriptures, the Gospel could not be communicated with authority. Tracts were auxiliaries. On the same principle, because only the written story had authority, the story of a mission was significant for the larger body of Evangelicals only insofar as it told about tangible progress in evangelization. Morrison’s work in China was considered valuable to the Evangelical community only when Gospel-message exchange was central.

It is around this principle of telling the Gospel story that the Evangelical archive takes shape. Following the late-eighteenth-century practice of publishing accounts of conversions in the new society periodicals, other genres began to work with the ancient idea of testimony, or bearing witness. Adopting the radical success of Hannah More’s *Cheap Repository Tracts*, the Religious Tract Society developed the mode of short, punchy narrative in order to convey the power of the Gospel message to change lives. In the Society’s first Tract, entitled “An Address to Christians on the Distribution of Religious Tracts,” the Rev. David Bogue explained the form and purpose of the religious tracts:

> It should contain pure truth—“nothing to recommend one denomination or to throw odium on another; but pure, good-natured Christianity, in which all the followers of the Lamb, who are looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus unto eternal life, can unite with pleasure, as in one great common cause.” There should be some account of the way of salvation in every tract. It should be plain. It should be striking. It should be entertaining. It should be full of ideas. (The Story of the Religious Tract Society 5)
These brief testimonials adopt the ancient practice of the Christian church of explaining one’s reasons for commitment to the faith, and then overlay that idea with more appealing and colloquial contemporary narrative forms.

Combining a distinctively transparent style with a remarkably innovative marketing awareness, their formulae proved extremely successful, at least on the level of distribution. As Aileen Fyfe explores in *Science and Salvation: Evangelical Popular Science Publishing in Victorian Britain* (2004), the Religious Tract Society revolutionized publishing with its sense of target audience. She explains that although every publisher had to consider cost/benefit marketing, the RTS differed in that it was, dedicated to reaching its target audience, rather than simply selling its wares to any paying customer. This was why the Society…was not content with the usual trade channels of distribution, but experimented with innovative methods of distribution that might be more likely to reach people who did not generally visit booksellers’ shops or read literary reviews. This determination extended to a concern about whether the publications would be comprehensible to their intended readers, and whether the Christian tone would be effective, and this shaped the way in which the Society approached the problem of obtaining manuscripts. (142)

Because the RTS was not-for-profit and its goal was to disclose “the way of salvation,” the society was willing and eager to try any new method that might get tracts into the hands of unbelievers, as long as the writing contained “pure truth,” the Gospel story central to their worldview. With authors ranging from pastors Charles Simeon, John Newton, and Edward Bickersteth, to popular figures such as Wilberforce, Hannah More, and William Cowper, half-penny and penny tracts were produced in runs of tens of thousands, quietly making these authors among the best-selling of the century. Beginning with a circulation in 1800 of 200,000 tracts, by 1830 they were annually
circulating 10 million. In accordance with a moderate Calvinism, Evangelical readers were distinctly interested in ways in which individuals’ lives merged and interplayed with God’s larger redemptive plan. To the degree that one’s own story of redemption reflected the narrative of the Gospel, the greater was the moral and instructive value to this religious readership.

Despite the encouragement value of tracts for Evangelical readers, these little works were meant for the hands of non-believers. Following a similar paradigm, however, self-consciously “true Christians” wanted narrative reading matter of their own that would likewise connect them to the Gospel story unfolding in their age. Morrison’s work in China, along with later additions to that mission, began to fill an Evangelical archive with just the right recipe to satisfy the interest of the increasingly internationally conscious among the Evangelical ranks. As with the emergence of literary religious tracts, provocations employ the model of testimony, of telling about God’s redemptive work in the world, while overlaying that story with particular details of the missionary’s own encounters with fascinating new peoples. Provocations became the mode by which Evangelicals engaged with Britain’s increasing stretch, but they differ from other compositions of the day in that their interest is primarily with how other peoples respond to the Gospel rather than how they respond to Europeans in general. In this way, the existence and growth of an Evangelical archive concerned with a worldwide imagined community depended on the dual facts of an expanding British empire and on the coinciding theological push to move out in Christian mission from the edge of that empire—into China.

Even as the Evangelical archive depends upon a British presence in China, the
study of British relations with China and of popular British understanding of that nation
before the Opium War likewise depends on missionaries. Historian of China John K.
Fairbank has most powerfully expressed the importance of missionaries to the study of
nineteenth-century Sino-British relations:

In China’s nineteenth-century relations with the West, Protestant missionaries are
still the least studied but most significant actors in the scene. Where merchants
and diplomats by the nature of the professions normally had to collaborate, or at
least communicate if not cooperate, with their opposite numbers across the
international-cultural boundary, Protestant missionaries by their calling were
aggressive individualists in thought and attitude, often in conflict with the
established order in China. To be sure, their aggressiveness was shared by the
merchants seeking profits and by the Western officials seeking to open China. But
only the missionaries sought direct contact with the common people in the two
civilizations. …Only they sought to change Chinese minds and hearts. They
penetrated farthest into Chinese life and became among all the foreign invaders
the most deeply involved in the local scene. Meanwhile, in order to maintain the
support of their home constituencies, they were also the foreigners in China who
reported most fully, if selectively, about China to the Western public. (2; my
emphasis)

In the absence of other authoritative British voices conversant with the Chinese,
missionaries were the intermediaries for conveying a distant and largely unknown China
to the curious British public. Prohibited by company policy from disclosing official
information, East India Company representatives were automatically disqualified from
writing about their experiences in Canton. Even had they had the permission, however,
their lack of the language debarred them from authoritative comment. Where these were
content to remain in Canton and have dealings only with their official Chinese
counterparts, missionaries expressly desired to mingle with the masses and to press
inland. Not only did they become most acquainted with the people, they also had the
greatest interest and motivation for reporting back to Britain on their experiences.
Without recourse to missionary publications, it is virtually impossible to gather a realistic idea of what British people thought about China in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Provocations shape and fashion the British understanding of China in the early nineteenth century.

VI. Writing Provocation

As most critics concerned with mission make abundantly clear—indeed, make it the focus of their conclusions—one important aspect of maintaining missionaries abroad was that financial support required accountability, and accountability demanded written reports. In order for the broad Evangelical public to maintain faithful stewardship of their resources, they needed assurance that their contributions to the mission societies were being used effectively for the spread of the gospel abroad. The immediate consequence was that “the missionary at work was characterised by authorship as much as by daring deeds in foreign climes” (Johnston 3). Their relationship with the Evangelical community at home required prolific output, at the very least in correspondence with their society but more practically with many churches and individuals.

Missionary reports were regularly filtered to the Evangelical journals for broad dissemination, not only for the purpose of accountability but also, as Johnston and Thorne have argued, for encouraging further financial support. Missionary accounts within the journals often opened up new correspondence as interested readers began contacting those missionaries for whom they gave money. From these demands, most missionaries spent several hours of each day in written correspondence. Understanding the weight that his writing might have in Evangelical circles at home, William Milne, an
early LMS missionary to the Chinese, made for himself a set of rules of prudence for his letters to Britain.

―1st. Do I keep fully within actual facts? — or strong probabilities? 2nd. Do I so write, as will be apt to lead the public to expect more than can be realized. 3rd. Do I write, in regard to style, terms, and address, becoming my age, talents, and period of service? 4th. Do I write any thing which if made public, would cause future self reproach; or become an obstacle to me among the people among whom I labor? 5th. Do I attribute too much to myself? 6th. Do I give cause of offence to my brethren — by round about insinuations — by intentional neglect — or by positive accusations? (160)

His self-reflection shows cognizance that his letters were often brought before the public, that they would establish the view of him and his service in the eyes of the Evangelical church, and that they could have unintended effects. In consequence, missionaries had to keep careful records and private diaries of how they were exercising the role and resources entrusted to them. Their meticulous records thus allowed them to select exact information and give detailed accounts in order to forestall any attacks made on their character or usefulness in their vocation.81

The letters tend to be concise statements of achievements in linguistic or evangelistic pursuits, innovations in reaching the heathen, and updates on health or the physical and financial needs of the mission. Missionaries found that such letters would prove encouraging of continued support and would discourage slander on their abilities. As Johnston points out, “limited successes or spectacular failures are rarely mentioned” (7). They avoid negative suggestions of difficulty in reaching native peoples, their own frequent depressions, or fears for life and safety. Not only would such details have

81 Missionaries are frequently attacked in the pages of both secular and Establishment journals as being uneducated, ill-equipped, and pretenders to knowledge, with their efforts classed as “visionary schemes of fanaticism.” See, for example, The British Critic for July, 1816, Art. 10, or Quarterly Review Vol. 11.22 (July 1814): 332-47.
violated principles of social decorum, but also they could serve as grounds for criticism from enemies to mission work. Mission societies learned this lesson early on, as Baptist missionaries in India came under severe attack from Sidney Smith in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1808, in a well-known article entitled “Indian Missions.” Although Smith’s overall criticism was against the idea of evangelical missions in general, much of his assault clusters around the missionaries’ lack of formal education, class, and foolish hopes for conversion, for which he regards them as “detachments of maniacs [who] spread over the fine regions of the world the most unjust and contemptible opinion of the gospel” (180). His material is largely drawn from statements of the Baptist missionaries in India made in public letters and published society transactions. Subsequent to his attacks, as the archives of the London Missionary Society reveal, a missionary would often write separate sets of letters: upbeat public letters intended for circulation to the Evangelical journals, and turbulent private letters for the directors of the society, family, and friends.82

Particularly in a missionary’s first years abroad, letters were the only means of connection with lost community. Many experienced a deep sense of isolation beginning with linguistic and cultural isolation and deepened by the absence of Christian community upon which they had relied for “social capital.” Correspondence became a tenuous link with the Evangelical community they had left. After a year in China, Robert Morrison, the first British missionary in China, pleaded with his friend Joseph Hardcastle to increase his writing: “‘I do not mean absolutely official letters, but letters tending to

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82 The more transparent private letters, while not typically included in society publications, often appeared in Memoirs of deceased missionaries that were edited by surviving family members or friends. Examples include Memoirs of Milne and Morrison.
quicken and encourage, to caution and instruct missionaries. The society, as a body, writes as frequently, I doubt not, as is suitable; but might not the Directors be requested, whether in town or in the country, to fill up letters to such missionaries as they read of, or hear of in such and such situations?” (Memoirs 215). The significant circumstance that Evangelicals in Britain might correspond with missionaries they have never met but only read of or heard of in “such and such situations” highlights the connective strength of the imagined community of Evangelicals in this period, and illustrates how effectively they utilized the organs of literary journals for building this connection.

Despite the needs and requirements for letters, discretion of audience had to be learned, and young missionaries sometimes felt the rod of rebuke for too much openness in their public transactions. In consequence, the public letters have limited value as historical records of imperial sites, other than providing a sampling of what the Evangelical public received on a regular basis and perhaps showing the idealized version of religious enculturation abroad.

Modern critics of missions and missionary writing have tended to focus on the financial aspect of their production by pointing to the over-positive emphases in these public letters. The conclusion follows that missionaries hoped to paint the prospects so brightly that Christians at home would be filled with confidence and render financial support, but possibly seek to join in the great and hopeful task themselves. Consistent with this focus, Johnston’s reading of missionary writing leads her to conclude the following about the content of these publications:

Unsurprisingly, there is always an emphasis on positive evangelical achievements whilst limited successes or spectacular failures are rarely mentioned. Backsliding missionaries in the colonies—those whose faith was shattered in their confrontation with different cultures, or who abandoned missionary work because they formed
attachments to local women or communities, or who left preaching for the rather more lucrative positions of colonial trader, planter, or merchant, for example—slide out of the public textual record. Missionary figures are almost exclusively heroic, long-suffering, and do not experience religious doubts, debilitating diseases, or personal crises. (7)

The rosy picture of exotic lands and adventure likewise held out the possibility, other critics point out, of class advancement. As a missionary, they could gain what Cairns has called “humanitarian authority,” and thereby leave behind their working-class life.

These conclusions are best represented by the extensive studies of Thorne and Johnston, whose methodology reveals several limitations. As a precaution for consistency, the primary source material for both Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture and Missionary Writing and Empire 1800-1860 is limited to the archive of the London Missionary Society, the non-denominational society that sent out more missionaries in the first half of the century than any other society. Johnston explains her focus on the LMS archive in terms of its uniqueness from other missions: “Inevitably, the LMS broad evangelical base produced a specific history differing considerably from that of other, comparable missionary societies: particularly, it speaks of a section of British society overwhelmingly concerned with class and identity. This specific history also produced a distinctive textual environment” (4). Implicit here but explicitly dealt with elsewhere, both Johnston and Thorne read the LMS as a society especially attractive to the working class and lower middle class and argue that mission work opened up opportunities for greater respect at home and even economic prosperity abroad. In one sense, their work seeks to reclaim the complexity of imperial representation from the over-positive and high-gloss images in the official publications of
the LMS. Unfortunately, limiting the scope to the LMS provides a misleading picture of Evangelical missions as a whole.

Although Thorne quotes an undated and unsigned statement that the LMS “may be taken as a type of all the rest,” and both critics reference Anne McClintock’s dismissive assessment of the LMS as “the largest evangelical institution peddling its spiritual wares in the arena of empire,” the LMS was by no means cohesive in its membership nor consistent with other societies in doctrine and approach. Different societies formed precisely because they were drawn from different constituencies, with differing concerns, educational attainment, class status, and ecclesiastical bent. It is interesting to note that the Church Missionary Society formed itself explicitly because its founders were not in agreement with the LMS. In a letter to Charles Simeon proposing the first meeting of the CMS, Henry Venn writes,

Two points were unanimously assented to; one, that the (London) Missionary Society was not formed upon those principles, which were either calculated to produce success, or to justify our publicly uniting with them: the other, that it was the indispensable duty of every minister of the Church in general, and of ourselves in particular, to promote by all the means in our power the propagation of the Gospel abroad. (qtd. in Carus 96)

At the meeting, Simeon agreed, “We cannot join the (London) Missionary Society; yet I bless God that they have stood forth” (qtd. in Carus 97). Neither the individual missionaries, nor their evangelistic approach, nor the publications of the LMS can be generalized as typical of the Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyans, the Baptists, etc. Moreover, because LMS missionaries retained a multi-denominational character even

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83 Thorne’s reference is to an “undated/untitled news clipping found in the records of the Market Harborough Congregational Church, Leicester Record Office, DE 3190/122” (177, n. 71). The McClintock quotation is from *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 44.
after the Society itself became associated with the Congregationalist union, any given missionary might bring an ecclesiastical approach to church formation that would differ significantly from a mission associate of another denomination. The very “FUNDAMENTAL and DISTINGUISHING PRINCIPLE” of the LMS was that it “should not be either Episcopalian or Presbyterian, Congregational or Methodist, exclusively; but that it should combine all these, without being characterized by the peculiarities of any one of them” (Milne, *Retrospect 5*). With respect to the mission in China, Medhurst glibly states, “It is a pleasing feature of the Protestant mission to China, that hitherto the agents of various societies ... and the representatives of different hemispheres, have consented to merge their national and denominational prejudices, and to join heart and hand in making known the great doctrine of justification by faith” (iii).

Between 1807 and 1840, these LMS missionaries included several Baptists and Congregationalists, a Scottish Presbyterian, two German Pietists, and two Oxbridge educated clergymen of the Church of England. According to the principles of the Society, they were each to follow the practice and catechism of their own denomination, and any church they should establish would follow suit. The Society was thus distinguished by variance rather than homogeneity. Consequently, what appears to be a useful precaution for consistency in Thorne’s and Johnston’s studies may also produce confusing results.

Even more importantly than this understanding of denominational difference is the need for a wider inclusion of source material beyond letters and periodical reports,

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An interesting example of LMS unpredictability is discernable from the Memoirs of Robert Morrison, who as a young man candidly admits in his diary, “I have not examined thoroughly the claims of the Episcopalian body; I have to charge myself with slothfulness of mind, in not pursuing the inquiry with sufficient vigour” (74). Such self-criticism on matters of ecclesiology could not be said of the LMS missionary to Australia, Lancelot Threlkeld, who appears in Johnston’s book as an example of fierce and unreflective Dissenting independence.
particularly the need to include provocations. Given critics’ focus on missionary writing as it appears in periodical literature, it is not surprising that they argue “there is always an emphasis on positive evangelical achievements whilst limited successes or spectacular failures are rarely mentioned.” If one broadens the scope of research to include provocations, rather than confining investigation to correspondence and periodical publications, then the picture of missionary life and motivation, as well as of the Evangelical cultural response to imperial sites, becomes much more complicated.

Whereas periodical mission reports, such as the “Missionary Intelligence” pieces in the *Evangelical Magazine* or the “Religious Intelligence” in the *Missionary Magazine*, provide snapshots and quick updates on the progress of various missions, provocations give the personal story of the missionary and his message. The former were edited and re-crafted by the societies in order provoke and encourage support for an assumed common cause. As Johnston correctly points out, the reports present “‗the mighty men of Mission renown‘” and suggest an inevitability of success (“British Missionary Publishing,” 32). The latter book-length provocations, however, aimed to provoke readers in a different manner and appealed to their Gospel-mindedness—their Evangelical worldview—rather than to a bandwagon impulse to join a winning cause. Both types of writing are important for understanding the Evangelical response to empire, and without either of them the Evangelical archive is incomplete.

Provocations are troublesome for the conclusions of critics of missionary writing because they complicate the assumption that Evangelicals, particularly of the working class and lower middle class, would be de-motivated by “limited successes or spectacular failures” in the mission efforts abroad. With a limited exploration of the Evangelical
worldview, they have tended to argue that support should diminish where there is limited success of conversions. Although some portion of the Christian public likely had such a response to the honesty of these texts, most would have read provocations according to a more distinctly Evangelical hermeneutic, as testimonies to the overarching grand Gospel narrative, a history of God redeeming the nations. According to Evangelical teaching, one should expect a pervading resistance to the message that everyone needs to repent and accept grace freely given. The moderate Calvinism of their doctrine assumes of all people what Wilberforce explains as “the condition of a child of wrath, and a slave of Satan” (166), which Boston calls “entire depravity.” Because man’s life and nature are assumed to be wholly corrupt, the repeated representation of negative response to the Gospel in the pages of provocations rather confirms the Evangelical view than causes them to despair of it. Considering this dour view of man’s state, it should not be surprising that Evangelicals took such extreme interest in any situation whereby a person newly acquainted with the Gospel might “be adopted into the family of God...become an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, entitled to... an inheritance of eternal glory” (Wilberforce 166). This was to be marveled at and celebrated as a kind of family reunion, albeit in the spiritual imaginary.

As my earlier discussion of the Evangelical Archive implicitly suggests, the archive is best understood as interlocking personal stories intended to confirm and elaborate the central focus of Evangelicalism: the Gospel metanarrative. Their understanding of the Gospel included both a grand narrative about the redemption of the world, and smaller narratives in which individuals could play a role in the larger story. Provocations are the longest and most elaborate expressions of personal stories, and as
the most distinctly cross-cultural portion, they best illustrate the extent to which Evangelicals viewed their own role in the worldwide redemption story. The grand narrative, as outlined in such treatises as Thomas Boston’s *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State* and Henry Venn’s *Whole Duty of Man*, consists of perfect creation, followed by man’s fall to a state of depravity, resulting in the necessity of an atoning sacrifice, which was provided in the person Jesus Christ dying on their behalf but rising victoriously from death, thereby allowing restoration to relationship with God through faith in the efficacy of Christ’s death—a restoration experienced in limited measure on earth but in full measure in eternity.

When William Milne set about writing his *Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China* (1820), the first provocation from that region, he inevitably drew from a conception of Evangelical writing that required a focus on the Gospel story, within which the personal accounts of the mission found their own meaning. In writing about China, his design was to record the progress of the Gospel as a subcultural signifier, that is, to reflect upon instances whereby Gospel-focused Christianity established a distinct presence. As with Evangelicals at home, there was an expectation that real Christians in China would have to appear radically different from their compatriots in life and outlook. The erection of an Evangelical community of Chinese would thereby reflect not only the Evangelical community of Britain, but also show God’s Gospel plan to redeem the nations. The anecdotes and personal accounts of academic labors in the cause, of preaching and teaching the message, of physical ministry to poor Chinese, and of suffering for this cause, are calculated to display how the ministry, suffering, and triumph of Christ have been reflected in particular instances of
the mission to the Chinese. At the same time, his work served to connect the imagined Evangelical community of his British readers to the region of his operation and to the tiny Evangelical community being established there.

VII. Provocations and the Imagined Community

By way of intention, Milne’s early text aimed to provoke response in his readers through a presentation of the progress of the Gospel among a foreign people. By the time he wrote his *Retrospect*, he certainly knew his readers. Trained for his mission work by the Missionary Society’s teacher, the Rev. David Bogue, at Gosport, Milne had been both a student of evangelical theology and of Evangelical culture. His own conversion had been brought about through reading Evangelical works, particularly Boston’s *Fourfold State*, and from that time he turned his attention exclusively to writing from this archive.85 Through reading the *Evangelical* and *Missionary* Magazines, he began to feel “deeply concerned for the coming of Christ’s kingdom among the nations” (*Memoirs* 12), while his own part in that process was encouraged by reading “the Missionary Transactions, the Life of David Brainerd, and the Life of Samuel Pierce. An Address to Young Men, in the Evangelical Magazine, for April 1805, I found of much service” (14). In all these works and in his theological instruction, it was impressed upon him what William Carey had stated in his manifesto on mission, “Christians are a body whose truest interest lies in the exaltation of the Messiah’s kingdom. Their charter is very

85 Milne mentions a number of works as influential in his conversion process, all of which form the theological backbone of the early part of the Evangelical archive. Having special effect on him, he notes Willison’s *Treatise on the Sabbath*; Russell’s *Seven Sermons; The Cloud of Witnesses*; Mr. Boston’s *Fourfold State* (esp. instrumental); Boston’s “The Believer’s Espousal to Christ” (sermon); Guthrie’s *Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ* (*Memoirs* 3-7).
extensive, their encouragements exceeding great, and the returns promised infinitely superior to all the gains of the most lucrative fellowship. Let then every one in his station consider himself as bound to act with all his might, and in every possible way for God” (82). Towards these ends his mission was to be charted. In order to fill his vocation properly, it was incumbent upon him “to act with all his might, and in every possible way for God,” which included anything he might write.

Missionaries like Milne believed that the written word, as long as it was consistent with the Word (the Scriptures), could perform powerful spiritual work for the Kingdom. Through this sacred character, the writing of provocations was as much a part of their mission vocation as preaching and teaching. The first British missiologist, the Rev. Henry Venn, explained in 1844 that faithful work for the Gospel will produce certain effects within the community of faith. Likewise, as part of the Gospel work, provocations would produce these same effects: glory to God for the spread of His kingdom, an encouragement for believers towards “works of faith and labours of love,” a sense of unity for the Christian community, and compassion towards the perishing heathen (Venn 108-10).

These effects on the Evangelical imagined community are intertwined in provocation content. Remaining consistent with his theology in the composition of his *Retrospect*, Milne calculated the work for “the exaltation of the Messiah’s kingdom,” and in particular, how that kingdom was making its assault on the heathen lands under the sway of Chinese rule and cultural hegemony. His work begins with a Gospel framework and the inclusion of China within that story of worldwide redemption:

**CHRISTIANITY** claims the world as the sphere of its operations: it knows no other locality. It commands the nations to give up nothing but what is injurious
for them to retain; and proposes nothing for their acceptance but what they are miserable without. It casts no slight on any one country, by exalting the virtues and glory of another. It represents 'all peoples and nations' as on a level in the eyes of God--as equally offenders against him--equally subject to the decisions of his awful justice--and equally welcome to the benefits of his abundant mercy. (3)

As with religious tracts, he leaves no doubt that the focus of his labors and resulting literary production is the Gospel for all people regardless of nation and class. The equal opportunity for all to receive mercy, celebrated by Evangelicals as the great mark of God’s goodness, was meant to encourage his audience that theirs was indeed the most generous faith. Against the skeptics they could claim that due to its universal scope and consistent evaluation of human nature and need, “Christianity, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, is the only religion which is in all respects adapted to the moral state of the whole world” (Milne, Retrospect 1). Even in this way, Milne asserts the inclusive exclusivism of the Evangelical imagined community, open to “all peoples and nations as on a level in the eyes of God,” but demanding the exclusivism associated with giving up particular cultural norms.

Likewise following the model of brief testimonies produced by the religious tract society, provocations further extend the testimony for God’s glory by narrating the actual extension of the community. Milne explains this method in the introduction to his work:

[I]t was designed chiefly for those who were, or were likely to be, connected with the Ultra-Ganges Missions, and such as felt a particular interest therein; hence, it was necessary to notice some circumstances rather of a minute and private nature, more fully than would otherwise have been done. These, together with several long digressions (which are not, however, foreign to the design of the publication) the general reader may perhaps find irksome. (i)

As an extended form of testimony to the Evangelical object, the work was written for that community, and so he consciously included the details and digressions of interest to those eager to hear how the Gospel was being shared and received. Walter H. Medhurst, the
third of the early missionaries to China, expresses this approach even more clearly in his

> In the course of [the author’s] tour through England . . . to plead the cause of 
> missions, he found it necessary to dilate more at large on the political, moral, and
> spiritual condition of the Chinese, and to relate in order the efforts that have been
> made for their evangelization. These statements having been listened to with some
> interest, and awakened a sympathy on behalf of China, the thought suggested
> itself that, possibly, the feeling thus created might be extended and perpetuated by
> a publication, embracing the general state of CHINA, and its STATE and
> PROSPECTS, with especial reference to the DIFFUSION of the GOSPEL. (iii-iv)

Medhurst’s relation here of the origin of his work contains, obliquely, the mutual
constitution of influence and material product within the specifically Evangelical
framework. The mission itself began with an idea: the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God
for all nations. But for the mission to take place, both missionaries and their supporting
bodies had to be inspired. In his tour through England, Medhurst found that the voice of a
missionary, through the power of first-hand testimonial, “awakened a sympathy” for the
project in a way that an abstract call could not. His provocation for China was a result of
his own experience among Evangelical audiences, but it likewise produced a vision of the
mission in China for his readers.

When the imagined community began to spread to China through the presence
and preaching of Robert Morrison, William Milne, Walter Medhurst and others,
Evangelicals in Britain became eager to hear about their connections to Chinese
Christians, partial realizations of the worldwide community of faith to which the Book of
Revelation pointed.86 Through the overarching goal of illustrating the spread of the

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86 As suggested earlier in this chapter, Evangelicals were especially concerned with the millennial
reign of Christ, resulting in their close scrutiny of Revelation for indications of “signs of the times.” Images
of the impending kingdom appear frequently in their works, especially references to believers of “every
tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5.9, 15.4).
kingdom, provocations distinctly established the connection between the British Evangelical genesis of the mission, along with the continuous support from those quarters, and the resulting emergence of an Evangelical community in China. In a long passage in the *Retrospect*, in which he remarks upon receiving support from the British and Foreign Bible Society, Milne explores the role of British societies and supporters in bringing about and encouraging the mission work:

It was very encouraging to the Chinese Mission, to be deemed worthy of [the Bible Society’s] attention. . . . The MISSIONARY Society had already gone to great expense in carrying on the translation of the Scriptures into Chinese thus far; and would in all human probability have been obliged if not to desist, yet to have proceeded much more slowly, but for the seasonable aid afforded by the Bible Society. Pecuniary assistance though of great moment is not however, the only good that results from Institutions of this nature. Their attention is peculiarly calculated to produce salutary effects on the minds of those who are laboring in lonely situations abroad. Hence Mr. M. felt much gratified and encouraged, by the voice of the Bible Society . . . . The countenance of Christians, especially of constituted bodies, produces in general the same beneficial effects on Missionaries every where. For, there are perhaps few men on earth so entirely supported by faith in the divine promises respecting the Kingdom of Christ, as to feel no additional encouragement from the concurrence of other good men in the same work; and but few who are so habitually and entirely actuated by a regard to the Deity as to derive no increased stimulus to zeal and fidelity, from the interest which the religious public manifests in the furtherance and success of their labors of love . . . . The operations of the Church of God, in general, or in any of its several branches, produce awe and delight in every pious mind; and the attention of any particular body of pious men, brings along with it, a powerful association of ideas, which seldom fails to produce happy effects on the mind of the Missionary abroad. He feels that he is not alone in the work. (87-8)

Milne’s comments reveal at once the formal dependence of missionaries on the financial support of British Christians and the informal, or psycho-spiritual connections to that same group. Despite the actual distance from their family of faith, missionaries maintained a connection with their community in the imaginary. Through the encouragement of bodies of believers, a missionary like Milne could feel “that he is not alone in the work.” In this way, rather than serving merely as the lubricating oil for a
mission machine, money also provided a vote of confidence, means of “encouragement,” and “delight” at the power of God in supplying the needs of His workers through others of the Kingdom. As Milne suggests, these feelings motivated missionaries to pursue their work with greater zeal, and although he ranks these motives as inferior to the Scriptural command to “go ye into all the world,” such motivation is highly effectual on the humanly frail missionary.

In a turnabout of encouragement, such praise from missionaries naturally encouraged the Evangelical societies and supporters to continue their donations. For Evangelicals, giving to Gospel work wherever it should occur was an assumed part of obedience to God. Faithful Christians ought to consider their incomes in terms of stewardship of God’s resources. In a sermon based on 1 Peter 4.10-11, which states, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God,” the Rev. Henry Venn explains, “The things we possess are only committed to us to be dispensed through our hands to the objects or persons for which God has designed them” (106). As part of their stewardship, therefore, Evangelicals were eager to discern the most productive and most spiritually beneficial recipients for their giving, and hard-working missionaries were among the more noticeable objects for their donation. When missionaries like Morrison and Milne, who wrote about the vital importance of encouragement from home in the Twenty-third Transactions of the Missionary Society and in the Retrospect, respectively, pointed to home support as a most important human contribution for allowing the Scriptures to spread to millions of Chinese readers, the Evangelical community was quick to identify
this as a cause before which “every other means of usefulness sinks into comparative insignificance” (“On the Translation of the Scriptures” 343).

The individual acceptance of this theological justification is also important for the imagined community as a whole. Henry Venn explains a two-step spiritual principle as first a form of world-denial: “What more effectual antidote to selfishness can there be, than the conviction that nothing is our own—that all our gifts are to tend, not to our own aggrandizement, but to the glory of God? When the chain is thus loosened by which a man is bound to his wealth, he becomes ready to distribute and glad to communicate” (108). Giving up wealth further severs one’s ties to the world and thereby enables a more thorough identification with an otherworldly community. In accordance, such contributions brought an individual Christian to feel himself or herself both part of the community and part of the divine plan for spreading the Kingdom. Venn expressed this result of giving as laying “the surest foundation for union and sympathy amongst all who labour in the cause of Christ” (110). In 1810, Robert Southey noted this phenomenon with apparent interest while exploring the “immediate temporal advantages” for lower-class converts to Evangelicalism:

[H]is pride is gratified in the consequence which he obtains by being an acknowledged member of a community, and the habits of regularity, industry and frugality which are enforced upon him, bring with them so certainly their own reward, that worldly prudence soon comes in aid of his better resolutions. . . . Two traveling preachers were making collections in Yorkshire for the Missionary Society, when a poor man, whose wages were about eight and twenty shillings per week, brought them a donation of twenty guineas. They hesitated at receiving it, doubting whether it was consistent with his duty to his family and the world to contribute such a sum; when the man answered to this effect. “Before I knew the grace of our Lord, I was a poor drunkard; I never could save a shilling; my family were in beggary and rags. But since it has pleased God to renew me by his grace, we have been industrious and frugal—we have not spent many idle shillings, and we have been enabled to put something into the Bank, and this I freely offer to the blessed cause of
our Lord and Saviour.” This was the second donation of the same poor man to the same amount. (“On the Evangelical Sects” 489-90)

Contributions to the cause of missions enhanced identification with the Evangelical community and enacted the Scriptural principle that “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” One needs only to have purchased a stock or placed a bet to understand this principle. Giving towards a mission connected the giver to the cause and invested him, both literally and figuratively, in the emerging community abroad.

With supreme confidence in the goodness of their work, and acknowledging the need for corporate participation in the mission project, writers of provocation were not reluctant to provoke their readers unabashedly for financial support. In his edited volume of Milne’s Memoirs, Robert Morrison notes,

What money is for the immediate furtherance of the gospel should not be used sparingly. . . . And money that tends to the preservation of a Missionary’s health, by affording him wholesome and nutritious food and drink; and good air and lodging; and good medical aid; should not be spent grudgingly. Hard-workers cannot be too well taken care of. Loungers, who study first their own ease and comfort, do not deserve the same treatment. (17)

With a sharp tone born from several years of suffering deprivation of health in Canton, largely due to a lack of finances, Morrison conveys clearly the need for support. Such a straightforward appeal was more typical of published letters, however, as when Milne wrote for the Evangelical Magazine:

O, ye churches of the highly favoured land—ye wealthy Christians—We wish not to enrich ourselves (God is witness!) but to give the word of life to the millions of China. We cannot go on without your aid.—We have formed many plans, which have the honour of the Creator, and establishment of Christ’s kingdom as their only objects: but we cannot execute them without you. (November 1814, 448)

Milne explicitly connects their potential gifts with the distribution of the “word of life to the millions of China,” thereby uniting the Evangelical community of the metropole with
the mission project in China. He challenges the readers with the weight of their wealth and the burden that they, a “highly favoured land” due to their long possession of the Gospel, are the means God has chosen to enable “the establishment of Christ’s kingdom.”

Drawing deeply from William Carey’s earliest provocation, *The Enquiry Into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*, in which he proposed that anyone might be able to tithe a tenth to the mission (85), this call forth operates regardless of class and income, based instead on the notion of a cultural possession of the Truth and the obligation to share it.

Explicit appeals like these rare in provocations compared to more layered discussion of need. More common and more in keeping with the general tone of these works are honest expressions of a need for help in the face of great difficulty. In summing up his *Retrospect*, which “shews much that is calculated to damp the mind” (295), Milne arrives at three points of greatest need:

- laborers, means, and success. More LABORERS are wanted in all departments of the Mission. . . —to act in the capacity of tract-distributors—readers—catechists—teachers of youth—and itinerant, or settled preachers. In regard to MEANS, the annual expence of the five Missions now existing, including the expence of passages, the support of Missionaries, of the press, of schools, and the rent, or building, of houses, &c.—is very considerable, and the establishment of other Missions which are in view, will also be so great and heavy an expence, as is quite damping to look forward to. (301-02)

Contrary to what several scholars of mission and empire have suggested, Milne is transparent about the difficulties attendant upon their efforts among the Chinese. Not only is East Asia expensive for the mission, there are far too few Evangelicals working there to imagine making even a minimal impact. The desperation of the task, however, is far from de-motivating and instead becomes another reason for greater attention.
In his slightly later provocation, Walter Medhurst employs another rhetorical tool by reminding the Evangelical community of the earlier enthusiasm for the work in China, but also of their failure to support it properly.

We cannot conclude this chapter without remarking on the little interest taken in Canton by the British churches. It is true that so early as 1807 they sent an agent to that city, which was then denominated ‘the most important station upon earth;’ but it is also true that since the year 1808 the Christians of Britain have not maintained a missionary there; and though they were relieved from the principal expense by Dr. Morrison’s supporting himself, yet they have not afforded him a single assistant in China. . . . This conduct is the more inexplicable as contrasted with the zeal at first displayed in the cause, and the earnestness with which the British churches have been excited to pray that the barriers might be removed, and a wide and effectual door opened before God’s servants. China has been denominated the object of faith, hope, and supplication; but we humbly submit that prayer without corresponding exertion is, to say the least, inconsistent; and that, if we want the barriers removed, and the door opened, the mere sitting still, and wishing it, is not the way to get the one or the other speedily accomplished.…

(81)

For an Evangelical community so motivated by the ideal of faithfulness and consistency, or “seriousness” as it was sometimes expressed, Medhurst’s criticism is particularly charged. Again harkening back to Carey’s early call that “we must not be content . . . with praying, without exerting ourselves in the use of means” (81), a call that signaled a more Arminian shift in evangelical theology, Medhurst is more provocative and even more Arminian by suggesting that “prayer without corresponding exertions is . . . inconsistent.” Where Carey understood “means” simply as God using people to convey the Gospel rather than using revelation alone, Medhurst goes further by arguing that consistency between profession and action must result in giving, sending, or going. Zeal for the kingdom must be manifested by participation in mission. Pleas for support could thus intertwine a reproach and an appeal with a theological justification and call. A
failure of stewardship on the part of the community could be conceived as a failure of the community in its charge to be “in the world but not of it.”

In a public address (later published) to the Missionary Society during his one visit back to Britain, Robert Morrison similarly invokes with force the Evangelical principles of consistency and of distinctiveness from the world.

Laying up treasures on earth; providing a competence for old age; accumulating fortunes for our children—for these things the different classes of men in our nation; the literary, the mercantile, the civilians, the clergy are all anxiously labouring. And I decry not industry, but I do decry placing these things higher in our estimation; and nearer to our hearts, than the things which concern Messiah’s reign, and a world’s salvation. …There is a want of consistency between our principles and our practices; for that which we say we deem supremely excellent; infinitely important and indispensably necessary to human happiness and salvation, we do less, than for many of those objects, which we confess to be very secondary to the knowledge of Christ. (“The Knowledge of Christ” 32)

Without condemning wealth outright, Morrison tiptoes between the classes and stresses the importance of otherworldly thinking. When Evangelicals were especially sensitive to the frequent charges of hypocrisy, such a suggestion from within would have struck with force. Like the Evangelical teachers of his day, Morrison turns attention to the Gospel as that which deserves the focus of one’s life. All pursuits, whether economic, domestic, social, or political, ought to be subservient—“secondary to the knowledge of Christ.”

How closely Morrison follows Wilberforce’s Practical Christianity, “But if it be indeed true, that except the affections of the soul be supremely fixed on God; that unless it be the leading and governing desire and primary pursuit to possess his favour and promote his glory, we are considered as having transferred our fealty to an usurper, and as being in fact revolters from our lawful sovereign” (176). Likewise echoed in Morrison’s words,

87 This phrase was and remains common shorthand for Christ’s teaching in John 17. 9-19, about separation from worldliness while yet remaining involved in the affairs of society.
one hears the familiar refrain of Simeon: “How heavenly is the Christian’s life. He is in
the world. But he is ‘not of it. . . His treasure is in heaven, and his conversation is also
there.’ . . . Seek then, beloved, after this high and holy attainment. Walk with a holy
indifference to the world. Show yourselves above all the things of time and sense” (71).
It is interesting to note that after delivering his message to the LMS, Morrison made visits
to William Wilberforce at Clapham and to Charles Simeon at Cambridge (Morrison,
Memoirs of the Life and Labours 306). An even smaller and more closely linked group
than the imagined community, the set of Evangelical leaders influenced one another in
actuality in a way that the larger community experienced only in the imaginary.

By employing this language of separation and distinctiveness, provocation writers
were reiterating the standard theological argument of the Evangelical community to
accompany the implicit argument of their works as a whole: specifically, that
commitment to Christ must result in action for the kingdom, and hopefully, action for the
kingdom in China. Their provocations were not only to be thought-provoking, but life-
provoking.

In terms of provoking the domestic community, their works were believed to be
successful at spurring other Evangelicals to “love and good deeds.” In “Defense of the
Missionary Society,” an article for the Anti-Jacobin Review apologizing for the work and
writing of Evangelical missionaries, the Rev. Joseph Hardcastle observes:

Both the friends and the enemies of the Society remarked, that as we discovered
so much zeal for the conversion of the heathen abroad, it was equally our duty to
administer instruction to those at home. . . . These considerations stimulated the
zeal of a great number of the Ministers of Christ, to visit the contiguous villages
in their respective circles, and to form associations for preaching the Gospel
among them; but as this field of Christian benevolence was far too extended for
Ministers alone to occupy, they have been assisted by well instructed Laymen,
who have read to the poor and ignorant people, such approved sermons as were
well adapted to convey to them the knowledge of the great principles of divine revelation. Very extensive and highly beneficial effects have resulted from these exertions, the religious principle with all its happy influences has been greatly diffused . . . contributing in various ways to raise and improve the standard of public morality, and thus promote the general interests, prosperity, and tranquillity [sic] of the country. (207)

Hardcastle argues that not only have missionaries led the way in showing zeal for the cause, their example and written encouragements have actually been the cause of domestic imitators. The clear-cut differentiations of believer and unbeliever abroad suggested to Evangelical readers that they ought to think in these terms at home, and not only to think, but to act in accord with the missionaries abroad. Through the connection between the Evangelical community abroad and the domestic community, the situation abroad affected attitudes at home, towards countrymen. Interestingly, Hardcastle shows that the condition of empire and the mission abroad actually caused change in the religious practice of the metropole.

How perfectly these effects on the “standard of public morality” fit into the “reformation of manners” conceived by Wilberforce in 1797. This broad hegemonic project required the participation not only of leaders and clergymen, but even more importantly the engagement of the “common lump of men.” When Hardcastle reports enthusiastically that the “religious principle with all its happy influences has been greatly diffused,” he marks out territory gained in the hegemonic overthrow of rationalist religious practice. Not only were missionaries doing their part to establish the Evangelical community abroad, their provocations were influencing the Evangelical community in Britain by filling up the place of imagination, possibility, and excitement in the Evangelical archive.
For the writers of these provocations themselves, though, an even greater object than building up the domestic community was the extension of the community at their sites of residence on the edge of the empire. The most pressing objective of their provocations, as shown earlier in the opening pages of both Milne’s and Medhurst’s works, was to awaken “a sympathy on behalf of China” among “those who were, or were likely to be, connected with the Ultra-Ganges Missions.” While certainly they hoped to provoke Evangelicals to take an interest in the mission and if possible support it through prayer and finances, their fondest hope was provocare, to call forth to action. From their own experience of stimulation to move abroad, they believed that a successful call required a personal attachment to the idea of mission, and for greatest success, “sympathy” with a particular nation.

Nearly every missionary of what may be understood as the first generation of British missions traces his first inklings going abroad to some type of reading in the Evangelical archive. Morrison, Milne, and Medhurst each became intrigued by mission in young adulthood through reading in the Evangelical Magazine and the Missionary Magazine, published in London and Edinburgh respectively (Morrison, Memoirs 7; Milne, Memoirs 2; Wylie 25). Through articles about preaching the Gospel, giving one’s life to the service of God, fulfilling the mandate of Christ to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Matthew 28), and vague reports on various nations around the world, the young men—each with an artisan background—determined to leave their country. Typical of that generation, a young Robert Morrison, writing to his father about his decision to leave Britain, explains the impulse:

I know that the redeemed of the Lord are to be gathered out of every nation, every kindred, and every language, under heaven. From this consideration I think it my
duty to quit this country, where there is abundance of labourers, and go to those countries where there are few or none. I do not consider inclination only; I am afraid I should weep for the omission when about to die, should I shun the work. (Memoirs 56)

Within a vision of a worldwide kingdom of worshippers, described in Revelation but drawn to his attention by “the Evangelical Magazine, and the missionary intelligence which it supplied” (8), Morrison found a place for himself in that mission. Again drawn from Scripture, it had been impressed upon him that “the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few” (Matthew 9.37), and nowhere did this seem more true than among millions of unbelieving Chinese. So closely did he link himself with the Evangelical community and its purposes, that he identified his inclination to go abroad with a “duty” that would be a sin of “omission” should he avoid “the work.”

What they had experienced in their reading and in the missionary prayer meetings they later attended was a similar kind of psycho-spiritual investment to that of financial investment. Through their reading and prayer, they began investing spiritual and emotional attention on an abstract concept of “the Chinese,” a people desperately in need of the light. In Chapter III, I discuss ways in which images of the Chinese in Evangelical texts were structured to create and foster this effect. At this point, it must suffice to point out that the primary goal of their writing—in a personal sense—was to encourage “workers into the harvest field” (Matthew 9.38). Jacob Tomlin, a Cambridge-educated missionary sent to China in 1827, articulates this purpose in Missionary Journals and Letters written during Eleven Years Residence and Travels amongst the Chinese, Siamese, Javanese, Khassias, and Other Eastern Nations:

[I] will greatly rejoice if the following remarks and observations upon that singular and interesting people, should touch the hearts of [my] faithful brethren, with compassion for the wretched and benighted state of its countless millions!
and rouse them cheerfully to deny themselves, and to go out; or send help speedily to them, that they may be made partakers of the like precious faith with ourselves. For surely, the empire of China, which comprises one third of the whole human family, cannot be excluded from the universal charter of salvation by Jesus! (xv-xvi)

Passing over even the idea of financial support, Tomlin speaks directly to the central purpose of his writing: a provocation to act, “to go out; or send help.” Medhurst expresses the same idea with even more precise attention to the harvest vocabulary of mission in the Scriptures just mentioned:

[I]t may be well to offer a few remarks on its former and present state as introductory to the conclusion of its future destinies, and with the view of encouraging those exertions which, by the Divine blessing, may result in its universal evangelization. The conversion of the Chinese must be viewed as an object in every way desirable. . . . In contemplating the evangelization of China, the field spreads itself out before the mind, as one of vast extent and interest; the importance of cultivating this field appears to be of incalculable magnitude; the difficulties which threaten to impede the progress of Divine truth in those regions ought not to be overlooked; while the existing facilities for conducing a series of operations for the benefit of that interesting people should be allowed to animate and encourage us. (1-2; my emphasis)

In accordance with the Scriptural teaching that the kingdom of God will include “every tribe, nation, and tongue,” Medhurst assumes the “future destinies of China as part of “universal evangelization.” What remains is that more workers must enter “the field [that] spreads itself out before the mind,” a China big enough to excite the imagination. The greatest difficulty that impedes the progress of the Gospel, as Milne had explained in his Retrospect, was the scarcity of laborers. Although they worked tirelessly to spread the Scriptures and preach the Gospel to Chinese throughout Southeast Asia, the first-generation missionaries realized that the task was too big for them, and that perhaps their greatest service to the mission could be the instigation of others to come after them.

Having felt this impulse so strongly through their own reading, and having found in the
mission work such a profound sense of purpose, these missionaries added to the
Evangelical archive works of provocation that were tuned to the same keys of appeal that
had drawn them to China.

Beyond the direct appeals to fulfill the Great Commission (“Go into all the world
and make disciples”) and be part of the cosmic unfolding story of the Gospel,
missionaries took a page from the great missionary of Scripture, the Apostle Paul. In the
Acts of the Apostles, the writer tells of a vision Paul had while staying in the town of
Troas in Asia Minor. “And a man appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia
stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ Now after he
had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord
had called us to preach the gospel to them” (16. 8-10). As shorthand, Evangelicals
referred to this passage simply as “the man from Macedonia,” and it appears frequently in
the Evangelical archive as the general call of all nations to those in possession of the
Gospel to “come over and help us.” This expression of a general plea from the nations
appears noticeably in a hymn of 1838 for the Missionary Manual,

Hark! What mean those lamentations
    Rolling sadly through the sky?
‘Tis the cry of heathen nations,
    ‘Come and help us, or we die!’ (21)

Here, it is a general cry from all the heathen lands to those possessing the light. An even
more direct allusion to the Pauline passage echoes through a poem with title, “Come
Over and Help Us.”

