THE TAIPING REBELLION AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF MARQUIS L. WOOD

CHERYL M. LAWRENCE

"Today I am on the serenely undulating waters of the great Atlantic Ocean, sailing for China, to carry to that beautiful people the gospel of Christ." 1

In December 1859, Rev. Marquis L. Wood and his bride sailed from New York, bound for Shanghai, China, to become Methodist Episcopal Church, South missionaries. In doing so, they joined a much larger, aggressive Protestant missionary campaign to China. By the time the Woods arrived in the port city at the mouth of the Yangtze River, evangelical missionaries unwittingly had helped spawn a violent heretical quasi-Christian Chinese sect called the Taipings whose rebels sought to overthrow the Manchu dynasty. Although the Taiping rebellion caused widespread loss of life, homelessness, destruction, and misery—threatening even the missionaries' safety—the Shanghai Christian community where Wood lived and worked never took a stand against the brutal rampage, instead viewing it as God's providence to open up the "heathen" land to the light of the gospel. The missionaries were divided over the Taiping heresy itself, with some feeling that a heretical form of Christianity was preferable to the pagan religion it sought to overthrow.

Marquis L. Wood, a thoroughly Methodist minister, shared a western Protestant missionary world-view that held a strong sense of God's providence and a firm belief in both the superiority of Protestant Christianity as a religion and of Westerners. Wood, like other missionaries, believed that the ends—the opening up of China to Christianity—justified the means, which included killing on massive scale, heresy, and the missionaries' support of both the rebels and the invasive western military force in China. Ultimately, this strategy backfired. Some historians argue that this "ends-justifies-the-means" attitude led to anti-missionary riots in China during the late 1800s, the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, and the eventual expulsion of all westerners from China. 2

1 Marquis L. Wood Diaries (January 1, 1860), Marquis Lafayette Wood Records and Papers, University Archives, Duke University, Durham, N.C.
Before judging 19th-century missionaries for practices and beliefs that seem disturbing today, it is important to remember that historical events must be examined in light of their own time period and circumstances. Events of the 19th century cannot be assessed in terms of 21st-century morality. It was an accepted understanding during the 1800s in the United States that "heathens" were slightly less than human and probably destined by God for eternal destruction. Wood's diary entries reveal that on the trip to China he actually held an idealized image of the Chinese people. Nevertheless, he was a product of his own time viewing westerners as intellectually, culturally, and spiritually superior. Wood lost his idealism once he reached Shanghai and the sense of superiority quickly asserted itself.

I

"While I sensibly feel the loss of friends, society, and comforts of life left behind, I would not retrace my steps. Because I feel that I am doing the will of the Lord, and His grace is sustaining me." 4

Marquis Lafayette Wood was born in 1829, the tenth of fourteen children on a farm in rural Randolph County, NC. As a teenager, he was converted at a local Methodist camp meeting and subsequently licensed to preach. After attending college, Wood was ordained, and at a missionary meeting in 1859 he answered a call to be the first missionary to China from the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. 5 In September of the same year, he married Ellen Morphis, a teacher who had dreamed from childhood of being a missionary. The couple departed three months later for Shanghai, where southern Methodism had established a mission eleven years earlier. The Woods were accompanied by a missionary couple from the Georgia Conference, Rev. and Mrs. Y. J. Allen and a Presbyterian missionary couple. 6

The ocean voyage took seven months because of poor weather conditions and the passengers were perpetually ill and seasick. Wood's diary entries show his concern for the other passengers, especially his wife. They illustrate his thoroughly Wesleyan habits of prolific reading, study, introspection, prayer, soul-searching, and evangelization of the ship's crew. He wrote, "I thought of the many in the Church who are doing comparatively nothing for the spread of the gospel of Christ. Oh! How the Church of God ought to be aroused to her duty, how active she ought to be to let the sailor have the gospel. Every member of the Church ought to be a missionary." 7

