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Presbyterian Mission: Christianizing and Civilizing The Chinese in Nineteenth Century California

by Wesley S. Woo

IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY a number of adverse social, political, and economic conditions affected the lot of Chinese peasants and drove many of them to emigrate to find new means of survival. As such, between 1850 and 1882, over 322,000 Chinese (especially the Cantonese from Kwangtung Province) came to the United States. In 1890 this population reached a peak, with 107,488 Chinese reported to be in the country. After this, enforcement of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and other harassing anti-Chinese measures led to a decline in the population.[1] Thus it was, that in the latter half of the nineteenth century, American Protestants and the Chinese came into contact with each other not just in China, but on American soil as well. While the American Protestant missionary enterprise has been the subject of much study, missionary work among the Chinese in the United States has not. The purpose of this essay is to provide a largely chronological sketch of early Presbyterian work among the Chinese in California, particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area.[2]

To begin, we need first to remember that the missionary activities of American Presbyterians were shaped by the American Protestant establishment's perception of itself and its role in world history.[3] Essentially American Protestants felt that they, their churches, and their nation had a special and God-given responsibility to bring about a perfect and complete Christian world order. At the same time, the United States was to be itself the embodiment of an ideal Christian society, thoroughly Protestant, American, and civilized. In other words, the United States was to be both an agent and an exemplar of God's coming Kingdom.

These understandings were at work certainly in an 1876 General Assembly resolution regarding Chinese immigration:

> Resolved, that the influx of the Chinese upon our country, especially upon the Pacific Coast, demands that the mission work among them be prosecuted with unceasing vigor, so that their coming among us may not occasion harm to American society, morals, and civil institutions, and that their conversion, by the blessings of God, to the Christian faith may be followed by their consecration to the work of evangelizing their native land.[4]

Implicit in this statement, but explicit in others made throughout this period in history, was the perception that the coming of the Chinese to the United States was providential, particularly with respect to the goal of evangelizing the world. Presbyterians felt that a key to evangelizing China was to convert Chinese in this country, who would then take the Gospel back with them to their homeland. For example, the Reverend James Eells argued that each returning convert would become "a light in the midst of darkness," "an argument for civilization," and "a preacher to

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his more benighted brethren."[5] In this vein, missionary work in China and work among the Chinese in the United States were considered two sides of the same coin, although the former served as the larger context and was the basis on which many decisions about the latter were made. Therefore, particularly for Presbyterians, in the period under consideration, much of the missionary work among the Chinese in this country was supervised by the Board of Foreign Missions.

A second perception in the above statement was that the Chinese were a test of the nation and its ideals and institutions, since it was felt that the Chinese posed a threat to the country's morals, faith, and civil order. Missionaries like William Speer, Augustus Loomis, and Ira Condit judged the Chinese to be pagan and inferior to Americans in all ways. While the Chinese were deemed to be basically honest, industrious, and of a higher morality and civilization than many other groups, they were seen as falling far short of American standards. Therefore, the key was to Christianize them right away.

Regarding Christianization, Presbyterians felt, and indeed helped shape American Protestantism's understanding, that becoming Christian, becoming American, and becoming civilized were interlocking processes. Although there was debate over which came first, there was no debate over their relationship. Therefore, evangelistic missionary work included such "Americanizing" and "civilizing" activities as education and social services.

I

On August 20, 1850 a committee of San Franciscans, including Frederick A. Woodworth, Acting Chinese Consul, Mayor John W. Geary, the Reverend Albert Williams, and the Reverend Timothy Dwight Hunt, met with some 300 Chinese in a public meeting at Portsmouth Square, in the center of town, to distribute religious and secular literature published in the Chinese language and to encourage friendly intercourse. This event was probably the earliest organized effort to present Christianity to the Chinese in California. From then on, concurrent with the growing presence of Chinese in America, there emerged a concern for evangelizing these people.

Albert Williams

Presbyterians were at the forefront of the resultant missionary activity. Albert Williams and members of First Presbyterian Church visited in the Chinese areas and distributed publications from China. Williams, an Old School Presbyterian and organizer of the first Protestant congregation in the city, noted that these visitations were generally cordially received by the Chinese.[6]

Tong Achick[7] was the first Chinese Christian whom Williams met. Tong had spent two years in the Morrison School in Macao and two years at the branch in Hong Kong, where he was baptized. In San Francisco he and some acquaintances regularly visited with Williams, so by the winter of 1851 they constituted a Bible class taught by Thomas C. Hambly, an elder in First Presbyterian Church.[8]

Sometime in 1852 First Presbyterian Church asked the Presbytery of California (Old School) to petition the Board of For-

eign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to extend its China work by establishing a mission to the Chinese in California. Apparently, at this same time the Presbytery of San Francisco (New School) petitioned the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to appoint a China missionary for California, although no positive response was given by this board.[9] But, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions responded positively, noting that:

> It is the hand of a Providence full of grace to them, that has led them to a land where the gospel is preached, and where they may be directed how to lay up treasures in heaven while they are thinking only of earthly treasures.[10]

