


'Does God Mind?': Reshaping Chinese Christian Rites of Passage, c.1877–1940

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Chinese Anglicans and missionaries wrestled with the relationship between Christian rituals and culture. Missionaries entered China with preconceived notions about rites of passage, but quickly realized the difficulties of implementation. For example, with the backdrop of Western imperialism, clergy reported 'unworthy adherents' misusing their certificates of admission to churches only to gain extraterritorial legal privileges. Another question was how far traditional Chinese wedding customs could be integrated into Christian marriage. Students at Anglican schools wondered whether God would 'mind' if they believed Jesus in their hearts, but did not receive baptism because of parental opposition, because, to them, both faith and filial piety mattered. The complexity of the Chinese social and cultural context made it impossible to prescribe set formats for rites of passage. Instead, clergy and Chinese Anglicans reshaped rites of passage by referring to loosely formulated guidelines, using case-by-case discretion, and adjusting to their surroundings.

At the landmark 1877 General Conference of Protestant Missionaries in China, over 120 missionaries representing nineteen missionary societies gathered to discuss shared problems in their ministry. In addition to questions about missions and church government, rites of passage were discussed.¹ In their proceedings, delegates attempted to prescribe the ideal standard for Chinese Christian baptism,

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¹ M. T. Yates, R. Nelson and E. R. Barrett, eds, *Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China, held at Shanghai, 10–24 May 1877* (Shanghai, 1878), i–iii, 1–9.

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confirmation, marriage and funerals. They afterwards published and circulated their findings in order to unify practice around the country and, in so doing, establish clear guidelines on how Christian ceremonies could – and could not – incorporate Chinese culture.

Sixty years later, far from conforming to clear guidelines, Chinese Christian rites of passage remained in question. Lee Eng-choon, a graduate from an Anglican girls' school in Hong Kong, had been betrothed by her parents at the age of eighteen. The groom was a graduate from an Anglican boys' school. Although both newly-weds considered themselves Christians, the parents on both sides had opted for a traditional Chinese wedding. Lee's teacher, Mary Baxter, witnessed the occasion in the school hall. A Chinese master of ceremonies, dressed in black satin and donning a round cap, officiated at the wedding. The formalities were completed when the newly-weds bowed to each other three times. Baxter then noticed the Rev. Victor Halward leading the couple to St John's Cathedral nearby. Five minutes later, the couple hopped into a taxi to go on their honeymoon. Baxter felt disturbed at this, knowing that the newly-weds could not be married in a church because neither of them had been baptized due to parental opposition. While confronting Halward, she received his reassurance that he had only given the couple his blessing. Although the couple could not undergo a Christian wedding ceremony out of respect for their parents, they nevertheless had every intention of entering into married life as active Christians, as far as they were able.²

Evidently, Christian rites of passage were entangled with the Chinese cultural context. Existing research has explored Chinese Roman Catholic rites of passage and those traditional rites that came under scrutiny during the Chinese Rites Controversy (c.1643–1724).³ However, there are relatively few historical studies

² Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library [hereafter: CRL], CMS/ACC821/F4, Mary Baxter, 'Lee Eng Choon's Modern Wedding and the Rev. Victor Halward', c.1930–40.

³ For studies in Chinese Roman Catholic religious culture, see Ji Li, *God's Little Daughters: Catholic Women in Nineteenth-Century Manchuria* (Seattle, WA, 2017); Richard Madsen, *China's Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society*, Comparative Studies in Religion and Society 12 (Berkeley, CA, 1998); David E. Mungello, *The Spirit and the Flesh in Shandong, 1650–1785* (Lanham, MD, 2001); Nicolas Standaert, *The Interweaving of Rituals: Funerals in the Cultural Exchange between China and Europe* (Seattle, WA, 2008). For further reading on the Chinese Rites Controversy, see 李天纲 [Li Tiangang], 中国礼仪之争: 历史、文献和意义 [*Zhongguo liyi zhizheng: lishi wenxian he yiyi; The Chinese Rites Controversy: History,*

that specifically address rites of passage among Chinese Protestants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴ Existing studies focus more on major debates in Chinese Protestantism in other realms, such as theology and politics.⁵ Consequently, this study uses Chinese Anglican rites of passage to further research on the religious culture of Chinese Protestantism.

The majority of sources addressing rites of passage are conference records, church periodicals (both Chinese and English), or missionary letters. Some address Chinese Protestants more generally, while others are specific to Chinese Anglicans. There are very few first-hand accounts from Chinese Anglicans that explore rites of passage in great detail, except for commentaries in *The Chinese Churchman*, a monthly periodical circulated nationally by the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui (Chinese Anglican Church; hereafter: CHSKH). However, this does not mean that Chinese voices were silent in the reshaping of rites of passage. A close examination of the positions articulated by missionaries and Chinese church leaders reveals a sophisticated awareness of social and cultural norms at all levels of Chinese society. The

Documents, Significance] (Shanghai, 1998); Nicolas Standaert, 'Chinese Voices in the Rites Controversy: The Role of Christian Communities', in Ines G. Županov and Pierre Antoine Fabre, eds, *The Rites Controversies in the Early Modern World*, Studies in Christian Mission 53 (Leiden, 2018), 50–67. Views on the start and end dates of the Chinese Rites Controversy vary. In 1643, the Dominican missionary Juan Bautista Morales arrived in Rome and reported to the papacy about problems concerning Chinese rites. In 1724, the Yongzheng emperor issued an imperial edict to proscribe Christianity.

⁴ Examinations of Chinese Protestant religious culture tend to be embedded within a wider study, such as Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye, *China and the True Jesus: Charisma and Organization in a Chinese Christian Church* (Oxford, 2018), 250–8; Carl S. Kilcourse, *Taiiping Theology: The Localization of Christianity in China, 1843–64*, Christianities of the World 10 (New York, 2016), 134–9; Jessie G. Lutz, *Mission Dilemmas: Bride Price, Minor Marriage, Concubinage, Infanticide, and Education of Women*, Yale Divinity School Library Occasional Publications 16 (New Haven, CT, 2002), 5–8, 17–18.

⁵ For example, see Yangwen Zheng, ed., *Sinicizing Christianity*, Studies in Christian Mission 49 (Brill, 2017), which contains case studies on the interaction between Christianity and Chinese culture in architecture, music and theology. For in-depth studies of Chinese Christian theology, see Chloë Starr, *Chinese Theology: Text and Context* (New Haven, CT, 2016); Alexander Chow, *Chinese Public Theology: Generational Shifts and Confucian Imagination in Chinese Christianity* (Oxford, 2018). For a recent study addressing Christianity in the twentieth-century Chinese social and political context, see Thomas H. Reilly, *Saving the Nation: Chinese Protestant Elites and the Quest to Build a New China, 1922–1952* (Oxford, 2021).

ensuing compromises by the mid-twentieth century were the result of ongoing dialogue with church members.

