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ARTICLE VII.

THE CONTROVERSY AMONG THE PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES ON THE PROPER TRANSLATION OF THE WORDS GOD AND SPIRIT INTO CHINESE.

BY S. WELLS WILLIAMS, LL.D., PROFESSOR OF THE CHINESE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN YALE COLLEGE.

The following list enumerates the principal pamphlets and articles on this discussion which have been written by Protestants:

An Essay on the proper rendering of the words *Elohim* and *Theos* into the Chinese Language. By William J. Boone, D.D. pp. 69. Canton. 1848.

Defense of an Essay on the proper rendering, etc. By William J. Boone, D.D., Missionary Bishop. pp. 169. Canton. 1850.

Remarks on the best Term for God in Chinese; also on the proper Basis of Compromise on this subject. By Rev. L. B. Peet of Fuhchau. pp. 31. Canton. 1852.

Shin *vs.* Shangti. A review of the Controversy and Statement of the Evidence, etc. By a Life Member of the Bible Society [Rev. Jacob Tomlin, of the L. M. S. Mission at Malacca]. pp. 20. London. 1854.

Letter from the Bishop of Victoria on the Chinese Version of the Holy Scriptures, to T. W. Meller, Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. pp. 26. Hongkong. 1851.

Report on the Chinese Version, presented to and adopted by the Directors of the American Bible Society. Signed by S. H. Turner and R. S. Storrs, Jr. pp. 4. New York. 1850.

The Term Question; an Inquiry as to the Term in Chinese which most nearly represents *Elohim* and *Theos*, etc. By W. A. Russell, D.D., Missionary Bishop. pp. 47. Shanghai. 1877.

The Chinese Term for God. A letter to the Protestant Missionaries of China. By J. S. Burdon, Bishop of Victoria. pp. 17 Hongkong. 1877. — Another was addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The above are the leading pamphlets in favor of *Shin* as the translation of *Elohim*. Besides them, the Chinese Repository, Missionary Recorder, and China Review, periodicals printed at Canton, Shanghai, and Hongkong during the last thirty years, contain other articles on both sides.

The following list contains the leading pamphlets in favor of *Shangti* as the proper word for God in Chinese.

An Inquiry into the proper Mode of rendering the word God into the Chinese Language. By W. H. Medhurst. pp. 170. Shanghai. 1848.

Letter to the Protestant Missionaries laboring in China (proposing the transfer of Aloah as a rendering of *Elohim* and *Theos*). By W. H. Medhurst, and five others. pp. 22. Shanghai. 1850.

On the true Meaning of the word *Shin* as exhibited in the Imperial Thesaurus. By W. H. Medhurst. pp. 88. 1850.

Inquiry into the proper Mode of translating *Ruach* and *Pneuma* into Chinese. By W. H. Medhurst. pp. 75. 1851.

Dissertation on the Theology of the Chinese, etc. By W. H. Medhurst. pp. 280. Shanghai. 1847.

An Inquiry as to the proper Mode of rendering the word God into Chinese, etc. By Sir George T. Staunton, Bart. pp. 67. London. 1849.

Argument for Shangti as the proper Rendering of *Elohim* and *Theos* into the Chinese Language. By J. Legge, D.D. pp. 73. Hongkong. 1850.

Letters on the Rendering of the name God in Chinese. By James Legge, D.D. Hongkong. 1850.

Notions of the Chinese concerning God and Spirits, etc. By James Legge, D.D. pp. 166. Hongkong. 1852.

Thoughts on the Term proper for Translating *Elohim* and *Theos* in Chinese. By a Missionary [E. Doty]. Chinese Repository, Vol. xix. 1850.

The Question of Terms simplified, etc. By Rev. John Chalmers. pp. 128. Canton. 1876.

Teachings of Experience in the use of Terms for God at Foochow. By Rev. C. Hartwell. pp. 11. 1877.

Who is God in China, Shin or Shangti? By Rev. S. C. Malan of Baliol College, Oxford. pp. 310. London. 1855.

THE discussion which has been going on among the Protestant missionaries in China, respecting the most suitable words in the Chinese language to translate the Scriptural terms for *God*, *god*, and *spirit*, has probably attracted the notice of those persons in this country who are interested in the progress of missions among that people. It is in many respects a most important discussion, and well deserves careful inquiry by those who like to know the details and results of the mission work in that empire. I do not know that any full account has been published for the information of such persons in this country, and a summary of the leading

arguments used by the advocates of the various terms proposed may interest them. It will not be supposed, by any one conversant with the objects and character of the pious and learned men now engaged in proselyting efforts among the Chinese, that they would adopt any terms to express such fundamental ideas as *God* and *spirit* without most careful examination of their meanings; and the fact that China is the only country where a controversy on the choice has ever arisen, indicates some peculiarly difficult features in that language or people.

It has now been going on for thirty years, during which time it has grown more marked and divisive in its results, instead of drawing the parties together to agree upon those terms which might be deemed suitable. The matter has also been referred to the consideration of the two great Bible Societies in Great Britain and the United States, and their Directors have indirectly been drawn into the discussion by being asked to furnish the funds to print and circulate versions with different terms. Bibles and Testaments, with religious books in vast numbers and variety, have been disseminated in which the words *elohim* and *ruach*, *theos* and *pneuma* (*god* and *spirit*), are rendered by the same word in Chinese, which must therefore be understood in different senses by their readers to get at the meaning of the writers. Some confusion in the minds of native readers, who compare these books, must arise as to the Being or Beings who are really meant by their several authors. It is not easy to see how this untoward result could have been avoided, nor what consequences may yet flow from it, for there is no present prospect of any change in the usage of the two parties.

The discussion has its origin partly in the nature of the language of the Chinese, but really more in their pantheistic cosmogony. This is of course very vague, but their most acute philosophers suppose the existence of two necessary or eternal principles called *li* and *ki* (fate and substance), which by their intro-action evolved the material universe in accordance with the operation of the indwelling *shin* in the *li*. They

invest these causes with life, or make life flow from them, and then use the powers, beings, and laws thus set in motion to explain whatever exists and acts. The examination of this cosmogony in connection with this discussion has already brought out much knowledge respecting the religious notions of the Chinese, which is most valuable to every student interested in the searches mankind have made to find out God.

When Ricci and other Roman Catholic missionaries began to teach Christianity, they soon perceived the difficulty of finding fit terms in the Chinese language for their new ideas. Their disputes were carried on for nearly a century, with no prospect of even then reaching an amicable solution, when the main points were settled by a Bull of Pope Clement XI. in 1715, which was the sixth that had emanated from the holy see. This ordered all the missionaries in China to avoid the use of *Shangti*, and designate the word God (*theos*) by the phrase *Tien-chu*, or Lord of Heaven, and Spirit (*pneuma*) by the word *shin*. The controversy thus closed has not been re-opened, and that usage has since obtained a great currency by their books and teachings. Abbé Huc has given a summary of the whole matter in his History of Christianity in China, and the numerous records of their leading arguments can be profitably consulted by those who are desirous of seeing what those erudite men, Ricci, Longobardi, Visdelou, Navarette, Moralés, etc., said in behalf of their opinions, and comparing them with recent utterances. It should be mentioned that the party of Ricci, which argued for *Shangti* as being the best word for *God*, also advocated, or would allow, the worship of ancestors and of Confucius, which was condemned in the same Bull.

Their discussions were peremptorily closed by an authority that Protestants cannot acknowledge for their guidance. This mode of settlement tends to weaken the weight which might otherwise be given to arguments brought forward on both sides, if those arguments had settled it. No reasons were given by the Pope as having influenced his decision. Du Halde says, "That the dispute between the two orders

of missionaries (Jesuits and Dominicans) was rather personal than religious; all Europe was soon overflowed with a deluge of writings, which let the world see that it was not so much the Chinese ceremonies as the persons of those Fathers that were struck at." But Du Halde himself was a Jesuit. Their controversy toward the last assumed a little different phase from the present one; for, while one side advocated *Shangti*, the other urged *Tien* or *Tien-chu* as the most suitable term for the true God; but neither of them doubted as to *shin* being a suitable word for *spirit*, or proposed it as a translation of *elohim* and *theos*. Most of them seem never to have perceived the necessity of using two generic native words to denote *god* and *spirit* in order to render those two ideas as clear and distinct in the Chinese language as they were in the Scriptures and all European languages. It cannot be too carefully remembered, that in our search through Chinese literature for two words to express these ideas, it is idle to expect to find them already in it, since no pagan nation can have the knowledge of what Revelation alone teaches on these points, and learn that the real beings designated *God* and *spirits* are entirely distinct. When translating from the Chinese language we can interchange the words *god* and *spirit* to express our own notions of what they mean, without doing any violence to their conceptions. We can say, for instance, the *God of fire*, and the *spirit of a dead man*, in doing which we are partly transferring our own distinctions to their writings, by rendering one word in Chinese with two in English. This is necessary, perhaps, to convey the clearest expression of the native idea in its foreign dress; but the liability to imbibe the impression that the same distinction exists in the native language must be apparent to every one. This, of course, more or less inheres in all words brought from one language to another, and those in the poor and inaccurate tongue will always get a new growth and strength by the definite ideas transferred into them from the other; but we need much care in estimating their original value when the opinions and conduct of those who use them are to be discussed.

Before stating the leading arguments adduced in the present discussion, it is proper to indicate the peculiar difficulties presented by the Chinese language in defining the terms in question, and solving some of their applications as demanded by the Scriptures. One is the fixedness of the characters. No word in Chinese undergoes any change to represent its use as a verb, noun, or adjective; to indicate its position in the nominative, genitive, or accusative cases; or to show its number, gender, or tense. They are all, like our ten digits, unalterable. The difficulties arising in common life from the want of a singular and plural are partly obviated in many ways, such as stating the actual number, involving it in the context, or if not very important, letting the hearer or reader guess it. When the object is to express visible things, number can be easily denoted if necessary; but when spiritual, unseen, metaphysical, or imaginative terms are wanted, or are to be defined, this vagueness presents a real difficulty in the way of ascertaining or conveying accurate ideas. The Chinese themselves do not, of course, perceive it in its full extent, until they learn other languages; but its existence illustrates how loose their modes of thought are in comparison with those who use Greek or German.

