

## BOOK REVIEWS

PFISTER, Lauren F., *Striving for 'the Whole Duty of Man', James Legge and the Scottish Protestant Encounter with China, Assessing Confluences in Scottish Nonconformism, Chinese Missionary Scholarship, Victorian Sinology and Chinese Protestantism*. Frankfurt/Vienna: Peter Lang, 2004, 2 Vols., 315, 443 pp., indexes. Scottish Studies International, Publications of the Scottish Studies Centre of the Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz in Gernersheim, Vol. 34.

This important study ends with James Legge's visit in 1873 to the Temple of Heaven in Beijing. There, where imperial sacrifices to the supreme deity, Shangdi, were offered at the winter solstice, Legge and his travelling companions removed their shoes and, standing in a circle, sang the Christian doxology (Vol. 2, p. 243). This episode more than any other epitomizes what James Legge (1815-1897), missionary-scholar, as he is aptly termed by Pfister, attempted to accomplish in his life time: the meeting of two traditions in harmonious cross-cultural interchange, with the accommodation of one tradition to the other.

In writing this massive biography of more than 750 pages and 1,235 notes, the author has performed a multi-faceted service for scholars and laymen alike. In these two volumes he shows us the importance of background for the features, angles, and paths a life may take;<sup>1</sup> the significance and place of missionary scholarship and translation in the development of Western sinology; Legge's relationship with a number of important Chinese personages; and, of special interest to this reviewer, the varieties of the Chinese commentarial tradition. Concerning the latter, Legge might be considered the nineteenth century forerunner of such twentieth century Chinese scholars as Gu Jiegang (顧頡剛, 1893-1980) and Qian Xuantong (錢玄同, 1887-1939), the "Antiquity Doubters" (疑古) whose forays into the commentarial tradition created the foundation of modern Chinese Ru (儒教), or Confucian scholarship. This book is thus much more than a biography or missiological history, it is also an attempt to fill a gap that has continued to the present day about the nature and aim of nineteenth century missionary scholarship.

Pfister ascribes special significance to Legge's Scottish Nonconformist upbringing in which "duty" and obligation (as reflected in the title of the book) had an important place. Educated first at the parish school and then at the Aberdeen Grammar School, Legge was early introduced to China when he befriended the twin sons of William Milne (1785-1822), the Chinese missionary. At the impressionable age of fifteen Legge went on to King's College and, although Pfister does not claim that Legge was then and there introduced to the important missionary journal, the *Chinese Repository*, there is no doubt that this "almanac on all things Chinese" (Vol. 1, p. 69) was widely read in many circles. Edited by the Canton-based American Baptist missionary, Elijah C. Bridgman

(1801-1861), the *Repository* provided information on trade, travel, Chinese politics and institutions, Chinese cities, and much else.

Legge's decision to embark on a missionary career was taken at an early time and, even though, the London Missionary Society was hesitant to accept his application due to questions of health, he began the study of Chinese in 1838. In 1839, he married Mary Isabella Morison (1816-1853), and that same year the two set out for China, but ended up in Batavia because of political turmoil on the China coast. Only four years later, in 1843, were they finally able to settle in Hong Kong where Legge pursued the missionary calling until 1867. In 1876, at the age of sixty, he took up his appointment at Corpus Christie College, Oxford University, remaining there for the next twenty years.

These details about Legge's life are set forth in admirable detail within the context of the man's intellectual development. They are more general in the first volume, and more sinologically focused in the second volume. But Pfister avoids, on the whole, delving into psychological motivations. Thus, for example, Legge's decision to return first to Scotland and then to take up the Oxford appointment, while having, undoubtedly, much to do with the ill health of his second wife, Hannah Mary, who suffered greatly in the Hong Kong climate, Legge's decision may have been also motivated by the deeply felt desire to devote himself toward the end of his life to scholarship rather than to missionary work. Pfister's subtly presented arguments enhance this study further.