Over time, both missionaries and Chinese Anglicans became aware of the manifest difficulties in defining set forms for baptism, confirmation, marriage and funerals. However, this did not hinder them in their quest to define Chinese Anglican rites of passage that could incorporate aspects of Chinese culture while remaining distinctly Christian. As they encountered a wide variety of situations and exceptions, their solution was to exercise discretion regarding rites of passage on a case-by-case basis while holding to a general set of principles, rather than adhere to overly rigid specifications.⁶

The earliest recorded attempts to regulate Chinese Christian rites of passage date back to the third advent of Christianity in China with Roman Catholic missionaries in the 1600s and 1700s, during the late Ming and Qing dynasties. Debates over ancestral veneration, civic ceremonies and whether Chinese Christians should be permitted to participate in community festivals became known as the ‘Chinese Rites Controversy’. In the 1640s, Spanish missionaries arriving in China disagreed with how Jesuit missionaries had allowed Chinese Roman Catholics to honour their ancestors. Unlike the Jesuits, they thought that such activities had religious implications. Influential missionaries from the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, especially Charles Maigrot, vicar apostolic of Fujian from 1684, also opposed the Jesuit view on Chinese rites. This led Pope Clement XI to issue a decree in 1704 that decisively ruled against all ‘non-Christian’ activities. The Kangxi emperor responded by issuing an imperial decree in 1707 that required all foreign missionaries in China to obtain certification. Only those who followed Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit way of allowing participation in Confucian ceremonies would be issued a certificate. His successors, the Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors, perceived Christianity as subversive towards Chinese culture and values, and thus increased legal restrictions on Christianity. The dispute over rites eventually led to the expulsion

⁶ Certain source materials in this article overlap with those in Tim Yung, ‘Crafting and Communicating Theology in the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui, 1849–1949’, in Chloë Starr, ed., *Modern Chinese Theologies*, 1: *Heritage and Prospect* (Minneapolis, MN, 2023). Parts are also based on Tim Yung, ‘Forming Chinese Anglican Identity: South China Anglicanism, 1849–1951’ (PhD thesis, The University of Hong Kong, 2021).

of most European priests, though some remained by going underground.⁷

The matter of Chinese Christian rites of passage resurfaced during the next advent of Christianity in China, when Protestant missionaries arrived with mid-nineteenth-century foreign imperialism and were granted access into China via the Treaty of Nanjing (1842). With only a few exceptions, such as the American Presbyterian missionary, John Nevius (1829–93), or the founder of the China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), the general assumption among missionaries was that China needed not only Christ, but also Western culture.⁸ They attempted to refashion the lives of Chinese Christians along Western lines.⁹ However, after roughly thirty years of work among Chinese Christians, it became clear that the shaping of Chinese Christianity would require significant mediation. For instance, prospective plans to introduce Christian Western learning did not have the desired effect of mass conversion and the adoption of Western culture.¹⁰ The most extreme instance of unmediated Christian ideas causing unintended consequences was Hong Xiuquan's 'Taiping Heavenly Kingdom' (1851–64). After his encounter with Congregationalist tracts and preaching, Hong came to believe that he was the brother of Jesus and had been given a heavenly mandate to liberate China from its socio-economic grievances through military conquest. Almost one million 'God worshippers' joined Hong's Taiping movement throughout the 1850s, until its eventual defeat in 1864 by a coalition of Qing and Western forces.¹¹

With this troubled past in mind, Protestant missionary representatives at the 1877 General Conference conscientiously sought to reconcile Christianity with the Chinese context. Many subjects were discussed, including suitable arrangements for admission to holy

⁷ R. Po-chia Hsia, 'Imperial China and the Christian Mission', in idem, ed., *A Companion to the Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 80 (Leiden, 2018), 344–66, at 359–64.

⁸ Daniel Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA, and Oxford, 2012), 70–2.

⁹ Peggy Brock et al., eds, *Indigenous Evangelists and Questions of Authority in the British Empire 1750–1940*, Studies in Christian Mission 46 (Leiden, 2015), 4.

¹⁰ Tim Yung, 'Visions and Realities in Hong Kong Anglican Mission Schools, 1849–1941', in Charlotte Methuen, Alec Ryrie and Andrew Spicer, eds, *Inspiration and Institution in Christian History*, SCH 57 (Cambridge, 2021), 254–76, at 256–60.

¹¹ Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York, 1996), xxvi, 64, 118, 178, 316–32.

communion, confirmation, weddings and funerals. Concerning admission to holy communion and confirmation, the Rev. J. W. Lambuth of the American Southern Methodist Episcopal Mission highlighted the ‘great importance’ of Chinese disciples’ gaining knowledge of God. This was not to be demonstrated through reciting creeds or observing rites, but through ‘a thorough change of a spiritual and religious character’. Candidates were to be examined before baptism and would be granted full membership only after six months’ probation, in line with the practice in North America. Crucially, members would need to respect the Sabbath, give up opium and demonstrate the absence of covetousness.¹² Concerning weddings, delegates agreed that certain cultural features should be retained but others removed. For instance, the red sedan chair for the bridal procession could be kept because it was more of a fashion statement than a superstitious practice. However, payment for brides or petitioning heaven and earth for blessings ought to be abandoned. Equally, they agreed that introducing ‘foreign exotic observances’ from the West was unnecessary. Joining the hands of the bridegroom and bride during the wedding often brought ‘unnecessary ridicule’ from guests.¹³ Funerals were less straightforward. One major question was whether Chinese Christians could attend ‘heathen’ funerals. On the one hand, delegates argued that Chinese Christians ought to refrain from complicity with such ceremonies for fear of idolatrous practices. On the other hand, some noted that the absence of Chinese Christians at funerals could be perceived as demonstrating a lack of sympathy. In the end, there was disagreement between those delegates who suggested that individuals could exercise discretion while attending non-Christian funerals, and others who desired a clear set of guidelines for Chinese Christian funerals.¹⁴

The 1877 General Conference was followed by a similar meeting in 1890, and subsequently the 1907 Centenary Conference.¹⁵ Foreign missionaries and Chinese clergy continued their attempts to demarcate the acceptable boundaries of Chinese Christian rites of passage while investigating cultural nuances further. The Morrison Society was formed in Guling in 1903 to enable younger

¹² Yates, Nelson and Barrett, eds, *Records of the General Conference*, 241–50.

¹³ *Ibid.* 387–90.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 391–8.