The Reverend William Speer, a former China missionary with four years of work in Canton, was commissioned by the Board and sent to establish the work. He and Elizabeth Speer arrived in San Francisco on November 11, 1852, with the arrival noted in the *Pacific* as signaling a new era in the state's history, for California was destined to help bring American Christianity to the world.[11]

Upon arrival, Speer, who spoke the Cantonese dialect, chose to establish a mission house in San Francisco. By February 1853 the second floor of a storeroom was leased, with financial help from Chinese and Americans alike, and occupied as a chapel. Plans were underway to start a night school and a Sunday school, the latter to be taught by women from First Church.[12] Speer also began visiting among the Chinese, including the sick in the state hospitals. In the course of such visitations he met many leading Chinese, including Tong Achick and Lee Kan. Lee, like Tong, had studied at the Morrison School in Hong Kong. Speer also learned about the presence of other Chinese Christians who had been educated at the Presbyterian mission in Canton.[13]

On February 13, 1853, immediately after Chinese New Year celebrations, Speer began regular preaching services in the Cantonese dialect. For the first two months there was never more than thirty persons in attendance, but after that, a few more came. Speer then began evening prayer meetings, Sunday afternoon Sabbath school, and a Bible class. A night school was also started, with tuition charged initially. Attendance in this school was poor, although Speer's hopes were high. He said that, "shocks of electricity that make them jump and their eyes to start out, experiments in galvanism and magnetism, showed them the falsehood of their old idolatrous superstitions and fears."[14]

On November 6, 1853 Speer organized a church with four members—all converted in China. Lai Sam, brother-in-law of the first modern Chinese evangelist, Leung Fat, was chosen elder of this new church.[15] As this new church was without an adequate and permanent home, Speer sought funds for a site. He did so with no concern for denominational affiliation, feeling that the Presbyterian Church in San Francisco could do little compared to what was required. He also felt that some of its members were lukewarm and did not want to divert funds from their own building needs. The Trustees of Speer's mission thought that funds could be collected nondenominationally because Speer was well respected. In addition, some members actually preferred local nonsectarian control over this mission. Otis Gibson, Methodist missionary, said many years later, that persons from several denominations had joined together to form this Protestant mission. According to Gibson, who was not present at the time, only later did control of it pass over to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions.[16] In any case, funds were raised, including over two thousand dollars, out of a total of about sixteen thousand dollars, from Chinese sources. A site was purchased (different from one offered to him for one-half price by a Chinese individual), a mission building erected, and a dedication service held in the spring of 1854.

With new facilities the Presbyterian mis-

sion work expanded. In August 1854 over forty persons attended the worship services and there were seventeen regular pupils in the evening school. Since Speer had medical training he offered medical relief for those Chinese who suffered illnesses caused by the long and difficult voyage from China. A dispensary was opened with Drs. Ayres and Coon, both Presbyterians, providing voluntary services. Apart from the medical help provided, Speer felt that these services helped establish contact with the Chinese and also gave him access to information to be used in talking about the Chinese to Americans.[17]

Talking about the Chinese to American audiences became an important part of Speer's work, especially with the rise in anti-Chinese sentiments. Speer spoke regularly in sermons and lectures on behalf of the Chinese, defending their rights and explaining their culture and civilization. Many of his thoughts were later summarized in his book, *The Oldest and the Newest Empire: China and the United States*.[18] This same concern for educating Americans about the Chinese led Speer to start publishing, with Lee Kan as Chinese editor, on January 4, 1855, the *Oriental*, or *Tung-ngai san luk*, a newspaper with a circulation throughout California, the Sandwich Islands, and parts of China. The Board of Foreign Missions doubted the expediency of the newspaper and were concerned about the amount of time used to publish it. Speer himself eventually felt the same way, and made the paper into a monthly, instead of weekly, publication. Then in 1857 he ceased publication entirely.

Speer served as an advocate for the Chinese in other ways, too. He often appeared in court to speak in defense of the Chinese or to serve as an interpreter. He worked to overturn anti-Chinese legislation, such as the law prohibiting Chinese from testifying in court against whites. The importance of Speer's activities was recognized by the Chinese themselves. In 1853 Speer reported that some Chinese asked him to be their "chief in this country," to act on their behalf, and to be someone acquainted with foreign customs and businesses who would shield them from annoyances and acts of injury or plunder.[19]

Apart from the work in San Francisco, Speer traveled to other parts of the state giving lectures on the Chinese and visiting among the Chinese. While cordially received, this work was not progressively successful. One major problem was the highly transient nature of the Chinese population. Since late in 1853 the mission had in its employ two of its members—Lam Chuen as teacher and Lai Sam as colporteur. But by 1855 Lam Chuen had returned to China and Lai Sam was making plans to return because of ill health. Lam was replaced by Wu Tsan Yuen, while Lai promised to try to get someone from Canton to come in his stead. By the summer of 1855, three of the four original members of the church were back in China. Also, Yeung Fo, the only Chinese baptized in the mission by Speer (on March 2, 1856), had been a colporteur for the American Tract Society, but returned to China to serve in an English missionary station near Hong Kong.[20]