They see the path in that blest land—
    I wander on in night:
Alas! And will no friendly hand
    Convey that guiding light?
Oh! Come, and bring one heavenly ray,
   My darken’d heart to cheer,
I sigh, I sigh my life away,
   For, oh, it comes not here! (qtd. in Schwer 56)

How could those in possession of the “guiding light” refuse the plaintive plea of those “wander[ing] on in night”? All they desire is “one heavenly ray” to cheer their “darken’d heart[s].” Without national context, yet personal in appeal, such verses served a general call to mission. But the call could be more ethnically particular. As Mary Schwer has shown, Evangelical writers often put this plea into the mouths of native speakers from specific countries, as in the case of Thomas Freeman in *Journal of Various Visits to the Kingdoms of Ashanti, Aku, and Dahomi, in Western Africa* (1844). Giving a voice to victims of cannibalism, Freeman writes, “‘Come, pray come, and look on our unhappy country! . . . . O ye who enjoy the high blessings of Christianity, allow us to entreat you to direct your energies towards this scene of moral desolation!’” (qtd. in Schwer 54). In these cases, the design was not merely to encourage care for mission in general, but to establish sympathetic attachment to a particular people.

With such sympathetic attachment as a motivating goal for birthing new missionaries, writers of provocations used the “man from Macedonia” in an unprecedented method of appeal. Instead of merely calling British Christians on behalf of the Chinese, or even pretending the voice of a native, provocationists inserted quotations or letters from Chinese converts as new twist on the “man from Macedonia.”

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88 Among the earliest examples of this rhetorical device is an article in the “Missionary Intelligence” of the *Evangelical Magazine* for July 1815, in which the missionary to South Africa, Evan Evans, quotes a conversation with a Hottentot, who thanks him for bringing the Gospel and begs that more missionaries be sent to Africa (819).
This rhetorical device enables one “man from China” to stand in as the voice of the Chinese Evangelical community. Without doubt, the most notable and communicative of the Chinese converts was Liang Fa, or as he was called by the missionaries, Leang Afa. The second convert in China, he became a tireless evangelist and is perhaps most noted for landing a tract of his composition, through the means of another Chinese evangelist, in the hands of a young exam candidate for political office, Hong Xiuquan, in 1837. This tract, “Good Words to Admonish the Age,” confirmed for Hong his vision of a Heavenly Kingdom and indirectly shaped the ideology of the Taiping Rebellion. To the British Evangelicals of the early nineteenth century, however, Liang Afa was the voice of the Chinese Evangelical community, and most interestingly for them, they heard directly from him.

Letters and quotations from Liang Afa appear in numerous provocations and in the journals of the Evangelical archive, all to the purpose of encouraging mission to his people. Medhurst’s account of the Gospel mission in China affords considerable space to Afa’s turn to faith and evangelistic endeavors, thereby highlighting the birth of the

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89 Another notable voice was the first convert to Evangelicalism in China, Tsae-a-ko, a 27 year-old printing assistant to Robert Morrison. In a confession of faith, A-ko (as he is referred to in the provocations), clearly follows the Gospel structure of Evangelical catechism, noting particularly the sins of his life and complete depravity, need for salvation apart from works, the full atonement of Christ on the Cross, and hope of the resurrection. His account appears in the Evangelical Magazine of 1815 (426), Milne’s Retrospect (124-25), a Tract of the RTS on “Missionary Records, China, Burmah, Ceylon, etc.” (30-32), and Morrison’s Memoirs (408-10). Ko-Mow-ho, or Ko-seen-sang as he is sometimes called, also had letters published in Evangelical journals. His letter printed in the Evangelical Magazine (October 1813) “requests that you will take the doctrines of God and of Jesus, explain them more and more in their rise and progress from beginning to end; and by the ships of next season favour me with a reply, and with your admonitions” (398).

90 For a discussion of Liang Fa’s composition of the tract and its message, see Richard Bohr’s essay, “Liang Fa’s Quest for Moral Power.” The best discussions of the religious underpinnings of the Taiping Rebellion, and of Liang Fa’s contribution to the founder of that movement, can be found in Rudolf Wagner’s Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Rebellion (1982) and Jonathan Spence, God’s Chinese Son (1996). Told in story form, Spence’s chapter 3 uniquely captures the context in which Liang Fa’s tract found its way, through an unidentifiable Chinese evangelist, into the hands of Hong Xiuquan (23-33).
Chinese Evangelical community. Quoting him at length, he also puts forth the “man from China” to make an appeal on his nation’s behalf:

I thank the Lord for his wondrous mercy, in converting my whole family…. But the people of the middle country (China) are divided into many sects, and pride occupies their hearts; so that their speedy conversion will not, I fear, be accomplished. I can only study the truth, practise it, and set an example, that will move men’s hearts, praying the Most High Lord to convert them. The Chinese are glued fast to ten thousand forms of idols: the root is deep, and the stem strong; to eradicate it suddenly will not be easy. Therefore I hope that all believers in the Lord Jesus, in your honoured country, will increase in benevolence till all nations become one family, and the Gospel be spread throughout the whole world. (272-73)

While conscious to show his own part in the spread of the Gospel and witness to the faith, in accordance with good Evangelical teaching, Afa likewise encourages “believers in the Lord Jesus, in your honoured country,” to increase their efforts in spreading the Gospel throughout the whole world.” Pointing to the depravity of his own people and suggesting their hardness to the Gospel, he gives a rhetorical obeisance to Britain in carrying the Gospel abroad.

By 1835, it was obvious to British missionaries in China that as a native evangelist, through whose means “more than ten souls have professed their faith in Jesus,” Afa was the most effective member of the Christian community in China and was flatteringly compared to “holy Paul” (Bridgman 9). Full accounts of his conversion and spiritual growth appear in Milne’s Retrospect (177-80) and Medhurst’s China (307-11). Of so much interest was he to Evangelicals in Britain that at the age of 47, a short biography by Elijah Bridgman, “Brief Memoir of the Chinese Evangelist, Leang Afa,” was circulated by the Religious Tract Society, who printed approximately 20,000 copies. Another tract of the RTS, called “Missionary Records. China, Burmah, Ceylon, etc.,”

91 This letter from Liang Fa also appears in the Christian Guardian for September, 1835 (354-56) and in the Missionary Magazine of the LMS for the same month.
includes a full account of his conversion, along with Morrison’s good opinion of him and reports of his progress as a missionary in his own right (30-32). Another account of his life was included in The Christian Keepsake and Missionary Annual of 1835. Such “Christian Keepsakes,” inspired by the secular version first edited by William Harrison Ainsworth in 1827, were gift books for the parlor table and contained poems, hymns, mini-sermons, testimonials, slice of life, and scenes from abroad. Becoming a literary craze in the late 1820s and 1830s, keepsakes could have a circulation up to 10,000 copies (Feldman 7). Afa’s life was apparently so interesting that in a review of the Christian Keepsake in The Christian Observer for May, 1835, the account of Afa was reprinted in full, leaving almost no space for comment on any other piece of the book. With such exposure in tracts, a popular gift book, and literary journals, “Leang Afa” would have been a household name to Evangelicals in the 1830s and 1840s.

As spokesman for the Chinese Evangelical community, it was natural that Afa should be included in William Ellis’s Introduction to Charles Gutzlaff’s Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832, and 1833. Affording several pages of full quotation in which Afa describes the efforts he has made for the Gospel, Ellis includes a plea from Afa as well:

Happily, the Lord most high has graciously granted us protection, so that we have enjoyed hearts at peace and in tranquil joy; therefore I respectfully prepare this slip of paper, with writing on it, to inform you. . . of these things, and to pray that you would, as is right, joyfully praise our heavenly Father for converting us by his great grace.

Further, I look up and hope that you. . . will pray to our Lord and Saviour for us, that he will confer the Holy Spirit’s secret aid, to influence and rouse our hearts, that from first to last we may, with one mind, and persevering intention, cultivate virtue, and persuade men of the world every year to come in greater numbers to serve the Lord, that we may together ascend to the heavenly regions, and assemble with the vast multitude who, in his presence, shall praise the self-
existent and ever-living God, throughout never to be exhausted, never ending ages.

Just as in 1Cor.xiii.12, holy Paul says, “For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face:” we who in this world reverently believe in our Lord and Saviour, although we cannot, with fleshly eyes, see the honoured countenance of our heavenly Father. Though you and I are separated as far as one boundary of the sky to its extreme opposite, and cannot see each other in our own proper persons, still we hope to meet and see each other in the presence of our heavenly Father, and praise his great power for ever. (lxxiii-lxxiv)

There is perhaps no more complete statement, whether by British or foreign person, of the community ideals of the Evangelical imagined community, than this summation by Liang Afa. Beginning with a statement of peace, he gives the credit and honor for his conversion not to the missionaries, but to his heavenly Father. Rather than ingratiating with his sponsors and supporters for their efforts at evangelization in China, he suggests that the real work is done by “the Holy Spirit’s secret aid.” Consistent with what Doreen Rosman has pointed out, that it was this “emphasis upon the activity of the Holy Spirit that most obviously differentiated evangelicals’ beliefs from those of their fellows” (12), Afa shows himself a true Evangelical. Similar to his Evangelical counterparts in Britain, Afa hopes for and asks for prayers to “persuade men of the world every year to come in greater numbers to serve the Lord.” Like them, he maintains the distinction between believer and men of the world, and wishes to cultivate an otherworldly focus. As with other Evangelicals, his otherworldly focus connects readily to an eschatological period, when “we may together ascend to the heavenly regions.”

Most interestingly, though, is Afa’s Scriptural appropriation in order to establish his close connection with the Evangelical community of Britain. The quotation from Paul, which in its original context follows the well-known hymn of love (“Love is patient; love is kind…) and concerns the imperfection of temporal ties of love compared
to the love to be expressed in the eternal kingdom, suggests a startling intimacy of familial connection. Articulating the very idea of an imagined community, Afa explains that through belief—the imaginary—“although we cannot, with fleshly eyes, see” the Father, yet through Him there is unity. And he acknowledges that this unity is completely groundless in the physical: “Though you and I are separated as far as one boundary of the sky to its extreme opposite, and cannot see each other in our own proper persons.” One implication is that although not seeing each other in person, they can see one another in the imaginary. Finally, and most remarkably, his belief in this imagined community is not based on any hope of being part of a British fellowship, but on the Evangelical tenet of life everlasting. Not only does he express eternal union as his hope, but he assumes—saying, “we hope to meet and see each other”—that his British Evangelical counterparts share this hope for community “in the presence of our heavenly Father.” Truly a convert to the Evangelical faith, Liang Afa may have been more thoroughly evangelical than many bearing that designation in Britain.

Not the conventional appeal for money or fellow laborers, Afa’s appeal is more advanced in conception. He is not looking forward to the establishment of a Chinese Christian community, fed by European workers; instead, he speaks out of a lively existing community across a physical expanse to brothers, to support him as they would any part of their community in Britain—with prayer and encouragement. For British readers, this provocation is the final extension of personal investment: a name, a personality, a brother. Because no such converts and connections had existed prior to this first generation, this method of appeal was entirely new for missions. In many ways, though, it followed the example of freed slave narratives such as that by Ottobah
Cugoano (1787) and Olaudah Equiano (1789), which proved powerful as first-hand testimony and for showing their undeniable humanity. Like these freed slave narratives, an appeal from a Chinese convert gave a face and personality to the Chinese Christian community. By establishing the oneness of an Evangelical imagined community across the world, provocationists took away some of the fear and strangeness of going abroad and replaced it with warm attachment and sympathy. Evangelicals in Britain could read such passages and imagine their relationship and kinship to these Chinese converts, and speculate on the potential Evangelical community there.

Obviously, the voice of the Chinese convert is mediated to some extent, first through the translation performed by the missionary, and then as an inclusion in a larger textual provocation. Although the style of translation employed by first generation missionaries tended to place literal correspondence above eloquence and readability—evident in the non-idiomatic and wooden style seen here—there is no way to determine whether the ideas in our received text are what was intended by the Chinese writer. What we can say, however, is that Evangelical readers believed that this text is exactly what Liang Afa meant to convey. As an expression of community attachment and an appeal for connection and (implicit in context) for more help, these appeals held perhaps greater power than any other and were celebrated by the Evangelical community with an aplomb deserving a countenance from on High.

**VIII. Conclusion**

In the midst of analyses about mechanisms of raising support, about proselytizing from positions of power, and imperial interventions, studies of mission and empire can overlook what was the primary concern of the missionary community and the larger
group to which they belonged. Certainly missionaries wanted converts, but their interest was in the inclusion of those converts in a worldwide network of Evangelical Christianity. Their offensiveness at colonial sites or on the frontiers of the empire was due, not to their making of converts, but to the inclusive exclusivism of their brand of faith. Within any cultural system there will be a range of belief and unbelief. What made Evangelical missionaries so irritating was that they spelled out in unequivocal terms the separation from whatever world their converts had previously claimed. What is also frequently forgotten is that these same tenets made them equally irritating to the established social order at home.

This chapter has sought to show how Evangelicals, in forwarding their counter-cultural assault on late-eighteenth-century hegemony, established a community archive based on their tenets of faith. Their theology, focused on a crucicentric Gospel to be taken to all nations, provided the measure of value and forms of expression for their archive, as well as implicitly providing the worldwide agenda of content.

With the missionary attempt on China in 1807, just as the archive was growing in scope and requiring literature of imagination to challenge the novel, China became a site for the working out of the Evangelical vision of worldwide community. Provocations, the extended testimonies of missionaries to the spread of the Gospel abroad, filled the multiple roles of safe and edifying reading for conscientious Evangelical readers, of encouraging reportage on God’s work, and of provoking active response from the British Christian community on behalf of an emerging Chinese Christian community.
CHAPTER THREE

DARK, CIVILIZED, AND DEPRAVED:

PROVOCATIONS AND IMAGES OF CHINA

On the whole we may conclude, that the Romish missionaries, from first to last, have been rather solicitous about the quantity, than the quality, of their success; while they have displayed a spirit of time-serving compliance with the prejudices of the heathen, and failed to exhibit Christianity in its most inviting form to the nations. (Medhurst 249-50)

As this epigraph indicates, British Protestant missionaries held definite opinions about how Catholic missionaries, predominantly Jesuits, had previously approached the Chinese. Rather than personally encountering much of the Catholic mission, their ideas of it were formed primarily through reading, particularly those sixteenth- to eighteenth-century accounts that had provided the West with the only authoritative picture of China until the late eighteenth century. With the publication in 1763 of John Bell’s Journey from St. Petersburg to Pekin, 1719-1722 and the several accounts of the 1793-94 Macartney embassy published in 1796, 1798, and 1804 (Anderson, Staunton, and Barrow, respectively), distinctly secular visions of China were added to the resources for British imagination and for Protestant missionary consultation. Following close on the heels of a second embassy, that led by Lord Amherst in 1816, the professional writer and opium addict Thomas de Quincey gave a further set of Asiatic images in his Confessions of an English Opium Eater (1821; reissued 1822). Commerce likewise drove the production of writing about China when merchants sought to galvanize public opinion in
1813 and 1822 regarding the proposed renewals of the East India Company monopoly on trade in the East. A similar flurry of writing ensued when the charter expired in 1834.

To this mix of representations, British missionaries added their own vision of the Chinese people and their culture. This chapter explores how missionary provocations provide their own recognizably consistent perspective of the Chinese. Based on Evangelical notions of human nature and their worldwide Gospel mission to all nations, their depictions of the Chinese create stereotypes in keeping with their worldview and hegemonic project. Illustrative of the way Jane Tompkins has described stereotypes in Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860 (1985), they are “the instantly recognizable representatives of overlapping racial, sexual, national, ethnic, economic, social, political, and religious categories; they convey enormous amounts of cultural information in an extremely condensed form” (xvi). By examining the Evangelical stereotyping of the Chinese, I show how provocations reinforce the pre-established transhistorical narrative of world redemption through the Gospel. More particularly, I give readings of key passages from these texts that illustrate ways in which missionaries spiritualized their interactions with the Chinese. In doing so, the texts secured a place with their intended audience as legitimate Evangelical texts but also spiritually coded Chinese racial, national, social, and political categories according to the Evangelical vision of the world. Even as Evangelicals had assessed and measured British society, their missionaries served as the authoritative adjudicators of Chinese society.

Inasmuch as the early Evangelical missionaries were important players in the imperial pressure at the edge of the Chinese empire, their more lasting social impact came through their provocation literature and the “cultural work” that these performed.
Again, I follow Jane Tompkins’s canon-assaulting historicist approach. These texts work by “providing society with a means of thinking about itself, defining certain aspects of a social reality which the authors and their readers shared, dramatizing its conflicts, and recommending solutions” (200). Through the expanding British empire and the evangelistic effort, Evangelicals were entering realms of conflict, not only with the foreign peoples to whom they went but also with alternative Western visions of belief, practice, and mission. The cultural work of provocations was to stake out a place for Evangelicalism amidst these other visions, re-affirm its own truth as the only transnational and transhistorical narrative, and recommend a way forward for the true Gospel believers within the new intercultural context. Necessarily part of this cultural work—this Evangelical self-assessment, affirmation, and extension amidst other cultural options—is what Mary Poovey in Uneven Developments has called “ideological work,” or the construction and contestation, “always open to revision, dispute, and the emergence of oppositional formulations,” of the “imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (3). For Evangelicals, this meant constructing and questioning the view of themselves as God’s people on a mission. In the process of their mission in China and their writing about it, missionaries and their readers had to evaluate continuously their beliefs about this mission. On what is the mission really based? How should the message be formulated for the Chinese context? What is essential? In order to achieve successful cultural work, this ideological work was a necessary process.

In her dissertation Between Romantic Revolution and Victorian Propriety: the Cultural Work of British Missionary Narratives (1997), Susan Fleming McAllister likewise used Tompkin’s “cultural work” to explore “the intersection between popular literature and missionary narratives about China written between 1807 and 1907” (4). Although my argument supports McAllister’s attempt to define missionary narratives as a genre, I cannot see that her dissertation actually demonstrates missionary writing as performing any cultural work; rather, her argument shows the influence always flowing from broader culture to missionary productions.
Within the field of nineteenth-century British literature, there has been little consideration given to representations of China or the Far East either in prose or fiction.\(^93\) What consideration has been given to British images of China has come either from historians with a bent towards critical close-reading or scholars of comparative religion.\(^94\) Consequently, in order to establish the unique images of Evangelical representation characteristic of provocations, I briefly consider the alternative visions of China with which Evangelicals were either familiar, or with which their particular perspective conflicts. First, I present the outlines of the Catholic image of China developed through Jesuit writings from Matteo Ricci in the sixteenth century to the latest works read by Evangelical missionaries composed at the end of the eighteenth century. Next I briefly consider secular images of China that resulted from the royal embassies of 1793-94 and 1816, along with complementary economically and politically motivated images clustered around the renewal of the East India Company charter. I then move to popular images provided by the opium addict Thomas de Quincey in his *Confessions*. Finally, in presenting the Evangelical imaginary construct of the Chinese through their provocations, I analyze how they engage with or present alternate stereotyping in order to work out their ideology of mission and forward their cultural advance.

\(^93\) Several article-length studies have explored British fiction concerned with China, most notably Ross Forman’s excellent “Peking Plots: Fictionalizing the Boxer Rebellion of 1900,” which argues that profiteering adventure novelists capitalized on the romantic potential of the Boxer uprising and wove plots that affirmed the civilizing expansion of the empire, but all the while betraying fears for its security. Forman’s article, like that of Susan F. McAllister, “Cross-Cultural Dress in Victorian British Missionary Narratives,” concerns late-nineteenth-century representation founded on the assumptions established in the early part of the century.

\(^94\) Among historians of China, most notable for their close-reading of Western representations of China in the nineteenth century are Jonathan Spence, James L. Hevia, Jerome Cheng, and Colin Mackerras.
I. Catholic Imagination

The earliest reliable histories recording contact between Europeans and Chinese consider first contact to been the visit of Portuguese merchant explorers to the Chinese coast around 1514 or 1515, and although the Ming rulers of the sixteenth century were not solicitous of contact with foreign peoples, they eventually allowed the Portuguese to settle on a small peninsula near Canton, where they built a city called Macao (Latourette 85). Similar to other outposts of Portuguese and Spanish colonization, missionaries soon joined the settlement community at Macao. A notable first attempt to take the Gospel to China was made in 1552 by Francis Xavier, among the earliest members of the Society of Jesus. Delayed by the merchant soldiers of the Portuguese who were wary lest his presence should endanger their trading prospects, Xavier fell ill and died on the island of Shang-chuan, within sight of the mainland (Medhurst 225). Despite a constant Portuguese presence at Macao, including ecclesiastics and occasional resident Jesuits, it was not until the arrival in 1579 of the Italian Jesuit Michael Ruggerius that intentional mission activity was begun. Another of his Italian Jesuit associates, Matteo Ricci, arrived in 1582. Entering the country in 1583, the two began a course of slow and steady influence that lasted until Ricci’s death in 1610 (Latourette 92).

Following the ministry model of their founder Ignatius Loyola, the early Jesuits in China, and Ricci in particular, have been noted for their approach to mission. If the Gospel were to receive a hearing among the masses and finally be received by a society unaccustomed to it, the favor of the ruling class was necessary for stability and longevity. Consequently, Ricci and his successors, both Jesuit and Dominican, sought to secure respect among the Ming and thereafter Qing rulers in Peking. To this end they were
consistently pragmatic. Although initially dressing like Buddhist priests, who were held in honor by the people, Ricci and Ruggerius eventually adopted the dress of the literati after discovering the priests were not well respected by officials, whereas the government system depended on fluency with Confucian classical texts (Latourette 94). The Jesuits established their place among the literati first by displaying knowledge in astronomy, geography, and mathematics, but afterwards by mastering the Chinese classics. As long as the Jesuits proved useful to the court in Peking and avoided engendering the jealousy of others in court, they remained relatively secure.95

Ricci in particular proved remarkably successful both at gaining the respect of rulers and literati and at presenting a version of Christianity most readily acceptable to Chinese of the sixteenth century. He wrote extensively in Chinese on the teachings of the Church that engaged and sometimes merged with the contemporary interpretation of Confucian ethics. Although he became notorious for sowing the seeds of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century “Chinese rites controversy,” in which his permissive stance on the practice of ancestor veneration was challenged by Dominicans and Franciscans, Ricci firmly established the Catholic mission method in China.96 After Ricci, the Catholic influence in China varied from a position of strength to one of occasional persecution.

Among the other notable Catholic missionaries in China, Adam Schall stands out both for

95 Ricci and Ruggerius provided a model that has been used by Catholic missions since their time. Observing their successes, Antonio Gramsci observed that “a great mass cannot be converted molecularly; in order to hasten the process, one has to win over the natural leaders of the great masses, that is, the intellectuals, or, one needs to form groups of intellectuals of a new type that would make it possible to create indigenous bishops.) This requires an exact knowledge of the ideologies and ways of thinking of these intellectuals, in order to arrive at a better understanding of the organization of cultural and moral hegemony and thus be able to destroy it or to assimilate it” (3: 207).

96 The Controversy continued from 1645 to 1742, with reverberations into the nineteenth century. For a discussion of the Rites Controversy within the wider context of the Catholic mission, see Latourette (131-55).
long duration of residence and power of influence. Arriving at Macao in 1619, Schall eventually served the Ming court in Peking and survived the Qing takeover in 1644. When the conquering Qing rulers established their court, the new emperor Shunzhi took Schall into his confidence and gave him official rank. He remained in the imperial service until his death in the reign of Kangxi, in 1665 (Latourette 105-06, 115).

Most of the Jesuit writing on China came in the form of letters and practical notes written to their superiors, first filtered through the Society’s college at Goa and then conveyed to Rome in general reports on mission activity in the East. The overwhelming bulk of this material never saw any form of publication. The extensive reports and diaries of Ruggerius and Ricci, for example, were not published until long after their deaths. It was not until the eighteenth century, during which upper-class fashion made China a subject of fascination and imitation, that Catholic missionary writing became of interest to a non-clerical audience. Through the eighteenth century, several Jesuits published works on Chinese history and society, with particular emphasis on their authority as eyewitnesses. Most often cited by later Protestant missionaries were the works of the Italian Matthew Ripa, Belgian Ferdinand Verbiest, and French Jesuits Louis Daniel LeComte, Joseph-Marie Amiot, Grosier, and most notably, Jean-Baptiste du Halde, whose four-volume *General History of China* (1735; English publication 1736) was a standard reference.

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97 In confining my historical characterizations to these few representative figures, I am following the convention of brief histories of Christianity in China, which tend to focus their discussions of the Catholic mission on these early influential figures. Typically, a brief history will include the role of Mezzabarba as the antagonistic papal legate during the rites controversy, whose position and attitude helped push the imperial court to hostility towards a strong Catholic church in China. See, for example, Michie (57-69), Medhurst (220-250), Milne (*Retrospect* 43-49), and Beach (86-90).
Scholars since the nineteenth century have judged the accounts of China written by Catholic missionaries as almost unequivocally positive in their representation. Commonly associated with Catholic works on China was the missionaries’ enthusiastic attention to its geographical extent, population, antiquity, justice, cultural advancement, and religiosity. Fr. Matthew Ripa, writing in 1724 after his return from 13 years of service with the Qing imperial court, reflects on notions of China’s immense population already established by the works of his predecessors:

It is true that we Europeans are astonished when we are told of millions of men living within the walls of the same city; but those who have seen how all the towns, villages, hamlets, and roads of China swarm with human beings, are no longer surprised. How the population of the Celestial Empire has increased to this enormous extent it is not my object to inquire. (47)

Ripa’s words about the “enormous extent” of the empire’s population echo the missionary convention of marveling at the innumerable millions and the density of their dwelling. No longer were they relying on unreliable rumor, but these missionaries could give eyewitness reports. Of its population, eighteenth-century estimates ranged from 150 million to 350 million. Here, Ripa demonstrates what Anthony Grafton in *New Worlds,* *Ancient Texts* has shown to be a shift, coming out of the Renaissance, from “inherited authority” to the authority of first-hand observation. Missionaries were of a piece with their time as their reporting of experience served to broaden an understanding of the world by providing facts through not only numbers but also tangible images. Ripa’s strong imagery of towns, villages, and hamlets swarming with human life gives an almost tactile image to accompany the numbers. For the Catholic missionaries reporting about

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China, such details of real experience lent greater authority to their accounts and helped re-establish the Church as the legitimate purveyor of information about this empire.

Despite emphasis on the vast numbers of Chinese, the Jesuit accounts insist on the orderliness and relative prosperity of the nation, owing largely to the care taken by the imperial administration to provide for its subjects. Though the cities swarmed, it was according to an established order. Admiring the Chinese for their remarkable ability to maintain consistent order over such an enormous empire, both in extent and population, du Halde repeatedly praises “the Superiority of Genius of the People . . . over all their neighbouring Nations, whether of West or South” (I. 72). He speaks often of China’s “ancient Splendour,” celebrating the antiquity of the empire and its systems, even comparing favorably with Europe. He writes, “China has this Advantage over all other Nations, that for 4000 Years, and upwards, it has been govern’d, almost without Interruption, by its own Native Princes, and with little Deviation either in Attire, Morals, Laws, Customs, or Manners, from the wise Institutions of its first Legislators” (II. 1).

Even more extreme in exaltation, the Dominican Domingo Navarette called China, “the noblest Part of the Universe [and] the seat of that, the most Glorious Empire in all natural respects, that the Sun ever shines upon” (qtd. in Spence, The Chan’s 38). This consistent theme, that the antiquity, splendor, and continuity of Chinese rule and culture proved not only its high rank in the so-called scale of civilizations but also established its system as one to be emulated, further highlighted the importance to Europe of the Catholic presence in such an important place.

The written works of writers like Navarette, Ripa, and du Halde became physical expressions of the link they were providing as interpreters and liaisons for both Europe
and China. For example, these writers made much of the fact that missionaries had proved their value to Kangxi (1662-1723) by completing a geographic survey of the empire and drawing up a complete map of the emperor’s domains, which was reputed as never done before the reign of this ruler. Utilizing European skills, they helped the Chinese interpret their world, while at the same time their works on China interpreted that people for Europe. For their adopted country and their home countries, they drew authority as purveyors of useful knowledge, but more particularly, knowledge unavailable to anyone else. Because they alone knew China through personal experience, long residence, and facility with the language, their role as translators and cultural interpreters established Catholic missionaries as the European authorities on China. They were the sole mediators. It was consequently in their interest to elevate the image of China in European minds in order that their role as cultural interpreters would remain secure.

So much did the missionaries praise this society and admire its culture that the charge of exaggeration became inextricably attached to their name. Even as their enthusiasm merged seamlessly with the eighteenth-century fashions of “Chinoserie” that rippled from France to most of Europe, their reports were viewed with suspicion by the emerging body of middle-class readers already with an Anglican proclivity to distrust the Catholicity of information coming from the Continent. W.H. Medhurst explains, “though the Romish missionaries had sent home voluminous accounts of that region, yet their statements had not obtained much circulation, or credence with the British public. The wondering style in which some of them wrote, and the very wonderful things they related,—unsupported by the collateral evidence of our own countrymen, led many to
doubt their judgment, and some their veracity; so that their accounts made but little impression” (252). The unequivocal celebration of China in the Catholic works rendered them suspect to the English, who were increasingly able to get their own eyewitness reports and were thereby eroding the authority of experience held by the Catholic mission.

A more important factor for minimizing the impact of Catholic writing in England was the basic expense of their works. William Milne, the early Protestant missionary to China, was certainly interested in obtaining information about China before he departed, but he explains that not only were these works in foreign languages, they were moreover “in the expensive and unwieldy size of quartos and folios” (Retrospect 45). He criticizes their authors for unnecessary verbosity, mentioning specifically the “‘Memoires des Chinois par les Missionaires de Pekin’—in no fewer than fifteen quarto volumes!” (45). The only work he seems actually to have read, du Halde’s work—in English—he praises for its greater conciseness and accessibility. Milne’s comments reveal the well-noted social divide even into the nineteenth century between those who could get books and those who could not. These large and expensive volumes, costing sometimes four guineas (£4. 4s) at a time when the highest paid artisans made twenty to thirty shillings (£1 to £1. 10s) for a seventy-two-hour week, belonged to that category of books reserved for scholars and bibliophiles (Sutherland 8-9).

While the English common reader could have had little notion of the Catholic representation of China, which is confirmed by the general ignorance in England of China, whatever of their works were available in English became objects of interest to the
new Protestant mission societies formed after 1795. Through the financial donations of their constituencies, these societies were able to begin their own libraries for the use of their missionaries. It was through these Protestant missionaries, and their own filtered reading of the Catholic works discussed in their provocations, that the Catholic imagination became known to a larger portion of the British reading public.

II. Secular Imagination: Embassy Accounts and their Appropriation

Excluding Evangelical writing, the predominant way of representing China in Britain prior to the Opium War reflected the economic relationship between the two empires. These secular representations have naturally drawn the greatest attention from historians of China and Western histories concerned with the British presence there. In the period I cover, ending in 1845, China comes into full view on the proverbial British map as the single greatest source of revenue for the East India Company and therefore a linchpin in the British economy. For a nation that, as Kenneth Bourne describes in Foreign Policy in Victorian England, 1830-1902 (1970), was by 1815 a politically “satiated power,” whose “political objectives were largely, perhaps exclusively, defensive: to maintain the material bases of her success” (3), the China trade became and

99 Concerning this general ignorance, a writer for the Quarterly Review in 1810 states, “The utmost [one] can obtain in England of the language will be a superficial acquaintance with the 214 elementary characters to be found in an imperfect state in the Meditationes Sinicae of Fourmont. . . . The best information he can collect respecting the real character of the government, the administration of the laws, and the habits of the people, is but trifling, and even of this some is doubtful” (“Ta Tsing” 276).

100 In time, these libraries became important sources of information on foreign lands because, if the society’s missionaries ever returned from their sites of mission, they almost always made some kind of donation of books to their society library. For example, the Morrison Collection at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, contains a collection of several thousand volumes initially donated by Robert Morrison for the LMS to establish a Chinese Institute for the teaching of Chinese in England.
remained crucial for the maintenance of Britain’s material success. One pamphleteer writing about the Company’s charter renewal emphatically remarked, “The China trade, it is well known, is now the only remaining branch of the company’s trade which still yields them a profit” (Question 103). China was this important in 1812, ten years before opium had been recognized as the most profitable commodity. But as Bourne argues, Britain’s “commercial appetite was insatiable, and the attempt to feed it . . . forced an ever enlarging, though usually reluctant, commitment to political control over large areas of the world” (3). In Chapter Three, I discuss the role of missionary provocations in Britain’s eventual political engagement in China, but here I am concerned with the characteristic tone and representations of secular works for the stock of images they provided and with which missionaries engaged in their own works.

In 1699, the ship Macclesfield had a successful trading venture at Canton and began the Sino-British economic relationship. In the first two years after the Honourable British East India Company established its charter (1708), a steady course of merchant vessels began making annual trips to Canton, where they set up a factory (a kind of upscale residential warehouse). For British merchants and curious travelers, Canton was China. Consistent with the Qing foreign policy of positioning themselves as the overlords in a world of competing lords, control of any foreign presence was strict, and admittance

101 It has been estimated that from 1773-1905, the profit from opium sold in China was £436,000,000 (Scheltema 213).

102 Rubinstein effectively describes the British factory: “The were offices, showrooms, and treasuries where the basic business of the pre-Opium War China trade was carried out. And for the duration of the trading season, they were where the British . . . merchants made their homes. From the front, the factories looked like a row of single houses. . . . The depth of these factories was approximately a hundred and forty yards. The frontage of the British factory was a hundred and twenty feet. . . . [They] contained store rooms, repositories of specie, offices, and living quarters that they had to have. The first floor contained the typical factory’s public spaces. The bedrooms and sitting rooms were usually found on the second floor” (14).
into the mainland was forbidden, as was trade anywhere along the coast (Hevia, *Cherishing* 30-31). The established policy that all Western trade was conducted through Canton, which the British regarded as Chinese “jealousy” and “exclusionism” was, as Hevia has pointed out, “no more than the practical politics of the Qing court, . . . [treating] the Pacific coast of China as an area of both opportunity and of potential threat” (49). As British trade attempted a steady course of expansion, and as the taste for tea in Britain became a staple, the economic policies of the British and the Chinese came into frequent and direct conflict. It was through this economic context that China was represented to the British public in secular terms, and it was with this context and these terms that missionaries related in person and often in their own textual representations.

That the British presence was confined to Canton becomes an important fact when considering images of the Chinese. The population with whom British merchants interacted was far from representing the whole of China. Canton was a provincial capital and a port city, so prosperous in proportion to most cities in China that it was a distinct reward for Qing officials to be given a place in its government. At least some members of the Chinese merchant community could communicate with British visitors using a “pidgin” English, while the regular rhythms of the trade—called the Canton system—rendered the sight of foreigners in the streets an unremarkable regularity. In addition, the permanent factories, which one critic called a “palace, rather than a warehouse . . . and a princely institution” (*Free Trade* 16), allowed British merchants to continue their Western patterns of food and comfort, creating a little English alcove on Chinese shores. Combining this residential situation with the Chinese policy of exclusion meant that British visitors to China before the Opium War all received a similarly limited impression
of the country: Canton. For world travelers or speculating merchants, a visit to Canton was a comfortable way to almost see China. For those eager to write about their travels to China, this produced a monotonous stream of impressions of the city and its surroundings, particularly of the river from Whampoa to the city itself. As suggested by this engraving from the cover of the Saturday Magazine (Figure One), an engraving that introduced an article series that covered nothing of the country beyond Canton, writers attempting to describe China were most vivid in their depictions of activity on the river, which they thought “surpasses even the busy scenes upon the Thames” (qtd. in “Some Account” 162).

Figure One. “Some Account of the City of Canton,” The Saturday Magazine, Vol. 10, no. 310 (April 1837): 161.

In their descriptions of the river, these secular writers come nearer than at any other point to echoing the Jesuit writers, whose wonderment at the Chinese population and its density
had been thought hyperbolic. The thick clusters of boats, as seen in Figure One, seeming as one sailed past them “like the almost magical variations of a kaleidescope—no sameness, all variety,” combined with “the low heavy hum of a million of human voices” (qtd. in “Some Account” 165), produced an impression upon a visitor which writers agreed was more striking than anything else in their experience of China. Describing this scene, one visitor proclaimed that amidst the “crowd, business, bustle, noise, confusion, and the din of a thousand gongs... there is nothing in the known world, that can vie with the novel spirit-stirring interest which this river presents” (165). David Abeel went so far as to call the experience of the river at night “more like magic than reality” (45).

Although these writers attempted to cast Canton as “the most interesting city in China... [where] the native manners may be seen in all their purity, as perfectly as in any other part” (“Some Account” 162), literary reviewers remarked on the sterility and repetitiveness of the reports. In the Chinese Repository, a journal published in Canton but also available in London, Elijah Bridgman’s review of C. Toogood Downing’s three-volume Fanqui in China rejoiced at the current interest in China but mourned the “greediness with which every alluring, but unsatisfying, bait, that can upon any pretense be denominated Chinese, is snatched up by the indefatigable anglers of Paternoster Row” (329). Only a brief visitor to Canton, Downing had walked through a few streets, visited some buildings, talked with a few merchants and some local intermediaries, “then went away; and, feeling the cacoethes scribendi strong upon him, bethought himself to publish a book” (328). The review sardonically concludes that Downing’s work, along with most works passing for views of “the Real China,” would better be classified as: “A Voyage to China, made by a literary body-snatcher, under an attack of a sciptital (or scribbling)
fever, containing the results of observations personal upon the river of Canton, and observations through the medium of others within the compass of many books” (328). Reviewers of such snapshots of China—through the isolated lens of Canton—concluded, “We are by no means satisfied that we have yet obtained a true and impartial portrait of the Chinese” (“Narrative of a Journey” 76). However much the tourists might insist that they had seen China at its best, there was at least some suspicion that there was more to the country than Canton (see Appendix A for other engravings of the Canton vicinity).

One corollary to the Canton confinement was an increase in the value of any report issuing from the rare circumstance of a visit beyond this commercial city. The two occasions for secular observation before the military invasions of 1839 came from the embassies of Lord Macartney in 1793-94 and Lord Amherst in 1816. Each of these embassies produced an official account, but both resulted in such a flurry of publications from various members of the embassy that one reviewer could remark, “It is true that all which can be seen from the grand canal, and which is the usual track from Pekin to Canton, is now nearly as well known as the road from London to Edinburgh,” which became irritating in print by “the constant repetition of the same kind of objects” (“Embassy to China” 465).103

In these accounts of the embassies, with their repetitious scenes and simple stereotyping, Colin Mackerras notes a characteristic “change from the dominantly positive images of the eighteenth towards the negative of the nineteenth century” (43).

103 Within a decade of the Macartney embassy, in addition to his own journal, the official account by Staunton, and Barrow’s Travels, two other accounts were published by Aeneas Anderson (a personal servant) and Samuel Holmes (a private in the Light Dragoons). Although reviewers of the time mocked Anderson’s simple style and opportunist publication, and Cranmer-Byng considers his work as approaching useless, Anderson expressed “a justifiable satisfaction in having obtained a complete triumph over many illiberal but fruitless attempts to depreciate my work” (xiii), when a third edition of his work was published in 1796.
Although the negative impression is somewhat qualified in Lord Macartney’s own journal, Mackerras sees a more representative and dismissive new attitude in John Barrow’s *Travels in China* (1804), which was less a step-by-step account of Macartney’s embassy than his own impressions of the Chinese. Whereas the *Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (1798), written by Sir George Staunton, included celebratory descriptions of Chinese wealth and entertainment that were reminiscent of the Catholic representations, Barrow cast the Chinese in a light that reflected the more aggressive—and middle-class—British economic interest.

Macartney, highly educated aristocrat and friend of Johnson, Burke, and Voltaire, provided a view of China that showed a debt to eighteenth-century admiration for the country but with a realistic eye for the economic interests of Britain. With measured comments, he tried “to convey an idea of some things of China,” while always maintaining “how little right we have to despise and ridicule other nations on the mere account of their differing from us in little points of manners and dress, as we can very nearly match them with similar follies and absurdities of our own” (230). Following the precedent of Jesuit writers with a willingness to rank China above the West, Macartney noted the impressive scale of the Court and “that calm dignity, that sober pomp of Asiatic greatness, which European refinements have not yet attained” (124). Specifically recalling Matthew Ripa, who remembered China as a “swarm” of human beings, Macartney was likewise impressed that the towns were “inhabited by such swarms of people as far exceeded my most extravagant ideas even of Chinese

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104 Macartney’s journal was not published in full as an independent text until 1963, but it was the source for Staunton’s official account and was excerpted extensively in Barrow’s later *Some Account of the Public Life . . . of Lord Macartney* (1807).
population” (74), calculating specifically that for every twenty-four persons in France, China has thirty-seven (246). And in typical eighteenth-century fashion, he admired the Chinese gardens, whose gardener “is the painter of nature,” able to produce the “happiest effects by the management of or rather penciling of distances,” and able to work marvelous things by introducing “dusky foliage” and “buildings of different dimensions, either heightened by strong colouring, or softened by simplicity and omissions of ornament” (116-17).

A significant aspect of Macartney’s representation of the Chinese is his demystifying descriptions that show a completed shift in eyewitness reporting. While maintaining typical eighteenth-century fanciful considerations like comparing the Emperor to “King Solomon in all his glory” (124) and the kow-towing court to the worship of Nebuchadnezzar (131), he also humanizes the old emperor as “affable, and condescending,” and his reception as “very gracious and satisfactory.” Conspicuously lacking the notes of splendor conventionally associated with Chinese emperors in Catholic writing, he further calls him “a very fine old gentleman, still healthy and vigorous, not having the appearance of a man of more than sixty” (123).

Yet, Macartney was not a tourist in China. Like nearly every visitor to China before the mid-nineteenth century, missionaries excluded, he was in the country on an economic mission, and accordingly viewed the country with an imperialist eye. With calculations that came to typify secular writing about China, Macartney’s journal is replete with weighing and evaluating relative strengths and weaknesses. With keen observation, he frequently notes the resulting divisions and bureaucratic mechanisms created by Qing imperialism in China, where a tiny minority of Manchu (or Tartars) ruled
over the native Chinese population. Through this fact of “a foreign tyranny,” Macartney interprets much of his experience, including the extensive ceremonial discussions, imperial entertainments, and personal conversation (222). He returns frequently to the systems of the “vast superstructure,” always cognizant that China is a complex empire on a level with European powers (239).

As a representative of both the crown and the East India Company’s interests, Macartney’s reflections on this vast Chinese empire were concerned with the very practical goals of increasing the British trade. He occasionally considers the military comparison of “our discipline” with their “matchlocks, bows and arrows, and heavy swords,” and their “unwarlike character and disposition” (203), as well as the potentially advantageous results for Britain of “the breaking-up of the power of China (no very improbable event)” (213). Indeed, Macartney’s assessment of the empire’s fragile state was both accurate and prophetic, particularly his comparison of “the Empire of China” with “an old, crazy, First rate man-of-war, which a fortunate succession of able and vigilant officers has contrived to keep afloat for these one hundred and fifty years past, and to overawe her neighbours merely by her bulk and appearance” (212).

Macartney’s assessment of the Qing’s steadily dissolving power was also a point heavily emphasized in Barrow’s Travels and proved, by its later repetitions, to have performed significant cultural work by creating an image of China as decaying. Rather than the just and honorable government described by Catholic writers, Barrow described the empire in “terms of tyranny, oppression, and injustice” that could only excite feelings of “fear, deceit, and disobedience” in the governed. The result for the country, Barrow argues, is that “The spirit of the people appears to be completely broken by the sordid
despotism to which they are subjected‖ (“Travels in China” 273). Stagnant in its cruel laws that “exclude and obliterate every notion of the dignity of human nature” (qtd. in Mackerras 45), and stifled in evil customs like exposing infants and considering deceit as virtuous, the Chinese were doomed either to develop further through Western stimulation, or decline into barbarism. As Mackerras points out, Barrow did not cast the people at large as responsible for this deplorable state, but rather it was owing to the rulers—the imperialistic usurping Manchus—and their firm refusal to alter “stagnant political structures” (46).

Although reviewers of these embassy accounts commented that they were all “tinctured with prejudices” (“Travels in China” 260), and even pointed out that they betray an obvious reaction against “extravagant exaggerations contained in the writings of the [Catholic] missionaries, and adopted by some of the greatest philosophers of the Continent” (262), the net effect of these works brought about a reassessment of Chinese representation. Leaving far behind the celebratory characterizations of the Jesuits and fancies of Chinoserie, a writer for the Edinburgh Review concludes that, in light of these enlightened eyewitness accounts, one must be “disposed to consider this celebrated people as a mean and semi-barbarous race, distinguished by fewer virtues or accomplishments than most of their neighbours” (262).

In terms of the imaginary constructions of the middle-class reading public, however, significant cultural work of the embassy accounts was the stereotypical casting of the “proud Chinese” as exhibited in the course of the diplomatic engagements. The

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105 Macartney’s embassy had struck a note with national pride. Macartney scholar J.L. Cranmer-Byng writes that even as the embassy departed in 1792, “a cartoon by Gillray shows Macartney and his suite kneeling before the Emperor of China, proffering him presents, which are being spurned. But although the
embassy had been a colossal failure if measured by its purported goals. No diplomatic relations were established; no treaty of commerce and friendship was signed; and no new trade markets were opened on the coast. Instead, Macartney and his suite endured long negotiations concerning the ceremony of introduction to the emperor, and, after several brief and fruitless interviews, had been grandly entertained before their unsatisfactory dismissal. The chief point of contention was the kowtow, or nine knocks of the head upon the ground before the emperor.106 Macartney’s refusal to perform this ceremony of submission, whether or not it had any material consequence in the failure of the embassy, came to be regarded as a mark of valor and emblematic of British national honor in the face of a prideful race.

When Lord Amherst led another embassy to Peking in 1816 to address for the second time issues of international cooperation in trade, such as the opening of additional ports beyond Canton and the grievances of British merchants in Canton, again the upholding of British national honor foregrounded the mission. Although the previous embassy had been remembered for the failure of its objectives, it had also been hailed as “a victory” for the “evasion of the ceremony of the Ku-tou” (“Journal of the Proceedings” 436). Given the anticipated and assumed pride of the Chinese, it could be authoritatively stated that “Everybody who knew any thing of the matter . . . was prepared for that catastrophe of this new Chinese mission, which actually ensued” (“Journal of the skeptics were ready to laugh, the general public was quick enough to buy the various accounts of the embassy written by those who took part in it, and published in the decade after their return” (23).

