

“Make a Christian Out of Him”:¹

Muscular Christian Education and 1900-1940 Chinese Students at the American Academy

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Project Description

When a modest volume with a bold title made its debut on U.S. bookshelves in September 1935, Lin Yutang's *My Country and My People* catapulted the Chinese Harvard alumnus to unlikely prominence among a 1930s literary community dominated by Anglo-American bylines. In the effusive words of *The New York Times*' front page, Lin's incisive survey of Chinese society "burst like a shell over the Western world."

If Lin's prose reached countless American literati, his identity—a U.S.-educated, prolific man of letters in both English and Chinese—etched the legacies of Chinese students in America into transnational history. This project explores the stories of Chinese students at Phillips Academy Andover as a case study in twentieth-century influences of the American Academy on Chinese students that passed through its gates.

Drawing from a survey of 1,900+ archival documents, this paper argues that Phillips Academy Headmaster Alfred Stearns (1871-1949) modeled rhetorical and actionable commitments to American Protestantism—writing not just about, but as the type of muscular Christian citizen he wanted the Chinese students to become. Stearns used this two-fold commitment to amplify Chinese constituencies' faith in the Academy's muscular Christian education. Chinese families' ultimate adherence to muscular Christian values of patriotism, discipline, and athleticism evidenced Stearns' successful dissemination of American Protestant rhetoric among his Chinese wards. This study then contextualizes Stearns' evangelizing within concurrent Chinese reactions to American Protestant proselytization. This contextualization seeks to position Stearns' transnational influence as a Christian writer within the twentieth-century canon of American Protestant rhetoric in China.

As an elite American secondary educational institution, Phillips Academy shaped its Chinese students into pious, patriotic ambassadors of cultural exchange. This project explores their stories to complicate the legacies of twentieth-century American Protestant cultural imperialism, Progressive-Era foreign policy, and Chinese Americans of the twentieth century.

Introduction

When a modest volume with a bold title made its debut on U.S. bookshelves in September 1935, few imagined that *My Country and My People* would soon grace the reading lists and conversations of countless American literati.² Even amidst the other titles published in 1935—a star-studded lineup featuring Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie* and Sinclair Lewis’ *It Can’t Happen Here*, among other literary greats—*My Country and My People* would set a precedent only bolder than its title. The incisive assessment of Chinese society and cultural memory became the first of Lin Yutang’s long list of bestsellers and even longer list of literary accomplishments, the latter of which would include the first Chinese typewriter and first Chinese-English dictionary.³ Lin, a Harvard-educated son of Presbyterian missionaries and prolific man of letters in both English and Chinese, was himself an unprecedented rarity among the 1930s Anglo-American monopoly of bestseller bylines.⁴ His volume, furthermore, was one of the first hits of Reynal and Hitchcock, a then-nascent publishing house whose “published” list would boast *Strange Fruit* and *Le Petit Prince* by the late 1940s.⁵ *My Country and My People* marked many nascent beginnings: that of a literary career, burgeoning publishing house, and the widespread introduction of China to American society. In the effusive words of *The New York Times*’ front page, “the book burst like a shell over the Western world.”⁶

By 1935, however, the publication of Lin’s novel was hardly the beginning of American exposure to Chinese civil society. Those introductions came decades before, by way of government-sponsored educational envoys to the United States. When a Qing dynasty government desperate to emulate Western technologies sent dozens of Chinese youths to American secondary and undergraduate institutions in the 1870s, American administrators and students marveled at Chinese habits of dress, decorum, and academic and extracurricular

performance.⁷ Phillips Academy Andover ranked among the select few secondary institutions that received Chinese students in this first wave of educational exchange. For Andover, it would hardly be the last.

The second wave of Chinese students, however, would not come until some two decades following the introduction of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act that terminated the first wave of exchange programs.⁸ A twentieth-century Andover featured a new headmaster and a renewed enthusiasm to receive Chinese students. Between 1906 and 1930, over one hundred Chinese students attended the Academy under Headmaster Alfred Stearns' tutelage and relied on the 1890 Andover graduate for financial management, moral stability, and academic counsel.⁹ Indeed, for the families of Andover's Chinese students at the turn of the twentieth century, Stearns ranked among the most intimate of mentors during students' time abroad.

A large swath of Stearns' ideological mentorship came through the thousands of letters he exchanged with parents, students, diplomats, and external constituencies throughout students' time in America. Across hundreds of letters, Stearns modeled both rhetorical and actionable commitments to American Protestant ideals—writing not just about, but as the type of muscular Christian citizen he wanted the Chinese students to become. This paper argues that Stearns used this dual commitment as a consistent mechanism to amplify Chinese constituencies' trust in and adoption of the Academy's muscular Christian tenets. It concludes that Chinese families' ultimate adherence to muscular Christian values of patriotism, discipline, and athleticism evidenced Stearns' contribution to the expansion of American Protestant rhetoric abroad.

In addition to a case study in American Protestant proselytization, Stearns' Christian mentorship offers an unparalleled study of the Academy's twentieth-century positions and impact on Chinese affairs. The Andover headmaster's muscular Christian philosophies were a

natural extension of his position at the helm of the Academy: a Calvinist seminary at its founding that adopted a tempered evangelicalism in the twentieth century.¹⁰ As the Academy's figurehead, seldom did Stearns explore applications of the Academy's muscular Christian pedagogy in the context of foreign affairs, but for the Chinese students he made notable exceptions.

Correspondence was the principal medium through which Stearns commented on Sino-U.S. pedagogy, politics, and culture with the specificity and emotional investment notably absent in his published treatises.¹¹ Even as Sino-U.S. relations were embroiled in conflict, the correspondence thus captured Andover's most unfettered engagement with and commentary on Republican China.

Stearns' writing was transnational not only in subject but also in influence. Historians Fred Jordan and Henry F. May write that Stearns belonged to a class of prominent public intellectuals, "custodians of culture" whose commentary was sought on public and cultural affairs.¹² Stearns' rhetorical positions thus informed both the Academy's developmental philosophy and public opinion beyond Andover Hill.¹³ Indeed, Stearns' commentary on Chinese happenings offered his American followers and Chinese families a perspective through which to process Chinese events with a decidedly accommodationist and muscular Christian lens. Stearns' writing thus participated within a twentieth-century discourse of American Protestant sympathy towards Chinese society even as the Chinese Exclusion Act—which limited Chinese migrants' access to the United States to meager quotas until 1943—eroded China's cultural receptiveness towards all things "American."¹⁴ That Chinese students promoted this muscular Christian rhetoric upon their return to China, then, only attests to the strength of Stearns' influence within larger histories of exclusion-era Chinese engagement with American Protestantism.¹⁵ However, current studies of Stearns explore little beyond his domestic influence.¹⁶ To fill this academic

lacuna, this paper—in addition to arguing for Stearns’ preaching and embodiment of muscular Christian ideals—contextualizes Stearns’ evangelizing within concurrent Chinese reactions to American Protestant proselytization. With this contextualization, this study seeks to position Stearns’ transnational influence as a Christian writer within the twentieth-century canon of American Protestant rhetoric in China.

That this study centers around Stearns—a white Anglo-American and powerful figure in Chinese students’ lives—rather than the Chinese students proper has not gone uninterrogated. Because documentation of Andover’s Chinese students beyond the headmaster’s correspondence is limited to the occasional newspaper entry and conference program, both studies—though nominally different in emphasis—would rely heavily on Stearns’ correspondence.¹⁷ Knowing that the Chinese students’ communication with Stearns constitutes hardly the bulk of their total communication as Chinese students, to declare a study of the Stearns correspondence a good-faith, comprehensive study of the Chinese students would be misleading at best and a travesty at worst. Taking Stearns’ correspondence as the necessary inspiration for and subject of this study, it is not the Chinese students but Stearns’ relationship with the Chinese students that can be most faithfully explored. Such relationships, furthermore, were seldom tit-for-tat; the correspondence reveals that Chinese students relied overwhelmingly on Stearns for mentorship in this variable, formative chapter of their lives.¹⁸ To frame this study in the Stearns correspondence as one of Stearns’ influence, then, is most faithful to the inherent dynamics and conditions of the correspondence’s creation. It assumes that Stearns was but one influence, albeit a formative one, that offers one singular window into the students’ rich and untold stories. That this window—the one for which institutional records are most readily available—is delivered through the lens of a white, male figure of power within the Academy offers a revealing bias in institutional history

that extends far beyond the scope of just Stearns' correspondence. But the headmaster's social background does not detract from the intimate, formative influence he had on the Chinese students, nor does it disqualify his correspondence as fodder for meaningful study. In fact, that Stearns was able to bridge cultural gaps in correspondence—and that this is the largest trove of documents that remains on the Chinese students—makes a study of it all the more necessary.

This study opens with Section One, an examination of the theological and political environment from which Andover's twentieth-century Chinese students emerged. Section One first explores one of the most significant rhetorical channels through which Chinese families received an introduction to Christian thought and American education: American Protestant missionaries. A study of nineteenth-century American Protestant rhetoric in China reveals that missionary conceptions of Western supremacy undermined not only the Chinese reception of Protestantism but also the Roosevelt administration's attempts to transplant muscular Christian ideals into China. Turning to educational exchange as a conduit through which to realize this transplantation, Roosevelt vested tremendous faith in Chinese cohorts like those that arrived at Andover in the early twentieth century.¹⁹ That Stearns' relationships with the Chinese students only strengthened amidst this backdrop of political expectation and theological hostility attests to the strength of families' trust in Stearns' instantiation of muscular Christian values—for it was this instantiation that formed the fulcrum of intimacy between the two parties.

Given the theological and political backdrop of Stearns' mentorship, Section Two investigates the ideological cornerstones underpinning Stearns' muscular Christian rhetoric. Taking the principal values of muscular Christianity—Christianity, patriotism, discipline, and athleticism—as an organizational rubric for three subsections, each subsection first examines Stearns' preaching and embodiment of each value through the page. Each subsection then

describes the effect of such values on Chinese students and families, arguing that both parties demonstrated rhetorical support for all four values after Stearns' example. Finally, this section concludes with a case study in alumni career trajectories and gratitude towards Stearns' rhetoric to argue that each of the four muscular Christian values grew into cornerstones of Andover's twentieth-century Chinese alumni worldviews. Indeed, Chinese students in adulthood spilled ink about Stearns' formative influence in correspondence that extended decades past Commencement.²⁰ The longevity of such relationships attests to their strength and influence. Considering Chinese students' influence on China's modernization, such values shaped those of an entire class of Chinese cosmopolitans. This study aspires to an examination of that influence.

However, despite the intensity of Stearns' muscular Christian influence, the Chinese students nonetheless returned to a China where non-elite populations were far from sympathetic to their more affluent countrymen. Section Three offers a study of reactions to twentieth-century American Protestant rhetoric among the Chinese populace. Such a study reveals that Stearns' rhetorical sympathy towards China coincided with twentieth-century Protestant attempts at attentiveness towards Chinese culture. However, missionaries' attentiveness devolved into distortions of Chinese tenets—including ancestor worship, a folk religious practice integral to rural and suburban communities—in overzealous attempts at proselytization.²¹ This distortion undermined the Chinese reception of Protestant missionaries and, in turn, the popularity of the Christian ideals to which Andover's Chinese graduates subscribed. Stearns' influence, and the Chinese adaptation of Christian ideals, ultimately split sharply along socioeconomic lines. Stearns' mentorship to the Chinese students, although formative among a band of internationally educated Chinese, failed to curb widespread Chinese hostility towards Christianity.

Section One: Theological Hostility and Political Expectation

Dominant narratives of American Protestant evangelizing in China have often cast missionaries as insensitive towards the populations they sought to convert.²² Indeed, nineteenth-century missionaries—many of whom were graduates of the New England theological seminaries from which Andover also recruited its instructors—embraced Western exceptionalism and scorned Chinese culture.²³ This ignorance exacerbated Chinese animosity towards evangelizing efforts and sparked numerous anti-foreigner demonstrations at the turn of the twentieth century.²⁴ In subsequent decades, however, American Protestant missionaries proved more attentive than their predecessors. In response to mounting hostility towards Western influences, twentieth-century missionaries sought to develop an apologetic consonant with Chinese culture.²⁵ The Chinese students thus emerged from a nation embroiled in anti-Christian resentment that scorned Western access to and influence over the Chinese populace.²⁶ As such, even as missionaries' nominal attentiveness towards Chinese culture echoed Stearns' reverence towards the same, the former was received with distaste and the latter appreciation. This appreciation, in turn, formed a foundation of amicability that Stearns leveraged to transmit his American Protestant guidance.

Theological Hostility: Chinese Resistance to Nineteenth-Century Western Exceptionalism

By the twentieth century, the Chinese populace associated American Protestant missionaries with a history of insensitive Christian evangelizing efforts. Since the early nineteenth century, missionaries had entered a China crippled by the opium trade and internationally ridiculed as “the Sick Man of Asia.”²⁷ Derogatory foreign perceptions of China led nineteenth-century Christian missionaries to exude arrogance and turn a blind eye to Chinese culture. Elijah Bridgman, the first American Protestant missionary appointed to China, was an

outspoken proponent of this contempt. Upon founding *The Chinese Repository*, a missionary publication for Western readers first published in 1832, Bridgman declared, “we have no very strong expectation of finding much that will rival the arts and sciences, and various institutions of the Western nations.”²⁸ This declaration enabled *The Chinese Repository* to frame the missionary enterprise in China as a project to “take the lead in remodeling society, in purifying it and in forming [*sic*] it on the basis of those principles of the Christian religion.”²⁹ A chorus of similar assessments corroborated Bridgman’s: in 1834, for instance, American missionary S. Wells Williams lauded efforts to catalyze China’s “elevation from her present state of moral, intellectual, and civil debasement.”³⁰ Bridgman’s and Williams’ commentaries brimmed with distaste towards Chinese society. Both Americans considered Western understandings of Christianity to be the paragon of religious thought and thus labeled any Chinese divergence from Western Christianity a theological impurity.³¹ Accordingly, Chinese culture became an impediment to—rather than a conduit for—Chinese conversion to Christianity. Only the imitation of Western civilization, missionaries like Bridgman and Williams maintained, would catalyze China’s ideological and social modernization. In the nineteenth century, this approach alienated Chinese who despised missionaries’ dismissal of Chinese etiquette, culture, and intellectual output. Missionaries nonetheless positioned themselves as sponsors of an American ideology with no appetite to understand Chinese thought.