The school work faced similar problems. Speer complained that the Chinese learned a few common phrases and then left. This and other aspects of the work were also affected by Speer's ill health. In 1856 he went to Hawaii for a few months for rest. While he was there little mission work was done, although Ho-Sun, the Chinese assistant at the time, did hold occasional religious meetings. Upon his return Speer did not reestablish regular Sabbath worship, but held private prayer meetings instead.[21]

In 1856, given Speer's poor health and the questionable success of the mission, the Board of Foreign Missions considered terminating the work. According to Speer, the Board had three concerns—that the expectation of a large reflux of Chinese to

California had largely proved untrue, that the treatment of Chinese by citizens of the State was negative, and that the mission was expensive to maintain. Speer countered that the population was actually growing and that, to date, the mission had been supported more with local funds, than with Board monies. But Speer's health continued to be a problem and the presbytery recommended that he take a year's rest. With his departure to the East in 1857, the mission was closed.[22]

With the mission closed the few remaining Chinese Christians worshipped at various churches in the city. Meanwhile the Trustees of the mission negotiated with the Board of Foreign Missions to reopen it and find a replacement for Speer. Eventually, the Reverend Augustus W. Loomis, a former missionary in Ningpo, China (1844-1850), was appointed.[23]

Loomis and his wife arrived in San Francisco on September 14, 1859 and began to reestablish the mission by his visiting among the Chinese, while Mrs. Looms taught English to a few children. Loomis also spent time learning the Cantonese dialect. By Christmas he was able to reopen the chapel for worship and evening prayer services, with ten to thirty persons in attendance. By February 1860 a Sabbath school was started. Also, a day school was run in the mission house, with the teacher paid from public school funds. Within a few months this school was suspended due to a lack of students. However, it later reopened as an evening school. But in 1867 the public school board decided to withdraw from the mission building, despite the protests of the Chinese. After failing to prevent this withdrawal, Loomis set up his own school.[24]

On March 15, 1866 Chinese members of the mission submitted the following petition to the Presbytery of California:

> We brethren, a few names, heretofore baptized and associated as a holy assembly for the purpose of hearing the Word, receiving the ordinances, and for mutual aid and oversight; also having for some years enjoyed the care and oversight of Dr. Loomis as pastor and teacher; now we respectfully petition the ministers and elders of California Presbytery to receive and understand (said petition), earnestly begging your honorable body to receive us, to watch over and protect us the same as other churches of your honorable Presbytery; and if consistent with the wisdom and pleasure of your worthy body, permit us to select of the brethren one to become a ruling elder, and also give to us as a pastor that person whom the honorable gentlemen, acting in behalf of the General Assembly, may from time to time select and send here to preach the Gospel. This is what our hearts desire.[25]

Of the twelve men who signed the petition, four were baptized in China. The petition was granted and Chin Shing Sheang, Loomis' teacher and assistant, elected elder.

In the spring of 1866 Loomis was joined by the Reverend and Mrs. Ira Condit. Since Mrs. Loomis' health was not good, Condit's presence allowed the Loomises to go East for a rest. Mrs. Laura Condit joined them for the trip, since she too was in bad health. In August, Ira Condit, who had been a missionary in Canton, himself went East to join his family and Dr. Daniel Vrooman of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions Canton station helped out while in San Francisco on leave. During this interim period Vrooman was paid by the American Board, but they were unwilling to make this a permanent arrangement.[26] In December 1866 Mrs. Loomis died and Augustus decided to return to the San Francisco work. Coincidentally Laura Condit passed away around this same time, leaving Ira open to returning to San Francisco, although Loomis felt that Condit was better off returning to Canton.[27]

Augustus Loomis served as the superintendent of the Presbyterian Chinese Mission from 1859 until his death on July 26, 1891. He was joined again by Ira Condit in 1870 and two men shared various responsibilities, although there was personal conflict between them. It was perhaps because of this tension that, in 1877, after Condit returned from a visit in Southern

Ira M. Condit

California, he was assigned by the Board to take charge of Chinese work in Oakland and some surrounding areas. Loomis maintained overall charge of the mission work and took responsibility for areas not assigned to Condit.[28]

In the next twenty or so years the Presbyterian Chinese Mission operated steadily, with fluctuations in the number of Sabbath schools, mission stations, and other institutions in operation, the number of church members and students, and the number of missionary workers and native helpers. Some work was given more attention and new work added in response to changing conditions.

