The Missionary Catalyst:  
Bishop James W. Bashford and the Social Gospel in China

by Jerry Israel

Missionaries had been the major American group striving to awaken the “sleeping” Chinese before 1900 and remained so after as well. As Paul Varg has noted, however, after 1900 education replaced evangelism as a primary concern of missionaries who worked to implant their kind of Christian progress in a China they felt moving in new, challenging, perhaps revolutionary directions. Indeed, as Kenneth S. Latourette observed, missionaries came as part of “the desire of merchants, manufacturers, and investors for access to the markets, and the raw materials of China.” Yet their dream, for they saw China as past, present and especially future, was an advance or invasion combining a “political revolution, a moral advance, an intellectual renaissance, a religious reformation and a nineteenth century of scientific and industrial development.”

Such a vision was perhaps best expressed by Methodist missionary James Bashford. Viewing the development of civilization in fashionable turn of the century geographical terms, Bashford felt the Pacific Ocean to be the next and perhaps final stage in a process that already had swept across the Fertile Crescent ever westward to the Aegean, Mediterranean and Atlantic. Sea power, especially with the proposed Panama Canal, gave the commercially and industrial rich United States a chance to dominate Chinese civilization. Religious power was still more pivotal. Or as Bashford wrote with confidence, “the Chinese themselves in breaking away from an ancient civilization can readily be led to accept a western, Christian, Protestant civilization.”

Adopting a verse form, the bishop summarized his feelings on China and America:

God took care to hide that country  
Till he prized his people ready

Then he chose me by his whisper  
And I found it, and it’s yours


2. James W. Bashford, The Awakening of China, Missionary Research Library, Union Theological Seminary, New York; the poem may be found in Bashford’s “Diary,” Vol. XXXVII, 96, also among the James Bashford Papers of the Missionary Research Library.
THE MISSIONARY CATALYST: BISHOP JAMES W. BASHFORD 
AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL IN CHINA

Yes "America's God Country"
Yes a best of all creations

What's the use of going further
Till I crossed the range to see

God forgive my pride I'm nothing
It's God's present to our nation
Anybody might have found it
But his whisper came to me

Bishop Bashford's faith in the ability of the United States to export its domestic success, a premise shared by many Americans from all walks of life, suggests that the education for evangelism shift in missionary emphasis was more than a change in religious tactics. Studying this transition, Paul Varg has compared it to the church reforms of the Social Gospel in America and hinted at the analogous images of the social worker in the urban United States and the missionary in China in the early twentieth century. Each was interested in a range of issues from education and women's rights to temperance, both alcoholic and narcotic. Each viewed the answers to such problems in terms of public education, an improved technology, scientific experimentation and democratic political institutions. 3

As was the case with the Social Gospel movement in the United States, the church's increased interest in social concerns in China gave it a larger and more important voice in economic and political matters. It also allowed for these secular forces to have a pronounced and dramatic effect upon it. Shifting missionary emphases, at least in this period, must be approached not as a question of internal or institutional history but rather, as Akira Iriye has perceived, as a question well within the domain of "inner history" — the past as interaction among peoples and civilizations as well as nations and empires. 4 Most directly, the student of American-Chinese relations is called upon and anxious to view the missionary within the context of those attitudes and actions of the so-called "Progressive period" of United States history in the early twentieth century. While missionary work in foreign fields reveals much borrowing from domestic developments, a considerable part of the period's reform orientation, so secular in appearance, may well be missionary in origin.

The missionary had one foot in the churches, cities and schools of the United States and the other in the establishment of similar institutions abroad. Just as a make-believe China market captured the fancy of American businessmen and reformers, so too reform, especially in

education, as the means to make the market myth a reality, attracted American schoolmen, both secular and religious. Indeed a certain "messianic tendency" surrounded the hopes and plans of educators. When these tendencies came in direct contact with the heritage of a fervent evangelism they produced a powerful missionary spirit. Such a pattern emerges from a study of the life and work of James W. Bashford.

At Home

A case can be made for the fact that Bashford was suited for, enjoyed or was more successful at any of his careers as preacher, teacher, or church leader. Yet that each blended into the others is best evidenced by Bashford's own repeated refusals to leave his present post until convinced the next provided even greater opportunity to achieve the results for which he had already been working. After training at Boston University's School of Theology and presiding over a series of New England churches, he declined eleven offers to leave for college presidencies, including the first of two proposals in 1889 that he assume the leadership of Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio. "I'm not going to go," Bashford reportedly observed. "The city church is our weak spot. I am having success in this field. I must stay." Yet a second invitation from Ohio Wesleyan and the urging of his friends convinced Bashford that perhaps the college community was as important as the city congregation and even more fruitful as a field for training and administration.

Similarly when he was one of seven bishops elected by the 1904 Methodist Episcopal General Conference, Bashford again overcame a genuine reluctance to leave America and especially the progress being made at Delaware, "I love my own people in America even better than I do the Chinese." This time, though, he also overcame the advice of his friends who thought he had earned the right to spend his years as bishop at home, perhaps in the powerful Chicago district. Recalling how he had wanted to go to China "at the conclusion of my course in education," Bashford took his second chance and asked for the missionary assignment as an outgrowth of what he had already accomplished and now could extend where there existed the "greatest opportunity...of any young


7. Good biographical data can be found on Bashford in the obituary and tribute in the _Christian Advocate_, March 27, 1919, pp. 387ff and in the _Dictionary of American Biography_ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), 1, 55-54. See also George Grose, _James M. Bashford_ (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1922).