Chinese reactions to this decades-long ignorance proved acute. In 1900, anti-foreigner sentiment culminated in the Boxer Rebellion as Christian missionaries and Chinese converts experienced “widespread attacks... in a flurry of insurrectionary activity.”³² Anti-foreigner sentiments peaked again during the 1919 May Fourth Movement; advocates declared that China’s passivity towards Western encroachments exacerbated national benightedness and

faulted foreign influence for distorting Chinese identity.³³ Accordingly, May Fourth thinkers decried extraterritoriality, foreign tariff collection, and missionaries as embodiments of Western imperialism.³⁴ American Protestants, though not the sole subject of such anti-Western declarations, faced particular hostility due to their national presence and regular interaction with potential converts and the Chinese populace.³⁵ Twentieth-century arguments against evangelizing arose from an aversion to the Western triumphalism that suffused the nineteenth-century missionary enterprise. A twentieth-century China, May Fourth intellectuals argued, must dispense with that triumphalism without exception.³⁶

Political Expectation: Theodore Roosevelt as a Champion of Muscular Christianity

Chinese anti-Christian movements, however, proved but one influence on Chinese students' access to and reception of American thought prior to their arrival in the United States. Across the Pacific Ocean, President Theodore Roosevelt proved just as eager to facilitate the transmission of American Protestant thought into China as May Fourth intellectuals were to subvert it. Writing in 1905 to William Woodville Rockhill, the American Minister to China, Roosevelt reiterated his stance as a passionate patron of American Protestant missionaries.³⁷ "All the Protestant missionaries... [should] count upon your absolute friendliness and kindness of attitude towards them," Roosevelt exhorted, "of course it is unnecessary for me to say that I am more than anxious that the missionaries should feel that in you they have a constant and considerate friend and that you will keep as closely in touch with them as possible."³⁸ This commitment and friendship, Roosevelt instructed, required Rockhill to maximize the convenience of American Protestant missionaries in scheduling the activities of the minister's office.³⁹ The support of the American government towards its missionaries, Roosevelt implied,

was to be unequivocal and reflected in both rhetorical and actionable commitments. As a beacon of American government abroad, the ministers' office was to echo this support without fail.

By the early twentieth century, however, Roosevelt's support for the American Protestant missionaries proved an ever more isolated commitment amidst deteriorating public support for missionary activities.⁴⁰ In requesting Rockhill's support for the missionaries, Roosevelt sought to make friends for the missionaries where their friends were in short supply.

Given missionaries' middling support among the Chinese populace, Roosevelt also turned to Chinese students to facilitate the introduction of American thought into China. The President concluded his 1905 letter to Rockhill with promises to support Chinese students at all costs: "I am trying in every way to make things easy for the Chinese here... I want to secure the best possible treatment for [Chinese] students and travelers."⁴¹ Roosevelt's promises came at the height of the 1882-1943 Chinese Exclusion Act, which limited Chinese entry into the United States under the pretense of dampening economic competition between more industrious Chinese workers and an irate American labor force.⁴² Roosevelt's support of Chinese students' entry to the United States thus ran directly contrary to official United States policy positions—a seeming paradox of limiting Chinese presence in America while encouraging it all the same. The thrust behind this rationale Roosevelt explained to George B. Cortelyou, Secretary of Commerce and Labor, in a 1904 letter outlining his position on Chinese entry:

The policy of the law is to favor merchants and students... We wish to make ever firmer our intellectual hold upon China[; it] is for our interests that Chinese... students should come here. It is very much against our interests that Chinese laborers should come here and compete with our own workmen. Everything should be done to prevent the latter

coming in by any fraud or evasion, but we should at the same time do everything to prevent harshness being done to the ... students.⁴³

Roosevelt's support for the Chinese students was conditional upon students' capacity to transplant American ideologies into China following graduation; exclusion was reserved exclusively for the Chinese laborers who were purported threats to competition. Roosevelt thus positioned the project of Chinese access to twentieth-century America as an enterprise in extending the United States' intellectual influence abroad. As a former student at Harvard College—an institution for which Andover was a reliable intermediary—and colleague of several Andover-educated diplomats, Roosevelt was keenly aware that Chinese students' attendance at New England institutions would confer an American education and “intellectual hold” that was decidedly Protestant.⁴⁴ That Protestant missionaries and Chinese students were prime subjects of Roosevelt's care and concern, then, revealed the president's commitment to the expansion of American Protestant rhetoric abroad. Phillips Academy, with its history as a Protestant institution and proximity to the Andover Theological Seminary, was expected to be a prime bastion of the Protestant “intellectual hold” Roosevelt so desired.

Roosevelt's commitment to American Protestant evangelizing was hardly a coincidence—he himself subscribed religiously to muscular Christianity, an American Protestant movement part and parcel of the American education students would receive in the States, not least of which under Stearns. Muscular Christianity positioned physical vitality as an enabling condition for intellectual vitality and argued that the strength of Western civilization relied upon the literal strength of each Protestant practitioner.⁴⁵ Raised in a Presbyterian household, a young Roosevelt pursued athletics zealously and would maintain a lifelong affinity for hiking, equestrian, and swimming.⁴⁶ Such pursuits, undertaken under the masculine pretense of

“mak[ing] his body,” made Roosevelt a passionate proponent of muscular Christianity at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴⁷

Roosevelt shared this affinity for muscular Christianity with Liang Cheng, an 1882 Andover alumnus who proved intimate diplomatic advisor to Roosevelt on Chinese policy between 1903 and 1907.⁴⁸ The relative brevity of their relationship did little to limit its productivity. In four years as the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, Liang—a member of the first wave of nineteenth-century educational exchange—extended the tradition of China-U.S. educational exchange by negotiating the Boxer Indemnity Scholarships, the largest early-twentieth-century program of government-funded support for Chinese students’ education in America.⁴⁹ While few of the students at Liang’s alma mater under Stearns’ tutelage leveraged the government-sponsored program, Andover nonetheless proved an instrumental factor in Liang’s relationship with the president and ultimate diplomatic productivity. In fact, Liang—a standout base runner of the Academy baseball team who, braving a chorus of racial jeers, drove home three runs at the 1881 Andover-Exeter showdown—found his athletic achievements to be of tremendous interest to Roosevelt.⁵⁰ In an early meeting with the president, Liang unabashedly declared himself the Academy’s best baseball player of his time; years later, the ambassador related that thereafter “the relations between President Roosevelt and myself became tenfold stronger and closer.”⁵¹ Liang thus recounted his athletic exploits as fodder for rapport and a rhetorical strategy to advance his diplomatic relationship with the president. Furthermore, just as Stearns would do years later, Liang extended his love of Andover beyond a rhetorical strategy and into actionable commitments. A consistent Academy patron who regularly rubbed elbows with Stearns at alumni functions, Liang never hesitated to wax poetic about the merits of Andover’s muscular Christian education and ranked among Stearns’ most prolific and eager of

advisors on the Chinese students years following his diplomatic heyday.⁵² As such, years before Stearns began his mentorship to the Chinese students, a tradition of dual commitments to Andover's muscular Christian education had impressed heavily on the trajectory of China-U.S. educational exchange. Indeed, Liang's position as an Andover alumnus yoked the Academy intimately with Roosevelt's understanding of policymaking towards twentieth-century China. This central positioning of Andover alumni in diplomacy surrounding Sino-U.S. education only heightened expectations around Andover's capacity to contribute to Roosevelt's vision of ideological colonialism.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Chinese students entered the Academy with loads of baggage and only more political strings attached. Stearns, embedded within a backdrop of theological hostility and political expectation, found himself and Andover at the confluence of two-pronged pressures to deliver and foster trust in muscular Christian mentorship. Indeed, each Chinese student arriving at Andover Hill set forth into a nexus of pressures that extended as far up the political hierarchy as the Oval Office and as far in geography as missionary happenings halfway across the globe. At the center of this nexus of rhetoric lie one man and one school: Alfred Stearns and Phillips Academy.

Section Two: Alfred Stearns and Chinese Receptiveness towards Muscular Christianity

Alfred E. Stearns belonged to a family of Philippians. Within his genealogy are Johnathan French and Josiah Stearns, two of Stearns' great grandfathers and the Academy's founding trustees; William A. Stearns, Stearns' grandfather, an 1823 graduate of the Academy, and eventual president of Amherst College; Presbyterian pastor Johnathan French Stearns, Stearns' great-great-uncle, an 1826 graduate of the Academy, and founder of the Philomathean Society; and Cecil A. Bancroft, Stearns' uncle, an 1867 graduate of Andover Theological Seminary, and the Academy's eighth headmaster from 1873 to 1901.⁵³ When Bancroft recruited Stearns to the Academy in the fall of 1897 as its Director of Athletics, then, Stearns became but the latest chapter in a storied tradition of the Stearns' involvement in Academy administration.⁵⁴ Indeed, the Stearns family's fingerprints were all over the Academy's first three centuries of institutional history; the development of the Academy tracked intimately with that of the Stearns genealogy.

Stearns' initial posting as the Academy's Director of Athletics was scarcely a coincidence. Stearns, himself an 1890 graduate of the Academy, had a childhood where the ubiquity of a Protestant "Phillips Academy" was second only to that of sports.⁵⁵ As a teenager, he ranked among the Academy's finest athletes in football, tennis, and baseball.⁵⁶ By the time Stearns graduated the most popular boy and best athlete of his class, he had boasted a singles tennis victory over Exeter and two-year tenure as varsity baseball captain.⁵⁷ Stearns' athletic exploits continued into his undergraduate studies at Amherst College, where his prowess at second base earned him numerous offers in professional baseball.⁵⁸ If athletics were a driving force behind Stearns' identity, however, theology was his north star. The budding athlete duly rejected offers for a professional athletic career to pursue theology at Andover Theological

Seminary alongside his administrative duties at the helm of the Academy's athletic program.⁵⁹

Stearns' upbringing and career thus embodied central tenets of muscular Christianity: athleticism, discipline, and the Protestant faith.

By the time Stearns moved from Director of Athletics to Headmaster in 1903, his commitments had only solidified—in fact, during his tenure as headmaster he would prove the staunchest of advocates for the Academy's muscular Christian pedagogy. The Chinese students offered Stearns a forum through which to channel this enthusiasm. With his Chinese wards, Stearns launched into a decades-long campaign to inculcate into their families the three values at the center of muscular Christianity—Christianity, frugality, and athletics—as a means to promote trust in the American Protestant education that had served his own family for decades.

A Malleable Christianity:

Stearns' Protestantism as a Catalyst for Patriotism and Cultural Ambassadorship

While a select few Chinese parents discovered Andover by way of referrals from the muscular Christian institutions with which they were affiliated, many twentieth-century Chinese parents seeking study abroad opportunities for their children were not explicitly Christian.⁶⁰ Given Andover's ideological orientation, however, Stearns needed to warm Chinese parents to American Protestantism before even broaching the possibility of an Andover matriculation. As the first pillar of Stearns' American Protestant advocacy, the headmaster employed actionable and rhetorical commitments to demonstrate to Chinese students the merits of the Christian faith. Indeed, Stearns' actionable commitments to Christianity were only more numerous than his athletic accolades. If his decision to study at Andover Theological Seminary was not explicit enough a commitment to Protestant theology, his recollections of his religious education at Amherst committed his piety to writing.⁶¹ Of his philosophy classes under Charles E. Garman,

Professor of Moral and Mental Philosophy at Amherst College, Stearns relayed the following account in his *The Challenge of Youth*, a 1923 treatise well-circulated among his Chinese wards.⁶²

The closing bell would ring, but no one would stir. With a smile on his face, Mr. Garman, to whom this was no new experience, would say quietly: ‘Gentlemen, the bell has rung. I am willing to go on if you desire, but I wish no one to stay under compulsion.’ And none left. The class would go on, fifteen minutes, a half hour [*sic*], sometimes three-quarters of an hour beyond the closing bell... During those never-to-be-forgotten days the atmosphere became charged with a veritable spiritual electricity.⁶³

A cursory skim of the Amherst College Course of Study confirms that the religious education about which Stearns effused was decidedly Christian; among Stearns’ full-year Senior courses was Christian Evidences, a course that explored Christian apologetics and their global resonances.⁶⁴ Stearns’ undergraduate course of study, then, explicitly encouraged Stearns to consider Christianity in transnational contexts. This curriculum reflected the growing prominence of “world Christianity” in late-nineteenth-century American Protestant parlance and offered a vision that Stearns absorbed with seemingly insatiable zeal.⁶⁵

A decade later, Stearns would channel this commitment to transnational evangelizing by projecting his enthusiasm for muscular Christianity onto the Chinese students. As headmaster, Stearns continued his actionable commitments to American Protestantism. A frequent sight at Andover’s pulpit, Stearns also institutionalized Phillips Academy’s administrative support for religious education by hiring a chaplain in 1907, the first such hire among New England boarding schools.⁶⁶ It was with Stearns’ devout faith in mind that Chinese parents first sent their children to the Academy.⁶⁷ In the early twentieth century, the Academy’s first twentieth-century

Chinese students entered an Andover where manifestations of Stearns' actionable commitments to Christianity were ubiquitous.

For the Chinese students, Stearns complemented such actionable commitments with rhetorical appeals to the merits of Christian practice. Among the most frequent of such appeals to Christianity came through references to “ideals” and idealism across dozens of letters to Chinese families. Stearns summarized the thrust of his rhetorical invocations in a July 1920 address reprinted in the alumni magazine, *The Phillips Bulletin*. “To implant into these young minds and hearts [the] ideals and visions... so splendidly thought out by our founders, so eloquently described in their Constitution,” Stearns gushed, “that, pray God, may always be what the School attempts to accomplish.”⁶⁸ In lavishing praise for the Academy's founding ideals, Stearns implied that the Academy's constitutional commitments to limit all members of its faculty and trustees to Protestants and inculcate in its students “the truth of Christianity... One true GOD, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost... [and] the other important doctrines and duties of our Holy Christian Religion” had served the Academy well into the twentieth century—and, in the best of circumstances, would remain so for decades beyond.⁶⁹ Stearns' every reference to “ideals and visions” thus directly invoked those of the founding documents and, in turn, redoubled the Academy's institutional alignment with Christian ideals. That Stearns immediately followed such invocations of idealism in his July 1920 remarks with a rhetorical prayer to God, then, only made this religious alignment explicit. A dozen years into Stearns' mentorship of the Chinese students, the headmaster's remarks positioned the Academy's central project—and his rhetorical invocation of “ideals and visions”—as unmistakably Christian. By 1920, dozens of Chinese students under Stearns' tutelage had become alumni and thus among the recipients of *The Phillips Bulletin*.⁷⁰ For many Chinese alumni among Stearns' readership, the headmaster's

address offered a published reminder of the Christian rhetoric extended through private correspondence years before.