Work that required particular attention included the defense of the Chinese against anti-Chinese agitation. In the early 1870s Loomis noted that his ministerial and lay brethren, as well as friends in other denominations, "are getting feverish on the Chinese evangelization theme."[29] Many other mission stations were opened. But by the 1880s anti-Chinese agitation and the debate over "the Chinese Question" was taking its toll. The San Francisco mission and church moved to a new facility—formerly First Presbyterian Church—in 1882, but operated under extraordinary difficulties because of social antipathy towards the Chinese. It became difficult to recruit volunteer workers or rent property for other mission sites—for example, in Oakland and San Jose. Such property, once rented, was subject to vandalism, as when the Santa Rosa mission was burned to the ground by arsonists. Activities in the missions themselves were at times disrupted, as when rocks were hurled through windows or at Chinese on their way to or from the missions. On top of this, the missions experienced the loss of students who left the country in reaction to anti-Chinese sentiments and activities. Presbyterian missionaries were vocal in inveighing against sinophobia and in advocating for the Chinese, whether on the pulpit, in the media, or in the courts. Like Speer, Ira Condit wrote a book trying to influence American opinions about the Chinese.[30] But even in their defense of the Chinese, Presbyterians held a patronizing view and reproached them for bringing about their own problems. For example, the Presbytery of San Francisco cited heathenism as one of the reasons for "incendiary harangues" against them, while Ira Condit said that their non-assimilation was more to blame than racial antagonism.[31]

Work that developed in response to changing conditions included rescue work with enslaved Chinese women. Presbyterian women undertook this work in 1873. It was eventually lodged under the Occidental Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church.[32] Moreover, for a while the mission also worked with Japanese immigrants, this work established as separate mission in 1884.

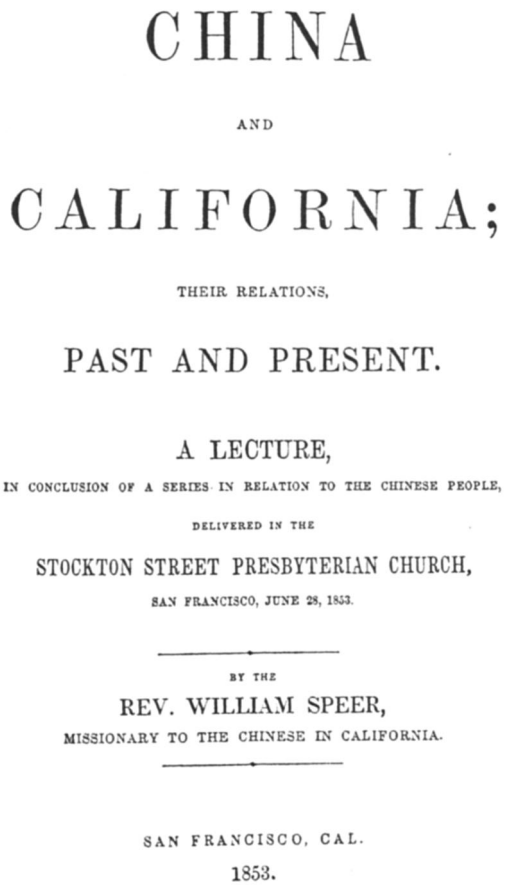
Over time there were also changes in the approach to the work, for example with the inclusion of street preaching and revivals. But Loomis considered the school work to be a major example of the success of the mission, particularly as a

tool for preparing Chinese for evangelistic work in China. As mentioned earlier, such work was considered to be essentially evangelistic and reflective of the interaction between the work of Christianizing, Americanizing, and civilizing the Chinese. In 1885 the Presbyterian mission in San Francisco ran a tuition-free evening school for young men, with an average attendance of eighty. The curriculum included English, arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, essay writing, Bible, and religious instruction. Also, Chinese church members regularly held their own Bible study after the evening school adjourned. Besides this school, the Presbyterian missionaries and Chinese helpers worked integrally with two day schools for boys and girls—the Occidental School run by the Woman's Occidental Board and the Union School run by the Woman's Union Mission.[33]

II

Apart from Loomis and Condit, several other missionaries served the Presbyterian mission for varying periods of time. John Glasgow Kerr, a medical missionary in Canton, was in charge of the San Francisco work for little over a year in 1877-78, when Loomis took a leave of absence for health reasons. The Reverend H.V. Noyes, also of Canton, was on furlough and served for a while between 1877 and 1879 in Sacramento and Los Angeles. Both of these men then returned to Canton. The Reverend Alexander J. Kerr was appointed by the Board of Foreign Mission in 1882, and served until 1892. Kerr was unique in being the first worker who was not a China missionary. He came almost immediately upon graduation from Princeton Seminary and had to learn the Chinese language on the spot.

Throughout the entire period many Chinese also carried major responsibilities and leadership roles in the Presbyterian missions, though always under the supervision of a missionary. Some, like Tam Ching, Chin Shing Sheang, and Tam Ye Gam served as missionary assistants. Others like Kung Mung Chung, Fong Doon, and To Kim Ngak served as teachers in the mission schools. Then there were the colporteurs like Lo Kwong Wun, Chang Chi Ming, Sit Moon, and Mung Mau. Many individuals like Kwan Loy and Au Yeang Shing Chak served in a variety of roles over the years. But, as stated before, a major problem in this period of time with regard to Chinese leadership, at least as stated by the missionaries, was the temporal nature of their stay in America. There were only a few persons like Tam Ching who stayed in the mission work in America for a long time. Tam left his business in San Francisco to return to Canton in order to study theology. He then came back to San Francisco and served the Presbyterian mission until his death (ca. 1875-76). Most others returned to China, al-



CHINA

AND

CALIFORNIA;

THEIR RELATIONS,

PAST AND PRESENT.

