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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to explore themes in U.S. history that have only recently begun to receive attention in the field, such as the role of religion in foreign relations and the application of postmodern methodologies to the study of history. Specifically, this project focuses on cultural imperialism as a process that begins with the social construction of personal and national identities as well as bodies of knowledge regarding other cultures. I argue that the role of American Protestant missionaries in the Chinese Boxer Rebellion was significantly influential on the course of events, without necessarily being causative. The actions of American Protestant missionaries were rooted in their identities as products of nineteenth century American culture, which conflicted with the cultural identity and institutions of many nineteenth century Chinese, ultimately making the missionaries targets of Boxer aggression. American Protestant missionaries also exercised influence in the political arena, leading to the U.S. military intervention in the Boxer Rebellion, through the exploitation of treaty protections, relationships with the American diplomatic apparatus in China, as well as personal relationships with top leaders in the McKinley administration and other powerful leaders of the Republican Party.
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believed in me, not only during this project, but throughout my life.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis in memory of Judge Edward E. Crutchfield, Katherine S. Crutchfield and Roger F. Duncan. I would also like to dedicate it to my mother, Jane Crutchfield Garrison; my father, John Hamilton Duncan; and my grandmother, Mary Chandler Duncan, all of whom played very different but essential roles in helping me reach this level of achievement.
INTRODUCTION

On June 20, 1900 missionary wife Bessie Ewing was trapped in the Legation Quarter of the walled Tartar City in Beijing (Peking). She was not alone. Four-hundred-seventy-two other foreigners, mostly diplomats, missionaries, and their families, were also trapped, along with 2,400 Chinese Christian converts with only 362 marines to protect them.\(^1\) They were surrounded by disorganized armies of peasant martial arts fighters who believed their sacred rituals possessed them with the spirits of ancient gods and made them invincible to sword and gun. Westerners called these men Boxers, because of their origins in rural martial arts boxing clubs.

The Chinese government was bound by treaty to protect missionary families like Bessie Ewing’s, but the palace had ordered the Legation Quarter to be evacuated of all foreigners, even though to do so would mean certain death at the hands of the waiting Boxers. That morning the German minister had been slain in the street by Chinese Imperial soldiers, on his way to meet with representatives of the Chinese government.\(^2\) They were trapped, besieged by both the Boxers and the Imperial army.

The Boxer Rebellion was an anti-foreign uprising of peasants organized into loosely associated martial arts groups in China in the final years of the nineteenth century. It began in the rural northwest province of Shandong with attacks on European and American missionary posts, Chinese Christian converts, and local Christian churches. The uprising was put down relatively quickly in this area but the ideas and practices associated with the movement had already spread northward towards the capital city of Beijing. By late June the movement had grown from an anti-Christian movement to an anti-foreign one and had surrounded the foreign Legation Quarter.

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of Beijing where they laid siege to the foreign ministers, missionaries, and Chinese converts who had fled to the legations for protection. Boxers also descended on the coastal city of Tianjin where foreigners, missionaries, and converts were besieged as well.

The ruling Qing Dynasty lent its support to the Boxers when it appeared they would be successful, committing the Imperial army to the siege. However, when the tide turned against the Boxers, the Qing withdrew its support and focused its energies on repairing relations with the foreign powers. After fifty-five days, the Boxers were defeated by an allied military force comprised of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, France, Japan, Great Britain, Russia, and the United States.

The central role that missionaries played in the Boxer uprising along with the United States military intervention invites a variety of intriguing questions about the possible ways that religion may influence foreign relations. While there have been a considerable number of studies on both the Boxer uprising as well as American missionaries in China, there has not been a lot of in depth work done on the significance of American missionaries as actors in foreign relations, particularly in the Boxer uprising. The historiography on American missionaries and the American missionary movement is extensive and as old as American missions itself, beginning with Jonathan Edwards’ establishment of the biographical genre of missionary studies with his extremely popular 1749 publication of *The Life of David Brainerd*. While based on the diaries of Brainerd, and published with excerpts from the diaries, Edwards formulates his biography of Brainerd as a platform for the presentation for his own theological arguments. However, *The Life of Brainerd* earns its place in the historiography of American missionaries as the first serious

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scholarly publication documenting the activities of an American missionary and the aims of the movement.

In the late nineteenth century it was still the missionaries themselves who were writing the history of the missionary movement and books often originated as series of lectures given at the prominent missionary training schools of the time, such as Yale, Princeton, Andover, and Oberlin. A good example of this work is Foreign Missions After a Century by Rev. James S. Dennis, published in 1897. Dennis was an ordained minister as well as a missionary Professor at Presbyterian College in Beirut, Syria. While not professionally trained as a historian, Dennis was a highly educated scholar and produced voluminous academic works on comparative religion and sociology. Foreign Missions After a Century originated as a series of lectures on missions given at Princeton Theological Seminary. Because the author and the audience were both involved in the missionary movement, the history is framed in terms of present-day issues facing the missionary movement in various parts of the world. However, these works are still biased towards the missionaries themselves and still functioned as exhortations to support the missionary cause.

In the late 1960’s, the work of Robert Pierce Beaver signaled a transition in the field of missionary history. While he still did not represent a complete move away from missionaries writing their own history because he was a missionary, he was not an ordained minister, held a PhD in History from Cornell and therefore represented a significant move towards being more professor than missionary. In his essay “Missionary Motivations Through Three Centuries” published in 1966, Beaver provided the first comprehensive overview of American missionary

4 James S. Dennis, Foreign Missions After a Century (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1897); Another very good example of this type of work can be found in the many voluminous works of Kenneth Latourette.
ideology and its relationship to American political ideology. He was the first to address directly the significance of the rise of both millennialism and nationalism to the motivations of American foreign missions, and identified the marriage of missionary and expansionist goals in the nationalist doctrine of Manifest Destiny throughout the nineteenth century. Beaver’s work brilliantly anticipated, and possibly even precipitated, the explosion of academic scholarship that was to come.

The conflict over American involvement in Vietnam in the late 1960’s and into the 1970’s raised significant questions as to the imperialistic nature of American foreign policy. As a result scholars began to view questions of motivations for American missionary involvement overseas, particularly in East and Southeast Asia, more seriously. After years of languishing on the periphery of professional scholarship, all of a sudden missionary history began to be taken seriously by academic historians. Not only Vietnam, but the rise of social history and its focus on issues of race, class, and gender drew the study of the American missionary movement firmly into the realm of serious academic inquiry with questions regarding the significant role of women in the movement.

In 1974, Arthur Schlesigner, Jr. published an article entitled “The Missionary Enterprise and Theories of Imperialism,” which was characteristic of the distinct departure from the tradition of missionaries writing their own history. Schlesinger Jr. was a Harvard trained historian with a background in government intelligence work during World War II. Schlesinger was among the first to define cultural imperialism and to identify American missionaries as agents promoting Western cultural ideals including commercial enterprise and Western technology, regardless of their intent to do so. He drew on works in the areas of political

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science, economics, sociology, as well as government documents. It was at this point that the field of missionary studies can be said to have fully made the transition from the realm of missionaries to the realm of professional academic inquiry. Most significantly for the purposes of the present study, this work marks the introduction of idea of missionaries as agents of cultural imperialism, and thus actors in the realm of foreign relations. Even so, Schlesinger did not thoroughly explore questions of how cultural imperialism functioned, how American missionaries in particular functioned as agents of cultural imperialism, and the specific consequences of those functions.

William R. Hutchison attempted to make some sense of the chaos in the field in his landmark 1987 book, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions*. Like Beaver, Hutchison focused specifically on the history of the American Protestant missionary movement and its ideological motivations. However, what he added to Beaver’s work was the historical context in which the major changes in motivating ideology took place. Hutchison argued the theme that has most defined American Protestant missionary ideology has been the tension between the promotion of the Christian Gospel and the promotion of Western culture or civilization, identified by Schlesinger. Hutchison certainly acknowledged the chaotic nature of the field, but made it clear that he felt it was time to stop talking about the problem and begin to attempt to make sense of it and throughout his work suggested very specific places in which the next phases of research should be done, specifically in the area of the role of missionaries as agents of cultural imperialism.

At this point it is necessary to backtrack to pick up the other important 1970’s development of the evolution of the history of the American missionary movement, which was

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the introduction of social history. We also must return to R. Pierce Beaver who pioneered the first history of women in the missionary movement in 1968, again showing his talent for anticipating significant areas of scholarship. In 1968 Beaver published *All Loves Excelling: American Women in World Missions.* Beaver introduced the importance of women to the missionary movement, tracing their involvement initially as educators within the family and the confines of church activity, to their increasing involvement as missionary wives in the field, and ultimately as single female missionaries. Most significantly, Beaver emphasized the negative reaction that the traditional male leadership had to the rising independent role of women and asserted that the decline in support for world missions in general could be directly linked to the attempts of the male leadership to subvert, rather than embrace, women’s active involvement. The controversial nature of this assertion at the time at which it was made cannot be overstated.

Beaver was slightly ahead of the larger movement of social history, which focused on issues of race, class, gender, and ethnicity, that developed in the 1970’s as a result of the civil rights movement and second-wave feminism. As related to studies of gender in the missionary field, Beaver was more than a decade ahead. Scholars did not begin applying gender studies to the research of the missionary movement until well into the 1980’s.

In 1984 Jane Hunter published *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women in Turn-of-the-Century China.* Hunter picked up where Beaver had left off. Beaver had merely identified the change in the role of women in the movement from missionary wives to largely single women. Hunter compared the roles of married missionary women to the roles of single missionary women. *Gospel of Gentility* was arguably the first in depth study of the missionary movement,

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not just as it related to gender, but as a complex trans-cultural movement that was about much more than simply sharing the word of Christ. Hunter tied together the issues of gender with cultural imperialism, making it clear that every gain of the missionary movement in any way was at the expense of local Chinese traditions and values. Most significantly, it was the freedom that single missionary women gained through the church that Chinese women began to emulate and not the domestic or even the Christian doctrines they were being taught. No other academic work on the missionary movement had yet to lay out the true complexity of the missionary movement and so clearly outlined innumerable perspectives from which the movement could be approached.

The last twenty years of research in the field of missionary studies has been characterized by increasing specialization. A good example of this is Carol C. Chin’s article “Beneficent Imperialists: Women Missionaries in China at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” published in 2003.9 This article specifically focuses on gender as it relates to the role of women in Chinese missions as cultural imperialists and defines itself as a study in diplomatic history. Chin applied the definition of cultural imperialism put forward by Schlesinger, Jr. and others in the 1970’s with the conclusions of the gender historians like Hunter in the 1980’s about women as effective agents of the civilizing mission. “Beneficent Imperialists” also reflects the ideas that were coming out of the application of post-structuralist literary theory to historical research. These were ideas regarding gender and culture as social constructions and the ways in which language and institutions served to define those social constructions. “Beneficent Imperialists” was not just another contribution to gender history. It is a highly specialized contribution to the field of missionary studies regarding the way in which gender and identity contributed to the role of

women as agents of American cultural imperialism in late nineteenth and early twentieth century China.

In addition to the application of post-structuralist ideas to historical interpretations, and studies on the significance of ideological history, another recent trend in missionary studies has been international comparative history. These works, such as “Indigenous Encounters with Christian Missionaries in China and West Africa, 1800-1920: A Comparative Study” published in 2005 by David Lindenfield, compare the effects of the missionary movement during the same time period in different geographical areas.10 These studies enable scholars to see if there are areas in which the missionary experience is similar, regardless of location, and in what ways location and indigenous cultures make a difference. Lindenfield’s study also exhibits the interdisciplinary approach that was so long called for by scholars like Hutchison and Hunter. In addition to the more traditional sources such as missionary and governmental archives, Lindenfield consulted scholarly sources in the fields of religious studies, psychology, and anthropology. Lindenfield’s study was one of the first to attempt to embrace the mulit-faceted and complex nature of mission studies, by taking both an international and an interdisciplinary approach.

In spite of the fact that literature on the American missionary movement extends back over two-hundred-fifty years, the academic field of missionary studies is barely over thirty-five years old. Like most relatively new fields, it is characterized by its extreme variety and lack of cohesiveness as scholars work to cover the ground necessary to build a proper foundation for further discussion. This study attempts to continue and expand on the theme of applying post-structural concepts regarding gender as a social construction by applying those concepts on a

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wider scale, encompassing not only gender but education, medicine, and popular culture as social constructions. Most significantly, this work seeks to expand the post-structuralist concepts applied by viewing cultural imperialism as a process that is grounded in the cultural creation of meaning, knowledge, and identity.

Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida transformed the world of academia by introducing new perspectives on the roles that meaning, knowledge, and identity play in the way that humans experience the world. Derrida is often considered to have founded the school of post-structuralism with the publication of “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences.”\(^\text{11}\) This essay focused on the ways in which humans create meaning and define reality with language primarily through dualities. A large part of the understanding of what something is for most people tends to have a lot to do with what something is not. In other words, to identify an object as a table implies that it is not a chair, or a couch, or bookshelf etc. However, Derrida argued that this manner of understanding is dependent upon assumptions about reality and not any form of unchanging, incontrovertible truth or meaning. This concept is difficult to see with an example using physical objects, but when applied to more intangible words such as love, freedom, or truth it becomes easier to see the dependence of their meaning on both context and personal interpretation. The conclusion becomes that while humans often experience the meaning of language, symbols, actions etc. as fixed, they, in actuality only have meaning in relation to very specific contexts, and even within those contexts are open to an infinite realm of personal interpretation.

Michel Foucault did similar work on language and the creation of meaning but focused more on the subject of knowledge by asking questions about how bodies of knowledge, or

structures of meaning, are created and perpetuated. He also explored the relationship of knowledge creation and power structures. The work that is most relevant to the current study is his *History of Sexuality Vol. 1.*\(^{12}\) In this book Foucault explored the process by which the body of knowledge regarding sex and sexuality was created and evolved over the course of several centuries. The most relevant part of this work concerns the way in which sex was transformed in the nineteenth century by the appearance of the scientific field of psychology. As psychologists began to question people about their sexual behavior and produce sets of data that were used to establish what was common and uncommon behavior in a given group of people, the concept of sexual norms were introduced. As the field of psychology gained more acceptance, both socially and scientifically, so did the language and associated social boundaries created by the conclusions of psychologists. Certain sexual behaviors became increasingly categorized as aberrant and words were created to label what were perceived as sexual disorders such as homosexuality and sexual hysteria.

The authoritative positions that psychologists held as representatives of the scientific and medical community gave their conclusions significantly more credence in society, as did the publication of their conclusions in magazines, academic journals, and books. Increasingly social norms for both sexual behavior and the discussion of sexual behavior were established creating social and eventually legal consequences for deviating from those social norms. However, as society has evolved, eventually the questioning of those social norms has taken place. Foucault’s main point was to expose the extent to which bodies of knowledge are largely dependent upon the socially constructed perceptions of those in the position of power to most successfully perpetuate those perceptions. As with the history of sexuality, the conclusions reached were

strongly influenced by the particular value system of those conducting the studies. The resulting
social norms and structures of meaning do not necessarily constitute a direct relation to actuality,
however, human beings tend to experience these structures of meaning as knowledge, or what
they know to be true.

This study seeks to apply these concepts of Derrida and Foucault to the experience of
American Protestant missionaries in the late nineteenth century and explore cultural imperialism
less as an event or concept but rather as a process. American Protestant missionaries were
products of the socially constructed culture of nineteenth century America. Chapter one
describes the process by which American Protestant missionaries came to understand their own
identities by coming to understand the Chinese as other than themselves. It also describes the
ways in which the body of knowledge about the Chinese people and culture was created and
perpetuated within the American culture that informed these missionaries’ experience of reality.
Chapter two briefly discusses the similar construction of the body of knowledge regarding
Christianity and foreigners in Chinese culture and primarily focuses on the specific ways in
which the opposing cultural constructions created friction when confronted with each other. This
includes the ways the attitudes of individual missionaries manifested themselves in their words
and actions towards the Chinese as well as the ways in which the religious, medical, and
educational institutions established by American Protestant missionaries conflicted with the
corresponding institutions in Chinese culture.13

13 For further reading on the subject of post-structuralism and its historical applications see the following: Robert F.
Berkhofer, Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995);
Jane Caplan, “Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Deconstruction: Notes for Historians,” Central European
Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations, eds. Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (New York:
The third and final chapter turns away from the more conceptual phases of cultural imperialism to the more concrete ways in which American Protestant missionaries and their supporting organizations influenced the formal diplomatic processes of the United States leading to the deployment of U.S. Marines to intervene in the Boxer uprising. The study of the influence of religion on foreign policy has been a tricky one for a variety of reasons. Only a select few scholars such as Andrew Preston, Andrew Rotter, and William Inboden have even attempted to tackle the subject because it is a subject that defies the traditional historical methodologies that seek to establish causation.\textsuperscript{14} The reality is that rarely do cultural factors, such as religion, serve as causal factors, particularly in the American political process. The Boxer uprising was not caused by American Protestant missionaries, nor was religion the primary motivation for United States military intervention. However, the fact that religion is not a causal factor does not mean that it does not exert a notable influence.

