THE METHODIST STRUGGLE OVER HIGHER EDUCATION
IN FUZHOU, CHINA, 1877–1883

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Reviewing American Methodism’s expansion around the world during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, one is struck by the large number of educational institutions Methodists founded. Shaped by the anti-intellectualism of the frontier, Methodism had nevertheless by 1844 established thirteen colleges, putting it second only to the Presbyterians with their historic emphasis on a learned ministry.1 By 1897, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the largest of the American Methodist bodies, was sponsoring fifty-four colleges and universities in the United States.2 Around the turn of the century, American Methodists were busy establishing nascent colleges and universities in China, Japan, Korea, Latin America, and India. Pioneer missionaries in Africa dreamed of founding Methodist colleges in their mission field as well.

The mission policy of 19th century Methodism, whether in the United States or beyond, was that of expansion. As soon as Methodism had established itself in one location, it moved on. In the words of missionary Stephen Baldwin, “With an ambition like Alexander’s, only that it is holy and unselfish, it is ever longing for ‘more worlds to conquer.’”3 Despite thin ranks and shoestring budgets, Methodist missions pushed onward, driven by evangelistic zeal.

How does one reconcile the evangelistic, church-planting focus of 19th century Methodism with its record of founding institutions of higher education around the world? From a late 20th century secular perspective, evangelism and higher education seem to be at odds with each other. Indeed, the argument that advanced education undercuts the Christian faith has been a theme in the Methodist press from the early 19th century to the present.

It can be argued, however, that a connection between evangelism and education is precisely what fuelled Methodist expansion in the late 19th

and early 20th centuries. The Methodist message of human cooperation in salvation was popularly understood as a gospel of self-help in both spiritual and earthly matters. Attaining salvation did not leave Methodist converts passive and complacent about their earthly lot. In fact, the opposite occurred. The acceptance of divine love and mercy by Methodist converts was often accompanied by the urge toward sanctification, which included both moral striving and self-improvement through education. The motto of Boston University, one of American Methodism's oldest universities, summarizes the historic synthesis between religious experience and education: "Learning, Virtue, and Piety."

Although a full study of the historical relationship between church expansion and education in Methodism is far beyond the scope of this paper, a beginning can be made through a case study of the rise of higher education in Fuzhou, China. The port city of Fuzhou was the entry point for American Methodists in China in 1847. Not only was the strongest, earliest Chinese Methodist church established in Fuzhou, but the Anglo-Chinese College founded in 1881 was the first Methodist college in Asia. The Girls' Boarding School, founded 1859, was the first such Methodist school in Asia; it evolved into Hwa Nan College, where higher education for women in China began. Charting the beginnings of Methodist higher education in Fuzhou thus addresses the relationship between expansion and higher education at its point of origin in the mission field. The struggles over higher education in Fuzhou did not have to be repeated elsewhere in China because the resolution in favor of it set a precedent that Methodism followed throughout Asia. A case study of Fuzhou demonstrates that the symbiotic rather than oppositional relationship between evangelism and higher education drove Methodist expansion and made it attractive in the late 19th century.

**Methodism enters Fuzhou**

During the early 19th century, the Congregationalists and Baptists dominated American activity in the mission fields. A younger denomination, Methodism spent the first half of the century expanding rapidly across North America, becoming by 1844 the largest denomination in the land. Despite the interest of a few in foreign missions and the founding of the Methodist Missionary Society in 1820, Methodists in that period were more concerned with domestic expansion. By mid-century, however, the denomination had stabilized to the extent of being able to turn sustained attention abroad. With its superior numbers and growing prosperity,

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4 19th century accounts referred to the city as "Fuh Chau" or "Foochow." In this paper I use the modern spelling "Fuzhou" except when I am citing older sources.
Methodism was poised to become the greatest American missionary denomination of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Following the opium war of 1842, Protestant missionaries were able to enter China and to reside in five port cities that had been opened to foreigners by treaty. Unwilling any longer to let older denominations take the lead in overseas mission work, the Methodist Episcopal Church sent a married couple and a single man to Fuzhou (Foochow), the capitol of Fukien Province, with the instructions to learn the Chinese language and to preach the Gospel. Healing the sick and founding schools were seen as subordinate to the "one great task" of preaching. Medical and educational work nevertheless provided quicker access to the Chinese, and a dispensary and boys' day schools were established in short order. Preaching had to wait until the language could be mastered. Despite reinforcements from an eager church back home, the mortality rate was so high that by 1861 of 23 missionaries sent to Fuzhou, 11 missionaries and their children had become casualties.

