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CHAPTER FIVE: THE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Introduction

In an article about the female Christians in the Chaozhou region, Hu Weiqing has suggested that “since that Christian congregation effectively promoted the emancipation of women in society (such as advocating gender equality, promoting the natural feet movement, and forbidding polygamy and infanticide), it would be logical to conclude that the women within the congregation should also gain a certain degree of ‘emancipation’ in the politics of the church.”⁵⁴¹ He was disappointed to discover that, in the Chinese synod records of the English Presbyterian Church, there are few reliable data about female Christians. He therefore concluded that women occupied only a marginal position in the politics of the Presbyterian congregation. He wonders whether gender inequality was not actually emphasized by the apparently sacred division of labour which was made in the congregation in terms of gender.⁵⁴² Probably Hu Weiqing should not have looked at church politics to try to fathom the relationship. Recently Murre-van den Berg has emphasized that, in the Middle East, Eastern Christians, Muslims and Protestant Americans alike, have all tended to restrict the roles of women to responsibilities in the domain of home and family rather than in the domain of church and society.⁵⁴³ I believe similar patterns can be distinguished in Chinese society, as I hope to explain presently.

In this chapter, I shall focus on how marriage was perceived and propagated by the Christian missions in China. Two questions are important. The first is related to Robert’s statements on “the Christian home”. She notes: “A central theme common to the Christian home in Africa, China, India, Japan was respect for women found in a marriage of companionship, including mitigating the evils of patriarchy, such as concubinage, wife-beating, and servitude to the husband’s extended family.”⁵⁴⁴ In the present context, it is worthwhile attempting to probe how the four foreign missions, the Protestant missions (the American Baptist Mission, the Basel Mission and the English Presbyterian Mission) and the Roman Catholic Mission (*Les Missions Etrangères de Paris*), propagated these new ideas about marriage in the Chaozhou region. The second question follows upon the research of Elizabeth Poujoulat on Roman Catholic marriage in China from 1860 to 1940.⁵⁴⁵ Her description of the marital regulations introduced by the Jesuits, Lazarists and the MEP missionaries allow me to compare these with the regulations which were employed by the Protestant missions in the same period. Although Poujoulat does not refer to differences among the Roman Catholic missions in terms of regulations,

541 Hu, “The Mode of Misery”, p.284.

542 Ibid., p.303.

543 Heleen Murre-van den Berg, “An Inheritance with Sarah’. Women in the Church of the East (1500-1850)”, *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift (Neue Folge der Revue Internationale de Théologie)*, 2010(3). p.202.

544 Robert, “The ‘Christian Home’”, p.163.

545 Elisabeth Poujoulat, *Le mariage dans les chrétiens catholiques en Chine: 1860-1940*, Directeur de thèse: Madame Marianne Bastid-Bruguère, Thèse soutenue le 20 mai 2008, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.

some new source materials permit me to refine her description. Therefore, the second question concerns the comparison of the marital regulations of four Protestant and Roman Catholic missions mentioned above.

My research will be based on Chinese tracts, hymns and the regulations of these missions. As it had carried out its mission work among the Hoklo sojourners in Siam since the mid-1830s, the ABM was a pioneer in composing tracts or folksongs which were used to propagate the aims of the missions. Many of these related to marriage. Compare, for instance, “On the Couple” in the *First Steps in the True Doctrine* (真道入门, 1849);⁵⁴⁶ “On Marriage” in *Hymns for Worshipping the True Living God* (拜真活神的诗, ca 1873-1895)⁵⁴⁷, all of which speak for themselves. The tract *First Steps in the True Doctrine* was compiled by William Dean in Hong Kong in 1849 in collaboration with his Chinese assistant,⁵⁴⁸ and the *Hymns for Worshipping the True Living God* were composed by the American Baptist Church in the Chaozhou region ca 1873-1895. Both appear to have been fairly popular.⁵⁴⁹ The text “Why the Holy religion forbids concubinage” in the tract *Fleeing Error; Seeking Truth* (辟邪规正论)⁵⁵⁰ is also worth looking at. In 1895, the American Baptist Chen Yishan (陈乙山) compiled this tract basing himself mainly on another tract entitled *Argument on Holy Doctrines* (圣教理证论), written by an American fellow Baptist.⁵⁵¹ It was circulated among the Baptist congregation in the form of hand-copied

546 William Dean, *First Steps in the True Doctrine*.

547 *Bai zhenhuoshen de shi* 《拜真活神的诗》 [Hymns for Worshipping the True Living God] (ca. 1873-1895).

548 William Dean produced this tract when he worked in Hong Kong. This tract consists of a series of concise explanations of a variety of Christian doctrines. The item entitled *fu fu* (夫妇, “On the Couple” or “On Husband and wife”) is among them.