8. _Christian Advocate_, March 27, 1919.
people on the face of the globe."9

Bashford, not unlike the United States, looked upon the time spent before the China experience as years of preparation for the next great challenge. The student of Bashford's, or America's, educational role in China, must trace back to the evolution of the missionary enterprise from its roots at home. The knowledge gained, most directly and recently, in the administration of educational reform would serve as the model for the "opportunity to render service in China."10 Yet this educational accomplishment rested on Bashford's even earlier attitudes and actions toward the church, especially the mission field and the movement known as the Social Gospel.

In 1912, President C. R. Van Hise of the University of Wisconsin, awarding James Bashford an honorary Doctor of Laws degree, noted that the "faithful pastor, inspiring teacher, successful college president, bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church and apostle to China" represented an "ideal of service for which this university stands."11 Bashford, himself, felt his earlier undergraduate years at Wisconsin (1867-1871) were "a turning point in my life" and led him "to look with deathless gratitude to this great State University as my Alma Mater."12 Yet the immediate experience of the young Bashford at college evidenced another side of his character and career. It was at Madison that he became convinced of his commitment to Christ and the church. This decision grew from steady parental pressures, serious health problems and direct exposure to the touring evangelism of Dwight Moody.13

Often, later in life, associated with the liberal concerns of Social Christianity, Bashford came to that doctrine from evangelical origins.14 He began as a gifted, intense preacher in the style of Moody and Phillip Brooks, whom he heard in Boston in the 1870's. This preaching talent gained him a first recognition when, as one observer noted, the exclusive "New England Conference lowered its bars against 'foreign born' enough to admit this Middle Westerner."15

Even at the beginning of his career at Ohio Wesleyan, Bashford, as an administrator and only part-time preacher, renewed his faith in religious revivals. Such phenomena, he announced, were the rule rather than the exception and were greatly needed. The church was born and continued to thrive in times of revival. Bashford himself would not become an active missionary until late in his life and then only as a leader and administrator.

9. Ibid. and Grose, Bashford, p. 113.
10. Ibid.
12. Grose, Bashford, p. 44.
13. Ibid., ch. 2, "The College Student."
not as a worker and preacher. Yet, the billion unconverted people, \textit{circa} 1891, provided the original preoccupation of Bashford's with the world and the role of education. "If a revival similar to those of the apostolic age could sweep through Delaware and transform our city and university," he told his student congregation, "it would doubtless spread to other colleges. From the colleges of the land it would spread to the centers of business and of literature and wealth. From the great cities it would sweep the country, and from our land it would sweep the world."\footnote{16} 

Most of Bashford's extensive writing came after he began to examine and analyze the role of the church in solving social problems, and especially during his stay in China. His first widely circulated tract, however, did glorify the missionary. A sermon, "A Romance of Modern Missions," later the basis for Bashford's last book, \textit{The Oregon Missions} (1918) was given in 1882 and published six years later.\footnote{17} Bashford told the story of the work done by the early missionaries in behalf of the Christianizing of the American Indians and also the church's role in the efforts which led to determining the boundary line between the United States and Great Britain from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

Foreshadowing his own later role in the missionary-diplomacy of the United States, Bashford's "A Romance of Modern Missions" was a first step towards his later perception of the importance of the Pacific and Asia.

In conclusion, Bashford prophesied, "when the population of that golden coast rises to thirty millions will not the landing place of the ship that sailed from Boston with Methodist missionaries in 1836 be the Plymouth Rock of the Pacific and Whitman Institute and Willamette University be their Harvard and their Yale?"\footnote{18}

Such projections focused only upon the American shore and its culture. Nearly four decades and much experience later, Bashford began the last paragraph of his last book with the embellished focus on the Pacific in political, economic and geopolitical terms, "when the population of that golden coast rises to 30,000,000 and Victoria becomes the Glasgow, and Seattle, Tacoma, San Francisco, and Los Angeles the Liverpool, Antwerp, Hamburg, and London of the boundless commerce of the Pacific...."\footnote{19}

Bashford's focus was given precision not only by experience and time but by a growing awareness and commitment to the Social Gospel. His early preaching years and slow acceptance of the church's responsibility to solve secular social problems were not atypical. Leading students of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Social Gospel have noted that

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Bashford, \textit{A Romance of Modern Missions} (Chicago: R. R. McCabe and Company, 1888). Also Bashford, \textit{The Oregon Missions: The Story of how the line was run between Canada and the United States} (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1918).
\item \textsuperscript{18} Bashford, \textit{A Romance of Modern Missions}, p. 24.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Bashford, \textit{The Oregon Missions}, p. 286.
\end{itemize}}
it was "a preaching movement" and that the Methodists—with strong revivalist traditions, a conservative, individualistic theology and John Wesley's injunctions in favor of hard work, accumulation and charity—were slow to accept it. 20

