

THE
CHINESE TERM FOR GOD.
A LETTER TO THE
PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES
OF CHINA,

BY
J.S. BURDON,
BISHOP OF VICTORIA,
HONGKONG.

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TO THE PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES OF CHINA.
MY DEAR BRETHREN,

In the last Annual Report of the English Religious Tract Society, a Statement appeared from the pen of Dr. EITEL, of Hongkong, professing to give an account of the Controversy about the terms for God and Spirit in China. It is no disrespect to Dr. EITEL to say that this statement, considered in itself, is not worth an extended notice. It is very brief and meagre. He probably wrote it in a hurry with the idea of giving, in few words, the gist of the controversy. The Directors of the Tract Society, however, thought it a statement of great importance, and so they adopted it, and put it on record in their official archives. This gives it an importance which probably the Author never

thought of or desired for it, and draws attention to it from those who otherwise would never have thought of noticing it. In writing to Home Committees on such a controversy as that which exists in China, we cannot be too careful both about our facts and our explanations. Those to whom we write know nothing of Chinese, and are utterly unable to understand our difficulties. How many, for instance, of those Gentlemen for whose benefit Dr. EITEL wrote his brief statement, were able from personal examination of the subject to understand the points in dispute about Shang-ti and Shin and Tien-chu? Not one of them would profess to know anything on the subject. They have [1/2] a general impression that a great controversy existed about the question a quarter of a century ago, and that it was then in some way settled, and they are impatient of any attempt to bring the subject forward again. In writing to such persons then, if a statement either of the history or of the merits of the controversy is thought necessary at all, the greatest care should be taken to be strictly accurate as regards facts, and fair as regards the arguments indicated.

Now in both these requisites Dr. EITEL has unfortunately failed. It is even a weak and not very clear statement of his own side, but it is decidedly inaccurate and unfair to his opponents. Dr. BLODGET in his letter published in a little pamphlet, entitled "The Chinese Term for God--Statement and Reply," well shows, how inaccurate Dr. EITEL is in his account of the controversy as it existed two hundred years ago, among the Roman Catholic Missionaries in China. There are other inaccuracies and unfairnesses in it. His Statement consequently misleads friends at home, and tends to perpetuate and embitter the controversy in China. The importance, if there is to be any hope of peace amidst our differences, of trying to counteract such results as these, is my only apology for troubling you with this letter.

The natural course in replying to Dr. EITEL's article, would have been to write to the Editor of the Periodical in which it appeared. This, however, is out of the question, when the Periodical happens to be the Annual Official Report of a great Society. No one in China who does not hold Dr. EITEL'S views would be likely to command attention from the Secretaries of the Tract Society or its Committee. A Committee, which has officially taken its side in a controversy, is, as almost every one in his turn is made to feel, a difficult body to reach. I suppose we are all reminded, from time to time, of a certain saying of SYDNEY SMITH'S' about Committees which is very smart, rather irreverent, but perfectly true.

In 1866 when I desired to have an Edition of the Mandarin New Testament

with Tien-Chu instead of Shang-Ti for God, I applied to the Society with which I was then connected (Church Missionary Society) to recommend this to the Bible Society. The recommendation was made and accepted; and an Edition of 7,000 copies of [2/3] the New Testament with this term was granted me. This rule, I believe, prevails still. If an English Missionary is unable to use the books provided by the Bible Society, they will furnish him with means of procuring such books as he can use, on the recommendation of the Society to which he belongs. The Tract Society professes to be guided in this matter by the action of the Bible Society, and in 1875 when I found myself unable to use the tracts and books provided by the Hongkong Tract Committee, I appealed first to the C. M. S., and then direct to the Tract Society, but neither of my applications was availing. I suppose both Societies are afraid of Bishops. At all events my position as Bishop, isolates me from the sympathy and assistance I once found so readily as a Missionary.

I am therefore shut up to the course of appealing in this public manner to my Missionary Brethren. I might have taken the more usual course of appealing to you through the "Missionary Recorder," but I felt afraid to ask for so much space as this letter is likely to need. If any one think that there is a great disproportion between the length of Dr. EITEL's statement and my letter, let it be remembered that one line of mistakes often takes twenty to rectify.