Chapter three seeks to identify the areas in which American Protestant missionaries and their supporting organizations may have possessed a degree of influence and posits questions as to the significance of that influence. This influence includes the role that American Protestant missionaries played in the negotiation of U.S. treaties with China that allowed them considerable protections. It also includes the unusual relationship American Protestant missionaries developed with the American diplomatic apparatus in China as a result of these treaty protections. Most significantly, this final chapter looks at the significance of Protestant Christianity and the

\textsuperscript{14} The most recent and comprehensive work in this field is Andrew Preston, \textit{Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), which is a tremendous leap forward for the field, as it looks to be the type of book that will be able to serve as a comprehensive reference book on the subject for those seeking to undertake further studies. Previous works in the field of religion and U.S. foreign relations that have influenced the methodology of this project include: William Inboden, \textit{Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Andrew Preston, “Bridging the Gap between the Sacred and the Secular in the History of American Foreign Relations,” \textit{Diplomatic History} 30 (Nov. 2006); Andrew J. Rotter, “Christians, Muslims, and Hindus: Religion and U.S.-South Asian Relations, 1947-1954” \textit{Diplomatic History} 30 (Nov. 2006).
increasing popularity of the missionary movement in nineteenth century America, the necessity of politicians of the era to court this powerful demographic, and the interesting relationship between the Republican Party and the leader of America’s largest missionary board at the time, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

This study is intended to be a very broad study and its intention is to introduce and explore large themes and new perspectives on the role of religion in foreign relations, the issue of non-governmental actors in foreign relations, as well as the concept of cultural imperialism as a process that encompasses larger issues of the formation of meaning, identity, and knowledge and the roles they may play in foreign relations. Little emphasis is placed on denominational differences or other such details primarily because in the events of the Boxer uprising, the Chinese Boxers did not discriminate in their attacks on missionaries according to denominational differences.¹⁵ The study has limited itself to American Protestant missionaries in order to establish some limitations on what is an extraordinarily broad subject and because American Protestants constituted both the largest group of American missionaries present in China at the time as well as reflected the culturally dominant religious group in the United States at the time. More than anything this study seeks to establish the potential of the application of post-structural methodologies to cultural areas other than race and gender, particularly the area of religion, in the study of foreign relations.

¹⁵ American Protestant missionaries themselves noted the challenges of distinguishing themselves, in the eyes of local Chinese, from Catholics and various foreign nationalities, and that they often faced opposition because of being associated with negative experiences or perceptions local Chinese had of other missionaries. One letter addressing this issue is particularly salient because of it having been written so close to the time of the first Boxer outbreaks and because it refers to this precise issue in villages in an area in which American Protestant missionaries were forced to flee during the worst of the Boxer violence: Frank Chapin, Letter to Judson Smith, May 20, 1898, Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Unit 3: ABC 16 : Missions to Asia, 1827-1919, Yale Divinity School Library, Special Collections, New Haven, CT.
Finally, a word must be said about sources and how sources relate to cultural imperialism as a process. A wide variety of both primary and secondary sources were consulted in researching this project including travel writing, newspapers, missionary journals, government documents, missionary board archives, poems, and short stories. The creation of knowledge about a particular subject in a society is complex and involves the dissemination of information through a variety of sources and mediums that ultimately serve to reinforce each other, giving the information the appearance of authoritative fact. Teasing out which source informed which others can be a bit like the proverbial question of the chicken or the egg. In order to focus on the process, which is the focus, it is necessary to choose a starting place. This study places emphasis on travel writing as that starting place because of its position as being the earliest and most widely available source in the Western world on foreign people and places, and seems the most likely seed of inspiration from which all subsequent perceptions grew.16

16 In his book *The Unwelcome Immigrant*, Stuart Creighton Miller provides an in depth exploration of the images portrayed of the Chinese by early American and European missionaries, as well as traders and diplomats. The focus of his book is primarily on books and newspapers and is directed more towards the role these images played in leading up to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. However, Creighton also concludes that the negative images of the Chinese found in American missionary writings were one of the most influential sources of information for Americans in the nineteenth century. Stuart Creighton Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).
Despite the lack of malicious intent, as well as the lack of consciousness as to the effects of their actions, American Protestant missionaries played a significant part in fostering the anti-foreign hostility that fueled the Chinese Boxer Uprising in 1900. It cannot be said that missionaries of any denomination or nationality caused the uprising, but it is undeniable that Christian missionaries and their Chinese converts were the primary targets. This is because missionaries came to be perceived by local Chinese as symbols of all forms of foreign incursion on China’s sovereignty, which they saw as the cause of many of their personal misfortunes, from natural disasters to unfavorable judgments in legal cases.

Most American missionaries truly desired to help the Chinese, and sought to replace many aspects of Chinese culture with Western ones because they believed that the Western way was better, and in some cases, it was. However, American missionaries unknowingly made themselves targets of local aggression mostly through the creation and perpetuation of a discursive system that denigrated the Chinese people and culture. This system began with the creation of a culturally biased body of knowledge about the Chinese that then became perpetuated as authoritative throughout American culture, and ultimately manifested itself in the attitudes and actions American missionaries expressed in their daily interactions with the Chinese. These attitudes and actions often contributed to or appeared to confirm existing fears among the local Chinese that missionaries were merely forward agents of Western political and commercial powers intent on dividing and colonizing China, hence, making the missionaries and their Chinese converts the ultimate targets for anti-foreign aggression.
Research on the Boxer Rebellion, like that of Victor Purcell, Chester Tan, and Joseph Esherick, has largely focused on the origins of the Boxers and their relationship to the Qing Dynasty and the question of whether or not the movement was merely anti-foreign or also anti-dynastic.\(^{17}\) The majority of work about American missionaries in China is largely biographical, narrative, or in the field of gender studies. When it comes to researching the specific contributions of American missionaries in the uprising, there has yet been no work entirely devoted to the subject.

In the 1970’s, a few historians, such as John King Fairbank and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., did begin to look at American missionaries in China as possible agents of imperialism, but still not in direct relation to any specific event, such as the Boxer Rebellion. What was significant, however, was the emergence of the concept of cultural imperialism. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. defined cultural imperialism as the “purposeful aggression by one culture against the ideas and values of another.” He asserted that while missionaries certainly played economic, social, and political parts in China, their lead role was as agents of cultural imperialism.\(^{18}\) However, it is important to note that the process of cultural imperialism is not always as straightforward as Schlesinger’s definition makes it sound. Cultural imperialism can take place both with and without the intent of expanding political, military, and/or economic power.\(^{19}\) In the case of the

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American missionaries in China in the late nineteenth century, there is no evidence that they had any conscious intention of expanding any form of national power – political, military, or economic. They certainly did not have any awareness of the concept of the “soft power” exerted by the spread of cultural aspects such as religion, fashion, and home economics, because such an awareness did not yet exist. Nonetheless, regardless of awareness or conscious intent, such things still had a dramatic effect on the relationship between Americans and Chinese, both on the ground, and ultimately at the highest national levels.

Cultural imperialism is intimately related to the relationship of knowledge to power and the creation of discursive systems. Discursive systems are comprised of the many ways that a given subject, in this case the Chinese people and culture, is studied, talked about, and symbolically represented in order to establish a widely accepted body of knowledge that reinforces the power of one group over another. Once a body of knowledge is established, it can be spread through institutions of authority, such as government organizations, schools, hospitals, and churches, which serves to legitimate it. Eventually the knowledge finds its way into popular culture, such as entertainment, literature, visual art, and advertising campaigns and hence the everyday mindset of the population at large and eventually becomes perceived as common knowledge.

Travel writings were often the primary source of knowledge about China for people at home in the United States. They were used as the basis for popular representations of China such as fair exhibitions and in advertising campaigns for American products, both at home and abroad. Travel writings, often penned by American missionaries, also served as the basis of instruction for other missionaries. Therefore, each generation of American missionaries arrived

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in China with a stronger and stronger sense of “knowing” China and the Chinese. What China needed, according to this knowledge, was Western civilization, meaning Christianity, education, and technology.

Missionaries based their attitudes and daily interactions with the Chinese on the knowledge gained through the culturally biased representations of Chinese culture perpetuated in the United States and therefore treated the Chinese regularly with a marked disdain. American missionaries focused much of their energy on establishing Western style schools and hospitals to provide visual evidence of Western superiority. They firmly believed that such visual evidence of the superiority of Western education and technology would certainly win the Chinese over to the Western religion.

Nineteenth-century travel writers, such as the early American missionaries to China, who were not officially connected with any political, military, or commercial form of imperialism, often unwittingly contributed to imperialistic aims through their writing. Other travel writers, such as merchants and government officials and their families, in spite of their official connections with the traditional machinery of imperialism, were not conscious of such an imperialist bias in their observations of the Chinese people and culture that they presented as being purely and scientifically objective. In the words of historian, Mary Louise Pratt, “science and sentiment code the imperial frontier in the two eternally clashing and complementary languages of bourgeois subjectivity.”21 By writing in terms of scientific observation and personal experience, travel writers tended to adopt a tone of disinterested, scientific authority. However, their observations were nonetheless colored by the racial, class and other cultural biases of the society that informed them. The result was a biased account that gave the impression of authoritative scientific objectivity that was taken as fact by many readers at home. The fact that

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21 Mary Louise Pratt. *Imperial Eyes* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 38.
the vast majority of these travel writers were associated with institutions of social authority, such as government, well-established businesses, armed forces, or religion, gave their observations an added sense of authority, as did the act of publication itself.

Authors often went out of their way to establish their observations as authoritative, frequently by having well-known and well-respected social figures write introductions attesting to the trustworthiness of the author. A strongly representative example is found in the introduction to *A Year in China* by Martha Noyes Williams. Published in 1863, the time when many American missionaries of the late 1890’s were between the ages ten and twenty; the book is by the wife of an American customs official and the introduction was written by William Cullen Bryant, a famous poet and prominent editor of the *New York Evening Post*.

Her accounts of Chinese manners and habits of life bear tokens of the greatest sincerity and conscientiousness. They are manifestly the precise relation of what was presented to her observation, and are given without the slightest attempt at embellishment, and without even any unconscious coloring.22

The very act of observing or studying something creates a power relationship between the active observer and the passive observed. This relationship is reflected in the English word that is used to describe something that is being studied as a “subject,” which meanings all evolve from the Latin word *subicere*, meaning “to place under.” When the observer also becomes the writer, this relationship becomes even more unequal because inherent in the role of the writer is the power to decide what is to be included in the writing and what is to be excluded. That which is being studied has no power or influence over how it is portrayed by the writer. In this way, the reader too is subject to the power of the writer, particularly in the world of the nineteenth century where information traveled slowly, books were expensive, and there were few, if any, books available that offered a differing perspective. Those who wrote the books and those who

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22 William Cullen Bryant, Introduction to *A Year in China*, by Martha Noyes Williams (Herd and Houghton, 1864), xvi.
published the books, intentionally or unintentionally, came to have virtually complete control over what the American people knew about China and the Chinese people.23

American missionaries to China were prodigious travel writers, writing about geography, political structure, social structure, religion, family, economics, and the Chinese character. Despite Bryant’s insistence that Mrs. Williams wrote “without even any unconscious coloring,” the perspectives of travel writers of the nineteenth century, including U.S. missionaries, were inevitably informed by the middle and upper class ideals of American society at that time. These ideals were overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon and Christian and included the predominating ideas of the “cult of true womanhood,” Manifest Destiny, and the justifications of Social Darwinism.24

When looking at the nineteenth century writings of American missionaries from a twenty-first century perspective, it is easy to identify these cultural biases today. However, it is important to constantly keep in mind the historical context of the nineteenth-century American reader who likely would not have identified these perspectives as biases, but rather as strongly held American values, or even as universal truths. Elijah Bridgman and his wife, Elizabeth, were the first American Protestant missionaries in China, and as such, gained considerable prominence among American Protestants as knowledgeable authorities on China and the Chinese. A young future missionary in the late 1860’s reading the words of the illustrious Elijah Bridgman quoted

23 It is important here to note that while it is beyond the scope of this project to explore them in detail, there were a number of dissenting voices among those who were publishing in the late nineteenth century, both in regard to American missionary ideology and American imperialism. Of particular note are John Nevius, Hudson Taylor, Mark Twain, Grover Cleveland, Andrew Carnegie and William James. Public discourse on any issue is often multi-facetted and those who may have been anti-imperialist in regard to foreign policy might have agreed with mainstream missionary ideology and vice versa. This study has, of necessity, limited itself to culturally dominant influences, however, the exploration of dissenting voices both inside and outside of the missionary movement and how they relate to the issues discussed in the current project is an area that would be of great benefit for future inquiry.

in his biography would likely have found little reason to question his account of the Chinese, regardless of how obvious the bias appears to the modern reader:

Although the supposition that Satan had a special agency in the formation of the Chinese language cannot be proved, nor with any strict propriety assumed to be a fact, yet we can hardly conceive of any tongue better adapted to promote his evil designs; and, certain it is, that no nation ever has been for so long a time shut out from the counteracting power of the Word of God.25

The extent to which the generations of late nineteenth-century missionaries identified with and adopted the perspectives expressed by these earlier writers will be examined in the following chapter. However, evidence that this overwhelmingly negative perspective of Chinese people and culture was shared by the majority of the American Protestant missionary community can be found in the increasing volume of publications over the ensuing decades that confirmed and elaborated this perspective.

An illuminating example from the late 1860’s and early 1870’s are the writings of John Nevius. These writings are of particular interest because John Nevius was a highly controversial figure in the China mission field because of his strong support for native churches and his outspoken criticism of the way in which the Chinese were so often portrayed in a negative manner. In the context of nineteenth-century American missionary ideology, where the concepts of cultural relativism and cultural sensitivity were yet to become major issues, Nevius’ argument that the Chinese people were no different than American or European people, beyond their lack of Christianity, was a radical argument indeed. However, what is most illuminating about the writings of Nevius is that they provide an opportunity to see the immense subtlety and subconscious manner in which discourse, and consequently, cultural imperialism work. On the surface he appears to be defending the humanity and dignity of the Chinese people and culture,

often comparing their intelligence and achievements to the ancient Romans and Greeks of the pre-Christian era. What Nevius still makes abundantly clear is that without Christianity and the influence of Western culture, the Chinese are still ultimately inferior and it is not only the role, but the duty of American Protestants to save them, just as it was the duty of St. Paul to save the Greeks and the Romans.26 This comparison was not limited just to John Nevius. Other contemporary prominent American missionaries seeking to defend the Chinese made similar comparisons:

The Chinese are a heathen people, and much that is evil can truthfully be said against them. But why do we judge them much more severely than other heathen empires which have not excelled or equaled them in morality? The Romans were a far more depraved and cruel people than the Chinese. Their idolatry was more gross and loathsome. . . And yet many of our poets have exhausted the language of praise upon the Romans and their virtues. . . Can we not then exercise candor in forming our opinions of the Chinese?27

There were American Protestant missionaries in China who reflected such comparisons in their own writings; viewing Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism like the ancient pagan religions of the Roman Empire, Chinese people like the ancient Corinthians of the Bible, and themselves like Paul, chosen by God to deliver the heathen from their sinful idolatry.28 Such defenses attempted to reconcile Christian values of openness and acceptance with the belief in the superiority of Christianity, and Western culture that was believed to be inseparable from and attributable to the superiority of Christianity. As interest in China and China missions grew among American Protestants into the 1880’s and 1890’s, the demand for the travel writings of missionaries grew as well. More and more books were published as all-encompassing treatises

28 Frank Chapin, Letter to Judson Smith, March 11, 1896, Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Unit 3: ABC 16 : Missions to Asia, 1827-1919, Yale Divinity School Library, Special Collections, New Haven, CT.
on China, its people, and its culture; works somewhat similar to modern text books. The tone of detached authoritative observation became more marked, giving the perceptions and opinions of the authors regarding the superiority of Christianity and Western culture the impression of being irrefutable conclusions; conclusions that the author assumed to be common sense to the reader:

Betrothals among the Chinese are arranged by the parents or guardians. Very frequently the parties meet for the first time at the marriage altar. This plan does not commend itself to our advanced ideas of social life. Yet in actual practice, the results are quite as felicitous and harmonious as when the bride is wooed and won in the orthodox fashion. From what we have observed of domestic life in China, and know of it elsewhere, we are convinced that cases of incompatibility of tastes and dispositions do not occur more frequently under the system of selection by parents, than where it is a matter of individual choice. However, we still retain a decided preference for the latter method.29

The most widely read book on China in the 1890’s and into the early twentieth century, *Chinese Characteristics*, was written by the prominent missionary, Arthur H. Smith. A missionary for the American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions, the largest missionary organization in the United States at the time, Smith had spent over twenty years in China and was considered an expert on China and the Chinese. More than any other U.S. missionary author, Smith wrote with the authoritative tone of scientific objectivity and included large numbers of photographs in his work which lent an added dimension of authenticity in a world where photography still represented the cutting edge of technology. American missionaries in the China field, particularly American Board missionaries stationed in North China, would have largely been informed by Smith’s voluminous works.

