

## Inquiring into Empire: Princeton Seminary's Society of Inquiry on Missions, the British Empire, and the Opium Trade, Ca. 1830–1850

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### Abstract

Princeton Seminary was intimately involved in the North American foreign missions movement in the nineteenth century. One remarkable dimension of this involvement came through the student-led Society of Inquiry on Missions, which sought to gather information about the global state of the Christian mission enterprise. This paper examines the Society's correspondence with Protestant missionaries in China regarding their attitudes to the British Empire in the years 1830–1850. It argues that the theological notion of providence informed Princetonians' perceptions of the world, which consequently dissociated the Christian missionary task with any particular nation or empire. An examination of the Society of Inquiry's correspondence during the mid-nineteenth century reveals much about Protestant missionaries and their interactions with the opium trade and the results of the First Opium War (1839–1842). Princetonians' responses to the opium trade and the First Opium War led ultimately to a significant critique of western commercial influence in East Asia. In conclusion, this paper questions the extent to which commerce, empire, and Christian missions were inherently associated in nineteenth century American Protestant missionary activity.

### Keywords

Princeton Theological Seminary, Society of Inquiry, missions, opium, China, British Empire

In the nineteenth century, Common Sense philosophy and Reformed evangelical theology and piety formed the intellectual and spiritual milieu of Princeton Theological Seminary (Princeton, New Jersey, USA). This combination created a profound interest in and dedication to domestic and foreign

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missionary activities among its students. A prominent and undeniable part of such missionary activity was its relationship to the British and their empire – a relationship which was contested, ambiguous, and varied according to context. This paper addresses Princetonians' responses to the opium trade in China and the First Opium War (1839–1842) between Britain and China.<sup>1</sup> Princetonians' interactions with the opium trade and the results of the First Opium War offer intriguing insights into how missionaries and their supporters negotiated and interpreted the complex dynamics of commerce, war, imperialism and providence in light of their belief that the message of the gospel should be brought to all peoples of the world. With regard to the opium trade and the First Opium War, these interactions evidence a tension between Princetonians' theological perceptions of the world and the tragedy wreaked upon many Chinese by opium. Princetonians' responses to this tension led them to critique western commercial influence in China, while simultaneously evidencing a stark dissociation between the kingdom of God and earthly empires. This paper concludes by discussing what Princetonians' responses to the opium trade reveal about American evangelical Protestant missionaries' dispositions to commerce and the British Empire.

### **The Missionary Culture of Princeton Seminary**

The establishment of Princeton Seminary by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1812 places it in the nascent stages of the North American missions movement in the early nineteenth century (O'Brien 1994). The Society of Inquiry on Missions at Princeton Seminary was founded by students just two years later. Patterned after a Society of Inquiry at Andover Seminary, Princeton's Society was very popular among students: 20 of the 21 students at the time of the Society's founding were members, and approximately 80% of students in the period 1844–1859 became members (Calhoun 1983: 78, 462–465).

The Society of Inquiry sought to gather "facts" about the state of the world as they pertained to missions (Calhoun 1983: 79). As a result, the Society of

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper the term "Princetonians" refers generally to all persons associated with Princeton Seminary, including professors (especially Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge), students, and former seminarians who served as missionaries. I use this term for the sake of convenience in noting individuals influenced by a common theological and spiritual milieu present at the seminary during the period discussed in this paper. Generalizations made about Princetonians pertain primarily to the period under consideration in this paper, ca. 1830–1850.

Inquiry amassed an impressive library (1,162 titles by 1836) of tracts, sermons, journals, and books, and corresponded with missionaries and missionary societies of multiple denominations around the world (“Catalog of Books” 1836, SOIR 1: 6).<sup>2</sup> Many of these missionaries served in conjunction with British missionaries in areas under the colonial control of the British crown or heavily influenced by British commercial interests. These included India, Singapore, parts of Africa, China, the Middle East, and certain Pacific islands (Barker 2005: 86–106; Porter 2004: 7–11). As a result, a significant amount of information collected by Princetonians had some relationship to British missionaries, missionary societies, colonial peoples (merchants, soldiers, and settlers), and colonial governments. In addition to the corresponding secretary’s responsibilities, the Society’s members were divided into committees responsible for gathering information on certain topics. In 1844 there were five committees: “foreign missions; domestic missions and revivals; Bible and tract societies and religious education; public morals, Romish church, and infidelity; and sailors, soldiers, and the Africans” (Calhoun 1983: 77). Each committee was expected to compose an annual report out of the information collected over that year in which the “current state” of that topic was described. These reports are a valuable source in discovering the sources of information gathered, how it was assimilated, and how students interpreted that information.

Princeton seminarians believed that the accumulation and assimilation of the gathered “facts” from “heathen lands” would illuminate their “duty” to non-Christian peoples. This duty flowed from their obedience to Christ’s “last command” – the great commission – in which Jesus exhorted his followers: “Go, therefore, into all the world, making disciples of all nations” (Mat 28: 18–20, Mark 16: 15). Moreover, David Calhoun states: “More than any other single factor, the great commission sent the Princeton students as missionaries to the forests and frontiers of America and to the villages and cities of foreign countries” (Calhoun 1983: 242). Mid-nineteenth-century Princetonians understood the great commission through the lens of natural theology, combined with an eschatological expectation of the progressive spread of Christianity.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, Princetonians were encouraged to span the globe in an

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<sup>2</sup> “SOIR” denotes The Society of Inquiry Records at Princeton Theological Seminary libraries.

<sup>3</sup> By “natural theology” I refer to Princetonians’ (namely Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge) use of Baconian empirical investigation. They believed that the information thereby acquired fit into a static, unified whole with the Christian scriptures. The real world, therefore, could be understood by anyone.

effort to combat idolatry and foster a right conception of the Creator's relationship to the world (Calhoun 1994: 144–147). People of all races were believed to be capable of achieving this right understanding through the employment of human reason and nature's evidences ("The Bible" 1829: 101–120). Similarly, Mark Y. Hanley argues for the centrality of the great commission in missionary motivations among North American evangelicals during the mid-nineteenth century, reasserting the importance of this religious and spiritual factor against colonial or national motivations. Hanley views the importance of the great commission as being inseparable from evangelicals' postmillennial eschatology (Hanley 2003: 44–49). For early Princetonians under the influence of Archibald Alexander, the great commission was global in vision, and its fulfillment was not exclusively associated with any one nation. This less nationalistic conception of the great commission in turn allowed Princetonian missionaries to critique American and British activities in China. Princetonians, therefore, shared three commonalities with contemporary North American missionary supporters: they assumed the gradual, providential expansion of Christianity within a postmillennial eschatological framework; emphasized a shared, common humanity within the church; and tempered nationalistic sentiment in favor of a more international conception of the church (Hanley 2003: 46–47). Princetonian missionary theory and practice thus arrived at a remarkably similar conception of mission as that of their contemporaries Rufus Anderson (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions) and Henry Venn (Church Missionary Society) (Hutchinson 1987: 77–90; cf. Harris 2004). Princetonians, however, reached these conclusions through the application of a Reformed natural theology in an attempt to understand both the Christian scriptures and their duties to the world. Thus, many elements of Princetonian mission theory and theology were, in fact, a part of contemporary mainstream missionary theories (Noll 2001: 24, 34).