106 Cranmer-Byng in his introduction to Macartney’s journal has argued that Macartney’s refusal to kowtow had no impact on the success or failure of the embassy, which actually never had any chance of success given the disinterest of the Qing in formal relations with other powers. Hevia has taken a different approach to the ceremony negotiations in Cherishing Men from Afar, arguing that it was the negotiations themselves that were important for establishing the international relationship in the eyes of the Chinese; consequently, the embassy was valuable for establishing the official Chinese approach to the British.
Proceedings” 433). With an established image of the Chinese as proud and uncooperative, it was universally accepted that the reason for the failure of the embassy was the refusal to kowtow. And like Macartney’s failure, Amherst’s embassy was also praised for upholding national honor. By refusing to sacrifice the desired economic ends of the embassy by avoiding “a disgusting and degrading ceremony,” Amherst had upheld not only the “national character” but also “experienced more consideration and attention from those very people who have failed in their attempts to degrade him, and, through him, the whole nation” (“Chinese Drama” 412). The public rhetoric concerning this embassy made Amherst, and through him Macartney as well, representatives of the conflict between an honorable British people and a petulant and prideful China.

One can see precisely this popular interpretation in Jane Austen’s Mansfield Park, which indicates that Macartney’s declaration of British dignity was still much in the popular imagination even twenty years after his embassy. Chapter 16 of her 1814 work concerns Fanny Price’s struggle with whether to bow to pressure from Edmund or to maintain the plans “so essential to a scheme on which some of those to whom she owed the greatest complaisance, had set their hearts?” (137). At the end of this climactic chapter, Austen alludes to Macartney’s embassy. Jonathan Spence summarizes her use of Macartney:

[His] China experiences . . . offered a metaphor for the interplay of power and personality, with Macartney’s final refusal to kowtow before Qianlong being emblematic of true strength of character. Austen’s heroine Fanny Price has the recently published volume of Macartney’s journal lying on her work table . . . at the novel’s central moment, and as Edmund in his mental agitation leafs quickly through the massive book, he shares his thoughts with Fanny: “You in the meanwhile will be taking a trip into China, I suppose. How does Lord Macartney
“go on?” Fanny, from reading the journal, knows the decision Macartney had made. Could she resist as well? (101)

Spence’s reading of this episode in *Mansfield Park* suggests, as I also posit, that Macartney’s embassy to the Qing court was primarily interpreted by the public as a test of strength—a battle of wills between Britain’s David, in the person of Macartney, and the Goliath China. Even as Britain was flexing its muscle in the South Seas in contention with other European powers, China stood as a powerful unknown in the imperial play. Austen’s allusion to Macartney’s decision in China, in light of Fanny’s own struggle throughout the chapter, shows her conviction that the ambassador proved himself true to the British people and their character by refusing to allow the ends of his mission to justify means that might diminish the national dignity. Throughout her chapter alluding to China, Austen has her heroine’s primary concerns, like Macartney’s, turning to the good of those for whom her scheme is designed. Furthermore, the development of this motif through the course of the chapter suggests that the allusion was expected to resonate easily with her audience.

Given Edward Said’s reading of *Mansfield Park* in *Culture and Imperialism*, where he calls it “the most explicit in its ideological and moral affirmations of Austen’s novels” (84), this reading of chapter 16 gives further evidence of Austen’s desire to

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107 For a full discussion of Austen’s use of the Macartney embassy as emblematic of Fanny Price’s strength, see the article by Peter Knox-Shaw, “Fanny Price Refuses to Kowtow,” *Review of English Studies* 47.186 (1996): 212-17.

108 The journal on Fanny’s table could not be Macartney’s journal in full, as it was not published until 1963. It could, however, be the official but much abbreviated account, albeit with forty illustrated plates, written in 1796 by Sir George Staunton. More likely, though, Austen refers to the work by John Barrow, *Some Account of the Public Life and a Selection from the Unpublished Writings of the Earl of Macartney*, which contains selections from Macartney’s own journal of the embassy. Since the work is mentioned as resting beside *Crabbe’s Tales*, and the *Idler*, this later publication of 1807 by Barrow would also suggest that Fanny keeps up to date on the best writing available.
affirm a British national character that stands against and above the peoples with whom the British were contending. As we read her slight reference to Macartney, we will miss the depth of her allusion unless, like Said, we try “to understand the historical valences in the reference; to put it differently, we should try to understand what she referred to, why she gave it the importance she did, and why indeed she made the choice, for she might have done something different…” (89). Whether or not Austen intended the equation of Fanny with a national British spirit is debatable, but this perhaps unintended effect must certainly have worked in the popular imagination when a refusal to bend one’s body or one’s will was so closely associated with the refusal to kowtow before the Chinese emperor, an association rendered closer to hand by her reference to the embassy. The economic framework of the novel, connecting domestic fiction to the tendrils of the British empire in the Caribbean, reminds the reader that events affecting the British trade triangles were of immediate importance for the maintenance of middle-class life in the metropole. Even as the fortunes of a plantation in Antigua maintain the Bertram family in Mansfield Park, diplomatic efforts to secure the tea trade with China were likewise of great importance to the British economy.

For those concerned with the economic interest in China, the early embassy accounts were highly significant for the terms used to describe the cultural situation in China. Both Macartney’s and Barrow’s dichotomies of people versus government, subjected Chinese population against cruel Tartar despots, and merchants desiring to trade but the government refusing it, created the categories for later secular writers in their arguments concerning the China Trade. On the question in 1812 and again in 1821 of whether or not to renew the East India Company’s monopoly on the Eastern Trade,
writers on both sides queried the possible reaction of the Chinese government, with its assumed “caprice and tyranny,” to free British trade (Question 102). Testimony before the Select Committee of Parliament convened to investigate the conditions of the trade in 1821 revealed that both sides of the debate, free traders and Company officials alike, agreed that the Chinese government was so “jealous” of foreigners and so judicially “severe” in its protection of its borders, that it must be regarded as different from “all other countries” (Paper No. 746, Third Report 263). Consistent with the embassy accounts, various Select Committees from 1821 to 1840 regularly concluded that the coastal populations of China were “anxiously disposed to cultivate . . . commerce,” and it was exclusively owing to the tyrannous self-protection of the Chinese government that trade was not prospering (Paper No. 644, First Report iv). Even as Macartney had distinguished the “steady foundations” of the Chinese populace from the “hollow superstructure” of the Tartar domination, the features of this contrast came to dominate the arguments for dealing with these two sets of Chinese society (239).

As the representations of a fissured Chinese society passed from the economic and government discussions to those of journalistic depictions, a visual image of a poor and beleaguered Chinese peasantry also became part of popular reference prior to and during the Opium War. In 1837 and 1838, both the Saturday Magazine and the Penny Magazine ran a series of articles on life in China that reflected the image of an honorable, British-friendly Chinese peasantry. As in the scene depicted in this engraving of a group of boat-trackers, labeled “Chinese Boat-trackers Refreshing” (Figure Two), journalists attempted to humanize and Westernize the native Chinese population, while at the same time characterizing their Tartar government as cruel, despotic, and tyrannical. These
boatmen and boat-trackers (who dragged the barges up the canals) represented the oppression by the ruling Manchu mandarins of the common peasantry, with whom readers were meant to sympathize. Quoting Barrow, the Saturday Magazine connects these common Chinese workmen to “our seamen in hauling the ropes,” and their working song with “the oar-song of the Hebrideans” (82). The engraving goes an amusing step farther in the artist’s depiction of features rather more like European than Asian—consider especially the prominent noses on all the men and the deep-set eyes of the very wise-looking central figure.

**Figure Two.** “Manners and Customs of the Chinese,” The Saturday Magazine, Vol. 10, no. 300, (4 March 1837): 81.

Another scene, labeled “Chinese Peasants,” is even more remarkable for its use of contemporary British values to stir commiseration for the common Chinese as against
their unreasonable and anti-British Tartar overlords. In the same series of articles for the *Saturday Magazine*, the Chinese peasantry is depicted in the simplicity of their domestic virtue (Figure Three). The sweet domestic arrangement of the scene in Figure Three unmistakably corresponds to that typical setting of family portraits common in middle-class British homes. Both parents are engaged with the children—the loving father noticeably tending to and coddling the child.

![Figure Three](image)

**Figure Three.** “The Peasantry of China,” *The Saturday Magazine*, vol. 10, no. 319 (24 June 1837): 233.

To the suggestion of similarity between “our families” and “theirs,” and the implicit unity of goals and aspirations, the *Saturday Magazine* adds some relevant details. China is predominantly agricultural, and as “The bulk of the population of the country is engaged in this honourable pursuit,” it is held in high honor “second only to the pursuit of
learning” (233). Recalling the vanishing agrarian simplicity of the British past, the magazine compares the peasantry of China to the past of “our own country, when every cottager brewed his own beer; kept his own cow for milk and butter; bred his own sheep, the wool of which, being spun into yarn by his own family, was manufactured into cloth by the parish-weaver. . .” (234). Like Wordsworth’s pastoral celebration of native British simplicity in the *Lyrical Ballads*, the peasantry of China are shown in their “simple manners, and civil treatment of strangers” to be among the salt of the earth despite their own poverty and want (235). Explicitly contrasted with “the cunning designs of the salesmen of Jung-Chow, and the brutal importunity” of the imperial courtiers and other officials of the ruling Tartars (235), the peasantry of China are represented as almost, by their very nature, friends of the British. (For other images of the Chinese in the *Saturday Magazine* and *Penny Magazine*, see Appendix A)

The circulation and impact of these images among a broad range of readers is suggested by Patricia Anderson in *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790-1860* (1991). At the cost of only a penny, both the *Saturday Magazine* of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the *Penny Magazine* of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) reached circulations as high as 80,000 and 200,000, respectively (80-81). Since the SPCK was connected with the Church of England, it represented the High and Broad Church constituencies rather than the Evangelical, although no doubt many Evangelicals would have read it as well. With a readership that ranged from shopkeepers, clerks, merchants, and country gentry, to an increasingly literate working class, these magazines were intended to satisfy the concerns of a popular, mainstream English culture—mildly religious, economically ambitious, and
increasingly conscious of a wide world (80). As image purveyors, these magazines conveyed their picture of China as divided and vulnerable, friendly at its base but proud and wicked in its ruling class and principles. That these ideas of a relatively tiny number of proud Tartar rulers oppressing a mass of simple, hard-working Chinese peasantry should have found their way to the penny magazines provides sufficient evidence of the successful cultural work of the embassy accounts. Their judgment of the Chinese government as too proud for open, honest dealings became what might be regarded as the official account, passing into “common sense.” As late as 1925, an historian of China and the West, W.E. Soothill of Oxford, could still maintain with complete sobriety, “The kotow and the spirit behind it were the cause of our subsequent wars with China. How could a self-respecting nation permit the representative of its sovereign to kotow, or prostrate himself, before the Chinese Emperor?” (102). Although the embassy accounts were read by relatively few contemporaries, their authoritative eye-witness reporting gave popular publications the necessary material for spreading their distinctively secular imaginary of a proud and overbearing imperial China, bent on making the world submit to its despotic whims.

III. Romantic Associations: DeQuincey’s Confessions of an English Opium Eater

The aftermath of Amherst’s embassy and the discussions in press and parliament concerning the E.I.C.’s monopoly of the China Trade may likewise have influenced a contemporary popular work that provided a further set of images for imagining China.109

109 The years during which DeQuincey wrote the Confessions were marked by discussions in Parliament concerning the conditions of the trade in China, the publication of several pamphlets concerned with the trade, Sir George Staunton’s and Robert Morrison’s translation of several Chinese texts, along with Milne’s Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission in China.
Although Thomas De Quincey made a long career of journalistic writing, and on numerous occasions directed his vitriol towards China, it is for his earliest autobiographical work, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, that he is chiefly remembered. De Quincey began the project in 1820 with *Blackwoods* in mind, but the work was first published in serial form in the *London Magazine* in late 1821, and its popularity resulted in the speedy publication of the book in 1822.\(^{110}\) Given the date of this, his most popular work, De Quincey is most frequently classed within the ranks of the Romantics, and although this work has some affinities with what has come to be called visionary Romanticism, one may detect the national prejudices and assumptions that are normally associated with British imperial discourse of the Victorian period. Moreover, for my purposes, the stereotypes of the *Confessions* also reveal a working cluster of representations of China, and an opium-laced China at that, which possesses frightening power to overwhelm.

That the attitudes of imperialism predate the steady expansionism of the mid- to late-nineteenth century has been firmly established by Patrick Brantlinger, Edward Said, Sara Suleri, and others, and it adds little to the discussion for me simply to characterize De Quincey as yet another perpetrator of an “imperial ideology” in the years before that ideology had attained its fullest expression. His participation in the rhetoric of empire, particularly in his mid-century writings, has already been well noted by John Barrell, Nigel Leask, and Diane Simmons.\(^{111}\) While these discussions deserve praise for their

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\(^{110}\) Printed by J. Moyes, Greville Street, for Taylor and Hessey, Fleet Street, London, 1822. For details of the work’s genesis, see Jonathan Wordsworth’s introduction to the *Confessions* edition in the facsimile series, *Revolution and Romanticism, 1789-1834*.

\(^{111}\) In their respective works, these authors pay primary attention to De Quincey’s psychology of imperialism in his writings on China during the Opium and Arrow Wars.
insights into the psychopathology of imperialism that De Quincey exhibits throughout his works, they miss the manner in which De Quincey’s imperial eye in the Confessions provides an entrance into popular imagination of the Sino-British relationship of the early nineteenth century. By considering De Quincey’s opium-induced dream associations and emotional responses that follow his encounter with a Malay traveler, I examine one particular cluster of images attempting to work out a still mysterious but obviously real China in the early nineteenth century.

Like many of his literary contemporaries including Samuel Coleridge and Wilkie Collins, De Quincey’s medicinal use of laudanum led him, gradually, to develop an addiction to opium, and it is this addiction he explores in his Confessions. Portions of the work are taken up with accounts of dreams or hallucinations experienced in drug-induced states. In recounting his dreams, De Quincey was employing literary artistry, as Alethea Hayter has pointed out, “He used dreams in his writing not as decoration, not as allegory, not as a device to create atmosphere or to forestall and help on the plot, not even as imitations of a higher reality…but as a form of art in themselves” (103). In constructing these dream sequences, he wove dream images with conscious contemporary considerations. Although what he writes of his dreams may not actually have been experienced, they are nonetheless valuable for establishing particular ideas of Asia current at the time. Even as he introduces his Asiatic dream sequence, his fluidity of association and confirmed prejudice point to a popular imaginative framework for thinking about China. His account begins as follows:
The Malay has been a fearful enemy for months. I have been every night, through his means, transported into Asiatic scenes. I know not whether others share in my feelings on this point; but I have often thought that if I were compelled to forego England, and to live in China, and among Chinese manners and modes of life and scenery, I should go mad. The causes of my horror lie deep; and some of them must be common to others. Southern Asia, in general, is the seat of awful images and associations. As the cradle of the human race, it would alone have a dim and reverential feeling connected with it. But there are other reasons. No man can pretend that the wild, barbarous, and capricious superstitions of Africa, or of savage tribes elsewhere, affect him in the way that he is affected by the ancient, monumental, cruel, and elaborate religions of Indostan, etc. The mere antiquity of Asiatic things, of their institutions, histories, modes of faith, etc. is so impressive, that to me the vast age of the race and name overpowers the sense of youth in the individual. A young Chinese seems to me an antediluvian man renewed. Even Englishmen, though not bred in any knowledge of such institutions cannot but shudder at the mystic sublimity of castes that have flowed apart, and refused to mix, through such immemorial tracts of time; nor can any man fail to be awed by the names of the Ganges, or the Eurphrates. It contributes much to these feelings, that southern Asia is, and has been for thousands of years, the part of the earth most swarming with human life; the great officina gentium. Man is a weed in those regions. The vast empires also, into which the enormous population of Asia has always been cast, give a further sublimity to the feelings associated with all Oriental names or images. In China, over and above what it has in common with the rest of southern Asia, I am terrified by the modes of life, by the manners, and the barrier of utter abhorrence, and want of sympathy, placed between us by feelings deeper than I can analyze. I could sooner live with lunatics, or brute animals. All this…the reader must enter into before he can comprehend the unimaginable horror which these dreams of Oriental imagery, and mythological tortures, impressed upon me. (168-170)

There can be no doubt that De Quincey abhors China, but that is not nearly so remarkable as the bizarre reasons he offers and the curious language by which he strings together his notions of Asia. Given the futility of the Amherst embassy to the Qing court and the publication of the Macartney journal in Barrow’s work, both of whom were frustrated and irritated by the Qing ceremonials, it is not surprising that De Quincey held a negative view of Chinese custom. This seems to be on his mind as he twice mentions “Chinese manners” and “modes of life” that create a “want of sympathy” between British and
Chinese. Ironically, his conclusion of a want of sympathy fulfills the fears of the Chinese Grand Secretary, Sung-yun, whose concern in 1794 that Lord Macartney might bring to Europe “impressions to the disadvantage and disparagement of China” led him to suggest, as the ambassador records, “that as all distant countries must necessarily have different laws and customs, we should not be surprised that theirs varied from ours, [and] that we owed each other mutual indulgences” (178). De Quincey, however, was in no way prepared to offer indulgence.

Although this argument against Chinese custom may be De Quincey’s best but tenuous grasp at reason and the one which resonated with many of his contemporaries, that is not the prevailing strain in the opening apology to his Asian dreams. He conveys the dominant reason for his fears through a plea ad populum—“some of them must be common to others”—trusting that there will be common concurrence on the “affect,” “feeling” or “sense” that is produced in a civilized mind by “Asiatic things.” This feeling can described as sublimity, even as he twice designates it, and it is this sublime concept of China that reveals an ambivalence in at least some segment of the popular imaginary that emerged out of the eighteenth century and was present even as missionaries began writing their own first-hand accounts.

Published in 1757, Edmund Burke’s *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* brought into modern focus the idea of sublimity developed by Longinus in the first century A.D. Although Immanuel Kant focused his discussion of the sublime in *Critique of Judgment* of 1790 on the mental operations and rejected Burke’s notion that an object or description may of itself be sublime, he did not alter Burke’s argument on its experiential effects in a fundamental way. In Burke’s
conception, “Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime” (63). Before even detailing the dreams themselves, De Quincey connects characteristics of Burke’s sublime to what he conceives as common perceptions of Asia, fitting his fancy into what he believes to be popular notions of China as full of terror.112

To Southern Asia, and China “over and above” the rest, he attaches the qualities of dimness and reverence, “ancient, monumental, cruel, and elaborate.” These qualities echo Burke’s description of several sublime qualities: “All general privations are great, because they are all terrible; Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude, and Silence” (Burke 73). De Quincey’s “dim and reverential feeling” is Burke’s Darkness and Silence. As Burke considers the darkness of “heathen temples” to be sublime, De Quincey makes all of Asia a heathen temple deprived of civilization’s light. Of his dreams in general at this time, De Quincey remarks that two common occurrences were his descent “into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths,” and that “space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable infinity. This, however, did not disturb me so much as the vast expansion of time” (158-59).

112 De Quincey’s use of Burke’s sublime, and his overall goal in writing the Confessions for admonishing potential addicts, is similar to what Sara Suleri in The Rhetoric of English India (1992) has shown was Burke’s own use of such images in his parliamentary speech on Fox’s East India Bill in 1783: The paradigm that [Burke] establishes can be schematized as follows: India as a historical reality evokes the horror of sublimity, thus suggesting to the colonizing mind the intimate dynamic it already shares with aesthetic horror; such intimacy provokes the desire to itemize and to list all the properties of the desired object; the list’s inherent failure to be anything other than a list causes the operation of sublimity to open into vacuity, displacing desire into the greater longevity of disappointment. While Burke’s speech ostensibly shapes this paradigm into a passionate warning against the abuse of colonial power, his method of exemplification clearly reveals that the catalog itself carries more weight than its abundant moral. (29)

In the same way, De Quincey uses the sublime first to show the terrors of opium addiction, then to attempt a careful listing of its use and physiological effects, which in turn fail to contain its real danger, and finally results in a greater moral warning.
Similarly, the “antiquity” of the Chinese empire, that makes a young Chinese seem “an antediluvian man renewed,” draws on what Burke conceives as the power of depth and obscure distance to affect sublimity. As he says, “hardly anything can strike the mind with its greatness, which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity; which nothing can do whilst we are able to perceive its bounds” (Burke 68). For De Quincey, Asia is of a “vast age,” with “vast empires” having “enormous population,” approaching that boundlessness which forms the essential quality in Kant’s notion of the sublime (Kant 391). These populations have a particular horror for him, as for “thousands of years” Asia has been “swarming with human life,” almost insect-like. Not only does China have “greatness of dimension, vastness of extent or quantity” (Burke 74), he cannot conceive of the degree. Fuzzy in its details, his imagined China is writhing with indistinct life, and has continued in this darkness since the human race began. In comparison to the masses of life, he conceives of a single man as a mere weed, dehumanized and emptied of dignity. China overwhelsms the individual, so that its great mass—living but not distinct—provokes a “sublimity to the feelings associated with all Oriental names or images.” Its terror lies in its approach towards infinity in age, numbers, size, and perhaps utmost, its obscurity in outline. He knows of it, but does not know it. He is not able, as Burke says, “to perceive its bounds” or to “know the full extent of the danger” (65). De Quincey sets up China as terrible because it simply cannot be contained in his civilized British mind.

When De Quincey reaches his dream accounts, he again uses the sublime by limiting his descriptions to the vague and abstract, never clearly defining the contours. With some abbreviation, his account runs thus:
Under the connecting feeling of tropical heat and vertical sun-lights, I brought together all creatures, birds, beasts, reptiles, all trees and plants, usages and appearances, that are found in all tropical regions, and assembled them together in China or Indostan. From kindred feelings, I soon brought Egypt and all her gods under the same law. I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkey, by paroquets, by cockatoos. . . . I was buried, for a thousand years, in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles; and laid, confounded with all unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud.

I thus give the reader some slight abstraction of my Oriental dreams, which always filled me with such amazement at the monstrous scenery, that horror seemed absorbed, for a while, in sheer astonishment. Sooner or later, came a reflux of feeling that swallowed up the astonishment, and left me, not so much in terror, as in hatred and abomination of what I saw. Over every form, and threat, and punishment, and dim sightless incarceration, brooded a sense of eternity and infinity that drove me into an oppression as of madness . . . . I escaped sometimes, and found myself in Chinese houses, with cane tables, etc. All the feet of the tables, sofas, etc. soon became instinct with life: the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions: and I stood loathing and fascinated. (170-72)

The fluidity of association and colorful vividness of language, yet lack of rational clarity, are an application of Burke’s stylistic observation that literature has greater power than visual art to affect the sublime (66). In this way, the cancerous kisses of the crocodile that confound the dreamer raise lively ideas in the mind yet cannot be fully contained. Likewise, the description moves on so rapidly through associations that no sooner is the attempt made to grasp the idea than it has slipped into another. From his images of pagodas and temples, chattering monkeys and parrots, and animated cane furniture, it is not possible to raise anything more than a “very obscure and imperfect idea” of what haunted his dreams. De Quincey’s opium-bred abstractions of China thereby possess a formlessness and boundlessness that reflect his vague sense of the place in the concrete world.

Similarly, his dreams are filled with the same qualities that he assigned to Asia when giving his preliminary apology for his prejudice. Writhing with life, with “all
creatures” and “slimy things,” the scenes overpower his senses, and he conveys the sublime idea of utter powerlessness. He is pursued, fixed, and confined “for centuries,” “buried for a thousand years in stone coffins,” and “sacrificed.” The uncontainable ideas of absolute power, uncertain pain, and impending danger that render sublime terror are replete throughout his sequence.

As he describes the result of these terrors, he seems to draw straight from Burke. The “amazement at the monstrous scenery,” the “sheer astonishment,” and the “sense of eternity and infinity” that brood over “every form, and threat, and punishment, and dim sightless incarceration,” are clear figurations of what Burke calls “the effect of the sublime in its highest degree” (64). Burke describes this affect as astonishment, “The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully; . . . and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it” (64). De Quincey’s sublime dreams, drawn from his vague notions of Asia, bring him to a state of astonishment with certainly some degree of horror.

Although his reflections on these dreams, which leave him “loathing and fascinated,” reinforce his intense antipathy towards China, there is in his language—in his use of the sublime—a kind of dueling sensation intrinsic in sublimity, a horror that can be delightful (Burke 75). Since the sublime affects the mind in a way that resembles an emotion, it produces feelings that are neither measurable nor distillable. Thus, sublimity can be regarded as both terrible and wonderful, even simultaneously. Kant describes this as resulting from a check, then increase, in the flow of vital powers. For the
one who experiences the sublime, the shock of chemical forces in the brain seems an
alternation between repulsion and attraction (Kant 391). Burke considers this play of
sensation as the higher and inferior effects of the sublime, the former being astonishment
and the latter “admiration, reverence, and respect.” Yet even within what he sees as the
highest effect of the sublime, Burke sees a kindred sense of both fear and wonder that we
associate with the words astonishing and amazement (65).

Within De Quincey’s imagination and his sublime depictions of China, all the
effects of sublimity—the higher and inferior—come into play. Associated with the
negative, his experience is of “unimaginable horror,” “mythological tortures,” “sheer
astonishment,” “terror,” “loathing,” “hatred and abomination”; at the same time, there is a
sense of attraction to the “impressive” scenes that leave him “filled with amazement” and
“fascinated.” As in Burke’s examples of animals that are sublime by virtue of their
dangerous strength, he cannot help but feel some degree of respect for what seems so
overpowering. Paralleling his hatred for and delight in opium use, De Quincey shows
China as both terrible and intriguing. Even as he twice mentions the manners, customs,
and modes of life in China that are so incomprehensible, he betrays his double interest
and attraction to them. Although he is invariably repelled, he is again drawn thither.113

According to De Quincey’s chronology in Confessions of an English Opium
Eater, these opium dreams and their content were tied to a cross-cultural event in his life,
one in which the reality of the expanding British empire came rushing into his

113 De Quincey may have had a particularly developed taste for the sublime resulting from his
troubled psychological state. His biographer Sackville West argues that his relationship with an abusive
brother was painful, yet “brought him a queer voluptuous delight.” De Quincey wrote of this relationship
that “I had a perfect craze for being despised” (West 13). His sadistic turn of mind may have drawn him to
sublimity in an abnormal degree.
consciousness. He was visited one spring afternoon in 1817 by a Malaysian sailor. At this time he resided at Dove Cottage in Grasmere, Westmoreland, in the Lake District, the tenancy of which he had taken over from William and Dorothy Wordsworth in 1809. Although some critics have been skeptical about the possibility of a Malay visitor by calling even this first visit an opium fantasy, such a reading of the text would give an illusory quality to the whole of the *Confessions*. One would need to dismiss his whole account as opium induced, whereas the historical anchors in De Quincey’s text discourage such a reading. He gives the visit a psychological context, when “a latter spring had come to close up the season of youth: my brain performed its functions as healthily as ever before…” (128). Had he positioned the appearance of the Malay during the previous three years, when the “inability to wrestle any longer with irritation and constant suffering” had driven him to eight thousand drops of laudanum each day, then one might more defensibly consider the Malay an opium apparition (121). But De Quincey takes pains to assert the clarity of his mind during this happy year, “a parenthesis between years of a gloomier character,” in order that his readers may not take the encounter as fantasy (127). First, he assures his reader of his renewed acuity by declaring his ability, after a drought, to read and understand Kant. Next, he argues his mental and emotional readiness to receive an intelligent guest: “if any man from Oxford or Cambridge, or from neither, had been announced to me in my unpretending cottage, I should have welcomed him with as sumptuous a reception as so poor a man could offer.

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114 For details of De Quincey’s life, see his biographers Edward Sackville West, *Thomas De Quincey: His Life and Works* (1936), and Grevel Lindop, *The Opium-Eater: A Life of Thomas De Quincey* (1981).

115 Picking up on dubious suggestions in his early biographers, Diane Simmons posits that the Malay may have been an imagined figure conjured by De Quincey to provide himself “with a socially acceptable, if irrational, outlet for the rage and sadistic desire for revenge which, as Kohut has written, often marks the victim of narcissistic damage” (7).
Whatever else was wanting to a wise man’s happiness, —of laudanum I would have given him as much as he wished, and in a golden cup” (128-9). As proof that he had indeed decreased his need for opium in this year, he explains that his lust for the drug had decreased to the point that he would freely give it away. Finally, these lines carefully set up the visit from the Malay, who is certainly not from Oxbridge but does receive the promised sumptuous feast of opium, though without the golden cup. By claiming a ready receptivity to any guest, yet leading the reader to an expectation of a visit from one of his former Oxford classmates, De Quincey highlights the surprise he experienced from the visit of a wandering Southeast Asian. His surprise, though, fits with the frank realism of his account. Contrasting the experience with his dreams, he writes, “the reader will soon meet it again in my dreams, which it influenced more fearfully than could be imagined. One day a Malay knocked at my door. What business a Malay could have to transact amongst English mountains, I cannot conjecture: but possibly he was on his road to a sea-port about forty miles distant” (129). When the Malay appears, his simple prose and offhanded comments on his geographical context again drive away any thought that this could be a visionary encounter. With the assertion that his dreams were influenced by the encounter, De Quincey draws a careful line between fact and fantasy.

Assuming that De Quincey’s visitor was actually from the Malay peninsula, British conquests up to that point could easily have brought him to the metropole in 1817. In 1795 the British had seized sovereignty from the Dutch over Malacca, the major trading center on the Malay Peninsula at that time, and by 1824 a treaty with the Dutch resulted in British control of the whole peninsula and dominance in the South Seas. But over a century before the British obtained this possession, their commerce for spices had
regularly brought them into contact with the Islamic kingdoms on the Malay peninsula. In his very popular *Voyages and Discoveries* first printed in 1699, Captain William Dampier writes of Malacca that at the time of his first visit there in 1688 it was already a strongly fortified settlement of Dutch and Portuguese exerting dominance over a Muslim society of Malaysians, but even at that early date British traders were frequenting those seas. The same week of Dampier’s arrival at Malacca, five English ships touched in port. Of the native people, he writes, “They are a Mahometan People, very warlike, and desirous of Trade. They delight much in Shipping and going to Sea” (11). From Dampier’s account we also learn that it was common practice to hire Malaysians or Tonquinese (now Vietnamese) sailors when necessity required it, as in a particular instance when Dampier notes, “We had now in Captain Minchin’s Ship but 2 white Men, the Captain and I” (116). That a number of these Malaysian sailors should eventually find themselves at their employers’ original port of departure would be most natural. Regardless of whether or not De Quincey’s visitor was actually a Malaysian or of another Southeast Asian people, what is important for the context of the *Confessions* is the likelihood that the increasing British presence in the South Seas throughout the eighteenth century brought many such Asian sailors to British shores up through De Quincey’s time.

Accepting, then, that De Quincey’s experience of 1817 was in some outline an actual occurrence, a careful analysis of his description of the Malay’s visit provides some

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116 On numerous occasions Dampier alludes to the hiring of native sailors, and in one passage gives justification for the practice: “But here in the Indies our English are forced, for want of better, to make use of any Seamen such as they can get, and indeed our Merchants are often put hard to it for want of Seamen. Here are indeed Lascars or Indian Seamen enough to be hired; and these they make use of: yet they always covet an Englishman or 2 in a Vessel to assist them. Not but that these Lascars are some of them indifferent good Sailors, and might do well enough: but an Englishman will be accounted more faithful, to be employed on matters of Moment; beside the more free Conversation that may be expected from them, during the Term of the Voyage. So though oft-times their Englishmen are but ordinary Sailors, yet they are promoted to some Charge of which they could not be so capable anywhere but in the East Indies” (80).
intriguing insight into the author’s worldview. As stereotypes, or “representatives of overlapping racial, sexual, national, ethnic, economic, social, political, and religious categories” (Tompkins xvi), the figures in the scene open up layers of De Quincey’s imaged East and West. Ironically significant for De Quincey’s later writings concerning Asia, —a place he never saw—he begins the account by relating another scene that he himself did not witness: the servant girl’s opening of the door in answer to the Malay’s knock. He imagines the shock of this young girl, “born and bred amongst the mountains, who had never seen an Asiatic dress of any sort” when she first beholds the dark skinned, turbaned figure enter the English cottage (129). This initial contrast is swallowed up by the author’s quick elevation of himself above both the servant and the visitor, who he draws together at the level of simplicity and servitude: “there seemed to be an impassable gulf fixed between all communication of ideas, if either party had happened to possess any” (129). Leaving aside for a moment the impassable gulf, we note what De Quincey assumes is a native simplicity in the English native of the mountains and the Malay native of an unknown land. Unable to communicate thoughts, unable to speak intelligibly, and standing in awe of DeQuincey’s abilities and presence, the Malay is described as having the helplessness of a child. This equation of Southeast Asians, regardless of the individual’s age, with childlike simplicity of mind becomes a trope throughout nineteenth-century adventure literature.\(^{117}\) According to an Aristotelian notion of natural orders with which De Quincey was familiar, simplicity of mind leads to natural

\(^{117}\) See especially Patrick Brantlinger’s discussion of the topic in Rule of Darkness, chapters 2, 5, and 6.
The servant girl runs quickly to her master in whose reputed learning she trusts implicitly, and in response to the author’s attempt to communicate with the man in Greek, “the Malay worshipped [him] in a most devout manner” (132). In the moment of their confusion, De Quincey interprets that both the girl and the Asian bend naturally to the learned white master.

De Quincey’s puerilization of the Malay with regard to his own superior position is the first of several contrasts he sets up in the account of this experience. The next contrasts emerge from the scene as it presents itself to “[his] fancy and [his] eye in a way that none of the statuesque attitudes exhibited…at the Opera House, though so ostentatiously complex, had ever done.” He finds the fact of a Malay in an English cottage so absurd and bizarre that the scene affords him an entertainment. In keeping with the dramatic, he builds a contrast within the sentence that introduces the Malay to his eye: “In a cottage kitchen, but paneled on the wall with dark wood that from age and rubbing resembled oak, and looking more like a rustic hall of entrance than a kitchen, stood the Malay.” As he unfolds the scene, the author conceives contrast upon contrast:

His turban and loose trowsers of dingy white relieved upon the dark paneling: he had placed himself nearer to the girl than she seemed to relish; though her native spirit of mountain intrepidity contended with the feeling of simple awe which her countenance expressed as she gazed upon the tiger-cat before her. And a more striking picture there could not be imagined, than the beautiful English face of the girl, and its exquisite fairness, together with her erect and independent attitude, contrasted with the sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, enameled or veneered with mahogany, by marine air, his small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips, slavish gestures and adorations. Half-hidden by the ferocious looking Malay, was a little child from a neighbouring cottage who had crept in after him, and was now in the act of reverting its head, and gazing upwards at the turban and the fiery eyes.

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118 De Quincey’s attainments in Greek and study of Greek works are well known. See his biographers Edward Sackville West, and Grevel Lindop. For his own account of his language skill, see the “Preliminary Confessions” (15-17).
beneath it, whilst with one hand he caught at the dress of the young woman for protection. (130-31)

Through this description, De Quincey sets up characters in the scene as racial representatives in order to contrast pure Englishness with a vague but dark Asiatic nature that, like the Malay standing too near the girl, had placed itself nearer civilization than the English seem to relish. As the representative of Englishness, the girl has the brave “native spirit” of her people, along with the beauty, strength, and purity of the Anglo-Saxon race. In stark contrast to this English beauty, the Malay is described more animal or otherworldly than human; he is “a sort of demon.” Her “beautiful English face” with its “exquisite fairness” contrasts with his “sallow and bilious” complexion and “small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips.” Her erect posture and “independent attitude” stand as natural master to his innate turn to “slavish gestures and adorations.” Through these two ethnic representatives, De Quincey gives a racial judgment on the relations between Britain and the East. As with his dreams, appearances code essences. The fairness of the girl suggests the righteousness and purity of English civilization, while the dark skin, small eyes, and gesticulations of the Malay suggest that Asians possess a wicked, short-sighted, and naturally servile nature. For him, this encounter reveals the genius of races — the white and the “Oriental” — and the former is the natural master of the latter.

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119 This literary appearance of a figure from the outer reaches of the empire finding his way to the metropole may be the earliest instance of an element common to what Patrick Brantlinger in Rule of Darkness terms “imperial gothic.” Figuring prominently in late century tales such as Bram Stoker’s Dracula or Kipling’s “Phantom Rickshaw,” imperial gothic stories all contain an invasion of civilization by the forces of barbarism or demonism. Interestingly, De Quincey has the servant girl call the Malay “a sort of demon” (130).

120 The essentialization of races plays prominently in the criticism of Hannah Arendt, Homi Bhabha, Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and Edward Said previously mentioned. See also Henry Louis Gates ed. “Race,” Writing and Difference.
Like Austen’s heroine in *Mansfield Park*, De Quincey’s beautiful English lass also maintains a Macartney-like “erect and independent attitude” in her encounter with the Malay, despite the author’s assertion that she was filled with awe. In the same way that Austen a few years earlier had used Macartney’s refusal to bow before the Qing emperor as a mark of British character, so De Quincey argues that even the most uneducated provincial English girl is too filled with British spirit to lose dignity by fawning over the novel Eastern visitor. Perhaps desiring to throw a mocking insult at the proud court in Peking, De Quincy emphasizes the difference between the strong spirit of the unpolished servant girl and the Asian guest who bows constantly with “slavish gestures and adorations” and worships the author in his own sort of kowtow. Certainly he makes an argument in this episode that it is in the natural character of an Asian to bow and grovel, whereas the Anglo-Saxon character of the British is of strength and independence. Although the Lords Macartney and Amherst are not mentioned in the *Confessions*, they may linger just at the edges and so have echoed in the mind of De Quincey’s contemporary readers.

The way in which his description of this encounter positions the Malay as representative of the “Oriental” becomes exaggerated in De Quincey’s opium dreams in the years following this visit. As he writes, “This incident I have digressed to mention, because this Malay…fastened afterwards upon my dreams, and brought other Malays with him worse than himself, that ran ‘a-muck’ at me, and led me into a world of troubles” (134). In a note on this association, he claims that his imaginary world of troubles is based on reality, which one can read of in the accounts of “any Easter traveler
or voyager.” This assertion aims to anchor his fantasies of horror to what he claims is a reality in the East.

For De Quincey, these accounts to which he refers are based on the firm ground of disinterested experience. Unlike the Catholic missionary accounts that were often discounted as too personally interested, the memoirs and travel writing of eighteenth-century British merchants and diplomats to the East were elevated in De Quincey’s mind as fair and impartial representations of Asian culture. De Quincey’s remark here signals the shift that had taken place in the eighteenth century and that would mark the cultural contestation of the nineteenth century as a whole, that is, the shift away from a consciously theological metanarrative of the world—a view that readily accepts conjecture and spiritual interpretation of events—toward the exaltation of “facts” and first-hand experiential knowledge, what I described earlier as the emerging secular view. I will return to this contestation later in this chapter, but at this point it is important to note that De Quincey was eager to receive any account of the East that would position British culture as firmly superior, as the pinnacle of progress in Western civilization and therefore the model for the world. First hand observations of Malays running a-muck were only too welcome as counters to Catholic claims of a highly developed civilization in the East that might complicate a view of Britain as a light to the nations.121

121 De Quincey’s negative response may also have been a reaction to Oliver Goldsmith’s Citizen of the World. An epistolary novel in which a Chinese protagonist writes to his Chinese friends about his experiences in England, Goldsmith’s work adopts completely the Chinoiserie of the eighteenth-century upper-class fascination with China drawn from continental works dependant on Catholic missionary sources.
IV. Evangelical Alternatives

The nearest that a Western scholar has come to an extended treatment of missionary representation of China in the nineteenth century is Eric Reinders’s *Borrowed Gods and Foreign Bodies: Christian Missionaries Imagine Chinese Religion* (2004). Focusing on the period between 1850-1914 and concerned with missionaries’ impressions, interactions with natives, and representations to their constituencies at home, Reinders reads a broad selection of late nineteenth-century works on the Chinese empire during its decline, sped along by British imperial pressure. Following perhaps from Reinders’ position within the field of comparative Religious Studies, his work assumes a dislike for the categorical beliefs of the missionaries he studies, which may perhaps explain why there is no discussion of Evangelical thought, theology, and culture. His reading of these missionary texts concerns almost exclusively their negative apprehensions of China and the Chinese as religious quantities, which, as his title suggests, they “borrowed” for their own purposes of propaganda.

This section of my study may be considered as an early-century complement to Reinders’s treatment of late-century missionary impressions and representations. I am concerned with the phase of what Mary Louise Pratt has called “first contact,” which produced foundational ways of imagining the Chinese in accordance with an Evangelical worldview. The ways in which the earliest British missionaries conceived of the Chinese and their own position in relation to them inevitably performed the cultural work, within

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122 Reinders’s selection of sources may render his title and thesis problematic. Not only do some of his most prominent sources include non-missionaries, such as the merchant Robert Fortune, he ignores some of the most widely known and influential missionaries of his period. Most notably absent is a critical reading of missionaries from the China Inland Mission, the largest mission society in nineteenth-century China, whose policies of favoring integration into Chinese society complicate his conclusions about religiously justified aversion to Chinese culture.
their subculture, of establishing terms and practical theology for interaction between future Evangelicals in China and the Chinese—as well as between native converts and their Western spiritual parents.

V. “First Contact” and First Impressions

Missionaries very quickly understood the ignorance in Britain regarding the nations to which they were sent. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century, those who attempted some type of missionary training before going abroad—typically those associated with the London Missionary Society—spent approximately two years at Gosport, studying the Bible, principles of translation, tract composition, and missionary methods at a Missionary Seminary operated by the Rev. David Bogue, known widely among Evangelicals for his Essay on the Interpretation of the New Testament (Milne, Memoirs 15; Milne, Retrospect 54; Morrison, Memoirs 60). But in regard to their particular destinations, there was little that could be learned with the exception of those bound for India or the Caribbean. One could glean only general impressions of the South Seas and Southeast Asia from Cook’s Voyages and Travels or Dampier’s Voyages and Discoveries. Until the primary work of the first generation of missionaries had generated pertinent knowledge about their destinations, missionaries struggled to find material that could assist them in their preparation. In their own provocations, partly written to address this problem of knowledge, Evangelicals inevitably responded to the sparse or questionable source material that had provided their own—frequently false—presuppositions about the people to whom they were sent.
The first missionaries intended for China—Robert Morrison, William Milne, and Walter Medhurst—naturally made use of what resources were available, albeit with some reservations. In a passage in his *Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China*, Milne relates the trouble of preparing for the mission. Through the funds of the Society, they were able to obtain several of the accounts from Lord Macartney’s embassy, but although these contained some useful generalities, they supplied “not much of that kind of information, which would have been useful to the Missionary Society” (46). Morrison concurred, writing in 1804 that although Barrow’s *Travels* had received some public attention, “There seems to me to be much uninteresting matter in it. Little can be derived from every petty circumstance that took place on their voyage, and in their journey through China” (*Memoirs* 74). What those accounts did reveal was the glaring lack of any Chinese language ability among the British. It was widely known that at the time of the embassy there was not a person in Britain able to communicate in Chinese. Among these first missionaries, only Morrison had the benefit of any Chinese language training before departure. A young Chinese of the merchant class, Yong-Sam-Tak, happened to have come from Canton on an East India Company ship to visit London, and Morrison was able to engage him as a tutor and then as an outgoing traveling companion. As texts for study, he was able to use a manuscript in the British Museum of a Harmony of the Gospels, as well as a manuscript Latin-Chinese dictionary—Morrison had taught himself to read Latin—both of which were compiled at an unknown date by Catholic missionaries in Macao.¹²³ When the later Milne and

¹²³ These texts were discovered and reported in a *Memoir* by a dissenting minister, the Rev. William Mosely, of Hanley. They were part of the foundation material of the British Museum.
Medhurst were preparing, however, the tutor had departed and the texts were meaningless to these men who could not read Latin.

Although the works of Catholic missionaries described earlier were potentially attainable, Milne and his contemporaries were able to read only the Catholic works that had been translated into English, which amounted to du Halde’s *History of China*, along with a few abridgments of the *Memoirs des Chinois* and *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses* which he assesses as “but of little value.” The language difficulty aside, the primary reason for distrust in the Catholic works was due to a “want of confidence in the testimony . . . especially of the Jesuits” (46). As evidence of the prevalence of this attitude, Milne quotes the opinion of Adam Smith in *Wealth of Nations*, which considers accounts of China as “‘drawn up by weak and wondering travellers; frequently by stupid and lying Missionaries’” (46). Surprisingly, Milne defends the Catholic missionaries against this moral charge of lying; instead, he attributes their exaggerations and extreme praise of China to their unstated hope that their works would, “through some channel or other, be made known to those of whom they wrote, and produce an impression in favor of the authors” (47). Milne casts the Catholic writers as ingratiating flatterers, rather than dishonest, fame-seeking bookmakers.

What is perhaps more interesting about Milne’s brief sympathy with the Catholic missionaries—which he later qualifies, of course—is that he sides with the Jesuits as fellow Christians against “men of Dr. S[mith]’s views of Christianity, [who] endeavour to weaken the testimony of its propagators” (47). Remarkable for this period of anti-Catholicism in England, Milne sees greater likeness between his Evangelical confession and the Jesuit mission than with the rational Christianity of the Broad Church of England.
Published in 1820 and collectively expressing the views of Milne and Morrison, this work shows a change in attitude towards the earlier Jesuits, who Morrison in 1804 had believed would “be our bitterest foes.” Clearly drawing his impressions from the Catholic accounts, Morrison had written to a friend of the difficulties ahead: “Many amongst the Chinese are highly refined and well-informed; they will not be beneath us, but superior. …and if the Romish missionaries be our foes, they will be foes that are far superior: aged, venerable, and learned men” (69). Morrison’s anxiety about engaging with refined Chinese and wily Catholics shows, on the one hand, a credulity towards the Catholic accounts that sets both native and Catholic on an exalted level in relation to the simpler Evangelical missionaries. While maintaining that their works were certainly romantic portrayals of the Chinese, the Evangelicals implicitly assume that at least some of what the Catholics had reported was true. At the same time, Morrison’s comment assumes an antagonism towards the Catholic vision. As shown in earlier chapters, this Evangelical defensiveness marks their worldview and mission, and it naturally suffuses their provocations. That Milne even for a brief moment aligns himself with Catholic missionaries is remarkable and demonstrates the fluidity of Evangelical political alignment.

Aware of the general charge against Catholic writers for their exaggeration, Evangelical missionaries went to China with conscious restraint regarding what they might write, even down to the letters written for the LMS. In his Memoirs under the heading, “QUERIE TO BE PROPOSED BY A MISSIONARY TO HIMSELF, WHEN WRITING MISSIONARY LETTERS,” Milne seemingly responds to charges against former missionaries, including the Catholic writers, “Do I keep fully within actual facts? –or
strong probabilities? 2\textsuperscript{nd}. Do I so write, as will be apt to lead the public to expect more than can be realized? 3\textsuperscript{rd}. Do I write, in regard to style, terms, and address, becoming my age, talents, and period of service?” (160). In his concern to remain close to facts and cautious in expectations, Milne aims to differentiate his accounts from the idealized depictions of the Jesuit *Lettres Edificantes et Curieuses*. Where he believed the Jesuits had misled the public and brought about a general “reproach” on their integrity, he shows an awareness that he will be accountable for his claims, either to the public or to God. He likewise reflects the increasing weight given to eye-witness authority by the end of the eighteenth century, as suggested by Lord Macartney’s aim “to represent things precisely as they impressed me” (219), not as the result of “what I had read in books or been told in Europe,” but from “what I saw and heard upon the spot” (221). Although both Macartney and Milne were cognizant of the British public’s ignorance of China, they both nonetheless cultivated a consciousness of faithful reporting that would bear the long-term test of proof, which, they believed, the Catholic writers had failed.