One result of this feature is that the people think and speak loosely. Unless limited in some way, their common appellative and generic nouns, as *man*, *house*, *ship*, convey to most minds rather a plural idea; and this is even more the case with invisible things like *god*, *demon*, *fairy*. All this increases our difficulty in ascertaining exactly what they mean, and also in conveying the precise idea which we wish to teach to them. Bishop Boone remarked, when speaking of a version of the New Testament, and the diffuse style desirable to be adopted to render its teachings easily understood, "I have known instances, in my own efforts to make translations with the aid of Chinese teachers, of their insisting on the non-necessity of inserting words, which they declared no one could fail to supply; when the very parties themselves having forgotten, after the lapse of some time,

what word was to be supplied, have made blundering work in the attempt to explain what they themselves had written."

The disregard of gender is indicated more by the want of separate terms to distinguish sex than by the impossibility of modifying the characters to show it. Particular words to denote *mare*, *cow*, *hen*, *doe*, and a few other similar terms exist; but the common usage is to add *kung* or *mu*, *nan* or *nü*, *mau* or *pin*, to the generic noun in order to describe the sex. Thus, *pin yang* means *ewe*; *ki kung*, a cock; and even *nü jin*, a *female man* is the most usual phrase for a woman. There are many deities in China whose sex cannot be certainly decided from anything attributed to them.

This vagueness in number and gender has had much to do with the definition and discussion of the proper words for *god* and *spirit*. It is remarkable, too, how the constant rendering by one party of *shin* as *god*, and by the other as *spirit*, has gradually led each to forget, in some measure, the native uses for both those foreign words. They seem to have overlooked their loose application by the Chinese, from having given them their own more definite and accurate ideas of *god* or *spirit*, according as they have translated them.

The Protestant literature of the Term Question, as this discussion is commonly called in China, has already attained considerable dimensions. The debate has turned chiefly on the points whether *Shangti*, *Tien-chu*, or *Shin* shall be used to denote the true God. One party maintains that God should be denoted by one of the first two, and the third term be solely applied to spirit. A second party proposes to denote *Elohim* or God by *shin*, and express *ruach* or spirit by the word *ling*. A third party wishes to use one or other of the first two terms for God, *shin* for gods (false gods), and *ling* for spirit. Other terms have been less used and advocated to designate God. Among these, *Ti*, a Ruler; *Tien-ti*, Heavenly Ruler; *Tien-shin*, Heavenly God; *Shang-chu*, Supreme Lord; and *Ta-ti*, Great Ruler, are the most common. Other phrases and combinations, like *Tien-fu*, Heavenly Father; *Chin-shin*, True God; *Shin-chu*, Divine Lord; *Tien-*

hwang, Heavenly Autocrat, all more or less indicating their foreign origin, have come into partial use among missionaries according to their peculiar views. They are all, however, intended as the special designation for the true God, and not applicable, like the words *elohim* and *theos*, to all objects of worship, true as well as false. They are all, in fact, descriptive or proper names, not generic nor common terms such as is needed, and are like Jehovah, Aloha, Jesus, Messiah, Paraclete, etc., in their application. In vindication of these differing views many writers have come forward to explain and uphold the use of their chosen terms. On the side of *Shangti* and *shin*, the Rev. W. H. Medhurst, Rev. James Legge, D.D., Rev. John Chalmers, Rev. Charles Gutzlaff, and Rev. Elihu Doty in China, with Sir George T. Staunton, and Rev. S. C. Malan in England, have apparently exhausted the topic by their researches and arguments. On the side of *shin* and *ling*, Bishop Boone, Rev. Thomas McClatchie, Bishop Russell, Rev. L. B. Peet, Rev. A. P. Happer, D.D., and Rev. M. S. Culbertson, D.D., have written. Their two standpoints have been nearly diametrical. In general, it may be said that those on the first side have endeavored to find the name or deity which will come nearest in the Chinese conception to the true God, and through that name lead them up to him as the only object of worship; while their opponents have sought for the word for gods (*theoi*) in Chinese which includes them all, and can be made most effectual in teaching Chinese idolaters that there is only one God demanding their worship and obedience, and thus overthrowing their polytheism.

I shall endeavor to state succinctly the main arguments used for each word, and the objections urged against each, in such a way that the conditions of the controversy may be clearly understood. When it began in 1846, the advocates for *Shangti* and *shin* were mostly from among the British and German missionaries, and those in favor of *shin* and *ling* were nearly all of them Americans, and somewhat in the majority. In the interval of thirty years the usage of

Shangti and *shin* has extended, and the proportion of British and German missionaries has greatly increased over the Americans. This, however, has not materially influenced the views of individuals; though a few instances are known where persons have found it so uncomfortable to preach *shin* and *ling*, where their brethren used *Shangti* and *shin*, that they have left the station or mission. At every leading missionary station in China both sets of words have been in constant use at the various chapels opened by men of different societies; and the converts have usually followed the teachings of their pastors.

In support of his argument in favor of *Shangti* Dr. Medhurst [1] quotes from the Imperial Dictionary of Kanghi, respecting *ti*, as follows, which I condense a little: "*Ti* means a judge, and is the designation of one who rules over the empire; he who in virtue is united to heaven; a sovereign; formerly *ti Yao* [the sovereign *Yao*] was intelligent, perspicacious, accomplished, and thoughtful, while his glory covered the empire. *Ti* is one of the names of Heaven, and the reason why Heaven is called *Ti* is because *ti* means to judge. This application of the word signifies that Heaven is widely extended over all, without any private feeling, forgetting the difference between self and others; his justice and equity pervade to the utmost distance, in everything judging and discriminating accurately. Therefore Heaven is called *Ti*. The five *ti* (early rulers of China) in their right principles assimilated to this standard, being able also to judge and discern, and therefore this name could be applied to them." The lexicon then says, *Shangti* means Heaven, or the Divinity, which Dr. Medhurst explains as being the Supreme Being in the estimation of the Chinese. Kanghi further tells us, "The five *ti* are the names of *shin*, or certain spiritual beings distinct from the Supreme."

Dr. Medhurst opens his argument for *ti* with the following remarks, with which, I think, most of those on his side of the question agree as expressing their own views on the place held by the term *Shangti* in Chinese writings:

[1] Inquiry, pp. 5, 6.

"Here it may be premised that after the most studious research we have not been able to find any one term that fully answers to the words *elohim* and *theos* as used in the sacred Scriptures. In one important particular the Chinese ideas respecting God fall short of the truth; for they do not appear to ascribe the creation of heaven and earth to any one being. The Supreme in their estimation is variously designated as *Tien*, *Ti*, or *Shangti*, to whom they attribute the production and superintendence of all things. We do not find that they predicate of himself existence; nor do we remember that anywhere they expressly describe him as existing from eternity. At the same time, however, we nowhere meet with a single passage which speaks of the origin of *Ti*, nor of his deriving his existence from any other. On the other hand, all things are said to come from him, as children are said to spring from their parents. . . . . There can be no doubt that the Chinese use the word *ti* in the same way in which Western writers use the word "God" — that they ascribe to *Ti* such attributes as were usually ascribed to the Divine Being by the pagans of Greece and Rome. We therefore conclude that by *Ti* the Chinese mean the Supreme God, as far as they are acquainted with him. They also use this word when speaking of inferior spiritual beings who have some superintendence over different parts of the universe, and who, in the estimation of the Confucianists, were entitled to religious worship; while it is applied by both Taoist and Budhist writers to beings whom they consider as gods. The inference, therefore, is, that *ti* is descriptive of a class of beings, beginning with the highest and passing down to inferior divinities, and is therefore generic for *god* in Chinese."[1]

Dr. Medhurst then proceeds, by quotations from the ancient books and their commentators to show, under several heads,—I. That to *Ti* are ascribed the production and formation of all things, and the conferring of a virtuous nature on mankind; II. That *Ti* or *Shangti* is synonymous with *Tien*

[1] Inquiry, pp. 4–6.

or Heaven; III. That he is called the Lord or Governor of heaven; IV. That divine decrees (*tien ming*) are ascribed to him; V. That a superintending providence is ascribed to him; VI. That divine acts and attributes are ascribed to him; VII. That sacrifices and worship of the highest kind are paid to him, as well as other beings called *ti*; VIII. That *shin* is viewed as an adjunct of, or something belonging to, *Ti* or *Shangti*, when the principal sacrifice is offered; and IX. That these terms are used for others beside the Supreme. Under this head he explains the description given "by the Taoists of the five *Ti*, and a variety of others, great and small, who must all be considered in the light of Gods, according to their creed"; and also of the views entertained by the Budhists, "who use *ti* in the sense of a divine, spiritual being."

Dr. Medhurst has given, with each head, many extracts from native authors in proof of these theses, most valuable in themselves as illustrating their religious notions, but beyond our space to quote. They are concluded by a list of twenty-six *Ti* and *Shangti* who are worshipped by Confucianists and Taoists, of whom there are only six specially designated as *Shangti*, the rest being termed *Ti* (Rulers), *Ta Ti* (Great Rulers), or *Shing Ti* (Holy Rulers), all indicating their high position in the Chinese pantheon. These six are called the *Shangti* of the Expansive Heavens, of the Imperial Heavens, of the Original Heavens, and of the Sombre Heavens, the Perfect Imperial *Shangti*, and *Shangti* without any epithet. The first two are regarded as synonymous with the last, and are worshipped in the state religion.

From this application of both these terms to a variety of gods, Dr. Medhurst proceeds to argue that *ti* is necessarily a generic term for *god*, and though it also means *ruler* and *heaven*, and should be so translated in general, its meaning as a relative noun, limiting its application to ruler as the converse of ruled, does not prevent it being used as the generic term to translate *elohim*. He shows, from the attributes ascribed to *ti* under the above nine heads, that the relation of ruler is too limited to answer the requirements of his powers and

position. These involve moulding and forming things, producing and completing things, leading and influencing men's minds, conferring a virtuous nature on mankind which results in sincere and reverential thoughts, and lastly, knowing all things, controlling the heart, and seeing its feelings more clearly than in the brightest mirror, — all of which prove him to be God. Further, the fact that *ti* is applied to other beings of a lower grade who are worshipped by the Chinese, like the *shin* and the *sien* (spirits and immortals) strengthens its use as a generic word for *god* and *gods*, like *theos* and *theoi*.