Dr. EITEL's statement is as follows:

"During the past year our committee has been considerably agitated by the vexed question as to the correct rendering of the term "God" in the Chinese language. To any one unacquainted with the peculiarities of the Chinese idiom, it is simply impossible to explain the difficulties which surround this question. Nearly two hundred years ago the Roman Catholic Missions in China were divided into two hostile camps violently opposing each other. The learned Jesuits defended the use of the classical terns "Shang-ti" for "God," as being a relic of ancient Monotheism which obtained in China before either Confucianism, Buddhism, or Taouism misused that term, giving it a pantheistic or polytheistic sense. The ignorant Dominicans, however, seeing in the term "Shang-ti" nothing but the idolatrous meaning given to it by the people of their time, and little caring for idiomatic purity, manufactured the term "Tien-chu," i.e. "Lord of Heaven," which gives the Chinese the idea that there is a corresponding god who is lord of the earth. The question was in true Roman Catholic fashion, decided by a Papal bull adopting the term "Tien-chu," and no Roman Catholic Missionary was [3/4] thenceforth or is now sent to China without having pledged himself by a-

solemn oath to use no other term for God.

"Twenty-five years ago the Protestant Missions in China were equally convulsed by dissensions as to the correct word to be used. The term "Tien-chu" became all over China the stereotyped designation of Roman Catholics, so much so that in the various treaties which China concluded with foreign nations the term "Tien- chu-kau," i.e, religion of Tien-chu, was invariably adopted to render the term "Roman Catholic religion" in Chinese, therefore Protestant Missionaries rejected almost unanimously the term "Tien-chu." They were nevertheless divided among themselves. All the English missionaries with but one or two exceptions, all the German missionaries without exception, and a small number of American missionaries adhered to the term "Shang-ti," acknowledging indeed that it was not an absolutely perfect rendering of the term God, but contending that it was the best word to be found in the Chinese language.

"On the other hand, an overwhelming majority of American missionaries renewed all the charges which in days gone by the Dominicans brought against the term "Shang-ti." They then adopted the word "Shin," i.e. "spirit or spirits," which in the Chinese language, devoid as it is of an article (either definite or indefinite,) and of a distinction of singular and plural, may mean *a* spirit, or spirits, or *the* spirit, or spirits, whilst the phrase, "Pai-shin," i.e. "worshipping shin," is the standing idiomatic designation of idolatrous worship all over China.

"For the last twenty-five years, all the publications of the American Bible and Tract Societies contained exclusively the term "Shin," whilst those of the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Religious Tract Society of England adhered to the term "Shangti." Meanwhile, however, a number of American missionaries, and signally those of Foochow (Methodist Episcopal Mission) yielded to the representations of their native church members and preachers and adopted the term "Shang-ti," whilst on the other side but two English missionaries rejected that word, one of them bringing forward a new term "Chi-shin," whilst the other contended for the old Dominican term "Tien-chu."

"At the proposed General Conference of Protestant missionaries to be held next year (1877,) an attempt will probably be made to bring about a peaceful settlement of this vexed question, possibly on the basis of a proposal to adopt "Shang-ti" as the standard term for "God," i.e. the true God, and "Shin" as the standard term for "god" or "gods," i.e. "false gods." It would be a great gain if all Protestant missionaries in China could use the same tracts and the same

Bible all over the Empire. May God give us missionaries [4/5] His Holy Spirit to set this question at rest for ever, with a better result than that arising out of a Papal bull."

Before noticing the allusions to rue in this paper, it may be as well to explain briefly the circumstances under which it was penned, so lightly passed over in the opening sentence.

On coming to Hongkong in 1874 I essayed to join the Bible and Tract Local Committees, but I found that according to an old resolution of the Tract Committee dating from 1853, which expressly limited the Members of the Committee to Missionaries, whether English or American, who could use the word Shang-ti for God, I was ineligible for a seat on the said Committee. I must confess I was considerably taken aback on learning this. I had never been used to such rules of Tract Committees in the North, and I believed it was a remnant of the old bitterness that reigned 25 years ago, which had accidentally adhered to the constitution of the Hongkong Committee, but would be removed as soon as it was found out. I was mistaken. No thought of a change was allowed. The exclusiveness of 1853 was as strong as ever in Hongkong in 1874. I appealed home, giving a fair statement of our difficulties, and explaining how Committees in Ningpo, Shanghai and Peking, which consisted of men of different views, acted. I fully expected that the same rule would be established in Hongkong. But here again I was mistaken. My appeal was rejected. A unanimous Resolution was passed, endorsing to the full all that the Hongkong Committee had done. The letter that accompanied the Resolution was so worded, that I could hardly believe that my statement had even been read through. There is a peculiarly painful memory about that letter, for I fancy it was the last official letter that the good Dr. DAVIES ever wrote. Another hand had to finish it.