One only has to look at the table of contents in *Chinese Characteristics* to see both Smith’s scientific tone as well as his cultural biases. A few of his chapters are subjects that could be found in any modern text book such as “Economy” and “Industry.” Most of his chapters have titles like “The Disregard of Accuracy,” “The Talent for Misunderstanding,” “Intellectual..."
Turbidity,” and “The Absence of Nerves.” His final chapter is devoted to “The Real Conditions of China and Her Present Needs.” These chapters reflect the prevailing notion of the inferiority of non-Western ideals and their need for Western intervention for the salvation of their souls and their society.

Cultural sensitivity or the idea that Western modes of civilization are merely different and not necessarily superior to others did not enter into the missionary conversation until after World War I. The American assumption throughout the nineteenth century was that qualities of cultures that differed from American or Western ideals were deficient and in desperate need of change. This is evident in Smith’s chapter on “Intellectual Turbidity.” Rather than recognize that the Chinese language and Chinese mode of thinking are merely different from Western standards based on the American English ideal, Smith characterized the confusing language as evidence of general intellectual confusion typical of the Chinese mind. He then ended the chapter by asserting that the only way in which the Chinese could be saved from their confusion of mind was by “a transfusion of a new life, which shall reveal to them the sublime truth,” meaning conversion to Christianity and American cultural practices, which in the minds of many American missionaries, were inseparable from one another.

The nature of discursive systems is overlapping and reinforcing, which serves to distribute the same information to the same people in multiple formats and from multiple sources. In this way the knowledge people have about a particular subject, in this case, the Chinese, seems to come from nowhere and everywhere at the same time, constantly re-enforcing itself and ultimately taking on the guise of “common knowledge.” This is a characteristic of

31 Hutchison. Errand to the World, 129.
32 Smith, Characteristics, 84.
33 Smith, Characteristics, 91.
discursive systems that makes them so complex and difficult to discuss, yet also what makes them so effective in establishing power relationships.

Future missionaries were not the only ones informed about China by travel writing, nor was reading travel books the only way in which this information about Chinese culture was presented to the American people. Travel writing, much of it written by American missionaries, informed popular culture and the ways in which the Chinese were represented in poetry, songs, performance, advertising campaigns, and exhibits, which in turn, informed the common perception of the Chinese among Americans, including the next generations of missionaries to China.

What also cannot be ignored is the large number of Chinese immigrants that flooded into the United States, mostly through California. Negative perceptions of the Chinese held by many Americans then combined with personal experiences of Chinese “otherness” on American soil and fueled fears among Americans, particularly in the West, that the Chinese were a threat to American lifestyles. Just as American missionaries in China sought to convert native Chinese to American ways because of their belief in the inherent superiority of American culture, Americans at home perceived Chinese immigrants as inferior and associated them with increased competition for jobs, spreading opium addiction, organized crime, or even threats from simpler things such as the Chinese language, mode of dress, food, or ancestor worship. This conflict often resulted in negative caricatures of Chinese immigrants in American popular culture that served to reinforce the negative perceptions of Chinese culture gained from travel writings.

The late nineteenth century in America was a time in which, according to social norms, only Anglo-Saxons were considered purely white, only Protestants were considered true Christians, and only Anglo-Saxon Protestants were true Americans. It was not only a time
strongly influenced by Social Darwinism and Manifest Destiny, but also the time of rising nationalism, anti-Irish and anti-Catholicism, the Nativist movement, the emergence of Jim Crowism, and of course, Chinese exclusion. Newspaper stories, popular culture, and the actions of the American government, worked together in the nineteenth century to perpetuate and authenticate the perception of all things Chinese as inferior to all things American.\textsuperscript{34}

The significance of the societal norms in the culture in which American Protestant missionaries formed their personal identities as American Christians, as well as their perceptions of China and the Chinese, cannot be emphasized enough. Whiteness, Protestant Christianity, and American patriotism were intimately and inseparably linked in American culture – in books, advertisements, poems, songs, exhibits, newspaper stories, and political rhetoric. This is so significant because these societal norms eventually manifested themselves in the inability of American Protestant missionaries to separate the promotion of Christianity from the promotion of Western culture, which in turn ultimately resulted in the Boxers identifying Christianity as synonymous with any form of foreign threat to their traditional way of life, hence making the missionaries and their native converts the primary targets of the Boxers in 1900.

As previously mentioned, travel writing was only the starting point for the growing discourse on the Chinese in American culture. The rapid increase of Chinese immigrants into California in the mid-nineteenth century made Chinese immigration one of the most prominent political topics of the 1870’s, meaning that the Chinese were a subject that garnered a significant amount of newspaper coverage. An examination of the \textit{New York Times} from 1870-1890 reveals

a wide variety of stories about China and the Chinese. In addition to articles reprinted from West
coast newspapers about labor disputes and anti-Chinese violence, there are editorials debating
the issue of whether or not restrictions regarding African slaves could be applicable to Chinese
coolies. Even more interesting are the numerous articles regarding the Chinese people and their
customs, most of which adopt a tone of surprised condescension in noting how not so very
different the Chinese are from Americans while often explicitly stating that their customs are in
no way equal to Christian ones. As the debate over Chinese exclusion intensified in the years
closer to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the articles became increasingly
targeted on the anti-Chinese movement, organized crime among the Chinese in America, and the
general foreignness of the Chinese and their cultural practices, particularly female infanticide,
the purchasing of wives, and various religious practices. The ultimate passage of the Chinese
Exclusion Act in 1882 that placed a ban on Chinese immigration to the United States acted as an
official government sanction to the belief that the Chinese were not only inferior, but more
importantly, not American nor worthy of becoming Americans.35

One of the most notable articles regarding American cultural perception of the Chinese in
the late 1800’s is not about Chinese exclusion or Chinese cultural practices, but rather, about a
Chinese-American family. The fact that the contents of the following article were considered
extraordinary enough to not only be newsworthy, but worthy of being reprinted in the New York
Times from its original printing in The San Francisco Exchange speaks volumes as to the
national pervasiveness of the socially accepted view of the Chinese as quite generally inferior in
all ways:

35 The literature available of Chinese immigration and exclusion is extensive, the following are suggested as useful
starting points for further reading: Peter Kwong, Chinese America: The Untold Story of America’s Oldest New
Community (New York: The New Press, 2005); Erika Lee, At America’s Gates: Chinese Immigration during the
Exclusion Era, 1882-1943 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Jean Pfaelzer, Driven Out: The
There went East by the emigrant train on Thursday a curious family. The head of it was a Chinaman, aged about 35 years, wearing American clothes, and without a cue. He looked like an energetic, shrewd citizen. His wife was a good-looking American woman but a few years younger. They had one child about 8 years old, of American complexion, and resembling the father’s race only in the characteristic eyes. They had with them two full-blooded Chinese children they had purchased just before leaving China, and these were deprived of cues and dressed as American children. The mother looked like a lady of average culture, and seemed as proud as mothers usually are of their children.36

The coverage of the Chinese immigration issue in the newspapers coincided with the increasing portrayal of Chinese characters in popular entertainment, again multiplying and compounding the sources from which Americans received their information regarding the Chinese. As early as the 1850’s, popular songs were being written in California that were carried back across the nation in traveling shows. A character by the name of “John Chinaman” was created in these shows, comparable to the blackface characters of Zip Coon and Jim Crow. John Chinaman was presented as a comedic character that played on the differences and presumed inferiority of Chinese dress, eating habits, religious practice, and unique way of speaking English, commonly known as Pidgin English.37 Imitations of both the Chinese language and Pidgin English were a common way to ridicule the Chinese and make them seem stupid, childlike and nonsensical as illustrated in the 1882 song by John Leach entitled “Chun Wow Low.”

Chun wow low, eatum chow chow,  
Chinaman a walla good likum bow wow;  
Litta Dog, litta cat, litta mouse, litta lat.  
Alla wella good for to makum me fat.38

38 Moon, *Yellowface*, 43.
Performers would yellow their skin with make-up and don costumes mocking the low socio-economic status of Chinese immigrants and sing songs that were often designed with the intention of promoting anti-Chinese sentiment by emphasizing not only the differences between white Americans and the Chinese, but also the unsuitability of the Chinese for assimilating to American cultural practices as can be seen in the following example of a few verses taken from a popular song that appeared in 1855:

I thought you’d cut your queue off, John,
And don a Yankee Coat,
And a collar high you’d raise John,
Around your dusky throat.

I imagined that the truth John,
You’d speak when under oath,
But I find you’ll lie and steal too —
Yes, John, you’re up to both.

I thought of rats and puppies, John,
You’d eaten your last fill:
But on such slimy pot-pies John,
I’m told you dinner still.39

Just as newspapers and songs in traveling shows perpetuated the stereotypes that were quickly becoming the common perception of Chinese people and culture throughout America, so did poetry and short stories that were published and circulated in popular magazines across the nation. Two of the most widely read writers of American popular literature in the 1870’s and 1880’s, Bret Harte and Bill Nye, built their reputations largely in connection with negative caricatures of the Chinese. Bret Harte’s most famous poem, commonly known as “The Heathen Chinee,” was published and re-published across the United States in countless newspapers, magazines, books of collected poems, and even as a reading in instruction books on rhetoric and

39 Moon, Yellowface, 36.
recitation. It was also set to music and even quoted by Horatio Alger in his popular children’s novels of the 1870’s. The original title of the poem was “Plain Language from Truthful James” and it was intended to be a satire on anti-Chinese sentiment in California, by showing a Chinese immigrant named Ah Sin, beating an American at his own game of cheating at cards. The satire was apparently too subtle for the majority of the American reading population, because the poem became an overnight sensation, published in magazines from coast to coast with the title “The Heathen Chinee.”

The nature of satire, particularly written satire as opposed to verbal where tone of voice can do much to portray satirical intent, is such that its humor is often dependent on the existing opinions of the audience. Readers who shared Harte’s opinion that anti-Chinese sentiment was absurd, would likely see the blatant use of negative Chinese stereotypes as exaggerated and ridiculous, making the joke at the expense of racist Californians. However, to the large majority of nineteenth-century Americans, the stereotypes of the poem likely appeared to be an accurate portrayal of their own negative perceptions of the Chinese character, making the joke at the expense of the Chinese. Hence, even a poem that intended to counteract negative stereotypes of the Chinese in American culture, ultimately served only to reinforce what, already by its publication in 1870, were perceived by the American public, not as stereotypes, but as commonly known facts about the Chinese people.

The fact that the information was published in widely circulated popular magazines verified to readers the social acceptability of the views presented by the poem. Even more interesting is the manner in which the title of the poem was changed to “The Heathen Chinee,” indicating that the publishers of the magazines felt that this more racially charged title would be

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40 “The Heathen Chinee” is printed in its entirety in the Appendix.
more acceptable to its readership than the less explicit original title given by the author. There is at least one known case of an American Protestant missionary in China referring to a local Chinese man with a reputation for dishonesty as “Ah Sin.”\(^{42}\) It would be surprising if an overwhelming majority of American Protestant missionaries serving in China in the 1880’s and 1890’s were not familiar with Bret Harte’s “The Heathen Chinee.”

Significantly influenced by the popularity of Bret Harte in the 1870’s, Edgar Wilson Nye, took his pen name, Bill Nye, from one of the characters in Harte’s famous poem and became one of the most popular comedic writers in America throughout the 1880’s. His magazine, *Boomerang* had subscribers in every state across the nation, creating a national market for the books he published as well.\(^{43}\) One of the frequent topics of Nye’s humorous stories was the Chinese in which they were often caricatured according to the most common stereotypes and cast as the object of humor. In one story Nye described a Chinese woman crying and remarks, “She was bathed in tears. It was the first bath she ever had.”\(^{44}\) In another story a Chinese immigrant by the name of Hong Lee attempts to expand his business into a neighboring town. He is portrayed as being so simple-minded that he mistook the hostile actions of the local townspeople as a welcoming party. After the townspeople arrived at his door with shotguns and clotheslines,

Hong Lee felt proud to be so much thought of, and was preparing an impromptu speech. . . when the chairman came and told him that a few American citizens had come, hoping to be of use to him in learning the ways of the city. Then they took him out to the public square where Hong Lee supposed that he was to make his speech, and then proceeded to kick him into the most shapeless mass. They kicked him into a globular form, and then flattened him out, after which they knocked him into a rhomboid. This change was followed by thumping him into an isosceles triangle. When he looked more like a bundle

\(^{42}\) Frank Chapin, Letter to Judson Smith, April 8, 1893, Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Unit 3: ABC 16 : Missions to Asia, 1827-1919, Yale Divinity School Library, Special Collections, New Haven, CT.


\(^{44}\) Bill Nye, “You Fou” in *Bill Nye and Boomerang; The Tale of a Meek Eyed Mule, and Some Other Literary Gems* (Chicago: Belford, Clarke & Co., 1881), 118.
of old clothes than a Chinaman, they took him with a pair of tongs, and threw him over
the battlements.45

It illustrates the consistence of the American cultural understanding of the Chinese as a
persistent knowledge, as opposed to any sort of passing trend, that the same perspectives on the
Chinese are found throughout American culture at least as far back as the writings of Elijah
Bridgman, who arrived as the first American Protestant missionary to China in 1830, through the
1850’s, and into the 1880’s and beyond. In an 1891 book by Bill Nye there appeared a piece
entitled “The Chinese God,” in which Nye made fun of many Chinese cultural practices. This
example is also significant because it displays the consistency with which certain aspects of
Chinese culture that were easily reconciled to Western culture, such as the ethics of Confucius,
were respected, while the more foreign aspects were denigrated.

I do not wish to be understood as interfering with any man’s religious views; but when
polygamy is made a divine decree or a bass-wood deity is whittled out and painted red, to
look up to and to worship, I cannot treat that so-called religious belief with courtesy and
reverence. . .  If Confucius bowed the suppliant knee to that goggle-eyed jim-jam Josh, I
am grieved to know it. . . I cannot believe the great philosopher wallowed in the dust at
the feet of such a polka-dot caricature of a gorilla’s horrid dream.46

The American belief in the inferiority of the Chinese and their desperate need for
salvation was all-pervasive in American popular culture by the early 1890’s, thanks in large part
to the rise of the commercialization of entertainment accompanied by the commercial
advertising of manufactured goods. These developments allowed for the printed portrayals of the
Chinese in travel writing and popular songs and poems to become illustrated in advertisements,
and in the case of museums and expositions, to even leap off the page and into life.

One of the most sensational uses of visual representation of the Chinese and other foreign
cultures in the mid to late nineteenth century was the international exposition. In the words of

one historian, “Perhaps the best evidence of the influence of America’s world’s fairs on American culture is the fact that one did not have to attend a fair to be affected by the world’s fair movement.”47 Both the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 and the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893 garnered extraordinary coverage in newspapers and magazines on the local, national, and international levels. There were world’s fair publicity bureaus established to organize promotional campaigns across the nation. There were also smaller fairs that received a considerable amount of publicity as well, such as the New Orleans World’s Industrial Exposition in 1885, the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition in 1895 and the Tennessee Centennial Exposition in 1897.48

The World’s Fairs were at their peak of popularity in the late nineteenth century and the one held in Chicago in 1893 is largely considered by American cultural historians to be unsurpassed in its contemporary influence on American popular culture. Like most other nineteenth century world fairs, the Chicago Exposition included a section of foreign exhibitions referred to as Villages or Pavilions in which foreign streets were recreated and populated with foreign people.49 These exhibits were largely based on the travel writings and images derived from them that had made their way into popular literature and art. This was most notable at the Chicago Columbian Exposition because unlike other international exhibits, the Chinese government had refused to participate in the creation of the exhibit as a protest against the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. The very location of the Chinese Pavilion at the Columbian Exposition was indicative of the American perception of Chinese culture, with the Western nations being

located closer to the central exhibition hall and the more “primitive” nations, including China, being placed farthest away, representing “an evolution-minded sliding scale of humanity.”\(^{50}\)

Similar to Chinese pavilions at other world fairs, the exhibit at the Chicago Columbian Exposition consisted primarily of a museum and a theater, both built in the style of traditional Chinese architecture. The museum was called the Joss House and was mostly a collection of Chinese religious artifacts. While the religions of China, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, were recognized as forms of religion, little was known about these religions and the objects were displayed and interpreted as expressions of primitive idol worship.\(^{51}\) The museum also contained what was called a “work display” that consisted of a Chinese woman and child performing common household tasks in what was supposed to be a typical room in a Chinese home. Because the majority of Chinese immigrants to the United States were male laborers, the Chinese woman and child themselves became more of an attraction than the household rituals they were performing.\(^{52}\)

In addition to the widespread media coverage and promotional campaigns that accompanied most fairs, the fairs of the 1890’s, particularly the Columbian Exposition, produced large collections of photographs that were sold in book form as well as in sets of cards, as stereoscopic images, and as individual prints that could be framed and used for decoration. In these ways the words of the missionary travel writers took on visual form and provided even further reinforcement as being the truth about China and the Chinese.