He also disposes of the objections against using *Ti* for God drawn from its modern use in the term *hwangti* for emperor, first adopted B.C. 225 by Tsin Chi Hwangti; and if the previous uses and meanings of the word are admissible in Christian books, this arrogant use by human sovereigns is no serious drawback to higher and divine ascriptions in Christian worship. The same thing was known in Egypt, Persia, and Rome, and their monarchs were more arrogant than the emperors of China.

On this resemblance he very well observes, "That it prevailed in both nations, and as the practice and all the superstitions connected with it gave way in Rome before the influence of Christianity in the days of Constantine, may we not hope that the same results will follow the propagation of the gospel in China in these latter days? The apostles, when they began to preach, found human rulers deified and regularly sacrificed to after their death, and the divine name frequently prefixed to that of human beings before and after their decease; but they did not object to use the word *theos* as generic for God, notwithstanding it was prostituted to such purposes." In time, as the truth was accepted, all this blasphemous use of *theos* among the Romans ceased; and so Dr. Medhurst concludes that the blasphemous use of *ti* for gods and men will cease in China, if it be used in the sacred Scriptures to denote all gods, both true and false. He goes on to show how its historical use by Chinese writers during

two thousand years to designate deceased emperors will practically prove no impediment to its more accurate and elevated designation of the true God, any more than it has in Roman literature. If his premise has been proven, these deductions can easily be accepted; and there will be no confusion between *ti* when applied to God and when applied to deceased emperors; nor would inquiring readers make any mistake as to the intent of the first commandment, excluding worship of, or allowing divinity to, other beings than the true *Ti* or true God.

Dr. Medhurst then takes up the objections to *ti* on account of *dominion* being the leading idea involved in the word, and endeavors to prove that *divinity* and *virtue* are also necessary ingredients in the Chinese conceptions of *Shangti*, and *a fortiori* are not found at all in *shin* — a word that does not express the nature or attributes of God in any way. He devotes nearly one half of his essay to the examination of this much disputed word, to prove that it means *spirit* alone, and can never be made to mean anything higher than that among the Chinese, and that the attempt to force it to mean *God* will only result in confusion and failure. In conclusion, he compares *ti* and *shin* as follows:

"We have thus seen that *shin* means spirit; that as such it corresponds to the human mind and soul, and is applied to the various invisible intelligences who are supposed to have charge over different parts of the universe, in which sense of a spiritual intelligence the Supreme Being in the estimation of the Chinese is called a *shin*. It is, therefore, no more adapted to represent our word "God" than is the term "spirit" in any language; while the argument for employing the generic term for divinities does not apply here, inasmuch as *shin* is not generic for *gods* but *spirits*. To use it for *God*, therefore, would be subversive of the genius and structure of the language, and render the books written for the religious instruction of the Chinese vague and unintelligible; while, on the other hand, *ti* has been shown by many examples, to have moulded the frame of nature and

conferred the virtuous principle on mankind. *Ti* is synonymous with Heaven in the sense of the Divinity, and at the same time the Lord and Governor of Heaven; *Ti* acts according to his will, and disposes of monarchs at his pleasure; the highest act of worship is paid to *Ti*. The word is also used in the plural, as referring to a variety of invisible beings honored with religious worship; and the divinities of the Taoists and Budhists are frequently called *Ti*. We conclude, therefore, that we are warranted by the Chinese lexicographers and the *usus loquendi* of the classical writers, in proposing *ti* and not *shin* to be used generically for *god* in the translation of the sacred Scriptures."[1]

In the desire, if possible, to secure unanimity among Protestant missionaries in regard to a term fit to be selected for *God*, Dr. Medhurst devotes the rest of his inquiry to advocating the adoption of the synonyme *Tien-ti* instead of *Shangti*. He says, "We are willing to suggest a cognate, but still more definite term [than *ti*], and to recommend the use of *tien-ti* generically for *god*." This proposal is fortified by several quotations from Chinese writers, all tending to show its identity with *Shangti*. Its general use by Taoists in the sense of the Supreme God, and for a class of beings who are treated by them with divine honors, ranging from the gods of the thirty-two heavens down to inferior *tien-ti* who rank with genii and immortals, is adduced and regarded as proof enough that this compound term, meaning *heavenly-ruler*, can be and is used as a generic term. He also brings forward some quotations from Dr. Morrison's writings where it had been used for the true God, to show its fitness to designate the three Persons in the Trinity. For instance, in one place Dr. Morrison describes them as *Tien-ti shin Fu*, *Tien-ti shin Tsz'*, and *Tien-ti shin Fung*; literally, Heavenly Ruler divine Father, Heavenly Ruler divine Son, and Heavenly Ruler divine Wind. This term is regarded by Dr. Medhurst as one which "no Chinese, by any possibility would misunderstand," when used generically for God; but it never

[1] Inquiry, p. 163.

seems to have occurred to him how this proposal to invest a word of his own selection with all the attributes of a generic word for a new idea completely neutralized all he had written for the other, and left this one unsupported by his arguments for that. The two cannot be interchanged in all positions in this manner; and the fact still remains that objects of worship are never called *ti*, *Tien-ti*, or *Shangti*, but are called *shin*.

It may be observed, in this place, that no response ever followed this proposal of Dr. Medhurst to adopt *Tien-ti* as the generic word for *God*, or even *Ti* alone. In fact it is not always easy to decide from the Inquiry whether he intended *Shangti* or *Tien-ti* as the best word for God, and *ti* alone to designate all, both true and false gods; or whether he regarded the latter as the best word for *elohim* and *theos*, and the others as most proper to denote the name Jehovah or God. However, neither of them was ever adopted; being relative terms, they were too much like *fu* and *chu* (*father* and *lord*) to meet the wants of the case.

Rev. E. Doty upheld Dr. Medhurst's view in an article written soon after, in which he compares the uses of *shin* and *ti* as generic terms for *god* and *gods*, and shows their similarity to *daimon* and *theos* among the Greeks. He also illustrates how easy it is to misunderstand, in such discussions, the meaning of the terms used, when he remarks at the close, "It is extremely doubtful whether any being worshipped by the Chinese is by them regarded as a divine being." To the general reader of many of these essays, it is apparent that there was much confusion on both sides as to the precise meaning of terms, and discrepancy as to the objects in view.

Two years after (Jan. 1850), finding that the two terms did not meet with acceptance as a compromise, Dr. Medhurst and his five colleagues at Shanghai proposed to transfer the word *Aloha* as the name for *God*, in imitation of the usage of the Nestorians of early times. The chief arguments in support of this course were, that *Aloah* is sanctioned by Scriptural usage; that it freed both parties from all mixture with Chinese superstition; that no philological difficulties

lay in the way; and that soon they would create for themselves a *usus loquendi* with the explanation of the new term given by all missionaries using it. This proposal met with no favor from any one. It really introduced a new foreign God by the name of *Aloah*, which could not be successfully used to counteract polytheism, and even the Mohammedans had been obliged to drop the word in their books; Allah has never obtained general circulation. It needed as much explanation to exhibit the truths of monotheism by it as the native terms *ti*, *shin*, *Tien-ti*, and *Shangti*. Its advocates soon dropped it, and no books were ever published in Chinese wherein it was used. Perhaps more weight would have attended their arguments if the language itself was not so inapt in assimilating all foreign words; but there really was no need of a foreign term, as the language had words to choose from. If a foreign term could have found currency, too, it is almost certain that the Roman Catholics would have suggested some such mode of settling their disputes, — a mode which has been attempted by the Russian missionaries in their versions by transliterating the word *theos* as *té-wu-sz'*. But this solution presents the same difficulty, and is inferior to *Aloha* from its novelty.

The "Inquiry" of Dr. Medhurst was published soon after the essay of Dr. Boone, but was probably written before its appearance. Both of these authors aimed at the same thing in the same way, viz., to find a word in Chinese corresponding to *elohim* and *theos*, which could be used as a generic appellation, as God, god, and gods are in English. Dr. Medhurst proposed *ti* as the common noun, and *Shangti* or *Tien-ti* as the peculiar term to denote the true God alone. Dr. Boone wrote in behalf of the word *shin* for god, and argued that it would gradually, in spite of its present vague and pantheistic uses among the Chinese, come to stand for the true God, whom they would come to know through revelation, just as the words *god* and *deus* had been elevated in English and Latin as Christianity had been gradually accepted by those who spoke them

Following generally the same line of argument that Dr. Medhurst had done, but taking up the points of Bishop Boone's essay seriatim, Dr. Legge of Hongkong, in 1850, issued his "Argument" for *Shangti* as the only proper rendering of *elohim* and *theos* in the Chinese language. In this he went much farther than Dr. Medhurst. He "rejoiced to acknowledge in the Shangti of the Chinese classics and the Shangti of the Chinese people him who is God over all, blessed for ever..... There is at least one Protestant missionary who does not admit that the Chinese do not know the true God." In this argument he logically maintained, therefore, that *elohim* is not interchangeable with Jehovah, and "God cannot be rendered in Chinese by giving the characters used to represent [the sound] Jehovah." He also argued that it is not necessary that Jehovah should be known with all his attributes in order to the existence of a term in Chinese which may mean the same as the word *god* means in English. This main proposition was ably discussed in the Argument, and further advocated and illustrated in two subsequent pamphlets, called "Letters on rendering the Name God in the Chinese Language," and "Notions of the Chinese concerning Gods and Spirits." These three essays contain about all that can be said in favor of his postulate that *Shangti* is the name by which the Chinese know God; and all that Christian missionaries have to do, therefore, is to divest the name of its idolatrous associations by leading its worshippers to the revelation wherein God makes himself known. If anybody could prove that this was the truth, and the right way to make it known in all its fulness, certainly Dr. Legge has done it; and his writings have been the refuge and armory of those who have been called on to defend their use of *Shangti* for *elohim*.