If anything, Bashford was one of those Methodists promoting a closer adherence to the new social doctrine, increasingly so in the 1880's and especially after moving to Ohio Wesleyan. As pastor of the Chestnut Street Church in Portland, Maine in the mid-1880's, Bashford took the lead in the Prohibition movement. He twice turned down nominations for political office from the Prohibition Party but still became embroiled in politics by refusing to support James G. Blaine whose stand on the temperance issue was a weak one. He later broke with the leadership of the Prohibition Party, however, because of its refusal to take stands on other significant national issues. 21

With the knowledge and encouragement of his wife, Jane Field Bashford, the young minister reserved his strongest entry into secular problems for the issue of women's rights, both in the church and in society. Perhaps inspired by the work of the Women's Christian Temperance Union he argued for women's suffrage (being approached to become a representative of the W.C.T.U. at a salary far higher than his ministerial one) and for the equally difficult approval of admission of women to the General Conference of the Methodist Church. 22 This concern would have an obvious impact on his later interest in the introduction of education for women in China. 23

At a meeting of the W.C.T.U. in Cleveland in 1894, Bashford identified himself quite clearly with the leadership of the Social Gospel movement. 24 Speaking about what he liked to call "applied Christianity," he itemized the problems to be solved and the best solution to the dilemmas confronting civilization. The problems were: "the growth of cities; the unequal distribution of wealth; our world-wide relations and intemperance." The solutions put the church right into the middle of society. Women, unfortunately, couldn't vote but could arouse their husbands to realize that "the time is coming when a Christian man will as clearly recognize his duty to attend the caucuses of his party as to attend the prayer-meetings of his church." Extending his view to a philosophy of history by which races advanced from barbarism to civilization by the conquest of

22. Bashford, "The Admission of Women to the General Conference," this 1895 address like several others cited herein was acquired on inter-library loan through the helpful cooperation of the Beeghly library at Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio. Grose, Bashford, pp. 76-77, 212.
24. The following discussion is taken from Bashford, Problems of the Twentieth Century (Chicago: The Women's Temperance Publishing Association, 1894).
great evils, *i.e.*, murder, theft, slavery, and alcohol, Bashford painted his picture of the twentieth century. It would be one in which all the facets of his work would be combined and fulfilled. There would be "a school-house upon every hillside, and a church in every home, and a temple of Christ in every human heart."

The image of the "school-house," a sporadic one for Bashford since his own days at Madison, became central to his experience in the fifteen years he spent at Ohio Wesleyan. It remained with him in China as well. One observer of his career noted Bashford's character was perhaps best seen by the way he "was as thorough in his inspection of a day school in Hinghwa as he would have been in inspecting the plant of a great American university." The emphasis on the physical plant, the structural aspects of education were a primary concern of Bashford's. It was joined in addition by a substantive faith in what the structure could achieve against all obstacles. While still a pastor, Bashford had encountered another Wisconsin native, the youthful Hamlin Garland, on the plains of the Dakotas. The result was Garland's decision to mortgage his land claim and go to Boston to take some courses in the University. Later in life Garland admitted his debt to Bashford whose urging and experience had stirred him on to seek an education.

The "applied Christianity" of which Bashford had spoken to the W.C.T.U. tied the emphasis on structure to the faith in learning and provided the platform by which Bashford built his own understanding and administration of modern Christian education. When he first arrived in Delaware the revivalistic tendencies of his pastorate filled the college with zealous enthusiasm. As a member of the faculty noted:

> The chapel was crowded with students and the Holy Spirit's presence was manifested in convicting, converting and sanctifying power. Over two hundred students have been converted...in six of our nine fraternities every member is now a Christian and the nine fraternities united during the services in the first Pan-Hellenic prayer meeting ever held in an American college.

By the end of his tenure of office, however, the Social Gospel had swept in as Bashford noted "a change, a decrease in some of the old-time religious fervor and an increase in practical righteousness." The President himself was responsive if not responsible for that...
change. Modern education he told his students "aims to be practical." No longer was there anybody pursuing knowledge simply for its own sake, nor for a degree. Rather he advised "you are seeking knowledge that you may use it in after life." This demand for practical education was the stimulus for "innumerable technical and professional schools." It was, in fact, "one of the most marked characteristics of our modern life."

Education, the church and even the state were now inextricably entwined. "The American school house has been simply the primary department in which our children have been trained for their earthly duties. The American Sunday schools and churches and Christian colleges are the true high schools of the land, in which the children are securing that development of character which alone can make them worthy citizens of the American Republic and of the Republic of God." Do you not see, Bashford suggested, "how the secular school blossoms out into the Sunday school, how the college blossoms out into the church, how education blossoms out into Christianity?"

In 1900 Bashford addressed the Ohio legislature and reviewed the present state of education. It was his fullest and clearest elaboration of the problem and would in many ways serve as a conceptual bridge between his early faith in religious revival and mission work and his subsequent administration of educational reform in the proposed transformation and salvation of China. The "applied" science curriculum had to be extended, its advantages were obvious. The agricultural department at Wisconsin had created a cheese industry for the state which took top prize at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and added $800,000 a year to farm profits in the state. If the University of Michigan could have developed a forestry program it would have saved the destruction of pinelands and the expense of hiring experts from Germany to attempt a belated program of education and reforestation.