Timothy Mitchell has written at length about the significance of Westerners being informed by such popular representations, to the development of imperialist attitudes and


\(^{51}\) Burris, *Exhibiting Religion,* 136.

\(^{52}\) Burris *Exhibiting Religion,* 114.
actions. He proposed the idea of the “world as exhibition” that was characteristic of the West, meaning the tendency to order and construct everything from store merchandise to representations of foreign cultures, for the purpose of attractive display. Evidence that this manner of thinking was prevalent in the construction and interpretation of nineteenth-century fair exhibits can be found in Denton J. Snider’s analysis of the international pavilions at the Chicago Columbian Exposition in which he stated that it was vitally important that the “vast multitude of details. . . be reduced to order,” so that “the event can become our intellectual property.”53 This quote emphasizes the most significant characteristics of the concept of the “world as exhibition,” which were its “remarkable claims to certainty, or truth,” and its imperial nature in that “what was to be rendered as exhibit was reality, the world itself.”54

The problem this posed to Westerners, in this case American missionaries, interacting with the actual cultures they had first encountered as exhibits, was that the Westerners mentally never left the exhibit. Their expectations upon arriving in a foreign country were created by the carefully constructed and ill-informed exhibits they had encountered. When the reality did not conform to the expectation, rather than reconstruct their expectation, Westerners had the tendency to assume the fault was with the reality and not the expectation. The solution to their psychic dilemma was to attempt to change the reality into the carefully controlled and ordered vision of the exhibit.55 In many ways, this is precisely what many American Protestant missionaries did when they arrived in China, as will be shown in the following chapter.

Another strong message of the world fair exhibit phenomenon was the establishment of technology as the ultimate measure of a society’s degree of civilization, with America as the touchstone, the nation that all other nations should strive to emulate. This ideology was based on

55 Mitchell, Colonising Egypt, 22,33.
variations of Darwinian thought that had become popular throughout the late nineteenth-century.

“Within this discourse, human history was envisioned as an evolutionary process that began in a remote past as a stage of savagery and that moved inexorably and inevitably through various stages of barbarism to reach civilization. Only the white race, though, had fully evolved and reached the stage of civilization.”

In the twenty-first century world, in which racism and Social Darwinism rank among the Western world’s most regrettable evils, it is important to remember that in the historical context of the nineteenth-century, much of what is scientifically understood today was still veiled in mystery. Nineteenth-century science had not yet established that phenotypical differences between races did not indicate genotypical differences. There were not anthropological theories to attempt to explain the differences in technological advancement between different peoples, and religion still far outweighed science as the default explanation for the unknown, particularly to those already inclined to a devout Christian worldview. Technology and Christianity were intimately linked in nineteenth-century American culture; one being the inevitable blessing bestowed by the other, regardless of which came first. The white civilizations of the world had been inordinately blessed, and it was their duty, their “burden,” as the popular Rudyard Kipling poem suggested, to save the inferior races by sharing with them both Christianity and the fruits of scientific technology.

This message was visually perpetuated in popular advertising campaigns that often consisted of trading cards featuring foreign cultures, like the Singer Sewing Machine collection issued in conjunction with the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. Trade cards appealed to young girls who had developed the common practice of keeping scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and

57 Rudyard Kipling’s poem, “The White Man’s Burden,” can be read in its entirety in the Appendix.
religious materials. The cards were colorful with a variety of pictures which made them incredibly appealing as material to use in scrapbooks. This is significant because in addition to the urging of young girls to their parents to buy specific products, “by treating religious and commercial material similarly, both advertisers and girls wrapped a measure of cultural approval around the newly developing pleasures of shopping” as well as the cultural messages presented in the advertising.\(^{58}\) Collectability not only ensured that the trade cards would be kept and frequently looked at in homes all over America, it also ensured the growing social acceptability of the product, and the advertising. This also created a powerful association between religion, gendered ideals of domesticity, and civilization that will be seen manifested in some of the interactions between American Protestant missionaries and the Chinese.

These advertising campaigns brought together the ideals of Christian religion, domesticity, technology, and patriotism to establish the overarching ideal of American civilization. Most significantly, unlike other popular portrayals of foreign cultures, ad campaigns also emphasized the potentiality of foreign cultures to be uplifted through the use of American products. Trade cards, through their illustrations and brief educational text, as well as their mass distribution became the primary method of instruction for Americans and foreigners on how to be civilized, as well as a source of information for Americans on foreign cultures.

A large part of the instruction on how to be civilized consisted of buying American manufactured goods. The message presented in these early trade cards is very similar to the message advertising still delivers today, that if you adhere to the principles in the advertisement, especially buying the product, your life will be better and you will be a better person. It was the beginning of what international relations experts call “soft power”, or economic imperialism;

meaning the ability to gain and maintain power by enticing others to voluntarily conform to a power structure, usually via economic integration, rather than by seizing control by violent means.59

The important part of this discourse of civilization was the implication that all of these foreign peoples represented potential customers to American companies, in other words, potential converts to the ideals of Western civilization. Therefore, while it was important to portray foreign cultures in these advertisements as lower in the hierarchy of civilization than whites, specifically American whites, it was also important to establish the belief that foreign peoples could become more like Americans, more civilized, by using American products. One historian has called this “flexible racism.” Instead of one’s hierarchical status being based solely upon physiological differences such as color, it was based on one’s access and use of technology and manufactured goods, and appealed to the dominant American Protestant view of foreign peoples as salvageable. As Mona Domosh puts it,

… their worldview united a belief in Christian millennialism (the belief that human history has one cosmic purpose, which is the millennial fight against evil), with Darwinian evolution (instead of God working toward that perfection, evolution could do the job), and economic development (evolution could be helped along through, and measured by, economic stages). By aligning consumption with civilization, businessmen could consider the geographic spread of their products as missionary work, and their resultant empires forged together not by conquest but by trade… Hence, American companies presented a racialized hierarchy that was not fixed.60

American missionaries arriving in China did not arrive as anything close to blank slates. They arrived, in their estimation, fully educated, by reliable and socially approved sources and methods, about the Chinese and what the Chinese needed. Missionaries did not need the Chinese to tell them who they were or about their culture because the missionaries believed they already knew. In the mind of the missionary, this placed him or her in a position of authority over the

59 Domosh, American Commodities, 3.
60 Domosh, American Commodities, 187.
Chinese, who did not know as much about themselves, the world at large, or what they needed to survive in it, as the missionaries did. What the missionaries thought they knew was that everything about Chinese culture was drastically inferior to what American technology, manufactured goods, education, and religion had to offer them, and it was only by imposing the superior aspects of Western culture that China and the Chinese could be saved from themselves. This is confirmed by the statement of one missionary upon his arrival in 1895, who reported confidently, “As to the country and people of China, I think that my reading had given me fairly correct ideas.”

In order to understand the motivations and actions of American Protestant missionaries in China in the 1880’s and 1890’s, it is essential to understand the basis of their cultural identities and the foundation of their existing knowledge of all things Chinese, because this is the key to understanding how cultural imperialism so often works. American Protestant missionaries did not have to harbor any ill will against the Chinese people or be intentionally promoting the political, military, or economic agendas of the United States to become targets of Boxer aggression. The missionaries carried within their very identities the mindset and the worldview of their culture, that inevitably manifested themselves in their daily interactions with the Chinese people, through both word and deed. As the next chapter will illustrate, the intentions of the missionaries were in their own minds truly benevolent. It was their limited cultural perspective of themselves in relation to the Chinese, based in what they mistakenly took to be irrefutable truth, or knowledge, that blinded so many of them to the possibility that their words and actions could and would be interpreted by the Chinese people in a completely different way.

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61 Charles Ewing, Letter to Judson Smith, January 10, 1895, Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Unit 3: ABC 16 : Missions to Asia, 1827-1919, Yale Divinity School Library, Special Collections, New Haven, CT.
U.S. PROTESTANT MISSIONARY ACTIONS IN CHINA VERSUS TRADITIONAL CHINESE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Studying the role of knowledge and discourse in relation to world events can be unsettling, because it highlights the significant role that personal and cultural perspective have in determining what we, as individuals, think we know. It is unsettling because such a study brings to the surface the most troubling of philosophical questions regarding how, exactly, we know what we know and how we know it to be true. These are the types of questions that many academics outside the discipline of philosophy wish to disregard as irrelevant or nonsensical, yet upon rigorous logical examination, it becomes difficult to disregard them. The reality is that in practice, knowledge is intimately related to perspective, which is intimately related to the constructions of meaning that one has been conditioned to in one’s society of origin, and ultimately, what each individual perceives to be reality.

The relationship of religion to the construction of meaning in any given society is also a subject that tends to make many academics uncomfortable. However, religion has as its very foundation, the purpose of assigning meaning to the most fundamental questions of human life: Why are we here? Where did we come from? How should we live? What happens after we die? The most basic constructions of right and wrong, and what is and is not socially acceptable, are often determined by the predominant religious constructions of a society. Just as American Protestant missionaries gained their working knowledge about the Chinese from the structures of meaning created from their cultural perspective, the Chinese also gained a working knowledge of Americans from their unique cultural perspective as well. Both groups of people believed their knowledge of the other to be grounded in absolute truth, and it was the friction from the meeting of these two opposing realities that resulted in American Protestant missionaries becoming targets of the Boxer uprising.
American Protestant missionaries in China in the late nineteenth century were involved in three central tasks: converting the Chinese to Christianity, establishing schools, and providing medical care. All three of these tasks involved a direct challenge to the traditional Chinese worldview. Before those tasks are examined at length it is first necessary to undertake a brief discussion of the Chinese perception of Americans and Christians in the years leading up to the Boxer uprising.

A specifically anti-Christian tradition of thought among the educated gentry can be identified in China as far back as the seventeenth century. A tradition of thought more generally hostile towards any unorthodox or non-Confucian system of belief can be traced as far back as at least the twelfth or thirteenth century. Because of the intimate relationship between Confucian orthodoxy and both the political and social structure in China, any heterodox belief was inherently associated with political and social subversion, regardless of whether or not subversion was an intended aim of the adherents. Unfortunately for Christian missionaries of the nineteenth century, by that time Christianity was already closely associated, particularly within the educated gentry class, with the Taiping Rebellion, unfair treaties, gunboat diplomacy, and extraterritoriality.62

While for the gentry, it was often in their own best interest to uphold the pro-missionary edicts that emanated from the palace in Beijing, this did not prevent them from undermining the activities of the missionaries in other ways. One of the primary ways that educated men of the Chinese gentry class acted against missionaries was through circulating anti-Christian propaganda in the form of flyers, books, and pamphlets that often contained explicit illustrations so that their message could be made clear to the wider, mostly illiterate, population. These works circulated widely throughout certain provinces in China, and were often copied and re-

printed under a variety of titles from province to province. In newspaper articles and books the missionaries themselves frequently commented on these placards and pamphlets as well as the difficulties such propaganda posed for them.

Sometimes the messages were straightforward, presented on simple placards posted in public gathering places, with a combination of facts and misunderstandings as to the nature of Christianity due to the difficulties of translating Western Christian concepts into the Chinese language. There were considerable issues with translating Christian concepts that had no equivalent in Chinese, such as *sin* which was directly translated as *crime*, but without the Western abstraction of understanding the crime as a spiritual one, against an incorporeal God. Therefore, a lot of anti-Christian propaganda featured the characterization of Jesus and/or Christians as criminals. The following example was printed in an article in 1887 edition of the widely read missionary newspaper in China, *The Chinese Recorder*.

The Foreign Devils originally poured opium into China to the injury of its people. Why should we be instructed or advised by them to leave off opium smoking. Seeing that they have it in their heart to advise our leaving off opium smoking, why did they pour it into the country to injure China. Detestable Devils! You ought to be killed you Devils! . . .

If you do not take warning and run yourselves before that time- you may be sure that you will remain without your heads if you remain in our borders. Why should Shangti draw near to Devils? Having drawn near to them why does he want the “Jesus” Devils’ nonsensical talk called Gospel. Jesus was a Chinese criminal banished to Foreign countries. This wild posterity of his power poison into China. Detestable to the highest degree. Their crime is worthy of death!63

Arthur H. Smith, in his voluminous work on the Boxer uprising, devoted an entire chapter to the various placards, pamphlets and books that circulated throughout China, and particularly the Northern provinces, in the decade preceding the uprising. He provided examples in which the doctrines of Christianity were conveyed in characters that had the alternate

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translation, “The Squeak of the Celestial Hog’ and the term for foreigners was written in characters that could be translated as “Goat Men.” Smith also described what he said was referred to as a “Picture Gallery,” in which were collected illustrations of “the vilest charges against foreigners and against Christianity,” for the purpose of circulation among the illiterate multitude of the Chinese population.  

In many cases the description of Chinese anti-Christian propaganda as “vile” was not an exaggeration. One of the most influential works of anti-Christian literature produced in China first appeared in the 1860s as a pamphlet whose title translated as “A Record of Facts to Ward Off Heterodoxy.” This pamphlet was copied and versions of it were reproduced under different titles throughout China for decades. One version is known to have circulated in Shandong province as early as the 1870s under the title “Deathblow to Corrupt Doctrines: A Plain Statement of Facts.” The allegations made against Christians in these works were truly extraordinary; however, they accurately reflect many widely held perceptions of Christians among the Chinese population in the late nineteenth century.

During the first three months of life the anuses of all [Christian] infants – male and female – are plugged up with a small hollow tube, which is taken out at night. They call this ‘rentention of the vital essence’. It causes the anus to dilate so that upon growing up sodomy will be facilitated. At the juncture of each spring and summer, boys procure the menstrual discharge of women, and smearing it on their faces, go into Christian churches to worship. They call this ‘cleansing one’s face before paying one’s respects to the holy one’ and regard it as one of the most venerative rituals by which the Lord can be worshipped. Fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers behave licentiously with one another, calling it ‘the joining of the vital forces.’ They say, moreover, that if such things are not done, the affections between father and son, brother and brother will become estranged. 

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From only this brief discussion of anti-Christian propaganda it can be seen that just as American Protestant missionaries arrived in China with a pre-conceived knowledge of the Chinese, so did many Chinese greet the missionaries of the late 1800s with their own pre-conceived perceptions of “foreign devils” and their “evil intentions.” The Chinese, particularly the Boxers in the northwestern region of Shandong province where the uprising originated, also had their own religiously constructed worldview, in which Christianity and its messengers, did not belong.

Religion and philosophy strongly influenced the general Chinese worldview, just as much as Christianity influenced the general American worldview. In practice, Chinese society has historically been religiously pluralistic. Confucianism is more of a philosophical system than a religion. This means that while Confucianism does address certain supernatural or divine issues, such as ancestor worship and the proper order of human relations according to Heaven, it is primarily concerned with ethics and morality for the sake of harmonious living on Earth. There is no doctrine concerning the fate of individual souls or the pleasing or displeasing of any specific deity. Acceptance of Confucianism, therefore, did not eliminate the acceptance of another religious or philosophical system as well. While most Chinese ascribed to the tenets of Confucianism, particularly in regard to family and social relationships, many Chinese, particularly rural peasants, also deeply adhered to localized versions of popular religion that often combined Confucianism with elements of Buddhism, folk magic, superstition, and mythology. Technically all belief that was not specifically Confucian was considered to be heterodox and was technically banned by the Chinese government, however, the extent to which such bans were enforced often depended on the extent to which a particular practice threatened to undermine the authority of Confucian social and political institutions and the strength of the
Confucian gentry in a particular locality. Gentry strength tended to correspond directly to the strength of local militias which were the primary force by which heterodoxy and order were maintained, particularly in more rural areas.