549 The composer of this hymn has not been identified. However, on the basis of three hymns (No. 22, No. 80 and No. 81) entitled “Hymns for Baptism” (浸礼诗), two issues become clear: (1) The hymn book belongs to the American Baptist Church, not the English Presbyterian Churches, since the latter used “Ritual of sprinkling/washing/shower” (洗礼) to indicate the Baptismal ceremony. (2) The hymns were published after William Dean’s *First Steps in the True Doctrine*, because he used a special word “搵礼” (immersion) to refer to the Baptismal ceremony. The word “搵礼” was used among the American Baptist congregations in Bangkok and Hong Kong, and was adopted when they moved to the Chaozhou region. Even the English Presbyterian congregations called them the “搵会” (Church of Immersion). As reflect in the Synod record of the English Presbyterian Church dated August 26, 1904: “议盐灶代议稟问蔡元贞夫妇为与会友不睦, 离弃本会归入搵会”, “汲约翰举议昨天元贞夫妇之事未便可复, 并巡视牧师稟陈奇夫妇及其子。孚山代议稟吴周生以上三者皆已归入搵会”. Similar written testimony can be found in the record dated September 6, 1905. The adoption of “浸礼” instead of “搵礼” is quite late. In 1895, Chen Yishan (陈乙山), an American Baptist, used “浸” in his tract ‘Fleeing Error, Seeking Truth’. Consequently, the adoption of “浸” instead of “搵” must have been between 1850-1895. It is possible that Adele M. Fielde was the author of this hymn. Lida Ashmore says that Fielde “prepared a Compendium of the Four Gospels and a hymn book with the help of Dr. Ashmore.” See Lida Scott Ashmore, *The South China Mission*, p.179. Adele Fielde arrived the Chaozhou field in 1873, this hymn book might have been produced between 1873-1895, but the exact date requires more research. This hymn book must have been composed or revised by a Chinese Christian, because the terminal character of each verse rhymes correspondingly. Moreover, the last verse, “enjoy millions and trillions years of honour”, is of typical format of the Chinese ancient folksong. Such a rhymed hymn must have been pleasing to local converts, especially the women, whose only entertainment was listening to one of their peers singing folktales in a rhymed and melodic format while doing housework (such as embroidery and needlework) together.

550 Chen Yishan 陈乙山, *Pixie guizheng lun* 《辟邪归正论》 (Fleeing Error, Seeking Truth), 潮州浸信圣会 [Chaozhou: Holy Baptist Church, Guangzhou], 广州东山美华浸信会印书局刊 [Guangzhou: China Baptist Publication Society], compiled in 1895, printed in 1923.

551 It is not certain who this man was. He might probably be Chen Yishan’s father, Chen Yongquan, who used to teach Chinese in the Queshi Boys’ School. The information on their baptism was found in the membership roll of the Lingdong Baptist Church, see appendix of *The Good News for Lingdong*, No.19, 陈府(永泉); No.1211, 陈和林(乙山).

transcripts.⁵⁵² Another interesting tract was published in the early years of the Republic of China by the Basel Church, *Mirror for the Female Christians* (女徒镜, 1916).⁵⁵³ At that time, modernizing Chinese had accepted education for women as proposed by Kang Youwei (康有为) and Liang Qichao (梁启超), the scholars who launched the ill-fated Hundred Days' Reform (百日维新) with the support of the Guangxu (光绪) Emperor in 1898. Furthermore, the new educational policy, accepted in 1903, guaranteed at least in theory the equal right of girls and women to education. Several regulations have been preserved, one published by the Basel Mission (1874) and the other three published by the EPM in 1907, 1934 and 1948.

Very few materials on marriage were found in the archival papers of the MEP in Chaozhou. Fortunately, in this case it is possible to use regulations which were printed and used elsewhere, especially in Shanghai. According to Li Xuzhen (李绪珍), a sister in the Swatow Ursuline Order in the 1950s, most of the Bibles and the hymns they used before 1950s were published in Shanghai by the Jesuit Tushanwan Press (土山湾印书馆). Some of these were sent from Hong Kong. It is quite possible that the MEP had marital regulations similar to those of the Jesuits in Shanghai. Elizabeth Poujoulat also regards the French Roman Catholic missions in China (including the Society of Jesus, the Society of Lazarus and the MEP) as a whole, basically sharing the same regulations. Consequently the regulations of the Jesuits in Shanghai (1865) and the Lazarists in Jiangxi province (1879) can be referred to if need be.⁵⁵⁴