Just about the time that the previous essays were published, the celebrated John Bowring, then British Consul at Canton, made a short review of the points at issue between their writers, showing that they were searching in the Chinese language for what had never been there, and would never

be found, and therefore must be supplied. As a solution, he proposed to adopt the Greek letter Θ as the symbol for *Theos* or God, by which his nature was to be taught the Chinese. He refers to the universal use of *Allah* in all Mohammedan countries in support of his proposal; and it is somewhat strange that he did not advocate the use of it in Chinese, instead of an arbitrary symbol, having no sound. It found no advocates, and would, in fact, never have been made if its author had had a practical knowledge of the Chinese language and of mission work among the people. Dr. Boone shows that he had confused an idea (viz. the true God) which was not in the language with a being (viz. a god) which was there; and then asks the question, "Could Dr. Bowring kneel down, and pray to Θ, 'O Θ, have mercy upon me!' I surely could not." Moreover, Dr. Bowring forgot to ask himself, "How can I best teach the Chinese the name and attributes of Θ, so that they shall learn who God is?" The proposal of course fell to the ground; for it was both absurd and impracticable.

Far otherwise was the drift and results of a discussion on the subject by Sir G. T. Staunton, who wrote his "Inquiry" at the request of the directors of the British and Foreign Bible Society. He agreed with Dr. Medhurst in advocating *Shangti*, "because it had been employed in Chinese from time immemorial in a sense more nearly approaching to that which we attach to the word "God" than any other which at present exists in the language of the country." His search after the right term ended in approving *Shangti*, and the directors henceforth adopted the conclusions of so good a Chinese scholar and candid polemic; though they did not withhold aid from those missionaries who preferred other terms.

Another suggestion may be here mentioned. It was proposed by T. W. Meller, Editorial Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, as a solution of the difficulty arising from the want of any indication of number in the word *shin;* for one of the most serious obstacles to its reception in a monotheistic sense was how to limit it to one being in

common usage. This was to use *shin* for gods, and *Pi-shin* or *Shang-shin* for God, the God, or Supreme God, who alone ought to be worshipped by man. The philological difficulties to the adoption of either of these phrases were, however, so apparent and so numerous that both sides were obliged to decline them as a solution of their controversy.

Dr. Smith, Bishop of Victoria, about the same time proposed the term *Tien-shin* as a compromise, urging that as *Shangti* had been called the *shin* of heaven by Chinese writers, it could be made an acceptable term to all after a full trial, and had already obtained some currency in Morrison's writings. But though it had no idolatrous associations, it was felt to be less fitted for denoting God than *Tien-chu*, and the proposal met no response.

It will suffice, now, to indicate briefly the main points of Dr. Legge's argument to prove that *Shangti* is the name of the true God among the Chinese, and therefore that it is the only term proper to translate *god*, *elohim*, and *theos* in all their uses. In the two hundred and eighty-five closely printed pages of his three pamphlets, there is much research and learning. It is mostly extraneous to his main thesis, however, and I need only mention the leading proofs of that as he gives them. His first premise is that *god* is a relative, and not a generic, term, and everywhere and essentially signifies a ruler, a lord; its correlate is creature, and he quotes the high authority of Newton to prove "that it is the dominion of a spiritual being that constitutes God." The second is, that the application of *Elohim* or God to what we call false gods or idols, or to any other being or thing than the Supreme Being, is a misuse of it. Taking *Shangti* as the relative term in Chinese for *god*, he would join it to Jehovah when necessary to designate the God of the Bible; for, he adds, "as God is not a generic term, and *shin* is a generic term, therefore *shin* is not a proper translation of God." This naturally leads to an examination of the many meanings of the word *shin*, of which he mentions the six quoted from Dr. Medhurst, classing them as he would the

species of a genus in natural history: 1st, a Supreme Being or beings, who must be considered divine; 2d, invisible intelligences supposed to be in charge of various departments of nature; 3d, souls of men, both living and dead; 4th, mischievous sprites, elves, and apparitions; 5th, temper, disposition, vigor of intellect; 6th, certain energies of nature, which contract and expand to produce its phenomena. From these various significations, Dr. Legge argues that it is mere play to contend for any other translation but *spirit;* for if it really mean *god* in any case, then it always means *god.*" Many paragraphs are devoted to this point, in which one of the initial difficulties of the whole subject is well illustrated by the transfusion of our own ideas about god, spirits, intelligences, energies, etc., into the Chinese language, for Dr. Legge translates the word *shin* by all of them. Our ideas are definite, but theirs are so vague that this word melts away into meaning everything and nothing, as soon as we bring it to our more accurate tests. He then goes on to argue that *ti* is an appellative term, and quotes its accepted definition in Chinese dictionaries to support his position. It is, "*Ti* is the appellation of one who judges the world or rules over the nations, an epithet of honor applied to one who rules as a lord." He then fairly asks: "Is not Jehovah the governor among the nations? He is indeed King of kings; his is the kingdom, the power, and the glory; to him, therefore, may *Ti* be applied with the utmost propriety as an appellative name." Taking the two together as conclusive of the application in this sense to God, he adds: "We want now a term in Chinese which shall express the relation of supreme authority inhering in a Supreme Being. We have it in their oldest and latest books, in their every-day language. It is the term *Shangti.* Separate its constituent characters, and we shall translate them Supreme Ruler; but they carry home through the eye and ear one complex idea to the mind, the same with that in the Greek word *pantocrator*, the same with that in The Supreme, the same with that in God."

In the quotations given from the Chinese classical and other books, he translates this word by God, as if there were no doubt that their writers knew him who made the heavens and the earth. Objections are brought against the use of *ti* or *tien-ti* as its proper rendering, the principal of which are that *ti* is too vague; "it denotes a ruler, perhaps the Supreme Ruler, perhaps some other; while *tien-ti* denotes heavenly ruler, and this is not the idea conveyed by God. We know that he has his throne in the heavens; but it is not that fact of which the term awakens recognition, but that his kingdom ruleth over all. It is only as *tien-ti* is understood to be another name for *Shangti* that it comes to have the signification of God." If this postulate has been proved by Dr. Legge, certainly it ought to be used by everybody teaching the Bible among the Chinese.

He then brings his argument to a close by denying that *Shangti* is a proper name, as had been again and again asserted. The sentence *Shangti tien chi shin yé* is therefore translated "Shangti is the spirit of heaven, i.e. the spirit that possesses this supreme power. Heaven does not mean the chief God of the Chinese, but the supreme ruling Power, known and acknowledged in China and everywhere else; the word being also used in every nation by metonymy for God." To translate the sentence "Shangti is the God of Heaven" as Dr. Boone does, is therefore described as "wonderful and erroneous." In support of this, he challenges any one who asserts that *Shangti* is a proper name, like Jupiter, to write a treatise on the birth, life, kingdom, name, and death of *Shangti;* but the "first sentence has yet to be discovered in Chinese writings which speaks of the birth, life, or death of *Shangti.* Of his name and reign we read, but to the effect that his name signifies the character of his dominion that ruleth over all."

Confident in his premises, proofs, and deductions, Dr. Legge concludes: "Let us translate *elohim* and *theos* in the sacred Scriptures by *Shangti;* if it should seem to lead us to strange results, we may not, on that account, presume

to reject it. We may trust truth; it can never lead us wrong." In elucidation of this application, he goes on to say that the "sacred writers had no option of their own when they gave the name *theos* to false gods as well as the true. They found the name so applied by men; it was not they who deified the objects of heathen worship; and the design of all the instructions of the Holy Spirit is to rebuke and abolish the practice. ..... Nothing can be plainer to my mind than that the apostle (1 Cor. viii. 5, 6) dealt with *theos* as a relative term, having its proper signification, and expressing a relation of which one party could only be the Supreme Being, from whom, therefore, it could never be diverted, excepting by the depravity of man, and a falsehood imposed by them upon themselves. Jehovah says: 'There is no God [i.e. no Supreme Ruler] beside me.'"

The reason why good and wise men have shrunk from following their course, and calling other beings than Jehovah as *elohim* and *theoi*, is, he thinks, found in the fact "that the Chinese have not called the numerous objects of their worship by the term they have for *God*. They have not *deified* them." They have only done it in the three Taoist idols and the five *Ti*, which are among those previously enumerated by Dr. Medhurst. "The crowd of beings worshipped by the Chinese are not gods, neither are they called *gods* ..... Who says that they *are* gods? The time is coming when the Chinese will fulfil the prophecy in Jer. xvi. 19, 20, 'O Lord, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?' Again, Who says they are *called* gods? They are called *shin*, and *shin* only signifies *spirit* or *spirits*. It cannot be permitted that in any document pretending to accuracy it can ever be translated in any other way..... It is an inadmissible definition of *god* to say that the term means *an object of religious worship;* the ideas of god and worship are so closely associated in the mind that men, looking merely at the outside of things, can

hardly help speaking of the beings worshipped by a heathen people as the gods of that people, and such an application of the term is generally assented to without difficulty." In saying this, Dr. Legge evidently forgot Johnson's definition, which he quotes approvingly at the outset: "God, the Supreme Being; a false god, an idol; any person or thing deified, or too much honored." Those who use the English language will still adhere to this definition of the word *God*, and no doubt call idolaters polytheists, and not polypneumatists, and will include the Chinese among them.

Speaking of the application of the first commandment to this use, Dr. Legge defines it as forbidding polytheism properly so called, i.e. the worship of *many gods;* and so far as the Chinese have worshipped many Shangti, so far do they come within the direct sweep of this commandment. The second commandment forbids what he would call polytheism improperly so-called — bowing down to or serving beings who may not be called by the name of *gods*. "So far as the Chinese have been guilty of worshipping any other beings than *Shangti*, whom henceforth they will know as *Jehovah Shangti*, so far do they come within the sweep of this commandment." He concludes his proofs and arguments in the "Notions," by bringing forward six objections against *Tien-chu*, two of which are founded on its use by the Roman Catholics, and "thinks it is a good thing for Protestants to be able by the use of a different name for God, to discriminate their teaching of Christianity from that of Popery. If the Roman Catholics had kept by the proper word for God, it would be absurd in us to use an improper word, that we might avoid being confounded with them. They have given up the *natural* word, and adopted a word which is only a synonyme." It seems to me that Dr. Legge had almost forgotten that Christian nations worship the same God when he wrote this.