The animus of the Society of Inquiry owed much to Archibald Alexander, who oversaw its activities until his death in 1851. Alexander's genius and piety made more of a contribution to the missionary spirit of Old Princeton than any other single person. His extensive knowledge of theology, history, geography, and politics often converged to argue convincingly for missionary engagement throughout the world ("Christian Obligation" 1832; "The Call to the Foreign Service" 1833).<sup>4</sup> It was also Alexander who mediated Scottish Common

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<sup>4</sup> Most articles written in the *Biblical Repertory and Theological Review* (1829–1836) were anonymous, though many of the articles cited from that journal in this paper likely came from Archibald Alexander.

Sense philosophy to Princeton Seminary. The influence of Common Sense philosophy on Princeton seminarians' engagement with missions greatly shaped their methods of inquiring into missions as well as their perceptions of non-Christian peoples, cultures, religions, and world events. The institutional and theological program of Princeton Seminary was created largely through the influence of Alexander and, after him, by Charles Hodge, who taught at the seminary from 1822 to his death in 1878. Hodge's *Systematic Theology* (1871–1873) represents the clearest expression of these influences that established a remarkable consistency at the seminary through the mid-nineteenth century (Noll 2003: 37). During this period, theological innovation was staunchly resisted, while adherence to an unchanging Reformed confessionalism was defended with rigor (for example, Charles Hodge's engagement with Philip Schaff, John Nevin, and the Mercersburg theologians, see Hodge 1848).

A central feature of the Society of Inquiry was its involvement in the Monthly Concerts of prayer for missions, which also served to infuse Princeton's Reformed evangelical theology with a missionary piety. The Concert was held on the first Monday of every month for the purpose of praying for the outpouring of God's Spirit and the spread of the kingdom of God on earth. These Monthly Concerts, which were observed in America, Britain, and around the world via missionary activity, strengthened common pietistic bonds between Protestants (Orchard 1998: 138). Many Princetonians continued the Monthly Concerts in their missionary fields or lamented their absence during periods of isolation, such as on long ocean voyages or remote missionary stations (H. A. Brown 14 Sept 1847, SOIR 12: 15). Princeton graduates serving as missionaries frequently exhorted current students to attend to the Monthly Concerts and other spiritual disciplines in order to inculcate deep personal piety.

Protestant missionary efforts from the 1790s through to the end of the nineteenth century were often related to eschatology, whereby the spread of the gospel to all parts of the world was associated with the second coming of Christ and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth (Rogers 2004: 41–46). Though there were elements of exceptionalism, such as the primacy of evangelical Christianity – which was at times linked with Anglo-Saxondom – these notions were global from the outset and were therefore not associated exclusively with any one nation (or its empire). For both American and British Protestants, the British Empire played a unique and important, but by no means exclusive, role in the spreading of Christianity. Foundational in understanding missionaries' interactions with the British Empire is the theological

notion of providence (Porter 2004: 10–11, 58–63). As it related to the missionary enterprise, the doctrine of providence generally referred to the divine orchestration of temporal circumstances in such a way as to make a region more conducive to the spread of the gospel. Princetonians associated the call and guidance of providence with the command of God:

It may be assumed as a principle that the calls of God's providence are just as imperative as those of his word; and, consequently, when definitely made out, demand as prompt an obedience as though a voice from heaven had issued the order ("The Call to the Foreign Service" 1833: 449).

The circumstances in which mid-nineteenth-century Princetonians encountered the British around the globe varied significantly. When Princetonians in India referred to the "British" they often meant the governmental and military officials residing near mission stations. Princetonian missionaries largely had positive relationships with these expatriates, whom Princetonians believed to have a very high standard of living (Hodge 6 Nov 1849). They perceived that the British had brought order to a fractured society in a way that at least provided a general context within which the subjugated peoples could be brought to the Christian faith. In China, however, the "British" with whom American missionaries primarily came into contact were often sailors, merchants and soldiers.

It was at these points of contact that American missionaries came to face the tensions between theological, political and social perceptions and functions of the British Empire. Though certain imperial territories may have been made conducive to the spread of Christianity, these "English" (as they were often referred to by American missionaries in China) were often a far cry from model pious evangelicals, for whose benefit they ostensibly were working. For in conjunction with evangelicals' providential sensibilities with regard to the British Empire was metropolitan Britons' perception of their settlement territories "as a sociological dumping ground for hicks and bumpkins [...] full of the dross and deritus of the British metropolis" (Cannadine 2001: 125). And British missionaries (along with their international counterparts) were often treated as such. Though the case of China does have its uniquenesses, there is a tension in the imagination of empire in its socially and theologically constructed senses, which provoked different meanings and implications to the various persons involved. Princetonians and other evangelicals, generally speaking, viewed the British Empire as a sort of mutual inheritance based

upon common understandings of faith, theology and social engagement (Hodge 1862). Their vision, however, only included the empire as part of a global vision of God's redemptive plan, which could even simultaneously hinder and foster Christian expansion.

One of the more fascinating and complex forums in which these interactions occurred was in nineteenth-century China. The case of China was particularly salient because it was an empire containing approximately one quarter of the world's population, the vast majority of which was precluded from western missionaries. When Princetonians spoke of the "opening" of China, such speech carried with it eschatological associations of the spreading of the gospel to all peoples of the world. There was a general perception among evangelical Protestants that the limited opening of certain Chinese ports was somehow a part of God's designs, even though (and in some cases, especially because) these openings were made through the prosecution of a war to sustain a banal enterprise. At the same time, missionaries' (and their supporters') acceptance and use of the results of the war also resulted in a critique of both American and British overseas activities.