3 Is this attitude so different from today?
4 Wood Diaries, Jan. 7, 1860.
5 William E. King, "Marquis Lafayette Wood" (biographical article, 1), Marquis Lafayette Wood Records and Papers, University Archives, Duke University, Durham, NC.
6 Wood Diaries, Dec. 17, 1859.
7 Wood Diaries, Dec. 25, 1859.
In an effort "to redeem my time while on board the ship and be better prepared for my great work when I reach China" and to "improve my heart and become a better man." Wood read a variety of books about history, culture, philosophy, and anatomy, as well as the Autobiography of Peter Cartwright. His regular soul-searching produced entries such as, "While I feel no special condemnation, I do not enjoy that deep abiding love I desire, or I once enjoyed. Lord, give me more of the mind that was in Christ Jesus."

Wood's entries grew shorter as the days lengthened. By the time the ship reached Hong Kong in June, he was ill and weak and spent several weeks recovering. The missionary couples arrived in Shanghai by boat on July 13, 1860, and the small Christian community immediately embraced them. British and French troops also were in Shanghai, protecting the city from the Taiping rebellion while looking to the economic interests of their countries.

Although there were few Chinese converts in Shanghai, the Methodists held regular worship services and weekly class meetings. One of the missionary couples ran a small school for children in their home. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South missionaries were friendly with other Protestant missionaries in Shanghai and frequently attended worship services and prayer meetings at Baptist, Anglican, and Presbyterian mission chapels and homes. There were no northern Methodist missionaries in Shanghai. The denominations held worship on Sunday mornings and Methodists conducted Communion on the first Sunday of the month. Methodist class meetings were held Sundays and Thursdays; prayer meetings in the various denominations occurred Fridays and Saturdays; and Wood spent Saturday mornings visiting sick members of the church or other missionaries. He read sermons by other ministers on Sunday afternoons. The Methodist missionaries also held quarterly conferences. Wood settled into the community and spent his first few years in Shanghai learning to speak and write Chinese, reading, studying, and worshiping.

After inspecting Shanghai several days after his arrival, Wood revised his idealistic view of the Chinese as "beautiful people," writing, "Today I passed through the city, and I saw nothing attractive, but the reverse. My olfactory nerves were extremely taxed. Filthy, filthy people are the Chinese, the lower classes." Soon, Wood joined the disdainful dialogue the missionaries shared with the folks back home concerning the "benighted heathen," and complained in his diary that potential converts cared for nothing but cash and rice. An 1862 article about China as a mission field in the

---

8 Wood Diaries, Jan. 2, 1860.
9 Wood Diaries, Jan. 4, 1860.
10 Only eleven native Methodist Episcopal Church, South converts attended worship and Communion, according to Wood's 1860 Diary, Aug. 5.
11 Wood Diaries, 1860.
12 Wood Diaries, July 16, 1860.
13 For example, Wood Diaries, Jan. 8, 1864.
Methodist Quarterly Review is typically critical, "The difficulties of giving the Gospel to the Chinese are found in their ignorance, superstition, and opposition to all that is moral and pure, and just and good. They hold on to their idols with an easy hand, but they cling to their sins with all their heart."¹⁴

Converting the Chinese to Christianity proved exceptionally difficult for a number of reasons in the 1850s and 1860s. Some missions operated for years with only a handful of converts. In particular, missionaries and converts were often persecuted by the Manchu government which only allowed missionaries into the interior of China when forced to do so by treaties with western powers. As Wood noted in his diaries, another major difficulty was that the Chinese identified Christians with either all westerners—including those who were greedy and cruel—or with a violent Chinese sect called the Taipings.¹⁵ Less than a month after the Woods arrived in Shanghai, Taiping rebels threatened to attack the city and Marquis Wood began to reflect on and write about the rebellion.