Dr. Boone expanded his Essay in favor of *shin* into a "Defence," published the same year as the above "Argument," and of Dr. Legge's Six Letters in further explanation of the question. The latter entered the arena again two

years after by the publication of the "Notions of the Chinese concerning God and Spirits," in which he developed and illustrated the former thesis, and replied fully to Bishop Boone's "Defense;" he also offered new quotations to prove that the early Chinese were monotheists, and by inference not idolaters, seeing that they worshipped the true God under the name of *Shangti*. He admitted that in the course of ages this worship had fallen away from its purity, and the atheistical philosophers of the Sung dynasty in the eleventh century had "endeavored to explain the creation and operations of the universe without the intervention of a personal, independent, spiritual being, the Creator and Governor, — in other words, without the intervention of God." It is no doubt true that this is the case to a great degree, and that their acute speculations, and subtile conclusions upon subjects beyond their knowledge, have had a disastrous effect upon the Chinese mind. These atheistical teachers are, however, looked upon by Dr. Legge as were the false teachers in Christianity, like heresiarchs in the Greek and Roman churches, who overlaid and perverted the simple ordinances and truths of revelation without destroying their vitality or origin. The present state religion practised at Peking follows in many, perhaps most, of its features the ancient ritual, and the emperors sacrifice to heaven, to the earth, to ancestors, etc., as in the Chau dynasty. Several extracts are given from the statutes of the Ming dynasty (A.D. 1530), quoting the prayers and songs used in the solstitial worship, which are remarkably pure and elevated in sentiment. Dr. Legge reviews and extols them, and claims in conclusion that the denunciation in Jeremiah, "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens," can have no application in China, for *Shangti* cannot be among them. "The Christian world will agree with me in saying, This God is our God."

I do not find any new arguments in support of what is maintained in these extracts, which can sensibly strengthen Dr. Legge's postulate, that *Shangti* is simply a Chinese desig-

nation of the true God, and as such ought to be developed to that people from the Bible into his full character and attributes. Since the "Argument" and "Notions" were written, twenty-five years ago, he has worked at his careful translations of the ancient classical books, of which seven out of the nine are published. In them he renders *Ti* and *Shangti* by the word *God*, as if there could be no doubt of their identity, and gives his readers the impression that Yao and Shun, Ching Tang, Wăn-wang and Wu-wang, with all those early monarchs and their subjects, were as cognizant of him as were their contemporaries, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Samuel and David, though not taught as clearly, nor knowing as much of his character.

As a last utterance on this head, it may not be amiss to refer to a recent letter from him on "Confucianism in Relation to Christianity," dated March 1877, read at the late missionary conference. In it he expresses his conclusions even more strongly as to the theism of the classics. Speaking of the high position given to *Ti* in those books, he says to his brethren, "In order to bring our Chinese readers and hearers to think as we do about God, missionaries must supplement largely the statements in the Confucian books about him, — more largely, indeed, than in dealing with the Jews we have to supplement the testimony concerning him in the Old Testament. .... It is matter for rejoicing that we have not to clear away from the Chinese books a multitude of passages that would present *Ti* to the mind as a Being other than powerful and supreme, righteous, holy, and loving. If there be any such passages they have eluded my observation; whereas the passages that sustain what I have said are so numerous and striking that I may well be excused from adducing any of them to the members of this conference."

In this paper he admits that these writings do not take us back to a time when the religion of China was pure monotheism; but their notices indicate sacrifices and worship to the six honored ones, the hills and rivers, and the host of spirits, at the very first mention of *Shangti*, when a corrupt

admixture of other beings went along with his worship. Such is probably the truth about the matter; but when was that time? What grounds are there for concluding that it was after the beginning of the Chinese race? Before asking us to take such a novel thing for truth, as that a great nation knew and worshipped God three thousand years ago, and yet no one ever recognized it in its fulness of meaning until the present day, we may well ask for far clearer proof than these deductions carry with them, much as some would like to believe them.

I agree with Dr. Legge in the sense he quotes it, when he says, referring to the remark in Mencius: "That Heaven also made for the people instructors, who, as well as the rulers, should be assisting to God." I fully accept this saying, and "believe that Confucius, not to specify others, was raised up by God for the instruction of the Chinese people. That Confucius's system of teaching was not complete is only in harmony with the divine plan in the communication of truth to mankind, ... and need not interfere with our admitting that those men were specially helped by God, that he might keep up some knowledge of himself and of the way of duty among the millions of our race."

These summaries of the arguments of Dr. Medhurst and Dr. Legge in behalf of *Shangti*, *Ti*, and *Tienti*, as the proper words to render *elohim* and *theos*, show all their important points. I turn now to exhibit the other side of the question, and bring forward the reasons which have induced so many Protestant missionaries in China to reject the notion that *Shangti* is the ancient Chinese name for Jehovah, and is not a suitable word to render *elohim* and *theos*. If it never did denote the true God, however near this highest deity of the Chinese came to him, the distance between them was and is infinite, and the character of Jehovah must be taught alone from the Bible, without supplementing from that book the deficiencies of their classics. I myself, used the name *Shangti* for ten years, and then reluctantly dropped it altogether, chiefly because of its identification with the idols and

gods around me, daily worshipped by the people of Canton. Every year, too, the street placards calling them to remember *Shangti pao-tan*, i.e. the precious birthday of *Shangti*, and celebrate it by plays, led many to infer that that was the *Shangti* whom I meant as the Father of Jesus. It mattered little to them what the classics said of the *Shangti* of Yao and Shun.

Many persons had begun to inquire into the merits of this question in 1844, and a few articles had appeared in the "Chinese Repository;" but it was not till the Committee of Delegates met at Shanghai in June 1847, and its members found themselves differing in views on these vital points that they resorted to the press. The two essays of Bishop Boone written in support of *shin* as the rendering of *elohim* and *theos*, contain nearly all the reasons that have ever been adduced for that view.

He states at the outset that the main object of the Christian missionary is to teach monotheism to the Chinese polytheists. "They do not know the true God, or any being who may truly and properly be called God; therefore, the highest being known to them is to be regarded only as the chief god of a pantheon, and not as the being whom we call God. Under these circumstances, we can only choose between the name of the chief God of the Chinese, and the name by which the whole class of gods is known in their language. It is derogatory to Jehovah to call him by the proper name or distinctive title of any false god; we cannot, therefore, use the name of the chief God of the Chinese to render *elohim* and *theos*, and must, according to this alternative, use the generic name of the Chinese gods; ..... its use is absolutely necessary to forbid the reigning polytheism. This generic name is *shin;* therefore, we must use this word, malgrè all objections, to render *elohim* and *theos* into Chinese."

Bishop Boone goes on to show that he agrees with Dr. Medhurst in believing that the Chinese have no knowledge of the true God, but that they differ in the object of their search for the properest word to express it — one by the

general term for gods or all objects of worship; the other, "by a name which will convey to the mind of the Chinese the *same idea* which was conveyed to a Greek by the word *theos;* if the same be likewise that by which the whole class of worshipped beings is known in the language, so much the better." In this also agree other writers, who are shown to have missed the end in view by not seeking for the name of the Being who can, from the attributes ascribed to him, be regarded as the true God, but have sought for a name which came nearest to the biblical account of him. It is necessary, absolutely, to have him invested with some attributes peculiar to God before we can admit that *Shangti*, *Ti*, *Tienti*, or *Tien* designate him. If one of these terms does so, they all do, or can be made to do; for they are used interchangeably by Chinese writers. These attributes are given by Knapp as follows: "God is the most perfect Being, and is the cause of all other being." Cudworth says: "The true and genuine idea of God in general is this — a perfect, conscious, understanding Being (or mind), existing of itself from eternity, and the cause of all other things." Anything short of this requirement prevents all acceptance of the Being spoken of as being the true God, or having ever been worshipped as such by men ignorant of this attribute.

Bishop Boone then proceeds to show that *Shangti* cannot be deemed to answer to God over all, blessed for ever, for the following reasons: 1. No Chinese writer has been found who distinctly states his self-existence from eternity. Dr. Medhurst admits that he has never found such a passage, but adds that we nowhere meet with a single passage which speaks of his origin. Yet self-existence from eternity being an essential attribute of God, the inference that *Shangti* is self-existent cannot be deduced from the silence of native authors, while he is not mentioned by their philosophers among eternally-existing principles. 2. The Chinese do not regard heaven and earth as eternal, but made in time, and *Shangti* had nothing to do with making them. The eternally existing principles are *li* and *ki*. "The first is without form

or trace; it cannot make or do anything; the second can settle and collect together, make and do." The Book of Changes is the most ancient book in Chinese literature, and its teachings, as expounded by Chu Hi (A.D. 1150), are regarded as giving their true meaning.

It is a just inference, therefore, against *Shangti* being God (*propriè*) that these principles, with the *Tai-kih* or Great Extreme, and the dual Powers *yin* and *yang*, were all evolved into and by each other, until all things were made. Meanwhile he stood quietly by, and let them grind on until heaven and earth, the universe, was made, or else he did not exist. Either is fatal to his claim to be regarded as truly God. He then concludes,—after remarking that this omission to connect *Shangti* with the evolution of the *kosmos* is best accounted for by supposing that these writers so identified him with heaven and earth that it would be like making a being the cause of itself to ascribe their creation to him,—by asking the question, "If *Shangti* is neither self-existent nor eternal, nor the maker of the heavens and the earth, what then is asserted of him on which his claim to be considered as truly and properly God is founded? I cannot believe in the existence of a traditional knowledge of God among a people who had forgotten the fundamental fact that God was their Creator — at least, their Maker and that of the world they live in." The clearest proof is necessary, at least on this prime point; for a mistake is most fatal. "If there is a single doubt that the *Shangti* of the Chinese people is Jehovah, — not merely the most like Jehovah of any of the Chinese gods, — and we proceed to worship him, we are guilty of spiritual adultery."

Bishop Boone objects to the phrase *Shangti* as the rendering for *elohim* and *theos*, because they are not, and God is not, relative, but absolute terms. Bishop Russell, in his Term Question, designates them, quoting Whately's Elements of Logic, as absolute terms — "terms which denote an object considered as a whole, and without reference to anything of which it is a part, or to any other part distinguished from it.