### **Barbarians at the Gates of the Celestial Empire: Early Princetonian Missionary Interactions with China**

Princetonians perceived China to be an ancient, mysterious empire, home of the great "Oriental sages," the land that pioneered printing and gunpowder (Committee on Foreign Missions 6 April 1837, SOIR 4:26). At the same time, China contained "600 millions" of souls "perishing for all eternity," all (presumably) speaking a "common dialect," perishing under the weight of "superstitious" "religious errors" (Committee on Foreign Missions 2 Jan 1837, SOIR 3:5; Committee on Foreign Missions 6 April 1837, SOIR 4:26; "A Report on China" [n.d.], SOIR 4:30). The enormity of the task of converting the Chinese to Christianity was conveyed by the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* with the sobering statistic: "Could we bring one thousand individuals under instruction every day, and give them only a day's teaching each, it would take one thousand years to bring all the population of China thus under the sound of the gospel" ("The Chinese" 1839: 165).

Part of the excitement associated with the prospects of China as a mission field in the 1830s stemmed from Princetonians' perception that the country was on the brink of "revolution", which would ostensibly open it up to western missionaries. This particular belief was set within an existing global revo-

lutionary framework, in which the British Empire played an important, but not exclusive, role (Committee on Foreign Missions 6 April 1837, SOIR 4:26; Breckinridge 1830: 595–599). Students believed that the Chinese government was “arrogant” yet weak since it constructed barriers to commercial intercourse in order to prevent foreigners from seeing the tenuousness of its hold on the empire (Committee on Foreign Missions 6 April 1837, SOIR 4:26). Though the Chinese had “always extolled the benefits of industry and free trade,” the government’s isolationist policies led to the proliferation of illicit trading and opium smuggling by foreigners (Committee on Foreign Missions 6 April 1837, SOIR 4:26). With these being the primary means of contact between western nations and the Chinese, one student asked, “Is it any wonder then that the government came to the determination to treat them all as barbarians?” (Committee on Foreign Missions 6 April 1837, SOIR 4:26; Liu 2004: 31–69). In part, therefore, Princetonians regarded the contemporary Chinese context as being discontinuous with its ancient traditions of commerce, exploration, and scientific inquiry, while simultaneously recognizing the role played by westerners in this digression.

The first Protestant missionaries to China were essentially confined to the “thirteen factories” district of Canton and were more or less tolerated, surrounded by an assortment of international merchants and sailors, many of whom dealt in opium smuggling. The fact that it was illegal for foreigners to be taught Chinese in Canton (or elsewhere in areas controlled by the Chinese government) made the translation of the Christian Bible into Chinese and the publication of Christian tracts in Chinese difficult. Some early Protestant missionaries, chiefly Robert Morrison (London Missionary Society – LMS), Karl Gützlaff (independent, eventually founded the Chinese Evangelization Society), and Elijah C. Bridgman (ABCFM), were able to make Chinese translations. The tasks of learning Chinese dialects, translating, and printing could not have been accomplished without the agency of Chinese assistants, who undertook the work under violations of Chinese law, which carried severe punishment (Tiedemann 2008). An article in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* described the penalties as follows: “[If] too much intimacy or friendly feeling with [foreigners] is at any time suspected, the poor merchant guilty of it is fleeced of his property, bamboozed, or sent into exile, according to the good pleasure of the haughty and arbitrary mandarin” (“The Chinese” 1839: 152). A significant setback to Protestant publishing in the mid-1830s came with an edict from the Emperor prohibiting Chinese from assisting westerners in acquiring the language, printing or distributing Christian literature (Committee on Foreign Missions 2 Jan 1837, SOIR 3:5). This adverse



situation was exacerbated when Walter H. Medhurst (LMS) was caught attempting to disperse “20,000 volumes of books” on a merchant ship, supposedly under the guise of the protection of a commercial agreement. These disturbances were interpreted by Princetonians as signs of God’s work and evidence of the reality of oppositional spiritual forces in a cosmic battle for the souls of the Chinese (“The Chinese” 1839: 152).

As a result of these kinds of difficulties, some Protestant missionaries developed what John King Fairbank described as “a flank attack on China through the soft underbelly of expatriate overseas Chinese communities” (Fairbank 1985: 13). Initially, the Presbyterian Church’s “China Mission” referred to a series of mission stations in southeastern Asia that corresponded to areas more amenable to foreigners’ presence, which often (though not necessarily) meant under the control of Britain. For example, Singapore, because it was under British control, offered “a safe retreat to the persecuted from every station, and is now likely to be used as a place for printing books for China” (Committee on Foreign Missions 2 Jan 1837, SOIR 3:5). These Christian books were to be distributed among the Chinese in the port, with the hopes that the literature would eventually make its way to various regions of China as yet off limits to foreigners (Orr 1839: 378). A similar disposition was taken with regard to Bangkok, which was believed to have 400,000 Chinese immigrants living in its vicinity. This strategy, though unsatisfactory, also met with setbacks. Missionaries soon discovered that very few of the Chinese they encountered were literate. Thus, the establishment of schools among Chinese emigrants became a prerequisite to the evangelization of China for many American Protestant missionaries (Latourette 1929: 225; Culbertson 15 July 1845, SOIR 12:25). In this way, however, they were able to familiarize themselves with the languages, religious beliefs, and cultures of the Chinese prior to entering mainland China.

Despite these difficulties in the China Mission, Princetonians often spoke of their contemporary circumstances with a great deal of enthusiasm and excitement, believing that they lived in a “ripe” period of world history, characterized by a “spirit of extraordinary enterprise” (Breckinridge 1830: 595). With regard to China, Princetonians often referenced the opening of its doors within the context of an emerging global economic and cultural order which would be characterized by intercourse and reciprocity (“A Report on China” [n.d.], SOIR 4:30). While significant critiques of western commercial interactions arose from missionary circles, they did not, generally speaking, produce a resounding call for the cessation of commerce. Rather, they tended to advocate for commercial interactions that were legal, fair, and free, and which were

conducted in a way that would foster mutuality, which in turn would be more conducive to expanding missionary efforts in mainland China.