The western region of Shandong province, where the Boxers first gained strength, had a long history of a low military presence and a weak gentry system. This was attributable to poverty of the area, making education and the degrees necessary for gentry status more difficult to obtain, as well as the susceptibility of the area to natural disasters such as severe droughts and floods, making the population of the area relatively transient. As a result of these factors, the western regions of Shandong also had a long history of rebellious heterodox sects, of which the Boxers were only one.

One of the most significant causative factors in the Boxer uprising was the prolonged period of drought in the area, leaving large numbers of the rural peasant population without work to occupy them and more importantly, with the threat of severe famine hanging over their heads. Uprisings had often resulted from similar circumstances, however, in the past aggression had been channeled towards government officials. In the case of the Boxer uprising, it was Christian missionaries of all nationalities and denominations, as well as Chinese Christian converts that became the primary targets of aggression. Just as it was the religiously based worldview of Christian missionaries that led missionaries to view Chinese culture as inferior, it was the religiously based worldview of the Boxers that led them to view Christian missionaries,

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67 There is evidence throughout the extensive history of China of various dynasties banning certain sects for heterodoxy, however, it is primarily in the last three dynasties, the Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644), and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties that heterodoxy was most specifically defined as being any belief that was not Confucian. This was largely the result of the imperial response to the anti-imperial White Lotus and similar sects that were the source of considerable rebellious movements at various times throughout the last three dynasties. However, the practice of Buddhism and traditional Chinese folk religion was largely ignored, the ban was mostly applied to secret, foreign, or anti-imperial sects.


including American Protestant missionaries, as the source of their misfortune, most specifically, the cause of the prolonged drought.  

According to one account the following placard was “posted everywhere” in Northern China including “cities, towns, and villages,” in the Autumn of 1899:

Thus sayeth Li, the God of wealth and happiness. On account of the Protestant and Catholic religions the Buddhist gods are oppressed, and our sages thrust into the background. The Law of Buddha is no longer respected, and the Five Relationships are disregarded. The anger of Heaven and Earth has been aroused and the timely rain has consequently been withheld from us. But Heaven is now sending down eight millions of spiritual soldiers to extirpate these foreign religions, and when this has been done there will be a timely rain. . . People ought to hasten to rejoin the Buddhist faith as soon as possible. . . If the foreign religions are not destroyed there will be no rain.”?

One can deduce from this placard and its’ widespread placement throughout Northern China that there were a significant number of local Chinese in the area that perceived that Christianity was to blame for the drought. One can also see evidence of the religious pluralism of Northern China. In this one placard there are references to local gods and spirit soldiers representative of Chinese popular religion, reference to Five Relationships of Confucianism, as well as various references to forms of Buddhism. All of these religious aspects combined to create the unique religious worldview of the Boxers and their supporters in Northern China at the turn of the century.

Even though it was the literate gentry that disseminated the placards and pamphlets, at least one American Protestant missionary in North China wrote of a notable change in the type of opposition they were meeting in Shandong province as early as November of 1897; from opposition primarily rooted in the gentry class to a more widespread and generally hostile

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peasant opposition. Other examples of the types of notices that circulated in the months immediately preceding the Boxer uprising of 1900 were composed in verse, to make them easier for the illiterate peasant population to memorize and convey by word of mouth. The following examples also contain fewer references to formal belief systems such as Confucianism and Buddhism, and more generalized references to gods, spirits, and ancestors, likely intended for a more rural audience that would be more devoted to localized popular religion that centered on rituals designed to appease local gods and spirits. Also, note the reference to Christian incest that reinforces that this was a popularly held perception of Christians in China in the late nineteenth century, particularly in Northern China.

They proselytize their sect,
And believe in only one God,
The spirits and their own ancestors
Are not even given a nod.

Their men are all immoral;
Their women truly vile.
For the Devils it’s mother-son sex
That serves as the breeding style.

No rain comes from Heaven.
The earth is parched and dry.
And all because the churches
Have bottled up the sky.

The gods are very angry.
The spirits seek revenge.
En masse they come from Heaven
To teach the Way to men.  

72 Frank Chapin, Letter to Judson Smith, November, 1897, Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Unit 3: ABC 16 : Missions to Asia, 1827-1919, Yale Divinity School Library, Special Collections, New Haven, CT.

While it has been strongly suggested that there likely would have been an uprising in Northwest Shandong as a result of the series of natural disasters in that area regardless of the presence of foreign missionaries, it is significant that the presence of missionaries also resulted in them becoming the primary targets of this hostility as opposed to the local or imperial government. It has been established that both American Protestant missionaries and local Chinese in the late nineteenth century each had their own culturally based perceptions of each other, which was mostly negative, as well as their own religiously based worldviews. It has also been established that many local Chinese in North China blamed foreigners, and the Christian religion in particular, for throwing the natural order of the universe out of balance. Therefore it is important at this point to explore the specific ways in which the attitudes, words, and actions of American Protestant missionaries created friction with the local Chinese population, both by general attitudes of condescension as well as particular violations of Chinese sensibilities of social propriety and spiritual balance.

The attitude of superiority to the Chinese, as well as the need felt by many to separate themselves from the Chinese, is reflected in the personal correspondence of American Protestant missionaries. The letters of Eva Jane Price, a missionary wife stationed in Shanxi province in the decade leading up to the Boxer Rebellion, function as the perfect example of the struggle most U.S. missionaries faced between their purpose as missionaries and their desire to remain above and separated from the Chinese. One of the most notable examples of Mrs. Price’s attitude toward the Chinese is her repeated use of the term “boy” to refer to her Chinese servants, regardless of age.\footnote{Eva Jane Price, \textit{China Journal, 1889-1900: An American Missionary Family During the Boxer Rebellion} (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1989), 14.} The usage of this term in this way has its roots deep in the history of slavery,
extending as far back as the ancient world. Whenever she mentions her “boys” it is always in regard to their dishonesty (real or imagined), uncleanliness, or ignorance of the proper ways in which to keep a house.

This is wash day and I have a “boy” I am teaching and he needs close watching lest he boil the flannels or do some other awkward thing. Our Eshin was light-fingered and took a fancy to some of our money and napkins so we invited him to leave and we took a boy who has never been with foreigners... It would take away your appetite I expect to see them strapping about in their clumsy clothes – wide sleeves dangling, greasy queue hanging, quite untidy in all their general appearance and ways.

Mrs. Price felt it was her duty to live in a manner as close to that of the American middle class as possible, as a form of example to the Chinese around her. However, she struggled with what she felt was her duty to exhibit the benefits of American Christian family life and her desire to keep her home free of the less desirable effects of associating with the Chinese people, such as dirt, disease, infestation, and theft. When the Prices began a mission school in their compound she expressed at length her conflict between the loneliness of her son and his desire to play with the Chinese children and her desire to protect him from the less desirable effects of association with Chinese children. The distinct disparity in standard of living and marked disdain for the Chinese people and culture displayed by many American missionaries, only served to reinforce the local view of missionaries as elite representatives of foreign powers that threatened to destroy the traditional Chinese culture. What American missionaries viewed as setting an example, some Chinese perceived as conspicuous consumption.

Another way in which American missionaries exhibited their believed superiority over the Chinese was through the use of technology, education, and medicine. These things were often used as tools to attract the local Chinese, either out of curiosity or need. It was believed that

76 Price, China Journal, 17.
77 Price, China Journal, 82.
78 Price, China Journal, 70.
demonstrating the superiority of Western education, medicine, and technology would lead the Chinese to the conclusion of the superiority of the Western religion, Christianity, as well as other Western cultural ideals.

Exhibiting Western technology was a particularly popular way to attract the attention of Chinese villagers. Missionary Charles Ewing related a story in one of his letters about how he used a fountain pen to draw the attention of curious villagers and then used the opportunity to explain the Christian religion. He questioned one particular villager about his religious beliefs to which the villager replied that he worshipped a mud image. In return the villager asked what Ewing’s pen was made of. Ewing replied: “Of rubber, which exudes from a tree. It is very useful. Now, if your mud image is useful, I should like to know, and if your doctrine is better than mine, I will change.”

Eva Jane Price also provided evidence of how American missionaries used technology in this way. She described how villagers would come from all around just to see her Singer sewing machine. She even remarked that she “will soon have to charge the Board for muslin” because she has used so much in her demonstrations. She also mentioned having brought the sewing machine out during a local fair in a neighboring village in order to receive their “share of attention.” Here we see the manifestation of the Singer trade card advertising campaign discussed in chapter one. It is, of course, not known if Eva Jane Price ever actually saw the particular advertising campaign in question, but given the widespread use of such campaigns, it is likely that she saw many like it.

It is also in ways such as Eva Jane Price’s demonstrations with the Singer sewing machine that American missionaries became, in practice, regardless of their lack of conscious

\[79\] Ruoff., Death Throes of a Dynasty, 63.
\[80\] Price, China Journal, 57.
intent, agents of American commercial imperialism; advertising American products as benefits of the civilizing force of Christianity. While the American missionaries themselves may have been unaware of their roles as such agents, this message was certainly not lost on the local Chinese, who had long harbored suspicions of missionaries as forward agents of larger foreign political and commercial imperial powers.

Education and medicine are two areas in which the power of discursive systems becomes the most tangible because they deal with the establishment of authoritative institutions that are designed for the express purpose of acting as distribution centers for knowledge based on the accepted structures of meaning derived from the parent culture. In other words, one of the most fundamental purposes of schools and clinics is to instruct people in what the proprietors believe are the proper ways of thinking and behaving. Establishing schools and clinics were the two most significant activities which American Protestant missionaries used as tools in their efforts to convert the Chinese, both to Christianity and to American cultural norms.

Eva Jane Price and her husband established a boy’s school at their mission station in Fen Cho fu and the American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions ran several schools in North China, including the Bridgman School for girls in Beijing, near where Charles and Bessie Ewing were stationed. These schools instructed their students first of all in religion. However, they also provided instruction in basic math, geography, physiology, bookkeeping, and Chinese classics as well as Western social ideals including hygiene, home making, sanitation, childcare and proper behavior for women. Much of the friction between the cultural practices of American Protestant missionaries and the traditional Chinese they sought to convert was rooted in different social constructions of gender. These differences were most pronounced in the area

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of education, because of the function that education has in establishing and perpetuating core social values.

As has been previously noted, the ethical system of Confucianism occupied a very similar dominant cultural position in nineteenth-century China to that of Christianity in America. The foundation of society, according to Confucianism, is based on three primary hierarchies, that of ruler and subject, teacher and student, and husband and wife. The “Exemplary Woman” in Confucian society embodied very similar ideals as the American “Cult of True Womanhood,” being those of piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity as well as separate spheres for men and women within the social order. “Women were seen first as extensions and servants of men, and second as potentially attractive physical objects and producers of the race.”

Domesticity and submission also manifested themselves in Qing society in more dramatic ways. Women in Chinese society were ideally never to be seen outside of the home, or even within the home by people who were not immediate family members. While it was considered acceptable in American society for women to be seen in public or converse with men while chaperoned, it was never considered appropriate for Chinese women to have any association with men who were not their husbands or fathers. The segregation of the sexes in Qing society was so

82Mary H. Fong, “Images of Women in Traditional Chinese Painting,” *Women’s Art Journal* 17 (Spring-Summer, 1996): 22. It is important to note, as Fong does in her original footnote, that Confucianism recognizes five total essential relationships, the other two being elder brother to younger brother and friend to friend, however, the three mentioned were singled out in Confucianism as having special significance to the order of the universe. For more information on Confucianism see Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Derk Bodde trans., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).
83 As referenced in an earlier footnote, the seminal work on the American “Cult of Domesticity” or “Cult of True Womanhood” is Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer, 1966); It is important to note that while many scholars have previously believed that the Cult of True Womanhood in America and the Cult of the Exemplary Woman in China were largely only applicable to middle and upper class women, evidence presented in more recent studies on both American and Chinese women show that working class and peasant women participated in these social practices far more than was previously thought, particularly in regard to corsetry and footbinding. See Jessica Curtis-Niesewand, “Breaking the Girl: The Social Institutions That Shaped Footbinding and Corsetry,” (M.A. Thesis, Colorado State University, 2004) and Wang Ping, *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
absolute that even “brothers and sisters were not supposed to intermingle once they had reached puberty,” and there were ideally separate living spaces for men and women within the home.\textsuperscript{85} It was not worth the risk for Chinese families to allow their girls to be seen on a daily basis walking to and from school, where they would be subject to interaction with a wide variety of unknowns which could end up casting doubt on their character and reducing their future prospects for marriage. Of most importance is that the segregation of the sexes in Qing society reflected the Confucian belief in maintaining the proper balance between opposites which was necessary for creating social harmony as well as for the proper function of the universe as a whole.\textsuperscript{86}

Eliza Bridgman, one of the pioneers in American missionary schools in China, stated the educational purpose for women in China was to “elevate the Chinese female to the hopes and privileges of woman in Christian lands, and give her the same qualifications to discharge the duties of daughter, wife, and mother.”\textsuperscript{87} However, what American Protestant missionary educators, like Bridgman, saw as the elevation of women, many Chinese saw as the destruction of the natural balance of the universe. Prior to the events of 1900 it was very difficult for mission schools to find female students, partly because of the deep anti-foreign sentiment that was already directed towards the missionaries, but also in large part because of the function that women served in Chinese society which led to a very low value being placed on young girls by their families. It was customary when Chinese women married for them to become part of their husband’s families. As a result, Chinese families saw no benefit in investing much time or effort into educating their daughters, particularly when it would not in any way increase her prospects.

\textsuperscript{87} Eliza Jane Gillette Bridgman, \textit{Daughters of China: or Sketches of Domestic Life in the Celestial Empire} (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853), 9.
for a favorable marriage.\textsuperscript{88} Actually, it was perceived in Chinese society that educated women were less submissive, and therefore less feminine and less desirable as wives and concubines by traditional Chinese men.\textsuperscript{89} In the words of one Chinese parent, “Will it (education) bring a girl more to eat, more to wear, increase her dowry or secure a rich mother-in-law? If not, what use can it be?”\textsuperscript{90}

Therefore, the first female students in American Chinese mission schools tended to be orphans, or unwanted daughters that the missionaries purchased from their families to save them from servitude, prostitution, or marriage to non-Christian men.\textsuperscript{91} The missionaries’ willingness to take in the unwanted of Chinese society and spend valuable time and money to educate them led to increased suspicion regarding their true motives and gave credence to the wide variety of wild rumors as to what the missionaries did with the children they took in, as evidenced by the anti-Christian literature previously discussed above.

Another way that many American Protestant mission schools were perceived to be upsetting the natural balance of the universe was in their strong position against the traditional Chinese practice of female foot-binding. The binding of women’s feet served an important function in traditional Han Chinese society for hundreds of years. Most significantly, foot-binding was a way of establishing gender, social, and ethnic hierarchies. Bound feet came to be one of the most identifiable, defining characteristics of a woman.\textsuperscript{92} This was not only true within Chinese society, but even American missionaries often remarked that the only way they could distinguish Chinese men from women was that women bound their feet and men wore their hair

\textsuperscript{88} Margaret Ernestine Burton, \textit{The Education of Women in China} (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1911), 19.
\textsuperscript{90} Mrs. John R. Mott, “China’s Daughter’s and Their Education,” \textit{The Evangel} 11(May 1899):6-9.
\textsuperscript{91} Burton, \textit{The Education of Women in China}, 29.
\textsuperscript{92} Wang Ping, \textit{Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China} (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 46.
in queues. Ethnically, foot-binding was a sign of cultural resistance to the foreign Manchu power that had forced men to wear their hair in queues and had unsuccessfully attempted to outlaw foot-binding. Manchu women did not bind their feet, nor did ethnicities viewed as inferior by the majority of Han Chinese such as the Hakka or the class of people simply referred to as “boat people.” However, the most important social function of foot-binding was establishing the desirability of a woman for marriage. A woman, regardless of socio-economic status, physical beauty, talent, purity, or submissiveness, who did not have “perfect lotus feet” was an object of social ridicule and unlikely to find a position as either a wife or a concubine in Qing society, which were the only traditionally acceptable roles for women.

American Protestant missionaries did not want to discourage non-Christian students from coming to their schools so they often had mixed policies on foot-binding. For example, schools in Shandong province run by the American Presbyterian Mission did accept girls who already had bound feet to attract non-Christian students. However, girls were not allowed to begin the foot-binding process after they had enrolled, and girls of converted parents who still insisted on binding their daughters’ feet were denied enrollment.