Methodists baptized their first convert in 1857. Resistance to the gospel was high, as the Chinese hated foreigners and resented that heterodox thinking had entered China through gunboat diplomacy. But once a small core of Chinese had joined the Methodist Church, the missionaries quickly appointed Chinese preachers to circuits and more rapid growth began in 1866. In 1870 Fuzhou Methodism reported 931 members with 969 probationers. In 1873, Chinese preachers were first appointed as presiding elders. Then on December 20, 1877, was founded the Fuzhou Annual Conference, composed of five missionaries and fifteen Chinese.

With the erection of the conference structure, Chinese and missionary pastors were in theory equal, mutually accountable to each other in terms of finance, character, and appointment. In practice, of course, the missionaries possessed the resources of the mission board. Remarkably quickly given the difficulty of the field, American Methodism had succeeded in planting a "native church" with a "native ministry." As clearly evident in conference records, Chinese members of the Fuzhou conference wrote conference reports, voted on resolutions, and took the lead in the evangelistic and pastoral work of the church. The leadership ability of the Chinese Methodists was so pronounced that missionary Franklin Ohlinger in 1878 requested a transfer to a new mission field:

At the mission meeting just preceding the last conference while reviewing the state of things there was almost a unanimous exclamation: What are we here for?! Translating

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7 Barclay, 380. For sketches of the earliest missionaries to die in Fuzhou, see Isaac W. Wiley, The Mission Cemetery and the Fallen Missionaries of Fuh Chau, China (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1858).
8 Barclay, 383.
9 Lacy, China Methodism, 79.
books is about the only work we can claim to do better than our native brethren. I was amazed to see the native brethren take up the business of the last conf. and to hear their powerful sermons—and I cannot tell you how insignificant and superfluous I feel ever since. They preached, argued and voted until I was ready to believe myself of use anywhere but at Foochow... The organization of the Conference has given them a wonderful lift, and to help them up a step higher it is simply necessary [sic] to remove some of the foreign ballast.10

As a group of leading Chinese pastors humbly understated in a petition to the missionaries in 1883, “If you carefully look into the circumstances of things here you will see that it is very difficult for foreigners in China to accomplish good in any work without faithful native assistants.”11

Mission theory and the role of education

At the time Methodism was gaining a foothold in Fuzhou, the reigning mission theory among American Protestants was “three-self theory,” pioneered by Rufus Anderson, Foreign Secretary of the American Board (Congregational) from 1832 to 1866. The cardinal tenet of three-self theory was that the purpose of missions was to plant indigenous churches that were self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. Three-self theory emphasized church planting, seeing education as an adjunct to evangelism, important insofar as it supported the raising up of a native ministry and Christian wives as helpmeets. Anderson emphasized that missionaries should learn the vernacular and teach in the vernacular. In 1854–55, he visited the American Board missions in India and Ceylon, concerned that after over three decades of work there was no native ministry. Concluding that the mission schools had become means of social advancement for pupils rather than an evangelistic agency, he eliminated the teaching of English in mission schools and thereby reduced their curricula to material directly related to ministerial training.

The early missionary work in Fuzhou generally followed Anderson’s emphases on church-planting, raising a native ministry, and refusing to teach English or secular subjects on the theory that such teaching pulled converts out of the church and into secular pursuits and alienated them from their own people. Educational work was clearly the handmaid of evangelism. When in 1858 the Fuzhou missionaries requested that the mission board send out unmarried female missionaries to open a girls’ boarding school, it was because men outnumbered women in the church. Missionary Erastus Wentworth appealed to the Mission Board, “We are

10Franklin Ohlinger, Foochow, to R. L. Dashiel, New York, 9 Nov. 1878, 5–6. Franklin Ohlinger File, General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church Archives, Madison, New Jersey.
11Petition of Hu Sing Mi, Hu Yong Mi, Chung Taik Ling, Sia Sek Ong, Ting Neng Mi, and Wong Sin Chiong to Dr. Taylor and the four missionaries [c. March 1883], in Ohlinger File, UMC Archives.
surrounded by females degraded by customs, by ignorance, by vice: our churches are full of men; only now and then a woman dares venture within sound of the Gospel, and these are large footed women, small footed ladies of China never.\textsuperscript{12} Regular means of evangelism were unable to reach most respectable women who were segregated from the men and not seen in public. The Ladies China Missionary Society of Baltimore responded to the missionary appeal and sent three single women, two of whom opened the Foochow Girls' Boarding School in 1859.\textsuperscript{13} In subsuming education under evangelism, Methodist missionaries in Fuzhou were following the Andersonian principles shared by virtually all Protestant missionaries in China from the 1840s through the 1870s. Education for its own sake was decried as secular and outside the responsibility of the church.