¹⁵ Bays, *New History*, 70–1.

missionaries to study problems relating to missions in China. Frederick Graves, Anglican bishop of Kiangsu (Jiangsu) diocese, stated that the society's aim was to secure all that was essential in the Christian ceremony without condemning what was innocent in the Chinese rites. In practice, this meant circulating publications on religious culture. One volume discussed the subject of Chinese Christian marriage. It affirmed aspects of the pre-existing Chinese system, such as betrothal via a go-between, betrothal cards, the sending of gifts and the wedding reception being hosted at the bridegroom's house. However, it rejected 'heathen' customs such as 'drinking to excess and the playing of rough pranks in the bridal chamber', or an understanding of marriage as 'a mere contract between families'. The booklet added that it would be 'an excellent plan' if, in future, parents consulted their children before betrothing them.¹⁶

Among Chinese Anglicans, more concerted efforts to regulate Chinese Christian ceremonies took place from 1897, when bishops representing different Anglican missionary societies working in China convened for the first time. Previously, these agencies from England and America had arrived at different times and had different priorities. From England, for instance, the Church Missionary Society worked in the south, while the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel worked in the north, and the American Church Mission focused on areas along the Yangtze river.¹⁷ At these meetings, the bishops took concrete steps towards organizing a general synod. At the same time, they passed various resolutions that addressed church order and rites of passage.¹⁸ For instance, at their 1899 meeting, they distinguished between hearers and catechumens at different stages of preparation for baptism. They also resolved that marriages in church should require both newly-weds to be baptized Christians. In addition, ten resolutions were passed on discipline. If an offender was found to have committed 'grievous and notorious sin', they could be

¹⁶ Hong Kong, Sheng Kung Hui Archive [hereafter: HKSKH], 2138/37, Morrison Society Papers 2, 'Marriage in the Chinese Church', December 1903, 1–3, 8–15.

¹⁷ G. F. S. Gray with Martha Lund Smalley, *Anglicans in China: A History of the Zhonghua Shenggong Hui*, The Episcopal China Mission History Project (New Haven, CT, 1996), 5. The Canadian Church began work in Henan Province in 1907.

¹⁸ For further information about the meetings, see Tim Yung, 'Keeping up with the Chinese: Constituting and Reconstituting the Anglican Church in South China, 1897–1951', in Rosamond McKitterick, Charlotte Methuen and Andrew Spicer, eds, *The Church and the Law*, SCH 56 (Cambridge, 2020), 383–400.

permitted to return to church services after public confession, but would be suspended from holy communion for a period stipulated by the bishop. Those unwilling to confess their sin should be openly excommunicated, with their name posted on the door of the church.¹⁹ In the diocese of Victoria (Hong Kong), Bishop Joseph Charles Hoare implemented these resolutions by suspending from holy communion those who were caught gambling, smoking opium, stealing, taking a concubine or marrying a ‘heathen’. More serious offences resulting in excommunication included ‘idoltrous practices’, fornication, adultery, ‘dealings with a prostitute’ and, in one instance, ‘notorious villainy’.²⁰

Notably, Chinese Anglican attempts to regulate rites of passage were consistent with efforts among Anglicans worldwide. As missions expanded to all parts of the world in the second half of the nineteenth century, the regular gathering of Anglican bishops at the Lambeth Conference, initiated in 1867 and convened roughly every ten years, became a platform to restore ‘union among the churches of the Anglican Communion’, especially with respect to ‘diversities in worship’ resulting from increasingly complicated cultural encounters.²¹ Specific resolutions from successive Lambeth Conferences addressed baptism and marriage, though resolutions were issued to Anglican churches worldwide only for ‘consideration’ and did not have legislative authority.²²

After positions were articulated at both Lambeth and CHSKH conferences, publications and periodicals were disseminated to inform clergy and church members about proper procedure. The

¹⁹ Hong Kong, Public Records Office [hereafter: HKPRO], HKMS94/1/5/60A, ‘Letters and Resolutions of the Conference of the Bishops of the Anglican Communion in China, Hong Kong, and Corea, held at Shanghai’, 14–20 October 1899, 3–8.

²⁰ HKPRO, HKMS95/1/24, Diocesan Register, 161–7.

²¹ Robert W. Prichard, ‘The Lambeth Conference’, in Ian Markham, J. Barney Hawkins IV and Leslie Steffensen, eds, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Anglican Communion* (Chichester, 2013), 91–104, at 94–6, 101. The quotation is from Recommendation 7 of the 1878 *Lambeth Conference Recommendations*, online at: <<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/lambeth-conference.aspx>>, last accessed 20 February 2020.

²² For example, Resolution 5 from the 1888 Lambeth Conference addresses polygamy, and Resolutions 48 and 49 from the 1897 Conference address baptism. Resolution 3 from the 1897 Conference explains the consultative, rather than legislative nature of the conferences: online at: <<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/lambeth-conference.aspx>>, last accessed 18 June 2021.

CHSKH monthly periodical, *The Chinese Churchman*, was introduced in 1908. Extended articles and commentaries from both missionary and Chinese writers gave theological and practical guidance on organizing rites of passage. For instance, two articles in the November 1916 edition of *The Chinese Churchman* addressed marriage. Zhang Yaoxiang, a postgraduate at Columbia University who later set up the first experimental psychology laboratory at Peking Normal College, emphasized that children of church members should not be betrothed to non-Christians. The instruction in 1 Corinthians 7 was very clear about husband and wife becoming one flesh, implying that Christians marrying non-Christians would defile both spouses. This was especially the case for women in Chinese society, who were expected to adopt the religious beliefs of their husband. Marrying a non-Christian would 'violate their religious freedom' and was therefore 'a must not, ten thousand times'. Furthermore, such marriages would lead to their children being brought up under non-Christian instruction.²³

Huai Xin's article on upholding certain standards for Christian marriage referred to resolutions from the 1915 CHSKH General Synod concerning marriage. While it is not possible to locate his biographical information, details in his article (which provide more information than the meeting minutes) suggest he may have been one of the lay delegates who attended the synod. Huai also referred to the Bible, citing 1 Corinthians 9: 5, 2 Corinthians 6: 14 and Hebrews 13: 4 as clearly asserting that marriage with non-Christians was not permissible under any circumstances. However, Huai explained the practical difficulties of applying these instructions in China. Men significantly outnumbered women in the CHSKH, which compelled many to seek a wife outside the CHSKH and in other churches. Moreover, the cultural practice of betrothal at a young age through parental arrangement meant that it was difficult for young believers to marry according to biblical instruction.²⁴

²³ 張耀翔 [Zhang Yaoxiang], '教會子女與教外人結婚問題解決之一法' ['Jiaohui zinu yu jiaowairen jiehun wentijiejue zhiyifa'; 'The Sole Resolution to the Dilemma of Betrothing Children to Non-Christians'], 中華聖公會報 [*Zhonghuasbenggonghui bao; The Chinese Churchman*] 9/11 (1916), 17–20.

²⁴ 懷新 [Huai Xin], '論基督徒與非基督徒通婚' ['Lun jidutu yu feijidutu tonghun'; 'Treatise on Christians Marrying Non-Christians'], 中華聖公會報 [*Zhonghuasbenggonghui bao; The Chinese Churchman*] 9/11 (1916), 20–3.