Legge's many years of collaboration and cooperation with Ho Tsun-sheen (He Jins-han 何進善, 1817-1871),<sup>2</sup> whom he met already in Malacca early in 1841, are significant. Together with Ho, and perhaps because of him, there began the Protestant biblical commentary tradition when biblical texts were interpreted in notes for the Chinese reader. While Ho continued this commentarial work on the New Testament, Legge began the all important task of translating and annotating the Chinese classics (or the Ruist canonical literature, as Pfister terms it) for the English reader.

Best known for his translation and commentarial work, it is doubtful that even today a student of China and Chinese would not have encountered James Legge's translations of the Chinese classics. Indeed, after only fifty years of British sinology, scholars of other countries at the turn of the twentieth century enviously eyed the accomplishments of men like Legge.<sup>3</sup> Among his major translations are the *Four Books* (Analects, Mengzi, the Mean, and Great Learning), the *Book of Songs* (Shi jing), the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun Qiu) together with the *Dzuo Commentary* (Dzuo Chuan), the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*. The format developed in the *Four Books* and used in other translations was exceedingly successful: the Chinese text appears at the top of the page, it is followed by Legge's translation, and at the bottom of the page are his comments that also include Chinese characters wherever necessary. Pfister usefully points out that while this format was maintained for the five volumes of the *Chinese Classics*, this was no longer the case in the later Oxford edition of the *Sacred Books of China*. There the Chinese text was not included and the explanatory notes were used selectively (Vol. 2, p. 99). In the former, however, as Pfister perceptively remarks, "Comprehensive, detailed, and boldly transparent in setting out the 'modern' Chinese text, English translation, and commentarial notes all on the same page, Legge was obviously engaging relevant works by sinologues and translators...." (Vol. 2, p. 236).

But this need not concern us further, for what is important is the discoveries Legge made in the Chinese commentarial tradition, and which leads Pfister to claim that ultimately Legge was a forerunner of the "Antiquity Doubters" in modern Chinese scholarship, men who assumed the task of rectifying the distorted tradition. One discovery was "that the Ruist traditions were multiform," that is what we term Confucianism consists

of many trends and is not monolithic. For this reason a Christian interpretation of Confucianism became one of several options, being by no means incongruent with other options. Before discussing further the implications of Legge's conclusion, I want to point out, however, one other aspect of Pfister's study concerning Confucius, and that is the emphasis of a continuing development of Legge's ideas. By this Pfister indicates that Legge's earlier critical attitude regarding Confucius (paternalism, unreligiosity, lack of charity) gradually gave way to a different assessment of the master. By separating the historical Confucius from the mythologized "Master of the Myriad Generations", Legge believed that he participated in an ongoing process of Confucian interpretation (Vol. 2, p. 112).

As indicated above, Legge's position had important implications. These can be seen mostly in a major controversy that took place in missionary circles in mid-nineteenth century and was the so-called "Term Question" controversy,<sup>4</sup> in the course of which the problem by what name to refer to God in Chinese was extensively discussed. By the early 1850s Legge had concluded that the Chinese had a residual knowledge of the "true God", known by the name of Shangdi (上帝).<sup>5</sup> Legge's position for Shangdi was supported by Ho Tsun-sheen and also by Luo Zongfan (羅仲藩), a Cantonese Confucian scholar whom Legge knew personally. I am not certain how widely an early Chinese monotheism was also supported in Western Protestant circles, yet echoes of it can be found in the translation of the *Daodejing* (1870) by Victor Friedrich von Strauss und Torney (1809-1899) who, furthermore, published in 1885 a book entitled *Ancient Chinese Monotheism*. For Chinese Protestantism assuming the existence of an early monotheism was, however, significant. It meant that the missionaries were reintroducing rather than introducing a teaching.

Legge's association with Wang Tao (王韜, 1828-1897) is well known and need not be repeated here. He was a Christian Confucian scholar who came to Hong Kong in 1862. It was Wang who provided much of the commentary material Legge needed. Yet, as Pfister perceptively notes, even if Legge was often influenced by Wang's pronouncements, he did preserve independence of judgment in many instances. "Wang undoubtedly 'laboured' with Legge and 'enlivened' the process, influencing by providing new information and being a dialogue partner in technical discussions, but he did not dominate ever Legge's critical judgments" (Vol. 2, p. 149). The fruitfulness of their collaboration is, obvious and nowhere more so than in Legge's translation of the *Shujing* (Book of Documents), the authenticity of which had puzzled generations of scholars.