Gender was not the only point at which American Protestant missionary schools clashed with traditional Chinese cultural practices. The traditional function of education in China had been to prepare men for the civil service examinations which were designed, ideally, to identify the most talented men to serve in the extensive imperial bureaucracy. Technically any man could sit for the exams, regardless of wealth or social status, but in practice it was usually only the sons

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93 Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility*, 204.
94 Wang Ping, *Aching for Beauty*, 34.
of families that could afford the extensive education required to pass the examinations that were capable of passing the exams. Teaching was an exclusively male occupation, and the relationships between teachers and students functioned as a significant social network that often worked parallel or even alternatively to the complex system of imperial hierarchies among government officials.\textsuperscript{97} The content of traditional Chinese education, beyond basic mathematics, was exclusively limited to Confucian classics, primarily the works of Confucius and Mencius. The civil service examinations themselves consisted of extended essays on Confucian principles. The relationship of teacher to student itself was considered one of the five sacred relationships of Confucianism.

Even though American Protestant missionaries included study of the Chinese classics in their educational curriculums, they were not the guiding force of Western educational methods as they were in Chinese education. American Protestant mission schools sought to provide lessons in a wider variety of subjects including Western sciences, and they placed a very strong emphasis on prayer and Bible study. This emphasis on Western science and Christian religion placed American Protestant missionaries in the position to be seen as not only encouraging ideas and practices that undermined the natural balance of the universe, but also undermined the Confucian basis of social and political hierarchy that was considered, according to Confucian orthodoxy, to be essential to the proper functioning of society.

Gender was also a point of friction when it came to the practice of medicine. The strict segregation of the sexes in China directly conflicted with Western scientific medical procedures that depended on direct examination of the body by doctors, often including light physical contact. While in America women were already well-established in the field of nursing, as it was seen as an extension of their natural roles as caretakers, the more specialized occupation of

\textsuperscript{97} Kuhn, \textit{Rebellion and Its Enemies}, 9.
doctor had only begun to open to women in the United States in the 1850’s.\textsuperscript{98} By 1890 there were only twenty-three female doctors in the whole of the Christian missionary movement in China, meaning that the majority of doctors, particularly of any given nationality, were men.\textsuperscript{99} The majority of Chinese refused to allow a male doctor to examine a female patient, regardless of the medical need.\textsuperscript{100} The practice of male doctors attending to female patients in western medical practice only acted to confirm Chinese perceptions of Americans as vulgar and lascivious.

The theoretical system of traditional Chinese medicine can be dated to the Qin and Han Dynasties (221 B.C.E. – 220 A.D.), with individual components of its philosophical and diagnostic theories extending back to the earliest primitive Chinese societies.\textsuperscript{101} Unlike Western medicine in the nineteenth century, which was increasingly based upon scientific method and technological advances, the theoretical system of traditional Chinese medicine was built upon the theory of holism, the idea that there is an intimate correspondence between man and nature. As a result, many of the practices of traditional Chinese medicine are designed with the purpose of bringing the body’s natural energies back into correct balance with themselves and the energies of the surrounding environment. One of the most significant characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine is the way in which it reinforces and reflects the principles of Chinese social culture, intimately marrying Chinese medical, religious, political, and social practices into an interconnected web bound together by common philosophical threads. The influence of Confucianism can be seen in the strong code of medical ethics as well as the importance of

\textsuperscript{98} Kwok Pui-lan, \textit{Chinese Women and Christianity}, 17.
\textsuperscript{101} Jisuzhang Men and Lei Guo, \textit{General Introduction to Traditional Chinese Medicine} (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2010), 3.
balance and correct relationships between man and nature. The Taoist principle of *qi* or life energy is central to Chinese medicine, as is the concept of *Yin-Yang* energy and the Five Elements which are derived from a wide variety of Chinese philosophers and popular religious beliefs.\textsuperscript{102}

The strong connection between Chinese cultural philosophies and Chinese medicine complicated native resistance to western medical practices introduced by missionaries. In addition to resistance based on religious and/or philosophical differences, there were widespread rumors “that the foreign physicians in their hospitals gouged out the eyes of children for charms, or extracted vital organs for the composition of medicaments” or even the ghastly charge that surgeons made food, such as mince-meat, from their Chinese patients.\textsuperscript{103} Western medical practices, particularly when used as a tool for evangelizing the Christian religion were already a point of cultural friction between American Protestant missionaries and the Chinese natives of the largely rural towns the missionaries sought to convert. What likely added additional chafing was the obvious attitude of condescension towards traditional Chinese medical practices exhibited by many missionaries, not only American Protestants. One missionary referred to traditional Chinese medicine as a “farrago of utter nonsense,” and more bluntly and to the point, several American missionary publications reported that the Chinese “have no rational system of medicine.”\textsuperscript{104}

American Protestant missionaries sought to achieve what they perceived as positive change in Chinese society, and some individual missionaries did manage to achieve great things

\textsuperscript{102} Men and Guo, *Introduction to Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 17.


\textsuperscript{104} Herbert Allan Giles, *Chinese Sketches* (London: Trubner & Co., 1876), 38; Methodist Episcopal Church, Women’s Foreign Missions Society, “Chinese Medicine” in *The Heathen Woman’s Friend* (Vol 20, No.3 September 1888), 64.
in China prior to the Boxer uprising. Sadly, both missionaries and the Chinese population suffered from an inability to perceive the world outside of the culturally created structures of meaning that they mistook to be reality. Rather than creating an inter-cultural dialogue where the two sides could attempt to meet each other half way, they, generally speaking, viewed each other in terms of right and wrong, each casting themselves as right, and the other as wrong. When the natural world began to go haywire, first with a monumental flood, followed by a period of extensive drought that foreshadowed a period of inevitable famine, it was a natural reaction according to the Chinese worldview, to look for ways in which the universe was out of balance and how to correct that imbalance. Had foreign missionaries not been present, it does seem likely that the natives of Northwest Shandong would have found fault with corrupt government officials as they had in times past. However, in the years 1898-1900, there was a far more readily available target, that had set itself apart by its very purpose of converting the Chinese away from their traditional ways of life. While it sounds almost too simplistic, in a very real way, American Protestant missionaries became targets of Boxer hostility because they were there.

The most important point that must be made about the ways in which American Protestant missionaries fostered local resentment towards themselves is that these impositions were almost entirely subconscious. The characteristic of discursive systems that makes them so influential is the subtlety and subconsciousness with which they operate. It is certainly possible that some entity could attempt to consciously create a discursive system by which to establish power, in many ways, that is what government departments of propaganda do. More often than not though, discursive systems and the consequent power relations that result from them, are not conscious creations, but rather evolve through the countless methods of obtaining and
reproducing knowledge within a society that slowly create culturally specific structures of meaning associated with various subjects.

When the Boxers rose up in arms against the foreign presence in their midst, it is not a wonder that American Protestant missionaries were shocked and confused at the extreme level of hostility directed towards them. While other groups of missionaries, particularly German and French Catholics had participated in egregious incidents against native Chinese, the actions of American Protestant missionaries seemed almost culturally sensitive in comparison. Trapped inside the Legation Quarter in Beijing, American missionaries genuinely had no idea what they had done to end up in such a situation. They believed their actions had been nothing but benevolent because their intentions had been nothing but benevolent. For years after the Boxer Rebellion, Protestants would blame Catholics, Americans would blame Europeans, missionaries would blame diplomats, and diplomats would blame missionaries, because it would take decades before anyone could begin to see the unintended consequences of the mentalities behind the benevolence.

One of the most significant roles played by American missionaries in the outbreak of the Boxer Rebellion can be summed up in their ignorance of the difference between their understanding of China as an imperial frontier and its reality as the “contact zone” between two vibrant cultures. “Contact zones” can be defined as sites of trans-culturalization, in which cultural

105 Many French and German Catholic missionaries had a very hostile relationship with Chinese authorities and non-Christian local Chinese. There were a number of cases in which particularly some German Catholic missionaries committed acts of violence against Chinese villagers for varieties of reasons, there were also documented cases of German Catholic missionaries killing local Chinese. While these missionaries were protected from Chinese authorities through extraterritoriality, these same missionaries often demanded that non-Christian Chinese be prosecuted to the furthest extent for even very minor offenses. French Catholic missionaries, while not implicated in the worst crimes of violence and extortion, were known for their extensive involvement in Chinese government affairs because of France’s position as the official protector of all Catholics in China. Most comprehensive works on the Boxer Rebellion contain sections on the actions of French, German, and other missionaries, however the most thorough treatment is given in Joseph Esherick, Origins of the Boxer Uprising (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
influences are not controlled by one side or the other, nor are they necessarily equal. These areas function more like thresholds than strict borders and the context of these cultural interactions are therefore constantly changing. In these zones neither party controls who is influencing and who is influenced. Who has the upper hand in any given situation constantly shifts, depending on innumerable factors, in countless encounters between individual actors. More importantly, no single power controls how such influence is to be translated into the other culture. The greatest mistake of the American missionaries was in the assumption of their inherent cultural superiority and the consequent failure to consider how their actions, words, and attitudes translated into the Chinese culture.

Most of the missionaries, diplomats, and converts besieged in the Legation Quarter in Beijing, such as Charles and Bessie Ewing, survived the Boxer Rebellion. Eva Jane Price and her family were not so fortunate. They were slain by a roving band of Boxers, twenty miles outside of Fen Cho Fu while attempting to evacuate to Tianjin. As one historian has eloquently noted, “Price’s death came not because of the failure or success of the mission walls; it came, perhaps, because of a failure on the part of Price and her neighbors to realize that the walls were such trans-cultural sites and thus not the property of either ‘side.’”

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106 Susanna Ashton, “Compound Walls: Eva Jane Price’s Letters from a Chinese Mission, 1890-1900” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 17 (1996), 82; It is important to note that Ashton derives her definition from Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN U.S. PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES AND AMERICAN POLITICS AT HOME AND ABROAD

One of the essential components in the process of cultural imperialism is that the intercultural relationship suffers from an egregiously unequal power relationship where one side possesses a preponderance of power politically, economically, and/or militarily. In spite of the lack of any official relationship between the American missionary movement in China as a whole, and the political, economic, and military institutions of the United States that did not mean that associations did not exist, both perceived and actual. Prior to the establishment of formal U.S. diplomatic relations with China, individual American Protestant missionaries played large roles as translators and consultants in treaty negotiations and even served as American consuls or ministers to the Chinese government due to their extensive experience in Chinese affairs. Individual missionaries or missionary organizations regularly petitioned the American consulate, often successfully, to intervene in the affairs of the Chinese government at all levels, on behalf of themselves or their Chinese converts. After the outbreak of the Boxer Uprising in the summer of 1900, representatives of the U.S. State Department consulted with American mission boards regarding the appropriate course of action.

None of this is to say that the United States government would not have acted aggressively to rescue American citizens that found themselves besieged in the manner that took place during the Boxer Uprising, regardless of their religious affiliation. However, it cannot be ignored that the overwhelming majority of American citizens endangered during the Boxer Uprising, were, in fact American Protestant missionaries at a time in which Protestant Christianity held a dominantly influential position in American culture. Because of the unique confluence of time, place, and historical actors in this event, the military intervention placed religion in an unparalleled position of influence in regard to U.S. foreign relations that it may
never have occupied in quite the same way either before or since. While, as usual with the influence of religion in foreign relations, religion was not a causative factor in the U.S. decision for military intervention, it was omnipresent as an influencing factor. This influence can be seen in regard to the ability of religious organizations to have a voice in the decision-making process, as well as the need for American political leaders to consider how their actions would be received by a voting populace that was predominantly Protestant and among whom the foreign missionary movement was increasingly popular.

The position of American missionaries in China at the turn of the twentieth century was unique in many ways. Most notably, the United States itself was barely over a century old, and only after the Civil War was it even capable of having serious interests beyond its most basic relationships with European nations such as England and France. When American foreign policy did begin to emerge, it was largely in the name of seeking economic opportunity, particularly for the purpose of alleviating the domestic problems of economic depression and rising social unrest.108 The United States diplomatic apparatus did not leap into existence fully formed. Much of its dealings tended to be reactive and foreign ministers, especially to places like China, with which the U.S. had little formal business, were often granted based upon political connections as opposed to actual experience of the country. It was not until around 1890 that American foreign policy began to take on a clearly methodological and proactive appearance, and even then, in areas like China, much was still being learned by trial and error.109

American missionaries had been in China since the early nineteenth century and were, in most cases, far more familiar with the language, people, customs, and government than the


American ministers themselves. Missionaries also remained in the country far longer than most American ministers, who sometimes only lasted a year or two, while missionaries were required to serve minimum terms of at least five years, more often terms of seven or ten years, and tended to serve multiple terms. As a result, missionaries often served as advisors and translators to the diplomats, especially in situations involving treaty negotiations, such as the 1844 Treaty of Wanghia, which officially opened formal Sino-American relations, and included the provision of extraterritoriality and most-favored nation status, which, by extension, granted missionaries the first legal right to evangelize in China.\textsuperscript{110} It was not until 1882 that the United States began to attempt to turn away from this strong reliance on missionaries in the American legation.\textsuperscript{111}

Extraterritoriality was a protection written into the treaties China signed with the United States and other nations that ensured that foreigners, Americans in this case, could not be prosecuted under Chinese law. Missionaries also gained protection for their right to evangelize the Christian faith as well as protection from persecution. It was estimated by the diplomats in Beijing that nearly half of their time was spent in negotiating resolutions to conflicts between Chinese authorities and missionaries or their converts.\textsuperscript{112} When Bessie and Charles Ewing arrived in China in 1894, Charles commented on the extent to which this protection was invoked by missionaries. “If I am insulted all I have to do is report it to the consul, and he will see to it that a proclamation is issued, or something is done, that will prevent a recurrence of the insult. . . The government [of China], so far from failing to respond, has issued proclamation after

\textsuperscript{111} Hunt, \textit{Making of a Special Relationship}, 149.
\textsuperscript{112} Ruoff, \textit{Death Throes}, 9.
proclamation, until as one of our missionaries says the Chinese are almost afraid to look at a foreigner.\footnote{Ruoff, \textit{Death Throes}, 15.} 

Probably the most controversial issue regarding extraterritoriality was the extension of treaty protections to local Chinese Christian converts. While the Treaty of Tianjin signed between the United States and China in 1858 clearly extended protection from persecution to native converts, it did not extend extraterritoriality.\footnote{“Treaty of Peace, Amity and Commerce between the United States of America and China,” June 18, 1858, \textit{U.S. Statutes at Large} 12 (1863).} Many missionaries however, loosely interpreted persecution to include legal prosecution, even in circumstances in which the convert was clearly guilty, and would intervene with local authorities to obtain favorable judgments for Christian converts. It was also well-known that many Chinese converts were criminals who joined the Christian church to avoid prosecution by local authorities.\footnote{Esherick, \textit{Origins}, 88.} What was more often a point of contention in local villages were situations in which villagers would engage in acts of persecution against Christian converts. The local authorities would frequently attempt to ignore the incident, often siding with the perpetrators, but then would be forced to prosecute after intervention by the missionaries, who demanded action based on the treaty protection of all Christians against persecution. The following incident took place in a village six miles outside of Beijing in 1896.

The leader among these [Chinese Christians] is a poor man, whose business in the winter is collecting kindling, for his own use and for sale. One night his stock of kindling, worth over fifteen dollars (a large sum for a poor Chinese) was burned, and he was also warned that if he did not move out of town within ten days his house would be burned. The case was reported to Dr. Ament. He went immediately to see the proper official, and the result was that before the ten days were half gone, the men who made the threat were in jail, and there was evidence in hand sufficient to convict one of them of the burning of the pile of kindling. The official seems disposed to push the case, and these men are not likely soon to be free, in spite of the efforts of a large number of friends.\footnote{Ruoff, \textit{Death Throes}, 26.}
Incidents like this were common and increasingly resented by the larger part of the Chinese population. What the Chinese people saw, was American and other missionaries using the protection of foreign power to intimidate Chinese authorities into prosecuting non-Christian Chinese. At the same time, villagers saw missionaries protecting Chinese Christians who had committed crimes against non-Christian Chinese. More importantly, the repeated edicts issued by the Imperial government in Beijing authorized the foreign intervention in local affairs. Chinese that believed their traditional way of life was under attack or that they had been unfairly treated by missionaries or their converts felt they could no longer expect support from local authorities or the Chinese Imperial government.

It is significant that the Chinese people saw American and other missionaries as agents of foreign power even though they were not officially connected with the commercial or political interests of their home countries. Most Chinese, particularly in the rural area of Northwest Shandong province, where the Boxer movement began, never encountered the soldiers, businessmen, or diplomats that were commonplace in large cities like Beijing and Tianjin. What the people did encounter were the stories of foreign military presence in these cities and the effects of commercial intrusion into Chinese markets. To the rural population of Northwest Shandong there was little difference between the threat posed by the American gunboat, the USS Monocacy, stationed off the coast of Tianjin, and the threat of American missionaries stationed outside of their villages. Each equally represented the threat of foreign invasion.

