

THE
 Chinese  Recorder
AND
MISSIONARY JOURNAL.

VOL. VII.

MARCH-APRIL, 1876.

No. 2.

TRACES OF THE OLD BURIAT MISSION.

“A MISSION among the Buriats, a Mongolian tribe living under the authority of Russia, was commenced by the Rev. E. Stallybrass and the Rev. W. Swan, who left England in the year 1817-18. The mission was established first at the town of Selinginsk, and afterwards also on the Ona; but in 1841 the emperor Nicholas broke up the mission, and the missionaries retired from the field.”

Such is the brief official record which the London Missionary Society is wont to produce, when occasion arises to refer to its first endeavours for the conversion of the Mongols. The history of this most interesting mission has never been written,—probably never will be written. No attempt at a history is made here; but as this old mission is often asked about, perhaps the few particulars that have in various ways come to the knowledge of the present writer, may have some interest for some of the readers of this magazine.

Among the traces of this mission may be mentioned the *tombs of the dead*. On the banks of the Selenga, and within easy reach of the town of Selenginsk, is a substantial stone-built enclosure containing four graves,—those of Mrs. Yuille, her son, and two of the children of the Rev. E. Stallybrass. There is also inside the protecting wall, a stone pyramid of decent height, with a Latin inscription, so obliterated as to make it impossible to discover, whether it marks the resting-place of Mr. Yuille, or merely commemorates the erection of the monument by him. Two or three years ago, the wall, the pyramid, and the graves, were in a state of good preservation, though, according to the account of the natives, they had suffered somewhat from a great flood of the river.

About three days' journey from Selinginsk, at a place called Anagen Dome, are other two tombs. Originally they had been surrounded by some enclosure, but latterly all traces of the enclosure

The term for "God."

DEAR MR. EDITOR.—

The last *Recorder* (January-February), contains some interesting correspondence, on the question of the "Terms." I have not been long enough in China to entitle me to a hearing, even if I were able to discuss the question on its merits; but as one who is seeking light, I would ask, as a favor, of those older missionaries, who feel called upon to revive the discussion, that with all their eloquent logic, they would give us facts simple and unqualified. The letter of Carstairs Douglas professes in an eminent degree, to deal with facts; yet in reading that letter, one cannot but notice the vagueness and generality with which alleged facts are stated.

I confess, the impression that Dr. Douglas was a little crafty, grew stronger the farther I read in the letter; so much so, that when I came to his citations of Dr. Williams, I almost involuntarily reached for the dictionary, and turned up the word *Shin*; concerning which Dr. Douglas says:—"He (Williams) actually gives the translation "spirit" to about one half of the examples adduced in his great *Dictionary*." Of course Dr. Douglas means "spirit" in the sense under discussion, otherwise the remark has no force whatever.

I found that, of the thirty-seven examples given under the word *Shin* (神), in only eight is it translated "spirit," in the sense under discussion, and in one of these it is rendered first by "god," and then "spirit." In twelve examples it is translated "god," "gods," or "divine;" and in the remaining examples it is variously translated by meanings accidental or poetic, which can have no weight in deciding the general use of the term.

We see therefore, that when Dr. Douglas says "about one half," he means to say "less than one fourth;" and if the other "great" and "remarkable" facts, cited by Dr. Douglas, are to be accepted with a corresponding discount of fifty per centum, it will materially affect the sum total of what is proved.

Having discovered such a glaring discrepancy of statement in this instance, you will not wonder, Mr. Editor, if I receive Dr. Douglas' other statements with, at least, some degree of mental reservation. What we younger missionaries want, to enable us to decide this great question, are facts and fairness from all parties. No good cause has anything to fear from being treated in this manner; and Dr. Douglas may rest assured, that "the Lord of the harvest" will use truth, sincerely stated,—but not misrepresentation,—in the settlement of that "which so vitally affects the cause of His work in China."

D. N. LYON.

HANGCHOW, *March 14th*, 1876.*On the Term for "God."*

DEAR SIR.—

It may seem presumption for one who has *not* been in the field four years, to write even a line upon this question, which has commanded the attention of the ablest minds for thirty years; but most that has been written in this journal has been by those who have been

the advocates of the respective terms; and perhaps there might be presented a *side view* which many of the younger missionaries like myself take.

The only reason that in preaching I use one term more than another is, that in the first phrase-book put into my hands, it was put down as *the* translation of God. A few months afterwards, I heard there was another term used by some missionaries. I have read all I could obtain upon the subject, especially the discussions in the *Recorder*; but so far from being able to decide upon the merits of the two terms, all that has been said has only "taken me out to sea and left me there."