Protestant missionaries in China and Princetonians also used existing commercial relationships – which they largely viewed as illegal and immoral – to exhort Christians to missionary engagement (Gützlaff 1836: 299–300). Thus, a juxtaposition of the avaricious motivations of western merchants with the tepid missionary response of western Protestant Christians frequently arose in their correspondence and writings, such as Elijah C. Bridgman's rhetorical questions: "What friendly relations have the kings and rulers of the west established with the emperor of China? Where are the men in Christendom who are well acquainted with the necessities, wants, and woes of this great people?" (Bridgman 27 April 1837, SOIR 12:14). China's isolationism was often attributed to the aggressive actions of European merchants and traders, who duly received the Chinese epithet, "barbarians" (Committee on Foreign Missions 6 April 1837, SOIR 4:26; "The Chinese" 1839: 149; Liu 2004: 31–51). The remedy for the situation was to "manifest a conciliatory spirit" in trading with China, giving China "proper self respect" in hopes that "the day is not far distant when this barrier will be broken down" (Committee on Foreign Missions 6 April 1837, SOIR 4:26). A separate student report alluded to Christian missionaries pursuing a similar course to that of western merchants, by gaining the favor of local Chinese officials ("A Report on China" [n.d.], SOIR 4:30). An article written in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* likewise stated:

Science and Commerce are busy in exploring every nook and corner of the earth, in quest of their respective prizes, and Christian benevolence should be equally active in promoting inquiry into every avenue for the truth of the gospel. [...] We must be content to follow in the path opened by the laborious and daring children of this world, who, in their own way, are wiser than the children of light. Geography is becoming more and more a Christian science. [...] Every new discovery gives a hint to the missionary and the church ("American Embassy to Asiatic Courts" 1838: 179).

Since the gospel offered rewards and happiness in this life *and* eternity, Christians' dedication to its global proliferation should *at least* match that of those people who sought global commercial expansion merely to accumulate wealth (Calhoun 1983: 273–281). Princetonians' associations of commercial and missionary efforts did not evidence an implicit compatibility between the two, however, and there was no outright commendation of commerce *qua* commerce with regard to China, particularly because much of it was associated with the opium trade (C. C. Baldwin 21 Nov 1830, SOIR 12:12).

Many of the missionaries with whom the Princetonians corresponded, both before and after the First Opium War, distinctly expressed their desire to disassociate themselves from western commercial involvement, a goal which met with varying degrees of success. This was due in part to the fact that many missionaries relied upon American merchants for financial support and transportation. The relationship between the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the Olyphant Company is an example of how business and missionary interests could easily be conflated from the perspective of the Chinese (Lazich 2006: 204). The sentiment expressed by C. C. Baldwin was often repeated by missionaries:

This seclusion too is the more favorable on another account. The river has, in reputation and to a considerable extent in fact, many hindrances to a free and safe navigation. On this account perhaps, more than any other commerce makes very slow progress here (Baldwin 21 Nov 1830, SOIR 12:12).

Baldwin's desire for seclusion from western merchants stemmed from their implicit association with the opium trade. It was Baldwin's opinion, however, that a consistent and continuing missionary presence among the common people would be one important way in which the Chinese could "learn to distinguish us as men who seek 'to save, not to destroy,' men's lives" (Baldwin 21 Nov 1830, SOIR 12:12). Within this context Baldwin issued an unambiguous critique of the effects of western commerce, showing no evidence of an inherent compatibility of "commerce" and "Christianity": "The missionary here has the start (to use a common phrase) of the thousand evils, which foreign trade among a heathen people inevitably brings in its train" (Baldwin 21 Nov 1830, SOIR 12:12).<sup>5</sup>

As compared with western merchants and government officials, missionaries spent much more of their time among the lower socio-economic classes, which affected their portrayal of Chinese life. A prevailing feature of missionary accounts of the Chinese was the descriptions of the "degraded heathen", their religious "superstitions", sub-par intellect, and lack of "patriotism" (Lowrie 1849: 136–137; Lutz 2008: 123–124). Such rhetoric was often aimed to stir up support for the cause of missions through their publication in denominational or societal journals primarily directed at middle-class contributors. Exaggerations and stereotypes of the Chinese purveyed by early American

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<sup>5</sup> These dynamics have been debated in relation to mid-Victorian British evangelicals' worldview (Stanley 1983: 71–94). For a critique of Stanley (Porter 1985: 597–621).

missionaries to the United States received some critique from Princetonians. For example, an annual student report from 1837 criticized “our countryman Mr. [David] Abeel” for overrating the prevalence of infanticide in order to portray the Chinese as more degraded. In the same report the student also attacked the notion that a doped opium smoker was an accurate reflection of the average Chinese man (Committee on Foreign Missions 6 April 1837, SOIR 4:26). A provocative and scathing critique of missionary caricatures of nonwestern peoples came in an 1839 article in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, in which the author criticized the “exaggerated views entertained” about “the cruelty and wretchedness of the heathen” conveyed in missionary literature (“Travels in South Eastern Asia” 1839: 494). He continued, evidencing the Princetonian combination of common sense and the doctrine of original sin:

Our feelings are often shocked by the recital of deeds of horror perpetrated in some heathen land; and we are too apt to consider them as characteristic of heathenism. We forget that such things are neither common nor peculiar to heathen countries; but liable to occur even among ourselves. In all the political evils of the heathen world, there are few evincing more cold-blooded cruelty than the horrors of the French revolution. [...]

And almost as often are our feelings harrowed by the recital of husbands and fathers beating, murdering and burning their own wives and children, in a fit of beastly intoxication. All this is not the distinctive character of any nation, heathen or otherwise, but the result of human nature phrenzied [*sic*] by wild and wicked passions, and belongs to the records of every age and every country (“Travels in South Eastern Asia” 1839: 495–496).

As evidenced here, Princetonians interpreted information about the opium trade sent by missionaries within the context of the temperance movement. Though resisting caricatures, Princetonians and other American missionary supporters still often described the Chinese as generally being in a less civilized state, abased through their lack of education and attachment to false systems of religious belief. At the same time, Princetonians became well aware of the deleterious effects that opium had upon Chinese society – as well as western nations’ role in supplying them with it. The image of the “degraded” Chinese peasants became more complex as westerners were accused of contributing to their lowly state.

Early American missionaries to Canton were initially reticent to voice criticism of the prevalent opium trade and its effects upon Chinese society, due to the precariousness of their presence in the port (Lazich 2006: 200). It was not

until missionaries in China established the *Chinese Repository* in 1833 that they, along with some merchants, had a forum for the discussion of the ill effects of opium (Lazich 2000). This newsletter was published on the press of the ABCFM, and the editors even went to the length of publishing the letter from Canton official, Lin Tse-Hsü (Zexu), to Queen Victoria, admonishing her for Britain's role in the opium trade, its merchants' resistance to abide by Chinese law, and the reprehensibility of providing the drug to China while the British did not take it themselves (Lazich 2000: 185, 193–195). The increasingly volatile relationship between Chinese officials and western merchants – particularly British merchants – increased as Lin demanded that all western merchants accede to his terms of trade in order to remain in Canton, terms which included a ban on the importation of opium. At this time many of the British retreated to Hong Kong. Through the influence of Elijah C. Bridgman, Olyphant and Company, a major American shipping company, agreed to sign on to the terms and continue trading, a move which did not endear them to American or British diplomats (Lazich 2006: 204). As tensions rose in Canton and eventually led to the war between Britain and China, many missionaries left China for other cities in southeastern Asia, where they were joined by newly appointed missionaries from the United States. Here they pursued their strategy of ministering to expatriate Chinese.