II

"Coming in contact with foreign minds and foreign teachings has already produced a convulsion in China. This may serve to show that the mind of the Chinese is susceptible of being affected by something besides what for ages has been its objects of thought. And it at the same time shows how deeply seated are their most cherished errors." ¹⁶

"In those very early years of missionary work a strange and powerful movement began in the interior of China," reads an account of the Methodist Church's missionary work in China. The religious movement, known as the Society of God Worshipers, became a rebellion that "nearly succeeded in overthrowing the Manchu Dynasty and might well have changed the whole course of Chinese history."¹⁷ It is estimated that thirty million people died as a result of the Taiping rebellion, whose supporters looted and burned some six hundred cities and villages and broke with Chinese traditions such as

¹⁵ For example, Wood Diary, June 23, 1860, as well as several newspaper clippings pasted in the back of Wood's 1860 Diary. One clipping is a letter from Marquis Wood addressed to "Dr. Heflin" and dated Oct. 18, 1860. Another clipping pasted in the back of the same diary is (apparently) from a Christian Advocate, although the name and date of the newspaper clippings has been cut from both articles.
¹⁶ Marquis L. Wood, "Is It Probable that China Will Be Christianized Without a Revolution?" (sermon, n.d., 22), Marquis Lafayette Wood Records and Papers, University Archives, Duke University, Durham, NC. On the front of the manuscript is written "Read before the Conference."
¹⁷ John Rose, A Church Born to Suffer: Being an Account of the First Hundred Years of the Methodist Church in South China 1851-1951 (London: Cargate Press, 1951), 17.
foot-binding, Confucianism, and worship of idols. Taiping means “great peace,” but the rebellion was hardly that.

The Taiping leader, Hong Xiuquan, originally was a student who repeatedly failed his civil service examinations in Canton. In his distress, Hong fell ill and had a nervous breakdown in which he experienced visions; he later interpreted the visions in light of information contained in Christian missionary tracts given to him, a Chinese translation of the Bible, and Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress. A Southern Baptist missionary, Rev. Issachar Roberts, tutored Hong and his cousin, Hong Rengan, in the Christian faith. Around the same time, Protestant missionaries, including Methodists, were attempting to convert other Chinese who eventually became recruiters for the Taiping movement.

In his vision—which he later claimed was his conversion experience—Hong said he met “Shangdi” (Chinese for “one God”), the “Elder Brother” (later interpreted as Jesus), and the Chinese demon king (later interpreted as the serpent from the Garden of Eden). In the vision, Shangdi gave Hong a sword and told him to kill demons. Hong later declared himself to be the younger brother of Jesus and claimed a divine mandate to purge China of idols and demons, which he interpreted to be the Manchus, along with almost anyone in China who did not support the rebellion.

After leaving the missionaries in Canton, Hong, his cousin, and their followers quickly converted the disaffected peasantry in large portions of eastern central China to their new religion, using revivalist methods they learned from the Protestant missionaries. Although Roman Catholic missions had been established in China for several hundred years, most of the 19th-century Protestant missionaries to China came from revivalist traditions. They carried with them a strong emphasis on rhetoric and conversion, an urgency to spread the gospel, and a fondness for emotional hymn-singing, praying, and preaching. These missionaries preached “a strong, thundering God who punished the idolater and sinner,” salvation evidenced by repentance and assurance, and a communing of baptized believers with God. The missionaries also shared a belief that because of linguistic, cultural, and legal barriers, ultimately China would have to be evangelized by the Chinese.

The Taipings were delighted to be agents of a new religion that would have little western interference and they adapted aspects of revivalist faith

---


19 Wagner, 15. Rev. William Muirhead translated The Pilgrim’s Progress into Chinese in 1851. Muirhead was a Scottish Presbyterian missionary in Shanghai and was mentioned by Wood in his diary on Oct. 1, 1860, as giving a “tedious” lecture on missionary efforts in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii).

20 Wagner, 12-89.

21 Wagner, 16. Judging from Wood’s sermon, diaries and journal of correspondence, he shared these emphases.
for their own use, along with Christian concepts of monotheism, election, divine providence, and the dying of the old self in order to be reborn. They outlawed the use of opium and alcohol, emphasized the Old Testament and the Ten Commandments, and meticulously searched the scriptures to find themselves in its prophecies. The rebels appropriated certain features from the Old Testament such as polygamy and the concept of a murderous, idol-hating God. Judeo-Christian beliefs and practices became blended with Chinese folk traditions, Hong’s vision, and its violent implications.  