If the vote were taken in the conference, I would ask to be excused, because I could not vote intelligently. As our mission is one of the youngest of the sisterhood, there was no 老矩規 (old usage) to plead. I have asked my teacher. Says he, "O! the term you use is just the thing." My brother in the next chapel, who uses a different term, asks his; and is told, "O! there is but one name to express the Great God of Heaven." The fact is, that the idea of the "one God" had never occurred to either of these teachers; but when that truth was presented, the proposition seemed self-evident, and they in their minds adopted the term used by their instructors.

There are two reasons which prevent me from deciding which term is preferable:—

1. It is a question upon which the wisest, most experienced and most devoted missionaries have taken sides. Can then a beginner in the language deliver an opinion *ex cathedra*?

2. A large number of the best missionaries I have met, now labouring in the field, are undecided upon the question and use both terms.

Again, the question is not one of doctrine;—it is not "What is truth?" All hold it is a question of *words*.

The Saviour has given us a general rule to test such questions. "The tree is known by its fruits." Now all who use 神 *Shin* hold,—that in the use of this term the native Christians worship the true and living God, notwithstanding its indefiniteness. Those who use 上帝 *Shang-te*,—that it may be "freed from all idolatrous and pantheistic ideas;" and that according to the "experience of many flourishing native churches," it is fully fit to express the one, living, personal God." Where then is the practical value of the question?

Many of the arguments used on both sides are open to criticism,—especially in that they often prove too much; but perhaps the wisest and clearest statement of the question that has appeared, was made by Dr. Kerr in the last number of this journal. His propositions are all fairly and ably set forth. But it is to two of his conclusions attention is called.

1. "If each party will courteously admit the term of the other, then the discussion will come to an end." But this does not satisfy. To take an illustration of recent date. Dr. Schereschewsky's Mandarin Old Testament was issued from the Peking press with 天主 *T'een-choo*. Sent to the Shanghai press, they had a teacher to go over it, strike out 天主 *T'een-choo*, and insert 神 *Shin*. I suppose it is also being issued elsewhere with 上帝 *Shang-te*;—no other alteration. How long must this state of things continue? It makes little difference

to a large proportion of the missionaries in the empire which edition they use. To secure unanimity, one term must be fixed upon for the written version, whatever may be used in speaking. Bishop Burdon last year made the key-note of a short article, *tolerate tolerate*. Dr. Kerr uses the only word which can settle the question, when he says, "The only question among Christian brethren should be,—which party shall be allowed to *yield* its preferences in the cause of harmony?" Is not this a favourable time for one party or the other to *yield*? There is no room for compromise. It is either the one term or the other. If one party rejoiced in the triumph of their views, the other would enjoy the Saviour's benediction of "Blessed."

2. "The opposition of a small minority would vitiate" a final "settlement;" and it cannot be unanimous; because "on both sides" there "are men committed to the term they consider best;" and "it is too much to expect of them to surrender their convictions," and "the habit of years cannot be easily changed." But though this is true, yet the "minority" would mostly be of the older missionaries, and we all know the proverb 世上新人換舊人;* and all future arrivals would probably naturally acquiesce in the "settlement." I am intensely interested in the question, but only to see it *settled*. I have asked the opinions of quite a number of missionaries, and heard it of others; and would make a statement which I believe to be true, though I have not sufficient data to state it positively as a fact; and it is this, that of the forty missionaries in the contiguous cities of central China, though many may have their preferences for respective terms, not more than six (certainly not ten) take such decided views as to become "partisans." Perhaps in the *indecision* of such a large number, there is a near approach to unanimity. Let the vote in the conference stand forty-five to fifty-five, and half of the minority would probably go with the majority, and so it would stand twenty or twenty-five to seventy-five or eighty.

For one, I would rather commit it finally to the committee of six, and let all abide their decision. If two on either side would agree to *yield*, (and adopt the other term;—for we could scarcely hope for perfect unanimity), then let all consider the question for ever settled. A month spent by this able committee in session, with their books and their teachers, would be time well spent, if a final result could be secured; and were the time known, special prayer might be offered throughout the empire, that God's Spirit might Himself decide.

Very truly,

Soochow, April, 1st, 1876.

HAMPDEN C. DUBOSE.

Hangchow Missionary Association.

DEAR SIR.—

At the monthly meeting of our Missionary Association last Tuesday, our subject was the tract called "A Dissuasive from Opium"—鴉片論

After the usual criticisms upon our friend the translator's performance, we discussed the tract, and came to the following resolution:—

* "In the world, old men are replaced by new."