Between 1860 and 1949, two civil marriage codes were adhered to in China: *The Codes of the Qing Empire* (大清律例), which remained valid until the downfall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, authorized the dominance of a husband over his wife: a husband could divorce his wife for any of “the seven justifying causes” (七出) and he had the right to take a concubine.⁵⁵⁵ This Code gave a woman no right to leave her husband under any circumstances. Even the *Draft of the Civil Code of the Qing Empire* (大清民律草案), which was completed in August 1911, ordained the husband as the guardian of his wife: he had full rights over his wife: both with respect to her behaviour and to her property. Men who had reached adulthood, were *compos mentis* and adjudged to have discretion were considered able to be

552 With reference to the couple of the *First Steps in the True Doctrine* and in the folksong “On Marriage” in *Hymns for Worshipping the True Living God*, Confucian doctrines still strongly back up this argument. Although Mencius' idea that “there are three ways to be unfilial, the worst is to not produce offspring” was initially criticized, in the end Mencius' description of “the five unfilial behaviors” and Confucius' praise of two wise men who had no offspring was cited to strengthen his argument. The author's aim in writing *Fleeing Error, Seeking Truth* was to assist his fellow Christians who he had often witnessed could not answer the rebukes of the non-converts. He compiled this tract to improve the theoretical training of his fellow Christians in their confrontations with non-converts, so as to “solve their doubts, and stop the slander, or go further to convert them”. See Chen Yishan, *Fleeing Error, Seeking Truth*, compiled in 1895, printed in 1923. The Second Preface, p.3.

553 The tract *The Mirror for the Female Christians* (女徒镜) was printed in Chinese characters, but it was in a typical Hakka dialect which was used among the Hakka people in Hong Kong and in Xin'an (新安) county, where the lowland station of the Basel Mission was located.

554 *Sheng Pei Gui An* (圣配规案) is a collection of regulations published by the Jesuits, namely *Traité sur le mariage rédigé en chinois par Monsieur Languillat* (S. J.) en 1865. The one used by the Lazarists was *Les Faculté apostoliques et leur commentaire auxquels s'ajoute un guide à l'usage des missionnaires de la province du Kiang-Si* (1879). The original document of the former is in Chinese, while the latter is in Latin, “*Apostolicae facultates earumque commentarius cui accedunt monita ad missionarios provinciae Kiang-Si*”. Both titles and contents of the regulations were translated by Poujoulat from Chinese into French and Latin to French respectively. See Poujoulat, *Le mariage*.

555 七出: 无子、淫佚、不事舅姑、多言、盗窃、嫉妒、恶疾; 三不去: 与更三年丧、前贫贱后富贵、有所娶无所归。见《大清律例通考》, 卷十, 户律婚姻, 出妻律文。

exponents of civil conduct, but married women were not included in this category.⁵⁵⁶ It is against this legislative background that the four missions introduced new marital regulations into the Chaozhou region.

I should note here that all quotations in the present and the following chapters, from Chinese tracts, from the different versions of the Presbyterian constitutions or from the Chinese synodal records, are my translations from Chinese into English. The same is true of some French Roman Catholic regulations mentioned by Poujoulat.

Indissolubility of Marriage

The indissolubility of marriage was the first theme emphasized by the missionaries. This is obvious from the tracts and hymns. *First Steps in the True Doctrine* maintains that “the couple which has been legitimized by a marriage ceremony should not discard each other.”⁵⁵⁷ The folksong “On Marriage” in *Hymns for Worshipping the True Living God* reveals this principle even more explicitly. Verse 3 of this folksong runs as follows: “Once married they should keep the promise; it is sinful should they lose their love for each other” (已成婚约当钦守, 失却恩情便有愆). The first half of this verse puts great emphasis on the marriage contract (covenant marriage). The second half is a warning, mainly aimed at men taking advantage of the dominance of husband over wife in Chinese society, well-embedded in “the seven justifying causes”. Reading them it is possible to grasp some idea of how foreign this new idea must have been to the first generation of converts.

The same principle of the indissolubility of marriage is reflected in the regulations of the other missions. According to the regulations of the Basel Mission (1874): “The Holy Book [i.e. the Bible, CXy] instructs people on the indissolubility of marriage.”⁵⁵⁸ The EPM (1881) likewise required that “according to God’s commandments, the couple should never separate during their lifetime.”⁵⁵⁹

However, the propagation of the indissolubility of marriage did not mean that the missions implemented this principle without qualifying it. In its 1874 regulations the Basel Mission listed several circumstances under which the separation of a couple was allowed. Article 93 lists the following conditions:

1. A wife who is persistently lascivious can be divorced, provided that she has not given birth to a child.
2. A concubine who has not been married in a marriage ceremony can be set aside if she has not given birth to a child.

556 Articles 9 and 26, Draft of the Civil Code of The Qing Empire. Wang Xinyu 王新宇, *Minguo shiqi hunyinfa jindaibua yanjiu* 《民国时期婚姻法近代化研究》 [Study on the Modernization of Marriage Law in Republic of China], Beijing: China Legal Publishing House, September, 2006. p.34.