In Ohio, social problems could also be prevented. "If a School of Commerce at our State University had inculcated the newer methods of business, and had enabled Cleveland to avoid her recent strike, it might have saved a single city the loss of a million dollars," Bashford advised. In addition ceramics departments could utilize the wealth of Ohio clays; fruit growers, beet sugar producers, stock raisers, manufacturers, coal and iron industries all could make incalculable additions to the state's economy with the extension of the teaching of the applied sciences.

Indeed, Bashford noted, the movement was world-wide. Germany had used French reparations after 1870 to build technological schools. England was being forced to respond to the German challenge with its own

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29. Taken from Bashford's sermon "Christianity and Education" a sermon preached before the students of Ohio Wesleyan, 1891.

30. Bashford's speech to the Ohio legislature, "An Educational Policy for Ohio," Columbus, 1900, from the collections of Ohio Wesleyan University, pp. 18-20.
version of such institutions. "It is apparent," Bashford reported, "the leading nations of the world are entering upon a gigantic struggle for the trade of the world." If the United States was to survive and prosper it could not relax, the first skirmishes were over but the battle remained ahead. Even at home, Ohio, a microcosm of the United States, had its own struggle for salvation. Education was its key weapon. The strategy was clear. "If Ohio is to continue to hold the fourth position in industries, commerce and wealth, and much more if she hopes to pass Illinois, Pennsylvania and New York, she must by no means neglect the strenuous training necessary to industrial supremacy." The state must add kindergartens in the primary schools, and domestic and industrial science to the high schools, quadruple its present school enrollments, demand teacher certification for all in the classroom, train professors of education, and establish Colleges of Agriculture, Engineering, Commerce and the Applied Sciences in the State University. With these Ohio "can lead her own people and help lead the nation for another century in commerce and industries, in arts and sciences and civilization."

But Ohio was not making progress like such places as Columbia, Johns Hopkins, Harvard, Chicago, Stanford, and California. "We stand at the parting of the ways," declared President Bashford. His present focus was Ohio and its sister states; it would soon be the United States, China and Japan. The state "must either move forward in her educational policy immediately, or else be content to lose the position of leadership in the nation which she has held since 1865, and be compelled, like Virginia, to content herself with the glories of past achievements."

In China

This remarkable discussion by Bashford revealed the basic tenets of his American and China policy as well. It showed him, as has been oft-studied, as a rather self-conscious political churchman. It brought to light in particular the reaffirmation of his experiences with American educational reform, especially its relationship to Christianity, as the critical element in his strategy for the necessary preservation of his ideals, both American and Christian as he would apply them now in an Asian context.

Bashford had written countless sermons, and published one book, 
*Wesley and Goethe*, in the years before 1904. During his China stay, Bashford produced three books, 
*China and Methodism* (1908); 
*God's Missionary Plan for the World* (1911) and his major work, 
*China: an Interpretation* (1916), a series of pamphlets, 
*The Awakening of China*, voluminous correspondence, over two hundred newspaper and magazine articles and fifty-four volumes of notes describing his travels, work, in-
In China: An Interpretation and in several letters and articles, Bashford detailed the importance of China. A relative realist in terms of the immediate bonanza of the China market, the bishop saw the position of the United States as no longer isolated and the future dependence in the western United States, in particular, of the Asian markets. “In a word,” he had decided, “the maintenance of our foreign trade is essential to the continuance of our prosperity.” Recent developments, especially the Panama Canal, enhanced the possibilities and the opportunities.

Reviewing the history of the United States and of western civilization, Bashford adopted the fashionable geopolitical view of the future of America in the Pacific. “The United States has developed a consistent foreign policy, and for half a century has pursued a policy in the Pacific quite as definite as that embodied in our Monroe Doctrine.” Moreover with the Alaska purchase, the United States had a “line of islands with open ports free from ice during the winter, some of them sufficient in size for the largest navy of the world, all the way from the United States to within seven hundred and fifty miles of Asia.” The distance from San Francisco to Tokyo by the northern route along the Aleutian Islands was two hundred and forty-three miles shorter than the straight course appearing on the map. Such harbors were “a national asset of incalculable value to the United States.” Trade made civilizations great as they advanced westward from the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, then to the Atlantic and now to the Pacific. “We venture the prophecy that in the twenty-first century,” Bashford believed, “the two peoples which will loom largest on the globe will be the Chinese and the Americans.”