A LECTURE,

IN CONCLUSION OF A SERIES IN RELATION TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE,

DELIVERED IN THE

STOCKTON STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

SAN FRANCISCO, JUNE 28, 1853.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM SPEER,

MISSIONARY TO THE CHINESE IN CALIFORNIA.

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

1853.

though they often entered missionary services there. Kan Kai, who was the first person that Condit baptized in the United States in the Chinese language, returned to Canton and served as an assistant physician to Dr. John G. Kerr.[34]

In the early years Loomis made a number of trips to visit among the Chinese living and working outside of San Francisco. But he soon gave that up because of the lack of time and funds. As an alternative, he met ships arriving from China and visited among the lodging houses.[35] In addition, he gradually gave over most of the countryside visitation work to Chinese assistants and colporteurs. Throughout most of the 1870s and 1880s there were usually at least three Chinese Presbyterians doing such work, with Loomis and Condit making occasional visits to augment the work. Evangelistic work in the countryside was also performed by Chinese converts who moved there from San Francisco. For example, in 1867 Kum Lum moved to Idaho City for business reasons and performed missionary service while there. Chinese colporteurs noted that the young men taught in the mission schools were centers of influence wherever they resided, serving as teachers and interpreters.[36]

In part as a result of the such work, a large number of Presbyterian missions were started throughout the state. A partial list of those with known starting dates includes: San Jose (1871), Los Angeles (1876), Santa Rosa (1878), Napa (1878), Santa Buenaventura (1882), San Rafael (1882), Anaheim (1883 or 1885), Santa Barbara (1886), San Diego (1889), and Stockton (1890).[37] The starting dates for several stations are not clear or are ambiguous. For example, work in Sacramento began as early as 1863 with occasional visits by Augustus Loomis and was continued by various Chinese colporteurs. 1870 marked the start of Sabbath school in Westminster Presbyterian Church. In any case, most of these missions took form either as a Sabbath school or as an evening school. Most of these stations were operated under the auspices of a local church and supervised by that particular pastor or a volunteer or salaried woman superintendent. They were also generally served by salaried itinerant Chinese helpers or colporteurs like Sit Moon, Kwan Loy, or Soo Hoo Nam Art who were usually supervised by Loomis or Condit. Sometimes these stations received partial or temporary financial support from the Board of Foreign Missions. The Santa Rosa mission was unique in that it was begun by Soo Hoo Nam Art and some others who built a room behind a laundry to be used for a school and chapel. Only later was this mission related to the local Presbyterian church in town.

The only two Chinese Presbyterian churches begun in California in this period that have continued into the present, besides the one in San Francisco, are in Los Angeles and Oakland. A brief sketch of their beginnings follows.

In January 1876 Ira Condit visited Southern California and preached to fifty to one hundred Chinese at a time in Los Angeles, Anaheim, San Bernadino, and Santa Barbara. In Los Angeles he organized a Sabbath school with approximately one hundred and fifty students. Returning to San Francisco shortly thereafter, he expressed a willingness to go back to Los Angeles to operate a mission there. In April 1876, when the Board of Foreign Missions left it to his disposition, and at the request of people in Los Angeles, Condit returned to open a mission and school. At this time the American Missionary Association turned over its small school to him. Within one and a half years a building was erected and seventeen converts were baptized. But ill health forced Condit to relinquish the work and return to Northern California.[38]

When Condit left, the facility and work were turned over to the United Presbyterian Church. However, the Chinese members were unhappy with this arrangement and refused to be transferred. At their own expense they rented a room and

maintained religious meetings. They also utilized the facilities at the First Presbyterian Church, while the pastor of that church and the presbytery negotiated with the Board of Foreign Missions to reopen this mission. Meanwhile, both Condit and Loomis regretted giving up the work and wanted to reenter the field. This was accomplished and a church was formally organized on April 2, 1884.[39] Ira Condit was reassigned here in 1885 and served until 1890, then returning to Oakland.

When Ira Condit returned from Southern California in 1877, he was assigned to work in Oakland. Before Condit's arrival a flourishing Chinese Sunday school and evening school had been organized by the Reverend James Eells at First Presbyterian Church, Oakland. Thirteen Chinese had been baptized into that church and Tam Ching, the assistant in San Francisco, occasionally preached there.[40]

Condit felt that Oakland was a good field for work with the Chinese and that it was in some ways superior to San Francisco. He noted that in San Francisco Chinatown there were temples, heathen rich merchants, and the Chinese Six Companies—all making conversion difficult. Yet Oakland was not without its difficulties. When Condit tried to secure a mission site he was hindered by white owners who refused to sell him any property for a Chinese chapel. Despite this, he eventually secured a site and built a chapel which was dedicated on February 10, 1878. The evening school at First Presbyterian Church then moved to this new chapel. On July 7, 1878 a Chinese church was formally organized with sixteen members, thirteen being from First church, and Au Yeang Shing Chak was elected ruling elder. By 1889 ninety members had been received to membership, sixty-five by baptism. Four of these members were preparing for the gospel ministry. Huie Kin and Chin Gim were studying at Lane Theological Seminary and Quon Chu and Huie Wing were studying in Canton.[41] (Huie Kin eventually went on to organize the Chinese Presbyterian Church in New York City.)