Before the First Opium War, a complex picture of the British and their empire emerges from the materials gathered by Princetonians. Providence had seemingly made a way for Christian missionaries to enter India through British imperialism, but American missionary experience in pre-war Canton was very different from that experienced by their colleagues in India or Ceylon, for example, though it was also associated with the British (“The Chinese” 1839: 152). In an article from the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, one author noted the “extortion and oppression” that the British suffered in Canton, indicting the Chinese with “excessive national arrogance” in dealing with the western “barbarians” (“The Chinese” 1839: 150–151). At the same time, however, Princetonians did have information, as provided by British and American missionaries, about (British and otherwise) opium traders' disregard for Chinese commercial law. It is difficult, however, as Jürgen Osterhammel observed with regard to British economic influence in this period, to ascertain how American missionaries specifically perceived the British, as the port of Canton held an international population (Osterhammel 1999: 159). The entirety of the blame for a “closed” China was not laid solely upon the British for their involvement in the opium trade. Instead, it was divided among western mer-

chants for their illicit trading practices with the Chinese, a “weak” Chinese government, unjust commercial laws, and corrupt Chinese officials. While recognizing the ill-effects that opium had upon Chinese society, a significant critique of British imperial presence (and American involvement) by Princetonians did not come until after the conclusion of the First Opium War in 1842.

### **An Opened Door on Rusty Hinges: The First Opium War and Its Effects**

Verily, God hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. The Church is bound to render to God hearty and constant thanks for the field, which in his gracious providence, is thus thrown open before her. Let there be no more complaints, that China is not open, and her people not accessible. China is open as widely as we can now desire, and so many of her people are accessible, that the Church will find it difficult, even if she put forth ten-fold the strength she has hitherto done, adequately to meet their wants (W. M. Lowrie 1844b: 216).

Much to the dismay of western missionaries, the opium war was about opium, and did not stop the opium trade, nor even make it legal (Austin 2007: 54). Ironically, any mention of opium was left out of the Treaty of Nanking (Nanjing). As the war came to a close, missionaries planned to reorganize their stations in light of the possibility of gaining access to additional parts of China (“China Opened” 1843: 54). From the missionaries’ perspective, the most significant provision of the Treaty of Nanking (Nanjing) obligated the Chinese to open the ports of Canton, Amoy (Xiamen), Foochow (Fuzhou), Ningpo (Ningbo), and Shanghai, in addition to ceding Hong Kong to the British Queen (Latourette 1929: 229). While there was initially no specific provision guaranteeing religious dissemination in the five ports, missionaries perceived the overall effect of the war as a part of God’s redemptive plan for China (Wu 1930: 21). These results of the First Opium War provided evidence that the door to China was opening and Christians ought to quickly obey the leadings of providence in directing the way of salvation for the Chinese. At the same time, however, early Protestant missionary writings from these port cities evidence a complex differentiation between commerce, western civilization and Christianity in mid-nineteenth-century China. Additionally, the implications of their writings with regard to the roles played by the British and American governments provide material for a provocative evaluation of the role of providence as associated with particular national governments in the evangelical Protestant missions movement in the mid-nineteenth century.

Walter M. Lowrie was commissioned to Singapore as a young Princeton Seminary graduate in 1842, just before the five ports opened. Shortly after his arrival he was sent on a scouting journey with David Abeel through the five opened ports in order to “make inquiries as to their suitableness for Missionary operations” (W. M. Lowrie 1844: 136). His correspondence provides some of the earliest American Protestant observations regarding their perception of and reception in the port cities. Lowrie’s journey made him very optimistic about the prospects of missionary efforts in the newly-opened cities. In summarizing his trip he wrote:

The doors have already begun to unclose, and no human power is able to shut them again. What though they move but slowly, and grate harshly as they turn on their rusty hinges, they move none the *less* surely for all that; and the field that is opened to us, by the first unclosing, is so vast that our numbers are quite insufficient to occupy it (W. M. Lowrie 1844b: 213).

Along with many others, Lowrie believed that the opening of the five ports was but a first step towards a fully-opened China to foreigners. He believed that the benevolent intentions of missionaries, along with reciprocal (legal and opium-free) commercial contact, with people from the interior of China would foster a further opening of the country (W. M. Lowrie 1844b: 216). There was often an association of the opening of the five ports with biblical prophecies found in Isaiah 45 and Revelation 12–13, where “those two-leaved gates of brass that have so long been closed, and guarded by the great Dragon, are shaking and will soon be opened” (Lowrie 1849: 137). Such sentiments abounded among missionary-minded Protestants in America and Britain. M. S. Culbertson stated more soberly to the Society of Inquiry that “China is by no means open, but the points of access are more numerous and more favourable than they were prior to the late changes” (Culbertson 7 Jan 1845, SOIR 12:24). In a general exhortatory letter Culbertson later declared that China is “a wide and open door to which the Lord is directing his people, commanding them to enter” (Culbertson 1 Jan 1847, SOIR 10:11). This was certainly a tremendous step in bringing the Christian message to all peoples, a central feature of Princetonians’ conception of the end of days and the coming of the kingdom of God.

It has been argued by Michael Lazich, Kenneth Latourette and others that missionary enthusiasm towards the opened ports prevented missionaries from overtly criticizing the means by which the ports were opened (Lazich 2006; Latourette 1929: 231–232). Princetonians and other missionary supporters

were far from ignorant of how the port cities became available to their use as mission stations. In fact, they tended to see the hand of God especially at work because so great a good came out of something designed for such a banal purpose. Walter Lowrie, the Corresponding Secretary of the PCBFM and father of the missionary by the same name, stated that in the removal of the barriers to missionary work in China “the hand of God was distinctly visible, overruling the wrath of man for the accomplishment of his purposes of mercy” (Lowrie 1844: 380). John Leyburn followed: “Cupidity and national ambition, however, have at last thrown down some of the barriers, and the selfish designs of men have been so overruled for good, that the missionary of the cross may now tell of salvation to the disciples of Confucius” (Leyburn 1844: 382).