The task was, in part, still an evangelistic one. In God’s Missionary Plan for the World, Bashford again talked of the eight and nine hundred millions of unevangelized peoples. The tools, now, however, were different, modern and progressive. Modern inventions, for example, reduced the cost of printing the Bible — five million dollars could produce fifty million Bibles so that it would be possible “to evangelize all China within the next fifteen or twenty years more fully than Europe was evangelized at the time of the Reformation.” This evangelism, of course, would be of

31. See microfilm 6. World Division Central Records, Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church, New York. This excellent microfilm contains Bashford’s correspondence with the home board for his years in China up to 1912. My thanks to Mr. Hans L. Aubakken, Director of Administrative Services, for permission to use these materials. Also Grose, Bashford, ch. 8, “The Author.”
33. Ibid., p. 435.
34. Ibid., p. 440.
35. Ibid., p. 441. This was one of Bashford’s favorite discussions and appeared frequently in his public writing as well as in his letters to Bryan and Wilson. See e.g., “America and World Democracy,” Good Housekeeping, August 1917 as reprinted in Bashford. The Demand for Christ, pp. 145.
37. Ibid., p. 145.
the Social Gospel variety. The term evangelistic, Bashford observed, "does not clearly reflect the distinct work of the men who are here called evangelists." The missionary travels, establishes native Christians in the work of the church, examines candidates for baptism, and decides on the locations and policies of churches. 

Bashford, as missionary leader and bishop, took his evangelism to include the expansion of Methodist endeavors by reinforcing its West China mission, extending the current boundaries of the Foochow and Hinghya Conferences, dividing the Central China Conference into two parts, organizing the Shantung District into the Shantung Conference and entering Manchuria and Shansi Province. Within Chinese society which he termed as "adaptable" and "guild" or organization conscious, Bashford saw the possibility for reforms like those accomplished at home. Women could reach out through the Women's Foreign Missionary Society to transform Chinese home life. Medical missionaries could disarm prejudice, conquer hostility and open doors by combining the best features of practical Christianity and Christian humanitarianism. Finally, of course, Christianity could educate Chinese children. Such education would introduce the applied sciences and develop China's resources. It would be the ultimate spiritual and secular panacea. "The education of Chinese children will demand houses with large window frames filled with glass — as in American homes — with board floors instead of damp cold dirt or brick floors, and with sufficient heat in winter for comfort in studying. Christian education also will insure the lighting as well as the heating of the homes." In short, Christianity blossoming again from education meant progress, increased standards of living and perhaps secular salvation this time through "a lowering of the birth rate and a decreasing pressure of the yellow races upon the white." 

To Bashford, the Methodist Church, in China as at home, was leading the way in this vital educational work. Accepting the view that China was the critical future arena and that education was the critical tactic in winning the struggle, Bashford shared the intensity of others like John R. Mott of the Student Volunteer Movement who believed, "it is western education that the Chinese are clamoring for, and will have. If the Church can give it to them, plus Christianity, they will take it; otherwise they will get it elsewhere, without Christianity — and that speedily!" The period

44. Bashford, China an Interpretation, pp. 480-81.
45. Bashford, China and Methodism (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1906), pp. 86-87. Mott's 1911 quote is found in Varg, Missionaries, Chinese and Diplomats, p. 89.
1890-1917 has been characterized as the great age of expansion of Christian education in China and Bashford worked to continue, study and improve its advance. This progress reached all the way from day schools taught by native Christian teachers through organized intermediate and high schools under direct missionary supervision to the boarding schools and colleges. Innovations, not unlike those accomplished at home in the years preceding 1900, included the introduction of kindergarten teaching and industrial training, and ranged from the use of soap and water to the relation of the soul to God. In the delicate relationship between the church and the school, mission education in China was accomplishing "what Christian homes, with the aid of public schools and colleges, accomplish in America."46

An advocate of structural coordination and efficiency, as he had been in Ohio, Bashford became a chief spokesman for the union of the various denominational school systems lest they individually become inferior to government "state" schools. With the advice and support of Methodist educational coordinator Frank D. Gamewell, Bashford pressured for the creation of a commission to examine and propose such structural reform. The end result was the Interdenominational Educational Commission which began its work in the fall of 1921 under the leadership of Ernest D. Burton of the University of Chicago.47 Cooperation instead of confusion and inefficiency was achieved to a degree by the 1920's and the Methodist Church itself worked at Peking, Tsinan, Nanking, Chengtu, and Foochow with other American, Canadian and British bodies.48

Improvement in the structure of Chinese education was to be matched by progress in the curriculum as well.49 The year before Bashford arrived in China a gradual abolition of the formal classical, eight-legged essay examination for civil service applicants was proposed by Yuan Shih-K'ai. On September 2, 1905 an imperial decree announced the immediate and permanent end of the examinations which had been held since 622 A.D.50 New schools and new studies would implement a curriculum along western

46. On Bashford’s study see his China: an Interpretation, Appendix 4. Also see his "Christian Education in China," p. 10 in his China Centennial Documents, Vol II.
lines. Bashford felt that despite the obvious weaknesses of the examination system, its private nature, corruption, and conservatism, Chinese education had a strong practical tradition, at least informally. He was sure that with the classics overthrown, the Chinese "will be content with nothing less than the applied sciences and applied Christianity." 51 As at home, this would mean emphases on social service, vocational training for industrial efficiency and, of course, science. 52 Bashford was confident that Christianity and America were particularly ready, based on their own years of preparation, to guide China towards these ends. His role, and that of America's, can be seen dramatically if one examines three of their special areas of interest: physical education, women's education and mass, or universal, education in China.