Indeed, by 1920, Stearns's rhetoric of "ideals and visions" had promoted families' trust in the Academy for years. In fact, so frequent were Stearns' references to ideals that he seldom found the need to reiterate their religious dimensions upon every invocation.⁷¹ Referring to the excellence of an Andover education in a 1908 letter to a Chinese parent, Stearns professed that "the Westerner has much to learn from the Easterner, as well as the Easterner from the Westerner... I know of no better place [than Andover] in which to make such a [realization] among developing boys whose habits and ideals are still in the making."⁷² Stearns thus framed Andover as an institution guiding students towards ideals that cherished cultural exchange. Given that Stearns' references to ideals were decidedly religious, Stearns implied that it was Protestant ideals that would ultimately encourage students to learn willingly from any culture, East or West. For Chinese parents willing to field the financial and emotional bill of sending their children to study abroad, cultural exchange and transnational learning ranked among the most attractive of lessons for their children.⁷³ Stearns' rhetorical strategy thus deftly positioned Christianity as a most effective conduit for realizing Chinese families' goals. As Chinese students flocked to Andover in droves, Chinese families came to view the study of Christian ideals as synonymous with progress towards East-West learning.⁷⁴

This rhetoric of multiculturalism became all the more enticing following the 1911 fall of the Qing dynasty, which left a Republican China overrun with nationalist sentiment while scrambling to find its place in an increasingly cosmopolitan world.⁷⁵ Stearns, conscious of this delicate balance, wrote in a 1912 note to a Chinese parent that "I can only express the hope that the new China may realize to the fullest extent the high and pure ideals which those who love her

best at home and abroad cherish for her.”⁷⁶ The implication of such a statement was lost on neither sender nor recipient: Stearns suggested that those who loved China best wished her to realize “the high and pure ideals” of Protestantism. Protestant practice, Stearns implied, graced each Chinese practitioner with the capacity for this highest love of country. In an increasingly nationalist Republican China, the prospect of an education that cultivated cultural exchange alongside patriotism proved both timely and politically expedient.⁷⁷ Where Stearns’ rhetoric of three years prior positioned Christianity as a means to promote cultural exchange, his rhetorical strategy in 1912 had evolved to also position the “high and pure ideals” of Protestantism as a badge of patriotism. Stearns’ rhetorical maneuvering thus portrayed an Andover education intimately aligned with Chinese interests because of—not despite—its Protestant emphasis. Such rhetorical strategies sought to elevate the value of Andover’s American Protestant education in the minds of the Chinese families and garner a critical mass of trust that would ultimately result in students’ entry into Andover.

If Stearns was a salesman for muscular Christianity, he both walked the walk and talked the talk—and Chinese families were sold. On Andover Hill, students echoed Stearns’ commitment to a religious education by hosting the 1907 Chinese Students Conference, the largest annual gathering of Chinese students in New England, at the Andover Theological Seminary.⁷⁸ The seven-day, one-hundred-student conference organized by the Chinese Students’ Alliance featured a slate of daily athletic contests and addresses by Protestant leaders; the function was steeped in muscular Christian ideals in both programming and location.⁷⁹ Delivering the conference’s opening address was none other than Stearns himself, his prominence within the Chinese students’ gathering reflecting his seminal role as an advocate for the Chinese students’ Protestant education. “Chinese students close a very enjoyable program,”

wrote *The Andover Townsman* seven days later, reporting the successful execution of the Chinese students' religious and athletic engagements.⁸⁰ This laudatory 1907 report was hardly the last. Students repeated the success of the 1907 conference in 1916, when the conference returned to Andover and yet again featured a message of welcome from Stearns.⁸¹ Chinese students thus reciprocated Stearns' Christian commitments through actionable commitments of their own: curating their largest gatherings to reflect Stearns' muscular Christian values and placing the headmaster front and center on its programs.

Across the Pacific Ocean, Chinese parents compensated for their lack of geographical proximity with an abundance of rhetorical intimacy. "I have the honor to thank you for the kind protection which you have extended to [my children]. It is really fortunate on my part to have such a Christian-like and liberal minded [*sic*] person as you are to look after the Chinese boys whose future happiness and improvement of their country depend upon your good guidance," a Chinese parent gushed in 1908.⁸² Indeed, Chinese parents viewed the cultural exchange that Stearns positioned as a benefit of Christianity to be critical to the betterment of China—and did not hesitate to express their gratitude to that end. "I am quite confident that the advantages of an American education under your good guidance will benefit the Chinese at large, and the memory of your kind energy shall never be erased from those young hearts that derived their enlightenment from such a Christian-like Principal as yourself," read a letter dated 1909.⁸³ Accounts such as these attested to Chinese parents' awareness of and pride in Stearns' rhetorical and actionable commitments. Indeed, just as Stearns' every rhetorical assurance that Christianity aligned with Chinese interests encouraged Chinese parents to laud an American education, it was with appreciation towards Stearns' personal commitment to Christianity at the pulpit and in his administrative hires that Chinese parents crowned him "a Christian-like principal." From

describing the “honor” and fortune of corresponding the headmaster to lauding his “kind energy,” Chinese parents brimmed with confidence in Stearns’ and the Academy’s capacity to deliver the religious education the Chinese parents grew to desire. Stearns’ dual commitments to Christianity did not go unappreciated by Chinese families; in fact, to repurpose Liang’s commentary on Roosevelt in 1904, Stearns’ commitments only made families’ trust in Stearns “tenfold stronger and closer.”⁸⁴

This trust continued into the ensuing decades. In 1920, as nationalist sentiment and domestic uncertainty reached a fever pitch in China, Stearns’ 1912 observations of Protestantism as a catalyst of patriotism remained pertinent. “China must feel very grateful to you for your individual services to her sons at this time—time of regeneration in more ways than one,” a Chinese parent remarked in 1920.⁸⁵ By “regeneration,” the parent alluded to China’s then-ongoing process of rediscovering the national identity and value systems of a nation wrenching itself into modernity. Amidst this volatility, Stearns’ assurances that a Protestant education promoted patriotism was a welcome constant and anchor for the Chinese parents. In referring to the Chinese students as China’s “sons,” the parent brimmed with patriotic pride in the students’ heritage. It was this same pride that aligned a Protestant education and its supposed cultivation of patriotism with Chinese interests. Beyond such rhetorical promises, Stearns’ “individual services”—his actionable commitments to Christianity—only amplified Chinese parents’ fondness towards Protestant practice. This fondness became explicit when Chinese parents began invoking God in a manner not unlike Stearns’ 1920 address.⁸⁶ But it was in a July 1920 note outlining the expressed interests of Chinese parent C. Y. Sun, sent scarcely weeks before Stearns’ alumni magazine publication, that offered the most explicit validation for Stearns’ American Protestant advocacy. “The training of Christian homes will mean more to these boys

and girls than a lot of good ‘schooling,’” read the Chinese parent’s directions, “[and] I very much hope they will get both.”⁸⁷ Sun paired his wishes for a “Christian Home” with an explicit request that Stearns become their personal guardian.⁸⁸ The two requests combined to form an implicit request that, given Stearns’ guardianship, the training of a Christian home would ideally take place in Stearns’ own. Conscious of such wishes, Stearns housed the children in his own residence upon their arrival at Andover Hill, where they remained Stearns’ wards and housemates for the entirety of their Andover career.⁸⁹ Sun’s explicit request for the training of Christian homes, then, expressed deep trust in and expectations for Stearns’ mentorship. “Good schooling,” of course, evidenced Sun’s confidence in an Andover education. This, too, proved a validation of Stearns’ American Protestant advocacy, for it was Stearns’ rhetorical assurances that fostered parents’ trust in the Academy’s capacity for exceptional pedagogy.⁹⁰ So satisfied was Sun with Stearns’ ultimate arrangements that he offered the most effusive of congratulations following Stearns’ alumni magazine feature three months later. Between praise for frugality and assurances of his continued preference for good Christian homes, Sun gushed that Stearns’ commentary “represented... a perfect knowledge of the Chinese youth and their mission to Phillips” by positioning the Academy’s mission as Christian at heart.⁹¹ Stearns could have received no more decisive a testament to Chinese parents’ support and, by extension, the efficacy of his American Protestant advocacy. Where Stearns’ dual commitment to Christianity sought to encourage parents’ trust in American Protestantism and Christian pedagogy, Chinese families reciprocated by adopting Stearns’ religious lexicon and waxing lyrical about Stearns’ guidance and Andover’s American Protestant education.

Stearns’ two-pronged advocacy for a Christian education hardly stopped at Chinese parents and students; the headmaster extended this strategy to Christian evangelists themselves.

Indeed, Stearns' frequent correspondence with missionaries in China sought to curry favor among American Protestants abroad and revealed both the strength and religious dimensions of his mentorship to—and Andover's education of—the Chinese students.⁹² In a 1920 letter to Henry Smith Leiper, an American Mission Board missionary stationed in China since 1918 and friend of many of Andover's Chinese families, Stearns gushed about the faith that Chinese parents placed in his tutelage.⁹³ "I shall not betray the trust and confidence which [the Chinese parents] have so generously placed in me. I have been more than touched by it all.... [O]f one thing these parents may rest assured, and that is that their children will have as constant and thoughtful care from me as would my own."⁹⁴ From being personally "touched" to promising care "as would my own," Stearns' rhetoric betrayed an immediate intimacy with the Chinese parents. Indeed, given that Leiper shared this intimacy, the headmaster's effusive recollections of their mutual Chinese friends thus became a rhetorical strategy to warm Leiper to Stearns' mentorship. Beyond this rhetorical intimacy, Stearns proceeded in the letter to reiterate his commitment to housing the Chinese students in his own home, a service that marked an actionable commitment to the thoughtfulness and intimacy he promised Leiper rhetorically.⁹⁵ Stearns' rhetorical and actionable commitments thus proved a two-pronged strategy to redouble Leiper's trust in students' experiences at Andover. Knowing that Leiper was an evangelist of the same American Protestant guidance that Phillips Academy espoused, Stearns assured the missionary that the students "would gain as much in the way of American education as could reasonably be expected."⁹⁶ Such promises of student growth positioned Stearns' mentorship and the Academy's curriculum as paragons of American Protestant education and reminded Leiper of his ideological alignment with the Academy. Converting Leiper, an American Protestant abroad, into an Andover supporter only expanded the scope of Stearns' American Protestant advocacy in

China. In 1920, Leiper's support became evident as Stearns' correspondence with the missionary—like those with other China-bound evangelists—continued enthusiastically into the coming months.⁹⁷ Indeed, Stearns' rhetorical promises communicated Chinese families' trust and actionable examples proved that trust well-founded. Stearns shared such dual commitments among American Protestant missionaries as a strategy to cultivate trust in the Academy's muscular Christian education abroad.

By the time Stearns address was published in *The Phillips Bulletin* in 1920, the headmaster had engaged in a decades-long campaign to, in rhetoric and action, encourage confidence in an American Protestant education from a wide swath of Chinese constituencies. Nonetheless, with an ever-conscious awareness towards the interests of his Chinese readership, Stearns took care to connect his rhetoric of “ideals and visions” back to the Chinese students in 1920. The academy's institutional responsibility to inculcate Christian values likewise extended to students who, “bringing with them the culture and refinement of the East, [seek a] broad and virile manhood [from] the Oriental point of view.”⁹⁸ After decades of rhetorical and actionable advocacy for an American Protestant education, the 1920 address' references to “manhood and virility” were hardly the first of Stearns' reminders that the Academy education was both Christian and muscular. Indeed, taking Chinese families' trust in Christianity as a foundation, Stearns likewise cultivated Chinese trust in frugality and athleticism through dual commitments explored in the following two subsections. By 1920, as such, Stearns' appeals to Christian education were not so much attempts at persuasion as a reminder to Chinese constituencies that their trust in the Andover education was well-placed. Rather than the concurrent scramble to convert the Chinese undertaken by his missionary colleagues abroad, Stearns' 1920 remarks better resembled a victory lap, a triumphant summary of the trust garnered from Chinese families

over decades of American Protestant advocacy. At the heart of this trust was a dual commitment to the strength of Protestant practice through both rhetorical and actionable commitments. Just as his great-great-grandfathers declared a commitment to propagate knowledge of Christianity upon the Academy's founding, Stearns did just that—though rather than to just the modest New-England student body of the Academy's initial years, to hundreds of Chinese students and their families halfway across the globe.⁹⁹

Frugality: Pinching Pennies, Holding Fast to Protestantism

Stearns' rhetoric positioned patriotism as but one benefit of Protestantism in alignment with Chinese interests. In the 1910s, amidst a volatile political environment that threatened the livelihoods of many Chinese parents—several of whom were government officials in the outgoing Qing administration and doctors whose financial interests were yoked with those of the Qing dynasty government—frugality proved of utmost priority for families committed to an expensive Andover education but suddenly strained at the bankroll.¹⁰⁰ Stearns thus leveraged the American Protestant commitment to frugality, a quality lauded by the likes of Ben Franklin, Cotton Mather, and Andrew Carnegie, as yet another alignment with Chinese practices.¹⁰¹ As the personal manager of the Chinese students' financial accounts, Stearns offered Chinese parents frequent updates on the accounts' balance, students' spending habits, and upcoming deposits—often recounting bills and individual expenses down to the dollar across dozens of letters.¹⁰² Such actionable efforts to care for the students' spending continued even beyond students' departure from the Academy. A particular series of 1912 correspondence illustrates the meticulousness of Stearns' commitments to economy. Just a few months before in the summer of 1911, King Yin Kwan—a doctor at the Imperial Medical College in Tientsin, China impacted adversely by the events of 1911—had withdrawn his son, Sung Sing Kwan, from the Academy

prior to the beginning of Sung Sing's senior year.¹⁰³ The travel and miscellaneous expenditures resulting from Sung Sing's sudden departure left his father with a deficit in his son's account that had grown to \$985.36 by March of 1912.¹⁰⁴ With obvious concern for the Kwan family's financial condition, Stearns wrote King Yin and Sung Sing on three separate occasions to warn the Chinese father and son of this threat to their economical tendencies. "I realize also that the unsettled conditions in China today must have their effect on the financial situation in general and on the means of individuals," Stearns began a March 1912 letter, before detailing the state of Kwan's financial accounts and outstanding payments.¹⁰⁵ "I can well understand that the unsettled conditions in China must have been a source of constant anxiety to all of you," Stearns reiterated two months later after King Yin settled his son's balance.¹⁰⁶ Stearns' frequent follow-ups on the students' financial standing thus also featured the sensitivity towards Chinese affairs characteristic of his appeals to cultural exchange and patriotism. If Stearns' repeated attempts to maintain the health of Chinese accounts marked his actionable commitments towards economy, his solace evidenced his rhetorical tact in encouraging financial next steps humanely. Indeed, this dual commitment to financial health sought to convince Chinese parents that Stearns, operating under a Protestant conviction, approached frugality with an abundance of responsibility and even more care towards Chinese families' tribulations. The Chinese families, in turn, thus associated Protestantism with a compassionate financial acumen that worked in families' emotional and financial best interests.