Missionaries’ acceptance of the opening of the five Chinese ports did not stem from an *ad hoc* justification of the means by which they were opened. The providentialist eschatological framework within which Princetonians understood the opening of China and other temporal circumstances conducive to the spread of Christianity far predated the Opium War and its effects (Breckinridge 1830: 595; “The Call to the Foreign Service” 1833: 449). Princetonians believed that any external ordering of events that produced a context relatively conducive to the entrance of missionaries corresponded to a divine imperative for Christians to respond. So dire was the imperative that Joseph Wright warned: “Better by far for China that this door [the five ports] had never been opened if the Ch[urch] neglects her duty” (Wright 15 Dec 1850, SOIR 13:29). Within such a framework, the opening of China resulted from God’s inscrutable designs for the spread of the gospel. It must be remembered, however, that this belief was fundamentally global, and was never merely confined to China.

Part of missionaries’ optimism and excitement surrounding the opening of new mission stations in the ports north of Canton stemmed from their desire to escape from the “prejudice” they experienced among the Chinese in Canton, which stagnated their efforts. By way of converts, early Protestant missions produced paltry results: probably less than 100 baptized converts in the first three decades of Protestant missionary activity (Latourette 1929: 226). Missionaries linked the presence of “prejudice” against them at Canton to the historical consequences of contact with westerners, “who their sole object being *gain*, have given more occasion for the epithet ‘Foreign Devil,’ that is bestowed upon them, than the inhabitants of Europe and America are aware” (Cartee 2 April 1844, SOIR 12:22; emphasis original). In much of the early correspondence from the new ports, missionaries frequently mentioned the lack of prejudice experienced among the Chinese (Hepburn 1845: 234). The



missionaries were soon to find out, however, that similar obstacles arose in the port cities: soldiers and opium smugglers hardly provided the ideal preamble for their missionary efforts.

As Lowrie's scouting voyage took him up the coast, he made frequent mention of the opium trade, opium smugglers, and the Chinese who suffered from opium addiction. He called the use of opium "one of the very greatest difficulties in the way of Christian Missions in China," it being "one of the strong chains in which Satan has bound this great people" (W. M. Lowrie 1844: 139). Lowrie described the *de facto* correlation between the Chinese, westerners and opium in relating the story of a man who he did not believe had ever been in contact with a westerner immediately asking him, "How do you sell your opium?" (W. M. Lowrie 1844a: 168). Lowrie laid much of the blame for the continuation of the opium trade upon local Chinese officials, who were bribed into not enforcing the laws against opium, while "the opium smugglers laugh at them and carry their drug recklessly to all parts of the coast" (W. M. Lowrie 1844: 139).

Missionaries – before and after the war – struggled with how to respond to the prevalence of opium among the Chinese and posited different approaches to the opium dilemma. Some believed that the trade must be abolished before Christianity could take hold among the people. Others advocated for the necessity of the gospel in mediating the mal-effects of the drug, which would provide the Chinese with the spiritual strength to lead the necessary abolition crusade (Wright 15 Dec 1850, SOIR 13: 29; W. M. Lowrie 1844b: 218). As Joseph Wright pleaded,

How shall we put a stop to the progress of this traffic! [...] Where is the zeal for the Lord of hosts that shall more than counterbalance this love of gain? That shall send forth its thousand messengers to plant the gospel in the hearts of this people, before the love of opium has taken root and carried its victims beyond the reach of warning? (Wright 15 Dec 1850, SOIR 13:29).

To some degree the missionaries found themselves in a Catch-22, whereby Christianity could not take hold due to their perceived association with the opium trade and its affects upon the Chinese, while at the same time perceiving the essentiality of Christianity in fomenting a temperance movement among the Chinese. All missionaries at least agreed that their presence in the newly-opened ports to some degree tempered the effects of opium by providing some means by which their benevolence could intermingle with the avarice of opium traders.

In their correspondence with the Society of Inquiry, many missionaries expressed a desire to be in a place of some commercial importance, while simultaneously avoiding a location which would be inundated with foreign trade (Culbertson 7 Jan 1845, SOIR 12: 24; H. A. Brown 30 July 1845 12: 17). Somewhat ironically, missionary efforts in the new ports were often directed at western sailors and soldiers, in some cases more than to the Chinese (Wright 30 July 1849, SOIR 13:28). In part, this arose out of a practical concern: it often took missionaries several years to become conversational in Chinese dialects, and missionaries found it far easier to evangelize among English-speaking sailors and soldiers while they attempted to learn Chinese (Cummings 26 June 1850, SOIR 12: 27; H. A. Brown 31 March 1848, SOIR 12: 16). A. W. Loomis (PCBFM) wrote of the difficulties and possibilities that some of the missionaries observed in this regard:

Furthermore, we need help in our work, and Christian merchants, Christian soldiers, and Christian sailors may do, have done, and are doing much to aid the missionary in his labours; while wicked men, the representatives of Christian lands, do much to hinder our work (Loomis 1845: 325).

By ministering among other westerners, missionaries hoped to influence the merchants and sailors to adopt more benevolent (and legal) trading practices, and many saw potential for the further spread of Christian missions in sailors trading through more “Christian” standards.

The perceived connection by most Chinese of westerners and opium smuggling was further complicated by the fact that the missionaries entered the new port cities quite literally in the wakes of gunboats and the footsteps of soldiers, who had presumably conducted a war in order to protect their interests in the opium trade. Joseph K. Wright communicated the objection of many Chinese to Christianity, who believed that the fruits of Christianity were not good: “We preach Jesus they say, and bring opium to destroy us” (J. K. Wright 3 July 1852, SOIR13: 30). J. C. Hepburn wrote in 1844 that the western missionaries in Amoy were often visited by Chinese travelers from the interior in tandem with the western troops stationed at the port (Hepburn 1844: 279). He wrote later of the Chinese’ perception of their correlation with the British government and military, of which the missionaries were supposedly “secret emissaries” (Hepburn 1845a: 327). One of the ways through which missionaries attempted to differentiate themselves was in the establishment of “daily personal intercourse” and benevolent institutions, like hospitals and schools. The implementation of English education, however, could prove to be

counterproductive: many Chinese men who learned English would choose to be employed by opium traders, who paid higher wages than they would otherwise earn (Culbertson 15 July 1845, SOIR12:25). In any case, missionaries hoped that their enduring presence after British troops left certain ports would help to distinguish them and their intentions in the eyes of the Chinese (Hepburn 1845a: 327).