In February 1918, an article by Li Yaoting, who later became a priest in the CHSKH, discussed Chinese Christian funerals, and the compromises and complications surrounding them. Li explained how local churches should go about funeral rites, from how to support an individual at the end of life to commemorative practices. Certain biblical teachings were recommended as especially important; a number of traditional practices were deemed tolerable; but certain customs were labelled unacceptable. For example, the pastor was encouraged to visit and pray for the one in need, as mentioned in James 5. However, during the visit, there was to be no negative talk of death, this being a taboo subject in Chinese culture. The Chinese Christian justification for this was that Jesus had avoided negative language during his visit to Jairus's daughter (Mark 5: 21–43). At the time of death, expressions of grief were acceptable, but Bible readings were to replace the 'superstitious' songs that were traditionally sung to cast away demons. Although the family could acknowledge friends and relatives who offered support, there was to be no kneeling before the dead, as this would constitute a form of idolatry. The funeral procession could take place on any day except Sundays, Christmas Day or during the Easter Triduum. After burial, an upright gravestone was permitted to indicate the year of birth and death of the deceased, and might include a suitable Bible verse to indicate hope of resurrection at Jesus's second coming. However, a level horizontal stone which might be used for 'sacrificial offerings' was strictly forbidden. Instead of participating in the annual Chinese tomb-sweeping festival (Qingming Festival), church members were encouraged to visit the graves of their deceased on All Souls' Day. Rather than providing food and burnt offerings for the deceased (as was the common practice in the Qingming Festival), they could sing hymns and share testimonies. The fact that the Qingming Festival and All Souls' Day were in April and November respectively would have created differentiation from non-Christians. Finally, recognizing the many grey areas that remained, the writer encouraged readers to discuss further issues with their fellow church members as required.²⁵

Just as *The Chinese Churchman* addressed Chinese readers, in 1899 Bishop Hoare initiated a new English periodical, *From Month to*

²⁵ 李耀廷 [Li Yaoting], '喪事規禮' ['Sangshiguli'; 'Rules for Funerals'], 中華聖公會報 [*Zhonghuashenggonghui bao; The Chinese Churchman*] 11/2 (1918), 12–16.

Month, to address English readers in his diocese. In its inaugural edition, Hoare explained that the primary intention was to raise awareness of localized perspectives of theology, which included defining the reasonable scope for Chinese Anglican rites of passage.²⁶ For instance, in the May 1902 edition, Hoare described a Chinese Anglican funeral in the town of Shiu Hing. The article appraised aspects of Chinese culture that were consistent with Christianity, while condemning unacceptable practices. One tradition that was deemed acceptable was the wearing of 'a length of white calico' by the widow and four children of the deceased as a sign of mourning. However, gongs, fire-crackers, burnt paper offerings and 'extravagant wailing' were absent, for these items and practices indicated fear that the dead would come back to haunt living relatives.²⁷

Another platform used by Bishop Hoare to communicate the ideal standard of baptism was his annual pastoral letter to the clergy and laity of the diocese. In 1901, Hoare noted that although the two thousand confirmations in the past year were commendable, he frequently observed discrepancies between baptismal registers and the actual number of attendees at Sunday services. In one instance, thirty-eight were registered but only seven maintained their connection with the church. In another church, sixty-six were registered but only nine kept in touch. Hoare attributed this 'leakage' to individuals' decision either to attend other churches or to leave the faith altogether, and he exhorted clergy to exercise greater caution when administering baptism. Furthermore, Hoare introduced procedures in the admittance of catechumens, in which church registers would be divided into 'hearers', who attended regularly for at least three months; 'catechumens', who attended regularly for at least six months; and 'church members' who attended regularly. Only catechumens were to be given cards of admission and could become eligible for baptism the following year, but would have their card confiscated if they were not baptized within the year.²⁸

Nevertheless, there were limitations in the quest for a definitive statement on Chinese Anglican rites of passage. No publication or

²⁶ CRL, CMS/H/H5/E1/Ch2/3, *From Month to Month* 1, October 1899, 1.

²⁷ CRL, CMS/H/H5/E1/Ch2/3, Kathleen Hipwell, 'A Chinese Christian Funeral at Shiu Hing', *From Month to Month* 24, May 1902, 3–4.

²⁸ HKPRO, HKMS94/1/5/59, 'A Pastoral Letter to the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese from the Bishop of Victoria', Hong Kong, August 1901, 3–6.

set of conference proceedings addressed practical realities comprehensively. To begin with, the very process of drawing up such guidelines presented challenges, partly because conferences lacked time to hold adequate discussions. For example, the 1907 Anglican conference, the first bishops' meeting to involve Chinese representatives, organized a committee to investigate the adaptation of church practices to local circumstances.²⁹ Although it was intended to examine a broad range of issues, when the eventual report was presented at the 1909 Anglican bishops' conference, the committee had only had enough time to focus on church architecture, marriage customs and burial rites.³⁰ Even then, they fell short of conclusive statements regarding weddings and funerals. Although they could agree that wedding invitations should be sent to guests and family earlier so that objections could be raised if needed, there was no agreement on whether the traditional crossing of wine cups (when the newlyweds took a sip from their wine cup, exchanged with the other, then finished drinking as a symbol of their union) should be replaced by holy communion.³¹ Harder questions about polygamy were avoided completely. Concerning burial rites, only two resolutions were achieved. First, the Chinese custom of exorcism for the critically ill was to be replaced with clergy visitation, prayers and holy communion. Second, it was recommended that the dead be laid in an inner coffin which could then in turn be placed within another, larger, outer coffin, the use and size of which was widely acknowledged to be a sign of filial piety. The smaller inner coffin was needed to fit into the church hall for the funeral service.³² The use of two coffins was intended as a way of maintaining traditional displays of filial piety while incorporating a Christian funeral. The report avoided discussing more contentious issues such as ancestral veneration.

²⁹ HKPRO, HKMS94/1/6/34, 'Report and Resolutions of the Conference of the Anglican Communion in China and Hong Kong held in Shanghai, 15–20 April 1907', 11.

³⁰ HKPRO, HKMS/94/1/6/33, 'Report of the Committee on "Local Adaptation" presented to the Conference of the Anglican Communion held in Shanghai, 27 March – 6 April 1909', 1–4.

³¹ This rite is derived from the Book of Rites, a classical Chinese text believed to have been written during the late 'Warring States' period (c.500–221 BCE). For further information, see 周兵 [Zhou Bing], '喝交杯酒由来' ['He jiaobeijiu de youlai'; 'The Origins of Crossing Wine Cups'], 文苑 [*Wenyuan*] 4 (2008), 56.

³² Report of the Committee on "Local Adaptation", 2–9.