While the U.S. missionaries saw themselves primarily as representatives of Christ and not of any political or commercial interest of the United States, as already discussed, they did not hesitate to call on the political power of United States representatives for protection and intervention. American missionaries also expressed a similar willingness to call on the military
power of the United States if diplomatic and political power failed. Charles Ewing revealed his comfort with calling on military intervention in the same letter in which he described the prevalence of missionary diplomatic intervention. “Armed resistance on the part of civilians, however interesting and exciting it might be, will hardly be called for, while we have the gunboats at hand. Why, the very presence of those armed creatures is enough to terrify the natives.”

American missionaries also did not hesitate to blatantly declare Chinese misfortunes, such as the Chinese defeat in the Sino-Japanese war, as acts of Providence designed to humiliate the Chinese and convince them of their need for Christ. Many U.S. missionaries vocally argued that “a Western military invasion would create turmoil and weaken China’s institutionalized resistance to Christianity.” This type of rhetoric only appeared to confirm the rural population’s fears that the missionaries were merely forward agents of powers whose purpose was to prepare the way for a pending Western invasion.

The belief in the identity of American missionaries as agents of larger imperial powers allowed the local population, specifically that of Northwest Shandong, to hold the missionaries responsible for other effects of foreign power on their daily lives. Most notable is the negative economic impact of the incursion of imported cotton yarn into the Chinese market. Scholars have debated the significance of this impact, often making the point that there did not seem to be an increase in the imports of foreign yarn into the province itself. What these scholars did not take into account was that the market for locally produced yarn was not within the province, but to large wholesalers that sold the yarn throughout China. This argument is confirmed in a

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contemporary account made by American missionary, Arthur H. Smith upon a visit to Northwest Shandong at this time. “But now, through the ‘bright outlook’ for foreign cotton goods, there is no market for the native product, as there has always been hitherto. The factors for the wholesale dealers no longer make their appearance as they have always done from time immemorial, and there is no profit in the laborious work of weaving, and no productive industry which can take its place.”\textsuperscript{120}

In addition to the negative economic impact of foreign imports, the residents of Northwest Shandong were able to see other negative effects of foreign presence that they therefore associated with the presence of American and other missionaries. The intrusion of the railroad and telegraph wires through the countryside disrupted ancient graveyards and their sense of \textit{feng-shui}, which was the long-held spiritual belief associated with the flow of spiritual energy through physical space. The Sino-Japanese war was cause for a disproportionate number of men called into military service, leaving wives and children behind to fend for themselves. The wars against the British, Japanese, and Germans also resulted in the closing of local garrisons to provide reinforcements to the coast, leaving the countryside unprotected from roving bands of bandits that were a threat to small villages, particularly in winter or times of natural disaster.\textsuperscript{121}

The official interests of the U.S. government in China were supposedly economic. The government did not officially endorse the American missionary movement, nor did the American missionaries officially endorse the American government or its associated economic interests. The reality was that the famed China market was purely mythological. The Chinese population was largely comprised of peasants who did not possess the economic means to purchase foreign goods and China itself did not possess the necessary infrastructure to transport and market such

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\textsuperscript{121} Esherick, \textit{Origins}, 68, 22.
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Missionaries, however, did make a minor contribution to the economic relationship between China and the United States. The explosion of foreign missionary activity in the late nineteenth century, for the first time made information about the Eastern world widely available to the general American population. Through travel writing, and especially missionary lectures involving lantern slides, the exotic sights of the non-Western world captivated home audiences. Appreciation of foreign material goods, particularly decorative items for the home, became a way for Americans to assert that they possessed the same sophistication and modern tastes as their European counterparts. Even so, the increased interest in foreign decorative goods did not make a significant impact on the bottom line when it came to U.S. economic interests in China.

Before further examining the specific issue of the official U.S. response to the Boxer Uprising it is necessary to contextualize the issue in a general overview of U.S.-China relations on the level of international politics in the late nineteenth century. Overall the Chinese and particularly the American government, at this time tended to refer to their relationship as a “special relationship.” The United States cast itself rhetorically as the defender and protector of Chinese territorial and economic integrity against all other Great Powers that sought to divide China for their own gain. In turn, the Chinese often turned towards the United States, seeking its support against territorial and economic aggression by such powers.

However, the nature of this “special relationship” as a whole was largely illusory, not just in regard to the myth of the China market. The U.S.-China relationship throughout the nineteenth

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century was a complex one that encompassed not only issues with missionaries but issues of extraterritoriality, Chinese exclusion, and immigration. In spite of the rhetoric of the United States and the Open Door Policy, which claimed a unique friendship with the Chinese in defense of their integrity, the United States consistently refused to support the Chinese in any significant way. Chinese who immigrated to America were met with violent xenophobia, lack of basic rights, exclusion from most industries, and ultimately barred entirely from entry, despite treaty provisions guaranteeing their right to do so. Missionaries who traveled to China were also met with similarly violent xenophobia, and the United States demanded treaty provisions guaranteeing missionary protection in China be enforced, while refusing to protect Chinese immigrants in the United States. Repeatedly the United States lent its support to Japan despite Japan’s territorial aggression towards China in both Korea and Manchuria.

As a result, the Chinese ultimately understood the United States policy to be merely rhetorical and thoroughly designed to protect its own interests. Yet both the United States and China, when faced with necessity, would resort to a reliance on this supposed friendship. The Chinese would still turn to the United States in desperation seeking assistance against outside aggressors or internal rebellions. The most important point is that the relationship between the United States and China at the turn of the century was based entirely on misconceptions each nation doggedly maintained about the other, regardless of the mounting evidence against those misconceptions. The United States was determined to perceive itself as the paternalistic “savior” of China “from foreign aggression” and the power that would lead China into modernity through “influence and uplift.” The Chinese remained convinced that the United States, like other Great Powers of the time, could be played off of the other powers and “manipulated by the

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prospect of trade preference. . . railway concessions. . . and loans.” The United States failed to understand the depth of Chinese anti-foreign sentiment and growing nationalist sentiment and underestimated the potential of the Chinese people to resist Western imperialist incursions, despite the weakness of the Qing imperial authority. The Chinese, in turn, failed to understand the position of the United States as a relatively weak Western power that did not have the economic or military might to engage actively in the balance of power struggles at the level of the other Great Powers.

The nature of the “special relationship” between the United States and China is particularly visible in the case of the U.S. position in the Boxer Uprising because of the U.S. desire to appear different to China from the other Great Powers in regard to territorial imperialism, while still appearing to be a major player whose opinion and position on global issues mattered. In the communications between U.S. Minister to China, Edwin Conger and U.S. Secretary of State, John Hay in the months leading up to the Boxer siege, Hay made it clear on several occasions the importance of keeping the United States position independent of all others, even in the case of concerted efforts. For example, when Conger met with the foreign ministers of England, France, Italy, and Germany and they all agreed to an identical and united course of action in their demands of the Chinese government, Hay had the following response:

”. . . while the Department finds no objection to the general terms of this paper, it would have preferred if you had made separate representation on the question instead of the mode adopted, as the position of the United States in relation to China makes it expedient that, while circumstances may sometimes require that it act on lines similar to those other treaty powers follow, it should do so singly and without the cooperation of other powers.”

Hay went on to instruct Conger to avail himself of every opportunity to impress upon the Chinese government that the U.S. had obtained renewed assurances from all of the great treaty powers “not to interfere with the integrity of the Chinese Empire.” Conger later replied assuring Hay that all of the ministers had presented their demands individually and not as a joint presentation.128

It is almost impossible to overstate the preoccupation of the U.S. State Department with the Boxer Uprising in the year 1900 when one examines the Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States for the year 1900. Three-hundred-twenty-six pages of the volume are devoted to the subject of China, which is over three times the space devoted to the next largest subject, Great Britain, with only one-hundred-four pages. President McKinley also devoted considerable attention to the subject, spending nearly a quarter of his forty-six page annual message to the Senate and House of Representatives recapping in detail the entire Boxer ordeal.129

What is most striking about the papers concerning the U.S. position on the Boxer Uprising is the extent to which missionaries attempted to exert influence on the decision-making process and the degree to which they appeared to have been successful. Admittedly, it is always difficult to measure influence in a given situation, because there is no way to know whether the decision-makers involved would have made the same decisions regardless of various influencing factors. However, one does not need to over-complicate the situation in regard to the Boxer Uprising in that because the situation involved religious organizations, it naturally put those organizations in a position to have at least some voice in the course that the State Department took in resolving the situation.

128 Edwin Conger, Telegram to John Hay, 12 April 1900, PRFRUS, 114.
129 William McKinley, “Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress December 3, 1900” in PRFRUS, vii-xvi.
As previously mentioned in this chapter, missionaries had a long history of involvement with U.S.-China relations, and it was largely due to the participation of missionaries as translators and consultants in treaty negotiations that such extensive protections for missionaries and their activities were granted in U.S. treaties with China. Missionaries were the only U.S. citizens allowed to travel freely throughout the interior of China, or allowed to live among the local Chinese outside of the treaty port cities. It was this unique treaty protection provided to American missionaries that put them in a position to interact so closely with the larger Chinese population as well as created the ongoing relationship between American missionaries and the U.S. diplomatic corps in China. It was also the failure of the Chinese government to successfully protect Chinese Christian converts, and later American missionaries and their property, per their treaty agreements that both Conger and Hay cited repeatedly as justification for U.S. intervention in Chinese affairs, including the eventual use of military force.\(^{130}\)

American missionaries developed an unusually powerful voice in the conduct of U.S. affairs because of Article XXIX in the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin which stated:

The principles of the Christian religion, as professed by the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches, are recognised as teaching men to do good, and to do to others as they would have others do to them. Hereafter, those who quietly profess and teach these doctrines shall not be harassed or persecuted on account of their faith. Any persons, whether citizens of the United States or Chinese converts, who according to these tenets peaceably teach and practise the principles of Christianity shall in no case be interfered with or molested.

This article made it common practice for American missionaries to regularly contact U.S. consuls as well as Edwin Conger, the U.S. minister in Beijing, to ask for intervention on behalf of their Chinese converts. What is most striking is the promptness with which the U.S. minister


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acted upon the requests and suggestions of these missionaries, often communicating his actions
and their results to the State Department only after the fact.

Consequently, when Boxer incidents began to erupt in the province of Shandong it was
then not at all unusual for American Protestant missionaries in the area to petition the U.S.
government for intervention, even though at that time, no hostility had been directed towards
American citizens. Beginning on November 11, 1899, Edwin Conger began receiving
communications from American missionaries regarding escalating violence against Chinese
Christian converts in various areas of Shandong. More specifically, these communications
blamed the governor of the province for failing to use troops, make arrests, or in any other way
take action to protect Chinese Christians. On more than one occasion Conger directly forwarded
these telegrams to the Tsungli Yamen (the Chinese institution purposed with acting as liason
between the foreign legations and the Chinese Imperial Throne) demanding that the Imperial
Chinese Government “send such imperative orders by telegraph to the governor and other
officials as will compel them to instantly use such forcible means as will forthwith disperse these
threatening rioters and protect the lives and property of these people.”¹³¹ A few days later
Conger received, among others, a telegram from the U.S. consul, John Fowler in Chefoo relating
that he received two long telegrams from American Protestant missionaries in Shandong and that
“they ask legation force governor act or superseded.”¹³² In other words, the missionaries asked
that if the governor could not be forced to act, that he be replaced.

The record does not contain any telegrams or other communications from Conger to Hay
or any other State Department official requesting guidance or approval for a course of action. On

¹³¹ F.M. Chapin, Telegram to Edwin Conger quoted in Edwin Conger, Letter to Tsungli Yamen, 25 November
1899, PRFRUS, 78; Arthur Smith, Telegram to Edwin Conger quoted in Edwin Conger, Letter to Tsungli Yamen, 2
December 1899, PRFRUS, 81; Edwin Conger, Letter to Tsungli Yamen, 25 November 1899, PRFRUS, 79.
¹³² John Fowler, Telegram to Edwin Conger, 27 November 1899, PRFRUS, 80.
December 5 Conger once again contacted the Tsungli Yamen, this time echoing the demand put forward by American missionaries that if the current governor of Shandong province could not bring the Boxers under control that orders be sent from the Imperial Government in Beijing for his replacement.\footnote{Edwin Conger, Letter to Tsungli Yamen, 5 December 1899, \textit{PRFRUS}, 84.} On December 7, 1899, Conger sent a telegram to Arthur H. Smith with only four short words, “Yuan-shih-kai appointed governor Shantung.”\footnote{Edwin Conger, Telegram to Arthur H. Smith, 7 December 1899, \textit{PRFRUS}, 84.} Only then is there a record of Edwin Conger penning a communication to Secretary of State, John Hay, informing him of the negotiations of the previous six weeks as well as enclosing copies of all of the aforementioned communications. It is no small influence for a group of American citizens to be able to effect the removal of a provincial governor in a foreign country via their relationship with U.S. diplomats.

The intimacy of the connection between American Protestant missionaries and agents of the State Department is only confirmed by the next recorded communication to Minister Conger from Secretary Hay. The communication was a letter that contained two other letters, one that Hay had received from the Foreign Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), Judson Smith, and one to Judson Smith from missionary Arthur H. Smith regarding the situation in Shandong and the need for action to be taken against the provincial governor. Hay instructed Conger to “do what you can for the protection of these American citizens” and to report if any of his “diplomatic colleagues are making or propose to make similar representations.”\footnote{John Hay, Letter to Edwin Conger, 18 January 1900, \textit{PRFRUS}, 89-91.} Obviously the slow speed of written communications was a factor here, however, the use of telegrams was commonplace at this time, and this communication confirms several things. First, this communication confirms that Conger had not acted with any direction or approval of the State Department in his suggestions for the removal
of the provincial governor of Shandong, but primarily on the suggestions of American missionaries in the field. Secondly, this communication shows that Conger’s actions were in line with State Department thinking. Most significantly, however, is the that this communication shows that Secretary of State Hay, like Minister Conger, considered the reports and suggestions of American missionaries, both at home and in the field, to be of the utmost importance in regard to determining the proper course of action.

As the uprising of the Boxers in Shandong continued and spread into the neighboring provinces of Shanxi and Chili, the communications between American Protestant missionaries, Minister Conger, ABCFM Foreign Secretary Judson Smith, and Secretary of State Hay continued to grow in frequency. One communication, dated February 20, 1900, from Hay to Conger, in which he enclosed a letter from Judson Smith which mentions a meeting held between Hay and Smith in Washington. Smith’s letter goes on to suggest that “the presence of United States warships in Chinese waters might be an added guaranty of safety to American citizens residing in that Empire, under existing conditions.”

March 9 Conger sent a telegram to Hay also advising that “a demonstration by war vessels” may be necessary and a reply was received by Hay on March 15 communicating that the Navy had authorized a ship to be sent.

In a letter dated March 24, 1900, which Hay also forwarded to Conger, Judson Smith again communicated, this time rather forcefully, his suggestion that the Chinese Imperial Government dispatch troops to put down the insurrection without delay and that on the part of the U.S. government, “perhaps some demonstration of power may be necessary to stir the sluggish Government at Pekin. . . “

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A warship, the *USS Wheeler*, was deployed to North China for several weeks in the month of April. When it departed Conger immediately began petitioning for another to be sent because while the Boxer violence had calmed significantly in Shandong, it had escalated dramatically in the province of Zhili and moved dangerously close to the capital in Beijing. Another warship, the *USS Newark* was dispatched at once from Manila. On May 26 the State Department authorized Conger to request a contingency of U.S. Marine guards from the *Newark* to act as guards for the U.S. legation in Beijing. After that point the situation deteriorated rapidly, ultimately resulting in the siege of the legation quarter throughout June, July, and the beginning of August. An additional 2,000 U.S. Marines were sent from the Philippines to assist in rescuing American citizens, predominantly missionaries, who had become besieged in Tianjin and Beijing.

The late nineteenth century has long been characterized as the era in which American foreign policy was the most imperialistic in the traditional sense of the term. Considering the Spanish-American War and the war in the Philippines, it is perhaps not so extraordinary that the United States was so easily drawn into a military intervention in China, especially for the purpose of rescuing such a large number of American citizens. However, the military intervention in the Boxer Uprising was more than an American impulse to flex its imperialist muscle along with the Great Powers of Europe. The fact that the imperiled U.S. citizens in China were missionaries was not lost on the decision-making politicians in Washington, nor their voting constituents. The intimate relationship between Protestant Christianity and American nationalism in the nineteenth-century American identity was discussed in chapter one. Securing the evangelical vote then was no small matter. A national official, particularly a president, perceived not to be acting aggressively for the protection of the ambassadors of American
Christianity in heathen lands could possibly be perceived by evangelical voters to be both un-Christian and un-American.