Although William Milne believed that the lack of knowledge about China among his countrymen had hindered the cause of mission, his concern not to replicate the “want of confidence” assigned to Catholic productions resulted in a long delay before the publication of the first provocation. Evidenced by his sympathy for the early Catholic writers’ enthusiasm for China, he recognized the inducement of “first contact” to tell the wonders of one’s excited initial sensations, thoughts, and sentiments. This first contact carried the dangers of attempting, too quickly, to fix firmly one’s interpretation of a society, or by shallow initial impressions to correct the popular view of it. In his *Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China*, he writes,
Missionaries are apt, on landing in a distant heathen land, to be struck with the first view which they obtain of the scenery, and to receive a deep, and often erroneous, impression from the first view which they take of the state of society. They often write freely to their friends at home, and through partiality or want of care, half-matured opinions, new to those who have never left the paternal home, are admired for a time; find their way into some periodical publication, in the pages of which they are transported from country to country, and it is possible may be handed down from age to age. (48)

Milne’s comments reveal a critical eye towards the missteps of some of his missionary forebears, the same, perhaps, who had drawn Sidney Smith’s mockery as “little detachments of maniacs” in his depiction of the “Indian Missions” in the *Edinburgh Review* of 1808 (180). His reference to half-matured opinions finding their way into a periodical publication shows painful reflection on hostile criticisms such as Smith’s. Demonstrating remarkable self-awareness both of his own naivety and possibly ill-advised motivations, and of others like him who have gone abroad with the Evangelical mission, Milne aims to mitigate the indiscretions of first impressions that would tend to rush toward providing a “real image” of the native society.

From his own experience of the cognitive dissonance associated with first contact, he advises that “To write first impressions is wise for a Missionary’s own improvement” (49). The need to cope with ideological and cultural disequilibrium, common among travelers (both then and now) to foreign locations, made writing a valuable spiritual and psychological activity, in which Christopher Herbert has seen “the invention of a new subjectivity” (156), which he terms the “ethnographic imagination.” But what Herbert reads as “an impulse to experience a state of radical instability of value—or even the instability of selfhood itself” (157)—Milne seems to consider more practically as working through Christian identity in a different cultural environment. Perhaps due to one’s unstable opinions when working through the disequilibrium, Milne also cautions
future missionaries that one’s “first views should be given to others with great reserve
and moderation” (49). He takes for granted that accounts of a foreign locality will be
interesting to many in the “paternal home,” but such interest requires all the greater
prudence in supplying careful and matured opinions only after “knowledge of the
language and of the people enable him to write with more certainty and confidence” (49).

Lest embellished or erroneous accounts later redound “to their shame, preserved
on record, and furnish the snarling infidel with weapons against the Gospel” (48), it was
only after a long and continual residence that missionaries were advised to begin filling in
what they had discovered to be holes in Western understanding. Evangelicals assumed
that their provocations would be attacked by “the snarling infidel” and “the cold hearted
moralist, with arguments against those benevolent objects in which they are engaged”
(49); such negative responses were considered part of their suffering for the cause of
Christ. Assumed within Evangelical subculture was the notion that those who sought to
spread the Gospel, and “who follow most closely to the apostle’s steps, are despised”
(Simeon 56). The assumption of such attacks gave an additional consideration for
providing careful and accurate representations of Chinese society. It was in this regard, as
the objects of attack from the opponents in society, that Evangelicals found fleeting
identification with their Catholic competitors.

Perhaps more important to individual writers than as a safeguard against secular
attack, careful attention to representation was part of a believer’s adherence to his version
of the faith. Milne shows his faithfulness to Evangelical teaching as he explains the
necessity of truth-telling: “Regard to truth, the most sacred of all things, should ever
prevent from exaggerating the circumstances even of the most important and striking

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facts, with the view of producing an effect on the Christian publick” (49). Truth stands on its own as an object in writing. According to Evangelical principle, as explored in the first two chapters of this dissertation, the stewardship of knowledge itself was its own incentive for careful representation because this was the faithful application of a gift from God. Simeon expressed the idea succinctly, “True religion is wisdom. God, when he gives it to the soul, gives us ‘sound wisdom’ and discretion” (“Spirit of Vital Christianity” 137). Edward Irving, who as a wildly entertaining speaker was for a time in the 1820s among the most popular attractions in London (Hilton 12), taught that as a result of this principle of stewardship in knowledge, “Christians should be . . . the princes of human intellect, the lights of the world, the salt of the political and social state” (128). If the Holy Spirit brings truth, then that truth, carefully preserved and applied, should cause Christians to have a more accurate view of the world. Milne accepted this idea, reasoning “There will always be enough in the statement of actual facts, and in the inferences which naturally arise out of them, to interest the Church of Christ at home, and to kept [sic] its zeal alive, without recourse to heightened representation” (49). The “effect on the Christian publick,” which was among the primary goals of provocation production, would be achieved not through exaggeration, but through “the statement of actual facts.” The proverbial dictum that truth is stranger than fiction became foundational to Evangelical provocation writers, who believed that the Holy Spirit would be producing events of greater interest than anything they might create through “heightened representation.”

Truth, for an Evangelical, meant a great deal more than information and facts because truth concerns, primarily, spiritual realities. The great and overarching reality, in
which all lesser truths were absorbed, was considered to be God’s redemption of a fallen world through the spread and acceptance of the Gospel. The Christocentric life brought about by accepting the crucicentric message (see Chapter One 22-25) was inherently a spiritual process “that does not come from nature. For the natural man cannot attain to it” (Simeon, “Practical Christianity” 129). When an Evangelical like Milne wrote about missionaries maintaining a “regard to truth,” his concern was to reflect the spiritually guided process of redemption taking place in his own sphere, China. Not only should Evangelical writers accurately convey knowledge, they must regard truth; that is, they must look to, refer to, and weave in the greater narrative of which their own narrative is but a part.

VI. The Gospel Lens: National Depravity, Darkness, and the Light

The “regard to truth” required Evangelical missionaries in China to fit their representation of the Chinese into a Gospel narrative. If they were to be consistent with Evangelical teaching on the nature of man and way of salvation, their readers would expect characterizations and instances of depravity, both on a personal and national level. Any conversions would need to be shown as the work of the Holy Spirit, “because he is the author and giver of all grace, and because it is through his agency alone that we are able to pray” (Simeon, “The Means of Evangelical Repentance” 122). Finally, readers would expect to see the efficaciousness of this salvation through observable sanctification, or an obvious turn in the individual towards goodness, righteousness, and truth, which will be “the height of [their] ambition and the very end of [their] lives” (Simeon, “Practical Christianity” 128).
The few scholars who have considered missionary writing (broadly speaking) at any length have been quick to notice the prevalence of the doctrine of depravity, which I consider the most marked feature of provocations. In writing about missionary works in Polynesia, India, and Australia, Anna Johnston has noted that “Native resistance is usually depicted as moral decay and intellectual depravity” (*Missionary Writing* 7), and Patrick Brantlinger in *Rule of Darkness* (1988) has noted a tendency in African missionaries “to exaggerate savagery and darkness” (182). In *Culture and Anomie* (1991) Christopher Herbert likewise shows missionary representation of “unredeemed human nature [as] a horrifying mass of lust and wickedness” (159). One interesting commonality in many of these scholars’ readings of missionary texts is that they seem unwilling to accept that missionaries actually believed in depravity; instead, they assign alternate reasons for their stereotyping of depravity. Brantlinger, for example, explains the trope as a means “to rationalize their presence in Africa, to explain the frustrations they experienced in making converts, and to win support from mission societies at home” (182). Johnston agrees and considers the missionaries’ depictions of “depraved native masculinity” as a foil for “vigorous but pious British manliness” (*Missionary Writing* 8). Herbert interprets a more scientific approach and considers their depictions of depravity as “attempting to gather authenticated empirical proof of [their] proposition”—a sort of experiential scientific method (159).

These valuable examinations of missionary language and practice certainly reveal currents within provocations, but by setting aside the Evangelical worldview, they do not attend to how the missionaries themselves, and the culture in which they were nurtured and to which they wrote, conceived of the world. For missionaries, most of whom lost a
spouse and children in their unfamiliar environments and almost all of whom died in their adopted land, belief in their spiritual principles, that most of the world was in a perilous and desperate state in relationship to God, was a significant motivation and a cause for which their lives were worth giving.

Evangelicals considered depravity to be the natural state of every living person, “the sad state we are brought into by the fall; a state as black and doleful as the former was glorious” (Boston 59). Most simply defined, they understood depravity as “a corrupt heart,” or more fully stated, “The soul, which was made upright in all its faculties, is now wholly disordered” (61). This, “‘Man’s Natural State,’” would be the more markedly exhibited where Gospel teaching had not affected society by informing its laws and institutions. As provocation writers aimed to provoke other Evangelicals to join in the work of spreading the Gospel to China, they followed William Carey’s argument in the earliest provocation, that examples of depravity, “instead of affording an objection against preaching the gospel to them, ought to furnish an argument for it” (69). He went on to stress that every true Christian could not possibly fail to act after hearing of the damnable condition of “a great part of our fellow creatures, whose souls are as immortal as ours, and who are as capable as ourselves, of adorning the gospel, and contributing by their preaching, writings, or practices to the glory of our Redeemer’s name, and the good of his church” (69-70).

With this aim of provoking their readers, representations of Chinese depravity became both a point of doctrine and a persuasive rhetorical device. Two principal uses of depravity as rhetorical device mark these works: national and personal. National depravity turned on moderate Calvinist eschatology, whereby Christ’s atoning sacrifice
was necessary for all people everywhere but available only to those who should hear the Gospel. The duty of the Church, as Carey had articulated, was to be the means by which Christ’s message would be conveyed and through which the messianic scripture, “I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thy possession” (Psalm 2.8), would be realized. Since Christ would rule the nations at the end of time, the nations would need converting. National depravity was simply evidence of this need. Rhetorically, it provided points of contrast with Evangelical culture and implied what would be changed when that “kingdom of the world [should] become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ!” (Burder 88). Personal depravity, however, was the immediate problem and pressing concern of missionary work. The nations, which inevitably must convert, would be converted one person at a time. Understanding their Christian culture as a “religion of the heart,” provocations writers inserted individual instances of depraved behavior to impart a sense of connection between the reader and subject, thereby appealing to the impulse of love.

In its theoretical cast, early provocations present Chinese national depravity in terms almost prescient of twentieth-century anthropology. Milne anticipates Branislov Malinowski’s and Clifford Geertz’s use of “cultural system” in framing his own cultural theory. He explains, “The religious, moral, and political principles of any people, constantly and reciprocally affect each other to such a degree, that it is hardly possible to

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124 Evangelicals were subtly divided on the eschatological interpretations of the end times. Millenarian expectations fell into two categories: pre-millennial and post-millennial. Post-millennialists, who were the larger group at the time, believed that Christ’s return and his thousand-year reign (the millennium) would be ushered in once all the nations had been converted. Consequently, they believed the world would get better and better, and they looked for social and cultural evidence to support this view. Pre-millennialists believed that Christ would return before the millennial reign; consequently, they looked for signs that the world would get worse and worse, and then Christ would come to correct the world. Boyd Hilton’s *Age of Atonement* provides a useful discussion of the respective social and political praxis of Evangelicals holding these two interpretations.
delineate one, without drawing in part of the others” (Retrospect 18). Through a decade of interaction and conversation with Chinese, Milne and Morrison had recognized that the intertwining of customs required very careful consideration when determining how the Gospel should be presented and, if accepted, applied.

Evangelicals had no doubt, however, that the Chinese cultural system was depraved. Analogous to the negative turn taken in the embassy accounts, much of their stereotypical representation counters the enthusiasm of the Catholic writers. Instead of depicting a well-ordered and peaceful state, provocations follow the embassy accounts in conveying a despotic and divided empire based on the “restless ambition” of the Tartars over an insulted native population (Milne Retrospect 18). Departing from the secular writers, however, the Evangelical writers do not then interpret the native Chinese as good; rather, they consider the mingling of “two national characters in the Empire, of a very opposite kind, affecting each other by a mutual re-action” (23), but turning out for the worse. Like the interaction of mutual imbrication described in Simon Gikandi’s Maps of Englishness (1996), Evangelicals read Chinese society as a combination of the “national emanations of human depravity” present in both the Tartar and the Chinese: “the intrigue and deceit of the Chinese, and the rude courage of the Tartar” (23).

The missionaries read this combination of national characters, or perhaps the imperial system itself, as productive of its own “national evil.” Milne argues that the rule of strangers in a given land over “her own legitimate children” is “heterogeneous and unnatural . . . like those liquid compounds (e.g. oil and water). . .” (24). Not only does

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125 This point, that modern ethnography and anthropology have origins in early missionary writing, is the main thesis of chapter three in Christopher Herbert’s Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century.
such a situation result in abuse, it brings out and exacerbates the evils inherent in both people groups. China’s national depravity, he concludes, is the greater because the imperial exploitation of the Tartars intensifies both their own and the Chinese natural propinquities. The Tartars become more grasping, proud, and cruel while the Chinese demonstrate their “little honorable principle as a nation—little regard to truth; but much fraud and artifice” (24). Due to their vulnerable position as minority overlords, the Tartars must overawe the population with pomp, cruelty, and insult, while the Chinese must resort to dishonesty in order to circumvent the Qing imperial system. At the same time, the Chinese view of itself as the Celestial Empire and the Middle Kingdom was advantageous for both Tartar and Chinese. For the Qing emperors, control of the vast and ancient empire was further enhanced by reference to and adoption of the ceremonies and terminology of Chinese custom. Though they might not prove the legitimacy of their rule, at least they could graft themselves into Chinese tradition. Milne and Morrison understood that for the native Chinese, the centrality of China and superiority of Chinese culture provided its own form of resistance to the Tartars. No Han Chinese could for a moment believe that Qing rule would alter the Chinese place as the Middle Kingdom or the “sons of Han” as the favored race.

Missionaries were conscious that many of the insults that Westerners received were due to this imperial problem. Milne considered that “idle displays of majesty and authority [that] must satisfy those nations which seek her alliance,” were the result of an imperial anxiety to show invulnerability. “Woe to that nation,” he underscores, “which dares to presume even to think itself equal” (24). This characteristic pride was ancient, Medhurst points out, quoting Mencius, “who flourished before the Christian era,” as
saying “‘I have heard of barbarians being improved by the Chinese, but I never heard of the Chinese being improved by barbarians’” (19). Given such a perception, it did not surprise missionaries that foreigners “are considered by the Chinese . . . so far out of the pale of civilization, as not to be controlled by the laws of the celestial empire” (Medhurst 284). Confinement at Canton and the insulting epithets “barbarian and foreign devil” were simply results of what missionaries called “national jealousy,” deriving from China’s imperial heritage. In dealing with foreigners, the anxiety for power determined policy: “She discolors narrative—she misquotes statements—she drags forth to the light whatever makes for her own advantage—and industriously seals up in oblivion whatever bears against her. She lies by system” (Milne Retrospect 25). Missionaries argued that maintaining the empire and the place of China at the center was the modus operandi of China’s foreign relations.

At the point of describing these national characteristics, provocationists make a rhetorical turn from their secular counterparts. Whereas embassy writers and merchant lobbyists stopped at describing national characteristics that were inimical to British custom, such as infanticide, official torture, and foot-binding, provocation writers went further, interpreting the “character of a nation” as “formed by the sentiments and conduct of individuals; and that these again, are the results of principles taught in the country, or reigning in the heart” (25). Simply stated, the condition of the heart throughout “the population of the whole continent” was “spiritual blindness and ignorance” (Burder 15). Since their concern was ultimately with this completely pervasive spiritual blindness, they read national characteristics—the entire cultural system—through a spiritual lens.
Milne and Morrison operated under the assumption that every society had “native emanations of human depravity.” Man’s sinful nature was the same everywhere; it merely altered its social appearance “according to times, and circumstances” (20).

“England, Wales, and Ireland” had their own “dark and neglected corners” full of “irreligion, false religion, immorality, dissipation, luxury, and infidelity” (Burder 433).

To every nation, with its own special emanations of depravity, the Gospel had to be taken. With the Gospel conceived according to the scripture, “That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (John 1.9), the central metaphor for both domestic depravity and the depravity of China was darkness—part of the Evangelical task was to bear witness that the “Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1.4). As Milne phrases it, “The CONVERSION of the heathen, is the great end of all Missionary exertions. By the conversion of the heathen, I mean, the making of them ‘wise unto salvation’—‘the turning of them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God’” (Retrospect 330; my emphasis).

As Evangelicals framed the light and darkness metaphor, light was characterized by the dissemination of scriptural ideas and Gospel truth throughout the customs and laws of a land, while spiritual darkness—where a people were without the Gospel—had the effect of corrupting the nation, almost always reflected in tyranny, cruelty, and idolatry.126 In China, Milne and Morrison agreed that every social, political, and ideological problem of “the Emperors of China, her statesmen, her merchants, her people,

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126 A writer for the Evangelical Magazine explains that, “Although in Christian countries sin much abounds . . . the governments are uniformly more adapted to promote the happiness of their subjects—The mild spirit of Christianity has produced . . . a humanity of disposition, that feels for the sorrows of others . . . [and] has done much to restrain those crimes which disturb society” (Minimus 177).
and her PHILOSOPHERS” derived from their false worship, the most notable emanation of China’s national depravity. Milne explains the condition:

She has gods celestial, terrestrial, and subterraneous—gods of hills, of the vallies, of the woods, of the districts, of the family, of the shop, and of the kitchen! She adores the gods who are supposed to preside over the thunder, the rain, the fire . . . she worships “the host of heaven, the sun, the moon, and the stars.” She also worships the genii of the mountains, rivers, lakes, and seas; together with birds, beasts, and fishes. She addresses prayers and offers sacrifices, to the spirits of departed kings, sages, heroes; and parents whether good or bad. Her idols are silver and gold, wood and stone, and clay; carved, or molten, the work of men's hands. . . . Astrology, divination, geomancy, and necromancy, every where prevail. Spells and charms, every one possesses. (30)

Missionaries to China immediately became aware that the worship of localized deities permeated all levels of Chinese society. From their first time on a Chinese boat or in the market, they noted a multitude of religious practices that were part of everyday life, including offerings of burning sandalwood sticks, music to frighten or invite deities, theatrical exhibitions, fruits and sweatmeats constantly present on small altars, prostrations, mantras, etc. For these spiritually conscious Evangelicals, China was clearly a land of pervasive non-Christian worship, “in which scarcely any thing but darkness, confusion, or absurdity is palpable” (37).

Visual images within their provocations are calculated to underscore the written imagery of false worship. Whereas the engravings of the Saturday Magazine and Penny Magazine were intended to humanize the peasant population of the Chinese according to an assumption of human goodness, the engravings in provocations underscore the Evangelical notion of human nature without Christ as depraved and falling inevitably into idolatry. In the first image from Medhurst’s China: Its State and Prospects (1838), titled “Buddhist priests on a stage” (Figure Four), the attention of the Evangelical reader is arrested by the prominence of the idol, both in size and decorative splendor.
With a radiant head and flowing robes, the Buddha indicates the decadence of idolatry. Similarly signaling decadence, the idol is juxtaposed with numerous priests seated idly on a stage during the middle of the day (discernable by the short shadows). Conveying self-promotion, these elevated priests highlight Medhurst’s text: “the priests of this sect actually swarm” (205), leading “indolent lives” and “looked upon as drones in society” (216). The image is intended to gesture at once towards several aspects of China’s national depravity. Evangelical readers would understand this image as a depiction of Psalm 115, from which provocation writers frequently quote:

Their idols are silver and gold,  
the work of men’s hands.  
They have mouths but they do not speak;  
Eyes they have, but they do not see;  
They have ears, but they do not smell;  
They have hands, but they do not handle;  
Feet they have, but they do not walk;
Nor do they mutter through their throat.

And as the Psalm also suggests, “Those who make them are like them; / So is everyone who trusts in them,” the image also suggests that the Chinese are confused by the “sly deceit and cringing meanness” of an idle priesthood (216).

A second image from Medhurst’s provocation, “Adoration of a celebrated devotee” (Figure Five), depicts what the missionaries call the veneration of sages, wherein “those who have attained the greatest nearness to . . . perfect abstraction, are considered the most holy . . . and worshipped accordingly” (216). Here, the “shaven headed priests” (216) are said to exhibit another frequently quoted scripture, “They have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1.25).

Figure Five. [Adoration of a celebrated devotee]. ibid.
With their understanding darkened and “given up to what Heaven regards as abominable idolatries and to vile affections” (Morrison, *Knowledge* 13), the Chinese were in such spiritual darkness that not only did they worship idols, they worshiped their fellow men as well.

These images of China represent a portion of those in Medhurst’s text, nearly all of which are understood to depict some manifestation of national depravity. These engravings include cruel executions, temples and holy sites, and the machinery of war and oppression (See Appendix B). Where secular images present the common Chinese as hard working, family oriented, peace loving, and typically without any religious practice (Appendix A), the images of provocation are turned primarily to religion. In the same way that provocations’ written representations of the Chinese contradict secular imagination, the visual representations also provide an alternate way of imagining the Chinese based on an Evangelical worldview. This alternate way of thinking about China as part of a worldwide spiritual geography was not without conceptual obstacles.

Despite their conviction that it was a land “in the thick darkness of midnight” (37), China’s national depravity presented a problem for the general conception and ideological use of the light and dark metaphor among Evangelicals, and later among popular writers who adopted the metaphor. Throughout the nineteenth century, but particularly in the first half, the formation of missionary societies sparked a debate concerning whether or not the “civilization of the heathen” was necessary before their conversion, or whether Christianity would be the best means of civilizing them. This question became of such importance to colonial administrations, that in 1836 a Select Committee of Parliament was convened to consider the question: “Whether the
experience of the several Societies led to the belief that it would be advisable to begin with civilization in order to introduce Christianity, or with Christianity in order to lead to civilization” (Coates i). Taking the former opinion, the High and Broad Church parties, represented by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and the Society for Propagating Religious Knowledge, argued “That some considerable progress in civilization is previously necessary to prepare a people for the reception of Christianity. ‘You must first make them men . . . before you make them Christians’” (Mason, “Civilization” 12). Given an understanding that Christianity consists in practices and the rational understanding of those practices, the High and Broad Church parties concluded that certain presuppositions and patterns of thought and custom had to be present before one could begin practicing Christianity. Reasoning differently, that Christianity was primarily a spiritual condition, Evangelicals were somewhat divided on the subject.

Collectively among Evangelicals, there was agreement on the point that “The human mind is not, in any country, below the reach of discipline and religious instruction” (Mason 13). The Great Commission assumed an equality of spiritual potential as well as of depravity. Evangelical differences came with varying emphases deriving from their actual experience of mission. Prima facie, Evangelicals were quick with the question, “Was the world universally civilized when Christianity was promulgated?” (Mason, “Civilization” 15). Their easy answer was to observe the changes in the ancient German tribes, the Scythians, the Gauls, and even the Britons. Clearly there must be a “tendency and efficacy of Christianity to civilize mankind, and to promote their social wellbeing” (Coates iii). Contemporary circumstances, however, complicated the
simple answer. Bad experiences with British merchants in the South Seas and Australia led some to conclude that so-called civilization was actually detrimental to natives:

“European contact with native inhabitants, always, excepting the cases in which missions have been established, tends to deteriorate the morals of the natives” (Coates 52). Rather than civilizing them, the coming of certain elements of civilization demoralized them. Consequently, some missionaries considered Christianity as a defense against evils that Westerners brought. At the same time, they also needed to affirm that Christianity would “benefit man for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come” (Coates iii). Christianity “cannot exist in force in any community,” they reasoned, “without the moral and social well-being of that community being greatly promoted” (100). In this way, Christianity is rendered at once the foundation of Western civilization and the theoretical foundation of a quite independent and even anti-Western South Seas civilization.

The experience of the mission among the Chinese brought further complication. By any measure, China was civilized. Since the Macartney embassy, China was “universally admitted to be more civilized than any Asiatic nation,” with “the most unequivocal proofs of their civilization” having been established by eyewitness reports (“Journal of the Proceedings” 433). Not only was “The superiority which the Chinese possess over the other nations of Asia” a matter of fact (Davis, Chinese 6), some went so far as to state that “we may perhaps be induced to concede to the Chinese not only that superiority which we have claimed for them over the rest of the Asiatics; but even to doubt whether they do not possess certain advantages, which some even of the more enlightened European nations cannot boast” (“Narrative of the Chinese Embassy” 414). Notwithstanding their spiritual concerns, missionaries were also quick to affirm the
attainments of Chinese civilization and its greatness “with regard to the antiquity of its origins, the extent of its territory, the amount of its population, and the advance of its civilization” (Medhurst 2). In his *China: Its State and Prospects*, Medhurst spends almost a quarter of his work praising the attainments of the Chinese in manners, conversation, genius of invention, skill in the arts, and justice of law. When Morrison spent a year on furlough in Britain trying to encourage new missionaries to China, he presented a message to the Missionary Society in which he asked, “What, then, do the Chinese require from Europe?” He stressed that they needed nothing of “the arts of reading and printing,” nor “education,” and nothing of “what is so much harped on by some philanthropists—civilization” (*Christ Supreme* 13). What they needed, he stated, was “only [that] which St. Paul deemed supremely excellent, and which it is the sole object of the Missionary Society to communicate—they require the knowledge of Christ” (272).

The problem with the question of Christianity and civilization as it had been framed, then, was that Christianity could not civilize China since it was already clearly civilized.

With China possessing an apparently high degree of civilization, and civilized British subjects bringing demoralization to the South Seas, the Evangelicals realized that “a good deal will depend upon what is meant by civilization” (Coates 99). Their somewhat cunning solution was to redefine civilization according to their own belief system. In *precisely* the same way that William Wilberforce in his *Practical View* had redefined Evangelicalism as “true Christianity” or “real Christianity” as against the “prevailing religious system of professed Christians,” leaders of the Evangelical mission societies changed the terms for talking about civilization in order to fit their worldview.
In testimony before a Select Committee of the House of Commons concerned with the civilizing of aborigines, John Beecham, secretary of the Wesleyan Mission, stated,

I regard Christianity as the parent of civilization, and am persuaded that true civilization cannot be produced without it; I say true civilization, because I am aware that a certain kind of civilization may exist unconnected with Christianity. . . . [and] the only kind of civilization that the Christian philanthropist can be supposed anxious to promote, cannot be originated but by means of Christianity. (Coates 123)

Likewise adopting the terminology of true civilization versus a limited counterfeit,

William Ellis of the LMS agreed.

True civilization and Christianity are inseparable; the former has never been found but as a fruit of the latter. An inferior kind of civilization may precede Christianity and prevail without it to a limited extent. . . . This kind of civilization is only superficial. . . . (Coates172)

With this redefinition, that “The more nearly that a nation approaches to that standard [of Christianity], in the highest degree does it enjoy civilization,” they were pressed to consider the place of Britain on a scale of civilization. Replying to the question, “Do you think that there exists any nation on the face of the globe thoroughly civilized?” Beecham replied, “Not in the highest sense of the expression” (171). Just as Wilberforce had redefined “real Christianity” to mean the evangelical faith, and “practical Christianity” to mean Evangelical culture, missionary representatives redefined “true civilization” according to their view of God’s kingdom on earth: an Evangelical hegemony.

Looking to the end of the century, it is interesting to note how these terms—civilization, light, darkness—were again redefined along racial lines. By the time Joseph Conrad adopted them for Heart of Darkness, light had come to be firmly associated with white-skinned, Western civilization generally, and darkness was fixed to non-Western
peoples with darker skin. In many ways like the early-century missionaries, one of the remarkable qualities of Conrad’s work is that he complicates the light-darkness racial binary by recognizing darkness within western centers of power. As Tony Brown explains, “What occurs in Marlow’s viewing of the Western metropolis through ‘the veil of the colonial fantasim’ is what might be called a ‘metonymy of the veil,’ as one fantasy (Western metropolis as civilized place of light) is displaced by another (Western metropolis as horrific place of darkness)” (15). Conrad’s experiences had led him to reassess civilization, light, and darkness and allowed him, insofar as he was able, to reject the idea of Western civilization as in itself pure light. Instead, as Walter Anderson persuasively argues, Conrad “completely accepts Darwinian premises,” and, “by way of a sort of ‘miracle,’” conceives the “indestructibility of moral light in a heart and world of darkness” which happened, at the moment, to be passing through European peoples (405). Conrad’s “spark from the sacred fire” (4), the light of true civilization, is the remarkable existence and progress of morality, albeit vaguely defined, when the world ought, by principle, to be thoroughly dark. Despite radically differing starting points, Conrad rhetorically shifts the metaphor of light and darkness in a way reminiscent of the early-century missionaries. Perhaps nothing illustrates their diverging uses of the same concepts.

127 China still remained somewhat ambiguous. In “Peking Plots: Fictionalizing the Boxer Rebellion of 1900,” Ross Forman reads a number of turn-of-the-century adventure novels concerned with the Rebellion and depicting the Chinese as shadowy and mysterious. To the contrary, though, Jeffrey Dupree argues that “The Chinese were never beneficiaries of Europe’s eighteenth century love affair with ‘noble savages’: neither were they recipients of Europe’s subsequent shift to viewing many peoples of the world as simply ‘savages’ to be tamed and civilized by the ways of the West, even if missionaries to China approximated that imagery with their descriptions of the Chinese as ‘heathen’ and other endeavors to bring Western civilization (more precisely Western technology) to China” (140).

128 Edward Said’s reading of Conrad is a necessary complement to this point: “Conrad could probably never have used Marlow to present anything other than an imperialist world-view, given what was available for either Conrad or Marlow to see of the non-European at the time. Independence was for whites and Europeans; the lesser or subject peoples were to be ruled; science, learning, history emanated from the West” (Culture 24).
vocabulary more than Conrad’s “spark from the sacred flame,” which echoes a writer for the *Evangelical Magazine* assessing the “Present State of Evangelical Religion Throughout the World” in 1810, who considered his literary task to be communicating “a spark of the sacred flame of missionary zeal, kindled by a living coal from between the cherubim” (Burder 385).  

By redefining true civilization as the kingdom of God on earth, or just shy of that the hegemony of Evangelical culture, their provocations performed ideological work that was crucial to the overall cultural work of the Evangelical archive. Redefinition enabled Evangelical writers to map their spiritual geography over widely accepted standards and assessments of societal development. In this way, the understanding of Light as the presence and practice of the Gospel, and Darkness as resistance to the Gospel, could still fit their notion of total human depravity. They were able to rearticulate what Boston had written in 1720, “Every natural man’s heart and life is a mass of darkness, disorder, and confusion, how refined soever he may appear in the sight of men” (84). They could allow for higher degrees of light in so-called civilized places such as Britain, where they yet maintained very active “home missions” to the “dark corners” of the land because it was not truly civilized. Less developed regions like the South Seas could become truly civilized as long as they let go of their own native darkness and did not absorb any of Western civilization’s darkness. Finally, the Empire of China, civilized according to secular standards, could at the same time be startlingly Dark. As Morrison expresses, “With all their civilization, still envy and malice, deceit and falsehood to a boundless extent, pride and boasting; a selfish ungenerous, scarcely honest prudence, and a cold

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129 The allusion of the spark from the sacred flame is to Isaiah 6.6, “Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand alive coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.”
metaphysical inhumanity, are the prevalent characteristics of the people of China” (Christ Supreme 13)

The strictly spiritual use of the light and darkness metaphor gave the early missionaries to China a way at once to affirm and celebrate the impressive attainments of Chinese culture and to maintain the spiritual geography of their worldview, including their own sense of alienation within British culture. British society as a whole was not good—it was, in fact, full of depravity—yet it possessed a greater measure of light than China. Morrison and Milne were able to explain the people of China, who were completely without the Gospel, as fitting “exactly the portrait of the Gentile world, drawn by the inspired writers”:

. . . For they are ‘sitting in darkness, and dwelling in the land of the shadow of death’—‘Have changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into images made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things;’ . . .—‘do service to them who by nature are not gods’—serve ‘idols of gold, and silver, and wood, and stone, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk;’ . . .—‘having the understanding darkened, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them’—‘deluded by a vain philosophy’—‘lying in the wicked one’—‘without hope—without God in the world!’ Such is the state of China. (40-41)

Since depravity on this national scale was understood to lead a people away from God, making them averse to Truth and spiritual pursuit, it was obviously “the source of all that stupidity, blindness, perverseness, and secularity of soul” described above (340). China endured national depravity because it did not have the Light of the Gospel, and the only remedy would be to introduce it.

VII. Testimony: the Representation of Personal Depravity

It was for neglecting the task of bringing a pure Christian Gospel that the Catholic missionaries are somewhat reproached in provocations. Although Milne gives
exceptionally high praise to the early Jesuits, whose “learning, personal virtues, and ardent zeal . . . deserve to be imitated by all future Missionaries—will be equalled by few,—and perhaps rarely exceeded by any,” they are also censured for failing to provide the Scriptures in Chinese (*Retrospect* 12). With admiration for their abilities but denigration for their doctrine, the Prussian missionary Charles Gutzlaff believed, “Had they then spread the pure Gospel instead of the doctrines of the Romish Church,” China would now be part of Christendom (17). Medhurst’s comments go a bit further and locate the central complaint that Evangelical missionaries made of their Catholic forebears and contemporaries. Their methods, he points out, merely require “an outward profession, without insisting on a change of heart, or scarcely a reformation of life; the Scriptures are not placed in the hands of the people; ceremonies are frequent, and public preaching rare” (249). China could not be converted, Evangelicals believed, unless the Scriptures were made available to individuals, and unless those who might “have a change of heart” through the Gospel were taught how to experience a “reformation of life.” Despite their belief in the nations being given as an inheritance to Christ, in a complete reversal of national depravity, Evangelicals believed essentially in “religion of the heart,” which required a “change of heart” away from personal depravity and into holiness. Their criticism of Catholic methods derived not from Evangelicals’ eschatological understanding, but from their sense of the necessity of individual redemption through the crucicentric Gospel.

As missionaries gave the written gospel to many thousands of individual Chinese, however, the problem of disinterest and resistance challenged the glib notion that all that would be needed to convert China would be to get the Bible in people’s hands. Some
scholars have concluded that in missionary writing “there is always an emphasis on positive evangelical achievements whilst limited successes or spectacular failures are rarely mentioned” (Johnston 6). While this reading may hold for the annual reports of the Missionary Society and for the “Missionary Chronicle” section of the Evangelical Magazine, provocations present a distinctly different, and one may conclude a more honest and gritty, picture of Evangelical mission. The fact was, Chinese people wanted nothing to do with a foreign religion. Interpreting the failure in accordance with their worldview, the doctrine of “THE DEPRAVITY OF HUMAN NATURE” was the obvious reason. Simply having the Scriptures would not be enough, as Milne explains, because “A SPIRITUAL agency more powerful than that of sin and Satan is absolutely necessary to counteract them and subdue their ascendancy in the human heart, before the gospel can be cordially received—and the world reformed.” While missionaries might employ every means possible, success would come by “faith and prayer for the secret, but efficacious, influence of the SACRED SPIRIT, to produce conviction, faith, repentance, and holiness” in individual Chinese (Retrospect 341). Because of these beliefs, which succinctly reflect the position held by moderate Calvinists of the period, missionaries were enabled to present failure and years without any conversions as part of the overarching but mysterious and sometimes painful divine plan. Concealing failure would lack regard for the truth. “Effects may not follow so soon as our sanguine minds may expect—but they will follow,” writes Morrison in a letter to the Bible Society in 1817, “It is under a conviction of this, that we go onward” (Memoirs 480). At the conclusion of the first ten years of the mission to China, Morrison and Milne could number less than a dozen Chinese who they were convinced had made true professions of faith.
For the goals of their provocation writing—to awaken “a sympathy on behalf of China” (Medhurst iii), to “appeal for more agents and increased facilities for the vigorous prosecution of the work” (iv), and “encouraging those exertions which, by the Divine blessing, may result in its universal evangelization” (1)—some testimony to the presence of God in the mission was necessary. If God were not in the work, then it would be a vain hope for success, as the psalmist frames it, “Unless the LORD builds the house, / They labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127.1). Accepting the doctrine of human depravity as the natural inhibitor to individual conversions, particularly within such a realm of Darkness, any and every example of conversion would have provocative value. With the Calvinist belief that “the conversion of a sinner is the exclusive work of Jehovah the Spirit” (Mason 15), then instances of individual conversion would be proof positive of God’s work, or the building of God’s house in China. In addition, there could be no firmer evidence than when new Christians maintained their profession for an extended period and especially with persecution, as this would prove their faith “to be the genuine work of the Holy Spirit” (“Means” 104).

It is not surprising, then, that no provocations came from China until ten years of mission work had produced several testimonies of converts, each of whom had their faith tested and proved by persecution. With a small stock of these testimonies—the missionaries’ chief claim to be working within the will of God—provocation writers used them within their own larger narratives of the mission to track the ways and workings of the Holy Spirit. In weaving these individual testimonies of spiritually blind people having the “eyes of their heart” opened, provocation writers were directly heeding the advice of their teacher at the Missionary Academy, the Rev. David Bogue. In Tract No. 1 of the
Religious Tract Society, Bogue writes, “There should be some account of the way of salvation in every tract. It should be plain. It should be striking. It should be entertaining. It should be full of ideas” (Story 5). Provocations expanded the idea of the informative and entertaining tract to include, not just the story of God’s work in one individual, but of his work in a nation through the mission. But for there to be any story to tell, they required individual testimonies.

What is perhaps the most surprising feature of Evangelical provocations is the consistent way they use testimonies of native conversion as rhetorical devices. Rather than providing a straightforward narrative account of their meeting and interaction with a particular Chinese convert, provocation writers—with the notable exception of Charles Gutzlaff—often record the testimony of converts in their own (translation-mediated) words.130 For example, Tsae A-ko, a twenty-seven year old Chinese who was the first convert of the mission, wrote a confession of faith before he was baptized in 1814, and both Morrison and Medhurst record it in their provocations:

Jesus making atonement for us, is the blessed sound. Language and thought are both inadequate to exhaust the gracious and admirable goodness of Jesus. I now believe in him, and rely on his merits for the remission of sins. I have many defects, and without faith in Jesus, should be eternally miserable. Now, that we have heard of the forgiveness of sins, through Jesus, we ought with all our hearts, to rely on his goodness. When I reflect, and question myself I perceive that, from childhood till now, I have had no strength—no merit—no learning. Hitherto, I have done nothing to answer to the goodness of God, in giving me existence in the world, as a human being. I have not recompensed the kindness of my parents, my relations, my friends. Shall I repine? Shall I hope in my good deeds? No. I entirely cast myself upon Jesus, for the remission of sins, and pray to God to confer upon me his Holy Spirit. (Morrison, Memoirs 409; Medhurst 263)

130 The fact that missionaries’ translations are all that remains of the early convert’s baptismal confessions requires either a degree of faith in their attempts at accuracy, or else some skepticism. One must consider that missionaries desired to impart certain concepts, such as grace and the atonement, that may or may not have had cognates in Chinese but which Evangelical readers would require their missionaries to teach. The controversy surrounding the “Term Question” for how God should be designated suggests this problem of translation. See the essays in the Bible in Modern China, especially by Jost Zetzsche, and Irene Eber.
By recording A-ko’s confession, provocation writers avoid coloring or exaggerating the converts’ depravity and turn that responsibility over to the new believer. A-ko’s words reveal a careful catechism in Evangelical doctrines. With orthodox Trinitarian affirmations, he leaves no doubt of his sins—his depravity—and of his complete lack of merit to attain salvation; he displays a reliance on substitutionary atonement through Jesus; and finally, he hopes for the Holy Spirit. Despite the desire to report converts, missionaries would have waited until each of these doctrinal emphases were thoroughly instilled before baptism would be granted. No converts were better to report than lapsed converts.

Other converts during the early years of the Chinese mission are similarly quoted confessing a clearly Evangelical conception of faith. Medhurst provides a brief testimony of Lew Tse-cheun, a literary graduate, by first introducing the man within the context of his nation’s depravity: “Before he had seen the Christian Scriptures, he said, he did not know the Supreme Being, and was carried away with the example of the many, stupidly worshipping false gods.” Immediately thereafter, he introduces Tse-cheun’s own confession. “‘To prevent the rising up of evil thoughts,’ he continued, ‘and to maintain purity of heart, requires our utmost exertions; and after all, it is necessary to rely on God’s help to keep us from evil. Having no power to renew ourselves, we should depend on Jesus for aid. Once I frequently offended, but latterly, through the grace of Christ, such thoughts have been few, and I pray that they may be entirely obliterated, and, for his sake, forgiven’” (295). With admission of sin, inability to attain salvation, dependence on the grace of Christ, and hope for holiness, Tse-cheun gives a tight Evangelical testimony. Like A-Ko’s words, the confession provides clear evidence for Evangelical readers that
(a) the missionaries are teaching evangelical faith, and (b) the Holy Spirit must be at work, for only by the Spirit’s influence could a spiritually dark person come to such understanding.

As P. Richard Bohr has discussed in “Liang Fa’s Quest for Moral Power,” the demographic of most of the early Chinese Christians encouraged these types of testimonies. The first generation of “converts were tradesmen and farmers with a few years of formal literary training” (35). Not only did their Confucian education provide them with “the concern for moral perfection instilled by ethical tradition” along with the intellectual framework to reflect on “their failure to uphold the ‘five relationships’” of the Confucian system (185), it also supplied them with the literate competency to express their conversion to Christianity in writing. Their missionary instructors, drawing on the strong Evangelical tradition of spiritual reflection, encouraged them to put their thoughts into a testimonial form.

Their particular testimonial form was of a piece with the cultural moment among Evangelicals. During what has become known as the Evangelical Revival, with sporadic intensity throughout the eighteenth century, Evangelical services were focused on conveying and affirming the doctrinal clarity of the Gospel while enacting its effects communally—from the reading of Scripture and preaching to singing and public sharing. Hymns, for example, probably the most communal method of testifying to the transformative power of the Gospel, are marked during this period by their narrative testimonial quality. Perhaps the most well-known hymn of the eighteenth century, John Newton’s “Amazing Grace,” illustrates the lyric testimony well:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now I’m found,
Was blind but now I see.

Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved,
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come,
Twas’ grace that brought me safe thus far
And Grace will lead me home.

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise,
Than when we first begun.

Telling of repeated moments of God’s unmerited favor toward a depraved individual, from salvation, through trials and suffering, and into the heavenly Kingdom, the hymn is exemplary of testimony because it is personal in its narrative but also expressive of Evangelical doctrines. The emergence of narrative hymns is coincident with the practice of speaking a public testimony as common occurrences during Evangelical worship services and prayer meetings, especially among Methodist and Dissenting congregations. Whereas all record of an oral testimony disappears after the service, and we have few complete accounts of them as given publicly, hymns provide a stable source of eighteenth-century testimony form.

With the extension of print culture and the emergence of an Evangelical archive at the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, the printing of testimonies brought a further stability of form. Among the earliest published testimonies, Richard Coppin’s *Truth’s Testimony, and a Testimony of Truths Appearing, in Power, Life, Light and Glory; Creating, Manifesting, Increasing and Vindicating it self in the midst of*
Persecution (1768) was intended as “a Narrative of what the Lord in these dividing times hath done, and will do, for the encrease [sic] of the manifestation of truth amongst men,” thereby serving as “an outward testimony bearing witness of the truth” (iii-iv). His work presents the common form of written testimony: “the Author’s Call [by God] and Conversion to the Truth, his Practice in it, his publishing [or preaching] of it, and his several Tryals for the same” (1). When the Religious Tract Society formed itself in 1799, the founders agreed that each tract should contain “some account of the way of salvation” in narrative form, like “Mrs. Hannah More had done in her excellent Cheap Repository Tracts,” but with strict regard to “the evangelical doctrines of the Gospel” (Story 4-5). Tracts such as “James’s Anxious Inquirer” (with circulation over 845,000), and “The Swearer’s Prayer” (first published in 1806 circulated 4,649,000 by the end of the century), refined the form suggested by Coppin in order to convey the Evangelical doctrines more completely (13; 28). As in these two tracts, an unregenerate individual meets some person or occasion that causes reflection on his or her sinfulness, and encountering another person or event determines to repent and trust in the atoning death of Christ; a dedication to holy living inevitably follows.

This testimonial formula, in an even shorter form as “histories of converting grace,” became part of the Evangelical journals (“Means” 104). Encouraged to take “the most conscientious care that the cases transmitted are truly authentic,” readers were invited to send in short accounts illustrating the various “means which God is pleased to employ in bringing careless sinners to a serious concern for their immortal souls, and in making them acquainted with the truth that is in Jesus” (104). The example offered to readers as a model for imitation consists of 280 words and recounts the conversion story
of a woman. It begins, “M.P. of C—, was, like all others, by nature a stranger to the
gospel, and an enemy of it. Her mind was filled with prejudice against the people of God,
whom she held in the greatest contempt” (104). From this depraved state, she experiences
fear and doubt, and upon hearing words from the Gospel that made “a lasting impression
on her heart,” she turns to salvation “by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus” (105). The
story concludes with a statement about her enduring some persecution and persevering in
the faith until death.

Evangelical missionaries looking for signs of God’s work in a Chinese person no
doubt had subconscious recourse to the model of testimony presented here. It seems to
have formed the backbone of their baptismal catechism, as seen in Milne’s record of one
baptism:

*Question.* Have you truly turned from idols, to serve the living and true God, the
creator of heaven and earth? *Answer.* This is my heart’s desire. *Q.* Do you know
and feel that you are a sinful creature, totally unable to save yourself? *A.* I know
it. *Q.* Do you really believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of
the world; and do you trust in Him alone for salvation? *A.* This is my heart’s
desire. *Q.* Do you expect any worldly advantage, profit, or gain, by your
becoming a Christian? *A.* None: I receive baptism because it is my duty. *Q.* Do
you resolve from this day till the day of your death to live in obedience to all the
commandments and ordinances of God, and in justice and righteousness before
men? *A.* This is my determination, but I fear my strength is not equal to it.
(Retrospect 179; Medhurst 308)

In formulating their questions, whether in the baptismal service or in their overall
evangelism and catechism, the missionaries provided the Chinese with a way of narrating
their experience that reflected Evangelical narrative concerns. And yet, at the same time
that they were eager to see these signs, letters between Morrison and Milne show an
anxiety to be sure of a person’s “genuine conversion” before administering baptism
(Morrison *Memoirs* II.73). In China as well as in Britain, nothing could prove a genuine understanding and conversion better than a truly Evangelical personal testimony.