Much about James Legge's life would be forgotten were it not for some of the details recounted in these two volumes. For example, who remembers today that Legge too tried to move Old Testament stories into Chinese by translating the Joseph stories as *A Brief History of [the Life of] Joseph* (約瑟紀略). We are also indebted to Pfister for stressing the continuing importance of Legge's contribution in our own day. A new relevance may be seen in studies concerned with Confucian Protestant Christianity and various forms of sinified Christianity among Chinese at home and abroad (Vol. 2, p. 241). But not only comparative religion, or the "synthetic view of Chinese religion" are significant, philosophy too is influenced by the stimulus of Legge's ideas, according to Pfister. Together with Christian philosophy, Confucian thought is becoming once more a legitimate subject of inquiry in Mainland China (Vol. 2, p. 242). Of special significance is the accommodationist vision that Legge apparently retained most of his life. This, according to Pfister, as was pointed out above, was the conviction that certain Chinese traditions could be and needed to be accommodated by Chinese Christianity. Equally significant is Pfister's repeated emphasis on Legge's Scottish philosophical and

Nonconformist background that allowed him to correct his stand, indeed, to change his views regarding the Chinese people (Vol. 2, p. 223).

Finally, in addition to being a splendid tribute to one of the great nineteenth century personalities, Lauren Pfister's study introduces the reader to important dimensions of sinological research. These are contained not only in his extensive notes, the bibliography, even if selected, but especially in the "Bibliographic Essay" (pp. 245-260), in which he describes how he went about his research and the archives and libraries that yielded results. The two volumes, therefore, fill an important gap concerning a number of issues relevant to the understanding of the growth and development of Chinese Protestant Christianity as well as modern Chinese studies.

Irene Eber

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<sup>1</sup> Another recent significant biography of over 700 pages with a somewhat different thrust is by Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China, James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage*, Berkeley/London: University of California Press, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> See Laurence Pfister, "A Transmitter but not a Creator: Ho Tsun-sheen (1817-1871), the First Modern Chinese Protestant Theologian," in I. Eber, S.K. Wan, K. Walf, R. Malek, eds., *Bible in Modern China, The Literary and Intellectual Impact*, St. Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 1999, pp. 165-197.

<sup>3</sup> Irene Eber, "Introduction," in Martin Buber, Alex Page, trans., *Chinese Tales*, New Jersey/London: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1991, p. ix.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the controversy, see I. Eber, "The Interminable Term Question," in Eber, et al., *Bible in Modern China*, pp. 135-161.

<sup>5</sup> James Legge, *The Notion of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits: with an Examination of the Defense of an Essay, on the Proper Rendering of the Words Elohim and Theos, into the Chinese Language*, Hongkong: Printed at the "Hongkong Register" Office, 1852.

HANSEN, Holger Bernt – TWADDLE, Michael (eds.): *Christian Missionaries and the State in the Third World*. Oxford and Athens, James Currey Publishers 2002. x + 307 pp.

Two introductory remarks to begin with. First – the book has little to say about "the State in the Third World" and it does not focus on the influence of Christian missions on state-building in former colonies either. The 'State' in the title of the book represents principally the colonial state and 'the Story' is about its interactions with the other great historical effort at modernization and influence building in the non-European territories, namely the missionary project. Second – there is actually very little of 'The Story'. The book is a collection of essays by several authors based, it appears, on the proceedings of one international conference and there is disappointingly little attempt at synthesis even in the introductory chapter by one of the editors. However, this shortcoming is partially compensated by valuable insights by some of the contributors, most remarkably by J. Lonsdale in his essay "Mission Christianity and Settler Colonialism in Eastern Africa".

On the other hand the book brings plenty of relevant information, quotations and observations on the topic of the Christian missions in the former colonial territories and it offers interesting, sometimes enjoyable reading. As a collection of essays by some of