Bashford argued, after some time in China, that the natives were not able to manage their own schools right away because they lacked western education and knowledge and also because they "never have exercised discipline in public schools." 53 He went on to link the lack of school discipline to the lack of personal discipline, especially physical training, exercise, and athletics. To a group of Chinese students he advised, "if you are to have a new China, you must have new Chinese. You must have strong bodies and well disciplined minds." 54 In fact education should begin with the body—the proper care of it by doctors and physical education directors. From this a well trained mind, character and eventually spirit would emerge.

Bashford's own ideas were shaped by developments at home, in the organization of physical education and athletics as part of reform at a college like Ohio Wesleyan. Until about 1890, Ohio Wesleyan's sports program has been "poorly organized, student-controlled, and inadequate." 55 Physical education, or as it was somewhat militarily known, "gymnasium drill," made its first start on the Delaware campus only in 1888 with "four gentlemen and three lady instructors" scheduling classes in Indian club work and calisthenics. 56 The growing American enthusiasm for organized physical participation in education surprised visiting Chinese students who noted a general American attitude to engage in manual labor and excited sports contests. "In this way," they observed, "the main object of recreation is entirely lost sight of; it becomes no longer an amusement, but labor and work." 57 Even so, Chinese students had

54. Bashford speech quoted in Christian Advocate, March 27, 1919.
56. Ibid., p. 287.
accepted the need for exercise so as to become healthy and strong both physically and mentally. Such a view was at great variance with the classical Confucian view of the division of the population and its habits into categories of "scholar, farmer, laborer and merchant." The "eight-legged essay" demanded such study that the scholar lengthened his nails and gowns and declared his contempt for all that was of the body, such physical wants as did exist being met by servants. While some physical education was introduced with the training of the Chinese army, by Germans in particular, the real breakthroughs came with the missionary, the Y. M. C. A. college athlete or the Ohio Wesleyan University president reliving and exporting their different forms of physical nostalgia. Beyond that level, of course, was the idea that the playground and the ball field were "a laboratory for the development of social ethics and personality."

It is indeed interesting to note that the transformation in the traditional values of Chinese society inherent in the introduction of such a mundane concept as physical education as practised in America was noted by Mao Tse-tung who wrote "A Study of Physical Culture" in 1917. Accepting the techniques of exercise and physical training, Mao, not altogether unlike Bashford, saw in them the possibility for creating not only a strong body but a strong spirit. Still in his pre-Marxist period, Mao emphasized not the Christianity but the concentration, will and savagery of exercise.

Another area in which James Bashford applied the lessons of what he had learned at home as part of the Social Gospel was in the educating of China's women. Quoting from missionary Arthur H. Smith, who used the phrase "liberation of women in China," Bashford argued, as he had at the Methodist General Conference, that advance on women's rights and education clearly was an index of progress in general. Through the work of women missionaries under his supervision, Bashford watched and encouraged reform of institutions and curriculum for women's education, an area which aroused interest as well in Chinese state-run schools. One in a thousand Chinese girls could read yet they had an enormous backlog of practical knowledge from domestic labors with their mothers. The materials taught in the new girls' schools had to be structured to meet the needs of the schoolgirl and even more of the China which that educated woman might serve.

To help promulgate women's education was then a part of the total reordering of traditional Chinese society on the basis of the guidelines

58. This discussion is taken largely from Bulletins on Chinese Education, Bulletin 5, C. H. McCloy, "Physical Education in China." My thanks to my colleague Professor James Shirley for his insights on the heritage of physical education in China.
60. Bashford, China an Interpretation, p. 144.
61. Ibid. See also Chindon Yiu Tang, "Women's Education in China." Bulletins on Chinese Education (1925) and Lewis, The Education of Girls in China.
developed in similar socially conscious movements with which Bashford, the church and the school had been involved in the United States. The conditions affecting women who worked in factories were to be improved not only because women worked there but because workers' conditions in general needed relief. 62 So too in education the ultimate decision to attempt to educate all girls, the ideal of universal education, and the aim of a minimum length for school life, was part of the larger pattern or plan which in reality made no distinction between girls and boys. 63

The universal character of women's education, and the fact that everyone was to benefit from physical education — these things led to the fullest aspiration of Bashford and the missionary educators, learned in the American experience, genuine Chinese universal, mass education. 64 This movement would begin with a further blow to the "tyranny of the classics" when Hu Shih urged the use of "pai-hua", the Chinese spoken language, as a written form for all communication. 65 It raced ahead when James Yen, a Chinese Y.M.C.A. worker, set about to teach reading to the thousands of Chinese coolies sent to France during World War I. Yen returned home, sharpened his simplified system of one thousand commonly used characters and launched a popular education movement. The program was supported by the Y.M.C.A. in Changsha and spread quickly into the National Popular Education Association founded in 1923. A program which could be supported by state and missionary schools alike, Yen's movement expanded so that by the 1930's it had become a broadbased social action front. 66

The challenge of universal education was simply put as "how to educate China's illiterate millions for democracy in a decade?" 67 This could only be achieved by a total cooperation of all educational institutions, state and missionary. The task was staggering, seventy million children of elementary school age as of 1916, with at most four million in recognized schools, perhaps not more than two hundred thousand of these in Christian primary schools. 68 While the mass education movement crystallized shortly after Bashford left China, its guidelines were ones with which he was in total sympathy. As long as the structures and curricula, whether in government or mission schools, were controlled by western, Christian influences there was nothing to fear and everything to gain from

62. See Varg, Missionaries, Chinese and Diplomats, p. 222.
65. On "pai-hua" see Fairbank, United States and China, pp. 168-69.
67. In the Bulletins on Chinese Education (1925) see "How to Educate China's Illiterate Millions for Democracy in a Decade." For a view of the considered importance of education in the 1930's see Jen-Chi Chang, Pre-Communist China's Rural School and Community (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1960).
universal education. It would be coordinated and efficient, the very characteristics Bashford had come to support in the educational systems of Ohio, both public and denominational.