Despite the dominance of three-self theory for China missions at mid century, countervailing tendencies were apparent beneath the surface. For one thing, higher education in the United States itself was the product of denominational effort. The Methodist missionaries at Fuzhou were generally graduates of denominational institutions such as Dickinson College, Concord Biblical Institute, Wesleyan University, and Ohio Wesleyan University. Missionary wives had often attended church-related "seminaries." Sara and Beulah Woolston, who founded the girls' boarding school, were graduates of the Delaware Wesleyan Female College. Methodist missionaries in China were themselves the products of the emerging Methodist network of higher education. They did not perceive their own liberal arts educations to be at odds with their faith. Rather, it was natural that they transfer their own positive experiences of higher education into the Chinese context. Jessie Gregory Lutz notes that those missionaries who founded Christian colleges in 19th century China were themselves products of Christian colleges: "Having seen the important role education played in the conversion of immigrants into Americans, these missionaries had great faith in the ability of education to change attitudes and ideals and to prepare the way for the acceptance of the Christian doctrine which they taught."\textsuperscript{14}

In 1877, the same year that the Fuzhou Annual Conference was organized, missionaries in China held the General Conference of the Protestant


\textsuperscript{13}On the Ladies China Missionary Society, see Mrs. L. H. Daggett, \textit{Historical Sketches of Women's Missionary Societies in America and England}, with an introduction by Isabel Hart (Boston: Mrs. L. H. Daggett, 1879).

Missionaries of China in Shanghai. Ninety-three missionaries attended, including five American Methodist missionaries from Fuzhou. The general position of the conference was to affirm the evangelistic, three-self thrust of China missions. But a vocal minority of missionaries "bluntly placed much of the blame for the missionaries' lack of success on two factors in the movement itself: its quarrelsome sectarianism, and its insistence on preaching the gospel to the almost complete exclusion of other activities." Presbyterian Calvin Mateer, who in 1864 had founded what evolved into the first Protestant college in China, called for the raising of academic standards in missionary schools. Granting the priority of evangelism over education, Mateer nevertheless urged that education be expanded to include western science and other secular subjects or else the church in China would have no influence among the upper classes. Despite the opposition to Mateer at the conference, it established a School and Textbook Committee to research and prepare textbooks for secular subjects.

The Shanghai Conference of 1877 thus inaugurated, albeit grudgingly, a new, more organized stage in the development of missionary higher education in China. On a theoretical level, founding the textbook committee marked a deviation from three-self theory. Following the conference, a few missions began to consider establishing college-level institutions. Yet affirmation of education for its own sake was slow to be accepted by the missionaries. At the Second General Conference of Protestant Missionaries in 1890, only thirty-seven of the 445 missionaries in attendance cooperated in founding the Educational Association of China.

The Chinese church takes initiative

Once organized, the Fuzhou Annual Conference became a powerful tool for change in the hands of the Chinese pastors, who far outnumbered the missionaries. Nowhere was their initiative more apparent than in their

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15The five who attended the Shanghai Conference of 1877 became the major opponents of higher education in the Fuzhou mission. One can only speculate that the debates at the conference solidified their opposition to English-language education for the Chinese, in accordance with the majority of other missionaries at the conference. Rev. S. L. Baldwin was one of the Secretaries of the conference. He read a paper by Sarah Woolston on "Feet Binding." Methodist Episcopal missionaries from Fuzhou at the conference were Baldwin, Sarah and Beulah Woolston, Nathan Plumb, Julia Plumb. Sarah Woolston, "Feet Binding," Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China, Held at Shanghai, May 10–24, 1877 (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1878), 132–137.
18Gregg, 20.
insistence that educational standards be raised in all the Methodist schools, that the study of English be provided for both sexes, and that women and girls take a more prominent role in church and society. Chinese pastors used the power of their equality in the church to push the missionaries toward higher education and increased medical services. Their success in evangelism and church-planting gave the Chinese pastors the moral authority to press the mission for services that would help the Chinese converts improve their lot in life. The Chinese saw Methodism not only as a means of salvation, but of social improvement as well. In this holistic vision they were supported by a few missionaries who presented their case before the Board of Missions. They were opposed by other missionaries who believed that higher education in English would undercut the evangelistic witness. Significantly, the missionaries who opposed the Chinese initiatives were the same group of five who had attended the Shanghai Conference of 1877 and whose views therefore approximated those of the majority of Protestant missionaries in China. The struggle over higher education in Fuzhou Methodism was not only an argument over mission theory and the future course of missions in China, but it also became a crisis about how much authority a so-called "native" church could have over missionaries.

The most dramatic evolution of Chinese leadership was in the education of women. The first instance in which Chinese pastors became involved relative to women was in the use of what were called deaconesses or Bible women, Chinese women who would be trained to read and to evangelize other women. In 1869, the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was founded to support the work of single women on the mission field. The first monetary appropriation of the WFMS was to support Bible women in India. In 1870, the WFMS offered the Fuzhou mission $100 to support twelve Bible women. When missionary Nathan Sites, who was the best itinerant evangelist of the missionaries, approached the senior Chinese pastor in Hinghua district about using the money to educate and support Bible women, Elder Hu Po Mi considered the project a waste of time. At Sites' insistence, however, Hu was put in charge of training the first group of deaconesses.