..... As regards *elohim* and *theos*, properly speaking, they are simply absolute terms, as there is but one God; but in view of polytheism and their *usus loquendi* in the Bible, they are also absolute-generic terms." It is impossible to substitute for them a relative or relative-common term, one "which denotes an object considered as a part of a whole, viewed in reference to the whole, or to another part of a more complex object of thought. Man is not only an absolute term, it is also a generic one, including the human race; and *father*, *son*, *ruler*, etc., are not only relative terms, they are also common ones, embracing all who stand in these relationships."

Bishop Boone completely answers the postulate that God is a relative term, although Dr. Legge adhered to his opinion in the Notions. That opinion, however, was necessary to uphold the argument in favor of the relative terms *ti* or *Shangti* as a translation of God; and one must infer that his zeal for his favorite terms blinded him to its weakness. Bishop Boone satisfactorily proves the nature of this word as an absolute term, which consequently neutralizes the propriety of the relative terms *ti* and *Shangti* to translate the absolute-generic terms *elohim* and *theos*. The same logic, consequently, applies, *à fortiori*, that *Shangti* on that ground has designated the true God, from the earliest notices, when Shun worshipped him in connection with the five *ti*, hills, rivers, and ancestors, down to the present time.

Dr. Legge admits that the expression *Shangti tien chi shin*, which Bishop Boone renders "*Shangti* is the God of Heaven," offers some difficulty as to its meaning. "He explains it, "That by *tien* is not meant the chief God of the Chinese, but the Supreme Ruling Power, known and acknowledged in China and everywhere else; the word being also used in every nation by metonymy for God. *Shangti* is the spirit of Heaven thus understood, i.e. the spirit that possesses this supreme power. The terms *Shangti* declare that possession, and express the meaning of God, unadulterated, without diminution, and without increase."

The bishop thus answers this singular explanation: "It

is only when we come to those explanations in which *shin* is used that the divinity of *Tien* becomes possible, and in these explanations *Shangti* is neither more nor less than this *shin*. If he be a separate, independent being ruling over heaven, a god, *Shangti* is this god; if he be the soul of the compound being *tien*, *Shangti*, according to one explanation, is this soul; if he be merely the divine or spiritual energies of *Tien*, *Shangti* is the title by which it pleases pantheists to designate these energies. As long as *Shangti* is defined to be the *shin* of Heaven, the phrase Supreme Ruler must stand or fall with the meaning we attach to *shin*."

It is an inevitable conclusion, too, that *Shangti* is a proper name, and cannot be made a generic one, although there are many gods so named. They are like Jupiter tonans, Jupiter pluvius, Jupiter Stygius, all of which are regarded as so many proper names. The names Jehovah-jireh, Jehovah-tsidkenu, Jehovah-tsabaoth, etc., are similar in this respect; and similar analogies can be drawn from the Budhist, Brahminical, and Syrian systems of mythology. The proofs brought from the classics and other books in Chinese literature in support of the statement that *Shangti* is the name of an individual being are so definite, so numerous, and so pertinent that one is surprised that any other view was ever taken by anybody who has read them; or that Dr. Medhurst should think that to quote the titles of seven or eight forms or impersonations of *Shangti* helps to diminish the personal character of the name. He only proves that it is the title common to the chief gods of the two native sects. On the other hand, *shin* is the only word in the language by which all gods or idols are called; and when a native writes the characters *king shin* on the lantern hung at night before his door, it matters nothing to the real nature of his feelings whether we translate them "Reverence the gods," or, "Reverence the spirits." But it does materially affect our ideas of his feelings which of the two renderings we take.

The common people in China never venture to worship *Shangti* under that name alone; for that is the prerogative

of the emperor. They are limited to the two or three chief gods of the Taoists, which have for ages been called *Shangti* alone in common usage. The state religion is regarded with awe and fear by them as a peculiar institution and ritual belonging to the Son of Heaven, the vicegerent of Heaven and Earth among men, who alone is qualified to offer sacrifices on the altar of Heaven at Peking. For a subject to offer prayer and sacrifice to *Shangti* at the winter solstice is tantamount to raising the standard of rebellion by invading the functions of the One Man who sits on the dragon throne. It is highly probable that the worship of God by the Taiping rebels under the name *Shangti*, which they adopted from Christian books, caused them to be suspected from the first, as aiming at the throne.

The people have therefore worshipped the *Hüen-tien Shangti*, that is, the Supreme Ruler of the Sombre Heavens, and the *Yuh-hwang Shangti*, or Perfect Imperial *Shangti;* and these two deities are found all over the land in innumerable temples. The advocates of the *Shangti* of the classics being the true God, of course maintain that this perversion of that ancient name by dumb idols is like the perversion or appropriation of the worship of Jehovah by the Israelites when Jeroboam set up the calves, and called his subjects to adore "the *elohim* which brought them up out of the land of Egypt"; or like the ceremonies and superstitions which in the Roman and Greek churches overlay the simple worship required in the Testament. It is their part to furnish some kind of proof from the Chinese classics or philosophers, like that which those who denounce the worship of the calves, or the adoration of the Virgin, find in the Scriptures for the God of heaven and earth, before they can expect that *Shangti* will be accepted as such.

That the common people understand wrongly when asked to worship *Shangti*, and believe that *Yuh-hwang Shangti* is meant by missionaries who preach from the Bible, has been often asserted and denied in China by advocates of the several terms. My own belief is that the people do confound

the two, and I am sure that even the risk of such confusion is a strong reason for avoiding the term. A very intelligent scholar in Peking, who assisted Mr. Burns in translating the Psalms, and was familiar with the whole discussion among foreigners, said that literary men in the country would always gather that *Shangti* meant *Yuh-hwang Shangti*, for he was the only one they could worship. A British consul, T. T. Meadows, who was acquainted with it, was once walking with me in Canton, and looking up to the sign-board over a little hovel of a shrine which read *Shangti ku Miao* (the old Temple of Shangti), said: "It is a marvel to me how any missionary can use that word to preach the name of God." Bishop Boone mentions instances where the misunderstanding led to sad results; and there can be no doubt that it constantly occurs among the most intelligent Chinese, as well as the uneducated.

Another objection to *Shangti* is that it is a compound, as well as a relative term, and therefore unsuitable to designate a single idea such as *God* is. Bishop Boone urges this with great force, and justly concludes that neither the relative *ti* nor the double title *Supreme Ruler* meets the requirements of the case. The application of the word *shin* to denote objects of worship is proven to include even the four or five *Shangti* which Dr. Legge acknowledges are false gods; and therefore, he proves rather too much when he tries to show that the Chinese do not worship gods but spirits. It does not seem to be necessary to pursue this argument into its details, and adduce the examples which are quoted in illustration of the use of this word for everything that is worshipped, or the explanation which Bishop Boone gives of the application of *shin* to the manes of the dead and the human soul. It is this pantheistic use which has proved a stumbling-block to many missionaries. They say, we need a more definite word than one which includes the heavens and earth, gods, spirits, ancestral manes, demons, and souls in its comprehensive application; and by using *Shangti* we will lead the people up higher to the true God.

On this point Bishop Boone may be quoted: "That the manes of a deceased ancestor, when regarded as an object of worship should be ranked in the same class with the Chinese Olympian deities, so far as this is done by their all being called *shin*, should not surprise us when we remember the hero-gods of Greece, and the *dii lares et penates* of the Romans. That heroism was the idol of ancient Greece accounts for the fact that Hercules was ranked among the *theoi* after death. If we remember that the whole ethical system of the Chinese turns, not on the duty of obedience to *Tien* (Heaven), *Ti* (Earth), or any other god, but on filial piety; we shall have as little cause to wonder at the Chinese deification of a deceased ancestor as at the Greek deification of a hero; find as little cause for surprise in the fact that *Hau-tsih* (the ancestor of the house of Chau) is classed with *Shangti*, among the *shin* sacrificed to on the occasion of the great drought, as that the Greeks called Zeus and Hercules each a *theos*. *Elohim* being a name alike common to the true and false gods, one of the most important uses of this word in the Sacred Scriptures is to forbid polytheism. It is, indeed, by its appellative character, and the use that can be made of it to forbid polytheism, that it is chiefly distinguished from the word *Jehovah*, and this is a point of the utmost importance to keep in mind. It is an unquestionable fact that the false worship to which the Chinese are most attached is that of their deceased ancestors. Should we not then rejoice rather than otherwise, that the word by which we must render *elohim*, although it specially designates the Olympian gods, yet by Chinese usage ready to our hand, has had its meaning so extended as to make the blow aimed at objects of false worship equally fatal to deceased ancestors and the terrestrial *ki*, as to the celestial gods themselves."[1]

Another objection exists to this use of *Shangti*, which is hardly touched on by Bishop Boone, and for some reason not even referred to by Dr. Legge. It is the decided character

[1] See for further remarks in this sense, Dean Stanley's Jewish Church, Sect. I., latter part.

he bears as the male principle of nature. If this be not so clearly stated in the ancient classics as it was worked out by Chu Hi and his school, that silence cannot be adduced as a proof that it did not obtain then, for the germ of it exists in the Book of Changes. The Bishop says, when comparing *Jupiter* and *Shangti*, "*Tien* is a perfect puzzle; impassible, impersonal, guilty of no gallantries, and always faithful to *Ti*, with whom he begat all things. In the Chinese cosmogony, to denote this matrimonial relation, *Tien* (heaven) is called *yang* (male), and *Ti* (earth) *yin* (female)."

At Peking, where the state worship is conducted with great solemnity at the solstices and equinoxes on the four sides of the city, to *Tien*, *Ti*, *Jih*, and *Yueh* (Heaven, Earth, Sun, Moon), this parity of respect is fully understood. There is abundant proof that Heaven and Earth (*Shangti* or High Heaven, and *Hau-ti* or Empress Earth), are regarded as the generators of all things, among which are *Hao-tsih*, the ancestors of the emperors, as well as *wan-wuh* or the myriads of things. The *Hwang-ti* or imperial rulers of China, though inferior to *Shangti* the Supreme Ruler, and *Hau-ti* the Empress Earth, are yet alone honorable enough to worship them. The action of the dual powers *yin* and *yang*, light and darkness, is made the consequence of the soul of the *yang*, which is *shin* or *god*, acting on the *yin*, which is the demon, and this double soul becomes the great Father and Mother of all things. This system of cosmogony has been worked out by Canon McClatchie of Shanghai in a full manner, and very strikingly resembles that set forth by the Greek philosophers, and goes far to destroy all sense of the first cause as a personal being in the minds of the Chinese literati. It is hard to suppose, however, that if the true God had been known to King Wăn and Duke Chau, B.C. 1000, that all traces of his being the Creator and Governor of the universe and self-existent God would have perished from among the Chinese. This seems more improbable than that he is to be recognized in the *Shangti* of those ancient days, mixed up as his worship was even then with ancestors, hills, and rivers.