III

On July 26, 1891 Augustus Loomis died. In 1892 Alexander J. Kerr resigned and Ira Condit was transferred from Oakland to San Francisco to take charge of the entire work. He was helped for a time by the Reverend J.E. Gardner, interpreter at the Customs House, and by Dr. B.C. Atterbury, a medical missionary for twenty years at Paotingfu, China. Atterbury opened a free dispensary which later drew support from the official and merchant classes of Chinese. Atterbury also served for a brief time in the Los Angeles mission.[42] Condit was also aided by several Chinese assistant helpers. In the years under Condit there were gradually more and more women, children, and families in the missions. There was also a greater presence in San Francisco of young men en route from other towns back to China. Then, too, there was a budding native-born population.[43]

By the late 1880s the Board of Foreign Missions had given up support of many of the smaller mission stations in the state. In 1885 the Board noted that much of the work was conducted in volunteer Sabbath schools run by churches in the towns where Chinese resided. These Chinese were taught English as a means of evangelization, which the Board saw as important parish work, but not within its own area of responsibility. It felt that it should be concerned with work which could only properly be done in the Chinese language. Being under financial constraint, the Board felt that it needed to concentrate its efforts on the overseas field.[44] In 1897, at a time when American Protestant missions to China were growing, the Board felt that it was unable to keep up support of all the Chinese work in the United States. Therefore it asked congregations and presbyteries to take up the responsibility. This

was done in Stockton, San Jose, San Rafael, Sacramento, and some other places. In some cases the Board continued limited support for specific pieces of work—for example, aspects of the work of the Woman's Occidental Board in San Francisco.

In San Francisco the presbytery argued that the "Oriental" work there was too large for it to assume the responsibility. Feeling a special relation of the San Francisco work to missions in China, the Board voted to make an exception in this case. In the case of Los Angeles, the Board decided to continue the salary of the Reverend Ng Poon Chew for a while. Later the presbytery was unable to maintain its share of the support and Ng was forced to seek secular work.[45] The Presbytery of Oakland also asked for continued Board support, but was turned down.

One aspect of this issue of national versus local financial support was the question of whether or not the Chinese should assume more responsibility for funding the mission work. Arthur Judson Brown, a Board of Foreign Missions secretary, advocated charging a fee for the night school. Yet local people felt that this would keep the Chinese away or drive them to other missions. Condit noted that the Chinese gave liberally, but with an eye to China work. He felt that pressure to give elsewhere would be negative. Brown said in a confidential report that Condit was getting too old and was no longer adequate to the demands of the work. He felt that Condit was yielding to the Chinese in not urging them to help more with meeting local costs.[46]

In 1903 the Presbyterian Chinese Mission in California celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. Reflecting over the past fifty years, Ira Condit sketched out three stages of progress.[47] First was the era of preparation, "sowing the good seed of the Word by tract and by speech, and by inviting them to come to our chapel and school." Condit noted the importance of Chinese colporteurs in this work. Second was the stage of organization when churches and schools were established, native agents trained and placed, and systematic work with women inaugurated. Third was the contemporary "progressive stage" marked by societies formed within the mission—for example, Christian Endeavor Societies, Circle of King's Daughters, Temperance Societies, Red Cross, and Missionary Societies. In this year there were three organized churches (Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Francisco) and several stations still directly related to the Board. There were four ordained Chinese clergy—Kwan Loy in Canton, Huie Kin in New York, Soo Hoo Nam Art, and Ng Poon Chew, both of them serving in San Francisco and Oakland. There were also many converts serving as helpers, teachers, and assistants in the Sabbath schools and various stations.

In this same year Condit proposed that he give up responsibility for the Presbyterian Chinese Mission and take charge of only the Oakland work. The Board then appointed the Reverend John H. Laughlin, formerly of the West Shantung Mission. Laughlin served until his death in 1918, at which time his widow was appointed to the position.[48] When Laughlin took over, the San Francisco church had 230 members, 91 of who were not then in San Francisco. The Sabbath school averaged 110 in the morning class and 70 in the evening class. Apart from the usual work, Laughlin focused his attention on generating more self-support among the Chinese members. Assisting Laughlin in all this work were Soo Hoo Nam Art and Wong Yuk Shing, who took turns in the home pulpit in San Francisco and in making regular visits to Oakland, Alameda, and San Rafael. They also did street preaching on occasion in cooperation with Chinese preachers from other denominations.[49]