Hu was so impressed at the capabilities of his deaconesses that in 1872 at the annual meeting, the predecessor of the Fuzhou Annual Conference,

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19 As early as October of 1871, Fuzhou missionary Robert Maclay called for the revival of the deaconess movement in the church. This was an early instance of use of the term deaconess in Methodist circles. "Letter from Dr. Maclay," *Heathen Woman's Friend* (October 1871): 185. On deaconesses in Fuzhou, see S. Moore Sites, "Bible Women in Foochow," *Heathen Woman's Friend* (November 1872): 359.

he and another senior pastor spoke before the assembled brethren on women's right to preach.21 Hu argued, "If only men preach, only men will be converted; only one half of the people will be preached to." Referring to the role of Esther in saving the Jews from destruction, Hu supported the work of the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society in educating girls and hiring Bible women.22 Reverend Sia Sek Ong followed Hu before the assembly and urged that women preachers were needed in China because of the segregation of the sexes. Sia argued against restrictive Pauline passages by pointing to the example of Mary, "If Mary could preach the resurrection of Jesus, is there anything to forbid Chinese women from testifying everywhere to the same truth?" Sia urged Chinese women to be like Rahab and to save their households. "With unbelieving wives," Sia argued "... the church will be too much like this Annual Meeting—all men."23 In 1878, a committee of the new Fuzhou Annual Conference composed of two Chinese pastors and one missionary recommended that deaconesses be instructed for two years before being appointed to a position.24 Accordingly, in 1879, Mrs. Susan Sites opened a Bible Training School to solidify the training of the now-accepted deaconesses, the first such training school in China Methodism. Three years later, a committee of five Chinese pastors was urging that the Woman's School be reorganized to educate more women and be divided into several classes based on ability and that the women of the upper group study English and medical books as well as the Bible.25 In a letter to the mission board, Reverend Sia Sek Ong, who was in charge of the school, said that the women who attended the school went there to be more useful to the church and to improve the role of women in China.26

The Chinese pastors' involvement with the Girls' Boarding School began later than their concern for deaconess training. When the Woolstons began the Girls' Boarding School in 1859, they could only collect a few orphans to educate because opposition to the education of girls was so widespread in Chinese society. Infanticide of girls was widespread, girl children left the home when married and so were considered a financial burden for parents, the custom of binding girls' feet into a small size made

21Sites, Nathan Sites, 100-101; Isham, Valorous Ventures, 167-168.
22Hu Po Mi, Quoted in S. L. Baldwin, "Our Society's Anniversary at Foochow,” Heathen Woman's Friend (March 1873): 423.
23Baldwin, 424.
24Minutes, Foochow Annual Conference (Foochow: Methodist Episcopal Mission Press, 1878), 16.
25Minutes Foochow Annual Conference (Foochow: Methodist Episcopal Press, 1882), 12.
26Sia Sek Ong, “The Woman's School of the Foochow Mission,” enclosure in letter from Bertha Ohlinger, Foochow, to Dr. Fowler, New York City, 11 April, 1883, Ohlinger Files, General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church Archives, Madison, New Jersey.
them unable to work, and Confucian custom was hostile to their education. The Woolston sisters struggled against great odds to make their school successful and to prove that girls could learn to read and then begin day schools for other girls in their home villages. The curriculum of the boarding school included reading the Bible, writing, arithmetic, geography, astronomy, and needle-work, with a major emphasis on deportment, hygiene, and moral training.27

Chinese pastors began to take substantial interest in the boarding school in 1879 after the Woolstons went home on furlough, and missionary wife Susan Sites took over the school. Mrs. Sites invited the native pastors to the closing exercises of the girls' school. The preachers were fascinated to see the girls examined in geography, arithmetic and Bible lessons. Breaking with Confucian tradition, and preachers in their newfound enthusiasm for female education asked that the girls study the Chinese classics. The Sites procured a set of books and initiated study of the classics in the girls' boarding school. When the Woolston sisters returned the next year, they were appalled to see that the girls had begun the study of the Chinese classics, English, and music. The Woolstons reversed the changes made under Susan Sites.28 The Chinese reacted to the Woolstons' reversal by taking some of the girls out of the school, and the enrollment began to drop. The Chinese-dominated Annual Conference decided that the curriculum of the girls' school was too narrow.