A short time after this Dr. EITEL seems to have sent his explanation of our troubles, and it assumed the shape of the statement under consideration. The Committee seized it as the best apology they could offer for their treatment of me and hence its appearance in the Annual Report of 1876.

[6] I will now notice the things in this statement that refer to myself, and in doing so, will give my views of the controversy so far as I have to do with it. Dr. EITEL states that "all the English Missionaries with but one or two exceptions adhered to the term Shang-ti": and in the last paragraph he says: "but two English Missionaries rejected Shang-ti, one of them bringing forward a new term Chi-Shin, whilst the other contended for the old Dominican term Tien-Chu."

These "two" are, I presume, Canon MCCLATCHIE and myself. How far the part of this statement that refers to Canon MCCLATCHIE is correct may be judged by the following emphatic denial by the Canon himself: "As to the phrase Chi-Shin, I have never used it either in preaching, or in teaching, or in Christian books, in all my life." From the way in which I am alluded to, it would seem as though I was the only "ignorant Dominican" to be found in the Protestant Community, and the Proposer of the term of that sect, It so happens, however, that I had nothing whatever to do with the proposal to adopt it into our Protestant nomenclature. It was first formally introduced by a Committee of Missionaries in Peking during my absence in 1865, and the leading Missionary who "contended for" it was the Rev. Dr. WILLIAMSON, then Secretary of the Scottish Bible Society, formerly Missionary of the London Missionary Society. To his proposition agreed two English Missionaries, Dr. EDKINS and Mr. COLLINS. Dr. MULLEN was also present and was, I suppose, a willing party to the proposal so far as he could understand it. As soon as I heard of the compromise, I gladly fell in with it and have ever since adhered to it, but it was not I who "contended for" it in the first instance. Dr. EDKINS, Mr. COLLINS, and even Dr. MULLEN, to say nothing of Dr. BLODGET and Dr. SCHERESCHEWSKY, must take the greater share of the blame conveyed in the reproach of "ignorant Dominican." Again Dr. EITEL lays stress on his fact that all the English Missionary body "but two" adopted Shang-ti.

It is a very significant fact, that no London Missionary Society man that I have ever heard of has swerved from the use of Shang-ti, since Dr. MEDHURST'S [6/7] view of the question was accepted by the Bible Society. I will not attempt to explain this. I merely point out the fact. There has been no such unanimity however among the Church Missionary Society men. The Northern Episcopal Mission is, I hear, equally divided, seven being for and seven against the use of Shang-ti. One of the latter seven, I believe, is the Bishop himself, so that the two oldest men, whose knowledge of the subject and long experience outweigh a host of more recent corners, Bishop RUSSELL and Canon MCCLUTCHIE, are against this term. Other English Missionaries in the Province of Chekiang, especially in the region about Shau-hing, have either modified or changed their views with reference to Sang-ti and now avoid it. These changes are, I believe, but the promise of "more to follow." Shang-ti is too much connected with heathenism to ultimately prevail in the usage of conscientious men who do not feel themselves committed to it.