Even after the constitution of the CHSKH in 1912, the General Synod voted in 1915 that it was 'inexpedient' to discuss certain questions about church order. The synod instead devoted most of its time to more pressing issues, such as the appointment of committees, church literature and developing a constitution for the General Synod.³³ It comes as no surprise, then, that Huai Xin was unable to take an authoritative stance in *The Chinese Churchman* on how the 1915 General Synod viewed marriage.³⁴ Lack of time was a recurring issue at every meeting. At the 1921 General Synod, the question of including a canon on betrothal, marriage and divorce was referred to a special committee, and effectively postponed until the 1924 meeting.³⁵ Even in 1928, the canon on marriage and divorce was still being deferred 'owing to pressure of business' and 'inability to give the proposed canon on marriage and divorce adequate consideration'.³⁶ Astonishingly, the 1931 General Synod was again compelled to defer the marriage canon due to a lack of time.³⁷

Logistical challenges were not unique to Chinese Anglicans. At the seventh annual meeting of the China Continuation Committee in 1919, a gathering that sought to survey the state of all Chinese Protestants, convenors struggled to gather responses from the various churches across China. As a result, they were unable to produce a conclusive report about ancestral veneration, marriage and burial services.³⁸ At meetings of the National Christian Council of China, an interdenominational organization formed in 1922 to discuss shared problems in mission work, matters relating to faith, order and doctrine were constitutionally excluded from discussion (due to the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy) in favour of other topics, such as medical and educational work. By 1937, various church representatives at the National Christian Council highlighted

³³ London, LPL, MS 2447, CHSKH General Synod House of Bishops Meeting Minutes, 14–22 April 1915, fols 6–30.

³⁴ Huai, 'Treatise on Christians Marrying Non-Christians', 20–3.

³⁵ CHSKH General Synod House of Bishops Meeting Minutes, 18–25 April 1921, fol. 85.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 21–28 April 1928, fol. 148.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 25 April–2 May 1931, fol. 160.

³⁸ CRL, CMS/G/GZ2/2, *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the China Continuation Committee, Shanghai, 25–30 April 1919* (Shanghai, 1919), 39–44.

the need to deliberate over faith and order in addition to Christian life and work.³⁹

Beneath these logistical challenges lay the fact that rites of passage were entangled with political, social and cultural issues in ways that made it exceptionally difficult to define appropriate procedures. For instance, admission to the catechumenate was mired in legal complications. Between 1842 and 1943, becoming affiliated with a church brought with it additional legal protection because foreign missionaries were granted extraterritorial privileges under the 'unequal treaties' signed between the Qing government and Western countries throughout the nineteenth century. With extraterritoriality, foreign citizens were placed under the jurisdiction of their consular authorities instead of the Qing law.⁴⁰ As a result, Chinese magistrates were reluctant to prosecute lawbreakers who claimed to be Christian because foreign missionaries would come to their aid using extraterritorial privileges. Paul Cohen highlights various cases in the 1860s and 1870s when Chinese subjects took advantage of their relationship with French Roman Catholic missionaries, resisting paying taxes and trumping up false legal charges. One particularly infamous incident involved a cash-strapped blacksmith in Suzhou who travelled around the area, threatening non-Christian families with the wrath of Roman Catholicism unless they paid him vast sums of money.⁴¹ At the 1903 Anglican bishops' conference, the bishops discussed what to do about 'unworthy adherents attracted by the prospect of obtaining worldly advantages', who reputedly obtained certificates of admission to the catechumenate in order to use them for legal protection in local courts.⁴²

What made matters even more complicated were instances of Chinese clergy and missionaries genuinely using their extraterritorial privileges to protect the underprivileged. Between 1912 and 1920, the Rev. Mok Shau-tsang, an Anglican priest in South China, used his foreign connections to help the Ng clan in Nanbo village,

³⁹ Ronald Rees, *Christian Cooperation in China as illustrated by the Biennial Meeting* (Shanghai, 1937), 11.

⁴⁰ Bays, *A New History*, 47–8.

⁴¹ Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860–1870*, Harvard East Asian Series 11 (Cambridge, MA, 1963), 133–5.

⁴² HKPRO, HKMS94/1/5/56, 'A Pastoral Letter to the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese from the Bishop of Victoria', Hong Kong, August 1903, 4.

which had recently become Christian. On one occasion, two clans from neighbouring villages decided to hold a Taoist procession that cut through land belonging to the Ng clan. Arguments broke out which then led to fights. The outnumbered Ng clan had much of their property vandalized, which included damage inflicted upon their church hall. Mok subsequently sought restitution from the prefectural government on their behalf and was praised by contemporaries for taking action.⁴³ A similar encounter took place with the Chow clan in Lo-A-Shan village, which had become Christian and affiliated themselves with Chinese Anglicans in the area. The Chow clan had an ongoing rivalry with the Lau clan in the neighbouring village of Shixia. The Lau clan once allegedly stole oxen in order to incite a fight, leading Mok to take the issue to the prefectural government, since the Chows were under his pastoral care. The Lau attempted, in turn, to seek protection from Dr John Fisher of the American Presbyterian Mission, who agreed to represent them in court. However, Mok clarified the matter privately with Fisher, who promptly chose not to represent them. This led the Lau to leave Fisher and the Presbyterian Church, before losing the case to Mok and the Chows.⁴⁴ Mok's biographer, a Chinese priest writing in 1972, extolled his intervention in these two cases, explaining that such legal intervention demonstrated faith by caring for the oppressed and seeking social justice.⁴⁵ There was no straightforward way of defining right and wrong regarding admission because the main problem was not the accompanying legal protection itself, but the context in which individuals chose to avail themselves of such protection.

An equally complicated problem was the intertwining of baptism with filial piety. In Confucian teaching, filial piety is a highly esteemed virtue as it shows that a person remembers their beginnings and gives due credit to heaven, as well as to their parents.⁴⁶ However, this teaching could cause tension if the convert's parents were not Christian. Edna Atkins, headmistress of St Stephen's Girls' College in Hong Kong, explained in her annual letters to the CMS

⁴³ 鍾仁立 [Zhong Renli], 莫壽增會督傳 [*Moshouzheng huiduzhuan; Life of Bishop Mok Shau Tsang*] (Hong Kong, 1972), 20–1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 22–3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 78–80.

⁴⁶ Huiliang Ni, 'Sinicizing Jesus in the First Half of the Twentieth Century – How Chinese Christians Understood Jesus' (PhD thesis, Claremont Graduate University, 2008), 18, 45–54.