From the beginning, the Woolstons had as their goal the education of girls to the point where they could return to their villages and teach others about the Gospel. The sisters' work in China consisted of running the Girls' Boarding School and itinerating among small village schools run by their former students. In an article written in 1873, Sarah Woolston explained her refusal to teach English in the boarding school, "We do not teach the girls English, as they will be much more likely to be of use to their countrywomen, by studying only their own tongue."29 Having entered the mission field in 1859, the Woolstons shared the perspective of three-self theory that education for girls was an adjunct to evangelism and that English education would alienate converts from their own culture. When the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was formed, the Woolstons were

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28Sites, Nathan Sites, 111–112. Mrs. Sites took over the boarding school twice during the Woolstons' furlough. Although she recalls that the study of the classics were initiated during the 1868 furlough of the Woolstons, other sources indicate that the classics were introduced during the second furlough of 1879. The second date is more likely because it explains the "showdown" with the Woolstons in 1883. Isham, *Valorous Ventures*, 169–70. Frances J. Baker, *The Story of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1869–1895* (Cincinnati: Cranston & Curts, 1896), 265-266.
adopted as missionaries, but already having been in China for a decade, they were not shaped by the pro–higher education ethos that characterized the late 19th century woman’s missionary movement from its beginnings.  

Facing opposition from the Chinese over their refusal to teach English and the Chinese classics, the Woolstons resigned from the mission field. By 1883, the Chinese pastors had come so far in their thinking about women’s education that they crossed swords with the Woolston Sisters over the issue of advanced education in the Girls’ Boarding School. They addressed a petition to the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society requesting that advanced education, including English, be approved in the Girls’ Boarding School and that new missionaries be sent who would foster higher levels of study. When in late 1884 two educational missionaries from the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS) arrived with the expectation of raising the educational level of the school, record numbers of girls sought to enroll, thus demonstrating that higher education for girls was truly the will of the Chinese. Although the actual petition of the Chinese pastors no longer seems to exist and is not recorded in the minutes of the WFMS, references to it indicate that part of the rationale for requesting higher education for girls was to promote social change. If it could be proven to the “heathen” that girls could be educated, they would no longer bind girls’ feet nor sell their daughters. To the Chinese and to those missionaries who promoted higher education for girls, higher education was an appropriate mission method because it promoted social change.

Chinese support for women’s higher education was related to their concern for women’s health and women’s usefulness in society. The custom

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31 "14th Annual Meeting of the General Executive Committee of the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society," *Heathen Woman’s Friend* (December 1883): 128ff. On the resignation of the Woolston sisters, the HWF reported, “Their resignation grew out of the fact that certain changes were made in the general education of the Chinese girls,—the introduction of English being the chief.

These ladies have the conviction that it would be prejudicial to the highest good and influence of the girls when they return to their homes, a conviction shared by a minority of our own church missions, but a majority of missions of other boards throughout China.

A memorial asking for this more liberal education for the girls was read, written by the native preachers of the conference. This paper urged a candid hearing of both sides of this question. They ask for the more liberal education which others oppose, and the majority of our mission is in sympathy. This letter was very strongly put, and abounded in Oriental figures.” (p. 128).


of footbinding of respectable women was universal in Fuzhou, and missionaries and Chinese struggled over how to deal with this injurious social custom. In 1876, the annual meeting of missionaries and native pastors condemned footbinding, a revolutionary move at the time and fifteen years ahead of enlightened Chinese sentiment on the subject. Part of the decision to condemn footbinding may have had to do with the arrival in 1874 of the first female medical missionary to Fuzhou, sent by the WFMS. She began to demonstrate the advantages of western medicine and hygiene. The Chinese pastors and their wives struggled individually over whether to unbind their daughters' feet. The first respectable girl in Fuzhou to have natural feet was Hu King Eng, the daughter of Hu Yon Mi, one of the first Chinese pastors. Hu began to study medicine with the WFMS physician. In 1883, the Chinese pastors not only requested that girls' work be upgraded in the boarding school, but that the WFMS endorse the study of Hu King Eng in the United States. The 1883 annual meeting endorsed her study and Hu became the second Chinese woman to study medicine in the United States. After a decade of university and medical study, Hu returned to head what was ironically called Woolston Memorial Hospital. As the leader of women's medicine in Fuzhou and a much-honored member of Chinese society, Hu used her position to encourage other women to unbind their feet. 33

To the Chinese Methodists in Fuzhou, the higher education of women, study in English, and western medicine worked together with the gospel of salvation for the transformation of their lives in the here and now. It was necessary for someone like Hu King Eng to learn English in order to master the western learning necessary for the gospel to impact Chinese society. Once the Chinese pastors were convinced by the gospel and by the missionaries of women's capabilities, they forged ahead of the missionaries in their demand for higher education for their daughters. The subordination of education to evangelism that was important to missionaries like the Woolston sisters, whose views concurred with the majority of China missionaries in the 1870s and 1880s, was not meaningful to the Chinese converts. To the Chinese, becoming a Christian in the spiritual sense carried with it expectations for a new way of life.