Preaching, hymn-singing and public prayer were central to the spread of the Taiping religion, and attendance was mandatory during sermons preached in conquered territory. Many of the hymns the Taipings learned from the missionaries had military language (fighting/waging war for Christ) that fit well with the rebellion. There are few descriptions of worship experiences, but one report states that during prayer, several Chinese were seized by “sudden fits” that resulted in falling to the ground in a “state of ecstasy,” profuse sweating, and uttering exhortation and prophecy. Another report claims that during congregational worship, some people had visions, spoke in tongues, and uttered prophecies. It would seem that the emotional, camp-meeting, revival-type experience had transplanted itself-with a violent, heretical twist-on fertile Asian soil. The rebellion spread quickly, and in 1853, the rebels conquered Nanjing and turned it into the capitol of the “Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.”

III

“A proclamation from the Rebels was posted last night, in which is stated they intend to attack Shanghai. What their force is thought not less than 3,000. Foreigners are taking steps for their safety. Considerable excitement prevails.”

For more than ten years in the 1850s and 1860s, fighting between Imperial troops and Taiping rebels ravaged the Chinese countryside around Nanjing, Shanghai, west to Chungking, and south to Kweilin. On New Year’s Day 1861, Rev. W. G. E. Cunyngham, a friend of the Woods and fellow Methodist Episcopal Church, South missionary in Shanghai, wrote an article titled “Present Condition of China” for the Southern Methodist Quarterly Review. In the article, he apologized for being uninformed about much of what was going on in China. “It must be remembered that there are

22 Wagner, 12-89.
23 Wagner, 89.
25 Wagner, 90.
no railroads, steamboats, telegraphs, or newspapers in this country,” he wrote, adding that all roads in and out of Shanghai were in the hands of Taiping rebels making communication with the rest of China difficult. The countryside was devastated, peasants were starving, and “bread riots” were common in the cities. Cunyngham wrote, “Cities once full of wealth are now desolate. The fruitful fields lie neglected, and the busy throngs of traders and mechanics, of shopmen and merchants, are gone. The destruction of life and property in the provinces and districts overrun by the rebels surpasses all estimate.”

The situation produced huge numbers of refugees, thousands of whom sought shelter in Shanghai. The Wesleyan missionaries might have been expected to be in the thick of things helping the refugees, but oddly, Wood’s diary shows only one instance in 1860 of the Methodists leaving their neighborhood on the northern outskirts of Shanghai to venture into the densely-packed city to minister specifically to refugees. On August 7, Wood, his wife, and Cunyngham, along with Liew Tsoh-Sung, a Chinese convert and preacher, visited refugees of the rebellion. Wood wrote, “They are entirely destitute and some sick. Not less than 3,000 of these unfortunate people. They fled from Nanjing to escape the Rebels; cashless, widows, orphans; seeing their children, parents, brothers, killed before, or while leaving Nanjing. Liew preached to the company while we visited, and gave them some cash and medicine for their sick.”

Perhaps aid was less forthcoming from the missionaries because of financial trouble brewing on the home front. Suspecting that a war might break out soon in the United States, the southern Methodist missionaries in Shanghai took measures to cut expenses as early as 1860. By 1862, they had lost nearly all financial support from the church because of the Civil War. Soon they could scarcely communicate with home.

There might also have been some hesitancy among the missionaries to approach the “filthy” Chinese lower classes in Shanghai for fear of disease. Although people did not yet know what caused epidemics, by the mid-1800s, there was thought to be a relationship between dirty, ill-drained, impoverished parts of town and diseases such as typhus, smallpox, malaria, and cholera. The missionaries spent a particularly miserable year in 1862; Marquis Wood contracted smallpox in the spring, and then Wood, his wife, and baby were ill with “Shanghai fever” in August. The fever forced the family to take an extended recovery trip to the hill country of Nagasaki.