Secretary of the South China Mission in London that family affairs were always given priority in Chinese culture.⁴⁷ Many students attending Anglican schools who considered themselves Christians in their heart opted not to receive baptism due to their parents' opposition. This accounted for one of Atkins's students from Borneo whose parents threatened to cut off their support if she were to be baptized.⁴⁸ Another student, who died of illness in 1936, had been reportedly 'a very fine Christian at heart, but not baptized', the reason being that her family was unwilling. Even on her deathbed, she opted not to receive baptism because she was afraid it would distress her mother. Her missionary teacher, Mary Baxter, approved of this decision.⁴⁹ One of Baxter's students went so far as to ask, 'Does God mind if we don't go to church and have prayers and all the ceremonious things?' Her thinking was that, although she believed in Jesus, she knew her parents would not grant her permission to receive baptism. Another student said, 'Perhaps our parents will not let us be Christians because Jesus said we were to love Him more than them.'⁵⁰ Even opposition from parents-in-law was enough to deter students from baptism. Atkins mentioned a former student in Beijing who ran a Christian kindergarten, but never received baptism because of her mother-in-law's opposition.⁵¹ A similar encounter took place with a graduate who wanted to be baptized and had her parents' support, but was unable to receive baptism because her fiancé's parents refused permission for either of them to be baptized.⁵²

On rare occasions, filial piety could work in the opposite direction in promoting baptism. Several missionaries recorded the case of Mrs Cheung Wing-kui, the headmistress of Fairlea, another Anglican girls' school in Hong Kong. In July 1932, on his deathbed, her father finally rescinded his opposition to his children becoming Christians. Cheung's sisters-in-law received baptism in December that year after receiving approval from their mothers as well.⁵³ In a separate instance, three boarders who were sisters received baptism on Easter Sunday of

⁴⁷ CRL, CMS/1917–1934/G1/AL/A–BA, Edna Atkins Annual Letter, November 1926.

⁴⁸ CRL, CMS/1935–1939/G1/AL/A–BA, Edna Atkins Annual Letter, 16 August 1935.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Mary Baxter Annual Letter, 23 August 1936.

⁵⁰ CRL, CMS/1917–1934/G1/AL/A–BA, Mary Baxter Annual Letter, 13 August 1934.

⁵¹ CRL, CMS/1935–1939/G1/AL/A–BA, Edna Atkins Annual Letter, 3 August 1937.

⁵² CRL, CMS/1917–1934/G1/AL/A–BA, Edna Atkins Annual Letter, 18 July 1933.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

1940 alongside their six other siblings, their mother and father.⁵⁴ Mary Baxter fondly recalled how the father and one of the daughters were confirmed the following year. After the ceremony, the father took his entire family out for ice cream, together with the church staff.⁵⁵ Filial piety played a central role in shaping baptism and confirmation. Jessie Lutz goes so far as to argue that filial piety even shaped proselytism among Chinese Christians, who had a tendency to rely more on family and kinship networks than public preaching and religious instruction.⁵⁶ Consequently, as with admission, it is difficult to make a clear statement about the relationship between baptism and filial piety because, for some, it worked in favour of baptism, while for others it worked against.

Illiteracy was another feature of Chinese society that compelled missionaries and clergy to reshape baptism and confirmation in the CHSKH. In early twentieth-century China, many were unable to read and write. For instance, during a visit to the street gospel halls in Kowloon, Bishop and Mrs Duppuy felt that some of the newly confirmed women had 'a very superficial knowledge of the gospel' and encouraged them to attend Sunday afternoon Bible classes.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, illiterate Chinese Christians often adopted a simplified version of Christian beliefs, although they did not always realize this.⁵⁸ At Holy Trinity Church in Hong Kong, one of the baptism classes was taught by a blind, older Christian who could not read and had such limited Bible knowledge that all she could do was retell Bible stories.⁵⁹ In another instance, a women's worker conducting a confirmation class came across a seventy-year-old nicknamed 'Granny Comfort' who had spent over two hours learning the Lord's Prayer but, by the end, could only remember the first line.⁶⁰ Over the ensuing year, she eventually managed to learn the entirety of the Lord's

⁵⁴ CRL, CMS/G1/CH1/e7, Far East Committee Minute on St Stephen's Girls' College, 4 June 1940.

⁵⁵ CRL, CMS/ACC821/F8, Mary Baxter's Letter to Friends, 28 July 1941.

⁵⁶ Jessie G. Lutz, 'China and Protestantism: Historical Perspectives, 1807–1949', in Stephen Uhalley Jr and Xiaoxin Wu, eds, *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future* (Armonk, NY, 2001), 179–94, at 181–2.

⁵⁷ CRL, CMS/1917–1934/G1/AL/HA–HO, S. L. Hollis Annual Letter, 29 August 1928.

⁵⁸ See Yung, 'Crafting and Communicating Theology'.

⁵⁹ CRL, CMS/1917–1934/G1/AL/HA–HO, S. L. Hollis Annual Letter, 18 October 1918.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Prayer. At her confirmation, she and the twelve other candidates were asked by Bishop Duppuay to explain the sacraments and to repeat parts of the catechism. However, when it came to ‘Granny Comfort’, Duppuay asked her specifically to say the Lord’s Prayer. After the Rev. Isaac Blanchett had to shout Duppuay’s request again due to her hearing difficulties, she repeated the Lord’s Prayer flawlessly. She was then confirmed. Afterwards, she confessed that her heart was filled with comfort, because she had only been able to memorize the Lord’s Prayer and nothing else.⁶¹ Rather than feeling disdain towards such believers, missionaries and clergy in the CHSKH – even Bishop Duppuay – accepted this simpler pattern of faith and adapted the requirements of theological knowledge for baptism and confirmation.⁶²

In more extreme cases, certain Chinese Christians in rural areas did not have the same regard for rites of passage, preferring alternative markers of faith. Deaconess Lucy Vincent, who was eventually put in charge of religious education in her diocese, observed that many Christian villagers had limited Bible knowledge. As she administered a short course on Jesus and the life of Moses, she eventually diverted her focus to teaching simple prayers, as well as introducing her hearers to easy newly published books. She was startled by the number of those content with having ‘a Christian household’ without receiving baptism. To this community, the absence of traditional religion, rather than baptism, was the defining marker of a Christian village.⁶³ Moreover, it was logistically difficult to conduct baptisms and confirmations because senior clergy were spread so thinly across their dioceses, and journeying inland was not straightforward.⁶⁴ Theologian Simon Chan argues that one should view such expressions of faith as creative adaptation, based on ‘grassroots’ experiences of

⁶¹ Ibid., 27 November 1919.

⁶² HKSCH, 2756/3, Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of the Diocesan Synod, ‘Bishop’s Charge: Diocesan Development’, 3–5 September 1931, 9–13.

⁶³ CRL, CMS/1917–1934/G1/AL/ST–V, Lucy Vincent Annual Letter, 9 August 1933. For further reading on Chinese markers of faith, see Simon Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* (Downers Grove, IL, 2014); Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology*, 2nd edn (New York, 2014).

⁶⁴ For instance, Bishop Duppuay was only able to visit certain parishes once per year. See HKPRO, HKMS94/1/7/1920–1921, Bishop’s Schedule, November 1920 – December 1921, 19–73. Journeys by land and by river were also complicated by widespread banditry and piracy. See Bays, *A New History*, 131.