In the years to come several other Chinese also served as pastor and preacher in the San Francisco church, with Laughlin as the superintendent. Several of these Chinese—for example, Wong Yuk Shing, Ng Don Sam, and Fong Lew Chuen—were

trained in China and brought here on temporary assignment. Chinese were also more involved in other aspects of the work. In 1915 almost all the Chinese missions were served by Chinese church officers and leaders. Of the nearly sixty volunteer workers in all the stations, twenty-four were Chinese. Also, in 1915 the San Francisco church had two Chinese deacons—the first time the Chinese church had this office.[50]

On August 18, 1906 the San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed the San Francisco church (911 Stockton Street) and the Woman's Home (920 Sacramento Street), so for a while the chapel in Oakland served as a refuge and rallying point for San Francisco members. Eventually a new church building was erected and dedicated on January 5, 1908. The Woman's Home was also rebuilt with expanded facilities so that it could serve as the local Presbyterian headquarters as well.[51]

In the period after the earthquake, the concern on the part of some Presbyterians for transferring the work from the foreign to the home mission agency increased. Actually, from the 1870s on there had been occasion discussion about this on a number of judicatory levels. Those in favor, which included the Board itself and all the missionaries working with the Chinese, of retaining the work under the Board of Foreign Missions, argued that the agency's workers had much familiarity with the Chinese language and culture were experienced and skilled for the work. The Board also thought that the work with Chinese in the United States had direct relationship with work in China. In addition, supporters argued that the Chinese Christians in the United States had a special affection for the Board.[52] A more novel argument was offered by John Laughlin, who stated that the Chinese and Japanese "are not American citizens, nor are allowed to become such. When they will or no [*sic*], they are kept foreigners all the time they reside among us. Such a condition necessitates different treatment from that accorded to the other immigrant peoples."[53]

Those in favor of transferring the work to the home missions agency felt that such a move would generate more local involvement and regional support. The home missions people felt that since some Chinese Sunday schools were maintained by churches receiving home board aid, the Chinese work was, in fact, home missions work. By the 1900s the Board of Foreign Missions agreed that all work within the United States should be carried by local churches, presbyteries, and the Home Missions Board. Yet it still felt that work with Asians was unique enough to be considered an exception.[54] The Board was willing to give up all its Chinese work, except for that in San Francisco. But, in 1922 the end of an era was marked when the denomination approved the transfer of all the Chinese work to the newly established Board of National Missions.

NOTES

[1] Him Mark Lai, "Chinese," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, eds. Stephen Thernstrom, Ann Orlov, and Oscar Handlin (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 218.

[2] This essay is drawn from Wesley S. Woo, "Protestant Work Among the Chinese in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1850-1920" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 1983). For a discussion of Chinese Protestants see Wesley Woo, "Chinese Protestants in the San Francisco Bay Area," in *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943*, ed. Sucheng Chan (Temple University Press, forthcoming 1991).

[3] For example, Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1937); Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millenial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

[4] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*, 1876, pp. 58-59.

[5] James Eells, "The Chinese in America," *Presbyterian Review* 1 (April 1880): p. 253.

[6] Albert Williams, *A Pioneer Pastorate and Times*, (San Francisco: Wallace and Hassett, 1879), p. 121.

[7] Chinese names are given in the traditional Chinese style with the surname first, followed by the name. All names are spelled as they are found in primary source materials.

[8] Albert Williams, *Pioneer Pastorate*, p. 122; Lee and Abbott state that the three companions were Lai Sam, Lee Kan, and Lam Chuen, but do not cite their source for this information. Elizabeth Lee and Kenneth A. Abbott, "Chinese Pilgrims and Presbyterians in the United States, 1851-1977," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 55 (Summer 1977): p. 126.

[9] Albert Williams, *Pioneer Pastorate*, p. 126; Albert Williams, "History of the Presbytery of San Francisco," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, 32 (December 1954): p. 274.

[10] Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Board of Foreign Missions, Annual Report, 1852, p. 61. (Hereafter cited as PBFM, AR, and date).

[11] *Pacific*, November 19, 1852.

[12] PBFM, AR, 1853, p. 52; William Speer to J.C. Lowrie, January 14, 1853 (Correspondence of Presbyterian missionaries cited in this essay can be found at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia).

[13] Speer to Walter Lowrie, November 30, 1852.

[14] William Speer, "The Founding of the Mission to the Chinese on the Pacific Coast," (n.d.), p. 2. (Typewritten manuscript.)

[15] PBFM, AR, 1854, p. 58: Speer, "Founding," p. 3.

[16] Speer to Walter Lowrie, November 3, 1853; Trustees for the Chinese Mission Chapel to Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, November 4, 1858; Otis Gibson, *Chinese in America* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1877; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1978), p. 161.

[17] Speer, "Founding," pp. 1, 5; William Speer, "Third Annual Report," December 31, 1855. Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Board of Foreign Missions, Correspondence: 1829-1895, Record Group 31, Box 45, Folder 2 (Hereafter cited as PBFM, Correspondence, with RG, Box, and folder numbers).