In Peking, where the *Tien tan* and *Ti tan*, the altars to Heaven and Earth, are laid out in all their magnitude on the south and on the north of the imperial palace, they are fully understood to be of equal divine powers, complementary to each other as much as Zeus and Hera were among the Greeks, or Baal and Astarte among the Syrians. If Dr. Legge felt called upon when he ascended the altar of Heaven in Peking to take off his shoes because God was worshipped there by the emperor, it seems as if he ought also to have ascended the altar to Earth in the same sense. Great cause of gratitude have the Chinese that they have been preserved by God from the depths of pollution and murder which came upon those western Asiatics through their worship of the powers of nature, and their consequent destruction by the righteous Judge of man, for the reasons which he has given us in Lev. xviii. 24–30.

In dealing with the polytheism of the Chinese, it is not altogether so much the ancient notions contained in their classics that are to be combatted and supplanted, however, as the thoughts and practices of the people now waiting for the gospel. To send them back to Yao and Shun for a God whom they are prevented by law and habit from worshipping, and who has been already explained by their own ancient philosophers as the active exhibition of the soul of the universe, requires on the one hand the clearest proofs that their God is in truth the eternal God, and on the other hand that the present *Shangti* will be understood in any other sense than as he now is. Dr. Legge himself allows, when referring to a comparison instituted between Jupiter and Shangti, "If we had nothing in Greek about Jupiter but what is to be found in the Hymn of Cleanthes, and in the writings of the Stoics generally, we should acknowledge that Jupiter was the name of the Supreme God," i.e. (as I infer from the context) Jehovah. Yet Jupiter and Zeus were never regarded by the Jews, or the Apostles, or the Christians, as having been at any time used by anybody as names applied to or designating the true God. When Paul was at Lystra he had the

opportunity to preach the being and attributes of God through Jupiter, whose temple and priest were before him, but he called him a *vanity*. And so is *Shangti*.

Another objection to using this name for the true God is the example of those who have taught his existence. The Nestorians lived among the Chinese for about eight centuries, but hitherto nothing has been discovered of their writings, except the tablet nearly eleven centuries old, now at Si-ngan, in which God is called *Aloho*, and described by the phrase *yuen chin Chu*, or eternal true Lord. His attributes are well epitomized in that inscription, and they were thus made known to the literati of China, and sanctioned by imperial assent, more than two centuries before Chu Hi and his school developed their notions of cosmogony and the *Shangti* of the classics. Yet the "atheistic philosophers," as they are sometimes called, never saw any connection between *Aloho* and the beings they described, nor did the Nestorians venture to call on *Shangti* as their *Aloho*. It certainly could not have been from ignorance of the question which we are now discussing.

Not long after came the Moslems, in the strength of their iconoclastic theism, and they rejected both *Shangti* and *Ti*, as terms for *Allah*, but adopted *chu* or lord, often making it *chin Chu*, or true Lord. It may be that they took both expressions from the Nestorians. In a compend of their tenets, published in this century, we have failed to find a sentence which intimates that they regarded the Lord whom they worshipped as having ever been known to the Chinese as *Shangti*, nor did its author seem to doubt but that the term *chu* would be understood to denote God alone. *Shin* is applied only to spirits and angels, for the Moslems could have no discussion like the one now before us.

The colony of Jews in Honan also knew the true God. The date of their entry into China is given by themselves about the Christian era, but cannot be determined with certainty. They made known their tenets, and practised their ritual among themselves, and probably kept up a knowledge of He-

brew for many generations. No digest of their doctrines has been found larger than the inscriptions on two tablets copied in 1850 in their synagogue at Kaifung. One is dated in 1489, and commemorates the rebuilding of the Temple of Truth and Purity; the other records the rebuilding of the Synagogue in 1511. In both God is referred to and described as *Tao* or Reason, and invested with many of the attributes of Jehovah; but both show a grievous ignorance of his character, and a falling away from the truth of the Old Testament teachings. In some of their inscriptions the term *Hao Tien*, or Expansive Heaven, is used for God, and *Tien* alone in the same sense; but nowhere have they, by any phrase, intimated that they regarded *Shangti* as the Chinese term for the God of their fathers. If they were cognizant of all the literature now referred to by its advocates to prove that such is the case, it is strange that none of them ever maintained this fundamental truth. To argue, as Dr. Legge does, from the use of *Hao Tien* being a synonyme of *Shangti* in the classics, that the Jews were in favor of it, or of *ti*, as the best rendering of *elohim*, if they ever translated the Bible, is to beg the whole question on very weak and small proof.

The results of the long discussions in the Roman Catholic church on this point ended in entirely rejecting *Shangti* as the rendering for *elohim* and *theos*, and taking the phrase *Tien-chu* in preference to *Ti* and *Tienti*. If the missionaries of the Greek church at Peking ever had any controversy on the matter, it ended in their fully agreeing with the Roman Catholics; and no one who knows them can doubt their full ability to decide the question on its own merits. The weight of the evidence from all these sources as to its impropriety is surely entitled to consideration by the small body of Protestant missionaries who advocate it, — both those who agree with Dr. Legge, and those who use it as expressing the highest conception known to the Chinese of the divine Being.

There is another view which is also worth their notice. If *Baal*, which only meant *Lord*, and *Zeus*, which was another form of *Theos*, had been upheld by the prophets and apostles

as admissible synonymes of Jehovah among the early and later Jews, would not the double use have worked much confusion in the literatures coming down to us from antiquity? To thus use both the absolute-generic and the proper names of the true God in connection with those false ones, would have almost neutralized all those declarations which speak of Jehovah's jealousy lest his glory should by any means be given to another. If, for instance, the pagan and Christian literature in the Greek tongue, before Justinian's time, had come down to us with Zeus as one name for the chief God in both, how would it have been possible for the theism of revelation to have ever been distinctly taught? The names as well as the teachings of polytheism must be discarded, because those names were polluted in the sight of the jealous God. So I think must be the result wherever *Shangti* in Chinese Christian and profane literature denotes the chief God in both. The recondite connection of the worship of *Shangti* with that of the imperial ancestors on the altar of Heaven as guardian gods of the dynasty, would also tend to strengthen the domestic idolatry now seen in the adoration paid in the family to departed ancestors; for if the emperor adored the true God and his deified predecessors as *Shangti*, why might not every Christian adore his own private lares too? The logic would be inevitable.[1]

[1] In relation to this blending of personages in the imperial worship, — a point on which it is not easy to reach a definite conclusion, — I quote a paragraph from Visdelou, one of the eminent Catholic missionaries whose researches into Chinese religion were extensive, which may throw some light on it: "Besides the common honors rendered to the five Shangti, former dynasties have honored by a peculiar superstition that one of the five from whom the reigning dynasty believes itself to have proceeded. For the Chinese think that the vicissitudes of empires depend on the fixed revolution of the five elements successively from one another. They call this period a *calendar*, because the changes of empires depend as much on this period as the conjunctions and oppositions of planets depend on their proper movement. They say that when the rule of a new element approaches, the Shangti which presides over it begets a man worthy of the empire, and helps him to attain it. This is why all the dynasty founded by this man gives, as recognition, to this Shangti the name of *Kan-shăng Ti*, meaning the Shangti who, by a secret sympathy, had begotten the founder of the dynasty; and under this designation as long as the dynasty endures, this Shangti enjoys certain peculiar honors, until he gives place to another."

But even if the ancient *Shangti* could be proved to denote the true God, its use among the people is so completely that of the proper name of one Being, that an absolute term is still just as much needed as *god* is in English to combat polytheism. It is freely admitted by those who can find no other term for this purpose, and are quite ready to admit its indefiniteness, that *shin* is a word of far wider application in Chinese than *elohim*, *theos*, *deus*, or *god* are in their respective languages; that the want of a singular and plural form increases the difficulty of distinguishing the true from a false god; that its pantheistic senses are more common than its religious uses, and this vagueness makes the native mind slow to perceive the central truth of the Scriptures that there can in fact be but one *shin;* that *ling* has less personality than *shin;* that it is liable frequently to be misunderstood for other words of the same sound; that it means a *spirit* just as much and oftener than it does a *god*, that is, its properest English translation is oftener *spirit* than *god;* and lastly, that no Budha is ever called a *shin*, but always a *Fuh*, and looked upon as belonging to an entirely distinct order of beings. All these points and difficulties are freely admitted, for if they were not real difficulties, there never would have been any discussion about this Term Question. Still, it is maintained that in order to teach the Bible distinction between *God* and *spirits* as real invisible beings, two generic terms are indispensable. If polytheism had never existed, God would have reigned alone in the mind of man as the I AM, who was to be worshipped by all his rational creatures; but gods many and lords many have invaded his throne, and must be cast down by the truth. One mode of enforcing this truth is by using the same word which is used for himself. This is the usual rule in translating the sacred Scriptures, in which one word means all of them. Even in our own English Christian tongue there seems to have been once a similar difficulty; for instead of searching in the native language for two words, the first missionaries introduced the Latin *spiritus* for the new idea they were teaching,

and soon naturalized it. In Chinese Christian literature, the word *shin* must gradually become limited in its application, as the people learn how the Bible describes the infinite distance between the one true and all other gods adored among mankind. As the word *god* has gradually risen with the acceptance of revelation by the English-speaking nations to stand for God, so will *shin* come to be restricted to its proper use among the Chinese.