For all his rhetorical sensitivity, nonetheless, Stearns was quick to state bluntly the importance of frugality. "If your boy is to return to America in the fall I earnestly hope that he can be impressed in advance with the importance of limiting his expenses. He needs to learn how to practice economy," Stearns concluded in his May 1912 to King Yin Kwan.¹⁰⁷ The firmness in

such a statement declared Stearns' personal commitment to American Protestant ideals of frugality and unwavering resolve to enforce the same in Chinese students. Indeed, Sung Sing was hardly the sole target of Stearns' pleas for economy. Similar requests addressed to Sun Faeyun, K. Y. Tu, Mary Sun, F. S. Tu, and H. K. Tu between 1908 and 1927 featured dozens of pleas for financial restraint, rebukes for extravagance, and effusive praise upon its faithful execution.¹⁰⁸

Stearns' commitments aligned Protestantism with the interests of Chinese families and cemented families' trust in the Academy's Protestant education. "You should learn to be economical," H. K. Tu wrote to his son K. Y. Tu in 1927, "as China goes through this terrible crisis... and civil strife... it is wise for all of us to be thrifty."¹⁰⁹ This alignment between Stearns and the Chinese parents only confirmed for the latter that a Protestant worldview corroborated countless values they wished to inculcate. Indeed, H. K. Tu's 1927 note was prompted by none other than one of Stearns' reports. Two months prior, Stearns had compiled an account of the child's financial expenditures and written F. S. Tu—an uncle of K. Y. Tu in regular contact with the Andover student's father—with a reminder of their shared values and a recommendation for "greater restraint in the handling of his funds."¹¹⁰ Stearns, as the Chinese students' financial guardian, thus served as families' pulse on students' financial standing, a responsibility he realized through both rhetorical reminders and actionable commitments as liaison. On encouraging frugality, then, Stearns and Chinese families were in such agreement that the two parties often became collaborators in their mission to inculcate economy in the Chinese students. This collaboration proved a most salient manifestation of the intimate trust Chinese families vested in an American Protestant education and the values it entailed.

Athleticism: The “Muscle” in Muscular Christianity

Beyond commitments to Christian patriotism and frugality, one distinctive feature explicitly identified Stearns’ Protestant advocacy with muscular Christian ideals: his championing of athletic engagement. To this end, Stearns likewise employed rhetorical and actionable commitments not unlike those he advanced for patriotism and frugality in order to garner Chinese families’ trust in athletic pursuits. Unlike frugality and patriotism, however, many families of the incoming students initially approached athletics with reactions ranging from apathy to aversion.¹¹¹ Stearns’ advocacy thus sought to convince Chinese parents of a central tenet of muscular Christianity: athletics, if encouraged properly, would only enrich the Protestant education that Chinese families so zealously desired.

That Stearns only encouraged athletics in service of, rather than instead of, theological study stemmed from his negative experiences with the latter as early as his studies at Amherst. Writing in *Youth From Every Quarter*, Stearns outlined his annoyance towards the often-incompatible scheduling of religious and athletic commitments:

Several of us were members of the college ball-nine [in Senior] spring, and I shall never forget the feelings akin to resentment with which we faced the necessity of missing occasional [philosophy] classes in order to play scheduled games away from home with rival college teams. Under the leadership and inspiration of a master-teacher we were dealing at first hand with the great facts of religion and the spiritual world, and... that experience was the most exhilarating and satisfying we had ever known.¹¹²

In articulating his resentment upon sacrificing theological study for athletic commitments, Stearns reflected that his enthusiasm for the latter was secondary to that for the former. Thus, even as an undergraduate, Stearns came to understand a fundamental tenet of muscular

Christianity: athleticism, although important to physical vitality, proved a conduit to enrich but not replace Christian theology. Stearns' resentment, then, was not so much resentment towards athletics itself as resentment towards pursuing athletics at the expense of Christian study. When Stearns elected to forgo a career in professional baseball and pursue a course of study at the Andover Theological Seminary alongside his responsibilities as Phillips Academy Director of Athletics, he acted explicitly on this muscular Christian conviction.¹¹³ Athletics, Stearns maintained throughout his professional career, was but a means to cultivate the physical discipline part and parcel of muscular Christian practice. Underpinning his every encouragement of athletic pursuits were decidedly Christian aims.

This conviction he shared openly with Chinese families in his correspondence decades following his Amherst graduation. As headmaster, Stearns—having embodied physical vigor as a standout athlete and the Academy's Director of Athletics—extended financial support for Chinese students' athletic pursuits as an actionable commitment towards the cultivation of athleticism. In 1910, faced with the purchase of athletic equipment and recurring payments in support of athletic activities for the Chinese students, Stearns displayed none of his characteristic financial restraint.¹¹⁴ "I beg to say that I thoroughly approve of your plan to require a subscription of \$10.00 a year [per student]... for the support of athletics," Stearns exclaimed in a letter to the athletic association.¹¹⁵ In begging to express his "thorough" approval, Stearns expressed unequivocal enthusiasm towards equipping students with athletic opportunities. Accordingly, Stearns positioned athletics as worthy of both rhetorical passion and financial investment. Indeed, Stearns, repurposing his well-tested habit of dual commitments, did not hesitate to buttress such actionable commitments with rhetoric directed at the Chinese parents themselves. In a 1926 letter to C. Y. Sun, Stearns offered that any praiseworthy educational

environment featured “marked emphasis placed on the Christian character and... an exceptionally wholesome physical life provided for the pupils, a life [filled with] outdoor activities.”¹¹⁶ Stearns’ listing of qualities was hardly an accident. In naming Christian qualities ahead of any athletic emphasis, Stearns positioned the former as the principal criterion forming the foundation for the second. Indeed, Stearns implied, both features worked in tandem to produce pupils of both spiritual and physical virtue; one without the other resulted in the tarnishing of both and overall diminishing of educational quality. Such statements aligned Stearns with muscular Christian theologians like Protestant missionary bishop Charles H. Brent, who proved himself a missionary counterpart to Stearns in their shared project of muscular Christian advocacy towards Asian and Pacific Islander populations through his engagement with Philipino converts between 1902 and 1918.¹¹⁷ As a champion of muscular Christianity, Brent “considered the body to be a mirror of the soul,” physical exercise “necessary as training the mind and spirit for improving oneself.”¹¹⁸ Stearns’ rhetoric towards the Chinese students echoed such sentiments and positioned exercise as enrichment to theological practice.¹¹⁹ While Stearns never explicitly described his positions as muscular Christian, his rhetorical and actionable commitments nonetheless embodied its principal features. This advocacy sought to warm Chinese parents already attracted to a theological education—given Stearns’ advocacy on Christian patriotism and frugality—to the prospect of athletic pursuits.

The Chinese parents soon came to agree. In 1927, following Stearns’ reports on K. Y. Tu’s progress at the Academy, his father H. K. Tu expressed his acquired approval towards athletics. “Recently [my son] has been taking greater interest in his studies owing to his... athletic activities,” H. K. remarked, articulating approval for “the wise regulation of the school requiring the students to maintain a comparatively high scholarship [concurrently].”¹²⁰ Such

parental accounts indicate that not only did Academy rules reflect Stearns' commitment to athletics practiced as a buttress to—rather than at the expense of—their religious studies, but parents likewise lauded such policies and extended their approval for religious studies to athletics thanks to Stearns' advocacy. Indeed, H. K. did not neglect to credit Stearns' formative influence. “This is an [*sic*] encouraging news and I must thank you sincerely for your continuous and successful efforts [to reform my son],” he concluded, referencing Stearns' efforts to cultivate athletic pursuits alongside high performance in the Academy's intellectual education.¹²¹ With such statements of approval, Chinese parents reiterated their trust in Stearns' athletic recommendations and illustrated the success of Stearns' rhetorical and actionable advocacy. Indeed, mirroring Stearns' philosophies, Chinese parents carefully qualified their approval with faith in athletics' capacity for intellectual and spiritual improvement. That Chinese parents advanced such qualifications only demonstrated their wholehearted approval of the nuanced interplay between athletics and theology part and parcel of a muscular Christian education.

Where commitments to Christian patriotism and frugality cemented families' trust in Christianity, athleticism made that commitment decidedly muscular. Stearns' successful attempts to cultivate Chinese parents' trust in athletics not only aligned American Protestant ideals with Chinese families' existing interests but also shaped those interests to accommodate muscular Christianity. That Stearns successfully catalyzed this nuanced cross-pollination and alignment of ideals attested to the deftness of his rhetorical and actionable commitments. This dual-faceted advocacy, in turn, amplified Chinese families' trust in Stearns' ability to center Protestantism—and thus their best interests—in his guidance. In fact, so strong grew this commitment to American Protestantism that, under Stearns' influence, Chinese families even reconsidered and adjusted their value systems in attempts to maximize the effectiveness of a theological education.

By the time the Chinese students concluded their studies at Andover, Stearns' rhetorical and actionable commitments to muscular Christian ideals had made devout Christians of the Chinese families familiar with his guidance.¹²² Upon their return to China, furthermore, many Chinese alumni proved eager to continue what Stearns dubbed the "missionary work" of promoting the Academy and the muscular Christian values for which it stood.¹²³ Years following their departure from Andover Hill, alumni wrote Stearns enthusiastically upon convincing prospective Chinese students of Andover's capacity to cultivate "both [their] studies and the development of [their] minds."¹²⁴ In the summer of 1914, for example, following a three-year hiatus in China between his abruptly curtailed studies at Andover and enrollment at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Sung Sing Kwan found himself among a delegation of 88 male students and 10 female students set to sail for America.¹²⁵ Two months before, a forward-thinking Stearns had sent the college-bound Kwan a selection of Andover's catalogs and a renewed reminder to "influence some of your young men to come to Andover before entering college."¹²⁶ True to his "missionary" commitments, Kwan ultimately persuaded five of the eleven boys of age for secondary school in the delegation to attend the Academy: an institution that, as he experienced three years prior, would offer a thorough education in muscular Christian ideals.¹²⁷ For Kwan, his 1914 advocacy marked just the beginning of his commitment to muscular Christianity as an Andover alumnus. Some three decades later—having moved to Taiwan following the Chinese Communist Party takeover of mainland China in 1949—Kwan became the Republic of China's foremost champion of track and field.¹²⁸ By Kwan's death in 1960, the Andover alumnus had served as the founding president of the Republic of China Track and Field Association, a starter in the sport for the Taiwan Provincial Games from 1952 to 1957, and mentor to two Olympic medalists—including Chuan-Kwang Yang, the first-ever Chinese

athlete awarded an Olympic medal.¹²⁹ Kwan thus took after Stearns' advocacy for athletic pursuits. Indeed, Kwan himself became only more zealous a proponent of athletic engagement than Stearns was for him.

Stearns' advocacy for a Protestant education not only encouraged Chinese constituencies' trust in muscular Christianity but also cultivated Chinese students and alumni eager to promote that trust in their younger counterparts. Phillips Academy's influence over its Chinese alumni thus participated within twentieth-century American Protestant attempts to convert the Chinese populace. Furthermore, it was China, not the United States, where the vast majority of the Chinese populace resided and Andover's Chinese alumni conducted the rest of their lives.¹³⁰ Accordingly, it is only appropriate to situate analyses of Stearns' influence within the twentieth-century reception of American Protestantism in China. The following section reveals that, even as a muscular Christian education took Chinese student circles by storm, Chinese popular conceptions of Protestantism proved only more tempestuous than the maritime turbulence that Kwan and the newly Andover-bound students faced during their voyage to the United States. Where Stearns was successful in his immediate "missionary activities" of promoting trust in a Protestant worldview, popular conceptions of Christianity soured as American Protestant missionaries fabricated symmetries between Chinese and Western thought in overzealous attempts at proselytization.¹³¹ The legacy of Stearns' muscular Christian guidance thus limited itself to the Chinese families with the financial and political wherewithal to pursue a Christian education and failed to stem the tide of twentieth-century hostility towards Christian activities.

Section Three: Stearns' Advocacy *vis-à-vis* American Protestant Advocacy in China

A Revised Rhetoric: Twentieth-Century Protestant Attempts at Sinicization

Two decades into the twentieth century, the 3,348 Christian missionaries and 58 Protestant missionary boards in China faced both Chinese and international pressures to renounce nineteenth-century arguments and adopt the attentiveness towards Chinese culture that Stearns practiced so deftly.¹³² By 1918, chief among missionaries' international pressures was the diminishing credibility of overtly Western supremacist philosophies among American audiences—for many, the unprecedented destruction of World War I disproved what nineteenth-century missionaries touted as the unmistakable superiority and civility of Western nations.¹³³ Stearns, himself a proponent of cultural exchange rather than unconditional Western superiority, chastised the socio-political holdouts in 1920. "That we are suffering from this disease there can be no doubt," Stearns lamented in reference to Americans enamored with Western exceptionalism and the American dream.¹³⁴ "Our sacrifice and suffering in the great war [*sic*] were not nearly sufficient to bring us to our full senses," he concluded.¹³⁵ Sentiments like Stearns', which condemned the fundamental assumptions of nineteenth-century missionary activities, were likewise adopted by missionaries across the Pacific Ocean. Combined with a decades-long Chinese aversion towards Western exceptionalism, such newfound insecurities pressured missionaries in China to declare the theological assumptions of their predecessors tenuous and outmoded. This confluence of domestic and international influences threatened to inundate Protestant populations in China and foretold seismic shifts in missionary arguments.

The first of these shifts, a reaction to the anti-Christian sentiment that began prior to World War I, was an attentiveness towards the Chinese representation that missionaries had long ignored. Whereas Western missionaries dominated Christian leadership in nineteenth-century

China, in 1911 the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions declared “a real advance in the idea of self-support and responsibility for... a Chinese Church.”¹³⁶ The new church would feature Chinese Christian leadership to develop teachings cognizant of Chinese culture and palatable to the Chinese people.¹³⁷ As the largest organization of American Protestant missions in the world, the Board of Commissioners validated and amplified calls to institutionalize Chinese-led Protestant evangelizing. Favorable statements from the Board, which included representation from Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Evangelical constituents, also demonstrated widespread cross-denominational support for a Chinese Church.¹³⁸ In 1918, American Protestants in China institutionalized this support and launched the Missionary Movement of the Chinese Church.¹³⁹ Such declarations and movements accompanied increases in Chinese membership at American Protestant functions. In 1912, fewer than one-third of the delegates in attendance at the National Conference of Missionaries were Chinese; at the National Christian Conference one decade later, Chinese representation had grown to more than 50%.¹⁴⁰ As a first step in the Sinicization of Protestant evangelizing within China, American Protestants encouraged Chinese Protestant leadership. These efforts challenged the racial and ideological homogeneity of nineteenth-century missionary activities and offered a foundation upon which to reform Protestant messaging.¹⁴¹ Just as Stearns encouraged the Chinese alumni formerly under his tutelage to continue American Protestant advocacy in China, Stearns’ missionary counterparts encouraged the integration of Chinese voices into the development of Christianity in China.