But even if it were true that "but two" English Missionaries rejected Shang-ti, it is not true, as is implied by Dr. EITEL, that all the rest have, as a matter of conviction, accepted Shang-ti. The explanation of so many English Missionaries using Shang-ti is simply this:--Twenty-five years ago, when English Missionaries chiefly, almost entirely, consisted of L.M. S. men, Dr. MEDHURST, Mr. STRONACH and Mr. MYLNE were able to move the British and Foreign Bible Society to print the so-called Delegates' version of the Scriptures, filling in the blanks that had been left by the Translators for God, god and gods with the term "Shang-ti." The controversy had never been settled between the Missionaries, but it was thus practically settled for English Missionaries, between the gentlemen just named and the Bible Society. Large numbers of this Bible with this terse were then printed at the Society's presses in China. The Million Testament Scheme, and soon after the Million Bible Scheme, suggested by the Taiping Rebellion, which was erroneously believed to be a national movement toward Christianity, increased these Bibles beyond all possibility of distribution. English Missionaries on arriving in China found these Bibles made ready to their hands and in overflowing abundance in the Bible Society's warehouses, and what was more natural than that they should fall in with the books and the usage they [7/8] found? This is the only course new Missionaries can take. Moreover the majority of Missionaries are men who do not care to enter into controversy on such a subject. They learn the language and they cling to the use of their own Mission, for the most part without any special examination. The unwavering faithfulness of every L. M. S. man to Shang-ti, and the well-stored purse of the Bible Society as well as that of the Tract Society, are the secret of the success of this term among the majority of English Missionaries. But does this prove anything about the term itself? Is it fair to dwell so perpetually and so ostentatiously on the fact of so many English missionaries being favourable to it, when that adherence arises in so many cases from simple force of circumstances?

The "signal instance of the Foochow Methodist Episcopal Missionaries having yielded to the representations of their Native Church members and preachers and adopted Shang-ti," alluded to by Dr. EITEL, is equally unsound. From the account given me by one of those missionaries, who has himself fallen in with the change, the real history, were it worth while to tell it, would prove nothing, but that a man of strong will can acquire great influence over weak and for the most part ignorant men, and that that influence can under certain circumstances easily spread. It adds not a

feather's weight to the deciding of the controversy in the mind of any unprejudiced man. I had last year an opportunity of personally becoming acquainted with many of the Native converts in the Foochow mission, and the explanation I have just given was forced upon me.

[9] Dr. EITEL has undertaken in his statement to give in a line or two the objections to Tien-chu. One would think from his way of stating these that they are so self-evident, that none but those who are wilfully blind could fail to see them. The inference is of course plain that the "ignorant Dominican" who persists in using it, is not worth a moment's consideration. The term means "Lord of Heaven" and as any one can see this implies that there is a "God of Earth." Then "it is the term employed by the Roman Catholics and gives the designation of their sect to the Chinese." This of course is enough to condemn it without one single word of argument.

Now I think, since Dr. EITEL took in hand to enlighten gentlemen in England on this subject--a self imposed duty altogether,--he was bound to deal a little more fairly with the subject, and tell the Committee something of the difficulties connected with this matter. He should have said that an absolutely perfect term for God, like those employed in the sacred Scriptures, is impossible in China. He does admit this to some extent in one part of his paper, but he does not bring it out, as he was bound in giving a statement to those who were neither Missionaries nor Chinese scholars, as a general principle.

It is not so wonderful, though it is quite as unfair, that he should not have given the slightest intimation that Shang-ti implies a correlative term as much, yea far more than Tien-clan, and that the use of Shang-ti is infinitely more dangerous than that of Tien-chu, from the very fact that Christianity is thereby confounded in the heathen Chinese mind, either with Confucianism or with Tauism.

Shang-ti means the "Emperor above," and naturally in the estimation of the Chinaman, corresponds to the Emperor below, that is the Emperor par excellence of or the universe, ?? that is, China. Moreover if the classical meaning of Shang-ti be followed, namely Heaven, no Chinaman could hear it without thinking of "Empress Earth," as the corresponding term. Hence in Peking the "Altar of Heaven," where Shang-ti is worshipped by the Chinese Emperor, has its corresponding "Altar of Earth" in the appropriate relative position.

But "the term Tien-chu is that used by the Roman Catholics and so, is on this account alone, utterly and hopelessly unsuitable for use by Protestants." This