Within Chinese provocations, undoubtedly the most notable example of native testimony—coming from the baptism just mentioned—is that of Liang Kungfa, “known to British Christians by the name of Afa, or Leang Afa” (Bridgman 1; my emphasis). Already discussed at length in Chapter Two of this dissertation, Afa became widely known to British Christians because his testimony was widely published, not only in provocations but also reprinted in other outlets of the Evangelical archive. Fully adopting the testimonial form, Afa wrote out an account of his conversion and subsequent attempts to live Christianly. In the account translated either by Morrison or Milne, Afa weaves his personal story into the missionaries’ representations of China’s national depravity and lack of the Gospel. Beginning with his personal depravity in the Chinese context, he makes clear, “Before I believed in the Saviour, though I knew myself to be a sinner, I did not know how to obtain pardon. I used to go every new and full moon to the temple, and prayed to the gods to protect me; but though my body worshipped the gods my heart still cherished evil thoughts and desires, together with designs of cheating and lying” (Medhurst 308). Picking up on the national sins most often emphasized by the missionaries, Afa affirms that he was an idolater, evil in mind and heart. In another of Afa’s testimonies, given to Elijah Bridgman in 1834, he elaborates on his thoughts during his lost condition, “I have had no fixed residence, have associated only with worthless friends and companions, and all the money I have earned has been wasted by intemperance and gambling. I have not done the least things that is good, and how can I
be esteemed a human being?” (2). In addition to being a cheat and liar, he represents himself like the prodigal son as aimless, wasteful, and intemperate.

He then tells how he tried to become a follower of Buddha but became disillusioned, reasoning “I had committed many real sins, and could hardly expect, by reciting prayers, without performing a single virtuous action to obtain forgiveness” (309). While in this state of depravity and questionning, he first encounters the Gospel, “In the meanwhile I heard the missionary preach the doctrine of atonement through Jesus, and at my leisure I examined the Scriptures, which forbad uncleanness, deceit, and idolatry” (309). Again following the testimonial formula, depravity is accompanied by doubt and fear, and an encounter with a person or event prompts crisis.

“I asked what was meant by Jesus making atonement for sin. The missionary told me, that Jesus was the Son of God, sent into the world to suffer for the sins of men, in order that all who believe in Him might obtain salvation. Feeling myself to be a sinner, I asked how I was to obtain pardon? The missionary said, ‘If you believe in Jesus, God will receive you as his adopted son, and in the world to come bestow on you everlasting life.’

On returning to my room I thought within myself, ‘I am a great sinner, and if I do not depend on the merits of Christ how can God forgive me?’ I then determined to become a disciple of Jesus, and requested baptism. After receiving this rite I employed my mind diligently in guarding my life and actions, and became more and more fond of reading the Scriptures. I prayed to God to drive all evil thoughts out of my mind, and cherish good desires within me. (310)

Under the guidance of the Evangelical missionary, Afa’s spiritual crisis takes on a profoundly Evangelical tone. With his focus on the atonement as the perfect solution to his problem of abject sin, Afa records his crucicentrism; with his attention to and fondness for the Scriptures, he registers biblicism; and with his desire to “become a disciple of Jesus,” wanting to move from “evil thoughts” to “good desires,” he shows conversionism. The remainder of his testimony conveys the various ways that his
Evangelical activism immediately had resulted in persecution. Later becoming the first Chinese Protestant ordained minister, Afa’s testimony passes any Evangelical test.

By inserting Afa’s, A-ko’s, and Lew Tse-cheun’s testimonies within their own accounts of the larger mission, provocation writers attempt to show how the larger story of China’s conversion is being initiated at the individual level. They certainly prove to their audience that the missionaries are being faithful witnesses to Evangelical teaching and that the new Chinese Christians are genuine believers. They are not, however, intended to suggest the method by which the missionaries believed China would be finally converted.

In the conclusion to his *Retrospect*, William Milne calculates, at the rate of conversion during the first ten years of the mission, that China could be converted in five hundred years. But he further reasons, that due to human depravity, the agency of Satan, and adverse events, “I do not see it possible for mere human probability to draw a single conclusion in favor of the spread of the Gospel” (339). The few conversions during those early years should not be considered the pattern by which God would redeem China. What they should be considered, however, is miraculous.

With such a strong conviction of human depravity, genuine conversions like Afa’s appeared to the Evangelical missionaries as positive proof that God intended to convert China. A single Chinese Christian registered God’s regard for that nation. Consistent with his belief in God’s prevenient grace, while admitting the unreasonableness “from mere human probability,” Milne considered that the “all-pervading SPIRIT can operate on millions of hearts at the same instant of time; producing in each of them that diversity of spiritual conceptions and views, best suited to promote conversion” (341).
Alongside this moderate Calvinistic view of God’s prevenient grace, there is a provocative edge that might be considered its theological complement and would not be missed by their readers. The moderate aspect of moderate Calvinism, it is the more typically Arminian affirmation that the Holy Spirit uses *means* to convey knowledge about himself. God would not write Truth on blank slates, but he might use whatever material of Truth that a person might have in order to bring them to salvation. The testimonies of Afa, A-ko, and Tse-cheun were examples. God had used the missionaries and Scriptures as the means for dispensing his grace. Morrison articulated this understanding at the annual missionary meeting during his furlough year, 1824: “*Fill the earth with the Bible and Christian books, in all the languages of all the nations, and you will fill the world with the knowledge of Christ. And then the Holy Spirit’s influences will have that on which to operate; and to carry conviction to the hearts of men*” (“Knowledge” 23). Only where the Gospel is present can God be expected to work.

Given such a view, the personal testimonies of a few Chinese converts were, in accordance with the authors’ moderate Calvinist theology, the most provocative portions of the provocations about China. Few converts had been made because little knowledge of Christ had been disseminated. The only way to increase the spread of knowledge would be to send more missionaries and print more Scriptures. In the next chapter of this dissertation, I examine the political impact of this distribution of Scriptures.
CHAPTER FOUR

“ANXIOUS TO CULTIVATE FRIENDSHIP”:
THE CRAFTING OF THE “OPium War” AND SHIFT TO A CIVILIZING MISSION

On 27 February 1832, the ship Lord Amherst departed Macao on an exploratory mission of the East India Company up the coast of China. Conceived by Charles Marjoribanks, President of the Canton Select Committee, the voyage was intended “to facilitate mercantile enterprise, and to acquire information respecting those ports where commerce might be established” (Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages* 153). According to the official orders in *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China, 1635-1834*, their project was “to ascertain how far the northern Ports of this Empire may gradually be opened to British Commerce which would be most eligible and to what extent the disposition of the Natives and local governments would be favorable to it” (qtd. in Morse 332). Chartering the vessel from Whiteman and Company, the EIC superintendents directed Hugh Hamilton Lindsay, a supercargo of the Company at Canton, that he was to give the local government no cause for alarm and to conciliate their requests, to flee any confrontation, to avoid implicating the Company with any connection to the venture, but to establish trade on any footing that they were provided. Charles Gutzlaff, a Prussian turned British missionary and adventurer, was to act as

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interpreter and negotiator. Applying his directions to keep the Company’s name out of their mission, and knowing that his name would be recognized at Canton, Lindsay rendered his name in Chinese as Hoo-hea-me, and Gutzlaff went by Kwo Shih-li. They claimed to be a Bengal vessel bound for Japan (Copy or Extract 3-5).  

From 27 February to 16 July, the ship cruised up the coast of China, stopping at every major emporium and occasionally at small coastal villages built alongside creeks feeding into the sea. At Amoy (Quemoy), Fuh-chow (Fuzhou), Ning-po (Ningbo), Shanghae (Shanghai), and the island of Chusan (Xiusan), they sought audiences with the local mandarins in order to discuss possible trade (See Figure Six for locations). Although they were hospitably treated, particularly by the common people, they were nowhere allowed to trade extensively. Once the voyage was brought to the attention of the imperial government, edicts were issued that they should be driven from the coast. On the 17 July, the ship left the China coast and turned eastward to Korea, then southward, eventually arriving back at Macao on 5 September. Having taken a cargo of legal trade goods for which there was little market in China—British manufactures of broadcloth, camlets, calicoes, cotton yarn, and raw cotton, but no opium—the venture was financially unsuccessful (Copy or Extract 3-5).

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132 For the sake of consistent recognition, throughout this chapter I will use the spellings of Chinese words that were common in the 1830s rather than their current spellings in pinyin, i.e. Peking instead of Beijing, Canton instead of Guangzhou.
Figure Six. Detail of Gutzlaff’s map of the Coast in *Journal of Three Voyages* which emphasizes the navigable routes with dark-penned rivers and canals. For the whole map, see Appendix C.

This six-month voyage and the subsequent written accounts of it, in particular Gutzlaff’s *Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832 and 1833*, are the subject of this chapter. In “The Secret Mission of the Lord Amherst on the China Coast, 1832,” Immanuel Hsü remarks concerning the voyage, “this important mission has been overlooked by most writers, despite the rich documentation in both English and Chinese” (231). Writing in 1954, Hsu’s article remains the only extended scholarly treatment of this historic voyage along China’s coast. Although historians have explored the Opium War from many angles, including Austin Coates’s examination of the long-range precipitating causes of the war in *Prelude to Hong Kong* (1966) and Maurice Collis’s earlier *Foreign Mud: Being an Account of the Opium Imbroglio at Canton in the*
1830’s and the Anglo-Chinese War that Followed (1947), little attention has been given to the powerful influence that this voyage had on the merchant community at Canton and the dramatic effect it produced in the public opinion of the China Trade in the 1830s. Likewise, literary scholars of imperial culture have also passed over the published accounts of the voyage, accounts that played a distinct role in the history of the British empire and in the course of literary production in the nineteenth century.

Immediately upon returning to Canton, Gutzlaff wrote up an account of the voyage, portions of which were quickly published by the Chinese Repository, an English-language journal on happenings in China written for the residents of Canton and also sent to London. Having received the Chinese Repository, the Royal Geographical Society in turn published large portions in their own journal in 1833. Gutzlaff wrote up another abbreviated version of the journey for a Parliamentary Select Committee convened to report on the China Trade, in view of the impending debate on the East India Company’s monopoly charter for trade in the East, which was due to expire in April of 1834.

Lindsay’s account of the voyage was also included in the same collection of papers,

133 A number of studies of the First Opium War consider the voyage as part of the rise of the opium trade, but as their attention tends to be on the situation in China and consider less the discussion in Britain, they rightly privilege examinations of the opium clippers’ activities as provoking Chinese response. See, for example, Beeching (The Chinese Opium Wars 60-85); Chang (Commissioner Lin and the Opium War 16-84); Coates (Prelude to Hongkong 139-52); Collis (Foreign Mud 57-95); Fay (The Opium War 1840-42 41-64, 110-127).

134 As suggested in my introduction to this dissertation, scholars of the literature on culture and imperialism have largely left the China Trade, the Opium Wars, and the literature of this relationship out of the discussion of the British Empire. Patrick Brantlinger, for example, mentions “the China Trade” (4) and Captain Marryat’s participation in the First Opium War—“defended by Whigs and Radicals as a means of forcing supposedly free trade on the reluctant Chinese” (27)—he does not enter into the literature from or about that imperial relationship. My study is intended to bring these materials into the discussion.

135 The Chinese Repository, which had been started by the British missionary Robert Morrison and American missionary Elijah Bridgman, published parts of the voyage account in the journal in October 1832 before printing the full version for limited circulation in Canton. The Journal of Two Voyages, containing accounts of his voyage in a Chinese junk and the Lord Amherst trip, was published in New York in 1833 and was made available in London.
printed 19 June 1833 and extracted for the public as a *Report of Proceedings on a voyage to the Northern Ports of China, in the ship Lord Amherst*. The fullest account, however, was published in 1834 as Charles Gutzlaff’s *Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China, 1831, 1832, and 1833*.

In this chapter I will introduce the enigmatic figure of Charles Gutzlaff within the religious, political, and economic context from which he emerged as a kind of celebrity. In “British Missionary Publishing, Missionary Celebrity, and Empire,” Anna Johnston has written generally in reference to the rising celebrity of missionaries, beginning with John Williams in the South Seas and reaching a crescendo with the missionary/explorer David Livingstone in Africa. As this chapter will demonstrate, Gutzlaff must rightly be considered their forerunner. With particular attention to his *Journal of Three Voyages*, I argue that he represents a shift in the approach to Christianity and culture, and thus a refiguring of the relationship between mission and empire. Departing from the more Calvinistic emphasis—represented by Morrison and Milne—of the primacy of God as the mover of hearts and the transformer of culture, Gutzlaff’s *Journal* shows a shift to what Richard Niebuhr calls in *Christ and Culture* (1951) “the synthesis of Christ and culture,” whereby the dual authorities of God and culture are combined into “a single structure of thought and conduct” (122). This shift, which reflects the success of the Evangelical hegemonic assault in British culture, also opened the way for religious justification for subsequent aggressive British policy in China.

At a time of significant changes in economic policy and in the related development of foreign policy, the publication of Gutzlaff’s *Journal* lent the authority of first-hand experience and expert knowledge to the emerging notion that the Chinese were
open for a change in policy, and it was only government that was in the way. Far more than what Alan C. Cairns has called “humanitarian authority,” and Anna Johnston “moral authority,” the early missionaries to China all possessed an authority independent of their mission, an authority based on their knowledge of language and custom. Frequently quoted as the experts on China, these early missionaries were simply the authorities for information as diverse as geography, custom, politics, economics, religion, and of course, language. Bringing such distinct authority to the question of China’s willingness to trade, the impression of Gutzlaff’s Journal reinforced the growing popular sense—expressed in the Law of Nations and the doctrine of Free Trade—that free trade was a right to be defended, and it aided governmental policy makers in their justifications—material and rhetorical—for economic policies that resulted in almost a century of British exploitation in China. In the Chinese Repository for April 1834, Elijah Bridgman was proved a prophet, stating in his review of the Parliamentary Papers concerning Lindsay and Gutzlaff’s voyage, “Whether [Western governments] will engage in the enterprise [of pressing into China] or not, the train of events now in progress must sooner or later, and perhaps within a very short period, introduce here a new order of things . . . laying the foundations of an unrestrained intercourse between the people of China and the enlightened states of Christendom. In hastening a consummation so devoutly to be wished, the journals of Lindsay and Gutzlaff will bear a conspicuous part” (553).

136 In Prelude to Imperialism: British Reactions to Central African Society 1840-1890 (1965), H. Alan C. Cairns considers how missionaries like David Livingstone utilized “humanitarian authority” in order to combat the slave trade in central Africa. Their calls for intervention by the British frequently led to military action and more obvious forms of colonialism. In Missionary Writing and Empire (2003) Johnston considers missionaries’ “moral authority” as a tool of justification transposed for the use of colonialism: “Christian missionary activity was central to the work of European colonialism, providing British missionaries and their supporters with a sense of justice and moral authority. Throughout the history of imperial expansion, missionary proselytizing offered the British public a model of ‘civilised’ expansionism and colonial community management, transforming imperial projects into moral allegories” (13).
I. Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff: Merchant of the Gospel and Missionary of Trade

Born in 1803 at Pyritz in Pomerania, Prussia, Karl Gützlaff (or Charles Gutzlaff as he was known among the British) was the son of a tailor and was brought up among the lower-middle-class Pietists. The death of his mother forced him, at the age of four, to develop an independence and self-reliance that characterized his personality for the rest of his life. As a lad he was apprenticed to a girdler in Stettin, but when he came into teenage years he sought to broaden his education in a municipal school, where he learned Greek and Latin and was given stimulus for future language learning. It was at this school that he also learned Enlightenment notions of cultural progress through scientific knowledge. Although he briefly indulged in the characteristic optimism of Deistic faith, he returned to the pietistic faith of his family upon enrolling as a brazier’s apprentice. As a teenager, he felt moved to the challenging life of a missionary, convinced that his struggles—including a dangerous illness—were preparatory for the difficult life overseas. At seventeen, he found a liberating benefactor by addressing a laudatory poem to the King of Prussia, who obtained for Gutzlaff a place at the well-known Jänicke Mission School in Berlin, a school conducted according to the “ecumenical and highly independent spirit of the Moravians” (qtd. in Nicolson 354). Also with royal sponsorship, he received education at Halle, where he learned basic knowledge of natural sciences and medicine. In 1823, Gutzlaff associated with the Netherlands Missionary Society, which sent him to Rotterdam and Paris for further training in Malay and the cultural knowledge of Southeast Asia.

137 The only adequate account of Gutzlaff’s life is Schlyter’s Karl Gutzlaff als Missionar in China (1946), which contains an English summary. Jessie Lutz’s treatment of Gutzlaff in “Karl F.A. Gutzlaff, Missionary Entrepreneur” also provides a very good introduction to his biography.
Going out by way of London, he made the acquaintance of Robert Morrison, the first British missionary to China who was in England for a year before returning to his missionary work at Canton. Hearing of the unreached peoples of China through Dr. Morrison, and of the laws that prohibited foreign entrance into the country, it may have been during this stay in England that Gutzlaff first conceived the notion of pushing the boundaries of China’s exclusionary laws. In accordance with his mission from the NMS, Gutzlaff proceeded to Batavia, finally arriving in 1826. For the next four years he moved between the Chinese settlements on Java, Bintang Island, Malacca, Singapore, and Sumatra, finally settling in Siam (Lutz 65).

It was at Rhio (Rayong) in Siam (Thailand) that the British missionary Jacob Tomlin found him, struggling with the language, in late 1827. In a letter to a friend, he describes Gutzlaff amicably, “It is delightful and amusing to see him conversing with the people. His simplicity, frankness, and benevolence, win their hearts, and fix their attention. Though yet a novice in the language, he presses onward regardless of difficulties. The people laugh at his blunders, and he, good humouredly, laughs with them. And when they observe him in straits, they kindly help him out, by supplying him with words” (Missionary Journals 28). In addition to this wrestling with Siamese, he had also learned the Fujian dialect from Chinese colonists. His perseverance and willing teachability were rewarded, as all reports of Gutzlaff from his contemporaries suggest that he was a highly skilled linguist, having a natural ability to “pick up the nuances of each local dialect after only a short period of fierce concentration” (Spence, God’s Chinese Son 20). William Ellis, secretary of the LMS in the 1830s, describes his natural abilities thus: “To a good constitution, and a frame capable of enduring great privations
and fatigue, he unites a readiness in the acquisition of languages, a frankness of manner, and a freedom in communicating with the people, a facility in accommodating himself to his circumstances . . . that they professed to recognize him as a descendant of one of their countrymen” (lxxxiv). Giving evidence of these gifts, H. Hamilton Lindsay, Guzlaff’s companion on the Lord Amherst’s voyage up the coast, claims that it was “decided among [the Chinese] that Mr. Guzlaff was a Chinese from Amoy, and one of them asked me in a confidential way to confess that their surmise was true” (18). In further praise of Guzlaff’s mastery of Chinese language and custom, Lindsay relates an incident with a mandarin at Quemoy, who, “turning to Mr. Guzlaff, he said, ‘I know you to be a native of this district traitorously serving barbarians in disguise.’ A higher compliment to this gentlemen’s knowledge of the language could certainly not have been paid” (Copy and Extract 24). Eventually having the mastery of a dozen languages, with the ability to write fluidly in at least six, Guzlaff possessed rare linguistic gifts by any standard.

In 1829, he left Siam with Tomlin for a brief stay at the British settlement at Malacca, where he met and married an Englishwoman, Mary Newell. He and his wife returned to Siam, but unused to the conditions there, she died 16 February 1831. Ironically, this death opened a door for him. As early as 1827, Guzlaff and Tomlin had considered the possibility of gaining access to a native Chinese trading vessel, which regularly made routes from Bangkok to Tianjin, a city on the northern coast of China. In a letter to Tomlin, dated 14 July 1829, Guzlaff conveys his determination not to postpone his trip to China any longer (Tomlin, Missionary Journals 220). The Netherlands Missionary Society, however, opposed this unwarranted and potentially disruptive move, but with the death of his wife, Guzlaff was left “a considerable sum of
money” (Waley 223). Because of this money, he was able to cut ties with the NMS, and accordingly, on 3 June 1831, he boarded a junk bound for Tianjin—the first of his “Three Voyages along the Coast of China.”

The independent and enterprising spirit indicated by his behavior with the NMS suggests another aspect of Gutzlaff’s character that did not win him favor with everyone. While many of his acquaintances, both missionaries and merchants, were impressed by his skills, zeal, and devotion to his cause, others found him disconcerting and repellant. A Canton merchant, Lane Poole, gives some insight into his unique character.

His specious manner and intolerable assumption of omniscience procured him the epithet of “humbug”. He was always posing as a genius, and those who knew him best put least faith in him. He was not to be unreservedly trusted. Nevertheless there was a strong original character, interesting as a study for the experienced, and certainly very impressive to his juniors. . . . It often took years to find him out. And he was not all sham. He had a considerable though not very scholarly command of the Chinese language. He was naturally kind-hearted, though irritable, suspicious and thin-skinned. (qtd. in Collis 233)

As Poole suggests, he did not fall into easy classification, despite having an exceptionally strong personality. Most were in agreement that his ultimate objects and motives were good, but his inflated self-concept often led him into unwise decisions and morally questionable stances. His surprising appearance somehow also fit his enigmatic personality. The youthful impression of a sixteen-year old, the future Sir Harry Parkes, gives a lively image: “He was a short square figure with clothes that for shape might have been cut in his native Pomerania ages ago, a broad-brimmed straw hat, his great face beneath with a sinister eye” (qtd. in Collis 69). Many thought he resembled a Chinese peasant, a fiction that he cultivated by frequently disguising himself as such and was a further assistance in his covert mission work (see Figure Seven).
The oddity of his character was further complicated by his unconventional approach to missions, for which historians have chiefly remembered him. Whenever Gutzlaff is mentioned, whether in contemporary accounts or in histories of the period, it is always in a multiplied capacity. Waley calls him a “missionary, interpreter and information officer” (223), as well as “a cross between parson and pirate, charlatan and genius, philanthropist and crook” (233). Nicolson depicts him as “Magistrate, Interpreter and Negotiator”; and perhaps most mercifully, Jessie Lutz calls him a “missionary entrepreneur.” His fellow missionaries thought of him as a merchant missionary, while the merchant community employed him as a missionary merchant.

In his approach to missions, Gutzlaff represents a shift from the age of mission theorists like Charles Simeon and William Wilberforce, and practitioners like William Carey and Henry Martyn, to what historians have come to call the civilizing mission of
the mid- to late century. In the Chinese mission, Gutzlaff’s approach stands in singular contrast to that of his forerunners Robert Morrison and William Milne. The differences reflect two distinct understandings of the relationship between Christianity and culture.

II. Approaches to Christianity and Culture

In his classic work on this subject, *Christ and Culture* (1951), Richard Niebuhr distinguishes five distinct ways that Christians through the ages have approached the relationship between the practice of faith and the believer’s cultural context. On one extreme is an approach he calls “Christ against culture,” implying a rejection of “the world” and a complete separation of Christian behavior and community from the surrounding culture. Niebuhr represents this position by Leo Tolstoy, the Benedictine tradition, and sects like the Amish. On the other extreme is “Christ of culture,” or cultural Christianity, which is a pluralist approach that understands faith as a matter of socially received knowledge, while “participation in the life of culture [is] a matter of indifference” (87). Every culture and the parts of each culture convey something of Christ, and what is best in Christianity will be agreeable with the morals of the age; this type is represented by the ancient Gnostics, Abelard in the middle ages, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Jefferson, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and George Eliot. Between these two extreme types are gradations and variations depending on the degree to which the believers see culture as depraved and redeemable, as well as the means by

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138 The “civilizing mission” is standard shorthand for reference to the complex of Christianity, commerce, and civilization that occupied the thinking of British imperialists during the period from about 1840-1920. For application of the concept, see Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness* (173-274); Hall, *Civilizing Subjects*; Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire*; MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*; and Thorne, *Congregational Missions* (84-123). For an excellent debate on the nuances of these concepts, see the exchange of articles on “Commerce and Christianity” by Andrew Porter and Brian Stanley, both in the *Historical Journal*. 
which culture can be redeemed. Niebuhr has designated these types as “Christ Above Culture,” “Christ and Culture in Paradox,” and “Christ the Transformer of Culture.” The two that concern the conflicting missionary approaches in the 1830s are the first and last of these three.

The Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century, which eventually resulted in the missionary movement of the 1790s and early-nineteenth century, was primarily rooted in an approach that resembles Niebuhr’s “Christ the Transformer of Culture.” As explained in the first chapter of this dissertation, Evangelical leaders like Wilberforce and Simeon believed profoundly in the depravity of man and the distinctiveness of true Christians from worldliness. Because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, believers could have their sins forgiven, receive the Holy Spirit, and experience the transformation of life through sanctification. Despite this activity within the soul of an individual, Evangelicals understood that these individuals nevertheless lived within a context and among people who also needed salvation. To withdraw from their culture would be an abandonment of their commission to “Go ye into all the world, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe my commands. . .” (Matthew 28.19-20). Also part of their call was to act as good stewards of the world around them. If one were a shopkeeper, he should conduct business honestly; if a lawyer, work hard and ethically; if a mother, teach the children the Bible and fill the house with joy; if a statesman, argue for principles consistent with Scripture. At the same time, although they felt an assurance of the truth of Scripture, they nevertheless recognized their own frailty and potential for self-deception in matters dealing with the world. They themselves required frequent self-examination, a willingness to be taught by their fellow believers,
and careful consideration of righteous responses to happenings in society. Their understanding of Christianity and culture, then, was that Christ, by his work in and through individuals, would slowly transform the culture. In this way, Wilberforce believed he was commissioned by God when he committed himself to the “suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.”

In the mission to China, one hears these same ideas from the pens of Morrison and Milne. Both of these missionaries and their families were socially distanced from the merchant community; as Morrison says, “We cannot take part in the gay amusements of our own countrymen, or mix much in their society; a distant civility is all that subsists” (Memoirs I.288). Nevertheless, they did not remove themselves from society; Morrison was employed as an interpreter for the EIC and for two weeks in 1834 before his own death, for the similarly doomed Lord Napier (Morrison and Napier died within a week of one another). Their hope, through the translation and distribution of Scriptures, and the preaching of the gospel, was to give an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work through those means. Echoing William Carey’s Enquiry, Morrison explains this Christ as Transformer of Culture approach: “And this necessary revolution or conversion; not general education; not science, proudly so called; not civilization—can ever affect. But Bible education; revealed religion; the gospel of Jesus Christ, accompanied by the influences of the Holy Spirit can effect it. And to communicate this gospel; and to pray for these influences, constitute one of the highest duties of every human creature reconciled to God” (Knowledge 18). With an assumption of the human inability, through fallen nature, of ever receiving Christ and getting to Him by reason alone, this approach emphasizes the Holy Spirit as the agent of transformation—both of the individual and
thereby of culture. As Milne has stated the case, it is to the agency of “the HOLY SPIRIT, whose inscrutable operations, accompanying the means, [that] the conversion of the heathen, and the virtues and moral excellencies of the true Christian, are uniformly ascribed,” and it will be by the Holy Spirit that “the world [is] reformed” (*Retrospect* 341). Their seemingly passive mission practices of translating scriptures, writing tracts, and preaching locally (primarily to those Chinese with whom they worked), reflects their theology of Christ and culture.

Gutzlaff, however, represents an entirely different theology of Christ and culture, an assumption of “Christ Above Culture,” or as Niebuhr shortens it, “synthesis.” In the synthetic approach, which Niebuhr typifies by Clement of Alexandria and Thomas Aquinas, great faith is placed in reason and natural law as leading one to Christianity, and the life of faith and that of society are combined into one system. As Clement understood the Greek philosophy of his day, it served as “a school-master to bring ‘the Hellenic mind’ [to Christ,] as the law [brings] the Hebrews, ‘to Christ’” (qtd. in Niebuhr 128). In a later period, Aquinas applied this same principle more generally to the “Christendom” in which he lived with a full affirmation of culture as disclosing the divine order of things. Niebuhr summarizes his sense of the dialectic, explaining that “Culture discerns the rules for culture, because culture is the work of God-given reason in God-given nature” (135). Laws of culture that are based on Natural Law will be consistent with Divine Law, such as “Thou shalt not steal.” Practically speaking, since the adherent to a synthetic approach to Christianity and culture believes that God’s “rule is established in the nature of things,” he finds that “law is never merely a human invention, but contains the will of God” (143). He finds himself affirming completely and cooperating fully with the
dictates of his culture, and “tends, perhaps inevitably, to the absolutizing of what is relative, the reduction of the infinite to a finite form, and the materialization of the dynamic” (145). A faith which he claims to be universal is folded into an expression of his particular culture, which becomes for him an essential of the faith.

This last statement describes Charles Gutzlaff’s tendencies with great accuracy. Even as a student at Jänicke’s mission school, his tutors and fellow students showed concern at his craving for new knowledge and his pursuit of “human conceit and pagan erudition” (Lutz 64). They were not sure he sufficiently held to the necessity of salvation through the blood of Jesus and the need for every person to be born again. Though he eventually came round on these points, he always retained faith in science and Western philosophy, which he believed were necessary for true religion. As a missionary, he quickly developed the notion that the Chinese had long been in a state of stagnant civilization because they had not followed natural law and had resisted Christianity. In order for that nation to be converted, it would require both Western learning and the Gospel, as “useful knowledge and science” are “the handmaids of true religion” (Gutzlaff, “Monthly Periodical” 187).

A true synthesizer, Gutzlaff came to believe that in England, above all nations, natural law had found its highest expression in specific laws and culture and so had developed the greatest possible consistency with Christianity. He saw British history as an example of the blessings of synthesis, as the rise in British power followed quickly on the heels of the acceptance of Protestantism. As Jessie Lutz has observed, Gutzlaff regularly points out in his Chinese writings that “the power and prosperity of Great Britain rest on the triple foundations of orthodox Christianity, sound political institutions,
and an expanding commercial economy” (81). Thereby tending to the absolutizing of what is relative, Gutzlaff increasingly came to support unequivocally all British activity in Southeast Asia. Rather than partnering for evangelization with other missionaries, with whom he frequently was at odds, he eagerly accepted employment as an interpreter for British merchants and eventually for the military and the government of Hong Kong. Not only did these posts allow him to remain independent of any missionary society, they also gave him political influence and much greater resources for his ventures.

**III. The Reverend Gutzlaff, Opium Merchant**

Not surprisingly, the praxis of this approach to Christianity and culture resulted in ethical dilemmas in an era of imperial expansion. Gutzlaff’s devotion to British culture and belief in its “march of improvement” to “the very frontiers of China” inevitably brought him into compromising proximity to the nefarious opium trade that had begun to accelerate during the 1820s (Gutzlaff, “Remarks” 118). Undeniably destructive, as admitted even by its highest traffickers, opium use was quite obviously at odds with the message of the Gospel.

Gutzlaff’s moral crisis came in 1832, just after returning from his voyage with Lindsay in the *Lord Amherst*, when William Jardine, partner with James Matheson in the most profitable firm at Canton, approached him with an opportunity for a third voyage along the coast of China (Collis 69-71). Jardine was known to be a man of firmness and strength of character, good to his friends but a dangerous enemy. Although a surgeon by training, he had developed a private trade while living in India from 1802-1816 and had partnered in an opium venture out of Bombay from 1819-1822. He had moved to Canton in 1822 and taken a job with Hollingworth Magniac, the leading opium trader at that
time. Noting that Jardine was “an excellent man of business in this market, where his knowledge and experience in the opium trade and in most articles of export are highly valuable,” Magniac made him a partner (qtd. in Collis 67). Perhaps due to Jardine’s aggressive business tactics and economic foresight, the dramatic increase in opium traffic through the 1820’s follows his arrival and career. One example, noted by Maurice Collis, is that Jardine was able to draw into partnership James Matheson, who was partner in a Spanish firm and served as a Danish consul. Able to fly the Danish flag and to use the rare Chinese concessions to the Spanish for trade at Quemoy, Matheson had a few assets that could be put to use in clandestine opium trading (67). In 1832, when Jardine approached Gutzlaff about a job, he had developed another business scheme.

Aware that the imperial government was increasingly concerned about the high opium traffic from Lintin Island, Jardine forecasted that the smuggling trade could be carried on to better purpose along the coast northward. He began to fit out a fleet of fast clippers, which have become known to history as the opium clippers (Chang 26-7). These smaller vessels could make three round trips a year between India and Canton; the first of these, the Red Rover, once made the trip from Calcutta to Lintin in eighteen days (Collis 68). Not only could they outrun any other ship in the sea, they were able to sail into the monsoon when other ships could not. They were the perfect smuggling ships, and with them Jardine and Matheson were always the first and most profitable traders of the season. In 1832, convinced by the voyage of the Lord Amherst that there was significant potential in the coastal trade northward, Jardine brought his second clipper, the Sylph, to Macao, and he needed a translator for the first smuggling trip that would go all the way up the coast as far as “Mantchou Tartary” (see Figure Six), which is today Heilongjiang
Province (Chang 23). In a letter to Gutzlaff of October 1832, Jardine explains that the *Sylph* will carry £4000 worth of goods,

> But as the expenses of the voyage cannot be defrayed from this source, we have no hesitation in stating to you openly that our principal reliance is on opium. Though it is our earnest wish that you should not in any way injure the grand object you have in view by appearing interested in what by many is considered an immoral traffic, yet such traffic is so absolutely necessary to give any vessel a reasonable chance of defraying her expenses, that we trust you will have no objection to interpret on every occasion when your services may be requested. (qtd. in Beeching 61)

But Jardine clearly understood Gutzlaff’s way of thinking. Anticipating the moral quandary, he concludes his letter with the proverbial carrot: “The more profitable the expedition, the better we shall be able to place at your disposal a sum that may hereafter be employed in furthering your mission, and for your success in which we feel deeply interested” (qtd. in Collis 70). Jardine likewise guaranteed to defray the publishing costs for six months of a magazine Gutzlaff was about to commence, “with a view to counteract these high and exclusive notions [of the Chinese] by making the Chinese acquainted with our arts, sciences, and principles” (“Monthly Periodical” 187).

In the opening sentence of his “Journal of a Third Voyage,” the last part of his *Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China*, Gutzlaff alludes to the ensuing ethical crisis, writing, “After much consultation with others, and a conflict in my own mind, I embarked in the *Sylph*” (413). Nowhere does he mention opium during his account. Although it is unclear with whom he consulted, he appears to have come to a firm resolution on the matter. Four months after the return of the *Sylph*, he was on board the *John Biggar*, another of Jardine’s opium clippers. In a letter to the company, the captain, William McKay, explains how he sent Gutzlaff over to the boats of local officials whose presence was inhibiting local merchants from coming out to buy opium.
“The Doctor [Gutzlaff],” he writes, “(dressed in his best; which, on such occasions is his
custom) paid them a visit accompanied by two boats made to appear rather imposing. He
demanded their instant departure and threatened them destruction if they ever in future
anchored in our neighbourhood. They went away immediately, saying they had anchored
there in the dark by mistake. We have seen nothing more of them” (qtd. in Chang 24). In
summarizing this successful voyage, which returned with £53,000 worth of silver,
McKay reported to Jardine on 14 September 1832, “I have received much assistance from
Doctor Gutzlaff whose services, as the trade increases, will become invaluable. His zeal
is unbounded, but in his ideas he is perhaps a little too sanguine” (qtd. in Collis 74).

Having such a good interpreter and negotiator, combined with Jardine’s new business
plan, certainly gave the leading firm in the opium trade another boost. In the year that
Gutzlaff was employed by Jardine and Matheson, the opium trade showed tremendous
gains, from 14,225 chests in the 1831-32 season to 23,693 chests in the 1832-33 season
(Documents, No. 21). For the next eight years, until the beginning of the Opium War,
Gutzlaff was in the regular employ of Jardine and Matheson in their smuggling
enterprise. In fact, when the crisis that ensued upon Lord Napier’s arrival as British
Superintendent of Trade in 1834—including his illegal settlement at Canton, his
confinement there by the Chinese, and his death from fatigue and fever—Gutzlaff was up
the coast with the Colonel Young, another of Jardine’s opium clippers (Fay 71).

On each of his opium fleet voyages, Gutzlaff was well supplied—ironically,
through the financial support of Jardine—with copies of Chinese New Testaments and
tracts. In his “Journal of a Third Voyage” aboard the Sylph, he says, “The mandarins
never directly interfered with my distributing books or conversing with the people. After
having issued the severest edicts against having any commercial dealings, they gave us *full permission to do what we liked*” (427). Few of his Evangelical readers in Britain would have understood that these “commercial dealings” meant opium trade and that mandarins were not about to enforce a prohibition against Western books when they were obviously allowing another prohibited article. What readers could catch is his recurring argument that Christian literature went hand in hand with trade, and the mandarins seemed not to resist. Moreover, the people were eager to receive both articles! He relates multiple instances where he was surrounded by “hundreds stretching out their hands to receive the same gift. Within a few minutes the store was exhausted, but the news spread with great rapidity” (431). With such accounts of Chinese eager to receive scriptures and tracts, it was hard to argue against his insistent claim, “What a field for missionary exertion do they present! Their hearts are open to the impression of truth, and their doors for the reception of its messengers” (433). He never mentions, however, that “the impression of truth” was often delivered in the midst, or just after, illegal opium dealings. If Gutzlaff had felt an ethical quandary at the initial offering of a place on board an opium vessel, he managed to work out a strong resolution, with which he closes his *Journal of Three Voyages*:

As our commercial relations are at the present moment on such a basis as to warrant a continuation of the trade all along the coast, we hope that this may tend ultimately to the introduction of the gospel, for which many doors are opened. Millions of Bibles and tracts will be needed to supply the wants of this people. God, who in his mercy has thrown down the wall of national separation, will carry on the work. . . . We anticipate the glorious day of a general conversion, and are willing to do our utmost in order to promote the great work. (449-50)

There is perhaps no more complete statement during this period of the absolute conflation of illicit trade and mission. Again employing his synthetic notion of Christianity and
culture, Gutzlaff here draws together his faith in God and belief that God is in his culture. Through His missionary merchant, it is God who has “thrown down the wall of national separation,” and God through these servants “will carry on the work.” If God, the mission, and the merchants are parts of one cause, then all moral and ethical objections to the means of accomplishing the “great work” of drawing China into Western Christendom have been effectively removed.

Part of Gutzlaff’s self-justifying sophistry turned on his understanding of “the Gospel.” As shown in previous chapters, how one defines the Gospel has had distinct ramifications for all believers’ relationship with society. Although the metonymy of referring to the Bible as the Word of God, or the New Testament as the Gospel, is typical in all strains of Protestant Christianity, Gutzlaff glosses over the specific content of the Gospel message, replacing the idea of spiritually encountering God with the act of reading the text (or at times it seems even just having the text). This tendency, detected by his tutors at Jänicke and reflected in his many writings, is another tendency of synthetic Christianity, “the materializing of the dynamic”—in this case, the interpretation of the Gospel as a material possession of the West that could simply be handed over to the Chinese. On numerous occasions, he writes of instances where he was exceedingly pleased “to leave with them the words of eternal life” (Journal 160). He further explains that “eternity will show how many a soul may be benefited by the perusal of one little tract” (161).139 In a remarkable incident, a government official demanded copies of his

139 History has also shown, through the Taipings, how the perusal of one little tract, combined with a megalomaniacal character, can result in terrible devastation. For discussion of how Liang Fa’s tract, Good Words to Admonish the Age, came into the hands of Hong Xiuquan and inspired him with an ideology for his Taiping social, religious, and political movement, see Philip Kuhn, “Origins of the Taiping Vision” and Rudolf Wagner, Reenacting the Heavenly Vision.
books in order to send them to the emperor. Complying, Gutzlaff sent “one copy of ‘Scripture Lessons,’ a tract on Gambling, ‘Heaven’s Mirror,’ a full delineation of Christianity, besides a few other books of which he had copies before” (222). Suggesting a sense of a mission accomplished, Gutzlaff considers the Gospel as having been exchanged: “I was highly delighted that God, in his wisdom, was sending his glorious gospel to Peking” (223).\footnote{This typical mark of synthetic Christianity is notable among certain groups of North American Christians in our own day.} Rather than understanding the Gospel as εὐαγγέλιον—an abstract concept that earlier Evangelicals considered to be the good news that Christ’s atoning sacrifice was available to save all people—Gutzlaff had materialized this message and conflated it with written material objects, the Scriptures or tracts. In moments of more abstract thinking, he considered these materials part of Western intellectual property.

If the Gospel was inseparable from the written material, then conversion of the Chinese depended upon getting the scriptures and tracts into Chinese hands—indeed, saturation would be required. It mattered little how these books were distributed, so long as it was done. Gutzlaff could justify handing out the “silent preachers” from opium vessels because “after all this, the gospel must be said to have flown here on eagles’ wings” (432). By “the gospel” having flown here, Gutzlaff in this instance refers not to the message of salvation spreading by word of mouth, but to his surprising discovery of some of his tracts in a locale previously unvisited. The dissemination of his tracts was evidence that his gospel was penetrating China, and it proved that God was sanctioning his methods. In Gutzlaff’s eyes, Providence was proving that commerce and Christianity should go together. As he had seen in Siam and concluded about their reception of his
British gospel, he writes, “the more the English are feared . . . the more the ascendancy of their genius is acknowledged, the more their friendship as individuals is courted, their customs imitated, and their language studied” (33), the easier will be the commercial relationship and the Chinese will be “well prepared for the reception of the Gospel” (37).

Gutzlaff certainly became aware that his theology of the Gospel and his methods of “carrying the gospel to China” were being questioned (Journal 124). In a moment of candor, he writes,

I am fully aware that I shall be stigmatized as a headstrong enthusiast, an unprincipled rambler, who rashly sallies forth, without waiting for any indication of divine providence, with first seeing the door opened by the hand of the Lord; as one fond of novelty, anxious to have a name . . . all of whose endeavours will not only prove useless, but will actually impede the progress of the Saviour’s cause. . . . I have weighed the arguments for and against the course I am endeavouring to pursue, and have formed the resolution to publish the gospel to the inhabitants of China Proper, in all the ways, and by all the means, which the Lord our God appoints in his word and by his providence. (124-125)

It appears that at least a few of his fellow missionaries had censured him for his journeys and the ill effects of his association with opium traffic. W.H. Medhurst, a missionary with the LMS variously at Java, Batavia, and Canton, writes without equivocation that “all connected with the trade in question, err in exact proportion to the extent in which they are mixed up with it. The grower, the vender, and the carrier of opium…must all be implicated in blame” (370). More specifically in regard to Gutzlaff, though, he goes on,

The connection of a missionary with a regular opium ship was found to be disreputable. The opium merchants themselves, though exceedingly friendly and ready to lend every possible aid to persons wishing to explore the coast, conceive it quite out of character for missionaries to make opium vessels the vehicle for the diffusion of Divine knowledge. . . . But the most serious objection is, that the Chinese bring it as the main argument against Christianity, that its professors vend opium; with how much greater force would they urge this objection should a missionary embark in an opium ship, and carry out boxes of tracts in company with chests of opium? (371; my emphasis)
Medhurst’s criticisms were not that Gutzlaff went up the coast distributing the Scriptures; in fact, after *Journal of Three Voyages* was published in 1834, Medhurst himself was sent up the Chinese coast by the LMS in the *Huron*, a ship of the American Evangelical merchant O.C. Olyphant offered for the purpose, “to ascertain the real state of things on the coast, and whether China were, or were not, open to the Gospel…” (369). The criticism came against his reckless association of Christianity with the opium traffic, which gave all missionaries and their Christian message a bad name with the Chinese. It seemed clear to other missionaries that if even the opium merchants thought there was a contradiction, then surely Gutzlaff ought to have seen it. Nevertheless Gutzlaff, “as a headstrong enthusiast, an unprincipled rambler,” resolved that the opium clippers were among “the means, which the Lord our God appoints in his word and by his providence.”

In addition to the criticism of means, his theology of the Gospel and the ramifications of his theology also came in for disparagement. Since the distribution of his New Testaments and tracts meant, in his mind, Chinese reception of the Gospel, Gutzlaff boasted that “alone and single-handed he had reached and affected thirty million Chinese. To celebrate this joyous feat he wrote and published (in London) a book modestly called *China Opened*” (Fay 96). Like Medhurst, later missionaries Samuel Wells Williams and G.T. Lay were annoyed with him and his irresponsible boasts. In a pamphlet arguing against the illegal China trade, Lay alludes to Gutzlaff’s exaggerations in his celebratory *China Opened*:

> When I can travel in town or in country with my bag of bibles without the fear, or rather the certainty, of being haled before a magistrate, and from thence to a dungeon; and when the missionary can teach publicly and from house to house, without jeopardy of losing his head, I shall then . . . allow my friends in England to inscribe upon their performances, CHINA OPEN, in as large a character as they please, and to descant upon the theme with all the enthusiasm of thought and
play of language that a glowing fancy can supply. (16)

With a degree of forthrightness, Lay suggests that a certain enthusiasm had led Gutzlaff to claim what was simply not the case. As Lay said of Gutzlaff in a private letter, he was not to be trusted, the kind of man “whose plans are a secret to everyone but himself” (qtd. in Fay 96). The fact was that during the 1830s there were less than twenty bona fide converts in mainland China, and almost all of these came to Christianity through Liang Afa, the Chinese convert of William Milne’s and whom Morrison had ordained as a minister. While Gutzlaff was claiming that thousands had received the Gospel, the truth was that thousands had simply taken away tracts and scriptures.

IV. A Shift in Christianity and Culture

An underlying and perhaps necessary condition for Gutzlaff’s shift from “Christ the Transformer of Culture” to “Christ Above Culture,” or synthetic Christianity, is that the hegemonic project of the early Evangelicals — the transformation of culture — had achieved a marked degree of success in the metropole. In the year that Gutzlaff’s journeys were first published, Wilberforce, James Stephen, Hannah More, and Lord Teignmouth — all leading Evangelicals — died, having seen the accomplishment of their two great objects, “the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.” The Reform Bill had been passed in 1832 and the complete abolition of slavery was effected in 1833. Most historians of Christianity in Britain agree with G.M. Young’s assessment of Evangelicalism, that its “work was done” by 1833 and, having “reached its apogee,” it had become “complacent, fashionable, superior” (4-5). In other words, Evangelical principles had become British “common sense,” worked their way into laws, and established hegemony in British society; Evangelical ideology remained “one of the
two most important influences in Victorian society” (Jay, Religion 6). With the turn that Gutzlaff’s thinking represents, Evangelicalism moved into a new phase, where “growing popularity and power” — benchmarks of successful cultural hegemony — “resulted in a dilution of the spiritual fervour which characterised its conception,” to the point that it came to be associated with “bellicose political Protestantism or cultural philistinism” (Jay, Faith 1). The success in the early 1830s of the Evangelical hegemonic project, which I discussed in Chapter Two, may correspond with what Gramsci describes as the “speculative or religious moment,” which occurs in every culture and “coincides with the period of complete hegemony of the social group of which the culture is an expression.” Given the shift that occurs in Evangelicalism from transformers of culture to synthesis with culture and eventual decline, it appears that Gramsci is correct in suggesting that “perhaps it even coincides with the moment in which the real hegemony disintegrates” (3: 380).