This Chinese missionary involvement encouraged Protestant leaders—both Chinese and American—to integrate Chinese culture into Protestant theology. Addressing the Christian Literature Society in 1920, David T. Z. Yui urged the Society to “aim at presenting the

fundamental principles of Christianity in a style that would be best appreciated by the people: [steeped in] a knowledge of Chinese psychology [and] the background of centuries of Chinese civilization and experience.”¹⁴² Two years later, Yui became the founding Chairman of the National Christian Council of China, presiding over an executive leadership team of twenty-seven—fourteen of whom were Chinese. Like Yui himself, the Council held that the financial and theological success of the Protestant movement in China required the integration of Chinese culture.¹⁴³ Where Stearns’ rhetoric sought to position Protestant theology as aligned with Chinese interests, Yui’s subscribers held that the theology itself must include aspects of Chinese culture in order to codify this alignment. Across China, Protestants echoed the sentiments of the National Christian Council in missionary essays and reports. Among the largest platforms for this discourse was *The Chinese Recorder*, a missionary publication founded in 1867, nationally circulated by the early twentieth century, and lauded for the diversity of Christian agencies represented on its editorial staff.¹⁴⁴ In a 1924 issue of *The Chinese Recorder*, American Sinologist Homer H. Dubs encouraged his missionary colleagues to draw upon “the store-houses of this ancient and flourishing civilization... in order to secure the greatest effectiveness in teaching the [sic] God.”¹⁴⁵ In subsequent years, countless missionaries reiterated Dubs’ appeals in the pages of *The Chinese Recorder* and *The West China Missionary News*, among other missionary publications.¹⁴⁶ A 1925 survey by missionary Phillip McClean found 75% of sixty-three newly arrived American Protestant missionaries keen to incorporate Chinese religious literature in their presentation of Christianity and 80% in favor of integrating Chinese values into Protestant evangelizing.¹⁴⁷ American and Chinese Protestants alike thus found themselves swept into an ever-growing impulse to integrate Chinese thought into Christian dogma. Whereas nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries considered an understanding of Chinese culture

redundant at best and a handicap at worst, their twentieth-century counterparts extolled that understanding zealously.¹⁴⁸ American Protestants' increased attentiveness towards Chinese voices and culture conceded that missionaries' previous enterprises had proven short-sighted. The integration of Chinese culture into Christian apologetics, American Protestants and their supporters believed, would only facilitate Chinese conversion. As Yui, Dubs, and McClean's writings gained traction, so did an American Protestant apologetic seeking to accommodate Chinese culture. Indeed, Stearns' attempts to align American Protestant interests with Chinese ones coincided with the shifting landscape of syncretized American Protestant rhetoric in China.

As if to assure Chinese peoples of their goodwill, missionaries likewise issued apologies for the misdeeds of their predecessors. American Protestants lamented that nineteenth-century missionaries tokenized "the seamy side and the bizarre," advanced arguments "based on force and vanity," and "were not sensitive to the injustices which were being done to China."¹⁴⁹ Variations of such apologies proliferated among American Protestants circles, for missionaries who retained the Western triumphalism of preceding decades would remain prime targets for the anti-Western movements threatening to jeopardize the Protestant missionary enterprise. American Protestants thus all but scrambled to repent and disassociate themselves from their forerunners in attempts to mitigate the stigma surrounding Protestant practice. If an embrace of Chinese leadership and culture saw American Protestant missionaries cultivate a Sinicized Christianity, repenting for nineteenth-century missionary activities sought to make that Christianity culturally expedient.

In attempts to maximize this cultural expedience, American Protestant missionaries likewise promoted the universal compatibility of Christian practice. "We are... not in China as the propagandists of any particular type of civilization," read a joint 1925 declaration by 72

Methodist Episcopal missionaries.¹⁵⁰ These assurances sought to convince the Chinese populace that American Protestants in China sought genuine engagement with Chinese culture. In renouncing ties to foreign rhetoric, missionaries sought to dismantle May-Fourth-era accusations that American Protestantism threatened to distort Chinese identities. Indeed, missionaries maintained, the Christian church ought to uplift all cultures and nationalities. Writing in the *West China Missionary News* in 1927, an anonymous editor of *The China Bookman* offered that, despite cultural differences across geographies, “the real Church is the Church of God, and is composed of men and women of all nations and tribes and tongues.”¹⁵¹ This rhetoric of inclusivity sought to assuage Chinese reservations that conversion to Christianity came at the expense of Chinese cultural practice. Rather than force civilizations into a Western model of Protestantism, missionaries implied that evangelization and Chinese culture could elevate each other and coexist in harmony. Such missionary arguments sought to convince the Chinese populace that American Protestants aimed to integrate rather than debase Chinese culture in their evangelizing. American missionaries renounced Western affiliations and touted the elasticity of Christianity in order to maximize Protestant consonance with Chinese thought.

Despite the volume and intensity of this rhetoric, the twentieth-century American Protestant movement in China—not unlike Stearns’ mentorship of the Chinese students—appealed primarily to the Chinese elite.¹⁵² Indeed, since the likes of British Presbyterian missionary James Legge in the nineteenth century, American Protestant missionaries had—taking after their British counterparts—conducted discourse through apologetical parlance and lengthy treatises largely inaccessible to the minimally literate Chinese populace.¹⁵³ As such, where the Chinese elite warmed to Stearns’ mentorship and American Protestant attempts at syncretism in the early twentieth century, missionary arguments became increasingly opaque to

those lacking the wherewithal for a thorough humanistic education. Arguments that did reach Chinese populations, in turn, were missionary writings assessing the Chinese folk religious tenets that Chinese citizens understood intimately. Such arguments, in attempts to incorporate Chinese thought into Protestant theology at the expense of faithful portrayals of Chinese culture, were riddled with distortions quickly spotted and condemned by ambivalent prospective converts. As such, the Chinese populace only turned up their nose as the Chinese elite, in part due to Stearns' muscular Christian advocacy, flocked to Christianity in droves.

Distorting Ancestor Worship to Fabricate Symmetries

Although many American Protestant missionaries and their sympathizers sought to align faithfully with Chinese culture, they misconstrued Chinese folk religious thought in practice. Under the pretense of Sinicization, twentieth-century missionaries appropriated everything from the Chinese religious lexicon to Sinicized habits of dress to argue that Chinese thought proved compatible with Protestantism.¹⁵⁴ A particularly revealing case study lies in American Protestant misrepresentations of ancestor worship, a millennium-long folk-religious practice central to Chinese religious practice and thought.¹⁵⁵ Derived from Confucian philosophies of reverence towards elders, ancestor worship dictated Chinese life—from the layout of Chinese towns to procedures of marriage—and prescribed a network of rituals, offerings, and geomancy.¹⁵⁶ Chinese clans trusted that such practices provided sustenance to the dead, who reciprocated with the wisdom and fortune of preceding generations. This capacity to confer wisdom to the living positioned the *citang*, or ancestor hall, as communities' principal site for kowtowing, community gatherings, and communal decision-making.¹⁵⁷ Ancestor worship thus proved a “deep-rooted Chinese [practice] of a socio-religious nature” critical to communal order.¹⁵⁸ Adherence to

ancestor worship lay at the center of Chinese culture as a keystone of the cohesiveness, decorum, and spiritual wellbeing of local polities.¹⁵⁹

Given the centrality of ancestor worship in Chinese life, Protestant alignment with the practice proved integral to a Sinicized Christianity.¹⁶⁰ However, ancestor worship required reverence for numerous idols and clashed with the Christian mandate of monotheistic worship.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, where ancestor worship outlined the responsibility of the living to worship the dead, Protestantism scorned just that.¹⁶² In attempts to circumvent this theological discordance, Protestant missionaries adopted two principal lines of argument: many declared ancestor worship secular and therefore irrelevant to religious thought and others recast the practice as not the polytheistic worship of the dead but the monotheistic worship of God.¹⁶³ The former argument sought to mitigate Protestant friction with ancestor worship and the latter moved further to fabricate symmetries between Chinese and Protestant dogma; both evidenced Protestant attempts to distort Chinese culture for theological expedience.

James Thayer Addison of the American Church Mission argued zealously for the secular interpretation of ancestor worship in a 1924 essay for *The Chinese Recorder*. “The average Chinese performs the ceremonies of ancestor worship without any clearly conscious motive... [and] with no belief implied in the powers,” Addison wrote, summarizing the twentieth-century opinions of his missionary colleagues.¹⁶⁴ Particularly vocal among Addison’s supporters was Chinese-born Protestant and University of Illinois graduate Tze Chung Woo. Writing for the *West China Missionary News* in December 1925, Woo offered that “ancestors are not idols, bowing and kneeling are not worshipping [and do] not conflict with any of the Christian principles.”¹⁶⁵ In asserting that ancestor worship lacked intent—religious or otherwise—Addison and Woo labeled the practice secular. This reframing enabled missionaries to dismiss ancestor

worship as a peculiar social activity rather than a problematic religious practice. A non-religious discrepancy, Addison and Woo concluded, posed neither a conflict with Christian theology nor an obstacle to missionaries' attempts at syncretism.¹⁶⁶ Such arguments sought not to actively accord ancestor worship with Christian theology but to position the two in benign coexistence. However, Addison and Woo's accusation that ancestor worship lacked intentionality overlooked the Chinese wishes for spiritual wisdom and guidance behind every prostration and offering.¹⁶⁷ In dismissing these wishes as secular, Addison and Woo minimized the religious importance of ancestor worship within Chinese culture. American Protestant missionaries and their supporters argued that a practice central to Chinese religious thought lay outside of its scope altogether.

Still other missionaries—dissatisfied with the benign coexistence of Chinese and Protestant thought and eager to position the former in active agreement with the latter—distorted the tenets of ancestor worship to introduce unfounded similarities between the two belief systems. Addison observed in his 1924 remarks that many of his colleagues declared the Christian “sublimation” of ancestor worship inevitable under Chinese Protestant leadership.¹⁶⁸ This diction highlighted the Christian exceptionalism that underpinned missionaries' nominal attentiveness towards Chinese culture.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, whereas syncretism and sublimation both attempted to promote the resemblance between Chinese and Christian thought, the former treated both on equal footing while the latter treated Chinese cultural practices as inferior. Addison's diction thus assumed that Chinese cultural practices were both mindless and unrefined. Only Protestant attempts to maximize Chinese symmetries with Christian theology, Addison's colleagues maintained, would elevate Chinese cultural practices from their crudity.

Justifications for this sublimation sought to reframe the principal discrepancies between ancestor worship and Protestant thought—reverence for the dead and polytheistic worship—as

either symmetries or peripheral nuisances. On both counts, American Protestants relied on arguments by E. R. Hughes of the London Presbyterian Church, who in the February 1925 issue of *The Chinese Recorder* presented ancestor worship as not idolatry towards the dead but an appeal to “the essence [of the Christian] Family.”¹⁷⁰ Hughes posited that, for Chinese communities in worship, “beyond the [ancestral] family was Heaven and that dim figure Shang-Ti,” invoking a romanized Chinese phrase for God.¹⁷¹ Therefore, the practice marked Chinese attempts to understand Christian truths of “the Son having glorified the Father, the Father glorified the Son”: the fundamental principles of the trinitarian family outlined, among other Protestant treatises, in the Phillips Academy Constitution.¹⁷² Hughes thus reframed ancestor worship as a Chinese attempt to discover the monotheistic worship of God and the Christian familial ideal. That the Chinese efforts involved a corrupted intermediate step of worshipping deceased ancestors did not overshadow the Christian truth towards which the practice strived. Indeed, Hughes concluded, the worship of numerous deceased idols exposed but a misinformed Chinese aberration awaiting correction, after which missionaries would finally guide “[Chinese] sheep, tired of wandering,” to “the main highway... by which the soul may arrive at the Kingdom of God.”¹⁷³ These statements denied the Chinese populace its religious agency in implying that that worship of the deceased had reduced the Chinese “flock” to but a wandering mass awaiting corralling and salvation. Hughes’ references to the “highway,” furthermore, positioned the Kingdom of God as the theological paragon and framed Anglo missionaries as shepherds of Chinese enlightenment.¹⁷⁴ Through such Anglo-centric arguments, Hughes dismissed the polytheistic worship of the dead as dispensable imperfections that did little to obscure the symmetries between ancestor worship and Christian thought. Given these symmetries, Hughes concluded that the sublimation of the former became tenable.¹⁷⁵ In fact,

sublimation would illuminate the Christian goals of ancestor worship, establish that Chinese culture accorded faithfully with Protestant thought, and enable converts to pursue Christian ideals while retaining theologically acceptable aspects of Chinese spiritual practice.

Arguments like Hughes' gained so much traction among American Protestant audiences that missionary and University of Chicago graduate Lewis C. Smythe's 1928 dissertation observed of his American Protestant colleagues that "a definite tendency is developing to utilize the fundamental values of the ancestor cult... for the [Christian] sanction of the family."¹⁷⁶ In framing ancestor worship as a "cult," Smythe's diction echoed the Anglocentrism implied within Addison's and Hughes' calls to sublimate ancestor worship and shepherd the Chinese to the Kingdom of God. Consistent with this Anglocentric rhetoric, Smythe highlighted not isolated attempts but growing missionary "tendencies" to accord a distorted ancestor worship with Christian familial values and thereby lend credence to the American Protestant enterprise. Just as Hughes declared ancestor worship consistent with the Christian ideal of Father and Son, American Protestants maintained that the practice only strengthened the theological symmetries between Chinese and Christian thought. Missionaries upheld these arguments by framing the specific subjects of worship—deceased ancestors—as but superfluous entry-points to access a universal, monotheistic idol.¹⁷⁷ The subjects of ancestor worship, however, were neither universal nor superfluous. As a socio-religious linchpin, ancestor worship enabled Chinese communities to foster communal solidarity around posthumous, clan-specific identities.¹⁷⁸ This shared devotion to the deceased, according to sociologist Anning Hu, cemented the practice as central to Chinese religious wellbeing, "with its rituals, scripts, beliefs, and courtesies penetrating in almost every aspect of an individual's daily life."¹⁷⁹ Therefore, the polytheistic and posthumous dimensions of ancestral worship proved central to the relevance and ubiquity of

the practice. To replace specific clan identities with a single deity would fracture the ancestral solidarity that reinforced both religious and communal wellbeing.¹⁸⁰ The subjects of ancestor worship—the dead—were integral to both the faithful execution of the practice and the identity of each community. Smythe observed American Protestant tendencies to discount and distort both.