always sounds to me like an electioneering cry, with a great deal of smoke and no fire. "Protestants will be confounded with Roman Catholics." "The truth and simplicity of the Gospel will be endangered." No cry can be imagined more likely to influence a Committee of an English Religious Society than this. If it were true, I should probably be the first to urge it. But Dr. EITEL himself does not believe it. He told me about two years ago that he, personally, could see no objection to the term, beyond its being what every other term is, an imperfect one, and that if the majority of Protestant [9/10] Missionaries would consent to use it, he would fall in with the usage. Dr. LEGGE does not believe it, as he told Dr. BLODGET in Peking, that he considers the two terms Tien-chu and Shang-ti as identical. Dr. EDRINS does not believe it, as he joined in the compromise already alluded to, in which Tienchu for God was taken as part of the basis of agreement. Bishop RUSSELL does not believe it. Dr. BLODGET does not believe it. Dr. CARSTAIRS DOUGLAS, of Amoy, does not believe it, Dr. WILLIAMSON does not believe it. It is much smaller men who have got up the notion in China, and it is gentlemen on Tract and Missionary Committees at home, who have given it, by means of the power of the purse, any practical value. These gentlemen well know the history of Romanism in England and in Europe, and they erroneously believe that the Chinese are equally well informed and regard the Romanist and Protestant controversy exactly as the Committee of a Protestant Association do in England, I wish I could make this matter plain to them, and take away the false alarm engendered by a weak and foolish fallacy.

In the first place the Chinese know absolutely nothing of the terms Protestant and Roman Catholic. To them we stand respectively as "Sect of Tien-chu" and "Sect of Yésu." As such we are undoubtedly confounded in the heathen mind, for it cannot be denied that the two "Sects" have many things and terms in common. And the addition of one or more terms, or the want of common usage of one or more terms, makes not the slightest difference in this respect. Whether we use Shang-ti or Shin or Tien-chu for God, we are confounded with the Tien-chu-kiau, and this simply because the two "Riau," as all the world knows, are originally one.

But *politically* we are NOT confounded with the Tien-chu-kiau. The Chinese everywhere in China, where I have been, make a marked distinction between the two sects. The Tien-chu-kiau has always identified itself with the French, whose conduct in China has, as a rule, been overbearing and unjust, and who are therefore hated by the Chinese. But the Yesu-kiau has always been

identified with the English and Americans, who are considered more just and mild than the French. The English, it is true, have had two [10/11] or three wars with China, and are the chief importers of opium, but their reputation is, nevertheless, good in the country for justice and fair dealing. The Americans have a better character still. They have always been able to secure the advantages they required without the painful necessity of fighting for them, and so the Chinese have a high idea of America. With these two nations, of whom the Chinese know most, the Yesu-kiau is always associated, and it has therefore a better odour than the other. Not that they like the *religion* of our Kiau any better than that of the other Kiau, so far as they understand it. In this respect we stand on the same level. But as political institutions, the only light in which the Chinese view us, they make a very decided distinction between the two Kiau, independently of all terms employed. They intensely dislike the one, and, as for the other, they neither like nor dislike it. In the Tientsin riots of 1870, though the Chapels and many converts of English Societies suffered, yet the rage was evidently directed against the Tien-chu-kiau. In the confusion, little distinction was likely to be made, but as soon as it was known that certain Christians belonged to the Yesu-kiau, they were released. This would have taken place quite independently of any religious term they might be using either in their books or in their worship. At such a time rioters would not stop to ask whether they used Shang-ti or Tien-chu. Different kinds of buildings and churches, different styles of worship, different modes of conduct, different designations, are connected with the two Kiaus in the minds of the Chinese, and between the two, therefore, there is a strongly marked line of demarcation which no *religious* likeness can efface.

But even if the use of the term Tien-chu did hopelessly comfound us with the Roman Catholics, no one knows better than Dr. EITEL that the use of Shang-ti is in even greater danger of confounding Christianity with Confucianism or with Taouism. The reading men in China, on hearing this term from the mouth of a Christian teacher, at once think of the traditional meaning of the term as given in the Classics, and no amount of Christian explanation, especially by a foreigner, acquainted with the language but to a limited extent at the best, will take from them the ideas they have acquired from infancy, and for [11/12] the matter of that for well nigh 1,000 generations, about Shang-ti and Heaven. As for the mass of Chinese, every Missionary, whether opposed to Shang-ti or not, knows that the name suggests nothing but a Taouist idol. Confounded with the Roman Catholics forsooth! I would