Those who advocate the use of *shin* for *spirit* in the biblical sense, as against its use for *god*, seem to expect that that signification is going to make it more definite to the Chinese, and restrict its application to real spirits. Our distinctions will only come gradually into their minds. We may define *Shing Shin* as Holy Spirit, but the native more probably takes it to mean Holy Gods, as he does *Chin Shin* for True Spirits instead of True God, until he learns the new senses. But *shin* has essentially a religious idea, and will naturally still be applied to all objects of worship, i.e. *gods;* while another word is wanted for spirits which has not so peculiarly the sense of fear in it. The word *shin* would be most proper for *spirit*, if the language furnished another one suitable for *god*, so that the Scriptural distinction between the two could be taught, — a distinction already remarked, utterly unknown to this or any heathen people.

One lamentable result during the last thirty years has been the confusion introduced into the Christian literature by the use of *shin* in these two senses by the two parties. The terms *Shing Shin* and *Shing Ling* do probably indicate the name for the Holy Ghost with a certain degree of clearness; but in the hundreds of cases where no adjective is used the confusion remains. It is not surprising that the Latin and Greek churches, which allow reverence to saints and canonized men whose images and pictures garnish their churches, maintain that *shin* should stand for *spirit;* for then they can allow the converts to pay homage to them. But will these converts ever be taught the sin of idolatry, and that God is "not to be worshipped with men's hands, as though he

needeth anything," when the second commandment is omitted from their ten, and they are allowed to worship ancestors and saints together? In Macao, Chinese carvers sell images of the Virgin, the Crucifix, St. Antonio, etc., on one side of their shops; and images of Kwanyin, Ma-tsu-pu, etc., on the other side, according as their Portuguese or Chinese customers ask for them. All are called by the same term, and every detail of worship goes by the same name, and has done so in that city for the last two centuries. It seems, in fact, to be well-nigh impossible to elevate the Chinese ideas about invisible beings until their generic name for all of them is confined to the only living and true God as the *only* proper object of worship. Even the term *shin fu* (spiritual father), by which the Roman Catholic priests are called by their converts, has the effect to keep the word at its heathen level.

It also has a tendency to blink the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit to apply *shin*, the appellative of all gods and spirits to him, and call God by a descriptive name like *Shangti*, *Tienti*, or *Tienchu*, without having another word for gods which will include him in it, and can be used to teach that he is the only one in reality. It is affirmed that *shin* is too low, too wide a term to apply to Jehovah, and therefore *Shangti* should be used; because, as Mr. Chalmers says, "it is the word we find in the language for the Highest. It is not, indeed, the Jehovah of the Jews, nor the *Theos* of the Greeks, nor the God of English Christians; and it is not, either, the Jove of the Romans, the Baal of the Canaanites, or the Great Spirit of the red Indians; but it is the word corresponding to God in Chinese as near as we could wish or expect. Take it, and be thankful; or if not, find another." However, in saying this, Mr. Chalmers seems to forget that if *Shangti* be not really and truly God, the Jehovah of the Jews, he is teaching adversely to the command given to those Jews by Jehovah, through Joshua before he died (Josh. xxiii. 7), to "make no mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them." Is not this command surely as obliga-

tory on the Protestant missionary in China as it was on Joshua?

Are we to infer that *shin* is good enough for spirit, and *Shing Shin* for Holy Spirit, but it will not do for Holy God? This very point was brought out so prominently in a conversation I had with an educated man, who had been taught enough to be employed as an expounder of the word, that I made other inquiries, and found that he had accepted the conclusion that *Shing Shin* was a synonyme for *Shangti;* though I do not wish it to be inferred that such confusion remains long in the minds of converts. He was not unlike those converts whom Paul met at Ephesus, who told him that they "had not so much as heard that there was a Holy Ghost." As the term *shin* includes Dr. Legge's *Shangti*, and Mr. Chalmer's Highest, and Dr. Medhurst's *Tienti*, will not a native naturally conclude that by *Shing Shin* is meant this God without compare, and confound god and spirit just as much as he does now?

That the words *shin* and *ling* can gradually come to be accepted in the distinct senses which are taught by many missionaries, is now exhibited in so many native churches in China, that no arguments or examples are needed beyond them to prove that it is possible and feasible. *Shangti* is never mentioned among them as the name for God, and thousands of them regard that term as the name of a false god. I have no doubt, too, that thousands of converts regard *Shangti* as the God of the Bible; for the study of that book wonderfully enlightens the mind, and the Spirit comes with power to set forth his truth, and quicken the conscience dead in trespasses and sins. Great care needs to be taken, however, that such are not baptized into the name of their own *Shangti.*

If more evidence be needed that the word *shin* will fully teach monotheism, the usages of both it and *ling* in Japan confirm this view. The Japanese also have their Highest, called *Ama-terasu oho-mikami*, or the Heaven-illuminating Goddess, who, like every god below her in their mythology

is called a *kami* or *shin*, just as they are in China. The Japanese have no *Shangti*, nor such reverential ideas about his worship and patronage of the empire, nor is state worship confined to their emperor; and therefore no argument can be adduced from their ritual and literature to uphold the views advanced in China. They know perfectly the meaning of Chinese characters; for they have used them since they had any books, and they can have made no mistake in using these two in the Christian senses of *god* and *spirit*. Happily, the growing church in Japan has been spared this unhappy controversy now struggling to a settlement in China.

While the discussion has continued now since 1846, the number of converts in that empire has gone on increasing to the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. Those attached to the latter, I am confident, have the vaguest ideas respecting the Trinity. They worship God (*Tienchu*), the Lord of heaven, and are allowed to pay homage to the *shin;* but without more knowledge of the Bible, which is little taught or distributed by Catholics anywhere in China, how is it possible for these uneducated neophytes to feel their need of a holy, sanctifying, eternal *Shin*, different from *Tienchu*, to come into their hearts to change them? The offices of the Holy Ghost in conversion are not much taught in the Roman Catholic church anywhere in the world; but in China it is harder for its members to understand them, and pray for his aid and power in leading them into all truth.

The assertion that *Shangti* denotes the true God, as maintained by Dr. Legge, is not now held by all who use it for God; but that assumption is really the only safe argument to urge in its behalf, when proving or defending its use in that manner. There can be no alternative in this view, according to Paul in 1 Cor. x. 20; for he there asserts that "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God." It is the safest way, surely, not to use a term which has been rejected by so many independent parties, and to which so many doubts and dangers attach;

while even if there were no doubts, its use as a proper name makes it just as necessary in Chinese to have an absolute term for gods, and another for spirits, to teach their distinctions. Because *Shangti* himself is called *Tienchu* in a few cases, no one would try to prove that they are ever confounded by the people, or that the emperor is ever said to worship *Tienchu*, although these terms were employed long before the Catholics entered China. It is surely no objection to the last term that they use it for God; but, on the contrary, it has already attained so wide a use for the name of him whom we all adore, that it has this well-known definition among the people as a good argument in its favor. It is conceded by some that *Shangti* would not be an improper appellation for the Almighty Ruler of the universe, if it was a new term, and not already imbedded in idolatry, error, and falsehood in the minds of the people. However, there would even then be some fear of its conflicting with the term *Hwangti* used to denote the emperor. If *shin* and *ling* be accepted by all parties, not only will Jehovah be gradually known as the proper name of *Shin* as God, but other descriptive terms, as *Tien-fu* (Heavenly Father), *Shang-chu* (Supreme Lord), *Tien-ti chu-tsai* (Lord of Heaven and Earth), *Chin Shin* (True God) will also come into use as descriptive names. The first is already widely used by all parties.

It must not be inferred, from the character of this discussion, that it has given rise to any serious alienation among the advocates of the various terms. It has been confined to the Protestants, and they have carried on their work of evangelizing without coming into contact very pointedly on these topics. They have used different versions of the Scriptures with their own terms in them, and their church members have, in most cases, as might be expected, adopted their teachings. Few of these neophytes are able to understand the points of difference among the missionaries on subjects involving so much acquaintance with other languages and times. And over and above all, the name and work of *Yésu kiu-shi Chu* (Jesus, the world's saving Lord) joins all in a common hope and faith.

While it is melancholy to estimate the weakness which the controversy has brought upon the united efforts of missionaries in China, no one doubts that the Holy Spirit has blessed his word to the salvation of many using whatever terms have been taught them. Yet every worker in the field, every contributor in the church abroad, must desire that the question be settled; and this desire increases as infant churches rapidly spring up in various parts of the empire. Yet it will never be settled until it is settled aright. It is not easy to see how the opinions now maintained are to be harmonized by any compromise, while between their extremes are to be found many diversities of views and practice. Though the recent Missionary Conference at Shanghai brought together men of all shades, and they felt that a public discussion might more likely estrange than harmonize them, their private interchange of experience was free, and can hardly fail to have had a good effect. The results during the last thirty years were before them, and the desire must have arisen to seek for unanimity on the questions involved.

Bishop Russell at Ningpo epitomizes the importance of the matter in these few sentences: "The term which represents *elohim* and *theos* in any language is that term upon which must be based, and around which must be grouped, all correct ideas, all systematic teaching, and all scriptural truth touching the nature and attributes of him 'in whom we live and move and have our being.' Hence the unspeakable importance of having the right term, and of not making a mistake in a matter which might involve in error, on the gravest of all subjects, the present and future generations of our fellow-creatures in China. It appears, too, from the undeniable fact that no other question connected with the mission work has been, and still is, the cause of so much division and estrangement amongst its members; and unless it is settled in some satisfactory way there is reason to apprehend that this unhappy condition of things will be perpetuated, and probably even aggravated, as time goes on. Moreover, as far as one can see, this question, if left unsettled, will make it impossible to have either

a common version of the Holy Scriptures, or a common Christian literature of any kind, and thus preclude all practical, hearty co-operation on the part of those who differ. And more serious still, it is to be feared that this lamentable state of affairs will sooner or later be imported into the native churches and their members, and produce there consequences yet more disastrous."

It has been my careful endeavor, in this paper, to state all the objections and arguments for each term in the clearest manner, and as often as I could in the words of their writers. The literature of the subject has now grown very large, and includes a great amount of illustrations and facts not essential to understanding its real nature. In condensing the writings I have examined, I may have omitted some things their authors deemed important; but I am confident that no material argument has been neglected. Though my own convictions are strong in favor of *shin* and *ling* as the most fit words for *god* and *spirit*, I do not now write for persons in China, but chiefly for the intelligent readers of the Bibliotheca Sacra, and for others in this country, who may wish to know the merits of this discussion.