Despite these differences, there was some degree of cooperation between missionaries and other western powers from the beginning of Protestant missionary activity in China. Missionaries and western consuls and diplomats could have tense relationships. The consuls, being stationed in the port cities to ensure that the treaty stipulations were met, were placed in difficult positions by missionaries as a result of the latter's propensity to venture beyond the boundaries stipulated for foreign residents (Osterhammel 1999: 155). Walter Lowrie and David Abeel made use of the ambiguous language of a treaty agreement on their scouting mission in 1843, when they travelled to a town in the interior and were met with some opposition. Abeel argued with the local Chinese magistrate that the treaty language only specifically mentioned that trading had to be conducted at ports. Since he and Lowrie were not merchants, then such stipulations did not apply to them. The magistrate acquiesced to Abeel's argument (W. M. Lowrie 1844a: 173–175). J. C. Hepburn wrote from Amoy that the treaty stipulated certain boundaries within which foreigners must reside, but since those boundaries had not yet been agreed upon, the missionaries ventured into the countryside on preaching tours (Hepburn 1844: 279). These examples are intriguing because corresponding missionaries often accused Catholic missionaries of bending boundary laws in treaty cities, thus inciting resentment against westerners and preventing further evangelizing privileges to Protestant missionaries (Culbertson 7 Jan 1845, SOIR 12: 24; J. K. Wright 15 Dec 1850, SOIR 13: 29; J. K. Wright 3 July 1852, SOIR 13: 30). Such activities became more problematic as treaties provided for extraterritoriality and, eventually, certain legal protections for Christian buildings and even Chinese converts to Christianity. These cases do serve to show that many Protestant missionaries remained somewhat ambivalent towards laws, viewing treaties and other legal agreements as potentially beneficial but tangential towards their ultimate goal of evangelizing among the Chinese.

Missionaries' efforts to distinguish themselves from British soldiers and western merchants were a part of missionaries' response to the role of "Christian nations" in propagating opium smuggling. Though western missionaries did associate the opening of the five treaty ports with the benevolent purposes

of God's providence, it simultaneously evoked a critique of America's and Britain's role in the opening of the ports. Lowrie commented during his scouting mission along the Chinese coast: "[It] is a most sickening reflection, that this evil luxury [opium] is supplied to them by the merchants of the two nations which profess to be actuated by the purest Christianity" (W. M. Lowrie 1844: 139). This indictment evidenced some degree of nationalistic penance. As a result of the damaging effects of western commerce upon China, America (and Britain) had a special responsibility "to set up among [the Chinese] a different standard than that of merely commercial intercourse" (J. K. Wright 30 July 1849, SOIR 13: 28). Additionally, since the ports of China were opened as a result of war, Christians had a duty to "enter, and proclaim 'peace on earth, good will to men'" (Culbertson 1 Jan 1847, SOIR 10: 11). The criticisms of Britain and America that arose as a result of the opium trade and First Opium War were not theologically destabilizing for Princetonians. Though there are traces of Anglo-American exceptionalism at points in their writings, Princetonians did not exclusively associate divine providence with the political, military or commercial actions of any one nation or empire. Thus, the critique that arose from Princetonians is a reflection of the universality of their notion of providence. While there are elements of nationalism evidenced, particularly as they relate to the "national" blight of being associated with the opium trade, Princetonians ultimately accepted the agency of both America and Britain because it was perceived to contribute in this instance to the propagation of the gospel to all peoples.

### **Princetonians and Empire: Providence and Commerce**

There is then, at this time, a two-fold contest going on in China. One is conducted by the British nation, the other by the Christian world. The object of the former is to open China for commercial purposes, in order that a market may be found for manufactures and productions, and a mine be opened from which the inhabitants of other nations may dig stores of this world's treasures, which all perish in the using. The object of the latter is to overthrow the power of Satan in this empire, to scatter the beams of Heaven's own light on the thick darkness that envelops it, to save the souls of our brethren who inhabit these ends of the earth, and to increase the declarative glory of our glorious God and gracious Saviour, by the building up of a holy temple to his name, where Satan's seat now is. Suppose that in each of these contests the results aimed at should be gained, will any one say that the former are of equal importance with the latter? [...] Surely not (Lowrie 1849: 180).

Princetonians' exhortations to missionary efforts in China often arose from their moral opposition to Anglo-American participation in the opium trade. In some sense Princetonians believed that the theological tension between Anglo-Americans' role in the coming of God's kingdom, and their simultaneous involvement in a morally reprehensible trade could be partly resolved through increased missionary efforts to the Chinese. This insight points to an interesting dynamic of Americans' perceptions of Britain's contradictions with regard to its empire. Here a tension arises between the British Empire's purpose as a theological construct conducive to missionary activity and the noticeably un-Christian principles by which it was formed and sustained.

The sad irony with regard to China – which Princetonians did not miss – was that it was precisely the two “evangelical Christian” nations which were deemed most responsible for the continuation of the opium trade – quite far from their benevolent potential in facilitating the coming of the kingdom of God. Anglo-American involvement in the trade and Britain's willingness to go to war to protect it were perceived to be among missionaries' greatest obstacles in China. Instead of British rule providing order to a fractured society (so they thought) as in India, Anglo-American involvement in the opium trade was contributing greatly to a disintegration of the lives of many Chinese. Thus, while there was periodic millennial excitement among British and American evangelicals that was associated with the British Empire, the two were not commensurate. This is hardly more evident than with regard to China and the First Opium War.

Also at issue here is the degree to (or, the circumstances in) which commerce and Christianity were perceived as being compatible or correlated in the mid-nineteenth-century American evangelical mindset. These dynamics are quite complicated in regard to China, since “free trade” with western nations was imposed by foreign nations and often secured through the threat of gunboats (Osterhammel 1999: 148). Writing of the British Empire in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* in 1841, one Princetonian did not “deem the theory of free trade to be infallible and applicable at all times, and in all nations, without regard to circumstances” (“A Statistical Account” 1841: 444). Based on their experience, some missionaries issued blunt critiques of western commerce, such as Baldwin's claim that commerce inevitably brings “a thousand evils [...] in its train” (Baldwin 21 Nov 1830, SOIR 12: 12). Other Princetonians associated open and liberal trade policies with governmental strength, and protectionism with weakness (Culbertson 7 Jan 1845, SOIR 12: 24). While missionaries maintained some basic association of Christianity and commerce with free trade conducted on cordial, reciprocal, and legal premises,

they strongly resisted any association with western commerce as it was being conducted among the Chinese in the 1830s and 40s.