infinitely prefer to be confounded with those whom I acknowledge as Christians, and with whom I have no quarrel as to the nature of God, than to be confounded with heathen who know not and never have known God. Two years ago I wrote a letter in the "Recorder," entitled "A plea for toleration." So far as I remember, it was the first letter that appeared on the subject of the terms, and it was the occasion of a revival of the controversy. This was not my intention. I do not believe that much good is likely to result from a revival of the controversy as such. Every thing was said about the two old terms Shin and Shangti 25 years ago, that could be said, and no good is likely to come from a recapitulation of old arguments. Besides, old views are being modified in the absence of controversy. In the course of the last 10 years or so, the old position is considerably altered. The upholders of Shangti as a generic term for God, god and gods, are not quite so strong on the subject. Dr. EITEL sees that this view will not do. He also gives up another main principle of his party in allowing another meaning for Shin beside that of Spirit. Dr. BLODGET too has given up Shin for God, though he would occasionally use it in this sense; he wishes it in the main confined to god, gods, and yet sees no great objection to its being employed for Spirit also, though he himself is unable to do so. These changes are working silently in the minds of Missionaries. Each one must be left to form his views, and if need be (for who would profess himself infallible on this subject?) to modify them as time goes on and light is given. The great thing is that, while we must differ, we bear and forbear with each other and be perfectly fair and just to each other. We cannot as yet see eye to eye; but believing each other to be conscientious servants of God, we ought to be ready to help each other on Committees, and not throw obstacles in the way of those who may differ from us obtaining those books which they can conscientiously use. Strong as my views are against Shang-ti, [12/13] I would never hinder by my vote on Bible or Tract Committees any one who employed that term, from procuring a reasonable amount of help of such a kind that he could use. This was the principle on which such Committees were conducted in Ningpo, Shanghai and Peking, so long as I was connected with them, and no confusion resulted. It is still the principle at Ningpo, I believe. Why should not this principle be adopted in Hongkong? Why has it been allowed to work so long in the Northern Ports, and why is it so peremptorily forbidden in Hongkong? The question may well be asked *why*, WHY, is this? Is it that the Tract Society considers itself bound to follow in the track of the Bible Society? But the Bible Society did grant me an edition of 7,000 New

Testaments with Tien-chu for God, which is far from being exhausted, and which I have a right yet to claim.

Is it that "Tien-chu" has been condemned as a thoroughly unscriptural term for God, the use of which would imperil the Gospel? If so, who is the Author of this judgment, for all the leading men, who accept "Shang-ti," have in one form or another expressed their approval of it.

Is it because there are so few Missionaries who wish for it? Numbers ought surely not to be made the test of what is right in a case of this kind, but if so, I can say I am on the side of all the Western believers in the God of the Bible who have come to China, excepting the Jesuits and the Missionaries of the L. M. S., who were the first to introduce Shang-ti into the Church of God. Numbers of Protestant Missionaries in the North of China are using this term at the present moment.

Is it because confusion will result from printing in various terms? But experience at other places for the last 25 years, proves that this is a false alarm. My Scripture Histories and Prayer Book are used in the North, in Missions that, as a rule, employ the term Shang-ti.

The question is again echoed why, why, this exclusion of me from the Tract Society in Hongkong? What have I done to deserve excision? If I be an offender or have committed anything worthy of death, I [13/14] refuse not to die as a Member of the Tract Society, but if there be none of these things whereof they accuse me, no man may give me up to their power, I appeal to-- You, my Brethren.

I appeal to the party in power at present in Bible and Tract Societies. Is that power so sweet that you cannot afford to part with over so small a portion of it? Do you not see that by forcing one term on all, or refusing all help, you are carrying out the system of Rome without the "Ball"? What are you afraid of? Is it manly, is it just, thus to try to stamp out the opposite side by mere material force?

I appeal to you all. I ask for your assistance, not as partizans, but as impartial healers of our great and sore troubles. Influence English Societies to act as American Societies have already seen it necessary to act.

The help that I would require from year to year from the Bible and Tract Societies is comparatively small. If these two Societies ultimately, notwithstanding all that can be said or done, decline to help me, I do not suppose for a moment that I shall lack for funds. It is not for money I am pleading. It is for the principle of common justice between Missionary and Missionary whether it involve a single shilling or hundreds of pounds, that I

plead. It is against the injustice of being debarred from help, when not one valid reason can be given for excluding me, that I plead; and it is to prevent the perpetuation of bitterness in the controversy, that I ask that all sides should be helped by Committees at home, who understand nothing or very little of any side.