Christianity that focus more on protection and prosperity, as opposed to 'elitist' understandings that focus on salvific principles.⁶⁵ Within the context of widespread illiteracy and folk religion in rural communities, some Chinese Anglicans went so far as to re-examine the place of baptism and confirmation in their view of Christian commitment.

However, most Chinese Anglicans and foreign missionaries continued to place great emphasis on baptism and confirmation as the primary rites of passage in the profession of faith. Annual letters from missionaries meticulously recorded the number of baptisms each year and did not neglect their essential purpose.⁶⁶ Statistical tables published by the CHSKH General Synod carefully counted the number of church members in each diocese. In 1918, there were 52,689 across the twelve dioceses, including 23,165 baptized non-communicants, 19,871 communicants and 9,220 catechumens.⁶⁷ In 1933, the total number of baptized members grew to 58,665.⁶⁸ Even after the Second World War, the CHSKH continued counting the number of baptism candidates and communicants in each diocese, which totalled 66,651.⁶⁹ The existence of such detailed statistics suggests that church leaders and members recognized the importance of baptism and confirmation as rites of passage, despite the effects of extraterritoriality, filial piety, illiteracy and folk religion.

For funerals, complications with regard to tradition persisted. The general approach adopted by the CHSKH found expression in a book about ancestral veneration by James Thayer Addison, an Episcopal minister under the CHSKH who taught at Boone University in Wuhan. That the Literature Committee of the General Synod published Addison's book suggests that its contents were endorsed by the CHSKH as a whole. Addison encouraged readers to be sympathetic towards Chinese customs, so that Chinese believers could discover for themselves what was 'both truly Chinese and truly Christian'. First,

⁶⁵ Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology*, 59–61.

⁶⁶ For example, CRL, CMS/1917–1934/G1/AL/HA–HO, S. L. Hollis Annual Letter, 27 November 1919; CMS/1917–1934/G1/AL/A–BA, Edna Atkins Annual Letter, 18 July 1933.

⁶⁷ New Haven, Yale Divinity School Library [hereafter: YDSL], HR114, Montgomery Throop, *General Statistics for the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui for the Year of our Lord 1918* (Shanghai, 1918), 3.

⁶⁸ YDSL, Montgomery Throop, *General Statistics for the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui for the Year of our Lord 1933* (Shanghai, 1933), 5.

⁶⁹ 中華聖公會年鑑 [*Zhonghua shenggonghui nianjian*; *CHSKH Yearbook*] (Shanghai, 1949), 23.

this meant understanding the tradition of ancestral veneration as regulating social relationships, rather than as mere heathenism. Moreover, Addison explained that, although the historical origins of ancestral veneration could be found in classical texts – namely, the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) and the *Liji* 禮記 (*Book of Rites*) – practices had evolved over the centuries and, by the 1900s, there were countless regional variations. By the time Addison was writing in the early 1920s, sacrificial rites did not necessarily have a particular basis or rationale in the Chinese cultural context, but were implemented simply because the same rites had been performed ‘as far back as memory and tradition could reach’. Addison also noted how churches had become increasingly accommodating towards Chinese ancestral veneration, from the Rites Controversy in the seventeenth century, to the national Protestant missionary conferences of 1877, 1890 and 1907. He concluded that after accommodating for culture and tradition in funerals, readers ought to focus on devising Christian substitutes for filial piety, such as having memorial services in churches, selecting different days to commemorate ancestors annually, and keeping family trees in Bibles instead of on inscription tablets.⁷⁰ In other words, it would be more helpful to suggest what to do, rather than merely instructing what not to do. The debate about accommodating funeral traditions was ongoing. There were no fixed guidelines, partly because ancestral veneration practices were not themselves fixed according to classical texts, but shifted in parallel with changing fashions, ruling authorities and social and cultural norms. Addison believed that the same shifting parameters applied to the relationship between ancestral veneration and Christianity.

Finally, marriage was the most complicated rite of passage for clergy and church members because it was deeply entangled with the widespread practice of concubinage. In late imperial Qing society, patriarchy and patrilineage were social norms. Taking a concubine was considered to be a display of wealth, prestige and sexual prowess. Men over the age of forty without a son were permitted, by law, to take a concubine in order to produce a male heir.⁷¹ This caused

⁷⁰ James Thayer Addison, *Chinese Ancestor Worship: A Study of its Meaning and its Relations with Christianity* (Peking, 1925), 4–5, 20–2, 29–49, 61–8, 74–6, 82–4, online at: <http://anglicanhistory.org/asia/china/addison_ancestor1925/>, last accessed 19 February 2021.

⁷¹ Lisa Tran, *Concubines in Court: Marriage and Monogamy in Twentieth-Century China* (Lanham, MD, 2015), 9.

problems among churches as early as 1862, when the Basel Mission in Guangdong found itself wrestling with the question of polygamy, which it understood to be contrary to biblical teaching. Their evangelist, Zhang Fuxing, was the lineage elder in the village of Wuhua. However, his only son had died and, due to a chronic illness, his wife could no longer bear children. To maintain his position as lineage elder, he was required to take a second wife in order to produce a male heir. One of the main reasons Zhang wished to retain this position was that it enabled him to protect the fledgling Christian community. To justify his action, he cited the example of Abraham producing a male heir through Hagar (Genesis 16). Moreover, his second wife said she would not have been accepted back into her family. After much deliberation, the Basel Home Committee recommended that Zhang be excommunicated. However, missionaries in the field had compassion on Zhang and decided not to implement the recommendation. As a compromise, they dismissed him from his role but allowed him to attend church services.⁷² The Qing legal code remained in use for civil matters until 1929, even after the establishment of the republic in 1911, meaning that polygamy remained an issue for Chinese Christians well into the 1920s.⁷³

Within the CHSKH, Bishop Frederick Graves of Shanghai noted that Chinese Christian marriage was treated 'very leniently' because clergy and missionaries alike understood the difficulties of handling the deeply entrenched practice of concubinage. In his diocese, a man would not be forced to put away either his wife or his concubine, lest he inflict hardship on a woman who was 'innocent of wrongdoing' without a say in her situation, and merely a victim of Chinese law and custom. Graves's solution for church members in Shanghai was for husbands to attend church services and be admitted as catechumens, provided they had a good reputation. However, baptism would not be administered until either their wife or concubine died, since it would otherwise suggest that polygamy was given official recognition in the Christian community.⁷⁴ Bishop William Banister of Kwangsi-Hunan (Guangxi-Hunan) observed that whenever other Nonconformist churches admitted men with concubines to baptism,

⁷² Lutz, *Mission Dilemmas*, 5–7.

⁷³ Tran, *Concubines in Court*, 22.