**Struggle over the Anglo-Chinese college**

Chinese Methodist initiative was not limited to women's issues, but included the higher education of men as well. Boys' schools were a feature of Methodist work in Fuzhou from the beginning. Over time, boys' day schools and a boys' high school developed. Missionary Franklin Ohlinger,

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a German-American Methodist, promoted the founding of a Biblical Institute to train pastors. The Institute held its first graduation in 1876. Out of his successful work training pastors, Ohlinger also dreamed of founding an Anglo-Chinese college that would use the medium of English to teach liberal arts and provide professional training in theology, law and medicine as well as teach Chinese classics. Susan Sites said of Ohlinger that in him "German-American scholarship was united with rare evangelistic zeal."

He later became a prominent educator, founder of the first printing press in Korea, translator and author of hundreds of works in Korean and Chinese. Ohlinger's chance to found the Anglo-Chinese College came when a Chinese merchant, Ahok Diong, offered $10,000 to purchase property for the college. Ahok was not yet baptized but had watched the work of the Methodists with interest and in 1882 united with the church. Not having time to consult the mission board, missionaries Nathan Sites, Franklin Ohlinger, and David Chandler created a Board of Trustees and purchased choice property for the college.

The Anglo-Chinese College that began in 1881 was founded in response to a petition from the Chinese pastors and the provision of initial financial support from an unbaptized Chinese Christian on the condition that English be taught. Sites and Ohlinger were the two missionaries who had given the greatest support to Chinese educational ambitions, Sites and his wife in upgrading women and girls' education, and Ohlinger through theological training. As primary mover and first president of the Anglo-Chinese College, Ohlinger came under attack from the missionaries who opposed higher education for the Chinese, the Reverend and Mrs. Nathan Plumb, Sarah and Beulah Woolston, and Stephen Baldwin, the five missionaries who had attended the Shanghai Conference of 1877. Fortunately, Baldwin had been elected to the General Conference of 1880 and so was not present to vote against the college.

Virtual war broke out between the Sites, Ohlingers and Chinese pastors, and the Plumbs and Woolstons. Not surprisingly, the sides were the same on the issue of upgrading women and girls' education, with the Sites and Ohlingers supportive of the Chinese position. Susan Sites and Bertha Ohlinger in fact agreed to work under Chinese direction in the

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34 Sites, Nathan Sites, 148. In her April 11, 1883, letter to Dr. Fowler of the Mission Board, Mrs. Bertha Schweinfurth Ohlinger threatened that German-American Methodists would support higher standards of girls' education in Foochow even if the Board would not. Ohlinger File, United Methodist Church Archives.

35 For the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Anglo-Chinese College, see the correspondence from Franklin Ohlinger to Charles Fowler of the Methodist Mission Board. Ohlinger File, General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church Archives, Madison, New Jersey. See also the "Historical Sketch of the Anglo-Chinese College" in Franklin Ohlinger Papers, China Records Project, Mott Archives, Day Missions Library, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut.
various girls' schools. The debate centered on the use of English in the college. Ohlinger and Plumb sent letters to the Board of Missions representing their positions. A letter from Ohlinger to Charles Fowler of the Board of Missions laid out the central defense of the college and is worth quoting at length. Referring to the objection that those Chinese who had studied English would repudiate the faith and be spoiled, Ohlinger wrote:

I may add that those who 'turned out bad' were almost exclusively such who had acquired only a 'smattering' of English or in other words the so-called 'pidgin English.' Of those who may be said to have acquired a complete knowledge of English, or in other words, a 'liberal education' as large a per cent has 'turned out well' as is generally the case with an equal number of young men in the 'West.' Experience in connection with our Biblical Institute has taught us to set a premium on the rare [word missing] of perseverance and we offer special inducements to our students to push on by all means to at least the completion of the Sophomore year. Counting 3 yrs. for the Preparatory Course we are quite sure of our students for at least five years—under our daily supervision, control and influence. . . . To those who would refer to the unsatisfactory results in the past it is therefore quite sufficient to reply: Such training as we propose to give has never been tried in China. We do not propose to 'teach English' (as some of our opponents persist in saying) but to give a thorough general education which besides many other things embraces a knowledge of the English language. We do not in America establish colleges to 'teach English,' or German, or French (and yet most of our colleges teach all these languages) nor do we intend to do so in China. I trust our first class in medicine, Theology, Law, will not only have a good knowledge of English and Chinese but also of German and French besides the customary drill in the 'ancient languages.' We mean to hold out strong inducement for aiming at this standard and our Trustees and Native Conference heartily favor the plan.