---

28 Cunyngham, 425.
29 Liew, a native of Nanjing, “fearlessly broke with Buddhism and became a Christian, and courageously he preached the gospel for fourteen years,” according to Walter N. Lacy, A Hundred Years of Chinese Methodism (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), 49.
30 Wood Diaries, Aug. 7, 1860.
31 Marquis L. Wood, (Journal of Correspondence), Marquis Lafayette Wood Records and Papers, University Archives, Duke University, Durham, NC.
Japan. Back in Shanghai in 1863, Wood’s wife and child contracted cholera which was raging in the city. In 1864, Wood’s wife died of an infection five months after giving birth to their second child.\(^{32}\)

Judging from his diary entries, Wood considered preaching the gospel in Chinese to be his primary duty as a missionary, not necessarily helping in material ways those to whom he wanted to preach. He spent time learning Chinese, preaching, teaching, and attending worship meetings, all of which also illustrate a Wesleyan desire to nurture the faithful. “I find to enjoy the continued presence of the Lord I must look only to His service, glory and causes in all that I do,” he wrote. “I must study Chinese, I study and read; must attend to my necessary affairs; must cultivate sociality and friendship; must converse; must act in my family relations; as religious duties.”\(^{33}\) Occasionally Wood penned a sentence or two that seem cold-hearted and “disconnected” now, such as, “Heard a good sermon at 6 o’clock PM. Saw a poor beggar lying dead beside the street.”\(^{34}\)

Wood devoted considerably less ink to beggars and refugees than he did to the Taiping rebellion. Periodically, the rebels attacked Shanghai, but the peasant army was no match for superior western military might, and repeatedly the rebels approached Shanghai city wall only to be driven back by shelling from British and French forces. Wood wrote in his diary that the rebels often were unarmed and seemed confused by the shelling—“Not seeing the flash nor hearing the report of the guns, they could not tell whence came the exploding balls.”\(^{35}\) When the rebel soldiers approached Shanghai, they sent an emissary to state they had no wish to fight with foreigners but rather wanted peace with them. However, the Taiping rebels “had received a commission to put down idolatry and kill all the Tartar imps, and against them they were waging an exterminating war,” Wood wrote.\(^{36}\) The missionaries were grateful for the protection of the troops and Wood allowed the British to reconnoiter from the roof of his house.\(^{37}\)

The Methodist missionary did, however, note in his diary the “atrocious” behavior of the French forces in Shanghai. The British and French burned parts of Shanghai to enable them better to defend the city, Wood explained, and while the burning was going on, the French forces plundered the city and murdered the local populace—“They have shown themselves to be worse than the Chinese, more destitute of humanity.”\(^{38}\)

\(^{32}\) Wood Journal of Correspondence and Diaries, 1862-1864.

\(^{33}\) Wood Diaries, Sept. 4, 1860.

\(^{34}\) Wood Diaries, Aug. 26, 1860.

\(^{35}\) Wood Diaries, Aug. 23, 1860.

\(^{36}\) Wood Diaries, Aug. 24, 1860.

\(^{37}\) Wood Diaries, Aug. 27, 1860.

\(^{38}\) Wood Diaries, Aug. 21, 1860.
IV

"While Ka-Wong [Hong’s cousin] is guilty of polygamy, the missionaries were fully persuaded that he is a Christian, is trying to correct the errors of Tai-Ping-Wong [Hong]. Wants missionaries to go and teach him and his people." 39

Protestant missionaries who supported the rebellion as a means of overthrowing the Manchu dynasty and opening up China for the spread of Christianity often argued that some of the Taipings—in particular Hong’s cousin—were, in fact, Christian. However, Hong’s insistence that he was the younger brother of Jesus, along with the rebels’ practice of polygamy were difficult to overlook. In fact, the missionaries had more problems with Hong’s theology than they did with his claiming a divine directive to carry out an “exterminating war.”