The significance of the revivalist or evangelical vote in the national elections of the 1890’s particularly the election of 1896 has been a controversial topic among political historians of this era. The general consensus among analysts in the 1970s was that evangelical votes moved away from the Republican party and towards the Democratic party in the 1890s. This was explained by the shift in the Republican party away from pietistic rhetoric and moralistic issues such as Prohibition and the adoption of these things by the Democratic party. In 1989 there began an opposition to this consensus with the publication of George M. Thomas’ book, *Revivalism and Cultural Change*. In this book Thomas argues that in spite of the Republican Party’s move away from pietistic rhetoric and moralist issues, it remained dedicated to the ideological principle of individualist nationalism, which corresponded to the evangelical principles of personal salvation, individual responsibility, and republican patriotism as a moral value. The identification of evangelicals with the individualist nationalism espoused by the Republican Party superseded the attempts of the Democratic Party to adopt evangelical rhetoric, symbols, and issues, Thomas claims, particularly because the Democratic Party misused this evangelical lexicon and completely rejected themes of individualist nationalism. He concludes that as a result there was no significant shift in the electorate between parties.

The relevant point of this debate for this study is that Protestant Christianity, particularly evangelical Christianity that fueled the missionary movement in the nineteenth century, played a

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significant role in the political strategies of nineteenth century party politics at the national level. Regardless of whether these strategies resulted in major shifts in voting patterns, historical analysts agree that maintaining the political support of the evangelical community was a factor capable of affecting political strategy at the highest levels. Even though the Republican Party shifted away from evangelical rhetoric, they did so in order to be able to encompass a broader Christian constituency, such as the growing immigrant Catholic population, even though their constituency remained overwhelmingly Protestant.\footnote{George M. Marsden, “Afterward: Religion, Politics, and the Search for an American Consensus” in Religion and American Politics from the Colonial Period to the 1980s, ed. Mark A. Noll (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 385.} 1900 was an election year and the influence of the evangelical population and their growing support for the missionary movement did not escape the McKinley administration and the Republican party, nor the missionaries themselves during the Boxer Uprising in 1900.

Probably the most obvious evidence of the Republican Party’s public support of the missionary movement was the appearance of President William McKinley, Governor of New York and soon-to-be Vice-President President Theodore Roosevelt, and former President Benjamin Harrison as speakers at the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York City on April 21, 1900. News of the growing danger to American missionaries in North China appeared back to back with news of the impending missionary conference, as well as McKinley’s appearance and Harrison’s role as “honorary president of the conference” in the \textit{New York Times}.\footnote{“North China Terrorized: Bands Organized to Destroy the Homes of Christian Converts,” \textit{New York Times}, April 15, 1900; “The Missionary Congress: Delegates from All Fields to Assemble at Carnegie Hall,” \textit{New York Times}, April 16, 1900.} On the opening night of the conference McKinley delivered an address in glowing terms that characterized missionaries and their supporters as nothing less than “the world’s heroes” who “braved disease, danger, and death, and in their exile have suffered unspeakable
hardships, but their noble spirits have never wavered.” When he concluded the audience responded by standing and singing “My Country ‘Tis of Thee,” the song that was considered to be the de facto national anthem at that time. The marriage of politics, evangelical Christianity, and American identity in the late nineteenth century could not have been more striking than in that moment.

The same article that announced the conference in the New York Times also described the organizational process leading up to the conference, and revealed that Judson Smith, Foreign Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, was the chairman of the organizing committee. In light of the ongoing correspondence at this same time between Judson Smith and Secretary of State John Hay regarding the issue of government assistance for the missionaries in North China, this suggests more than a casual relationship between the leadership of the ABCFM and powerful members of the Republican Party.

The correspondence between missionaries like Judson Smith, Arthur Smith, and officials like John Hay and Edwin Conger, also suggests that at least some missionaries were aware of the influence they possessed as voting constituents. Communications from missionaries in China or their representatives often included reminders, in varying degrees of subtlety, of their position as American citizens, and hence the voting population. Some statements were as simple as the closing of a letter from American Protestant missionary H.P. Perkins to Conger that merely stated, “For the American citizens residing in Lin Ch’ing.” Far more explicit, were the statements made in letters from ABCFM Foreign Secretary Judson Smith to Secretary of State...
Hay, in which Judson Smith juxtaposed suggestions for a greater show of force by the U.S. government in China on behalf of American missionaries with a far from subtle reminder. In the following example the juxtaposition and choice of words is so strong that it comes close to giving the feeling of a veiled threat.

> Has our Government considered the possibility that some demonstration of power may be necessary to stir the sluggish Government at Pekin to suppress this insurrection and to fulfill its treaty pledges in behalf of these Americans in China who are at present in such serious danger?

> I write in behalf not only of myself and associates here in Boston, but also in behalf of that great constituency of the board, number so many hundreds of thousands of citizens from Atlantic to the Pacific, who are deeply interested in the missionaries and their work in China. 147

Passages such as these present strong evidence for a significant influence of American Protestant missionaries and their representative bodies on an aggressive U.S. response to the Boxer Uprising in the summer of 1900. This is particularly true when placed in the context of the cooperation between Judson Smith and the McKinley administration in the planning of the Ecumenical Mission Conference, the significance of the evangelical vote identified by historical analysts, as well as the fact that 1900 was an election year.

The fact that religion did not exist as a causative factor in determining the U.S. military response to the Boxer Uprising cannot be over emphasized. The difficulties of establishing the influence of something as intangible as religion on foreign relations also cannot be overstated. However, the relative difficulty of the task should not be taken as reason to eliminate the effort to explore the topic. As this chapter has shown, while religion was not the deciding factor, nor was it the only influential factor leading up to the deployment of U.S. Marines to China in 1900, the fact that the American citizens they were sent to rescue were predominantly American Protestant missionaries inherently throws religion into the mix. This chapter has shown that American

147 Judson Smith to Hay, March 24, 1900, *PRFRUS*, 113.
Protestant missionaries, due to the unique circumstances of time and place presented by the nascent state of American foreign relations in the nineteenth century, were able to exercise an unusual degree of influence in U.S.-China relations. The position of American Protestant missionaries as experts on Chinese culture and language allowed them the influence to insert provisions for themselves in treaty negotiations that established both the avenues and the precedent for an ongoing and intimate relationship with U.S. diplomatic activities in China.

This chapter’s examination of the *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* for 1900 showed that there was extensive communication between American Protestant missionaries, missionary organizations, and decision-making actors in the U.S. State Department. It is also significant that these are the only communications. The record does not show similar communications from any other American citizens on the ground in China at the time. Most notably absent, given the emphasis on the supposed American economic interest in China, are communications from American businessmen or the companies which they represented. The only voice represented in the official record other than American and Chinese diplomats are the voices of missionaries and their boards.

The evidence in this chapter also revealed a more than casual relationship between the head of the largest missionary board at the time and powerful members of the Republican Party, including the Secretary of State, President, and future Vice-President of the United States. The relationship between evangelical Christianity and electoral politics provides a continuation of the themes presented in chapter one regarding the role played by Protestant Christianity and rising American nationalism in the formation of nineteenth century American identity. In an election year it was essential for the incumbent Republican Party to appear fully in support of the burgeoning American Protestant missionary movement, which demanded an aggressive response
to the peril of missionaries in a heathen land. The missionaries themselves were aware of this influence and did not hesitate to make use of their identity as Republican constituents in their efforts to elicit a more aggressive response from their Republican-led government.

If an influence cannot be empirically measured or even empirically established one may be tempted to ask what value its discussion may have. The answer to that question is in the role of history as evaluating change over time. One of the most valued principles in American government is the separation of church and state, and because the United States has never made any law in direct support of any particular religion nor has it ever engaged in a military conflict specifically for the cause of religion, that is not to say that our government is completely devoid of religious influence. All governments are comprised of humans, who both influence and are influenced by the cultural framework within which they operate. Religion plays an essential role in the establishment of both personal and national identity as well as the establishment of social norms and the perception of right and wrong. Viewing the world from a twenty-first century perspective that is significantly more secular and significantly less imperialist than the nineteenth century, it is not likely that our current government would undertake a similar military solution to a similar dilemma today. However, for the same reasons it is also easy to conclude that religion has no bearing on modern foreign policy decisions, yet by engaging in studies such as this one it becomes possible to see the ways that religion can and does continue to influence foreign policy in indirect ways through its influence on individual decision-makers, public opinion, and as a factor in courting particular demographics of the electorate. While the constitution of the United States may prevent Congress from making any law in support of religion, or prohibiting anyone from worshipping in their own way, it can never eliminate the influence that religion has on individual human beings. Therefore, as long as decisions are made
by people, and elections are decided by individual voters, religion will forever play a role, large or small, in the decisions that they make.
CONCLUSION

One of the most vexing problems in the research of the role of religion in foreign relations is the issue of causation. Quite often religion is a factor that one can identify as being observably influential, yet one cannot describe precisely how. The natural tendency of the historian is to look for causative links, however, in reality, not all influential factors are necessarily causative, nor can such influential factors be proven to exist by traditional forms of empirical evidence and documentation. Religion is one such factor, where it often acts as an intellectual framework within which actions or events are justified, or provides the basis for personal or national identities that in turn becomes the standard by which all others are measured, consciously or subconsciously. Often religion functions in such an internal way that identifying its influence can be extremely difficult. Hopefully this project has helped to move one step closer to an effective methodology for examining the ways in which religion has worked as an influential factor in world events.

This work began by asking if missionaries in Shandong province did not cause the Boxer uprising, then what exactly was their role and more specifically, what was the role of United States missionaries? Was it in any way unique? Did their role as emissaries of Protestant Christianity influence the decision of the United States government to intervene on their behalf? After an in depth examination of both primary and secondary sources it can be concluded that American Protestant missionaries, and their identification with Christianity did exert a notable influence on the progression of events in the Boxer uprising in two ways.

First, as products of nineteenth century American culture, many American Protestant missionaries behaved in ways that made them targets of Boxer anti-foreign aggression. In a very real way, just being foreign and/or being Christian and being present was enough to make one a
target of the Boxers. However, as chapters one and two of this study have shown, what it meant to be American and what it meant to be Chinese were understood very differently within the two cultures. The missionaries were seen as symbols of foreign aggression in the eyes of the local Chinese, while the missionaries themselves were acting based on a body of knowledge about themselves and the Chinese that was formed and authenticated from their own cultural perspective, in a time long before the concept of cultural relativism had been introduced. The result was a prolonged failure to successfully communicate in which both sides persisted in acting on bodies of knowledge about the other that were flawed at best, and blatantly wrong at worst. This failure ultimately resulted in the missionaries and their Chinese converts, becoming the primary targets of the Boxers’ aggression, and the Boxers becoming the targets of United States military forces.

The second way in which American Protestant missionaries and their association with Christianity influenced foreign relations during the Boxer uprising was political. One political influence was through the unique relationship American missionaries had with U.S. diplomatic operations in China as a result of protections they received via the Treaty of Tianjin. American Protestant missionaries regularly invoked these protections for themselves and their Chinese converts, and did not hesitate to urge, or even demand United States intervention at all levels of government. The numerous letters and telegrams between American Protestant missionaries and U.S. government officials, particularly the American Minister to China and the Secretary of State show that American Protestant missionaries used this relationship to place consistent pressure on the U.S. government to make ever stronger displays of force against the Boxers and the Chinese government. What is most significant is that American Protestant missionaries were the only special interest group that seemed to be openly exerting this pressure. There were certainly a
number of American businessmen in China at the time of the Boxer uprising, however, there are no appeals from these American citizens or their supporting bodies to be found in the official correspondence leading up to the military intervention.

The second political influence that American Protestant missionaries exerted was as representatives of a very large demographic of the American electorate. Evangelical Christianity and the accompanying foreign missionary movement represented the culturally dominant sensibilities of the late nineteenth century. Evangelical Christianity married the rising currents of American nationalism, Manifest Destiny, and republican virtue in a way that made Protestant Christianity synonymous with American patriotism as well as a force that no politician could afford to ignore. The historical record shows that evangelical Christians were anything but ignored by the Republican Party and the McKinley administration in 1900. At the same time the head of the largest missionary board in the United States, Judson Smith, was personally petitioning Secretary of State John Hay to make a display of force in China on behalf of his missionaries, he was also arranging for President McKinley and future Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt to be the opening speakers for the Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions in New York City.

The omnipresent problem with the study of cultural influences on foreign relations, or on individual people for that matter, is the impossibility of measuring degree of influence. There is simply no way to ever know beyond a reasonable doubt to what degree various cultural influences may have shaped the identities of historical actors. Nor is there a way to know to what degree, if any, the petitions or political relationships of American Protestant missionaries and their representative boards had on the ultimate decisions made by President McKinley, Edwin Conger, Secretary of State Hay and other top decision-makers. However, this uncertainty is
precisely why the method of applying post-structural concepts to the study of cultural influence can be so valuable.

Many historians are disturbed by the application of post-structuralist methods to the study of history because they seek to hold on to the idea that human events can be reduced to some form of absolute truth. Fortunately an increasing number of historians are realizing that history in its most fundamental definition, is the attempt to recreate and understand the events of human lives, and human lives can rarely be simplified to anything resembling absolute truth. Just as Derrida argued about language, all too often context is everything. While it may be possible to determine beyond a reasonable doubt that certain events occurred, the interpretation of those events, what they meant in the infinite number of ways those events were experienced by individual people, can never be certain. Post-structuralism not only allows for the consideration of context in a way no other method does, it places context at the center and therefore reveals the dizzying complexity of how life is experienced in actuality, by human beings. Life is not experienced in a scientific vacuum where the intangibles are ignored because they make the equation messy, rather, each human life is experienced in a very specific context, out of which many illuminating details are often overlooked as irrelevant.

Rather than a conclusive study, this is a project has been intended as a jumping off place for what will hopefully be a considerable amount of further study. There is much more to the reality of events than what can be shown on a timeline, or even dug up in an archive. What people believe, what they think they know, how it is they come to think they know it, and how it all comes together to affect the course of human events is a process that is vitally important to reaching a deeper and more thorough understanding not only the past, but the human experience itself.
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APPENDIX


Which I wish to remark,
   And my language is plain,
That for ways that are dark
   And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,
   Which the same I would rise to explain.

Ah Sin was his name;
   And I shall not deny,
In regard to the same,
   What that name might imply;
But his smile it was pensive and childlike,
   As I frequent remarked to Bill Nye.

It was August the third,
   And quite soft was the skies;
Which it might be inferred
   That Ah Sin was likewise;
Yet he played it that day upon William
   And me in a way I despise.

Which we had a small game,
   And Ah Sin took a hand:
It was Euchre. The same
   He did not understand;
But he smiled as he sat by the table,
   With the smile that was childlike and bland.

Yet the cards they were stocked
   In a way that I grieve,
And my feelings were shocked
   At the state of Nye's sleeve,
Which was stuffed full of aces and bowers,
   And the same with intent to deceive.

But the hands that were played
   By that heathen Chinee,
And the points that he made,
   Were quite frightful to see, —
Till at last he put down a right bower,
Which the same Nye had dealt unto me.

Then I looked up at Nye,
   And he gazed upon me;
And he rose with a sigh,
   And said, "Can this be?"
We are ruined by Chinese cheap labor," —
   And he went for that heathen Chinee.

In the scene that ensued
   I did not take a hand,
But the floor it was strewed
   Like the leaves on the strand
With the cards that Ah Sin had been hiding,
   In the game "he did not understand."

In his sleeves, which were long,
   He had twenty-four packs, —
Which was coming it strong,
   Yet I state but the facts;
And we found on his nails, which were taper,
   What is frequent in tapers, — that's wax.

Which is why I remark,
   And my language is plain,
That for ways that are dark
   And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinee is peculiar, —
   Which the same I am free to maintain.

Take up the White Man's burden--
Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden--
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain
To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden--
The savage wars of peace--
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden--
No tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper--
The tale of common things.
The ports ye shall not enter,
The roads ye shall not tread,
Go mark them with your living,
And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden--
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard--
The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:--
"Why brought he us from bondage,  
Our loved Egyptian night?"

Take up the White Man's burden--  
Ye dare not stoop to less--  
Nor call too loud on Freedom  
To cloke your weariness;  
By all ye cry or whisper,  
By all ye leave or do,  
The silent, sullen peoples  
Shall weigh your gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden--  
Have done with childish days--  
The lightly proferred laurel,  
The easy, ungrudged praise.  
Comes now, to search your manhood  
Through all the thankless years  
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,  
The judgment of your peers!