In terms of the alliance between commerce and Christianity that comes to dominate mid-nineteenth-century mission, Gutzlaff’s methods distill the moment of transition. Taking a broad view of the century, Andrew Porter has shown that in the first three decades of the century, Evangelicals were suspicious of missionary entanglements with commerce. “Preaching and teaching were the essential means; their effectiveness was to be increased by improving their quality and volume, not by linking them up with economic agencies. The British and Foreign Bible Society, supported strongly by Grant, Teignmouth, and Wilberforce, and the Religious Tract Society, were the purest expression of contemporary missionary strategies” (“Commerce” 606). By mid-century,  

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141 See Chapter II for a discussion of the Evangelical efforts to effect a change in what Antonio Gramsci describes as “common sense,” or the most widespread conception of life and morals.
however, the general perspective on mission and economic imperialism had altered, and David Livingstone’s assessment, that “Those two pioneers of civilization — Christianity and commerce — should ever be inseparable,” held sway (qtd. in Porter, “Commerce” 598).

What affected the shift to this latter attitude, Porter contends, was a slight slippage from the notion that Christianity could transform a people, making them truly civilized (see Chapter Three in this dissertation), to the similar but inverted argument that “Freer trade would assist ‘moral and religious’ transformation” (613). In the former case, commerce was understood to be frequently harmful to the effects of Christian transformation in individual lives, with special reference to their new conduct as citizens in the Kingdom of God. In the latter case, commerce was understood as beneficial in itself, but doubly so as a partner with Christianity against native customs. With this partnership, what became less important was the theological content of the message, which gave way to the “advantages” that the West was offering.

Charles Gutzlaff may not be the first missionary to have enacted these ideas of Christianity and commerce, but he was certainly among the first to broadly influence his generation and the one to follow. While recognizing the general move in this direction,

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142 An interesting discussion of the negative effects of commerce on native populations, on native converts, and on the work of mission is found in a House of Commons Select Committee discussion on Aborigines, initiated in 1833 and reconvened in 1835. The report was published as Christianity the Means of Civilization: Shown in the Evidence Given Before a Committee of the House of Commons, on Aborigines in 1837. In this report, Secretaries of the mission societies agree that “experience and history show us that the extension of white colonization tends to the diminution and gradual extinction of the black aborigines” (28), and “European contact with native inhabitants, always, excepting the cases in which missions have been established, tends to deteriorate the morals of the natives” (52).

143 With the work on the Aborigines Committee and the Niger Expedition of 1841-42, Thomas Buxton was at the forefront of domestic agitation for change, while Samuel Marsden in New Zealand was pushing for a “civilization first” strategy throughout the 1830s. In the mission to the South Seas, a similar partnership of trade and the gospel can be seen in the writing of George Pritchard and John Williams. Under Williams’s inspiration, the LMS fitted out a missionary ship that carried trade goods and
in terms of actually affecting the shift both in thought and government policy, Gutzlaff’s work along the coast of China and his writings about these experiences were the first to set out the argument in practical terms from the authoritative position of experience.

From this point of view, Gutzlaff’s provocation *Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China* marks a change in this literature to the more heroic tones of what Brantlinger has called “nonfictional quest romances,” of which Livingstone’s *Missionary Travels* (1857) is the greatest and most representative (180). In addition, one might also argue, in light of the discussion below, that Gutzlaff’s work is among those having the greatest political consequence.

V. Provocation and Policy: A Voyage along the Coast of China in 1832

While Gutzlaff’s voyage in the opium clipper *Sylph* in late 1832-early 1833 was a significant turning point in his own moral demise, it was his voyage with Lindsay on the *Lord Amherst* in early 1832 that had the greatest historical consequences. The opium journey pioneered a trade; the trade journey pioneered a mentality. While both were sufficient conditions for the subsequent war, the mentality was the necessary condition.

Intrigued and encouraged by Gutzlaff’s first voyage — his secret passage aboard the Chinese junk out of Bangkok — in late 1831 Charles Marjoribanks, President of the EIC Select Committee at Canton, determined that the coast of China was more permeable

missionaries between the islands. Although the trade was carried on for the benefit of the natives, the combination of Christianity and commerce is very striking. Analyzing missionary writing from the South Seas and Australia in *Missionary Writing and Empire* (2003), Anna Johnston has concluded that missionary activity “sought to transform indigenous communities into imperial archetypes of civility and modernity by remodeling the individual, the community, and the state through western, Christian philosophies” (13). But as Andrew Porter’s work has shown, her conclusion that, “Inescapably part of evangelizing projects were the dual processes of ‘Christianisation and civilisation’” (53) must be problematized by a consideration of period, location, and individual. My study of the shift of mission strategy in China supports Porter’s contention.
than foreigners had been led to believe, and that the coastal peoples were far more receptive to trade than had been thought. Gutzlaff’s reports of his first voyage had certainly led many to question the restrictiveness of the status quo. Evidence of the stir in Canton upon his return was conveyed to the *Eclectic Review* by a Correspondent in China, who wrote,

> I particularly wished to call your attention to a growing desire, among the commercial community at Canton, to open some intercourse with the regions to the north and eastward of us. The voyage of Mr. Charles Gutzlaff, in a Siamese junk, up to Teen-tsin [Tianjin] and Kinchow [Jinzhou], on the eastern side of the Great Wall, has been the occasion of calling people’s attention to the subject. . . . It seems greatly desirable that Christian merchants should persevere in annually sending one or more ships to the northward. (365)

Since the EIC had received considerable pressure in 1812, at the approach of the renewal of their charter, to justify why private merchants should not be allowed to enter the China Trade, they knew that even greater pressure would be put upon them to show why their monopoly was still useful. Marjoribanks, anticipating what the Correspondent a few months later called “a growing desire” among the country traders — private merchants licensed by the Company to trade under EIC authority — “to open some intercourse” along the coast, drew up instructions for a Company voyage.

Although Marjoribanks was called back to London at the beginning of 1832, he was replaced by John Francis Davis, who had supported the idea and immediately delivered secret instructions to one of the Company’s supercargos, Hugh Hamilton Lindsay. Knowing of Gutzlaff’s previous success along the coast, Davis invited him to act as the interpreter and negotiator. It is interesting to note the *Lord Amherst* was not the first ship assigned the mission. The captain of the Company ship *Clive*, Captain Harris, refused to make the voyage on the grounds that its objects were “at variance with my
Instructions, and the Regulations of the Service, and equally illegal in the eye of the Law” (Morse 333). The captain, it seems, was unwilling to take part in secret missions and illegal schemes. That this was the nature of the mission is proved from Lindsay and Gutzlaff taking the Chinese names Hoo-hea-me and Kwo Shi-lee, respectively, and the ship proceeding under a different name and purporting to be a Bengal vessel bound for Japan that had been blown off course by opposing winds, and had come northward due to extortion in the trading at Canton (Copy or Extract, 4).

Flying in the face of their claims, they took with them copies of a pamphlet written by Marjoribanks and translated by Morrison, entitled “A Brief Account of the English Character,” which gave some account of the British as a maritime nation, powerful but peaceful. Arthur Waley, in *The Opium War through Chinese Eyes* (1958), summarizes the pamphlet. Marjoribanks, he says, seeks to correct the notion that “the English are greedy for further territory. Nothing . . . could be more false,” he argues (225). Explaining the extent of British possessions and that it is unthinkable that the English would want to possess more, he goes on to say that they are interested primarily in free trading relations with other nations. The Chinese government, however, has not acted in the interests of the people but has allowed the trade to be dominated by rogues. After telling about how the good character and scientific development of the English — always impugned and attacked by the Chinese government — is based on the moral precepts of Christianity, Marjoribanks concludes that “England, honoured in peace and feared in war, is the country with which above all others Chinese ought to seek good relations” (Waley 227). This tract, of which Gutzlaff says “scarcely had they perused our small pamphlet when they treated us with every mark of respect and friendship, and the
name of Ta-ying Kwo-jin (Englishmen) was upon the lips of everybody” (Copy or Extract, 11), had been forbidden by J.F. Davis, who demanded surrender of the supply before the ship’s departure. Handing over about a hundred copies, Lindsay and Gutzlaff secretly obtained another 500 copies, all of which they distributed during the journey (Copy or Extract, 4).

In his “Secret Mission of the Lord Amherst,” Immanuel Hsü sketches the pattern of interactions between the Amherst traders and the local officials at the four major ports they visited.

First, local officials on viceroy and governor levels deliberately stayed away from the foreigners because of dignity; they instructed their subordinates to refuse flatly permission for trade on the ground of the established practice and to advise the barbarians to go back to Canton. Failing in that, the lower mandarins displayed water-forces and land-soldiers in the hope of frightening away the intruders. If they failed again, they tried to buy off the demand for trade by offering a demurrage for having detained the ship in lieu of the possible trade advantage. Then, as a last resort, they permitted trade outside the port or at some inconspicuous place so that they could pretend not to know of it. When the intruding ship had finished its transaction and left of its own volition, the Chinese water-forces, as a rule, followed it out and fired a few shots astern to symbolize the expulsion and, then, returned elated to report to Peking for rewards. (235)

This process could take some time, as at Shanghai where the Lord Amherst was anchored for 18 days. Through this time and amidst the official discussions with the mandarins described above, Lindsay and Gutzlaff refurbished their supplies, bought and sold trade goods, explored the anchorages and topography, sketched military positioning, and in general weighed the site from economic and military perspectives. At each port, similar reconnaissance was performed and noted down by both Lindsay and Gutzlaff.

From the perspective of profit, the official position of the Company’s Court of Directors was one of censure, as they wrote in a Despatch to the Select Committee at Canton: “We think that your own admissions sufficiently prove the unsatisfactory result
of the mission. We are not disposed to question the motives which led to its adoption, but we must lament the great want of judgment and discretion which has marked its origin and progress” (Copy or Extract 6). Written 19 June 1833, this official Despatch no doubt discloses the anxiety felt by the EIC at the uncalculated results of the mission. Despite their policy of secrecy, the secret mission had been made painfully public through the pen of Charles Gutzlaff.

Ever an unpredictable wildcard, Gutzlaff had taken it upon himself to report about the voyage. As employees of the EIC were bound by secrecy from publicly discussing Company business, rumors were naturally flying after the return of the Lord Amherst in early September of 1832. But eager to push the trade — and the potential partnership with mission — Gutzlaff did not wait even a month to announce to the British public, through the pages of the Chinese Repository, that although “There appears to be a great variety of opinion with regard to what has been achieved by the Lord Amherst . . . it has now been clearly proved, that by the people [of China] we will be received with open arms; and that the local authorities, prompted by self-interest, will be glad to encourage our coming” (“Voyages” 200). This thesis, that China is actually open to foreigners despite their imperial edicts, shaped the editing of what became his Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832, and 1833.

VI. Gutzlaff’s Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832, and 1833 (1834)

Gutzlaff’s Journal of Three Voyages appeared in London at the beginning of May 1834, creating quite a stir in multiple quarters of society. In 1816, a writer for the Quarterly Review had queried, in an article on the “Missionary Chinese Works” of
Morrison at Canton and Joshua Marshman at Serampore, “Why are the works of these indefatigable missionaries not advertised in the daily papers like other books?” (375). Although fifteen years passed before this writer’s question was addressed, with the publication of Gutzlaff’s *Journal* there came a definitive change in the public reception of what I have called missionary provocations, or narrative works by overseas Evangelicals designed to provoke into supportive action and call into mission those in the Evangelical community in Britain (see Chapter II). Whereas earlier provocations were intended for and received almost exclusively by an Evangelical subculture, Gutzlaff’s *Journal* became a broadly popular work and influenced British society as a whole.

Combining an entrepreneurial sense with a thorough conviction of the power of the press to influence people, Gutzlaff constantly enacted his belief that by “the extensive circulation of christian books,” God would “make the written word the means of bringing multitudes” to the faith (74). He seems to have understood the bibliomania in Britain of the day, and he calculated that if the adventures of a missionary were sufficiently woven into a romantic journey of daring and danger, then such an account could receive a broad reception. Published by Frederick Westley and A.H. Davis in a cheap quarto, the work was designed to reach beyond the Evangelical audience that had hitherto been the purchasers of works by missionaries. Previous provocations from China, such as the *Journal of Voyages and Travels by the Rev. Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet* (1831) was well received by the *Athenaeum*, the *American Quarterly Review*, and the *Edinburgh Review*. Although this work, which chronicles the travels of the LMS deputation to foreign mission stations around the world between 1821 and 1829, definitely belongs within the Evangelical Archive, it does not fit some of the characteristics of provocation literature, more closely resembling travel writing. Nevertheless, as Anna Johnston has noted, this work is significant because, through “these reviews in the broader periodical press . . . missionary texts and knowledges” were circulated “to an educated reading public beyond evangelical circles” (“British Missionary Publishing” 29).

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144 The first missionary work to receive broad attention from the secular press came two years before Gutzlaff’s narrative. Also published by Westley and Davis, who seemed to see the market for such works, the *Journal of Voyages and Travels by the Rev. Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet* (1831) was well received by the *Athenaeum*, the *American Quarterly Review*, and the *Edinburgh Review*. Although this work, which chronicles the travels of the LMS deputation to foreign mission stations around the world between 1821 and 1829, definitely belongs within the Evangelical Archive, it does not fit some of the characteristics of provocation literature, more closely resembling travel writing. Nevertheless, as Anna Johnston has noted, this work is significant because, through “these reviews in the broader periodical press . . . missionary texts and knowledges” were circulated “to an educated reading public beyond evangelical circles” (“British Missionary Publishing” 29).
works of Milne, Morrison, and Liang Afa, had focused on the history of the country, assessments of its spiritual condition, snapshots of interaction with local natives, and glimpses into the daily life of the missionary. Gutzlaff’s work, however, more closely resembles the traditional quest romance in which a hero leaves a safe haven, encounters a series of dangers and trials of his courage and faith, and returns to safety having gained greater clarity.

Anchoring the work to the provocation genre, the Journal begins with two essays on the history of missions to China and on the exclusive policies of the Chinese empire. Edicts against the propagation of foreign religions and against the extension of trade beyond Canton have kept the Chinese in isolation, mired in traditions that, while at one time noble, now keep them in stagnation as a civilization. These essays serve, in a way, to present the problem that will be overcome by the voyages: “China! Never in advance, but always in retrograde movement, groaning under arbitrary rule, doomed to perpetual seclusion from the world, from its interests, its sympathies, and its progressive illumination” (14). Despite the efforts of missionaries in the past and the continual presence of Western merchants for several hundred years at Macao and Canton, China has remained stubbornly closed.

Gutzlaff paints these obstacles in the epic proportions of a struggle between kingdoms of light and darkness: “The prince of darkness, with all his infernal array, can never prevail against the men who rely upon their Redeemer’s strength, who walk in his spirit, and who live and die in his service” (18). What is needed, as he had encouraged his friend Tomlin, is that a few bold men might “Be full of faith and Christian heroism” (Tomlin 35). China needs knights of Christendom to free its people from the thralldom of
Satan and from his pawns, the Qing overlords of China. Criticizing past missionaries for their timidity, he suggests that a new kind of missionary is needed, a “champion” of the Gospel. His weapons will be “the translation and circulation of the Holy Scriptures, the composition and distribution of tracts, with occasional oral addresses to the people” (19). Not content “to be shut up within the bounds of a small island” (Tomlin 28), the Christian warrior must press through any obstacles—ridicule, persecution, and death. Yet he must be confident that “whatever may befall its champions, the final overthrow of the kingdom of darkness is sure, and the ultimate result will be glorious” (20).

Eager to promote his own image as this conquering hero for the Kingdom, Gutzlaff’s three voyages are offered up as models for a new generation of missionaries, “filled with the Holy Spirit, imbued with humility, willing to suffer and to die for the great cause” (410). Following the lively introductory essays, his first voyage is preceded by a short account of his residence in Siam. A brief provocation in itself for mission to Siam, this chapter follows the model of Milne’s Retrospect as a presentation of the work of God among the people of Siam depicted through the particular activities of the mission station there. It includes discussions of the various ethnic groups, including Chinese colonists, Peguans, Burman slaves, Malays, Moors, Laotians, Cambodians, and Cochin-Chinese, and their respective potential receptivity to the Gospel should missionaries turn their attention there. He concludes this pre-voyage residence with considerations of the voyage he has planned aboard a Chinese junk sailing from Bangkok. Forecasting the pains he will have to endure, he describes typical Chinese sailors.

The major part of them are opium-smokers, gamblers, thieves, and fornicators. They will indulge in the drug till all their wages are squandered; they will gamble as long as a farthing remains; they will put off their only jacket and give it to a prostitute. They are poor and in debt; they cheat, and are cheated by one another,
whenever it is possible. . . . Their curses and imprecations are most horrible, their language most filthy and obscene; yet they never condemn themselves to eternal destruction. (61)

Enduring these moral reprobates, Gutzlaff purports to take on the martyr’s mantle by his willingness to journey with them for the cause of the Gospel. All his fellow passengers are “devoted to opium, and prone to lying” (69) — the very stereotype of the Chinese that came to prevail during the Opium War.

Adding to these moral pains and further emphasizing his willingness to suffer for the great cause, his journey is made more dramatic by a serious illness at the time of departure, which is exacerbated by his accommodations, “a hole, only large enough for a person to lie down in, and to receive a small box” (68). Through these difficulties, he cooperated, “only anxious to prepare myself for death.” In this wish he casts himself as the willing martyr. He goes on, “My wish to depart from this life was very fervent, yet I had a sincere desire of becoming subservient to the cause of the Redeemer, among the Chinese; and only on this account I prayed to God for the prolongation of my life” (71). Not only evoking the image of the Apostle Paul, he even employs his language from Philippians 1.21-24, “If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. . . . I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.”145 With such rhetorical imitation of Paul common in his writing, it is not surprising that the Eclectic Review

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145 This rhetorical tendency to imitate the language of scripture was so common in the period that it later became shorthand for characterizing Evangelicals. In Adam Bede, for example, George Eliot has the Methodist preacher Dinah Morris write to Seth Bede in apostolic language with distinctly scriptural phrasing: “We shall see each other again in the body, I trust—though, it may be, not for a long while; for the brethren and sisters at Leeds are desirous to have me for a short space among them, when I have a door opened me again to leave Snowfield” and closes the letter with “Greet your mother for me with a kiss” (330-31). The continued use of such terminology, even after orthodox belief had been jettisoned, is the subject of M.H. Abrams’s Natural Supernaturalism.
referred to his voyages as “his apostolic enterprise” (“Gutzlaff’s Three Voyages” 376), and in his obituary, Gutzlaff is referred to as the “Apostle to the Chinese.” Unlike Paul, whose letter to the Philippians is thought to be among his last, Gutzlaff’s “strong compassion for these poor beings” overcame his longing “to be with Christ” and to enter “my heavenly abode” (76), and his strength returned.

In addition to the moral and physical burdens of the trip, his journey is made more adventurous and exotic by its covertness. He remarks that before leaving Siam, “I became a naturalized subject of the Celestial Empire, by the adoption into the clan or family of Kwo” — a fiction he maintained for the rest of his life — “and was recognized (by those among whom I lived) as a member of the great nation” (71). His disguise, remarkable ability with local dialects, and keen awareness of variance in local customs allowed him to sail all the way to Tianjin without arousing suspicion with the authorities. Moreover, as a close traveling companion with the Chinese, he is able to find out their opinions about the British, their own government, and their views on trade. Like a secret military operative, he varies his role according to potential contact with natives. In one instance he passes as the ship’s “pilot or mate,” so that “visitors were very numerous” during a river anchorage (90). On other occasions, he offers medical assistance as a way of gaining their confidence. Once he has their ears, he can distribute “the word of life . . . that it might prove the means of their salvation” (90), or follow medical treatment with the chance “of making known to them the doctrines of the gospel (133).

Because of his diverse cultural and practical skills, he is able to move easily between various roles, using them both to give and to gain different types of knowledge. Foreshadowing the thrill of cross-cultural espionage fiction at the end of the century, as
in Kipling’s culturally-fluid *Kim*, Gutzlaff conforms “entirely to the customs of the Chinese” whenever the customs are useful to his purposes (71). In particular, his ears are attuned to Chinese views of the English and of their own government. At Leto (Liuhe), north of Shanghai at the mouth of the Yangtze river, he discovers the memory, “still fresh in the recollection of the natives,” of the Amherst Embassy in 1816. His remarks on the conversation betray pleasure that the Chinese seemed “over-awed and tremble, even at the mention of . . . those majestic ships, which might have spread destruction in every direction” (106). With smug superiority, he assures them that “‘If they had come to injure you, they would have done so immediately; but as they came and went away peaceably, they ought to be considered as the friends of the Chinese’” (106-7). A bit later in the journal, concerning the people at Pei-ho, he reemphasizes the “impression made on the minds of the people by the appearance of those ships.” He again remarks how frequently he “heard unrestrained remarks concerning barbarian fierceness and thirst after conquest, mixed with eulogiums on the equitable government of the English at Singapore” (114). As an accepted cultural mediator, he uses his position to reinforce popular Chinese views of the English as dangerous and powerful, yet potentially friendly trading partners. At the same time, he uses his narrative to filter to British readers these notions of the coastal Chinese that might be useful to British interests.

In “Peking Plots: Fictionalizing the Boxer Rebellion of 1900,” Ross Forman has written of a similar disguise motif in adventure novels about China following the Boxer Rebellion, nearly all of which “include a scene in which disguised Britons escape missionary settlements in the interior, arriving at safety in the Legation only after deceiving guards at the walled entrance to the city into thinking they are Chinese” (27).
For example, G.A. Henty’s *With the Allies to Pekin* (1904) follows the adventures of a boy protagonist, Rex Bateman, who much resembles Kipling’s hero Kim as “both boys are unusual in their linguistic capacities and in their ability to mediate between Eastern and Western cultures” (29). Both boys take on disguises and employ their extraordinary cultural knowledge in order to gain important knowledge for Western agents.

Although it would be unwarranted to claim direct influence, Gutzlaff seems in many ways a prototype for these later youthful protagonists of imperial adventure novels. Like them, he moves beyond the borderlands and behind the normal realms of cross-cultural interaction. By taking on their language, clothes, and customs, he purports to enter the mind of the Other. Like Kim, who finds himself “‘alone—all alone. . . . In all India no one so alone as I!’” (193), Gutzlaff suggests that part of the adventure of crossing over is the tantalizing excitement of isolation and alienation: “Almost friendless, with small pecuniary resources, without any personal knowledge of the country and its inhabitants, I was forced to prepare for the worst” (123). Anticipating the late-century works of Kipling, Conrad, Stoker, and Haggard, Gutzlaff’s narrative suggests that the more that one enters the world of the native, the more is risked of mind, body, and soul. Gutzlaff reassures his readers, however, that he has conquered each of these dangers. He overcomes illness of the body; he puts Chinese skeptics to shame, so that “they ceased to offer their objections, and admitted the correctness of the principles of the gospel” (100); and he embarrasses idolatrous priests by declaring that their goddess, Ma-tsoo-po (MaZu), “is weak — away with an image that cannot protect itself — cast it into the ocean, and let us see if it has power to rescue itself” (97). Gutzlaff’s adventure, published at the end of the Romantic period and drawing in a new geographic region for imperial
excitement, may serve as an imaginative bridge between the romantic flights of the early century and the imperial fictions of the late century. What makes his *Journal* even more interesting in this regard is that it is nonfiction and records “real” experiences, yet it was popularly read.

While, as W.H. Medhurst suggested, the covert voyage on the Chinese junk “struck most . . . English readers with amazement” (364), it was the voyage aboard the *Lord Amherst*, which occupies the largest portion of the *Journal*, that gave this work a political importance not eclipsed by any other work on China in the first half of the nineteenth century. Even in the composition of the *Journal*, Gutzlaff seems to have understood that the first voyage was but a gesture towards the importance of the second, or as he calls it, “only a feeble beginning of what must ensue” (151). A lone missionary, particularly one in disguise, was not enough to prove China open. “Something more efficient” was needed to open “a free intercourse with China,” and Gutzlaff wished that he might “be subservient, in a small degree, in hastening forward such an event” (151). This “more efficient” mission was clearly how he hoped to cast the second voyage. It was to be the forerunner of the opening of China to British commerce, or as the structure of the narrative places it, as the catalyst for trade up the coast in Jardine’s opium clippers.

**VII. The Second Voyage and Gutzlaff’s Opening of China**

The “Journal of a Second Voyage along the Coast of China,” as the second part of the book is called, can be understood as a narrative thesis on the receptivity of coastal Chinese to trade and relations with foreigners, with the single obstacle of government interference. Tracing their journey from port to port along the coast, Gutzlaff provides
various accounts of their ramblings ashore.\textsuperscript{146} After initial rebuffs from the local mandarins, they walk around the town and experience a regular friendliness and acceptance by the people. On several occasions he is recognized by acquaintances from his previous trip, who “called me by name, and were anxious to express their joy at seeing me again” (285). He notes the regular prosperity of the towns, with “shops well furnished with the necessaries and the luxuries of life” (179). Though everywhere they are escorted by a guard, they find frequent occasion to talk with merchants. As already mentioned, their large supply of Marjoribanks’s pamphlet “A Brief Account of the English Character,” serves them as an introduction to each community. Also supplied with tracts on the scriptures, gambling, Christian doctrines, and Milne’s famous dialogue, “The Two Friends,” they make a missionary impact as well. Having sent the tracts to the emperor, Gutzlaff praises God “to be a distributor of his holy word [with] ample opportunity to communicate these holy treasures; for the people were anxious to see and study the books which the emperor was to examine” (227). According to the \textit{Journal}, at no point are they ever refused by the common people, and no one opposes their distribution of tracts. They have seen “the Chinese character in its true light, that of friendliness and kindness towards foreigners” (301).

In addition to the general receptivity of their visit by the common people, Gutzlaff shows the people to be eager for trade. As he puts in the mouth of Fujian natives, “who complained bitterly of the system of exclusion enforced by the mandarins[,] ‘How gladly,’ said they, ‘would we, if permitted, cultivate amicable

\textsuperscript{146} As further evidence of the ease with which the exploring party moved along the coast, the \textit{Journal} includes a large fold-out map illustrating the many points at which they went ashore. This map is a powerful visual of China’s “open door.” For the map, see Appendix.
intercourse with you! but we are always forbidden to obey the impulse of our hearts!’” (172). Repeated again and again, Gutzlaff reports this response of native merchants along the coast. No sooner do they begin trading negotiations, than the mandarins interfere and prohibit them.

The problem, Gutzlaff points out, is that China is governed by an illegitimate and therefore suspicious despotism, by which the regional governments are held in awe. The local mandarins, though they might wish to trade, employ what he calls “political popery,” the deflection of all decision to the emperor (183). It is to this that Gutzlaff traces the grounds for more aggressive action on the part of the British. By refusing to allow the people to trade freely, the Qing overlords are transgressing natural law.

Gutzlaff seems assured that the doctrine of free trade is universally accepted in Britain:

“Every candid reader will agree with me, that no government has a right to seclude its subjects from all foreign intercourse. There are innate rights which no human prohibition can destroy, and the right of reciprocal intercourse between the nations of the world is one of these. (182)

Immediately following, by the characteristic slippage of his synthetic Christianity, this denial of trade is also resistance against God:

“What authority on earth, even of the Chinese emperor, as ‘vicegerant [sic] of heaven over all the globe,’ can enact laws forbidding to acknowledge the Creator of the universe, and the Saviour of the world? This, in effect, has been done in China. Though we cannot alter their laws . . . yet we do not consider them so binding upon us, as inhabitants of the same planet, and Christians in faith and practice, that we may not enter the empire. (182-3)

Since the laws of the Chinese are not shaped by the law of nature, then they need not be obeyed. If the Chinese empire violates these “innate rights,” then China is resisting God’s will and must be resisted by those who are “Christians in faith and practice.”
The solution to this problem of Chinese resistance runs throughout the *Journal* and follows, more or less, what was known as the Law of Nations. This popular theory of political economy is summed up by Vattel:

> All men ought to find on earth the things they stand in need of. In the primitive state of communion, they took them wherever they happened to meet with them, if another had not before appropriated them to his own use. The introduction of dominion and property could not deprive men of so essential a right; and consequently, it cannot take place without leaving them, in general, some mean of procuring what is useful or necessary to them [i.e., tea]. *This mean is commerce*; by it every man may still supply his wants. — Things being now become property, there is no obtaining them without the owner’s consent; they may be bought or exchanged for other things of equal value. *Men are, therefore, under an obligation to carry on that commerce with each other, if they wish not to depart from the views of nature. And this obligation extends also to whole nations, or states….”* (qtd. in Matheson 34)

Firm adherents of this political economy, the ministries of Lord Grey and Robert Peel established its principles through the 1830s, primarily through its corollary doctrine of Free Trade. Expressed by Richard Cobden as a principle “which shall act on the moral world as the principle of gravitation in the universe — drawing men together, thrusting aside the antagonism of race, and creed, and language, and uniting us in the bonds of eternal peace” (qtd. in Bourne 269), the doctrine of Free Trade assumed that because the earth was divided into different climates with differing products, the world was situated so “that man may be dependent upon man” through “the exchange of commodities . . . and the extension and diffusion of knowledge” thereby “multiplying and confirming friendly relations” (Palmerston, qtd. in Bourne 255). Free Trade was necessary to the good of all and ought to be defended and promoted by all, if necessary to the point of violence. As Kenneth Bourne has shown in *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, this doctrine was the basis of Palmerston’s foreign policy and the “economic imperialism” by which historians have characterized it (4).
In Gutzlaff’s hands, an implied doctrine of Free Trade becomes a license for aggression against the laws of China. “What right,” he asks, “have men, who derive their being from the same great Parent, who live under the same canopy of heaven, and who are advancing to the same state of future existence — to deny to their fellow-men the privileges of mutual intercourse?” (“Voyages” 200). With a peculiarly religious twist to the doctrine, the rights of trade and obedience to the law of nations are made universal through the common createdness of mankind. Assuming the justice of the British cause as champions of the law of nations, he explains the practical ease of execution. “Conscious of their physical weakness,” he relates, “and persuaded of the impracticability of their unreasonable law, the naval officers, who guard the coast against intruders, always endeavour to prevail by threats, which they never carry into execution, or by repeating the prohibitions of the ‘inviolable laws.’ Both measures are vain, when once a vessel enters the harbours” (252). He frequently emphasizes their inability to resist: “Had we come hither as enemies, the whole army would not have resisted half an hour, for they were all dispirited; and the mandarins went so far as to report that one soldier had actually died at the sight of our second mate” (310). In light of their weakness, what future merchants must do is boldly assert their right to trade. He blames the “fear of infringing Chinese laws” (304), not any real obstacle, for thus far deterring the British from the trade. By his own experience, speaking “from facts against inveterate

147 In an article on “Free Intercourse with China,” Elijah Bridgman adopts Gutzlaff’s religiously based doctrine of Free Trade—including its adherence to the law of nature—with unbridled enthusiasm. He writes, “The present condition and attitude of this empire are unnatural and utterly opposed to the spirit of the age. Hitherto in China the rights of man, even those which are unalienable, have been trampled on and disregarded: but so they cannot always be. Once indeed there were exclusive rights among the nations; but since the advent of the Prince of peace, the rights, as well the duties of men, have been placed in a new light. . . . The work which has been accomplished under the guidance of Providence, is a sure pledge of what shall hereafter be achieved, and that even China will be brought down (or more correctly, will be exalted) to stand on a level with the nations of the earth” (128).
opinions,” he urges that these laws will “lose that severity in the same degree with which they are resisted with firmness and reason” (305).

In the final analysis, his provocation is clear: China is open both to trade and the Gospel if only the British will push the issue. With an argument for “economic imperialism,” he gives a prescription and call for future action, uniting the elements of his synthetic Christianity: “All this we have fully ascertained, and make report of it to draw the attention of missionaries, as well as merchants, to this interesting field.” Nevertheless, it must be an informal imperialism, for “we should highly disapprove of violent measures to obtain an object, which might be gained by firmness and resolution” (310).

An analysis of the reception of Gutzlaff’s Journal clearly suggests that this perception of China as open for commerce and Christianity was precisely the cultural work that the Journal performed. Reviewed by the Eclectic Review, the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, Christian Observer, Chinese Repository, the Imperial Magazine, The Athenaeum, the Westminster Review, and the Quarterly Review, and additionally excerpted in the Journal of the Royal Geographic Society, The Mirror, and Missionary Records, Gutzlaff’s work reached far beyond the regular readers of missionary provocations because his specific type of synthetic Christianity, with its own uniquely provocative message, was addressed to secular as well as Evangelical concerns. What these reviews reveal is that both secular readers and Evangelicals came away with a common conclusion, expressed succinctly by the Eclectic Review: “These voyages sufficiently prove that China is not inaccessible” (“Gutzlaff’s Three Voyages” 391).

Not surprisingly, reviewers picked up on those aspects of the Journal that most closely matched their interest, whether economic or evangelistic. The articles for the
Eclectic Review and the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine focus on the missionary’s ability to move easily among the people and distribute scriptures, and they remark at the eagerness of the people to obtain the Christian literature. Given the long, slow trickle of information from the China Mission, with the constant reminders that China was closed to the Gospel, Gutzlaff’s account was startling. Writing a few years later, Medhurst explains the broad effect of Gutzlaff’s work in the minds of Evangelical readers:

It had long been supposed, that China was hermetically sealed against the propagators of divine truth; that it would be death to set foot on her shores; and madness to attempt to diffuse the Gospel in those regions. But here was a man, who had gone and returned unhurt; had maintained an extensive intercourse with the people; had resided, for months together, in their cities and provinces; had met the far-famed and much-dreaded mandarins; and, instead of being arrested, imprisoned, and sent back in a cage to Canton, had been, in every instance, treated with civility, and, sometimes, with respect. (364)

Gutzlaff had passed beyond the realms of safety and had entered regions of terror and darkness. The note of exotic danger is easily detectable in “the far-famed and much-dreaded mandarins.” Gutzlaff’s work debunked what had become an assumed notion of the impossibility of access to the largest portion of the earth’s population, and this seemed revolutionary. Even so, the enthusiasm of the Wesleyan Methodist reviewer is surprising: “It is one of the most interesting publications the age has produced . . . particularly the proof which it supplies, that the teeming population of that benighted country are accessible to Christian Missionaries” (“Journal” 444).

Among secular journals his work fared equally well. Pointing out that Gutzlaff’s object was as much for “the extension of British commerce” as for “extending Christianity,” The Athenaeum congratulates themselves for having reviewed each of his journeys as they appeared in the Chinese Repository, “which we had exclusively” (“Journal” 366). Noting that, “he appears to have been less scrupulous than some of his
religious brethren in the means he employed to accomplish his ends” (468), John Barrow in the *Quarterly Review* shows an awareness that synthetic Christianity was new for the Evangelical mission in China; at the same time, the change was generally welcomed, particularly the willingness to circulate non-religious works. “A missionary,” writes the *Athenaeum*, “could not be employed more beneficially” (“The Chinese” 271).

For these reviewers, however, Gutzlaff’s *Journal* was most important for its bold conclusion that firmness with the Chinese would be rewarded with openness to trade. Among the secular reviews there appears a common agreement that the error of the China trade had been too much cooperation with an unjust government. Affirming the argument of the *Journal*, one reviewer articulates Gutzlaff’s position with greater candor: “the Chinese government will eventually tolerate what it cannot hinder. If any outcry should be raised against this on the score of conscience, it will be speedily put down by the conviction which is gaining ground universally, that smuggling everywhere is not a vice but a virtue, a creditable effort of the common sense of man, against the folly and dishonesty of governments” (“Journal,” *Westminster* 135). What is an equally important piece to this Free Trade argument, also drawn from the *Journal*, is that while the government may resist trade, the will of the people will eventually carry the day.

Perhaps unconsciously, almost all of the reviewers include in their articles a little phrase from the *Journal*: “Let it rather be remembered that these millions of inhabitants are *anxious to cultivate* friendship with Europeans” (305; my emphasis). With each adoption of the phrase (always without direct quotation), Gutzlaff’s goal was fulfilled. One review states that Gutzlaff “found the *people* of China extremely anxious to cultivate the acquaintance of their visitors” (“The Chinese” 271); another says, “the Chinese [are]
as anxious as any nation on earth to court a commercial intercourse with strangers” (“Journal,” Westminster 134); another writes, among the “lower orders” of the Chinese “there was a strong disposition to encourage commercial intercourse with strangers” (Barrow, “Gutzlaff’s Voyages” 475); and another phrased the idea, “Anxiety to trade was, on most occasions, displayed by the people” (“Documents,” The Athenaeum 521).

This core idea of Gutzlaff’s Journal, the people of China’s anxiety to cultivate friendship — acquaintance, commercial intercourse, trade — became established in the popular discourse on the China trade through the middle of the 1830s. In 1835, a popular tract on “Missionary Records,” of which over 62,000 were distributed, tells of Gutzlaff’s mission and explains that in China, “The bondage of this exclusive system is beginning to be felt by the people, and the time is hastening when the government will feel itself necessitated to relax its efforts to maintain it” (67). Indeed, convinced that a “new era in our commercial intercourse with the east” had arrived, a writer for the Penny Magazine in 1836 believed that more efforts must follow Gutzlaff’s, which had revealed “the favourable symptoms already evinced generally manifest among the masses in China” (286). More important for gaining popular acceptance of his thesis, though, was that the book itself was widely read, going through thirteen distinct editions — including translation into four languages — before 1840. In addition, the book was marketed for extensive middle-class sales, appearing in London as an inexpensive sextodecimo. A literary notice for one of the reprint editions celebrated the fact that “The neat and cheap form of this reprint will secure its extended circulation,” spreading this “work of a man who has done more to break down the barrier which prevents the entrance of Christian missionaries into China, than any other human being” (“Brief Notes” 118). Perhaps most
effective for disseminating his thesis with the general public was the publication in 1839, on the eve of the Opium War, of an abridged tract version entitled “Missionary Travels in China, to Distribute Bibles. By the Rev. C. Gutzlaff.” Printed on a steam-press in Bristol, this 32-page tract sold for a penny and, if consistent with other tracts on missions, saw a circulation of around 60,000 (Jones “Appendix II”). In 1836 when the Christian Observer was reviewing a series of “missionary narratives,” which they recognized as a new and “if well-written a most interesting and instructive, species of composition,” they remark that “Gutzlaff’s recent hope-inspiring narrative is too well known to require mention” (“Proceedings of Missionaries” 186). The provocation that had sparked the genre had become so widely read in two years that a review would have seemed redundant.

VIII. Political Provocation

With the increasing public knowledge of Gutzlaff’s voyage through reviews, associated correspondence, and the gradual appearance of versions of his work in 1832 and 1833 — even before the complete edition was published in 1834 — his thesis began to influence the policies of the government toward China.148 Debate regarding the end of the EIC’s monopoly on trade in the East, which was scheduled to expire in April 1834, began in a preliminary fashion in the summer session of 1830, when the subject was referred to a Select Committee (First Report 1). Over the next three years, the work of the Select Committee included written statements from Gutzlaff and Lindsay, as well as testimony from the merchant community. In his statement, Gutzlaff reinforces the notion

Gutzlaff’s thesis must also be understood as H. Hamilton Lindsay’s thesis, as the two wrote in agreement on the issues and methods to be pursued. Although Lindsay’s statement to the parliamentary Select Committee — later published as an independent pamphlet, Report of Proceedings on a Voyage to the Northern Ports of China, in the Ship Lord Amherst (1833) — certainly lent additional weight to the commercial lobby, it was Gutzlaff’s provocation that provided the wide dissemination of the thesis and its vocabulary.
that the common people were “anxious to cultivate friendship,” writing, “If the voice of
the people, who, even under a tyrannical government, will be permitted to alter their
wishes, the united request of the inhabitants . . . claims a trade with the British nation for
the mutual benefit of both parties” (Copy or Extract 10). Generally drawn from events
related in the Journal, Lindsay’s statement serves largely to lend credit to Gutzlaff’s
ongoing argument, as for example his comment, “On many occasions, when Mr. Gutzlaff
has been surrounded by hundreds of eager listeners, he has been interrupted by loud
expressions of the pleasure with which they listened to his pithy and indeed eloquent
language” (Copy or Extract 26). As The Athenaeum reviewed these documents, they were
left with Gutzlaff’s intended impression: “Anxiety to trade was, on most occasions,
displayed by the people, while the Mandarins uniformly resisted all such attempts; but it
seemed on the whole, that a vigorous effort to open commercial intercourse, if supported
by such a naval force as would ensure respect for the British name, could scarcely fail of
succeeding” (“Documents” 521). On 4 June 1833, debate in the House was renewed in
earnest as the Select Committee concluded their investigation.

Over the next two months, the discussion in both the House of Commons and
House of Lords on the EIC charter was brought back frequently to the subject of the
China Trade. Clearly at issue was a great deal of money. The Company’s net gains after
selling legal wares, buying Chinese tea, and then selling to the public amounted to
$12,000,000 (Spanish silver) per year, while the private illegal sale of East India opium
was bringing in $25,000,000 a year (Hansard, H. of Commons, 4 June 1833, 378). In
addition, all were agreed that the chief concern of the public was maintaining the flow of
the beverage “which cheers but not inebriates” (Matheson 4), a product frequently and
ridiculously referred to as “nearly equivalent to a necessary of life” (Staunton, *Corrected Report* 21).\(^{149}\) Unwilling to query the process, the issues of the day regarded the maintenance of both the tea import and the profits from opium. These concerns were primarily framed as follows: Would private traders have greater access to the Chinese markets than the Company? If private trade were allowed, how could it be regulated? What would be required to secure respect from the Chinese should the authority of the Company be removed? It is interesting that the points of concern were almost exclusively about British commercial security. As Thomas Macaulay expressed it mid-way through the session, “The China Trade is to be opened: reason requires this — public opinion requires it . . . [but] the political consequences which necessarily follow from the opening of the trade” were the subjects for Parliament to consider (*Hansard*, H. of Commons, 10 July 1833, 504). For the most part, speakers on both sides of the House showed little concern for the laws of the Chinese empire or the implications of the trade on the people of China. Instead, the debates show a broad acceptance of the idea that the Chinese people — despite the oppressive and petulant edicts of the emperor — were open and eager for trade.

Because the entire economic policy of the Free Trade movement depended on mutual cooperation among nations, the fact of China’s openness to trade was among the central points established during the debates on the Company’s charter.\(^{150}\) Among the

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\(^{149}\) In his Resolutions in the House of Commons on the 13 June 1833, which opened the debate on the EIC charter, Sir George Staunton’s first Resolution begins, “That the British intercourse with China is the source from whence this country is exclusively supplied with tea, an article in such universal use as to be nearly equivalent to a necessary of life, and through the consumption of which a revenue of between three and four millions sterling is annually raised with greater facility and certainty, and with less pressure on the people, than is the case of any other tax of equal amount . . .” (Staunton, *Corrected Report* 21).

\(^{150}\) Although overwhelmed by the majority, the argument against free trade in China is best articulated by Sir George Staunton in *Miscellaneous Notices relating to China, and our Commercial*
few MPs to oppose this policy in China, Sir George Staunton opened the discussion with a set of nine Resolutions that outlined a highly diplomatic approach to extending the trade, including another embassy to the imperial court and, in the case of non-cooperation, the potential measure of stopping the trade temporarily.\footnote{Sir George Staunton’s nine Resolutions, which were immediately negatived by the House, can be found in Hansard, House of Commons, 13 June 1833, or in the Appendix to the \textit{Corrected Report of the Speech of Sir George Staunton on Sir James Graham’s Motion on the China Trade . . . 1840}. These Resolutions include a statement of the importance of the trade, the potential increase in trade should relations improve, the necessity to gain greater clarity on the causes of exclusion, the fact of trade at Canton being regulated by the Cohong, the past effectiveness of the Company in guarding the trade from cessation, the indispensable necessity of providing an equal authority should the Company be removed and of gaining imperial sanction for that authority from Peking, and the need for measures of extradition for British subjects should they commit crimes in Canton.}

After the reading of Staunton’s Resolutions, which display his characteristic caution and his respect for the Chinese, Charles Grant, President of the Board of Control, turned the discussion away from prudence and firmly declared that the Chinese were ready for trade. Their apparent reluctance and “jealousy,” he argued, was due to the Company’s power in India and China’s fear of their expansion (\textit{Hansard}, H. of Commons, 13 June 1833, 709). Towards private traders, however, the attitude was different. Drawing the missionary merchant Gutzlaff into the realm of public politics, he made the statement that “it was also a fact” that must foreground the entire discussion and “should not be lost sight of, that the people of China . . . were themselves \textit{anxious for the continuance, and, indeed, the extension, of that intercourse}, though it was prohibited by the laws of the empire” (714; my emphasis).

\textit{Intercourse with that Country} (1822). Written before the great influx of opium traders, he nevertheless foresaw the dangerous tendency and its potential for conflict with the Chinese system. With a clear perception of British national prejudice, he explains the cultural problem succinctly, “one of the most important features [of China] . . . is the principle of strict subordination and control, and of the most extensive individual responsibility, which in China pervades, not only the system of government, but every relation of private life. . . . and however despotic and oppressive the operation of this principle may appear in our eyes, in those of the Chinese it has invariably been considered as one of the first requisites of a good government, and one of the surest tests of a civilized people. . . . Nothing, therefore, upon the commencement of the present commercial intercourse of foreigners with the empire of China, so much contributed to render them odious, both to the government and to the people in general, as their apparent disposition and tendency, upon almost all occasions, to a state of anarchy and disorder.” (127-28).
As “an illustration” of that statement, he refers the House to the recent voyage of a ship fitted out for the purpose of ascertaining the possibility of opening trade along the northward coast. His reference goes further in giving Gutzlaff a place in the discussion:

There was, at first, some difficulty opposed on the part of the local authorities, as the orders of the Government are very strict in that respect, but by a little perseverance, and the advantage of having a gentleman on board who was perfectly conversant in the Chinese language and customs; indeed, so well acquainted that the Chinese would not believe that he was not a deserter from amongst them, — by that gentleman’s aid, they soon overcame this difficulty. Wherever the vessel touched, the people came around them in great numbers, and in some instances they were visited by the local authorities; but in every case the people showed the strongest disposition to open an intercourse with them. (714-15)

Following Grant’s speech, Charles Marjoribanks, who had been the President of the Select Committee for the Company at Canton, reiterated the point, saying, “Among the mass of people . . . there was a disposition in our favour. A proof of this was to be found in the expedition” already referenced (Hansard, H. of Commons, 13 June 1833, 755). As proof, he read to the House from a first-hand account of the voyage,

“Wherever we went, we found the people anxious, beyond our hopes, for intercourse with us; and, I declare, we met with more kindness and civility from the Chinese, during our voyage, than travelers could expect or experience from any civilized nation in the world.” (755; my emphasis)

Marjoribanks reminded the House that this “was no speculation, but a statement of fact,” coming from those “speaking the Chinese language admirably” (755). Taken together, Grant and Marjoribanks establish Gutzlaff as an authority—the authority—on the Chinese. First, his knowledge of language and customs is presented as providing unprecedented access to the real people of China, rather than the dishonest and self-interested Hong merchants with whom all others had been accustomed to deal. So adept as a cultural chameleon, Gutzlaff could even fool the Chinese into thinking he was a
native. Only such an authority could bypass the deceptive dickering of the mandarins and enable Gutzlaff and Lindsay to discover the true feelings of the Chinese towards the British. Second, they remind the House that the views of Gutzlaff and Lindsay are not mere speculations, but statements of fact. How could the opinions and suppositions of the Board of Directors or any interest in Britain compare with first-hand experience with the people? Finally, both Grant and Marjoribanks unconsciously lend further affirmation to Gutzlaff’s (and Lindsay’s) argument of an open China by framing their speeches not only with their idea, but even with Gutzlaff’s specific rhetorical phrasing: the people of China are anxious to cultivate relations with the British.