We do not train men to be cooks and butlers for the foreign merchants, but men who shall be leaders of thought, who shall carry the banner of Christianity and Western Science into every part of these Eighteen Provinces. 'Pidgin English' will be as little heard on our college grounds as in the streets of Boston. Bad English, taught by bad men, is yielding just such fruit as one might expect. In the few cases where young Chinamen were thoroughly educated by good men the result has been very encouraging. Let this difference be kept prominent.\textsuperscript{36}

Franklin Ohlinger defended the teaching of English on the grounds that it would provide leaders for China rather than servants of the foreign imperialists. In another letter to Fowler, he defended the teaching of English by saying that the Chinese demanded English education and that it was the only way to get support for the college in China. Also, English was necessary as a medium of instruction because textbooks for higher subjects of western learning were unavailable in Chinese.\textsuperscript{37}

The earliest defenders of English-language instruction in China were a minority even among those who supported the higher education of the Chinese. Perhaps Ohlinger's early defense of English-language instruction

\textsuperscript{36}Franklin Ohlinger, Foochow, to Dr. Fowler, New York, 7 September [1881], 1–3. Ohlinger file, United Methodist Church Archives.

\textsuperscript{37}Franklin Ohlinger, Foochow, to Dr. Fowler, New York, 9 August 1881. Ohlinger File, United Methodist Church Archives.
was because as a native German speaker he could see from personal experience the value of English for those who wished to advance in society. Methodists in Fuzhou were ahead of virtually every other mission in China in the teaching of English and by the Second General Missionary Conference of 1890 had nearly a decade of experience in the matter. At the conference of 1890, Fuzhou missionary W. H. Lacy disagreed with Presbyterian pioneer of Chinese higher education Calvin Mateer and said that English language was necessary because “The people demand it, and we must meet this demand, or allow the boys to go to Godless schools for their education.” Lacy defended the teaching of English by saying that in the experience of the Anglo-Chinese College, those who studied English stayed in school longer. Anglo-Chinese College was by 1890 using English for instruction in geometry, conic sections, trigonometry, surveying, astronomy, physics, botany, geology, chemistry, physiology, and premedical studies. It was also teaching the Chinese classics and the Bible. Fuzhou Methodism had found that evangelism was not undercut by the teaching of English, Lacy argued. In the prior two months, eighteen college students had joined the church.

The teaching of English was the lightning rod for a whole cluster of missiological and authority issues. To introduce English in defiance of three-self tradition was a tacit admission that evangelism, narrowly defined, was no longer the sole aim of missions. For why did converts need English in order to reach fellow Chinese for Christ? The use of English as a medium of instruction implied that teaching secular subjects for their own sakes was a worthy goal of missions, and that educating leaders for China was a mission goal alongside church planting. In Fuzhou, the teaching of English was at the instigation of the Chinese themselves and so raised the sticky question of whether the “native church” could tell the mission what to do.

The animosity between the Fuzhou missionaries over English education reached its height in 1883 when the issue of teaching English to women and girls emerged. According to Franklin Ohlinger’s correspondence, the Plumbs and the Woolstons made snide remarks about the college, about the “craze” for education, about Chinese workmen asking exhorbitant prices because they knew English, and so forth. The Plumbs intercepted a new missionary recruit and turned him against the college. They discouraged

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38 Jessie Lutz points out that the Episcopalian-sponsored St. John’s College admitted students to study English in October of 1881 and subsequently decided to teach subjects in the English language. She sees that as a “major turning point in the history of the China Christian colleges.” Lutz, China and the Christian Colleges, 69. Lutz’s book on Christian colleges ignores the Foochow Anglo-Chinese College and thus misses the fact that it was founded in 1881 under the assumption that English would be the medium of instruction.


40 Records of the General Conference, 498.
people from sending their daughters to the reorganized women's training school. Then Nathan Plumb slandered three senior Chinese pastors as "persecutors" because they deemed him out of line with the wishes of the Chinese-dominated Annual Conference, which of course supported English education.

The Chinese pastors reacted to the Plumbs' continued opposition to the teaching of English, his disdain for the Annual Conference, and his slander of the pastors by banning him from communion in April 1883. Plumb further defied the Chinese and communed anyway. At the Quarterly Conference a few weeks afterward, three girls from the Woolston's boarding school were rejected as members for being giggly and not having attended church or Sunday School. This was the first time in twenty years that girls sponsored by the Woolstons had been refused admittance into the church. To make matters worse, at the Lovefeast held at Quarterly Conference, the communion steward bypassed Sarah Woolston. Although the Chinese pastors apologized profusely for the omission, the Woolstons would not accept the apology and that year resigned from the mission. In June, Ohlinger preferred formal charges against Nathan Plumb for slander and misuse of funds. Plumb refused to be tried before a native annual conference concerning what he considered a disagreement between missionaries. The issue of native conference authority over a missionary went all the way to the General Conference of 1884 where it was confirmed that disagreements between missionaries should go before the Board of Missions. The time had not yet arrived when American Methodists could see that an indigenous church should have authority over the mission itself.