[18] William Speer, *The Oldest and the Newest Empire: China and the United States* (Pittsburgh: Robert S. Davis & Co., 1877).

[19] Speer to J.C. Lowrie, March 15, 1853; *Oriental*, November 1855.

[20] Speer, "Founding," p. 4.

[21] Speer, "Third Annual Report," n.p.; Speer to W. Lowrie, May 2, 1856, November 20, 1856.

[22] Speer to W. Lowrie, March 5, 1857.

[23] Trustees for the Chinese Mission Chapel to Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, November 4, 1858.

[24] Augustus Loomis to J.C. Lowrie, February 6, 1867; William W. Ferrier, *Ninety Years of Education in California 1846-1936* (Berkeley: Sather Gate Book Shop, 1937), pp. 102-*f*.

[25] Ira Condit, *The Chairman as We See Him and Fifty Years of Work for Him* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1990; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1975), p. 99. The men who signed this petition were: Kum Ah Lum, Sam Shuen, Tam Ching, Sho to Ming, An Yeary [Au Yeang] Shing, Mung Mau, Leang Tih Foo, Wang Ah Heng, Chin Shing Sheang, Woo Tsun Yuen, Tsoi Sheng Ke, Fung Shai Wo.

[26] Loomis to J.C. Lowrie, February 23, 1866; Ira Condit to W. Lowrie, August 17, 1866; Daniel Vrooman to J.C. Lowrie, December 1, 1866.

[27] Condit to Loomis, December 10, 1866; Loomis to J.C. Lowrie, May 28, 1867.

[28] Loomis to Lowrie, March 2, 1875, April 6, 1875, June 7, 1875; Alexander Kerr to Frank Ellinwood, January 17, 1885.

[29] Loomis to J.C. Lowrie, May 3, 1870.

[30] Condit, *Chinaman*.

[31] "Memorial of Presbytery of San Francisco to General Assembly Meeting, May 16, 1878," PBFM, Correspondence, RG 31, Box 38, Folder 6; Condit, *Chinaman*, p. 21.

[32] This is perhaps the best known part of this history about which the most has been written and will not be detailed here. See Mildred C. Martin, *Chinatown's Angry Angel: The Story of Donaldina Cameron* (Palo Alto, Pacific Books, 1977); Carol Green Wilson, *Chinatown Quest* (Palo Alto: Standford University Press, 1974).

[33] Augustus Loomis, "Report of San Francisco Mission for 1878," PBFM, Correspondence: 1829-1895, R.G. 31, Box 45, Folder 6; "Report of the Mission of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to the Chinese and Japanese on the Pacific Coast," 1885, p. 15 (Hereafter cited as PBFM, Chinese Mission AR, and date); PBFM, AR, 1884, p. 120.

[34] Condit, *Chinaman*, p. 129.

[35] PBFM, AR, 1861 pp. 82*f*.

[36] Loomis to J.C. Lowrie, June 28, 1867; PBFM, AR, 1872, p. 92.

[37] Untitled Document, PBFM, Correspondence, RG 31, Box 45, Folder 16.

[38] Condit to Lowrie, March 4, 1876, April 6, 1876, May 1, 1876; Condit, *Chinaman*, p. 156.

[39] PBFM, Chinese Mission, 1885, p. 19; Condit to Ellinwood, January 5, 1882, March 5, 1882.

[40] Condit to Lowrie, December 7, 1874.

[41] Condit to Lowrie, August 29, 1877; Condit to F. Ellinwood, September 27, 1882; PBFM, Chinese Mission, AR, 1885, p. 17; "Oakland Chinese Mission Annual Report" (n.d.), PBFM, Correspondence, RG 31, Box 45, Folder 7.

[42] Condit, *Chinaman*, p. 211.

[43] PBFM, AR, 1896, p. 250.

[44] PBFM, AR, 1885, p. 135; PBFM, AR, 1891, p. 63; PBFM, Minutes of September 18, 1893, Volume 11, p. 81.

[45] PBFM, Minutes of May 2, 1898, Vol. 15, pp. 237-38; PBFM, AR, 1900, p. 280.

[46] "Confidential Appendix" to Arthur J. Brown, "Report on the Work," p. 9.

[47] Ira Condit, "A sketch of the Chinese Mission in California," in Abram Woodruff Halsey, "The Japanese and Chinese in the United States," *Assembly Herald* (August 1903), pp. 3-4; Condit *Chinaman*, p. 213.

[48] PBFM, Minutes of September 8, 1903; Minutes of December 7, 1903.

[49] PBFM, AR, 1905, p. 411, p. 413.

[50] PBFM, AR, 1915, pp. 182*f*.

[51] *Assembly Herald*, 12 (August 1906): 402-5.

[52] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.*, 1887, p. 559; "To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Saratoga Convened," PBFM, Correspondence: 1829-1895, RG 31, Box 45, Folder 12.

[53] John Laughlin to A.J. Brown, March 29, 1907.

[54] PBFM, Minutes of May 17, 1915, pp. 53*f*.