Missionaries' dismissiveness towards the religious tenets of ancestor worship—and whether the practice was religious at all—only led the Chinese populace to reject American Protestant commitments to syncretism as unscrupulous.¹⁸¹ “The question of ancestor worship has long remained a stumbling block for many men to declare openly their Christian faith... [and is] oppressing the propagation of the Christian religion,” Woo observed in 1925, not without alarm.¹⁸² Woo's assessments proved well-founded; his warnings came amidst a resurgence in anti-Christian movements as missionary distortions eroded public support for Protestant evangelizing. Throughout the 1920s, student federations and local organizations published dozens of anti-Christian articles and proclamations in local newspapers like the *Peking Morning Post*.¹⁸³ Realizing that Protestant attempts at syncretism were not beyond the debasement of Chinese culture, May Fourth intellectuals circulated telegrams across the nation's largest cities that urged the Chinese populace to scorn association with Christian influences.¹⁸⁴ As missionary C.S. Chang observed in his 1923 summary of anti-Christian arguments, Chinese advocates maintained that American Protestant missionaries had “shackled freedom of thought” and attempted the “unnatural as well as dangerous” imposition of Protestant theology at the expense of the Chinese identity.¹⁸⁵ Chinese resentment towards this missionary compromise varied in intensity and method of dissemination but shared a disappointment in the American Protestant inability to abandon the Anglocentric attitudes of the preceding century.¹⁸⁶ Twentieth-century

political cartoons regularly made these domestic hostilities apparent. One such cartoon, published in a 1927 edition of *The North China Herald*, shows a missionary feasting on the “brains and marrow of the Chinese people” as his dog, labeled “Chinese Christians,” terrorizes a crowd of Chinese patriots.¹⁸⁷ The caption—“beat this damned dog to death”—offers a visceral representation of public hatred towards missionaries.¹⁸⁸ Labeled exclusively in simple Chinese, the cartoon targeted *The North China Herald*’s largely domestic, minimally literate audience. Media representations thus pitted Western influence against the Chinese populace and sanctioned violence against Chinese Christian converts and missionaries alike. The vehemence of Chinese public rhetoric only soured public opinion surrounding Christian proselytization and practice.

Two decades into the twentieth century, unsatisfying evangelizing results attested to the effects of this anti-Christian advocacy. With 340,000 Christian communicants and a total Christian constituency of approximately 600,000, missionary efforts in China swayed just 0.08% and 0.14% of the Chinese population, respectively.¹⁸⁹ World War I and growing anti-foreigner resentment offered impetuses for an American Protestant transition to Sinicization, but many missionaries sought to disguise rather than dispel the Anglocentrism that pervaded the missionary enterprise. Indeed, attempts to strip ancestor worship of its religious importance and tenets offered but two examples of American Protestant attempts to sacrifice faithful depictions of Chinese religion in service of advancing a “modern” American faith.¹⁹⁰ Seeking sublimation under the guise of syncretism, missionary distortions only led the Chinese populace to conclude that the debasement of Chinese culture within twentieth-century American Protestant theology—though less blatant than that of nineteenth-century evangelizing efforts—proved no less pernicious.

Missionaries themselves were not blind to these critiques. Relaying the frustrations of his Chinese counterparts, Woo lamented in December 1925 that many remained convinced that missionaries were “preaching a foreign religion... their [distortion] of ancestor worship [offering] but one example of their degeneration.”¹⁹¹ Frustrated by limited evangelizing success, individual missionaries even condemned this distortion. In August 1923, Chang observed that theological misrepresentations led the Chinese populace to view Protestant missionaries as “the vanguard of Western exploitation” seeking to erode the “national integrity of the Chinese people.”¹⁹² Indeed, it was not Chinese culture, but the Protestant travesty of Chinese culture, that resembled Christianity. American Protestant distortions thus offered argumentative fodder for select missionaries to chastise Addison, Woo, and Hughes’ sympathizers for their wanton misrepresentation of Chinese thought. Just five months following Chang’s warnings, Hodgkin redoubled his colleague’s alarm and labeled Protestant distortions as catalysts for “moral disaster [and] intellectual futility.”¹⁹³ The moral and intellectual atrophy resulting from Protestants’ travesties, Hodgkin implied, only undermined the theological nuance that a Sinicized Christianity sought to promote. Chinese resentment towards theological distortions evidenced American Protestant missionaries’ failure to adopt culturally responsive Protestant apologetics; missionary condemnations suggested that such distortions did not go wholly unchallenged among Protestants themselves.¹⁹⁴ In 1935, it was in none other than *My Country and My People* that Lin, having himself renounced the Protestant affiliations of his upbringing, likewise joined this chorus of condemnation. Missionary distortions only evidenced attempts to “develop [within Chinese] Western mental habits,” Lin declared, upon which converts “forgot the realities of their own race.”¹⁹⁵ In Lin’s view, capitulation to the Christian travesty of Chinese culture thus became “denationalize[ing] process” rather than the harmonization of Christian and Chinese thought that

missionaries claimed.¹⁹⁶ “The blood, surging in our veins in tides of pride and shame, is a Chinese blood,” Lin declared, extending the Chinese outrage towards twentieth-century missionary distortions beyond Chinese periodicals and to the coffee tables of thousands of American readers.¹⁹⁷ Lin’s message was unequivocal: in promoting American Protestants’ reinterpretation of Chinese cultural practice rather than Chinese culture itself, missionaries fabricated unfounded symmetries between Chinese thought and Christianity—to the ire of both individual missionaries and the Chinese populace.

Conclusion

The twentieth-century American Protestant enterprise thus proved an amalgam of Protestant campaigns to encourage conversion and Chinese campaigns to limit just that. In attempts to cultivate Chinese trust in Protestant evangelizing, American missionaries introduced Chinese Protestants into positions of leadership, supported efforts to center Chinese culture, and repented for the misdeeds of their forerunners. On Andover Hill, Stearns’ efforts to cultivate trust in the Chinese students resulted in a generation of Chinese subscribers to muscular Christian values. As the figurehead of a muscular Christian institution, Stearns thus offered missionary contributions of his own, preaching and modeling the muscular Christianity that became integral to both twentieth-century American Protestantism and the worldview of Andover’s Chinese families.

However, where Stearns’ preaching appealed to the Chinese elite, evangelizing efforts in China devolved from syncretism into misrepresentation. American Protestant interpretations of ancestor worship sought to present the practice as purposeless and strip it of its essential elements. Both arguments perpetrated distortion in service of theological expedience, alienating the non-elite communities in which ancestor worship was unassailable.¹⁹⁸ This distortion of

Chinese culture arose from American missionaries' convictions of American superiority.¹⁹⁹ Embroiled in an ever-growing wave to incorporate Chinese culture into Christian teachings, subscribers to Yui and the National Christian Council committed to overhaul outmoded theological arguments and produce a Sinicized Christianity.²⁰⁰ Others—Bridgman-subscribers masquerading as members of the former camp—sought merely to repackage nineteenth-century arguments with a Chinese wrapping while retaining American exceptionalism at its core.²⁰¹ Indeed, American Protestants treated Chinese culture as but an instrument to promote conversion and failed to consider Chinese and American Protestant ideologies on equal terms. This approach condoned the distortion of Chinese religious tenets and alienated nearly all but the Chinese elite, whose understanding of Christianity hinged upon an education in America—for which Stearns' mentorship was a prime example—rather than that of Protestant missionaries.

Between the Chinese elite and the non-elite Chinese populace, twentieth-century Chinese opinions towards Christianity thus diverged notably. The comparative success of Stearns' efforts to, as Roosevelt declared in 1904, "make ever firmer our intellectual hold upon China" stands in sharp contrast to the unsatisfying record of Protestants for whom syncretism proved but a visor to weather volatile political and social conditions.²⁰² Ultimately, the middling efficacy of missionary arguments in encouraging Chinese conversion attested to their apologetical shortcomings.²⁰³ For all of Stearns' religious advocacy, his dual demonstration of muscular Christian ideals across Chinese constituencies did little to sway Chinese public aversion to American Protestantism. Even as the twentieth century saw American Protestants experiment with syncretism and the Chinese elite warm to Christianity, the inertia of American exceptionalism fettered the expansion of American Protestantism abroad.

However, that Stearns' muscular Christian advocacy did little to impact popular conceptions of Christianity in China does not discount the effectiveness of his advocacy among the Chinese constituents with whom he corresponded. Stearns' rhetorical and actionable commitments enabled the headmaster to embody and apply a muscular Christian lens to the Chinese students' worldview in patriotism, frugality, and athleticism. Such efforts produced scores of Chinese students and parents eager to uphold muscular Christian ideals within the communities to which returned: communities of socioeconomic privilege and therefore hardly representative of China as a whole, but nonetheless an indelible constituency at the confluence of Chinese and American ideological syncretism. A study in Stearns' advocacy thus offers a critical case study in not only the mechanisms by which American Protestant ideals took hold among the Chinese elite but also the arguments that attracted a steady flow of Chinese families to the twentieth-century American Academy.

It was with awareness and gratitude towards this advocacy that, on July 27, 1918, Kwong Yung Kwang sealed a letter addressed to "Alfred E. Stearns" and mailed his halfway across the globe.²⁰⁴ When Stearns opened the typewritten letter some days later, the headmaster was greeted by a bilingual letterhead printed neatly in Chinese and English—a most explicit reminder of the transnational contexts of his correspondence.²⁰⁵ The letter body included a reaction to the examinations of Kwang's son and a renewed request for Andover's 1917-1918 catalogs, his previous supply of which he had exhausted after distributing them to family.²⁰⁶ Kwang thus proved himself among the Chinese parents and students who became advocates of an American Protestant education after Stearns' example. The letter included more than incidentals, however. At the conclusion of the letter, Kwang summarized the wishes of the dozens of Chinese parents who preceded and followed him with the following confession: "His mother & I sincerely hope

you will make a christian [*sic*] out of [our son].”²⁰⁷ Such a statement marked an unequivocal embrace of the Academy’s muscular Christian education. Stearns could have received no more enthusiastic an affirmation of the American Protestant ideals he worked so zealously to inculcate.

Kwang’s note included even more than a bilingual letterhead and commitment to Christianity, however. He included a thank you. “Thanking for your ever kindness towards our students,” Kwang wrote at the foot of the note.²⁰⁸ Those eight words carried gratitude for Stearns’ every tactful remark on Chinese affairs and every update on the Chinese students’ accounts—every action and every line Stearns extended to his Chinese friends, families, and collaborators. On July 27, 1918, Kwang spoke as one Chinese parent out of the dozens with whom Stearns corresponded across his three decades as a muscular Christian advocate at the helm of the Academy. Nonetheless, Kwang’s gratitude was directed towards the same commitments that Stearns extended to all of the Chinese families and collaborators he engaged in conversation. In that sense, Kwang may well have spoken for them all.

One must know what is there to identify what is not. This study occurs not in a vacuum but as one of what must become a series of studies in the Chinese students that build incrementally upon each other to uplift the Academy’s marginalized, untold histories. It is my hope that this opening study, conducted through the lens of Stearns, explores what is there in order to set the stage for studies in what is not. The framing and focus of this study do not neglect, but most explicitly acknowledge, the shortcomings and omissions in the archives. Those omissions await further study.

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In a study that centers Stearns, it is only fitting to reserve a place in these acknowledgments for the figure this study takes as its subject. In 1912, Stearns—in a characteristic show of compassion towards the Chinese parents amidst the political turmoil of Republican China—remarked at the height of his Christian advocacy, “I can only express the hope that the ordeals through which you are daily passing in your own land may soon become matters of history.”²¹⁰ Little did Stearns know, the “ordeals” to which he referred would grow into a decades-long campaign of political turmoil in China that shaped both his arguments on patriotism, frugality, and athleticism and the development of China in the twentieth century. Thank you, Headmaster, for offering me both impetus for this study and a quote to repurpose as the conclusion of my acknowledgments. It is my hope that this study in Stearns’ rhetoric in the larger history of American Protestant advocacy—a case study in United States’ educational institutions’ formative influence on the Chinese elite—does, in fact, make such transnational histories of educational exchange “matters of history” well-studied for decades to come.

Notes

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- ¹ Kwong Yung Kwang to Alfred E. Stearns, July 27, 1918, Folder 4710, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ² "My Country and My People (1935 Edition)," Open Library, last modified August 12, 2011, accessed September 9, 2021, https://openlibrary.org/books/OL24214697M/My_country_and_my_people.
- ³ "Lin Yutang, 80, Dies; Scholar, Philosopher," *The New York Times* (New York, USA), March 27, 1976, 1, accessed September 9, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/03/27/archives/lin-yutang-80-dies-scholar-philosopher-lin-yutang.html>.
- ⁴ "Lin Yutang (1895 - 1976)," Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity, accessed September 9, 2021, <http://bdcconline.net/en/stories/lin-yutang>.
- ⁵ Boyd Tonkin, "The Little Prince: The New Film of the Boy Who Fell to Earth," *The Independent* (London, United Kingdom), December 29, 2014, [Page #], accessed September 9, 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/little-prince-new-film-boy-who-fell-earth-9949079.html>; "Hall of Fame Honorees: Lillian Smith," Georgia Writers Hall of Fame, accessed September 9, 2021, <https://georgiawritershalloffame.org/honorees/lillian-smith>.
- ⁶ "Lin Yutang," 1.
- ⁷ Edward J. M. Rhoads, "Chapter 9: Becoming Americanized?" in *Stepping Forth Into the World: The Chinese Educational Mission to the United States, 1872-81* (Aberdeen, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 143-144, PDF.
- ⁸ Rhoads, "Chapter 9: Becoming," 158.
- ⁹ Alfred E. Stearns, "Andover and China," *The Phillips Bulletin*, October 1920, 6-7, accessed September 9, 2021.
- ¹⁰ Fredrick W. Jordan, "Between Heaven and Harvard: Protestant Faith and the American Boarding School Experience, 1778-1940" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2004), 22.
- ¹¹ For letters in which Stearns explores or references Chinese affairs, see Alfred E. Stearns to Charlie Sun, February 21, 1928, Folder: Sun 1928, Box 30, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to C.Y. Sun, March 17, 1928, Folder: Sun 1928, Box 30, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to Daniel B. Nye, December 31, 1929, Folder 4, Box 27, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to Fayuen Sun, November 14, 1911, Folder 1803, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to K. F. Tsai, May 18, 1926, Folder 5037, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to King Yin Kwan, December 7, 1908, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to King Yin Kwan, April 3, 1909, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to King Yin Kwan, April 23, 1909, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to King Yin Kwan, March 5, 1912, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to King Yin Kwan, May 8, 1912, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to M. C. Liang, June 21, 1920, Folder 4538, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to M. T. Liang, January 28, 1925, Folder 4604, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to Sung Sing Kwan, April 9, 1912, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to S. Y. Hu, November 29, 1920, Folder 4415, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ¹² Jordan, "Between Heaven," 348.
- ¹³ Jordan, "Between Heaven," 348.