Gutzlaff’s example and his narrative provided the Free Trade policy makers with a key premise to their argument. For the sake of cogency, they had to establish that the Chinese were demonstrating a willingness to trade. By the expression of that desire, the people of China were displaying tacit acceptance of the law of nations, with its particular expression in the doctrine of Free Trade. The EIC charter and the relations hitherto followed by the Company towards China had not dealt with the Chinese according the law of nations but had assisted in keeping them in isolation. Private traders, however, as the example of Gutzlaff and Lindsay had shown, would relate to the Chinese on equal terms and thereby affirm what the people of China clearly desired.

After three readings in the House of Commons, three readings in the House of Lords, and Select Committee discussions for each of them, the China Trade Bill was passed on 12 August and 22 August by the respective Houses. Since the House was not

152 *Hansard*, House of Commons, 12 August 1833, 562. A proposed amendment to the Bill, which provided for defraying the costs of the new government official in a manner like consular situations in other countries, was negatived by the Commons. In the House of Lords, there was little discussion on the bill, with the exception of an observation by Lord Auckland that the new position of Government
divided on either occasion, there were no individual votes by which private opinion has
been recorded. The only record of dissent emerging in either House of Parliament, apart
from mere haggling over the form of Free Trade that ought to be adopted, appears in the
arguments of the Marquis of Buckingham and Sir Robert Inglis, both of whom were
associated with Evangelicalism. Articulating a standard Evangelical criticism of the
Company, Buckingham pointed out the contradictory position of the EIC, which had
claimed to be “the guardian of the laws, and the preservers of the morals of the people
over whom they ruled, and punished with extreme severity any infraction of their own
regulations,” while in their commerce “they cultivated this opium for no other purpose
than for smuggling it into China, against the laws and edicts of the empire; and as had
been truly said, of poisoning the health, and destroying the morals of the people of that
country.” This, for Buckingham, stained the Company with immeasurable guilt: “it was
they who furnished the opium from India, and their supercargoes at Canton who licensed
the smugglers in China, so that the beginning and the end of this illicit and contraband
trade was theirs” (Hansard, H. of Commons, 13 June 1833, 770). Despite the criticism of
the opium traffic and of the Company’s obvious role as the supplier and encourager of

Superintendent seemed to include “a very large discretionary power” — which proved to have dramatic
irony given Captain Elliot’s later futile attempts to exercise power in Canton (Hansard, H. of Lords, 16
August 1833, 714). For the passage of the Bill in the House of Lords, see Hansard, Third Series, Vol. 20,
House of Lords, 22 August 1833.

Buckingham and Inglis fulfill at least one of the measures by which Ian Bradley identifies
Oxford, 1974: “(1) Direct evidence of adherence to Evangelical theology. The most common and
conclusive form which this takes is a reference in the biography or the manuscript remains of an individual
to a cataclysmic experience of conversion. . . . (2) The testimony of known Evangelicals. . . . (3) Active
membership in at least one of the ‘big three’ Evangelical societies, the British and Foreign Bible Society
(and its offshoots the Hibernian Bible Society, the Naval and Military Bible Society and the Prayer Book
and Homily Society), the CMS and the London Society for promoting Christianity Among the Jews”
(Appendix I). Buckingham was president of an auxiliary of the Bible Society, while Inglis fulfills all three
evidences.
the sale, Buckingham failed to see that Free Trade encouraged many more hands in the illegal trade. Instead, he adopted the naïve hope that free traders would bring manufactured goods instead of opium, and there would develop “a wholesome and reciprocally beneficial commerce” in place of “the mischievous and demoralizing traffic which now did injury to both” (770).

With a bit more foresight, Sir Robert Inglis — friend of Wilberforce and “the last of the great Clapham Evangelicals” (Brown 326) — took a self-consciously lonely stance against the entire discussion. Recalling the non-partisan position of Evangelicals during the decades of the fight against slavery, Inglis leveled criticism against both the Company and the Free Trade lobbyists. Pointing out the Company’s presumptuous rule and its disregard for the Chinese government, he remarked,

> when [I] found that the right hon. President of the Board of Control, in his correspondence with the Court of Directors, spoke of establishing a colony in the dominions of the emperor of China, for the purpose of regulating British trade, and that the same proposition was embodied in one of the clauses of the Bill with as little ceremony as if the subject were the establishment of a Custom House officer in the Isle of Wight, [I] certainly was not a little astonished. . . . It could not be denied that the Chinese government had the right of excluding us from their territories, although some persons assumed, because we admitted the Chinese into our Indian Empire, we were entitled to admission into theirs. (Hansard, H. of Commons, 26 July 1833, 20)

In the entire debate, his was the only suggestion that the Chinese, despite what Gutzlaff had reported, did not desire a British presence anywhere besides Canton — and with just cause given the harm of opium and the unpleasant precedent of the British colonization of India. The fact that the government of China was in earnest about its exclusions had been entirely brushed aside by public opinion, which as Grant had put it, “was not the clamour of the moment, but it was the voice of an enlightened community, formed during a succession of years” (Hansard, H. of Commons, 13 June 1833, 706). Denying the very
principles of the law of nations, the global economic cooperative, Inglis gestures towards the traditional notion of national sovereignty, whatever the form of government. Through that lens he likewise brings censure to the steps that had already been taken by rogues like Gutzlaff:

If, even under the rule of the East India Co., such a voyage as that of the ship Amherst could have been undertaken against the laws of China, how many other attempts would be made to violate those laws, when the restraints imposed by the authority of the East I.C. should be wholly removed (22)

Rather than considering Gutzlaff’s voyage as a moral victory and a model to be followed by other missionaries and merchants, Inglis applies an argument of respect for established authorities. Typical of the early Evangelicals’ “Christ the Transformer of Culture” approach, one is bound by faith to respect all authorities since they have been instituted by God. Inglis was certainly aware that many in the Evangelical community of his day were excitedly passing on the news that China had become open. As a member of Evangelical societies and a subscriber to the Eclectic Review, Christian Observer, and Evangelical Magazine (Brown 355), he knew that Gutzlaff’s missionary zeal in defying the laws of the empire had been met with applause and further anticipation. Nevertheless, illustrating the suspension of judgment and the self-critique that had marked the early phase of Evangelicalism, the aged Inglis registers his criticism with resignation. Knowing that “the question was already decided,” he simply thanked “the House for the kindness and the patience with which they had heard these observations” (Hansard, H. of Commons, 26 July 1833, 22).

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154 See chapter six of Wilberforce’s Practical View for a treatment of the Evangelical approach to established political authorities.

155 Evangelicalism after 1830 shows a growing divide in the approach to culture and shows distinct variations with regard to international cultures. The tendency in scholarship of empire to lump together
IX. Testing China’s Anxiety to Cultivate Friendship

With the passing of the China Trade Bill, the public’s belief that the people of China were anxious to cultivate trade and friendship was written into law. The question of the Chinese government’s response to Free Trade was put into the hands of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, and into the king’s designated Superintendent, William John, Lord Napier. Upon setting out, Napier was given a series of contradictory instructions. From the king, he was told to wear his naval uniform and act as representative of the crown, yet he was given no formal diplomatic letter. Lord Grey, the Prime Minister, instructed him to use caution and approach without pomp. To this contradiction was added Lord Palmerston’s, who recommended that he observe the laws of China as long as they are administered “with justice and good faith.” Yet, Palmerston reminded him, he must not endanger the existing good relations, “either by threatening language or by asking for British military or naval help,” unless it should be required “in extreme cases (by) the most evident necessity” (qtd. in Gelber 6). Similarly confusing, it was thought desirable to open communications with Peking; however, as Superintendent and not a diplomat, Napier was not to enter into any formal negotiations. Regarding the British traders, Napier was told that the government was eager to be rid of the embarrassing opium traffic, but here his instructions were at their most blurry: “it is not desirable that you should encourage such adventures, but you must never lose sight of the fact that you have no authority to interfere with them or prevent them” (qtd. in Gelber 6).

mid- to late-century missionaries as ubiquitously paternalistic and pro-empire lacks critical clarity and calls for an extended study on the Victorian Christians’ approaches to “Christ and Culture.”
Palmerston also recommended that he survey the coast and consider places where warships could maneuver.

With his remarkable ability to create fluid and unpredictable political situations, Palmerston provided himself for any eventuality from Napier’s arrival in Canton. It seems he anticipated a failure. Whatever the outcome, he could claim that Napier had been warned. Napier’s ill-fated arrival at Canton included disregard for Chinese laws about passports and an inability to adjust to the Chinese style of negotiation, which resulted in his ship firing on the forts at the passage of the Bogue. His refusal to cooperate with the Hong merchants contributed to his forced confinement at Canton and his eventual illness and death from fever. It appears there was some awareness that the outcome was perhaps inevitable given the proud and bellicose character of the man who had been chosen for an extremely delicate position. The merchants at Canton blamed the deceptive and capricious character of the Chinese, as well as the lack of foresight exhibited by Napier. The Duke of Wellington blamed Napier for his “pretension to fix himself at Canton without previous permission or even communication,” and his presumption in attempting to “communicate directly with the viceroy,” which he had been warned against (Hansard, H. of Commons, 7 April 1840, 681). And Palmerston, consistent with his easy dismissals of his own bad policy, later wrote of “poor Napier” and “his foolish Pranks” (qtd. in Gelber 17). Sir George Staunton, writing in 1822, was proved a prophet:

156 The Hong merchants insultingly referred to Napier as “Laboriously Vile,” a name by which he was remembered in Canton up to the time of the Opium War.

157 For a contemporary eyewitness account of the circumstances of Napier’s brief time in China, see “British Authorities in China,” in the Chinese Repository for November 1834. This account also contains all the edicts of the Chinese authorities and copies of Napier’s communications to them. An excellent history of the encounter is Chapter 3 of Collis’s Foreign Mud. See also Coates, Prelude to Hongkong.
[I]f, led away by a theory . . . we at once throw open this trade, equally and indiscriminately, to the experienced and the inexperienced, the honest and the dishonest, the wary and the unwary . . . [and] ceasing to interpose the present conciliating medium, [then] we hazard the consequent collision of such opposite characters and habits as those of the Chinese and the natives of Great Britain. 

*(Miscellaneous Notices 152)*

Staunton could not have explained the Achilles heel of Free Trade more accurately, as a nice enough theory that proves its own undoing due to the character of those who engage in it. In her foundational study of *Imperialism* (1951), Hannah Arendt identifies this central piece of the imperial puzzle: imperialism, she maintains, does not begin in the realm of politics, “but has its origin in the realm of business speculation” (5). At a moment of political satiation but economic superfluity, the “owners of superfluous wealth” joined with the permanently idle “superfluous men,” and together they produced “the most superfluous and unreal goods” — luxuries like tea and opium — establishing “the first paradise of parasites whose lifeblood was gold” (31). While the East India Company certainly belongs in this group, which Arendt short-handedly calls “the mob,” its most anarchical tendencies were revealed with the opening of the China Trade to all comers.

In a letter to his friend Sir George Staunton written not long before his death in 1834, the old missionary Robert Morrison recognized that the situation in China was changing radically. “Canton is greatly agitated by the new system. Hopes and fears alternate,” he wrote. Though he could not predict the consequences, he believed that they would be great; yet he feared for China, “for I am not that patriot who would wish to aggrandize my own country by the injury or ruin of another. I do not think that

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chapter 10; Chang, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War*, chapter 3; Beeching, *The Chinese Opium Wars*, chapter 2; and Fay, *The Opium War*, chapter 6. For an account sympathetic of Napier’s position, see *Barbarian Eye: Lord Napier in China*, by Priscilla Napier, a descendent of Lord Napier.
Christianity admits of such patriotism. But how few consider the welfare of China in all their speculations about free trade, &c.” (Memoirs II.505). Again showing his frequent doubt and misgivings about the relationship between a missionary and his country — characteristic of his Evangelical era — Morrison discerned that the speculations of free trade were to be colored with the exploitation of the Chinese. Already he had heard the patriotic rhetoric of national honor, but resident on the spot he could also see that the practice looked entirely dishonorable and self-interested. Everything had changed since his arrival, “a state of society . . . totally different from what I found it in 1807,” and he felt himself ready to “fall asleep” (465).

With the death of Morrison on 1 August and Napier on 11 October 1834, the moral and political leaders of the foreign community at Canton were gone. John Francis Davis, a former Company supercargo and a Chinese linguist in his own right, replaced Napier as Chief Superintendent, with Sir George Robinson as Second Superintendent and Captain Charles Elliot as the Third. Davis and Robinson were both middle-class Company men, with a style of leadership and a philosophy towards the Chinese that grated against the quickly increasing number of independent traders. Rather than the aggressive, forceful principles advocated by the traders, Davis and Robinson encouraged “a policy of quiescence, which should not imply acquiescence” (qtd. in Coates 168). For six months after Napier’s death, Davis watched the number of traders in opium swell the river at Canton. In full violation of the Navigation Act and following the lead of Jardine and Matheson, the traders placed receiving vessels at Lintin island in the bay and at points along the northward coast, between which their opium clippers ran each new shipment from Calcutta and Bengal (Collis 78-80). With Gutzlaff helping to establish
consistent floating emporiums near Foochow and Chinchow bay, within that year the opium traffic had multiplied from around 20,000 chests in 1833-34 to over 30,000 in 1835-36 (Coates 168). But with Palmerston’s orders still in effect, the Superintendents had no powers to interfere with the private traders; they were to manage disturbances to the trade (Hansard, H. of Commons, 7 April 1840, 682-84). Recognizing that the position of Superintendent was a political farce and considering the free traders a “vulgar rabble,” Davis resigned the commission and returned to England in early 1835 (qtd. in Gelber 41).

Taking over for Davis as chief Superintendent, Robinson made some efforts to de-legitimize the wide-open illegal traffic, even moving his ship to the opium emporium at Lintin Island and asking for powers from Palmerston to enforce restrictions. Yet Palmerston was insistent that the Superintendent had no powers over British subjects; instead, he desired that Robinson would make efforts at official communication with the Viceroy and Peking that might lead to relaxation of the exclusionary policy. When Palmerston received a letter from Robinson stating the opposite policy, “To use the common but applicable maxim of ‘letting well alone’; I shall carefully avoid all danger and risk of any change of a doubtful nature in its prospective effects,” he immediately called Robinson back to England and appointed Elliot in his place (Hansard, H. of Commons, 7 April 1840, 684). The doctrine of Free Trade was not concerned with method, only with results; the free traders were to be given their space.

In his instructions to Elliot upon taking over as Chief Superintendent, Palmerston again made it clear that Free Trade was to be protected at all costs. His comments show the ridiculous position in which Elliot was placed:

[E]xercise great caution in interfering . . . with the undertakings of British merchants. In the present state of our relations with China, it is especially
incumbent upon you, while you do all that lies in your power to avoid giving just cause of offence to the Chinese authorities, to be at the same time very careful not to assume a greater degree of authority over British subjects in China than that which you in reality possess. (Correspondence, 22 July 1836, 121)

He was to prevent trouble with the trade but was not to trouble the traders when they transgressed the laws of China or of international navigation. Elliot no doubt realized the foolishness of his position when, in the face of opium chests being unloaded right in front of the custom-house, he attempted to organize a police for controlling the activities of the British within the inner harbor, only to receive a rebuke from Palmerston reminding him of the Catch 22, “the regulations in question are not in any way at variance with the laws of England, provided they be duly made and issued by her Majesty . . . but you have no power of your own authority to make any such regulations” (Hansard, H. of Commons, 7 April 1840, 686). Cognizant of the growing dismissal of all law and authority in the region of Canton, Elliot wrote to Palmerston of what was certain to come: “[A]t last, some gross insult will be perpetrated, that the Chinese authorities will be constrained to resent; they will be terrified and irritated, and will probably commit some act of violence that will make any choice but armed interference, impossible to our government” (qtd. in Gelber 42).

X. The Open Door, the “Opium War,” and the Great Division

The gross insults and acts of violence that Elliot predicted in 1836 were not long in coming. Much has been written about the advent of the War in the summer of 1839 and its eventual outcome in the Treaty of Nanking in 1842. This dissertation, however, concerns the role of Evangelicals and their provocations during this period of imperial conflict, and in particular, the ways in which provocations shaped the popular imaginary
of the ensuing conflict. Despite the degree of popular support for Free Trade in 1833-1834 and the enthusiasm among the Evangelicals at the prospect of an open China, the advent of the war with China saw a surprisingly divided country. With significant critical commentary and a high level of defensiveness, the conflict in many ways resembles present-day divisions on the U.S. presence in Iraq. While the military outcome of the conflict with China was never in doubt, the battle for public opinion and the political results show a degree of division in Britain that has been overlooked by scholars of the period.

While J.F. Davis, Sir George Robinson, and Captain Elliot were struggling and failing to discern how they might stave off what seemed an inevitable conflict with the Chinese empire, due to the liberties taken by the opium clippers, the British public remained with the assumption that the people of China were eager for British goods and Bibles (see chapter III on the representations of common people and government). Having traveled to England in order to encourage the government to press the Chinese for official extension of the trade, James Matheson of Jardine and Matheson, also a business associate of Charles Gutzlaff, addressed the government and the Board of Trade. He found the Duke of Wellington uninterested in his arguments, since the Duke had reasoned: “That which we require now is, not to lose the enjoyment of what we have got” (qtd. in Collis 172). Writing to his partner Jardine, he called Wellington “a cold blooded fellow,” and a “strenuous advocate for submissiveness and servility” (qtd. in Beeching 56), but more importantly, he reckoned that the people of Britain were “so comfortable in this magnificent country, so entirely satisfied in all their desires, that so long as domestic affairs, including markets go right, they cannot really be brought to think of us
outlanders” (qtd. in Collis 172). The quantitative results seemed to suggest that the trade in China was fine, and the only obstacle to wide-open commerce was the stingy Qing government. Taking advantage of this favorable moment of public naivety concerning the actual situation of a drug-based trade, Matheson published a long pamphlet, *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China* (1836), which came to encapsulate the view of the aggressive part of the country during the ensuing conflict.

**XI. The Battle for Public Opinion**

James Matheson’s pamphlet, *The Present Position and Prospects*, might be understood as a Free Trade provocation, setting out an argument for the aggressive enforcement of the law of nations on the Chinese empire. Just as Evangelical provocations call forth action from like-minded readers, based on a shared evangelical worldview, so Matheson’s Free Trade provocation bases a call for violence on a shared belief in the doctrine of Free Trade as an expression of the law of nations.

Matheson begins his argument by identifying the problem he will address: although in accordance with the law of nations Providence has assigned to the Chinese a large portion of earth and population for their management, “It has been the policy of this extraordinary people, to shroud themselves, and all belonging to them, in mystery impenetrable — to monopolize all the advantages of their situation . . . and exhibit a spirit of exclusiveness on a grand scale.” It has been left to the “‘princes of the earth’ — the MERCHANTS” to overcome the Chinese reluctance to participate in the grand scheme of cooperation. Despite their tireless efforts, he continues, the Chinese have shown increased disdain for the law of nations, and the British government has abdicated its responsibility to correct this erring empire. His stated intention with his pamphlet is to
educate the “four-fifths of our fellow-countrymen” who “know, or care to know, little more about our relations with China, than that the delightful beverage ‘which cheers but not inebriates’” (Matheson 1-4). He wishes to lay before the public the issues, so that they might rightly consider the question,

whether from all this is not to be implied a tacit agreement on the part of the Chinese, to carry on trade with us on equitable principles; such an one, in short, as, if broken, will warrant us in compelling an observance of good faith; of that ‘customary law which, from motives of convenience, has by tacit but implied agreement, prevailed, not generally indeed, among all nations, nor with so paramount utility as to become a portion of universal voluntary law; but enough to have acquired a prescriptive obligation amongst certain states, so situated as to be mutually benefited by it.’ (33)

In short, Matheson would have his readers consider whether the Chinese violations of the law of nations have warranted the British “in compelling an observance of good faith” to the “universal voluntary law.” The question is already decided, however. Even before he begins to catalogue the grave offenses of the Chinese against the voluntary law, he flatly states the inevitable conclusion:

China has long since surrendered [her] rights, and is no longer in a position to enforce them, as against the British nation; . . . her conduct, during the last century or two, has amounted, not merely to a simple permission to us to carry on our trade with her, but has conferred upon us perfect rights, such as are accompanied by the right of compelling the fulfillment of the corresponding obligations. (36-7)

In proving this remarkable contention for the unrestricted rights to violence and domination, Matheson trumps up the law of nations as expressed in Vattel’s Law of Nations or the Principles of Natural Law Applied to the Conduct and to the Affairs of Nations and of Sovereigns (1758). The fact that China has never recognized the law does not exempt that country from fulfilling what proceeds directly from reason and from the universal dictates “which God himself has prescribed for the conduct of his creatures”
Moreover, while China has not expressly agreed to the law, the people have tacitly agreed by their eagerness to trade, and “It is mere trifling to talk of her being now at liberty to disregard the law of nations” (42).

As further justification for aggressive enforcement of the law of nations on the Chinese, Matheson catalogues the history of insult by which the Chinese have shown their disdain for the British. With patriotic rhetorical flair, he reminds his readers of “the melancholy and most humiliating reception and fate of Lord Napier!” and shouts “The death of that nobleman—the insult offered, through his person, to the King of Great Britain—IS YET UNAVENGED!” (51-2). While the events surrounding Napier’s death had largely been ignored by the public in 1834, Matheson uses it for political capital against the Qing government: “The Emperor of China, by ratifying the acts of the local authorities in their outrageous treatment of Lord Napier, has rendered himself responsible for such treatment; it has ‘become a public concern, and the injured party is to consider the nation as the real author of the injury, of which the citizen was only the instrument’” (67). What is required of the British government is to seek redress for the insults against Napier and for the restrictive system of trade enforced at Canton. “A ship of the line, together with a couple of frigates and three or four sloops, would suffice” to bring China into cooperative talks (68). Once British strength has shown the Chinese that their pretensions to superiority are no longer effective, the British government ought to demand suitable ports and a trade agreement. Matheson recommends the island of Xiusan, near Shanghai, which was eventually used as the major British base of operations during the War.
Matheson concludes his provocation for the defense of Free Trade with a round call for violence:

We must resolve upon vindicating our insulted honour as a nation, and protecting the injured interests of our commerce — or . . . fully sensible of the magnitude of the interests at stake, as well as the ease with which they may be protected and perpetuated — humble ourselves, nevertheless, in ignominious submission, at the feet of the most insolent, the most ungrateful, the most pusillanimous people upon earth. (79)

With this conclusion, The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China shows a remarkably different view of the China Trade than had been presented in 1834. Although he does not depart from the representation that the people are anxious to cultivate commerce with foreigners, he recasts them as “the most insolent, the most ungrateful, the most pusillanimous people upon the earth.” Once regarded as the most civilized nation outside of Europe, they are now considered among the barbarous and semi-civilized. Nevertheless it is clear from his argumentation that the violence must be directed against the Qing government, not the people as a whole. According to Vattel, it is governments who are responsible for the law of nations, both for participation and for enforcement. Throughout the entire provocation, Matheson not once mentions opium. Completely avoiding any ground on which the Chinese might have justification for resistance against British pressure, he removes the very argument that the imperial government of China was pressing against the British merchant community in Canton. According to the Present Position, insult and injury are all on the side of the Chinese.

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158 In his speech against violence in China, Gladstone yet refers to the Chinese as “the pagans” and “semi-civilized barbarians” (Hansard, H. of Commons, 8 April 1840, 800-820). This was a marked shift from the first three decades of the century, when the Chinese had been ubiquitously classed among the civilized nations. Their inclusion among the barbarous nations remains throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century.
Given Matheson’s careful avoidance of the opium issue, it is remarkable that the subject became such a major part of the popular discussion from 1839-1840 and renewed in 1842-1843. In fact, little is said of opium in the two years after Matheson’s pamphlet. Instead, his pamphlet is echoed by one from H. Hamilton Lindsay, a public Letter to the Right Honourable Viscount Palmerston on British Relations with China (1836), and an anonymous Address to the People of Great Britain, Explanatory of our Commercial Relations with the Empire of China (1836), signed a Visitor to China, both of which also advocate for violent action. Parroting Matheson, the anonymous pamphleteer argues, “A population far exceeding that of all Europe is ready and able to purchase the productions of the British weavers. ONE MAN* [note: The Emperor of China] has been induced to say they shall not, and England has kissed the dust from his feet and acquiesced in humble silence” (6). Accompanying these popular works in 1836, J.F. Davis contributed what was considered a work of scholarship, The Chinese: A General Description of the Empire of China and Its Inhabitants (1836). Rather than correcting the inflammatory notions in the pamphlets, Davis’s work provided complementary arguments in a more detached rhetorical tone. For example, Davis likewise finds grounds for active resistance against the “The rulers of China” because they “consider foreigners fair game: they have no sympathy with them, and what is more, they diligently and systematically labour to destroy all sympathy on the part of their subjects” (195). The imperial authorities have consistently provoked a contest, and according to his rules of political economy, “whenever the accumulation of wrong shall have proved, by exact calculation, that it is more profitable, according to merely commercial principles, to remonstrate than to submit, these will form a righteous and equitable ground of quarrel” (195). From 1836-
1838, these anti-Emperor arguments percolated among the British reading public, with Matheson and Lindsay feeding the popular level while Davis’s work found its place “in libraries of the rich, or the halls of colleges . . . inaccessible to the general reader (“Memoirs of the Life” 176). While Davis treated the opium trade as an issue that had been settled and decided by the Select Committee in 1832, one of the few mentions of Britain’s ongoing opium guilt during this period came from the Visitor to China when considering the possible lag in trade during the proposed conflict: “The Bengal opium trade, being contraband at all times, need not be affected by the suspension of the British branch of the commerce” (92).

With such silence on the opium issue during the mid-1830s, it seems that Matheson’s provocation, with ample support from the Free Trade lobbyists and a public pleased with the importation of its favorite beverage, might have established its view of British relations with China without too much discussion had it not been for the publication, in 1838, of Walter H. Medhurst’s *China: Its State and Prospects: with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel*. There is a remarkable irony in the probably unintended resemblance of his title to Matheson’s pamphlet on *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China*, each one a provocation for their respective worldviews and each providing an interpretation of the present situation and the prospects for the future.159

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159 Also of interest at this time, Gutzlaff published a two-volume general description of China, entitled *China Opened* (1838). Aimed at middle-class readers, the book was a compilation of materials from previous works on the history, geography, literature, and religion of China. Covering substantially the same material as found in Davis’s *The Chinese*, yet without Davis’s intelligence and skill, Gutzlaff’s work was not well received and the author was said to be exhibiting “some strong symptoms of book-making,” as his two volumes “show that the patient is so far gone as to have reached the stage of forgetfulness . . . [in] that he rarely acknowledges his obligations to those whose information he has appropriated.” In addition, “they are compilations executed with very little skill” (“China Opened” 695). It seems the work was very little read.
Medhurst’s provocation, as discussed in chapters II and III, is designed to provide a view of China and the Evangelical mission among the Chinese that would stimulate support for the mission and draw additional missionaries to the “field of China.” The book resulted, however, from a particular task assigned to Medhurst in 1835, “to undertake a journey along the north-east coast of China, in order to ascertain whether or not that country was open to the Gospel” (iii), after which he returned to Britain to report on his findings. With Gutzlaff’s Journal circulating widely and proclaiming an “open door” in China, the LMS sent Medhurst to verify the claims (365). As he explains in his book, he was offered passage on board one of Jardine’s opium clippers, but having scruples about the association with the traffic, he waited on another opportunity. An American firm not associated with opium and supportive of the Evangelical mission, Oliphant and King and Co., chartered the ship Huron for Medhurst’s venture (Report from the Select Committee on the Trade with China 100). Medhurst explains very pointedly that if one wishes to go northward along the coast, the options are limited either to an opium vessel or to privately chartered vessels since no legal trading vessels since the Lord Amherst ever go out of Canton (375).

Like Gutzlaff on his voyage, Medhurst took a missionary companion, an American named Edwin Stevens, and the two went ashore wherever there seemed to be a prosperous village or town. Taking with them at least eighteen thousand volumes — four thousand were distributed at Shantung alone — Medhurst and Stevens handed out Scriptures and tracts and sought occasion to preach to the public (507). Without any trading duties to attend to, the pair were able to spend long periods ashore, often walking several miles inland or sailing upriver from the sea. These patterns allowed them more
time to engage in conversation with local authorities, scholars, and priests, whereby they made clear that their mission was entirely religious in nature. Similar to Gutzlaff’s narrative focus, Medhurst spends most of the account of his voyage relating interactions with the Chinese. The latter, however, shows a more realistic view of the eagerness of the recipients of the books: “Their anxiety to obtain books, however, must not in the least be ascribed to any knowledge of, or relish for, their contents; but merely to an eager curiosity, to get possession of something that came from abroad” (403). Nevertheless, the impression left by Medhurst’s account does not in any way contradict Gutzlaff’s conclusion that China is open to the Gospel. In his own words, “China is open to the distribution of books, the myriads inhabiting the maritime provinces are ready to receive the word of life” (575), resulting in his provocative call, that “missionaries will subject themselves to much personal risk and inconvenience for the sake of the cause, . . . and those who enjoy the ease and gratification of home [will] contribute of their subsistence” (576). Although the two works share the conclusion that China is open, contrary to Gutzlaff’s Journal, Medhurst’s China: Its State and Prospects completely rejects partnership with commerce. Showing an approach to mission that resembles Niebuhr’s “Christ the Transformer of Culture,” Medhurst’s book instead adopts a highly critical attitude towards current British trade practices.

Only about 130 pages of Medhurst’s almost 600-page book are given to the account of his voyage. Most of the work contains reflections on Chinese culture and society, along with descriptive narrative of the residential mission. A remarkably stunning feature of the work, however, is the frequent and stinging excoriation of the opium traffic. In his reflections on the population of China, he discusses how the rise in
the opium traffic has affected their population growth. For the benefit of his readers, he illustrates the extent of the traffic and its perpetrators with anecdotes of the traffic at Lintin. He presents statistics of the rising traffic, seemingly the first use of this tactic on the opium issue, and shows the exponential increase in the number of chests every five years from 1816 to 1836, with the corresponding increase in financial reward (85). In his condemnation of the traffic, he casts his critical eye broadly, implicating the entire merchant community. “To the foreign community of Canton we would appeal,” he writes, “did we not fear that most of them are now actively engaged in the traffic. . . . Many, doubtless, are deluding themselves with the idea, that if they do not deal in it, others will: and as the Chinese will have opium, whether or not, they may as well furnish them with it, as let others reap the profit” (89). Likewise, he points to the guilty source of opium, “the greatest part of [which] is grown within the territory, and transported through the dominions of the Honourable East India Company. It is, in the Bengal presidency, a monopoly in the hands of our Indian government” (90), and as he later remarks, “all connected with the trade in question, err in exact proportion to the extent in which they are mixed up with it. The grower, the vender, and the carrier of opium . . . must all be implicated in blame” (370).

As common with Evangelical provocations, he considers the issue through his worldview, considering that “True morality will lead us to enquire, whether the thing be right or wrong; and, if the latter can be established, it is ours to renounce it, however lucrative to ourselves, or grasped at by others” (89). Without doubt, he argues, the trade is wrong. With almost ten pages illustrating the deleterious effects of opium on the physical health and morality of the people, he concludes with its hindrance to the cause of
the Gospel: “Almost the first word uttered by a native, when urged to believe in Christ is, ‘Why do Christians bring us opium, and bring it, directly, in defiance of our own laws? . . . Go, first, persuade your own countrymen to relinquish this nefarious traffic; and give me a prescription to correct this vile habit, and then I will listen to your exhortations on the subject of Christianity’” (91). He criticizes not only the damage to the reputation of Christians but also points specifically to the confusion resulting from the conflation of Christianity and commerce, especially illegal commerce. If everyone brings tracts, the Chinese have no way of discerning who are real Christians and who are only nominal. Gutzlaff may well be implied here. Towards all such men, Medhurst is indignant, “No man of feeling can contemplate this fearful amount of misery and mortality, as resulting from the opium trade, without an instinctive shudder” (84).

What is most significant about Medhurst’s discussion of the opium traffic is his consciousness of exposing a fraud on the public. Well aware that the government at home had decided in 1832 that it was “inexpedient to relinquish the revenue arising from the cultivation of opium in India, for the supply of the market of China” (Staunton, Corrected Report 10), Medhurst knew that both government and people had pushed aside the issue of opium traffic. To this willful ignorance, Medhurst makes the stern reply in his provocation:

Now, however, neither the Company, abroad, nor the Directors, at home, can plead unconsciousness in the matter: it has been told, and it shall be run in the ears of the British public, again and again, that opium is demoralizing China, and becomes the greatest barrier to the introduction of Christianity which can be conceived of. (90)

Argued through the Evangelical lens of Christian morality and the spread of the Gospel, Medhurst sets for his book the task of exposing the responsibility of the Company and
traders for keeping Christianity from being accepted in China and, in Evangelical parlance, causing both nations to stumble. Adopting a sense of prophetic responsibility like that of Ezekiel, he declares the cleanness of his hands: “it has been told.”

Although Medhurst’s work did not receive the level of circulation attained by Gutzlaff’s Journal, it did run to five editions before the author’s death in 1857. What is more important than its circulation, though, is that his provocative writing against the opium trade touched off a great deal of writing in Evangelical circles about the illicit traffic in opium. The most popular and extensively circulated pamphlet on the subject, the Rev. Algernon S. Thelwall’s The Iniquities of the Opium Trade with China; being a Development of the Main Causes which Exclude the Merchants of Great Britain from the Advantages of an Unrestricted Commercial Intercourse with that Vast Empire. With Extracts from Authentic Documents (1839), owes its existence and much of its argument to Medhurst’s China, to which Thelwall frequently refers. Reviews of the pamphlet, as in Thomas Price’s in the Eclectic Review for October 1839, treat it as inseparable from

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160 Ezekiel 2.5-7: “And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid . . . of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house. You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious.” On prophetic responsibility, see Ezekiel 3.18: “[I]f you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself.”

161 On the first page, Thelwall mentions that “I was, till very recently, equally ignorant [of the traffic] myself. But some weeks ago my attention was called to the circumstances connected with the traffic in opium.” His pamphlet was widely reviewed, as in the British and Foreign Review, the Quarterly Review, the Eclectic Review, the Gentleman’s Magazine, the Chinese Repository, and is mentioned with approbation in the Church of England Magazine. The Quarterly Review noted the dependence of Thelwall on Medhurst and disparaged the work, saying, “He admits . . . that he knows nothing of either India or China—which indeed is proved by his book. The only pages of the least use are those appropriated to a collection of edicts and proclamations, printed at Canton, which throw considerable light on the motives of the recent proceedings on the part of the Chinese. The remainder of the farrago libelli is hashed up chiefly from the exaggerated statements collected, from hearsay only, by the Missionary Medhurst” (“Chinese Affairs” 538).
Medhurst’s provocation, as the reviewer quotes large portions of each work. What made Thelwall’s pamphlet so effective and interesting to his readers was his presentation and discussion of Chinese government edicts and memorials concerning the trade. By showing the Chinese discussion of the problem — including various memorials to the emperor suggesting different ways of addressing the addictions, the related vices, the smuggling, and the loss of sycee silver — Thelwall pointedly reveals that the Chinese government was in earnest about stopping the importation of the harmful drug.

Evangelical reviewers were struck by the Chinese documents, commenting, “It is most humiliating to an Englishman and a Christian, to contrast the relative positions of his own and of the Chinese governments with regard to the Opium Trade” (Price, “Iniquities” 464). Taken together, Medhurst and Thelwall produced a remarkable impression on the Evangelical community regarding the action that must be taken. With activism characteristic of the earlier anti-slavery movement, Price echoes Medhurst,

[T]he remedy we demand, viz., the suppression of the Opium Trade is within the powers of government and parliament. We know that under ordinary circumstances an illicit trade cannot be suppressed, but this is evidently an exception, since the East India Company are the sole growers, and in the first instance, the sole merchants of the drug. . . . The British Government can also direct its officers at Canton to discountenance the traffic, and place all dealers in opium beyond the pale of its protection. Our commercial interests, our Christian duty, and the common principles of humanity, imperatively demand this at our hands; and all this is within the power and prerogative of parliament. (468)

This earnest call to action, the direct and intended result of Medhurst’s provocation, percolated through the Evangelical community from 1839-1840 as the political crisis in China developed and was slowly made known in Britain. In the Christian Keepsake for 1840, an annual giftbook that “by the standards of the day” was a regular “best seller” (Feldman 23), Robert Philip contributed a piece in order to spread the call for the Church
to act for the aid of China: “[I]f either the old monopolists or the new theorists gain the ear of government first, now that our home questions are so many and so absorbing, this foreign question may . . . be settled without the least regard to any thing but the present and pressing interests of trade.” The necessity was for “all the churches [to] speak out” (228). Philip explains that he was “led into these musings and remonstrances by reading Mr. Medhurst’s recent work upon the state and prospects of China,” and he would be glad “if Sunday-school teachers catch from this book a portion of Medhurst’s zeal for China!” (229). Utilizing the Evangelical Archive (see chapter II), Medhurst’s provocation produced multiple other calls for action in literary journals, political pamphlets, the Keepsake, and judging by Philip’s suggestion, Sunday schools as well. When the political crisis at Canton began to unfold in 1839, this growing tide of anti-opium Evangelical opinion contributed a measure of dissension in the country that, while it did not ultimately alter the political outcomes, changed the way in which the conflict has been discussed to this day.

XII. The “Opium War”: the Creative Influence of the Evangelical Archive

On 21 September 1839, dispatches from Captain Charles Elliot at Canton reached London and conveyed news of events back to 29 May. Things in Canton had begun to change when, on 10 March 1839, an Imperial High Commissioner, Lin ZeXu, had arrived at Canton with Plenipotentiary Powers and supreme command of Canton’s naval forces. As the former governor of Jiangsu, Lin had learned something of the English character in 1832 when the Lord Amherst had landed on the Fujian coast, claiming that they had been driven off their course to Japan yet distributing a pamphlet written in Chinese that explained themselves as English traders looking for new markets along the Chinese coast.
(Waley 12-13). When Commissioner Lin arrived at Canton, he was fully expecting to deal with duplicitous traders and had every intention of forcing the point of obedience to Chinese law, both among the Chinese community and the foreigners. Immediately moving into action, he began taking stock of the trading practices, examining the military installations, and discovering who the most egregious violators had been. Having previously been informed that William Jardine was the chief among the smugglers, he intended to arrest him immediately. But Jardine had left for England in January with a plan to persuade Palmerston to force the Chinese to change the trading regulations.

Having successfully put down salt smuggling as Governor-General in Hubei and Hunan the year before, Commissioner Lin began to employ the same tactics he had used there. Publishing “memorials,” or public notices, to the Chinese community regarding their duty to respect the laws of the empire and cooperate with its generous emperor, he also began to enforce the laws. Most significant among these laws was the prohibition against possessing opium. On 18 March, Lin sent two communications — one to the Hong merchants and another to the foreign traders — ordering the surrender of all opium aboard ships in the Canton river. It was the Hong merchants job to be security for the foreigners, and if they failed to effect the surrender of the opium, they would be held responsible to the fullest extent, i.e. convicted as traitors.

For several days, the British merchants put off answering Lin by telling the Hong merchants that they were considering the situation, and Lin became more suspicious of their movements. On 24 March, Captain Elliot came up from Macao and entered the British factory at Canton. No sooner had he called a meeting of the merchants, than the factories were surrounded by Chinese troops, and all the Chinese servants fled the
factories. No one was allowed to leave the factory, “except under the most imminent hazard of life,” under the pretext that the arch-smuggler Dent might escape without surrendering his opium (Crisis 19). Much ado was later made of this state of “martial law,” although Matheson once remarked, “They suffered more from an absence of exercise and from over-feeding than from any actual want of the necessities of life” (qtd. in Beeching 79). Three days after his arrival, and fearing that real harm was going to befall the Hong merchants and the British community, Elliot wrote to Lin with an agreement to surrender the opium and sent an order to the merchants to give up their opium. Because he had been unable to convince the merchants to hand over their opium, which they had taken on as a risk, Elliot gave an official pledge as a representative of the crown that the value of their opium would be assured by the British government. Recognizing that this meant guaranteed money, the merchants quickly began to comply, (Report from the Select Committee on the Trade with China 16), placing the British government in debt to the opium houses of India in the amount of £3,000,000 (Crisis 72). In addition to the surrender of opium, Lin also demanded that merchants sign a bond pledging never to bring opium to China again, with the penalty for violation being death (Crisis 53).

The merchants refused to sign the bond and were thus forbidden to return to Canton. Having evacuated the factories and taken residence aboard the ships after the surrender of the opium, the British merchants waited for the opening of the tea-trading season and planned to rely on American middlemen. But when one private vessel, the Thomas Coutts, consented to accept the bond and sailed inside the Bocca Tigris with a cargo of cottons and rattans, Elliot was revealed as lacking the authority he had claimed.
Boarding the *Volage* and accompanied by the *Hyacinth*, Elliot set out in pursuit of the *Thomas Coutts*. On the 2 November Elliot’s ships encountered a small fleet of war junks under Admiral Kuan. After a day failing to communicate their respective intentions — no translators had been brought — the first broadsides of the war occurred, and Elliot awaited the results of his pleas to Palmerston for a fleet from India (Fay 178-79).162

As the community of merchantmen represented the case to Palmerston in a letter dated 23 May 1839, violent reprisal was demanded due to the following causes: (1) the stoppage of the whole legal trade; (2) the forcible detention in Canton of all foreigners to compel the surrender of opium with the value of two to three millions sterling; (3) the open and undisguised threat to hold foreigners responsible with their lives for the surrender of opium; (4) the attempt to force foreigners to sign bonds that would render anyone coming to Canton with opium liable to the death penalty (Crisis 72). A week after the dispatches arrived, including this letter, Palmerston called in William Jardine. Having the best intelligence regarding local waters, the position of towns and villages, and the relative strength of Chinese forces, Jardine’s long experience in smuggling along the coast rendered him an invaluable source as a military adviser. It is interesting to note that, according to the records of the Foreign Office, Jardine suggested the opening of additional ports, specifically naming the eventual five. He likewise recommended that instead of Canton, the British ought to take possession of the nearby island, Hong Kong, which included a good harbor with extensive anchorage (Chang 193).

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162 On 4 September a ship of Captain Douglas fired on some Chinese junks attempting to prohibit peasants from selling food to the English, but as hostilities were not renewed until November, this “Battle of Kowloon” does not seem to be the real beginning of the war.
By the 9 December 1839, Palmerston had received Elliot’s dispatches regarding his pledge of compensation to the merchants, but orders of preparation were already on the way to India along with a letter to Elliot assuring him that he would have a force by March 1840. It seems that the merchants’ letter struck a chord with the imperially-minded Palmerston, the same Foreign Secretary who on a later occasion told Parliament that “as the Roman, in days of old, held himself free from indignity, when he could say Civis Romanus sum; so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong” (*Hansard*, H. of Commons, 25 June 1850, 444).163

As historian Harry Gelber explains, there were five issues that the British government had to settle with China, which closely resemble the complaints of the merchantmen: first, the imprisonment of British subjects; second, the constant and long-standing assertions of superiority over British representatives and authorities; third, compensation for the forcibly surrendered opium; fourth, the future necessity of bringing China into trade with the world; and fifth, control of the China coast (86). If it were not for the guarantee of payment to the opium merchants, the matter could be largely kept out

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163 Two days after this speech, Gladstone replied to these words with censure, “What then, Sir, was a Roman citizen? He was the member of a privileged caste; he belonged to a conquering race, to a nation that held all others bound down by the strong arm of power. For him there was to be an exceptional system of law; for him principles were to be asserted, and by him rights were to be enjoyed, that were denied to the rest of the world. Is such, then the view of the noble Lord, as to the relation that is to subsist between England and other countries? . . . It is, indeed, too clear, not only from the expressions, but from the whole spirit of the speech of the noble Viscount, that too much of this notion is lurking in his mind; that he adopts in part that vain conception, that we, forsooth, have a mission to be the censors of vice and folly, of abuse and imperfection, among the other countries of the world; that we are to be the universal schoolmasters; and that all those who hesitate to recognize our office, can be governed only by prejudice or personal animosity, and should have the blind war of diplomacy forthwith declared against them” (*Hansard*, H. of Commons, 27 June 1850, 586). Gladstone seems also to refer to an earlier statement regarding his foreign policy, when Palmerston told the House, “I hold that the real policy of England — apart from questions which involve her own particular interests, political or commercial — is to be the champion of justice and right” (*Hansard*, H. of Commons, 1 March 1848, 122).
of parliament and remain a matter for the Foreign Secretary. Palmerston concluded, however, that China would have to be forced to pay for the opium, and the other issues could be rolled into the mission as well, but he would need to request a large sum to finance the expedition. The offense to British honor would be a useful rhetorical device for galvanizing public opinion and the support of an antagonistic Whig parliament.

The debates in parliament during the session of 1840 are well documented by historians. When Parliament opened in January, the queen mentioned simply that the government would have to attend to affairs in China. Palmerston promised to lay before the House six years’ worth of correspondence respecting China, but after a full month, Sir James Graham pressed the point that “Parliament had now been assembled for a month, and no information had yet been laid before the House from which they might collect what was the real situation of affairs at Canton” (Hansard, H. of Commons, 18 February 1840, 344). During that time, reports had been received of military action in China, and Palmerston continued to put off inquiries by assuring the House that they were in preparation.

On 12 March, the discussion in Parliament turned from correspondence regarding China to the question of whether or not there was a war in progress. William Mackinnon pressed Lord John Russell, the Secretary for the Colonies, and Lord Palmerston with “whether there was any truth in a report very generally believed, that war had been declared against China?” (Hansard, H. of Commons, 1155). Though Russell replied that no official report had been received, Sir Robert Peel, leader of the Tory Opposition, refused to accept the denial and asked, “whether that war, if proclaimed, would be carried on on account of the supreme authority of this country and at the expense of the united
empire? And, second, whether or not the government would bring down any message to Parliament announcing the intention of her Majesty to resort to hostilities?” (1155).