⁷⁴ HSKH, 2138/39, Graves to Duppy, 17 October 1921.

this always had a ‘bad effect’ on the church.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, most Anglican bishops in China were supportive of allowing wives, concubines and children to be baptized, since there was no resolution from the Lambeth Conference explicitly advising against family members of ‘polygamists’ being baptized.⁷⁶ CHSKH leaders were especially keen to baptize children because this would ensure their upbringing in the faith by affiliating them with the church.⁷⁷ Bishop John Hind of Fukien (Fujian) summarized the situation, stating that, due to the complexity of the situation, there was simply no uniformity in the CHSKH, nor was there a canon on marriage and divorce. Instead, clergy were advised to assess how far individual family members in such situations were committed to the Christian faith on a case-by-case basis before taking corresponding action.⁷⁸ The worry was that creating a canon with strict limitations would lead to the false implication of innocent church members in exceptional cases.

Case-by-case discretion was exercised in other unusual marriage situations. In another instance in Hong Kong in 1928, a church member asked his vicar whether he was permitted to marry his deceased wife’s sister.⁷⁹ The vicar wrote to Bishop Dupuy, who searched extensively for answers. Resolutions from the Lambeth Conference noted that, although such a union was prohibited by the canons of the Church of England, it was now permitted by civil law.⁸⁰ This implied that the marriage would be legal but ‘ecclesiastically irregular’ if performed in the Church of England. However, the marriage in question was under the CHSKH, not the Church of England. Dupuy then consulted other bishops. Bishop Mandell Creighton of London referred to his speech at the 1898 Convocation of Canterbury, which focused on whether the individuals themselves believed, in conscience, that they were permitted by the Bible to marry.⁸¹ Bishop Handley Moule of

⁷⁵ HKSCH, 2138/41, Banister to Dupuy, 17 October 1921.

⁷⁶ See Resolutions 39–40 of the 1908 Lambeth Conference Resolutions, online at: <<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/lambeth-conference.aspx>>, last accessed 18 June 2021.

⁷⁷ HKSCH, 2138/42, Molony to Dupuy, 5 October 1921.

⁷⁸ HKSCH, 2138/43, Hind to Dupuy, 10 October 1921.

⁷⁹ HKSCH, 2138/46, Dupuy to Tsang, 8 May 1928.

⁸⁰ This had been permitted by civil law in England through the Deceased Wife’s Sister’s Marriage Act of 1907. Discussions about the more recent Deceased Brother’s Widow’s Marriage Act of 1921 demonstrated that the matter was still a live question amongst English bishops.

⁸¹ HKSCH, 2138/47, Creighton to Dupuy, 23 November 1927.

Durham wrote an article in 1917 explaining that the Bible did not explicitly forbid such unions, nor did it commend them. Moule urged all parties to exercise careful consideration before entering into the covenant of marriage, and suggested that the parish priest commit the matter to their conscience and judgment.⁸² Without a clear ruling or precedent, Duppuoy informed the vicar that he should decide the matter since he knew the circumstances best.⁸³

Chinese Anglican baptism, confirmation, marriage and funerals were entangled with confusing and ever-changing social and cultural norms, meaning that clearly articulated positions could not be made once and for all. Chinese Anglicans and foreign missionaries had carefully and continuously to navigate through issues of extraterritoriality, filial piety, illiteracy and concubinage in order to, as Bishop Frederick Graves put it, secure all that was essential in the Christian ceremony without condemning what was innocent in the Chinese rites.⁸⁴ With regard to Chinese theology, Chloë Starr argues that it is impossible to understand the Chinese church 'without first grasping something of China's complex relationship with itself as a nation and as a people', especially with respect to the historical, intellectual, social and cultural context.⁸⁵ The same must be said of understanding the shape of Chinese Christian rites of passage.

Over time, clergy and missionaries in the CHSKH learned to assess the sincerity and inner posture of individuals on a case-by-case basis, rather than making sweeping judgments based on the external qualities of the ceremonies themselves. Between 1877 and 1940, Chinese Anglicans and missionaries came to realize that rites of passage could not simply be prescribed at conferences, and through periodicals and publications, but had to accommodate the reality of life on the ground.⁸⁶ Fixing forms in writing would have been a near-impossible

⁸² HKSCH, 2138/52, Extracts from Resolutions and Letters on Divorce, 1867–1928.

⁸³ HKSCH, 2138/46, Duppuoy to Tsang, 8 May 1928.

⁸⁴ HKSCH, 2138/37, Morrison Society Papers 2, 'Marriage in the Chinese Church', December 1903, 10–11.

⁸⁵ Chloë Starr, 'Maintaining Faith in the Chinese World', in Joel Cabrera, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds, *Relocating World Christianity: Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*, Theology and Mission in World Christianity 7 (Leiden, 2017), 213–37, at 214.

⁸⁶ For a more general study of Christian living in non-Christian cultures, see K. K. Yeo, 'Biblical Interpretation in the Majority World', in Mark P. Hutchinson, ed., *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, 5: The Twentieth Century: Themes and Variations in a Global Context* (Oxford, 2018), 131–69, at 140.

undertaking since there existed an infinite number of possible scenarios.⁸⁷ Among Chinese Protestants, rites of passage in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries varied immensely. Bishop Handley Moule of Durham rightly observed that even the Bible left certain questions open, but invited readers to examine their consciences.

The journey of reshaping Chinese Anglican rites of passage fits with W. M. Jacob's broader description of the Anglican Communion as a network of dioceses and provinces 'without fixed structures and systematic theologies', evolving from the Henrician Reformation to the North American Episcopal Church, and then to British – and American – imperial dioceses and independent provinces. The global expansion of Anglicanism led to increasingly complex interactions with other denominations and the non-Christian world.⁸⁸ The CHSKH and other non-Western churches had to negotiate the meaning and practice of rites of passage within their respective social and cultural contexts. They became 'self-theologizing' in addition to self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating.⁸⁹ 'Self-theologizing' was not unique to Chinese Anglicans.⁹⁰ As for the CHSKH in the early twentieth century, their solution was to have resolutions from their General Synod and from the Lambeth Conference as reference points, but also flexibility and openness when confronted with social and cultural dilemmas. This constituted part of the broader quest for the convergence of faith and life, of Scripture and reason.

⁸⁷ For instance, the 1949 CHSKH yearbook makes no mention of rites of passage when summarizing the history of the CHSKH. Instead, it focuses on more defined aspects of Anglican identity, such as church polity, evangelism, finance, unity, women's work and religious education. See 中華聖公會年鑑 [*Zhonghua shenggonghui nianjian; CHSKH Yearbook*] (Shanghai, 1949).

⁸⁸ W. M. Jacob, *The Making of the Anglican Church Worldwide* (London, 1997), 299–300.

⁸⁹ This term is adopted from Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville, TN, 1990), and mentioned in Yeo, 'Biblical Interpretation in the Majority World', 135–7.

⁹⁰ For instance, see Aminta Arrington, *Songs of the Lisu Hills: Practicing Christianity in Southwest China* (University Park, PA, 2020); Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven, CT, 2010); Xin Yalin, *Inside China's House Church Network: The Word of Life Movement and its Renewing Dynamic* (Lexington, KY, 2009).