In their reports, missionaries often seemed divided over what the rebel king actually claimed in his new religion. Was he saying that both Jesus and Hong were divine? Or was he saying that, while being children of God, neither was divine but both experienced direct revelation from God? Cunyngham’s Quarterly Review article reflects this confusion. The rebel leader’s language “often appears highly blasphemous, as when he associates himself with the persons of the Trinity,” Cunyngham wrote. “But I do not think he intends to claim Divine honors. He does not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ, but regards him as a man sent of Heaven to reform the world; and in claiming a similar office, he simply means to say that he is called of God to reform his countrymen.”40

However, Hong’s own poem seems to imply otherwise:

God is vexed most by idols and images
So human beings are not allowed to see the Father’s likeness,
But Christ and myself were begotten by the Father,
And because we were in the Father’s bosom, therefore we saw God.
The Father and the Elder Brother have brought me to sit in the Heavenly Court,
Those who believe this truth will enjoy eternal bliss.41

Hong and his cousin held court in Nanjing where they entertained an on-going trickle of Protestant missionaries who undertook the dangerous journey in order to convince the rebel leader to adopt a more orthodox brand of Christianity. None was successful. One of these was British Methodist missionary Rev. Josiah Cox, who went to Nanjing determined to correct the “erroneous teaching” of the rebellion, only to be told once he arrived that

39 Wood Diaries, Aug. 6, 1860.
40 Cunyngham, 427.
“missionaries ought not to come, for the doctrines are different, and the Heavenly King will not allow doctrines other than his own.”

While in Nanjing, Cox met Hong’s former teacher, the Baptist missionary Issachar Roberts, who admitted to him that the new religion had taken an unexpected turn and that Christian missionaries were perhaps not entirely safe.

Rev. W. A. P. Martin, a Presbyterian missionary from Ningpo and staunch defender of the rebel cause, also undertook the journey to Nanjing to correct Hong’s doctrine, although he was turned away before reaching the Heavenly City. Martin wrote several letters in favor of the rebellion that were published in the English-language newspaper, *North China Herald*, where Wood was an editor.

On August 6, 1860, Wood attended a monthly prayer meeting at the London Mission Chapel in Shanghai in order to hear the report of missionaries who had just returned from a visit with the rebel leader in Nanjing. He wrote, “The Tai-Ping-Wong [Hong] is quite superstitious, conceited, in error regarding the teachings of the bible, practices polygamy, yet he is opposed to idolatry and encourages reading of the bible. He disbelieves the spirituality of the Deity and of our Savior.”

About a month later, Wood wrote to associates in North Carolina that Rev. J. L. Holmes, a Baptist missionary, had visited Nanjing and had been promised he could interview the Taiping leader without having to kneel and pray to the rebel king, as was customary. However, when Holmes arrived, the throne was vacant and he never got an interview. Instead, rebels gave him a long set of edicts explaining Taiping beliefs which Wood included in his article.

In the early 1850s, many missionaries believed the Taiping religion was either Christian or close to it, but by 1860, the tide was turning. Missionaries quarreled over supporting the rebellion, particularly because Hong’s theology was so unorthodox. In the same article, Wood described what he believed the greater Christian community thought of the Taipings, “We are ready to conclude that they surpass the old religious systems in China in idolatry; that

---

43 Clayton, 12. Roberts told Cox that recently two of his copyists had been “summarily decapitated for failing to remove from the proofs of a tract some words which conflicted with the Heavenly King’s teachings.”
44 Covell, 327. That Wood was an editor of the *North China Herald* is noted in his Journal of Correspondence.
45 Wood Diaries, Aug. 6, 1860.
46 From a newspaper clipping pasted in the back of Wood’s 1860 Diary, presumably to a *Christian Advocate*, as it begins, “Dr. Heflin - I cannot better give you and the readers of the Advocate, some idea of the religious (?) mind of the Insurgents, at this time, than by giving you the translations of Edict from Lien Wong and his son to Rev. Mr. J.L. Holmes, of the Baptist Church, U.S., during a late visit to Nanking.” Wood is the author, the letter is dated Sept. 18, 1860, and Wood mentions in it that he has not received a copy of the *N.C. Christian Advocate*. The date and name of the newspaper were cut off the clipping.
they are more blasphemous, if possible, in their assumptions than Popery; that they are more sensual and revolting, in their teachings, than Mohamedanism; that they are more lustful and shameful, in their acts, than Mormonism.”