Palmerston was no doubt aware that reports of action in the East were reaching the public, not least because the editor of the Chinese Repository was sending information to the Times, which tended to be unfavorable to Palmerston. But seeking to forestall the terms of war and the necessary justifications incumbent upon the Ministry, especially for what appeared to be an unpopular war, the master of public opinion provided what today we would call a sound-bite: “any communication which might take place with the government of China would be carried on in the name of the Queen of this country . . . [and] it was not at present the intention to send down any message of the kind” (1156; my emphasis). When Peel replied that if “hostilities were to be carried on at the charge of the country and in the name of her Majesty . . . [then] some formal communication should be made to Parliament on so important a measure as that of a war,” Palmerston reiterated the terms by which he desired the conflict to be discussed at the moment: “I used the word ‘communications’ not ‘hostilities’” (1156).

To the Evangelical public that had become increasingly interested in the unfolding events, Palmerston’s equivocations about British policy in China touched a nerve. The Evangelical press began responding to the government’s refusal to own their responsibility in the hostilities, particularly their calculated avoidance of the opium problem. Although typically quiet on political matters, the Christian Observer critically commented on Palmerston’s statement, “The quiet word ‘communication’ was significantly used on a late occasion in the House of Commons . . . though ‘a groat’s a groat,’ notwithstanding we should choose to call it, with the wise-acre in Shakespeare, ‘a
remuneration;’ and a bomb-shell will hit as hard and do as much mischief at Macao, Canton, or Pekin, though politely labeled ‘a communication,’ as if it were termed, in plain English, ‘a declaration of war’” (“Missionary Publications” 315). For the morally fastidious Evangelicals, rhetorical hedging looked suspiciously like lying. On 19 March, an especially damning short pamphlet by a Birmingham Quaker and merchant named Joseph Sturge, entitled Chinese War. To the Christian Public of Great Britain, pointed out the role that another type of backdoor communication was playing in pushing the war and even charting its course. Sturge writes,

An individual, now in this country, who has acquired immense wealth by this unlawful trade, has been in communication with the government, and his advice, it is presumed, has in no small degree influenced the measures they have adopted; though he is a leading partner in a firm to which a large proportion of the opium that was destroyed belonged; and at the very time he was claiming compensation, or urging a war with China, his house in India was sending armed vessels loaded with opium, along the coast of China, and selling it in open defiance of the laws of that empire. This information, with the names of the vessels and the parties concerned, the number of chests of opium on board, the enormous profits they were realizing, etc., was some time ago communicated to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on authority which he did not and could not dispute.

Obviously speaking of William Jardine, a fact confirmed in a later pamphlet of 1841, Sturge exposes Palmerston’s relationship with the highly interested party of Jardine and Matheson, Co., and through them with the opium merchant community. For Sturge, this relationship, which he discovered through friends in the merchant community, confirmed his suspicion that the war was being driven by opium interests. According to Thomas Price in the Eclectic Review, Sturge’s short pamphlet was “copied by the newspapers in every part of the kingdom” (“Opium Trade and War” 708). A week later, on 23 March, another Quaker, William Storrs Fry, wrote what he considered a complementary pamphlet to Thelwall’s Iniquities and Sturge’s pamphlet, “A brief and clear statement of
the leading facts connected with this subject,” which he thought much needed, “Lord Sandon having given notice in the House of Commons, of an early motion on the subject” (4). This long pamphlet, Facts and Evidences Relating to the Opium Trade with China, was later much used by Lord Shaftesbury in the mid-1840s when he worked with Fry on a movement for the abolition of the opium trade.

The growing Evangelical pressure only intensified when, on the day Sturge’s pamphlet was issued, J.A. Smith raised the point in the Commons that “the warlike preparations going on in India being now a matter of public notoriety, and as great anxiety existed on the subject,” the Secretary for the Colonies ought to state the aims of the now obvious expedition (Hansard, H. of Commons, 19 March 1840, 1222). Lord John Russell responded by finally explaining the aims of the operations, or “communications,” that were already underway, although “he could only state very generally what they were.”

In the first place, they were to obtain reparation for the insults and injuries offered to her Majesty’s superintendent, and her Majesty’s subjects by the Chinese government; and, in the second place, they were to obtain for the merchants trading with China an indemnification for the loss of their property, incurred by threats of violence offered by persons under the direction of the Chinese government; and, in the last place, they were to obtain security that the persons and property of those trading with China, should in future be protected from insult or injury. (1223)

With these aims finally made public, the Tory opposition to Melbourne’s Whig government determined that the time was right to capitalize on what seemed to be growing distaste for an immoral war. While Russell and Palmerston foregrounded the “insults and injuries” to Elliot and the merchants, and the pamphlets of the trade lobbyists argued for the importance of the trade to the economy and the necessity for its future
security, the Evangelical pamphlet assault at home had brought out the prominence of the opium element.

The Tory opposition, however, recognized that they were not in a position to use the moral argument. Because the issue of patriotism had been made so central by Palmerston and by the pro-war pamphleteers Matheson, Lindsay, and Samuel Allen, the war itself was supported by many among the Tory party. Likewise, they could not with consistency accuse Palmerston of aiding an immoral traffic because many of the party had supported the recommendations of the Select Committee in 1832 — the only opposing members having been Sir Robert Inglis and the Marquis of Buckingham. When Peel’s government had come to power briefly in 1834-35, during Napier’s crisis and Davis’s resignation, they had done nothing to address opium smuggling. Thus, when Sir James Graham raised a motion of censure against the government, in the event of which Melbourne’s ministry declared it would resign if the motion carried, no criticism of opium trafficking was made in Graham’s three-hour speech, only references to Palmerston’s poor leadership in directing how the Superintendent ought to act towards it. The motion against the government lacks any censure of trade itself, only “the growing evils connected with” it:

that the interruption in our commercial and friendly intercourse with that country, and the hostilities which have since taken place, are mainly to be attributed to the want of foresight and precaution on the part of her Majesty’s present advisers, in respect to our relations with China, and especially to their neglect to furnish the superintendent at Canton with powers and instructions calculated to provide against the growing evils connected with the contraband traffic in opium, and adapted to the novel and difficult situation in which the superintendent was placed.” (704)

When, after three days of debate on the issue, a division of the House was called for, the motion of censure was defeated, 271 to 262. It is a remarkable moment of history seldom
noted that British relations with China were very nearly — a margin of nine votes — altered and the course of imperialism in that region potentially changed. The very existence of the city of Hong Kong is closely tied to this vote.

Although Evangelicals in Parliament voted heavily with Graham against the government, regardless of their party, the “philanthropic and upright portion of the community was disgusted,” as Price wrote in the Eclectic Review, that Sir James Graham had attempted “to turn the whole to party purposes” without bringing out the terrible inconsistency of professing Christianity and pushing a harmful drug (“Suppression” 654). In another pamphlet on the war, Joseph Sturge considered that Graham’s failure to carry the motion resulted directly from his avoidance of the moral issue because he had presented protest “in a manner which gave it so much of a party character, that our cruel injustice to the Chinese, and the disgraceful conduct of our Government in attacking them, was lost sight of by many, whose professed principles ought to have made them foremost in condemning these proceedings” (“Opium” 3).

The disgust with the party politics within certain quarters of the Evangelical community was given specific direction by Sturge, who organized a public meeting on 24 April at Freemason’s Hall in order to petition Parliament against the war. Chaired by the Earl of Stanhope, a lonely Evangelical voice in the House of Lords, the meeting collectively resolved that “it most distinctly disavows any party or political objects, and deprecates most strongly any such construction being put upon its efforts” (Sturge, “Opium” 4). As points of action, the meeting resolved “that the East India Company, the

164 Sir James Graham was from an Evangelical background and tended to vote consistently with Evangelical positions. His seeming lack of concern for the moral question at issue was cause for much criticism in the Evangelical community.
growers of and traffickers in opium, and British subjects who received the protection of the laws of China, have been, throughout, the wrong doers’’; therefore, they held it was “the bounden duty of the government immediately to effect an equitable and pacific settlement of the existing differences with China” (4). Furthermore, they were in agreement on censuring the government’s position and its expedition, stating,

That all traffic in opium with the Chinese being contraband, the opium which was surrendered to their government was justly confiscated; and that to demand payment from the Chinese, to make reprisals upon them, or, for this country to give compensation to the British merchants thus engaged in smuggling, would be to sanction and even grant a premium on crime. (4)

This protest was presented to the House of Lords by Earl Stanhope on 12 May (Hansard, H. of Lords, 12 May 1840), and it was reintroduced at the conclusion of the war by Lord Shaftesbury in his later attempts to alter the course of economic policy in China (Hansard, H. of Commons, 4 April 1843).

The meeting at Freemason’s Hall on 24 April proved far more significant than its resulting petition. It was at this Evangelical meeting that either Earl Stanhope or the Rev. C. Stoyel publicly termed the conflict an “Opium War.” Although an effort was made by a Mr. Robertson to alter the terms of the discussion, saying “if the reprisals should end in a war, it ought not to be called an opium war,” the Times caught at the phrase and the next day reported on the meeting under the heading, “Opium War with China,” stating in the lead that the meeting had been “for the purpose of petitioning Parliament against the opium war with China” (25 April 1840, 5).

As editor for the Evangelical Eclectic Review, Thomas Price was very likely among the attenders at the Freemason Hall meeting. With his position at the head of the most widely read Evangelical review, Price was situated to influence the thinking of
Evangelicals across Britain. Taking up the phrase adopted at Freemason Hall, Price focused his article, “The Opium Trade and War,” on the political maneuverings of the opium lobbyists, the fact that the East India Company and British Government benefited from the illegal trade, and that Parliament had given its sanction to the opium traffic. Reviewing the Parliamentary debates, papers, and Fry’s Facts and Evidences, Price argues, “The government of Great Britain has for forty years past connived at the Opium Trade” (702). Attempting to give his readers a measure by which to judge the wickedness of the opium trade and the degree to which the government is implicated, he uses a benchmark they understood: “The slave trade, during its legal continuance, might have been called a national trade from the amount of capital and the number of vessels and of seamen employed in it; but the Opium Trade is national in a stricter sense, or more properly speaking, it is a government trade” (702). Having followed the Parliamentary discussion closely, Price criticizes the government for attempting to distance itself from the private traders when in reality their interests are inseparable. The governors of India and the Board of Control, “men who have called this traffic into existence,” must be considered “at least equally guilty” and have “given it a national character, and affixed the stigma of its immorality ineffaceably on the national escutcheon” (706).

After charting the progress of the government’s sanction of the opium traffic, Price points out that even at the climax of Palmerston’s defense during the debates, he had recourse to the opium merchants. In his speech on the 9 April, Palmerston “held in his hand a letter from thirty respectable firms in London engaged in the China trade,” in which the merchants “disclaim all pretensions of dictating to the Chinese the mode in which the British trade with China shall be carried on,” but expresses the opinion “that
unless the measures of the government are followed up with firmness and energy, the trade with China can no longer be conducted with security to life and property, or with credit or advantage to the British nation” (709). Signers of this document include the prominent opium houses, headed by Jardine and Matheson, Magniac and Co., and H.H. Lindsay. With obvious triumphal emphasis, Price employs the crucial new phrase, “Who after this can deny that the war with China is an OPIUM WAR?” (709), and with clear foresight predicts the historical judgment of the conflict: “We may deceive ourselves for the moment, but we shall not deceive our contemporaries, nor the next generation. The Opium War will stand out in history as the blackest stain on the character of Britain” (710).

That the denomination of the conflict as the “Opium War” has come down to us as the unrivaled designation owes a great deal to the Evangelical response encouraged in Price’s review. Reminiscent of Medhurst’s call to the Christians of Britain to press the government for change in the opium traffic, Price invites his readers to “join with us in publicly protesting against the Opium War, as an outrage on justice, on public principle, and on the independent rights of nations” (714). Employing an approach to Christianity

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165 In his Narrative of the Expedition to China, from the Commencement of the War to its Termination in 1842, Captain John Bingham protests the “Opium War” epithet, “The Opium war, as it has generally been misnamed, from the Chinese having taken their stand on that question, professing that to save the morals of the people the trade in that drug must absolutely be cut off, has raised doubts, in the minds of many individuals, as to the justness of our present proceedings in China. But neither the morals, nor the health of the subject, has been the real cause; which may more properly be found in the ‘oozing out of the sycee silver from the central flowery land’” (1-2). After providing a long history of the Chinese connivance at the opium traffic, Bingham asks triumphantly, “Will any one now be found to call this merely an opium war?” (101). Recognizing the trend in public opinion, he “beg[s] [his] readers not to allow their feelings to be carried away by any highly wrought descriptions of the miserable state of the opium smoker” (138), and he is assured that “Every candid mind that will carefully weigh the preceding statements, must surely be convinced that the present warfare on the coast of China has not arisen from any determination of ours to force the opium trade on that country, but from the bad faith of the ‘celestial’ government and the open violation of explicit treaties” (137). One wonders what he believed to be the “explicit treaties” that the Chinese had violated.
and culture worthy of Wilberforce, he claims that all Christians, “in their yet more limited, or, as it may be, far more extended sphere, have each a duty to perform, in reference to the questions we have discussed” because these issues affect “not merely the character and the interests of our country, but the general welfare of mankind, and the reputation and prospects of Christianity” (724). Echoing Price’s call and terminology, and recommending a course of action, Joseph Sturge’s pamphlet on the Chinese War “appeal[s] to the Christian public of my country that they may, without delay, forward petitions, or memorials, strongly urging a reference of the existing differences with China to commissioners mutually appointed, who shall be authorized to adjust them, and also to determine upon the best means of entirely suppressing the guilty traffic in opium” (5).

Taking united action in accordance with this call, petitions were sent to Parliament from the Wesleyan Missionary Society, the Baptist Missionary Society, and the London Missionary Society, along with letters from leading merchant firms in Liverpool, Manchester, Preston, Leeds, and Birmingham, “declaring their opinion that commerce with China could not be conducted on a . . . satisfactory basis, so long as the contraband trade in opium was permitted” (Price, “Suppression” 655). Even as the war terminated, Evangelicals continued to agitate against the dictates of party politics, which they had traditionally shunned, and pressed for moral reform in the commercial and political relationship with China.166 Aware that the opium trade had become unpopular to the

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166 Wilberforce and the “Saints” had attempted to avoid voting along party lines, preferring rather to vote according to relative consistency with Evangelical principles. Lord Shaftesbury, social reformer and leader of the next generation of Evangelicals in Parliament, wrote disgustedly in his diary in 1843, “What have I to do with the party motives? . . . Talk of party, indeed! The defence was as much the work of a faction as the assault. Never was I more disgusted and depressed; never did I feel less regard for public men, or less pleasure in public life” (Hodder 448).
British public, James Matheson recommended his ship captains to be cautious and avoid trouble, as the trade should be kept out of the public eye (Gelber 208).

Although their efforts failed to affect the course of policy, the workings of the Evangelical Archive had a profound effect on the perception of the war and the opium trade. At the conclusion of the war, Lord Ashley (later Shaftesbury) joined with Fry and Samuel Gurney in an effort to suppress the opium trade. A powerful orator, Ashley spoke in the House of Commons on 4 April 1843, to an audience whose silence was “as perfect as that of a well-behaved congregation when hearing a sermon” (Price, “Suppression” 655). Through his speech, Ashley painted the opium traffic as the quintessential evil of the age, “more black, more cruel, more Satanic than all the deeds of private sin in the records of prison history” (Hodder 466). It was, he thought, “perhaps worse than encouraging the slave trade,” for slavery “tortures and degrades the man, but it leaves him susceptible of regeneration. But the opium trade destroys the man, both body and soul; and carries a hideous ruin over millions, which can never be repaired” (472).

Although conceding not to pursue a motion due to the not yet ratified Treaty of Nanking, Ashley conveyed the point that moral reform was once again on the Evangelical mind. In a speech responding to Ashley with approval, Sir George Staunton asked him to remember “that his illustrious predecessor, Mr. Wilberforce, when he first advocated the abolition of the Slave Trade, met, in the outset, a still more determined opposition, and yet persevered, and lived to see, as he hoped his noble friend would do, the complete triumph of his principles” (Price, “Suppression” 657).

As the comparisons suggest, the Evangelical agitations had produced an impression that the pushing of opium on the Chinese contained an evil similar to that of
the slave trade. The war had been an “Opium War,” and, as the *Christian Observer* argued at the war’s conclusion, it represented Britain’s “wars of cupidity . . . one of our besetting sins,” and its results would be, “however prosperous, injurious to ourselves, for what is morally wrong cannot be politically right” (“View” 634). At least a few seemed to recognize, for a moment, what Aimé Césaire notes in his *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955), that “colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it” (41).

**XIII. Division on the New Open Door**

The Parliamentary vote on Sir James Graham’s motion of censure on 7 April 1840 reveals a latent division within the Evangelical community that may be masked by their seeming unity in the Evangelical Archive. Out of thirty-six known Evangelical MPs in the House, ten of them voted against Graham and in support of Palmerston. An indication of their position is found in Thomas Price’s reflection on the occasion: “Men, from whom we should not have expected the sentiment, contended that it was only by a demonstration of our power that the Chinese would be taught reason, and that cannon balls must be used to open the way for commerce and Christianity” (“Suppression” 654). With stubborn conviction, these men were very consistent. Having trusted Gutzlaff in 1833 and accepted his synthetic approach to mission, they employed the same policy in their political decision. In dramatic fashion, Evangelicalism revealed one of its most subtle divisions — not essentially theological or ecclesiastical, but cultural — the difference between a synthetic understanding of Christianity and culture, and a transformational understanding.
During the war, differences were apparent in China as well as London. On one hand, returning to the East from Britain in 1838, Walter Medhurst avoided the situation in Canton and went to Batavia to minister among the Chinese colonists there. He remained there for the duration of the war. Another LMS missionary, Samuel Dyer, removed to England in 1839 and returned to Singapore in 1841, also to work in an overseas Chinese settlement. Also of the LMS, James Legge, who was later to become a scholar and translator of the Chinese classics and was installed as Professor of Chinese at Oxford, left Scotland in 1839 and avoided Macao and Canton, settling instead at Malacca. On the other hand, William Lockart of the LMS accompanied the British troops to Xiusan, where he set up a hospital for both British and Chinese. Benjamin Hobson did the same at Macao (Latourette 244). Also with the LMS, William Milne, Jr., son of the author of the *Retrospect* (see chapter III), was an interpreter with the army, but “lived alone, and, without a messmate, occupied a lonely cottage in a Chinaman’s kitchen-garden in the heart of Tinghai” (Milne Jr. 149). Isolated from the British force, he was several times almost kidnapped by Chinese assailants (149-53). Most remarkable of all, though, was Charles Gutzlaff.

After steady employment with Jardine and Matheson through the mid- to late-1830s, as well as serving as the official interpreter for the Chief Superintendent at Canton, Gutzlaff was the most natural choice as an interpreter for the British expedition. He had taken at least thirteen separate voyages to the north of China and had always made careful notes for what he hoped would be the opening of commerce (Nicolson 355). When the army took possession of Dinghai on Xiusan Island (a strategic recommendation that had been made by Jardine), Gutzlaff was given the position of civil magistrate to
oversee the Chinese there. Dinghai was abandoned in the winter of 1840 in favor of
Macao, but when the second force, under Sir Hugh Gough, went north in 1841, Gutzlaff
again went along. After the taking of Ningbo in October, he was established as the civil
magistrate there.

In both his magisterial appointments, Gutzlaff was also active in espionage, in
keeping with his earlier secret missions up the coast. He recruited unscrupulous Chinese
to serve as spies for the British. In *The Opium War through Chinese Eyes*, Arthur Waley
presents Chinese documents concerning the trials of several traitors who were discovered
and executed; consequently, he notes, “we know most about the least competent of
Gutzlaff’s agents” (235). Of the six captured spies, five of them confessed to dishonest
dealings even before the British expedition; the sixth had long been a sailor aboard
British ships. According to their reports, Gutzlaff would give them a dollar or two for
each item of information. They gathered this information by sitting around “in tea-houses
listening to conversations and picking up military information” (236). One man, Yu Te-
ch’ang, was willing to work for Gutzlaff as a kind of Chief of Police of Ningbo, with fifty
Chinese working under him.\(^{167}\) Interestingly, none of these Chinese were from Ningbo
itself, but were natives of Fujian. Through their information, Gutzlaff was forewarned
about the synchronized nighttime attack on Ningbo and Xiusan on the 9 February 1842,
which included 51,000 Chinese troops and proved to be the decisive battle of the war
(Waley 168-69).

Most curious about Gutzlaff’s participation in the Opium War is the reputation he
gained among the Chinese. With what Waley calls the “legend of Gutzlaff,” the

\(^{167}\) There is perhaps an element here of the divided self, reminiscent of Fanon’s *White Skin, Black Masks*. 

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missionary magistrate worked his way into the local memory of Ningbo with his
“unconventional and summary but at the same time efficient methods of justice” (229).

Years after the end of the war, a local song by the poet Hsu Shih-tung (1814-1873)
remained about Gutzlaff’s rule. A few stanzas are worth quoting:

Up to his high dais
Daddy Kuo comes.
If you are in trouble
He’ll get things straight,
If you have been wronged
He’ll come to the rescue,
If you have got into difficulties
He’ll arrange things for you.
He’s a master at speaking Chinese,
There is not an ideogram he cannot read.
Daddy Kuo is nothing short of a genius!

. . .

From down at the side of the dais
Someone cries out that he has been wronged;
A fellow from who knows where came to his house
And extorted money from him.
Directly he hears it, Daddy Kuo, without another word,
Picks up his stick, climbs down from the dais, and
Waddles off into the town.
A moment later he reappears, dragging the culprit along,
Ties him up, bares his back and gives him fifty with the lash.
The man who made the complaint,
Goes home delighted, trusses a pair of fowls
And sacrifices them to Heaven. (Waley 230)

Gutzlaff, whose Chinese name was Kuo Shih-li, adopted the traditional magisterial seat
of a mandarin up on a dais above petitioners, but sharply breaking from the typical role of
a mandarin, he seems to have dispensed enough of his own justice that the song arose
around his unconventional acts. That he should himself have given fifty lashes appears to
be a touch of legend, but there always seemed room for such embellishment where
Gutzlaff was concerned. Another Chinese source, written by a staff-officer named Pei
Ch’ing-ch’ao, records the general belief that at Ningbo, the foreigners’ “main lair is the
Ta-ch’eng Hall of the Office of Education. Here Gutzlaff trains the foreign troops every day” (qtd. in Waley 162). Given his chameleon tendencies, it is not surprising that the Chinese could have taken Gutzlaff as interpreter, magistrate, chief espionage officer, religious leader, and sergeant of the troops. Another British interpreter, Robert Thom, commented on Gutzlaff’s self-promotion and pretensions with the Chinese at Ningbo, that “could one of the Hong merchants have seen Gutzlaff seated on the Cheheen’s chair and waited upon by his blackguard Nankingmen, they wd [sic] certainly have muttered something about . . . the Fox borrowing the dignity of the Tiger — or as we might quote from scripture —‘my house, ye have made it a den of thieves’” (qtd. in Chang 210).

Despite Thom’s acute observation, Gutzlaff was appreciated by Sir Hugh Gough. In the Gough Papers, analyzed by John Nicolson in “The Reverend Charles Gutzlaff, The Opium War and General Gough,” Gutzlaff is frequently referenced as giving timely advice on matters concerning the British occupation, particularly on avoiding the arousal of local opposition. Gutzlaff advised, for example, that soldiers should absolutely avoid the “disturbing their graves” and should “get rid of bad women” (qtd. in Nicolson 358). More remarkably, though, he played a key role in bringing in refractory groups of Chinese interested in rebellion against the Emperor. Given the injustice of the war, it is startling that a number of Chinese came to Gutzlaff and expressed a willingness to “follow the British army whichever place they go” (qtd. in Nicolson 360). It may be that these Chinese aimed to infiltrate the British army in order to sabotage it later, but these enlistments may also indicate the nascent civil dissent that was to boil over in the Taiping Rebellion in the 1850’s.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ As Rudolf Wagner points out in Reenacting the Heavenly Vision, Gutzlaff’s relationship with dissident Chinese directly affected the Taiping movement. In the late 1840’s, Gutzlaff initiated a scheme to
What may be most surprising about Gutzlaff’s participation in the war is that in early 1842, he presented Gough with a paper recommending a martial campaign against Nanking overland via Hangchow. This carefully argued and detailed plan was actually adopted and effectively brought about the conclusion of the war. In Gough’s papers, the well-pleased General wrote at the end of the assault plan, “Excellent Old Gutzlaff” (qtd. in Nicolson 360). Naturally, Gutzlaff served his victorious master at the Treaty of Nanking on 29 August 1842, after which he went to Dinghai as Superintendent of Trade. In autumn of 1843 he cemented his synthesis of Christianity and culture, taking up the post of Chinese Secretary to the Government of Hong Kong while also organizing his “Chinese Union,” a band of natives who would take tracts and Scriptures into mainland China (Waley 232). He held the post until his death in 1851.

But while Gutzlaff was enacting his belief in China’s “open door,” thoughts among Evangelicals in Britain were less certain. The disgust previously evidenced at the injustice and unrighteousness of the war brought a degree of reflection on what should be done in the hour of victory. Evangelicals were aware that their provocations had succeeded in publicly delegitimizing the opium trade, if not doing anything to stop it in practice. “In vain do we look for any official defence of the trade,” wrote Thomas Price in late 1843 (“Suppression” 659). Nevertheless, the end of the war itself was bittersweet. The Christian Observer, remarking on the announcement of victory in China and Afghanistan, writes, “We mourn indeed while we rejoice; for in neither instance had we a

recruit Chinese evangelists who could take the Gospel to inland China. As Wagner explains, “he organized his converts into a ‘Chinese Union’ resembling a Herrnhutian Brudergemeinde and a Chinese secret society rolled into one.” But just as earlier missionaries had criticized Gutzlaff’s methods and poor judgment of true conversion, most of his converts were interested in earning some cash, either by selling Gutzlaff’s books or simply taking his money and throwing away the tracts. At the least, none seemed to have a clear understanding of Christianity, and “A number of members of this Union later joined the Taipings and recruited for them…” (13).
righteous quarrel. We were the wrong-doers in both cases” (“Appendix” 814). Aware that this would be a minority view, he concludes his report by stressing the universal equality of man before God, and accordingly states, “These may seem unpopular, perhaps unpatriotic, remarks in the exulting hour of victory; but that is the precise time at which they are needed to chastise our triumphs into Christian sobriety, nay to mingle with them as much of wormwood as is demanded by all that was wrong in the origination or conduct of the most successful enterprise” (815). For those who had opposed the war, its conclusion was nonetheless bitter, especially in the recognition that the treaty was “one series of large concessions on the side of the conquered,” despite justice being on their side (814). The private thoughts of Lord Ashley, on receiving the news of the war’s end, are telling of the conflicted response of many Evangelicals and echo the *Christian Observer*:

Nov. 22nd — Intelligence of great successes in China, and consequent peace. I rejoice in peace; I rejoice that this cruel and debasing war is terminated; but I cannot rejoice, it may be unpatriotic, it may be un-British, I cannot rejoice in our successes; we have triumphed in one of the most lawless, unnecessary, and unfair struggles in the records of History; . . . I tremble the more, because I feel assured that . . . these sins will not remain unpunished; failure might have mitigated our retribution, but success will prove our ruin. (Hodder 440-41)

With a firm belief in the overriding judgments of Providence, Ashley shows a keen faith that God will not only withhold His blessing on evil acts but will subtly work against the perpetrators through a debasing of national morality. With considerations characteristic of Edward Irving’s arguments on God’s economy, though the British might seem to make political and economic gains from their “most lawless, unnecessary, and unfair” war, the underlying and long-term effects will be an eroding of morality, so that “success will
prove our ruin.” Along with this sense of collective responsibility, Ashley shows ambivalence about his citizenship. With marked differentiation from the synthetic Christianity of Gutzlaff, Ashley at once acknowledges his Britishness—“it may be un-British”—and rejects its pursuits. Like other believers in Christ as the transformer of culture, Ashley accepts his place in culture but has room in his system for rejection of its wicked ways. Such judgments on the war and its conclusion were not always easy to maintain with consistency, as the Treaty brought new complications.

When the Treaty of Nanking had been signed and the Opium War officially concluded, the Evangelical churches and mission societies were forced to reconsider the mission to the Chinese. According to the Treaty, the following changes in relations with China were effected:

Lasting peace and friendship between the two empires. The ports of Canton, Amoy, Foo-chow-foo, Ningpoo, and Shanghai, to be thrown open to British merchants; consular officers to be appointed to reside at them; and regular and just tariffs of import and export (as well as inland transit) to be established and published. The island of Hong Kong to be ceded in perpetuity to Her Britannic Majesty, her heirs and successors. All subjects of Her Britannic Majesty (whether natives of Europe or India), who may be confined in any part of the Chinese empire, to be unconditionally released. An act of full and entire amnesty to be published by the Emperor, under his imperial sign manual and seal, to all Chinese subjects, on account of their having held service, or intercourse with, or resided under, the British Government or its officers. Correspondence to be conducted on terms of perfect equality amongst the officers of both Governments. (qtd. in “Appendix” 816)

Nothing was specifically mentioned about religion, except that permission was granted foreigners to build houses, hospitals, schools, and places of worship in the treaty ports. In

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169 The continuing downward spiral of apparent success but inward moral eroding was part of Irving’s pre-millennial conception of the end of time. Things on earth would go from bad to worse, until the second coming of Christ would inaugurate a thousand-year earthly reign of the previously invisible Church. In the 1830s, Irving and Alexander Haldane began a journal, The Morning Watch, to promote the pre-millennial view (Bebbington 82). For more on millenialism in Britain during the early half of the century, see W.H. Oliver, Prophets and Millennialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s.
addition, permission to study the Chinese language and the right of legal
extraterritoriality also affected the mission plan (Latourette 229). What mission societies
had to figure out was whether or not, in light of the bitterness and xenophobia resulting
from the war, their missions could be conducted at all, and if so, how to do so within the
new treaty port system.

For a few mission societies, the element of critical reluctance to join with political
and economic triumphalism won out. As they had been conscious of the damage to
Chinese society first by opium and then by violence, they thought it best to distance
themselves from those groups and hoped to establish an independent identity with the
Chinese in the future. The Baptist Missionary Society, for example, as Ashley explained
in his speech against the opium trade, “took into consideration the propriety of sending
out missionaries to China; and it was decided to work through the agency of the
American missions, because the public feeling in China was so strong against the
English, that if the missionaries hoped to work at all, it must be through America, which
had kept aloof, in a great degree, from the disgraceful traffic” (Hodder 472). The BMS
did not send missionaries to China under its own banner until 1845 (MacGillivray 69).
With like caution, the Church Missionary Society — the Evangelical mission of the
Anglican church — took a circumspect view of the situation. Although some within the
society argued, “The merchant and manufacturer are already freighting out their cargoes
for speculative ventures; let the Christian and the philanthropist not linger behind them”
(“Appendix” 816), the more cautious in the society prevailed, and it was not until 1844
that the CMS sent two men, George Smith (later the first Bishop of Victoria) and Thomas
McClatchie, on a visit to consider the possibility, but they did not consider it the right
time to remain. Their first missionaries did not settle in China until 1848 (MacGillivray 23). The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, one of the oldest of the mission societies, did not send any missionaries until a decade after the Opium War, in 1852 (89). For these societies, each of which had long been interested in sending missionaries to China, the potential confusion of mission with war and opium was enough to mitigate the pressure to join immediately in the rush to the treaty ports. This conviction of their elder leadership, most of whom had grown up during the first phase of the missionary movement, was decidedly in the minority.

Perhaps more than any other indication of his influence, the popular belief in the imaginary “open door” in China shows the power of Charles Gutzlaff’s provocations, the Journal of Three Voyages and China Opened. Writing from China and reflecting on fifteen years of mission there, William Milne, Jr. wrote of the end of the war: “No sooner had the treaty of Nanking been signed and sealed, than the eyes of Protestant missionaries, who were already stationed on the outposts of the empire, turned in the direction of Shanghai, as being ‘a great door and effectual opened unto them’” (495). This phrase from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 16.9) had a prominent place in Gutzlaff’s provocations and echoes throughout his rhetoric on China’s desire for trade and bibles. The Treaty of Nanking seemed to many, influenced by a decade of concurring opinion in support of Gutzlaff’s contention, to be the lever that opened the door.

Even though by 1842 rumors had circulated that Gutzlaff was in some way connected with the opium firms, he had gained enough credit that his confidence in the openness of the Chinese to Christianity remained in Evangelical minds. Robert Philip, the
biographer of William Milne, illustrates the point nicely as he laments “all the little and cowardly questions — ‘Is China open?’—‘Is Gutzlaff connected with the opium trade?’ — ‘Is there any access for Missionaries?’” Instead, he gives the imperative: “Open China—go into the nation—make full proof of your ministry!” (“China” 226). Obviously engaging the doubt expressed by the more critical group in the church, Philip not only affirms Gutzlaff’s belief in the openness of the people, he provokes his Evangelical readers with the duty to force wide the door, whether it be open or not.

To the majority of Evangelicals keen to enter China, no door seemed to need forcing. In light of the extremely favorable conditions of the treaty, one reviewer argued that the church in Britain is not “at liberty to pause in her missionary career until better times come. Her country, as well as her commission, binds her to go forward, now that ‘a great and effectual door’ seems opened for the gospel in China” (“Chinese Missions” 72-3). As Milne Jr. pointed out, the call to walk through the open door was quickly answered. Missionaries for the LMS who had been in Chinese settlements abroad were immediately asked to settle in the treaty ports. Calling all their missionaries in the East to a conference at Hong Kong in August 1843, the LMS Ultra-Ganges mission decided where to allocate their human resources (Wylie 26). Walter Lowrie stayed at Hong Kong. John Stronach and William Young went to Quemoy. Milne Jr. spent time at Ningbo before going to Shanghai, where he joined Walter Medhurst and William Lockart at what was to become the most important mission station in China for the remainder of the century.

In a telling passage, Milne Jr. writes of the Shanghai station, “First and foremost to occupy Shanghai for a mission station was the London Missionary Society, two of
whose labourers, the Rev. Dr. Medhurst and Mr. Lockhart, moved up thither in December, 1843, contemporaneously with her Majesty’s consul, who planted the British flag at the same port” (Milne Jr. 497). Arriving together, the missionaries and the British flag were no doubt indistinguishable to the Chinese at Shanghai and the other treaty ports, and there can be little surprise that seventy years later, Shanghai became the center of the Communist Anti-Christian Student Federation (Stanley, Bible and the Flag 15).

It is interesting that even though many Evangelicals had been severely critical of the war, they reasoned their way to immediate active reassertion of missionaries alongside the political and economic forces they had recently deprecated. Even in 1840, in the midst of their assault on what they named an “Opium War,” they were already looking forward to the possibilities associated with its end: “Wickedness has shut China against us; may righteousness re-open it! Or if unjustly opened by rougher weapons, may righteousness follow to heal the cruel wounds of war!” (“Missionary” 317). With our historical and cultural distance, this dual condemnation and anticipation appears as either a grave contradiction or naïve ignorance, but within their particular worldview it appeared to make perfect sense.

In his article on “‘Commerce and Christianity’: Providence Theory, and the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860,” Brian Stanley has explained this contradictory response as derived from the Evangelical doctrine of Providence. According to providential theory, although the world functions according to natural laws, “God [has] directed all human affairs with this one supreme goal in view”: that “the earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord.” In consequence of this overarching narrative, “Human history [is] the story of the divine preoccupation with the
furtherance of the gospel of salvation,” and all events of that history had to be viewed accordingly (73). Evil would be turned for good, as “All things work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8.28). The evils of the Opium War would thus have to give way to the good of the Gospel coming to the whole of China, despite its introduction through wickedly attained ports. In 1846 Samuel Wilberforce, the son of William Wilberforce, implied this point at a missionary meeting, arguing “that it was tantamount to denying the government of God to suggest that Britain had been led by providence into war with China merely in order to achieve a minimal reduction in the price of tea” (Stanley, “Commerce” 78). Providence was concerned with larger ends, even if unchristian human agents were used to bring them about.

This subtle division in the Evangelical community, between advocates for cautious distance from political forces and advocates for immediate mission, is again reflective of the shift in Evangelicalism that was occurring in the early 1830s. By 1842, the influence of the early Evangelicals had waned in the face of their moral achievement. The slave trade had been abolished, the suppression of vice had taken large strides, and reform laws had been passed. The culture at large was thought to be Christian, with customs ever more reflecting Biblical principles. But as Evangelicalism had brought society to look more and more like itself, the distinctiveness that had marked its rise had disappeared (see chapter II). Its ecumenical spirit, united on the broad basis of the spiritual transformation of culture, was replaced by factionalism concerned with the minutiae of eschatological interpretations and the correct method of sharing the Gospel. What Lord Ashley had written of the war could equally be said of Evangelical unity, “our
success will prove our ruin.” To the older strain of Evangelicalism, with its emphasis on human depravity and the darkness of culture, a newer strain was added. These Evangelicals had been brought up in dissenting chapels or under Evangelical curates in the established church and had seen willingness in government to change and to adopt more “Christian” policies. Like Gutzlaff, they were positivists, not just spiritually but also temporally. And as Gutzlaff had clashed with the older missionaries in China, so Evangelicalism in Britain experienced significant disagreement and disruption for the rest of the century. While the positivist element grew stronger and came to dominate the political side of nineteenth-century religion and culture, giving Evangelicals the reputation in the history of the British empire for which historians and literary critics chiefly remember them, the critical element retained a quiet but persistent presence.

XIV. The Heritage of Gutzlaff’s Journal of Three Voyages and Medhurst’s China: Its State and Prospects

The history of Gutzlaff’s and Medhurst’s provocations is not confined to the Opium War and the conflicting attitudes surrounding it. While key parts of these works were aimed at changing British thinking — about China’s relative openness and about the opium trade — another explicit aim was to arouse individuals to become missionaries. In a call to “Christians at home,” Gutzlaff described the Christian heroes he wanted, “new labourers, filled with the Holy Spirit, imbued with humility, willing to suffer and to die for the great cause” (410). Medhurst likewise provoked “British churches,” which “have been excited to pray that the barriers might be removed, and a wide and effectual door opened before God’s servants,” but contended that “prayer without corresponding exertion is, to say the least, inconsistent; and that, if we want the barriers removed, and
the door opened, the mere sitting still, and wishing it, is not the way to get the one or the other speedily accomplished. . .” (304). Inasmuch as their call for political action was regarded, these calls for personal action were likewise heeded.

Among purely missions practitioners influenced by these works, the most notable is James Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission in 1866 and regarded by most missions historians as the single-most influential missionary to China and among the most influential missionaries ever. By 1907 the CIM had become the largest and most diverse society in the country, with 853 missionaries from at least ten countries at 204 stations scattered throughout every province of China (MacGillivray 135). Taylor’s turn towards China was significantly steered by a combination of Gutzlaff and Medhurst. In 1850, Gutzlaff had come to England in order to encourage personally the mobilization of more missionaries for his scheme to train natives for evangelizing the country. Although Taylor did not himself hear Gutzlaff, a number of British businessmen, inspired by Gutzlaff’s zeal and energy, founded *The Gleaner in the Missionary Field*, a magazine that the Taylor family received from the first issue in March 1850 (Steer 16). As Taylor relates in a brief autobiography, as he this magazine he became convinced that “it was in China the Lord wanted me” (15). Learning that the Congregational minister in his town “possessed a copy of Medhurst’s *China*, [he] called upon him to ask a loan of the book” (16). He explains the impact the book had on him, writing, “Medhurst’s book on China emphasized the value of medical missions there, and this directed my attention to medical studies as a valuable mode of preparation” (16). He accordingly studied medicine and surgery for two years at Hull. After this training, Gutzlaff’s influence again worked to get Taylor to China. During his speaking tour in England, a Chinese Evangelization Society
had formed to send new missionaries to Gutzlaff at Hong Kong. Although Gutzlaff had
died in 1851, the Society continued, and Taylor was its first British missionary, departing
for China in 1853.  

Although Taylor is best known among historians of missions, literary scholars and
historians of empire are best acquainted with another missionary influenced by Gutzlaff,
the missionary to southern and central Africa, David Livingstone. In his Missionary
Travels and Researches in South Africa (1857), Livingstone tells of his early nudges
towards mission. Taking a “dislike to dry doctrinal reading, and to religious reading of
every sort,” the young Livingstone refused to read Boston’s Fourfold State or
Wilberforce’s Practical Christianity. Instead, he took delight in “scientific works and
books of travels” (7). Upon feeling an Evangelical conversion, he began thinking about
how he might be of use to alleviate “human misery.” Considering this question, he writes,
“I felt that to be a pioneer of Christianity in China might lead to the material benefit of
some portions of that immense empire; and therefore set myself to obtain a medical
education, in order to be qualified for that enterprise” (8). Although Livingstone never
mentions the pioneering missionary merchant by name, it seems likely that Gutzlaff’s
work lurks in the background of his inspiration. That he wished to be a pioneer who
“might lead to the material benefit” of the Chinese strikes very close to Gutzlaffian
rhetoric. Livingstone’s later conclusions, too, suggest the influence. It is to Livingstone
that the slogan “Commerce and Christianity” is typically traced, but the idea is clearly
present in the Journal of the missionary-merchant-adventurer in China. As Livingstone

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170 The Chinese Evangelization Society became defunct when Taylor, after returning to Britain in
1860 due to ill health, formed the China Inland Mission in 1866. The Chinese Evangelization Society
was absorbed into his effort. Its only other missionary was John Jones, who went to China with his family in
1855. He resided in both Ningbo and Shanghai for the duration of his time in China, but with illness in
1863 he was forced to return to Britain. He died at sea (Wylie 240).
studied medicine at Glasgow from 1836 to 1840, his encouragement to use medicine as
an entrance to China could not have come from Medhurst (whose work was published in
1838) but had to come from Gutzlaff, who repeatedly expresses the idea,

I know scarcely one instance of a clever medical man having given himself up to
the service of this distant nation, with the view of promoting the glorious gospel
and the happiness of his fellow-men. There have been several gentlemen, both at
Macao and Canton, whose praiseworthy endeavours to alleviate suffering have
been crowned with much success. Yet we want a hospital in the heart of China
itself, and we want men who wish to live solely for the cause. (436)

Not only the words, but the pioneering independent spirit of Gutzlaff find their echo in
Livingstone’s exploratory treks to the heart of Africa. Had not the Opium War kept
Livingstone from going to China in 1840 (11), Gutzlaff would have found an English
double. A fitting, and admittedly painful, conclusion to Gutzlaff’s heritage is found in a

*Blackwood’s Magazine* article in 1858, written in admiration of Livingstone, his
missionary work, and his provocation, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South
Africa*:

[The Missionary Explorer] is . . . the bearer of a special good to every individual
who hears him; but he is also, consciously or unconsciously, in that course of
providential order which rules the world, the pioneer of universal benefits, the
beginner of legitimate intercourse —the first effectual link between the savage
and the civilized man. . . . [T]he results of his mission are not solely to individuals;
he is the ambassador of all possible and practicable advantages, the underworker,
unsuspected and unconscious, of all the developments of the future. . . . [I]t will
advantage the general interest in that great ambassador of God and man, if he will
. . . represent the true nature of an enterprise which, in reality, aims at nothing less
than an entire and fundamental revolution of nature, the destruction and
dispersion of savagery, and the making of a new world. (393)
APPENDIX A

The images that follow, taken from the Saturday Magazine and Penny Magazine from the mid- to late-1830s, display the paucity of knowledge about China available in Britain even at that late and crucial stage of the international relationship. What is also evident from these images is the relative peace of landscape and common people contrasted with an over-awing and oppressive government.

An image of working men (Figure Eight), from the Penny Magazine of 28 February 1838, shows the hard-working nature of the Chinese, along with rather distinctly un-Chinese facial features.

Figure Eight. [Cormorant-fishing in China] Penny Magazine (28 February 1838): 1.
It was and still is almost unheard of for Chinese men, especially young working men, to have facial hair. This Westernization of Asian features had been characteristic for many years in British depictions long before these penny magazine engravings. The very expensive and elaborate volumes by George Mason, *The Costume of China* (1800) and *The Punishments of the Chinese* (1801), while remarkable for the brilliant quality of the publication, are nevertheless amusing for the highly Westernized features of the Chinese depicted, including prominent noses, deep-set blue eyes, pale skin, and rosy cheeks.

Another maritime image, that of the Chinese navy (Figure Nine), shows the power of the government over the nation, particularly set amidst small private boats of the common people.

Its tilted position in the water and crowded decks convey the disarray and confusion by which British merchants represented the Chinese military.

Another image from the popular press of the 1830s (Figure Ten) conveys the impression of Canton as an orderly city with civilized inhabitants. The clusters of people milling about the square suggest something like a European piazza. Readers would have been surprised to contrast the peaceful image with descriptions of this square in missionary and merchant accounts, in which it figures regularly as a bustling and crowded human menagerie more like a market circus than a serene social scene.

Figure Ten. [Triumphal Arch, at Canton] “Some Account of Canton: Part II,” The Saturday Magazine 12 (1838): 256.
Figure Eleven. [Whampoa Pagoda] *The Saturday Magazine* 12 (1838): 108.

APPENDIX B

The following images are details of engravings in Medhurst’s *China* that suggest ways in which Evangelicals conceived of China’s national depravity as evident throughout the country. The figure titles are those ascribed in the book.

**Figure Thirteen.** [cluster of temples]: 406.

**Figure Fourteen.** [Guard-room with soldiers]: 406.
Figure Fifteen. [Chinese Fort]: 406.

Figure Sixteen. [Service in a Chinese Temple]: 181.
APPENDIX C

The following three images are taken from Gutzlaff’s *Journal of Three Voyages*. The large, fold-out map and the picture of the missionary’s home in Siam account for all the images in the book.

Figure Seventeen. [Map of the Coast of Siam, China, &c. to illustrate Gutzlaff’s Voyages]
Although a number of rough coastal maps existed prior to Gutzlaff’s map, his sketch was particularly significant for its emphasis on interior navigable routes. Highlighting the rivers and canals with dark pen, Gutzlaff intended the map to illustrate avenues by which trade goods and missionaries could penetrate the interior of the country by boat, particularly from key coastal emporiums. The rivers and canals are also interesting for their inaccurate representation on the map, becoming a visible testament to Gutzlaff’s tendency to pretend much more knowledge than he actually possessed.

**Figure Eighteen.** [Detail of Gutzlaff’s map of the Coast]
The image of Gutzlaff’s residence (Figure Nineteen) is a remarkable feature of the *Journal*. Although within the pages of mission narratives it is not uncommon to find images of local buildings, his inclusion of his own house, a visibly personal connection to the site of description, is unprecedented in missionary literature.

**Figure Nineteen.** [Residence of the Rev. Mr. Gutzlaff at Bankok] from *Journal of Three Voyages*, 1834
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