In *China: An Interpretation* Bashford summarized the advantages of a universally educated China. Only through offering schooling to all its children could China reach her goal. “If education is offered freely by the government and becomes the general possession of the people, many educated reformers will arise.”69 The colleges of the western world, he noted, developed the moral vigor and scientific discoveries through which progress was assured. “The founders of missions, the organizers of churches, the leaders of revolutions” — Moses, Plato, Paul, Luther, Wesley, Newton, Darwin, Jefferson — were men who received their discipline at great seats of learning.70 He summarized what in retrospect was his life’s work in the church, the classroom and the mission field. “The hope of China’s future rests upon the adoption of universal education maintained at government expense. Moreover, only universal education will enable the Chinese children of the twentieth century and beyond to take their places side by side with the children of Japan and India, of Britain and Germany and America as leaders in the civilization of the world.”71

**In Conclusion**

Bishop Bashford’s repeated effort to liken the future of China to the model of the United States, as in the case of the goal of universal education, should not blur his own doubts based on attitudes towards the Chinese, or other non-western peoples, which were at variance with his stated hopes. On the question of amalgamating schools for the children of missionaries with those for natives, Bashford was strongly opposed. In advocating the development of separate schools in China for missionary children (as contrasted to the practice of sending them back to the United States), Bashford reflected the first major problem in the effort at simultaneous reform of educational structures and systems in the United States and in China. It was not that the students would have different school backgrounds and thus create a teaching problem; rather it was that the Chinese, especially adolescent boys, had peculiar habits, e.g., exposing themselves, which would have a decidedly “pagan influence” on the missionary children.72 Even if the plan to keep the American children in China instead of sending them home prevailed, the schools established would clearly have to be isolated not merely separated.

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70 *Ibid*
72 Bashford to Stuntz, Sept. 18, 1911, microfilm 6, Board of Missions of United Methodist Church.
Bashford's ideas on the negative side of the Chinese character were as pre-set by his American years of preparation as his positive programs of action had been. On the eve of his departure for China in 1904 he had written, "in a word, the barbarian and the man of the tropics are lazy, and each dreads responsibility. His vice is a passion for tobacco and opium, or sedative drugs. He accepts with complacency the Nirvana, of everlasting sleep, presented to him in Buddhism." Bashford's maintenance, even after experience in the Far East, of the common Chinese stereotype indicated that the cultural gap between the missionary and the masses remained a vexing problem even to a man groping for the tools to close it through the adoption of a common religious and educational foundation.

Partly in response to the recognition of this gap, other changes took place which became problems for the missionary-educator such as Bashford. One was the deliberately organized rise of native student movements to affect the future of education in China; the other was the less-easily planned, though quite visible effect of the opinions and leadership of Chinese students returning from direct exposure to American schools and universities. The power and perception of such movements and men made the missionary effort to control and channel well-measured doses of western education a difficult one. These tendencies played a part also in the equally challenging pattern of transfer of control in the schools to the Chinese themselves.

While problems for the missionary, such developments were not wholly unanticipated or unwelcome. The Burton commission, a fruition of Bashford's emphasis on structural reform, had called for schools to be "more efficient, more Christian and more Chinese." As the evangelical emphasis had gone from revivalism to education, so the missionary had come to suspect that preaching and teaching were both pieces of a larger undertaking. Bashford might have called it the Social Gospel or "applied Christianity" for China. James Bashford spent more than a decade in China urging the Oriental to hasten to the western ideal of the school. He was as convinced when he returned to talk to the student-body at Delaware in 1915 as he had been when he left in 1904. His opening words in fact in June 1915 in the midst of World War are a fitting testament to his conviction. "We are experiencing," Bashford said, "one of the finest demonstrations of the value of an education which the race has ever witnessed."