In the article, Wood called the Taipings “full grown devils,” but he also asked, “Are we not made to think it is wonderful that they have and tolerate any truth—the bible—at all? Does this fact encourage us to hope that good shall at last come of them?”

V

“This part of the Chinese empire quiet, but very desolate. In the North and North-West, Rebels are strong. Signs indicate the downfall of the present dynasty... Now is the time to give the Chinese the gospel. They will never be Christianized as a nation; but their fall will be their spiritual riches.”

Even as the Taiping rebels slaughtered millions of peasants under what Hong claimed was the divine command of the “Elder Brother” (Jesus), the missionaries did not speak out against the rebellion. Many of them, including Wood, hoped the rebels would succeed in overthrowing the religiously oppressive Manchu government and thus open up China for the eventual spread of real Christianity, although some worried that the Taipings had perverted the Christian faith to the point that real religion might not take hold.

In some cases, missionaries spoke out openly in favor of the rebels, even as they lived in cities protected by western powers that supported the Manchu government. This attitude did not go unnoticed. Humphrey Marshall, the American High Commissioner to China, “bluntly asserted that missionaries who claimed the protection guaranteed by the treaties with the Imperial Government even as they sought to side with the Taiping rebels, were ‘worse than the heathen.’”

Were the Shanghai Methodists guilty of this attitude? Cunyngham wrote that the missionaries should hold no allegiance to any Chinese government, and expressed his hopes thus: “If the rebels succeed, the whole country will likely be open to us. Access to the people is all the missionaries ought to desire.” Wood preached:

---

47 The same clipping pasted in the back of Wood’s 1860 Diary.
48 The same clipping pasted in the back of Wood’s 1860 Diary.
49 Wood, “Report of Preaching and Communion,” (Journal of Correspondence). This was part of a longer letter dated Feb. 22, 1866, but judging from other letter copies, probably was sent as a missionary’s report for one of the years between 1861 and 1864, when the rebellion ended.
50 For example, Cunyngham, 428.
51 Covell (quoting Marshall from 1853), 327.
52 Cunyngham, 428.
The crown head of China will not submit to change in government—any departure from old customs—any innovation of old habits—any introduction of new and strange religions—unless some power greater than he possesses compels him. To our mind nothing furnishes any probability of the Christianization of China without an entire revolution in the whole structure social and political, without a complete breaking up the old basis, and the establishing a new. 51

VI

“The Christian of the present looks to the future history of China with deep and hopeful interest. And he longs to see it numbered among Christian nations.” 54

Marquis L. Wood buried his beloved wife in Shanghai, and he and his two young sons returned in 1866 to North Carolina where Wood resumed the life of an itinerant Methodist elder and, later, presiding elder. In 1883, he became president of Trinity College (which eventually became Duke University) for a key transitional year after the death of its founder. But during the six years he spent as a Methodist Episcopal Church, South missionary to China, Wood was part of a larger, evangelical Protestant missionary community that viewed the hugely destructive Taiping rebellion as God’s providence, designed to open up heathen land to the light of the Gospel. Wood and the other Shanghai missionaries enjoyed the protection of British and French troops even while hoping the rebellion would succeed in overthrowing the Manchu dynasty that the western troops supported. However, by 1864, the Taiping rebellion lacked focus and strong leadership and fell into disorder, and the Imperial government at last decisively quelled it. Hong died of malnutrition in the besieged city of Nanjing. Wood later preached, “So this great movement, once thought to be so promising of good, leaves us without hope; unless the breaking up to some extent the long dormant faculties of the mind, and the great destruction of idols, showing their utter futility should pave the way the permanent establishing true religious truth.” 55

51 Wood sermon, 24-25.
54 Wood sermon, 15.
55 Wood sermon, 23.