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- ¹⁴ Johnathan D. Spence, "Experiments in Government: China and the United States," in *The Search for Modern China* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 386, PDF.
- ¹⁵ Stearns to Kwan, April 9, 1912; Sung Sing Kwan to Alfred E. Stearns, June 28, 1914, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ¹⁶ For the most thorough—albeit domestic—study of Stearns' American Protestant influence to date, see Jordan, "Between Heaven," 364-387, 563-567.
- ¹⁷ For scattered examples of primary sources on Andover's Chinese students outside of Stearns' correspondence, see Alfred E. Stearns, "Welcome: Dr. Stearns' Message" (address printed in The Twelfth Annual Conference of the Eastern Section of the Chinese Students' Alliance in the United States of America at Phillips Academy, Andover, MA, August 24, 1916), 7; "Chinese Students' Alliance. Third Annual Conference Being Held in the Theological Seminary — Large Attendance of Students and Interesting Program," *The Andover Townsman* (Andover, MA), August 23, 1907, 4, accessed September 11, 2021, <https://mhl.org/sites/default/files/newspapers/ATM-1907-08.pdf>; "Successful Conference: Chinese Students Close a Very Enjoyable Program," *The Andover Townsman* (Andover, MA), August 30, 1907, 4, accessed September 11, 2021, <https://mhl.org/sites/default/files/newspapers/ATM-1907-08.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ For examples of Chinese students' reliance on Stearns, see Mary Sun to Alfred E. Stearns, April 18, 1926, Box 28, Folder 1, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Stearns to Sun, February 21, 1928.
- ¹⁹ Edward J. M. Rhoads, "Chapter 11: The Returned Students," in *Stepping Forth Into the World: The Chinese Educational Mission to the United States, 1872-81* (Aberdeen, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 209, PDF.
- ²⁰ Stearns' correspondence with Sung Sing Kwan extended past 1932, some two decades following Kwan's departure from the Academy; Stearns wrote Tommy Sun as late as 1949, nearly three decades following Tommy's departure. Stearns likewise advised the children of C. Y. Sun well past their time on Andover Hill. See Alfred E. Stearns to Sung Sing Kwan, May 4, 1932, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to Tommy Sun, March 28, 1949, Folder 1, Box 27, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Sun to Stearns, April 18, 1926.
- ²¹ For a study that positions ancestor worship within Chinese folk religion, see Fenggang Yang and Anning Hu, "Mapping Chinese Folk Religion in Mainland China and Taiwan," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, no. 3 (September 2012): 509, 512. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41681808>.
- ²² Chang, "III. The Anti-Religion," 466; Daniel Liestman, "'To Win Redeemed Souls from Heathen Darkness': Protestant Response to the Chinese of the Pacific Northwest in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Western Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (May 1993): 179-201, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/970935>; Editorial Board of The Chinese Recorder, "Editorial," *The Chinese Recorder* 55, no. 11 (November 1924): 695, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3107577&view=1up&seq=833&skin=2021>; Harry Kingman, "An Outstanding Problem of the Christian Movement in China," *The Chinese Recorder* 57 (May 1926): 332, accessed May 11, 2021, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b3103515>; Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, "God's Villages: Christian Communities in Late-Nineteenth-Century South China," in "Asian Ritual Systems: Syncretisms and Ruptures," special issue, *Journal of Ritual Studies* 19, no. 1 (2005): 32, PDF; Jun Xing, "The American Social Gospel and the Chinese YMCA," in "Bridging an Ocean: American Missionaries and Asian Concerts Reexamined," special issue, *The Journal of American - East Asian Relations* 5, no. 3 (Fall/Winter 1996): 277, 282, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23612677>. For a study that positions insensitive Protestant evangelizing in China as a catalyst of Confucian-Christian polarization, see Ya-pei Kuo, "'Christian Civilization' and the Confucian Church: The Origin of Secularist Politics in Modern China," *Past & Present*, no. 208 (February 2013): 235-264, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23360260>.
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Christian Movement in China 1922-127," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (February 1953): 133, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2941975>.

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²⁹ Editorial Board of The Chinese Repository, "Christian Colonies to Eastern Asia," *The Chinese Repository* 4, no. 5 (September 1835): 204, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3883202&view=1up&seq=219&skin=2021>.

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³² Johnathan D. Spence, "Fragmentation and Reform," in *The Search for Modern China* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 140-141, PDF.

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³⁷ Theodore Roosevelt to William Woodville Rockhill, May 18, 1905, Harvard College Library, The Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, Dickinson, ND.

³⁸ Roosevelt to Rockhill, May 18, 1905.

³⁹ Roosevelt to Rockhill, May 18, 1905.

⁴⁰ For a summary of the anti-Christian movement in China, see C. S. Chang, "III. The Anti-Religion Movement," in "The Intellectual Wakening of Young China," special issue, *The Chinese Recorder* 55, no. 8 (August 1923): 466, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3108842&view=1up&seq=580&skin=2021>.

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- ⁴⁹ Rhoads, "Chapter 11: The Returned," 209.
- ⁵⁰ Joseph A. Reaves, "Silk Gowns and Gold Gloves," in *Taking in a Game: A History of Baseball in Asia* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 25-27, digital file.
- ⁵¹ Reaves, "Silk Gowns," 25-27.
- ⁵² Stearns consulted Sir Liang Cheng regularly on Chinese students' affairs. See Alfred E. Stearns to Sing Kan Tsai, December 18, 1906, Folder 1120, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ⁵³ Claude Moore Fuess, "History of Phillips Academy Andover: The Twentieth Century," in *An Old New England School: A History of Phillips Academy Andover* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1917), 504, digital file.
- ⁵⁴ Fuess, "History of Phillips," 505.
- ⁵⁵ Fuess, "History of Phillips," 505.
- ⁵⁶ Fuess, "History of Phillips," 505.
- ⁵⁷ Fuess, "History of Phillips," 505.
- ⁵⁸ Fuess, "History of Phillips," 505.
- ⁵⁹ Fuess, "History of Phillips," 505.
- ⁶⁰ Describing Dr. Stearns' relationship with Chinese parents, Robert Chandler offered in 1920 that the Chinese parent was often "not himself a Christian." See Robert E. Chandler to Edward H. Chandler, July 1, 1920, Box 29, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ⁶¹ Alfred E. Stearns, *The Challenge of Youth* (Boston, MA: W. A. Wilde Company, 1923), accessed September 12, 2021, <http://www.pa59ers.com/library/Stearns/youth1.html>.
- ⁶² Sinley K. Y. Chang to Alfred E. Stearns, January 13, 1925, Folder 4543, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ⁶³ Alfred E. Stearns, "Part Three: Religion in Civilization," in *The Challenge of Youth* (Boston, MA: W. A. Wilde Company, 1923), accessed September 12, 2021, <http://www.pa59ers.com/library/Stearns/youth1.html>.
- ⁶⁴ *Amherst College Catalog 1884/1885: The Course of Study* (Amherst, MA: Amherst College, 1884), 25, accessed September 12, 2021, <https://acdc.amherst.edu/explore/asc:627250/asc:627420>.
- ⁶⁵ For a study of "world Christianity" in twentieth-century New England's American Protestant educational institutions, see James Strasburg, "Creating, Practicing, and Researching a Global Faith: Conceptualizations of World Christianity in the American Protestant Pastorate and Seminary Classroom, 1893 to the Present," *Journal of World Christianity* 6, no. 2 (2016): 217-236, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jworlchri.6.2.0217>.
- ⁶⁶ Jordan, "Between Heaven," 377.
- ⁶⁷ King Yin Kwan to Alfred E. Stearns, November 4, 1908, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ⁶⁸ Stearns, "Andover and China," 6-7.

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- ⁶⁹ Samuel Phillips, ed., *The Constitution of Phillips Academy, in Andover* (Andover, MA: Flagg and Gould, 1828), 11-12, accessed September 12, 2021, <https://archive.org/details/constitutionofph00phiala/page/n3/mode/2up?q=god>.
- ⁷⁰ Stearns, "Andover and China," 6-7. Among the Chinese parents, Stearns' piece was received with a chorus of applause. For an example of Chinese parents' vocal support for Stearns' Christian framing in his *The Phillips Bulletin* feature, see C. Y. Sun to Alfred E. Stearns, December 26, 1920, Box 29, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ⁷¹ For all the implied religious dimensions of his rhetoric, Stearns does not hesitate to articulate this religiosity clearly. For Stearns' reiteration of "high Christian principles" to the Chinese students, see Stearns to Sun, February 21, 1908.
- ⁷² Stearns to Kwan, December 7, 1908.
- ⁷³ Kwan to Stearns, June 28, 1914; Kwan to Stearns, November 4, 1908; Stearns to Hu, November 29, 1920.
- ⁷⁴ Stearns, "Andover and China," 6-7.
- ⁷⁵ Spence, "Fragmentation and Reform," 267-268.
- ⁷⁶ Stearns to Kwan, March 5, 1912.
- ⁷⁷ Spence, "Fragmentation and Reform," 261.
- ⁷⁸ "Chinese Students," 4.
- ⁷⁹ "Chinese Students," 4.
- ⁸⁰ "Successful Conference," 4.
- ⁸¹ Stearns, "Welcome: Dr. Stearns," 7.
- ⁸² Kwan to Stearns, November 4, 1908.
- ⁸³ King Yin Kwan to Alfred E. Stearns, October 2, 1909, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ⁸⁴ Reaves, "Silk Gowns," 25-27.
- ⁸⁵ S. Y. Hu to Alfred E. Stearns, November 24, 1920, Folder 4415, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ⁸⁶ C. L. Chow to Alfred E. Stearns, December 15, 1917, Folder 4055, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Hu to Stearns, November 24, 1920.
- ⁸⁷ Chandler to Chandler, July 1, 1920.
- ⁸⁸ Chandler to Chandler, July 1, 1920.
- ⁸⁹ Stearns to Liang, June 21, 1920.
- ⁹⁰ Chandler to Chandler, July 1, 1920.
- ⁹¹ Sun to Stearns, December 26, 1920.
- ⁹² The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to Alfred E. Stearns, June 9, 1921, Folder 4263, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ⁹³ Alfred E. Stearns to Henry Smith Leiper, September 9, 1920, Box 29, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ⁹⁴ Stearns to Leiper, September 9, 1920.
- ⁹⁵ Stearns to Leiper, September 9, 1920.

⁹⁶ Stearns to Leiper, September 9, 1920.

⁹⁷ Stearns extended similar promises of thoughtful guidance to several other missionaries as well, among them Edward E. Chandler of the American Board Mission. See Alfred E. Stearns to Edward E. Chandler, September 9, 1920, Box 29, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to Stearns, June 9, 1921.

⁹⁸ Stearns, "Andover and China," 6-7.

⁹⁹ Jordan, "Between Heaven," 14-15.

¹⁰⁰ King Yin Kwan, for example, served at the Imperial Medical College in Tientsin, China and resigned his post in 1913, just two years following the fall of the Qing dynasty. See Sung Sing Kwan to Alfred E. Stearns, October 16, 1913, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.

¹⁰¹ Soma Hewa, "The Protestant Personality and Higher Education: American Philanthropy beyond the 'Progressive Era,'" *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 12, no. 1 (Fall 1998): 135, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20019958>.

¹⁰² For examples of such detailed reports of financial accounts, see Alfred E. Stearns to Alfred K. P. Tsai, "Account of Alfred K. P. Tsai from December 5, 1927 [*sic*] to October 9, 1928," October 9, 1928, Folder 3, Box 27, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to K. F. Tsai, "Account of K. F. Tsai, from March 13 to December 8 [*sic*] 1920," December 8, 1920, Folder 5037, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to K. F. Tsai, "Account of K. F. Tsai, June 4, '23 to March 24, '24," March 24, 1924, Folder 5037, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Stearns to Kwan, March 5, 1912.

¹⁰³ King Yin Kwan to Alfred E. Stearns, May 25, 1911, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.

¹⁰⁴ Stearns to Kwan, March 5, 1912.

¹⁰⁵ Stearns to Kwan, March 5, 1912.

¹⁰⁶ Stearns to Kwan, May 8, 1912.

¹⁰⁷ Stearns to Kwan, May 8, 1912.

¹⁰⁸ Alfred E. Stearns to Fayuen Sun, December 26, 1908, Folder 1571, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to Fayuen Sun, November 14, 1911, Folder 1571, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to F. S. Tu, May 13, 1927, Folder 2, Box 28, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to K. Y. Tu, July 26, 1927, Folder 2, Box 28, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Alfred E. Stearns to Mary Sun, April 21, 1926, Folder 1, Box 28, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Stearns to Kwan, March 5, 1912; Stearns to Kwan, March 5, 1912; Stearns to Kwan, May 25, 1911; Stearns to Liang, June 21, 1920.

¹⁰⁹ H. K. Tu to K. Y. Tu, July 15, 1927, Folder 2, Box 28, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.

¹¹⁰ Stearns to Tu, May 13, 1927. For an account of the Tu's move to the French Settlement in Shanghai, see F. S. Tu to Alfred E. Stearns, April 10, 1927, Folder 2, Box 28, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.

¹¹¹ Letter to Alfred E. Stearns and Ting-Kan Tsai, November 8, 1926, Folder 2, Box 27, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.

¹¹² Alfred E. Stearns, "Part Three: Religion in Civilization," in *The Challenge of Youth* (Boston, MA: W. A. Wilde Company, 1923), accessed September 12, 2021, <http://www.pa59ers.com/library/Stearns/youth1.html>.