73. Bashford, "Christ and Civilization," 1904 speech in Bashford, The Demand for Christ
74. Paul Varg notes this in his conclusion to Missionaries, Chinese and Diplomats, p. 526.
Bashford's career evidences some of the links tying missionary work to the Social Gospel at home and the policy of the United States abroad. It need be noted that such emphases did not go unnoticed nor uncriticized. One point of attack came from those within the church advocating an older, more traditional goal. As the husband of evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson illustrated, "Every third baby that is born in the world is Chinese. Every third funeral is that of a Chinese; what a mighty task," Robert Semple concluded, "lies before Christianity."78 Another critique came from those who argued that religious purposes were not merely sacrificed but destroyed by secular contamination. The connection between church-related reformers and domestic targets of attack was made quite pointedly when magazine writers, picking up on Mark Twain's criticism of missionaries, labelled those who would export Christianity the "Blessings-of-Civilization Trust" or when other sections of the press charged religious and philanthropic concerns were "pulling dollar diplomacy chestnuts out of the fire."79

This criticism, however, did little to slow the extension of just such contacts. The pursuit of "progress and efficiency" remained the role of American science, engineering, medicine, education and religion acting in concert in China. Certainly such interactions were useful. One need only think, for instance, of the general level of knowledge about China in the United States in the 1920's for example of the utility of cross-cultural contact. Americans often learned little about China beyond the clever luncheon banter that America had given China light, heat and power in the Standard Oil Company, the American Tobacco Company, and missionaries, while China reciprocated with cleanliness, heat, and power through laundries, chop suey, and students. This level was represented as well by President Warren Harding who had an aunt who was a missionary and who, as he told journalist John B. Powell, "had always been curious about China." In fact as China-hand Powell liked to report, the president's aunt had been in India, never China.80 In his all-too-common confusion, Harding typified other Americans, untutored about the distant and mysterious Orient and in need of closing the gap between their interest and their knowledge.

While missionary enthusiasm could help in the closing of the gap, the criticisms of the shift in emphasis to secular reform did reveal significant potential dangers in the new missionary orientation. To some Americans

80. The first analysis was made by Dr. Ping Wen Kuo of the World Federation of Educational Associations and is reported in "Conflict of Policies in China," a publication of the Foreign Policy Association dated 1925 and found in the Library of Congress. On Harding see John B. Powell. My Twenty Five Years in China, 1917-1942 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945). p. 65.
born in China, like novelist Pearl Buck, "Asia was the real, the actual world and my own country became the dream-world."81 This was the exception. Usually the two countries were visualized in similar images, with China as a perceived tabula rasa making possible the westward expansion of America’s civilization. Henry Luce, an American raised in his father’s mission in China from 1898 to 1912, gave fullest expression to this ultimate goal when he spoke of the twentieth century as the American Century. "It’s ours," Luce wrote in February 1941, "not only in the sense that we happen to live in it but ours because it is America’s first century as a dominant power in the world." Luce lectured Americans on the need to get in and get out of a necessary war with Germany in order to face the opportunity ahead. In doing so, he defined “America’s Vision of Our World” in terms so common to the China mission environment of his youth. His conceptions started with the image of the China market and the enormous trade potential it held. Such trade, however, was not just economic but “has within it the possibilities of such enormous human progress as to stagger the imagination.” Americans, like Luce and his father, wished to “create the world of the Twentieth Century.” Sounding like Woodrow Wilson, Luce would send “engineers, scientists, doctors, movie men, makers of entertainment, developers of airlines, builders of roads, teachers, educators” throughout the world. “We must undertake now,” he concluded, “to be the Good Samaritan of the entire world.” The world leadership Luce sought for America clearly had its roots in the effort to import reform into China in the early twentieth century.82

Among the images of the Chinese in America, the standard stereotype of a gambling, graft-ridden and inefficient China was present though subdued in what Harold Isaacs has described as the early twentieth century’s Age of Benevolence in the United States towards China. George Creel, a precursor of the public relations or image-building agent drew the best word-picture of the stereotyped “chink” as “a sort of walkin’ banana that anybody could skin’ an’ did. A simple childlike soul, bringin’ his wife’s family to live with him, regularly handin’ over his pay envelope to his great-grandmother, or the oldest survivin’ ancestor, an’ eatin’ nothing stronger than chop suey.”83

To many, this image was a reminder of the need for America to awaken a “young China” and to direct an industrial, social, and political reformation. To a very few others, however, the negative side of the image was a sign that some of the missionary-reform optimism should be tempered. Despite decades of efforts, prostitution, gambling, and opium-

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82. “The American Century” first appeared in Life for February 1941. It was subsequently printed with other comments by Luce’s contemporaries (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941). Luce’s essay ran some forty pages; the heart of the matter lies in the final eight pages from which this discussion is taken.
smoking still flourished. Communication seemed impossible. Hope usually ended in frustration. Americans, *The Nation* observed, were just “drifting along, building a few roads, cleaning the towns.”

For all its feeling of uniqueness and omnipotence, American penetration, as described best by Henry Luce, was part of a revolutionary process begun by the West to transform Chinese society into a modern, industrial, Christian model. The “forced feeding” of American style western civilization into China, to be different or successful, had to introduce revolutionary changes in attitude as well as technique. Yet such a revolutionary orientation was exactly that which American reformers, secular or spiritual, could not tolerate, for they felt it threatened the roots of the society they would export to China which was a mirror-image of American society at home. In a word, the missionary American approach found it possible and consistent only to export what it was hoping and sometimes achieving at home. The answers provided by the Social Gospel were organization, efficiency, technology, education and democratic political institutions — the very things Americans had long sought. Applied in China, where there were very different traditions, they could easily fail, save to alienate nationalists who sought a meaningful philosophy as well as a workable technology by which to create a new society.