The fascinating thing about the struggles over English education in Fuzhou in 1883 is not only that missionaries disagreed passionately between themselves over mission theory and the relationship between evangelism and education, but that the Chinese Church exercised its spiritual authority to challenge the missionaries with whom it disagreed. Unable to provide higher education for themselves, yet seeing no contradiction between their own spiritual states and earthly desires for self-improvement and social change, the Chinese pastors used their power over communion, admission of members, and the annual conference structures to get their own way. Their challenge to the missionaries who disagreed with them, while unsuccessful at the formal level in General Conference, was successful in that they secured higher education for their sons and their daughters. For the missionaries, the price of success in evangelism was to provide the Chinese with what they wanted—namely, English education. Here was

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41 The chronology of events was constructed from the Ohlinger correspondence to the Methodist Mission Board. See especially Franklin Ohlinger, Foochow, to Bishop Wiley, 27 June 1883. Ohlinger File, United Methodist Church Archives.
42 Barclay, History of Methodist Missions, 438.
three-self theory turned on its head: a native church characterized by self government, self propagation, and partial self support, insisting on a definition of mission that moved beyond the three-selves and into institution-building that would help improve the quality of life for the Chinese. The very missionaries who at a theoretical level opposed westernization as symbolized by the teaching of English were trying to impose a western dualistic world view on the Chinese Church. Consequently, they were the ones rejected by the Chinese themselves.

Conclusions

The struggle over Methodist higher education in Fuzhou, China, from the founding of the annual conference in 1877 to 1883 was significant because its conclusion in favor of higher education set a pattern followed by Methodism in China into the twentieth century. The year after the Fuzhou Anglo-Chinese College was begun, Young J. Allen of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, began the Shanghai Anglo-Chinese College. Methodist missionaries excelled at founding higher educational institutions for both men and women. When in the early 20th century, American denominations united to found eight union universities in China, Methodist missionaries were the first presidents of four of these.\(^4^3\) The Methodist colleges and universities nursed tendencies toward social reform. The first Chinese YMCA, an organization that later pioneered in mass literacy training and other reform activities, was founded in 1885 at the Fuzhou Anglo-Chinese College.\(^4^4\) It is no wonder that Nationalist leaders Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen were affiliated with American Methodism and that their educated wives had close ties to Methodist missionaries.

The founding of the Fuzhou Anglo-Chinese College in 1881 marked a significant shift in mission theory toward the inclusion of higher education as an appropriate form of mission activity. The vernacular, church-planting principles of three-self theory were not so much rejected as seen as the responsibility of the Chinese Christians, who were after all far better at church planting among their own people than were the missionaries. The evidence from Fuzhou suggests that the assumption of higher education was not because educational missionaries rejected evangelism, but because higher education provided a two-pronged strategy: while Chinese Christians and missionaries with superior language facility could engage in church-planting aimed at the masses, educational missionaries could facilitate broad social change that would presumably prepare the way for

\(^{43}\) On the ten Christian universities of China, eight of which were multi-denominational, see the pamphlet "Sharing Our Best: The Story of the Christian Colleges of China," Franklin Ohlinger Papers, China Records Project, Yale Divinity School. According to Lacy, Methodists were the first presidents of Nanking University, West China Union University, Yenching University, and Fukien Union University. Lacy, China Methodism, 162.

\(^{44}\) Garrett, Social Reformers, 26.
the acceptance of Christianity. Methodist missionaries in China eventually accepted higher education as helpful to evangelism because it prepared leaders for the church and for society. Even Nathan Plumb, who so vigorously opposed the Anglo-Chinese College from 1881 to 1883, had by the second China Missionary Conference of 1890 become a staunch supporter of higher education and of English education as helpful to the evangelistic task.

One can conclude from the struggle in Fuzhou that the potency of American Methodism in turn-of-the-century China was precisely because it combined evangelistic zeal with the founding of institutions for higher education, not because these two were in opposition. Methodist missionaries founded colleges partly because they themselves believed in the value of Christian education for improvement in life and faith, and partly because they were listening to the Chinese who wanted western education. Once the church was planted, the Chinese were fully capable of evangelizing themselves. But they needed the missionaries to help them procure the benefits of westernization, attainable through higher education. Evidence from Fuzhou in the 1880s suggests that the split between evangelism and higher education, between spirit and body, was in the minds of the three-self missionary ideologues rather than in the minds of the Chinese.