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- ¹¹³ Fuess, "History of Phillips," 505.
- ¹¹⁴ Alfred E. Stearns to Dummer Athletic Association, October 10, 1910, Folder 2545, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ¹¹⁵ Stearns to Dummer Athletic Association, October 10, 1910.
- ¹¹⁶ Alfred E. Stearns to C. Y. Sun, June 7, 1926, Folder 2, Box 30, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ¹¹⁷ Hübner, "Muscular Christianity," 537.
- ¹¹⁸ Hübner, "Muscular Christianity," 537.
- ¹¹⁹ Stearns to Sun, June 7, 1926.
- ¹²⁰ H. K. Tu to Alfred E. Stearns, July 15, 1927, Folder 2, Box 28, Head of School (Stearns) Records, Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.
- ¹²¹ Tu to Stearns, July 15, 1927.
- ¹²² Chow to Stearns, December 15, 1917; Hu to Stearns, November 24, 1920.
- ¹²³ Stearns to Kwan, April 9, 1912.
- ¹²⁴ Kwan to Stearns, June 28, 1914.
- ¹²⁵ Kwan to Stearns, June 28, 1914.
- ¹²⁶ Stearns to Kwan, April 9, 1912.
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- ¹³⁰ Emma Teng, "Home: Celebrating the 140th Anniversary of Chinese Students at MIT," *China Comes to MIT: MIT's First Chinese Students / 早期留学生: 1877-1931*, accessed September 11, 2021, <http://chinacomestomit.org/sungsing-kwan>.
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- ¹³² Arthur Judson Brown, "XXI: Responsibility of Missionaries for the Boxer Uprising," in *New Forces in Old China: An Unwelcome but Inevitable Awakening* (Chicago, IL: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1904), 249, <https://archive.org/details/newforcesinoldch00browuoft/page/248/mode/2up>.
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- ¹³⁴ Stearns to Liang, June 21, 1920.
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- ¹³⁶ Report, "Annual Report of North China Mission of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions," 1911, in "The Dilemma of Accommodation: Reconciling Christianity and Chinese Culture in the 1920s," by Xiaogun Xu, 27, *The Historian* 60, no. 1 (Fall 1997), PDF.

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- ¹³⁹ Xu, "The Dilemma," 27.
- ¹⁴⁰ Foreign Missions Conference of North America and Missionary Research Library Staff, "National Christian Council of China Records, 1919-1950," Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 6, The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries, Union Theological Seminary, New York, NY. The National Conference of Missionaries was renamed the National Christian Conference in 1922 due to a reorganization of conference leadership. Despite the difference in titling, both conferences convened missionaries from across the nation in one of the largest annual Protestant missionary functions of twentieth-century China.
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- ¹⁴⁵ Homer H. Dubs, "Chinese Religious Education," *The Chinese Recorder* 55, no. 5 (May 1924): 290, accessed May 11, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3107577&view=1up&seq=339&q1=dubs>.
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- ¹⁴⁹ Chang, "III. The Anti-Religion," 466; Editorial Board of The Chinese Recorder, "Editorial," 695; Kingman, "An Outstanding," 332.
- ¹⁵⁰ "North China Herald, October 10," 1925, in "The Dilemma of Accommodation: Reconciling Christianity and Chinese Culture in the 1920s," by Xiaoqun Xu, 31, *The Historian* 60, no. 1 (Fall 1997), PDF.
- ¹⁵¹ Editor of The China Bookman, "The National Christian Literature Association," *The West China Missionary News* (Chengtu, Szechuan, China), January 1927, 17, accessed May 14, 2021, <https://findit.library.yale.edu/bookreader/BookReaderDemo/index.html?oid=11613946&page=1#page/4/mode/1up>. By 1927, missionary appeals to inclusivity were not without precedent: in November 1924, The Editorial Board of *The Chinese Recorder* reminded its missionary readers that "we need to appreciate, as well as say, that God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth [*sic*]." "It is the aim of Christianity," the editorial continued, "to blot out the word 'alien' and 'barbarian' and put the word 'brother' in its place." This declaration marked a continuation

of American Protestant attempts to declare the universal accessibility of Christian practice. See Editorial Board of The Chinese Recorder, "Editorial," 695-696.

¹⁵² Lauren F. Pfister, "The Mengzian Matrix for Accommodationist Missionary Apologetics," *Monumenta Serica* 50 (2002): 393, 396, PDF.

¹⁵³ Pfister, "The Mengzian," 393, 396, PDF.

¹⁵⁴ For a study of missionaries' linguistic and sartorial appropriation of Chinese culture in attempts at a Sinicized theology, see Pfister, "The Mengzian," 410-411, PDF.

¹⁵⁵ Yang and Hu, "Mapping Chinese," 509, 512.

¹⁵⁶ Yang and Hu, "Mapping Chinese," 509, 512.

¹⁵⁷ Yang and Hu, "Mapping Chinese," 508.

¹⁵⁸ Y. Y. Tsu, "Spiritual Tendencies of the Chinese People As Shown Outside of the Christian Church Today," *The Chinese Recorder* 56, no. 12 (December 1925): 781, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3109967&view=1up&seq=939&skin=2021>.

¹⁵⁹ Anning Hu, "Ancestor Worship in Contemporary China: An Empirical Investigation," *China Review* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 170, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/43709965>; Kevin Reilly, "Confucius The Analects, c. 479-221 B.C.E.," in *Worlds of History: A Comparative Reader*, fifth ed. (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, n.d.), One: To 1550: 138, accessed April 8, 2021.

¹⁶⁰ Addison, "The Meaning," 597.

¹⁶¹ Addison, "The Meaning," 595; T. C. Woo, "A Chinese Christian on Ancestor Worship," *The West China Missionary News* (Chungking, China), December 1925, 31, accessed April 23, 2021, <https://findit.library.yale.edu/bookreader/BookReaderDemo/index.html?oid=11613284#page/30/mode/1up>; Yang and Hu, "Mapping Chinese," 508.

¹⁶² T. W. Douglas James, "The Christian Approach to Ancestor Worship," *The Chinese Recorder* 56, no. 11 (November 1925): 731, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3109967&view=1up&seq=107&skin=2021>.

¹⁶³ Addison, "The Meaning," 592, 595-598; E. R. Hughes, "Race Prejudice and Some Allied Religious Issues," *The Chinese Recorder* 56, no. 2 (February 1925): 81-85, accessed July 26, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3109967&view=1up&seq=110&skin=2021&q1=race%20prejudice%20and%20some%20allied%20issues>; Woo, "A Chinese," 31-34.

¹⁶⁴ Addison, "The Meaning," 592, 596. Addison's colleagues, among them Reverend T. W. Douglas James of the Presbyterian Church, stripped ancestor worship of its religious dimensions and described the practice as "animistic." See James, "The Christian," 730.

¹⁶⁵ Woo, "A Chinese," 34. The University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives lists Woo as a 1921 graduate under the name "Thomas Tze-Chung Woo." Upon Woo's return to China, an American educational background informed his theology and evangelizing efforts. See Salvatore De Sando, "Illini Everywhere: Chinese Illini, 1917-1927: Alumni in China," Student Life and Culture Archives, last modified February 9, 2018, accessed July 29, 2021, <https://www.library.illinois.edu/slc/illini-everywhere/chinese-illini-2/>.

¹⁶⁶ Addison, "The Meaning," 592, 595, 597; Woo, "A Chinese," 33-34.

¹⁶⁷ Yang and Hu, "Mapping Chinese," 509.

¹⁶⁸ Addison, "The Meaning," 592, 597; James, "The Christian," 730.

¹⁶⁹ The Oxford English Dictionary defines "sublimation" as "the action or process of... transformation into something higher, nobler, or more refined." Addison's diction thus positions Christian theology as higher and more refined than Chinese thought, a mindset that hampered faithful engagement with Chinese cultural practices. See "sublimation, n." OED Online. June 2021. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.proxy5.noblenet.org/view/Entry/192761?redirectedFrom=sublimation> (accessed July 26, 2021).

¹⁷⁰ Hughes, "Race Prejudice," 84.

¹⁷¹ Hughes, "Race Prejudice," 84.

¹⁷² Hughes, "Race Prejudice," 84. Among the most prominent champions of the trinitarian family was eighteenth-century American Protestant theologian Johnathan Edwards. Summarizing Amy Plantinga Pauw's analysis of Edwards' theology, Ava Chamberlain offered that "as Paw explains... the Father and Son [offered the conduit] through which the trinitarian family 'seeks spiritual union beyond its bounds.'" Therefore, Hughes' invocation of Father and Son aligned his arguments for sublimation with American Protestant frameworks of the trinitarian family. See Ava Chamberlain, review of *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, by Amy Plantinga Pauw, *The Journal of Religion* 84, no. 1 (January 2004): 123, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/382312>.

¹⁷³ Hughes, "Race Prejudice," 84-85.

¹⁷⁴ Hughes' essay reads as follows: "[The Christian ideal of Father and Son offers] one road, perhaps the main highway, by which the soul may arrive at the Kingdom of God. Here too the Church may learn how and where to find good pasture for her flock and for other sheep, tired of wandering." "Pasture" refers here to expedient theological arguments meant to facilitate Chinese sublimation and conversion, "flock" refers to missionaries' current Chinese following, and "sheep" refers to potential Chinese converts. See Hughes, "Race Prejudice," 84-85.

¹⁷⁵ Hughes, "Race Prejudice," 82-85.

¹⁷⁶ Lewis C. Smythe, "The Changing Missionary Message," *The Chinese Recorder* 60 (March 1929): 165, accessed May 15, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt/search?q1=%22religious%20sanction%20of%20the%20family%22;id=uc1.b3157986;skin=2021;view=1up;seq=5;sort=seq;sz=10;start=1.;page=search;orient=0>. Smythe's dissertation, although completed in 1928, was published by *The Chinese Recorder* in 1929.

¹⁷⁷ Hughes, "Race Prejudice," 82-85; James, "The Christian," 730; Smythe, "The Changing," 165.

¹⁷⁸ Yang and Hu, "Mapping Chinese," 508.

¹⁷⁹ Hu, "Ancestor Worship," 170.

¹⁸⁰ Yang and Hu, "Mapping Chinese," 508.

¹⁸¹ Cohen, "The Anti-Christian," 176; Yamamoto and Yamamoto, "II. The Ant-Christian," 147; Tsu, "Spiritual Tendencies," 781.

¹⁸² Woo, "A Chinese," 34.

¹⁸³ Chang, "III. The Anti-Religion," 460, 463.

¹⁸⁴ Chang, "III. The Anti-Religion," 459.

¹⁸⁵ Chang, "III. The Anti-Religion," 462-463. Manifestations of this Chinese resentment towards Christianity ranged from passive to proactive. Anti-Christian functions such as a 1923 conference at Peking's National University saw thousands flock to lectures and discussions that declared Christianity a "passed issue" unworthy of Chinese attention. Prominent intellectuals like Nai Te Chang urged his followers "to attack with an objective attitude all [Christian] superstitions" that mistreated Chinese cultural tenets. Publications such as Hsu Ching Yi's 1923 booklet "The Anti-Religion Federation and Church Revolution" called for the abolishment of Christian theology in China altogether. For a more detailed account of anti-Christian responses, see Chang, "III. The Anti-Religion," 460-461.

¹⁸⁶ Chang, "III. The Anti-Religion," 460-461. Endnote 66 describes the anti-Christian responses of varying intensity and methods of dissemination.

¹⁸⁷ "打死这条野狗 [Beat this Damned Dog to Death]," 1927, in "The Dilemma of Accommodation: Reconciling Christianity and Chinese Culture in the 1920s," by Xiaoqun Xu, 26, *The Historian* 60, no. 1 (Fall 1997), PDF. "中国人民的骨髓" translated by Xu as "bones and marrow of the Chinese people," "国民" translated by the author as

“Chinese patriots,” “中国教徒” translated by Xu as “Chinese Christians,” and “教师” translated by the author as “missionary.”

¹⁸⁸ “打死这条野狗,” in “The Dilemma,” 26. “打死这条野狗” translated by the author as “beat this damned dog to death.”

¹⁸⁹ For further quantitative analyses of twentieth-century Christian missionary influence in China, see Fuk-tsang Ying, “The Regional Development of Protestant Christianity in China: 1918, 1949 and 2004,” in “Religious Studies in China,” special issue, *China Review* 9, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 68, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23462280>.

¹⁹⁰ Addison described the goal of American Protestants’ selective sublimation of ancestor worship as “purifying the worship of ancestors of all fear and falsehood so that what it contains of living truth may abide as a treasured possession.” In pursuit of this “living truth,” however, American Protestants stripped ancestor worship of its essential tenets. See Addison, “The Meaning,” 598.

¹⁹¹ Woo, “A Chinese,” 32, 34.

¹⁹² Chang, “III. The Anti-Religion,” 464. Cohen, “The Anti-Christian,” 176; Tsu, “Spiritual Tendencies,” 781; Yamamoto and Yamamoto, “II. The Ant-Christian,” 147.

¹⁹³ Henry T. Hodgkin, “The Discussion of Doctrinal Differences,” *The Chinese Recorder* 55, no. 1 (January 1924): 28, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3107577&view=1up&seq=40&skin=2021&q1=grose>.

¹⁹⁴ Chang, “III. The Anti-Religion,” 466.

¹⁹⁵ Yutang Lin, “Introduction,” introduction to *My Country and My People*, 11th ed. (Peking, China: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2008), 10; Yutang Lin, “Part One - Bases: Prologue,” in *My Country and My People*, 11th ed. (Peking, China: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2008).

¹⁹⁶ Lin, “Introduction.”

¹⁹⁷ Lin, “Introduction.”

¹⁹⁸ Cohen, “The Anti-Christian,” 176; Xu, “The Dilemma,” 26.

¹⁹⁹ Addison, “The Meaning,” 597.

²⁰⁰ David Z. T. Yui, “The Need,” 238, PDF.

²⁰¹ Smythe, “The Changing,” 165. Presbyterian missionary Maxwell Stewart, one such Bridgman-subscriber, scorned Christian apologetics that incorporated elements of Chinese culture as “a feeble substitute for the burning message... [and] the fire and assurance that were manifest in the missionary slogans of thirty years ago,” little more than a short-term adaptation to “stand the pragmatic test” of political turmoil. See Stewart, “The Missionary,” 526-528.

²⁰² Roosevelt to Cortelyou, January 25, 1904; Stewart, “The Missionary,” 526-528.

²⁰³ Ying, “The Regional,” 68.

²⁰⁴ Kwang to Stearns, July 27, 1918.

²⁰⁵ Kwang to Stearns, July 27, 1918.

²⁰⁶ Kwang to Stearns, July 27, 1918.

²⁰⁷ Kwang to Stearns, July 27, 1918.

²⁰⁸ Kwang to Stearns, July 27, 1918.

²⁰⁹ Reaves, “Silk Gowns,” 25-27.

²¹⁰ Stearns to Kwan, March 5, 1912.

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