As a result of their experiences in China, there is no evidence among Princetonian missionaries of an inherent correlation between commerce and Christianity. This, of course, is complicated by the fact that they gained access to Chinese port cities through the ramifications of a war prosecuted out of commercial interests – and hardly morally admirable commercial interests at that. Princetonians' acceptance of the results of the war does not imply their approbation of imperial ambitions on the part of western governments. Princetonians' actions in China, their perceptions of western involvement and the critiques that arose with regard to missionary activity and western influence are best understood within the theological milieu of Princeton Seminary and not in terms of western commercial expansionism or imperialism (Porter 1985: 599, 616). Simply stated, the opening of the Chinese ports made them conducive to missionary activity and was interpreted in light of providence, which corresponded to their Christian duty to obey the great commission and spread the Christian gospel of salvation.

There was no singular jingoistic or uncritical disposition toward America and Britain among Princetonians that prevented them from deeply criticizing Anglo-American activities in China. Their theological conceptions of the British Empire were not specifically related to the institutional forms of its governance. American missionary spirit was aroused in a period of optimistic theological regard for the British Empire. Princetonians perceived the effects of the First Opium War, however, within a broader theological framework which associated an ordering of temporal affairs conducive to missionary activity with the mandate of Jesus Christ to spread the gospel to all peoples of the world. It resulted in a temporary, though forceful, critique of the actions of western, specifically "evangelical Christian," nations towards China. For most Princetonians, the First Opium War's effects largely resolved whatever theological tensions that appear through historical hindsight: China was "opened" to missionary activity. For Princetonians, there was a dissociation between "empire" (British, American, or Chinese) and God's benevolent designs for the world – the two were not conflated with the kingdom of God. Just as there was no innate or inherent association between providence and empire, neither was there a unilateral association between providence and commerce – free trade or otherwise. In this sense, Princetonians' responses to the opium trade in China reflect the occasional and selective nature through which American Protestant missionaries engaged the British Empire.

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### **Enquête sur l'Empire: Société de recherche sur les missions du Séminaire de Princeton, L'empire britannique et le commerce de l'opium entre 1830 et 1850**

Le Séminaire de Princeton a été très engagé dans le mouvement missionnaire nord-américain du dix-neuvième siècle. Une dimension importante de cet engagement fut représentée par la Société étudiante de recherche sur les missions, qui s'efforça de rassembler l'information sur l'état général de l'entreprise missionnaire chrétienne. Cet article examine la correspondance de la Société avec les missionnaires protestants en Chine au sujet de leur attitude envers l'Empire britannique, dans les années 1830–1850. Il avance que la notion théologique de providence façonnait la perception du monde des Princetoniens, ce qui a donc dissocié la tâche missionnaire chrétienne de toute nation ou empire particuliers. Un examen de la correspondance de la Société de recherche au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle est très instructif en ce qui concerne les missionnaires protestants et leur interaction avec le commerce de l'opium et les effets de la première Guerre de l'opium (1839–1842). La réaction des Princetoniens au commerce de l'opium et à la première Guerre de l'opium déboucha sur une critique sévère de l'influence commerciale occidentale en Extrême Orient. En conclusion, l'article met en question la mesure dans laquelle on a associé le commerce, l'empire et les missions chrétiennes dans l'activité missionnaire protestante américaine du dix-neuvième siècle.

### **Investigando el imperio: La Sociedad de Investigación sobre las misiones del seminario Princeton, el imperio británico y el comercio del opio entre 1830–1850**

El seminario Princeton estuvo íntimamente ligado al movimiento de las misiones foráneas de América del Norte en el siglo XIX. Una dimensión notable de esta participación fue la cumplida por la Sociedad de Investigación sobre las misiones y que fue dirigida por los propios estudiantes. La sociedad buscaba información sobre el estado mundial de la iniciativa de la misión cristiana. Este artículo estudia la correspondencia entre la sociedad y los misioneros protestantes en China para analizar sus posturas hacia el imperio británico entre los años 1830 al 1850. Argumenta que la teología de la providencia tuvo que ver con la percepción que los de Princeton tenían acerca del mundo y que disociaba de cualquier nación o imperio la tarea misionera cristiana. Un examen de la correspondencia de la Sociedad de Investigación durante el siglo XIX revela mucho acerca de los misioneros protestantes y su relación con el comercio del opio y el resultado de la Primera Guerra del Opio (1839–1842). Las respuestas de los de Princeton sobre el comercio y la Primera Guerra del Opio llevaron, en última instancia, a una crítica importante sobre la influencia comercial occidental en el Asia Oriental. En conclusión, este trabajo examina hasta qué punto

el comercio, imperio y las misiones cristianas estuvieron asociadas intrínsecamente con la actividad misionera americana protestante del siglo XIX.

**Untersuchungen des Reiches: Die Gesellschaft zur Untersuchung von Missionen am Seminar von Princeton, das Britische Reich und der Opiumhandel, etwa 1830–1850**

Das Seminar von Princeton war engstens mit der nordamerikanischen auswärtigen Missionsbewegung im 19. Jh. verbunden. Eine bemerkenswerte Dimension dieser Beteiligung geschah durch die Gesellschaft zur Untersuchung von Missionen, die von Studenten geleitet wurde und die versuchte, Informationen über den globalen Zustand der christlichen Missionsunternehmung zu sammeln. Dieser Beitrag untersucht die Korrespondenz der Gesellschaft mit protestantischen Missionaren in China betreffs ihrer Haltung zum Britischen Reich in den Jahren 1830 bis 1850. Der Artikel behauptet, dass der theologische Begriff der Vorsehung die Weltsicht der Princetonianer beeinflusste, die folglich den christlichen Missionsauftrag von jeder spezifischen Nation oder Reich trennte. Die Untersuchung der Korrespondenz der Gesellschaft zur Untersuchung in der Mitte des 19. Jh. offenbart viel über die protestantischen Missionare und ihre Beziehungen zum Opiumhandel und die Folgen des Ersten Opiumkriegs (1839–1842). Die Antwort der Princetonianer auf den Opiumhandel und den Ersten Opiumkrieg führte schließlich zu einer bedeutenden Kritik des abendländischen Handelseinflusses in Ostasien. Zusammenfassend: Dieser Aufsatz stellt in Frage, wie weit Handel, Reich und christliche Mission zuinnerst mit der protestantischen amerikanischen Missionsaktivität verbunden waren.

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