"Bitterness"! it may be coolly said, there is no "bitterness," except in your own mind. A cruel retort, this, from those who are safe at present in the adherence of the great Societies, to one like myself, unjustly deprived of all their sympathy and help. It is ungenerous, and denotes moreover a doubt about their own view, if it had not money and influence to support it.

A few words with reference to my own position in the controversy, and I have done. It may be thought from what I have said that I wish to be known as a champion of Tien-chu, the term of the "ignorant [14/15] Dominicans." This is not the case however. My struggle is rather *against Shang-ti* than *for any* particular term. I believe, whether rightly or wrongly, that Shang-ti is simply the chief god in China, and that therefore it is unscriptural to apply the name to Jehovah. In speaking and preaching I have been in the habit of using *all* possible terms but this one;--Lord, Supreme Lord, Heavenly Lord, Heavenly Father, the Eternal, &c., &c. In books of course there must be one main term employed for God, and the one I chiefly use in these is Tien-chu, as I am fully convinced that on the whole, though imperfect, it is the best term under the circumstances. This is but a compound of the term used, as I have said, by every body of Western believers in the true God (but two) who have come to China, Nestorians, Mohammedans, Latin Christians, Greek Christians. I cannot therefore be very far out, for we are in agreement with all these bodies as to the nature of God; and at all events there is no fear of any association with idolatry. Every Chinaman on hearing it at once associates it with the God of Christians, as the Chinese have been accustomed to it now for two or three centuries. But in speaking, I use every term that is likely to convey the idea I want to the Heathen and is not likely to mislead them; and while I think Tien-chu the most convenient of all these terms as a principal word for God in books, I really am not concerned to uphold this more than the others.

This statement is a sufficient answer to those who try to prejudice me in the eyes of the friends of missions, whether at home or in China, by charging me with seeking to force this particular term (Tien-chu) on others. Little right have they in the first place to make this charge at all, for if it were true, I should but be imitating their own course, sufficiently indicated in this letter.

Bat it is entirely untrue. I cannot use Shang-ti myself; and there are times when I require, and I think as Bishop have a right to require, that it shall be avoided, but I am quite willing, if Tien-chu is conscientiously objected to, that Heavenly Father or Lord; or Jehovah be substituted. I do not interfere with ordinary services or ordinary usages. I give each mission with which I have to do perfect liberty to employ the term already in use. But where my services are needed, I consider

the above stipulation perfectly fair and reasonable, I will not be a [15/16] "lord over God's heritage" and compel the using of a particular term, but neither will I be a nonentity in the Church over which I am set as Overseer. Excuse this personal allusion. It has been forced from me by what I have heard.

One thing more. I have been told that the plan recommended in my letter to the Recorder already alluded to is substantially the same as that of certain Brethren in Chefoo, who propose to us to settle all our differences by agreeing to use all these three terms, Ti, Chu, Shin, interchangeably. I am astonished that the two proposals should ever have been classed together. If I were able to fall in with a proposal like that which emanated last summer from Chefoo, no words would be too strong to condemn the course I have adopted in opposing the use of Shang-ti. What I contend for is that each Missionary should be supplied with funds to furnish himself with books he can use. This surely is very different from consenting to amalgamate all terms, and to accept all alike as on the same footing. This would be indeed to make confusion worse confounded. It must have emanated from the younger men who signed it, who are not yet in a position to see the bearings of the question.

I conclude then by reiterating my "Plea for toleration." It is the only hope of peace. There is no compromise possible, at least in the present aspect of things. My remedy is then that the London Bible and Tract Committees say to us:--"Gentlemen, we cannot understand this matter, but we believe in you all as conscientious men, and we will help every one who has been in China over 10 years, who uses one of the three terms in common use among you. We will do all in our power to guard against an abuse of this privilege. Let the younger men follow the guidance of their seniors, and let the older men use the books employed in their neighbourhood, if they possibly can; but if they have really examined the question for themselves, and are conscientiously opposed to the term in common use about them, we will see they are not shut out from the benefit of our help. Be united in your several

missions, if at all possible; for we can easily see there can be no genuine cooperation among Brethren of the same Church, who differ on these [16/17] points. But, as separate missions, agree to differ; put no hindrances in each other's way; and leave the matter to God to guide this great controversy to a right issue in His own time and way."

Yours faithfully and sincerely,

J. S. BURDON,

Bishop of Victoria, Hongkong.

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