557 Dean, *First Steps in the True Doctrine*.

558 *Base shenghui guitiao* 《巴色圣会规条》 [Regulations of the Basel Mission], 1874. Article 92.

559 *Chaohui Zhanglaojiaobui gongli* 《潮惠长老教会公例》 [Constitution of the Chaohui Presbyterian Church], Shanghai: The American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1907. Article 387.

3. A woman who has been married without any proper betrothal gift and lives as a man's mistress (契家婆)⁵⁶⁰ might leave her husband if she wants to be a Christian.
4. A woman who has suffered from her husband's resentment because she has joined the church can leave her husband freely, even if her husband neither regards her as his wife nor can provide a document of divorce (离书) as people usually do in the case of divorce.
5. A wife or concubine can be allowed to leave a husband who continues to commit adultery.

Conditions 1 and 2 were included so that the husband could divorce his wife or concubine, while 3 to 5 granted the wife or concubine the right to leave the husband. In contrast to “the seven justifying causes”, which gave men the authorization to divorce their wives in traditional society, the Basel Congregation also granted women the right to divorce their husbands. This was a considerable challenge to the traditional values in Chinese society in which women were totally subjected to men. The most important aspect was the fact that the adultery of the man was considered a valid reason for divorce. As stated under No. 4, the difference in belief could also be a reason for divorce, whereas Article 91 of the same Basel Regulations granted the right of divorce to both parties:

If the non-convert [one party of a couple] does not want to live together with the convert, then the convert should not be bound by the marriage law. But he or she should wait a long period (俟候日久)⁵⁶¹ before he or she can remarry.

Article 90 adds that:

If one party of a couple is a non-convert, but he or she is willing to live together with the convert, the convert should not divorce him or her.

In the French Roman Catholic mission, similar regulations can be found:

1. If the first spouse does not convert but agrees to cohabit peaceably and does not offend the Creator, he (the husband) should separate from the other spouses.
2. If the first spouse constantly refuses to convert and cohabits without offending the Creator, he should summon her to give an account of herself. If her answers to the two questions which are usually asked are negative, the husband can contract a marriage with another Roman Catholic spouse, but has to repudiate the other spouses.⁵⁶²

The first regulation is equivalent to Article 90 of the Basel Mission; the second is similar to Article 91. Reading these, it would be right to conclude that difference in belief was a propositional but not a sufficient reason for a divorce in both the Protestant and Roman Catholic missions, even though the emphasis of these two missions was different: the second regulation stressed that the bride in a remarriage should be a Christian. This point is also implicitly embedded in Article 91 of the Basel

560 According to my friend Luo Jiahui (罗家辉, who grew up in Hong Kong, understands Cantonese and Hakka), the phrase 契家婆 here can also mean small daughter-in-law in a family.

561 The original text does not indicate the duration clearly.

562 “1. Si la première épouse ne se convertit pas mais accepte de cohabiter pacifiquement et sans offense au Créateur, il devra se séparer des autres épouses. 2. Si la première épouse, toujours, refuse de se convertir et de cohabiter sans offenser le Créateur, il faudrait alors l'interpeller et si elle répond négativement aux deux questions d'usage, le mari pourrait contracter mariage avec une autre épouse catholique, en répudiant cependant ses autres épouses.” *Les Facultés apostoliques et leur commentaire auxquels s'ajoute un guide à l'usage des missionnaires de la province du Kiang-Si*, the regulations on “Polygamie”. Poujoulat, *Le marié*, p.153.

Mission, which also emphasizes that a suitable interval should elapse before remarriage. The second regulation does not expound on this point.

Although the Basel Mission granted man and woman equal rights to exercise their free will in the matter of divorce, it did not encourage it:

94: Under the following circumstances, divorcing one's wife or concubine or leaving one's husband will cause one to suffer a guilty conscience:

1. A woman who neither commits adultery nor obstructs her family members in following the Lord's doctrine should not be divorced. [This refers to the wife]
2. A woman who has given birth to children and has a harmonious relationship with her husband should not be divorced. If she has become a Christian, there is even less reason to divorce her(则尤不可). [This refers to a concubine]
3. A husband who already has both a wife and a concubine and does not commit adultery and treats his spouses well, allowing them to worship God, should not be left/repudiated by his spouses.

Conditions 1 and 3 show Article 90 in specific contexts: so long as one party (either husband or wife) was not adulterous and was willing to cohabit, divorce was not encouraged in spite of the difference in beliefs. Condition 2 safeguarded the rights of a concubine who had given birth to children. This policy was shared by the EPM in the stations in Swatow⁵⁶³ and Tainan.⁵⁶⁴ If the concubine was a Christian, this could give her more protection in preserving her marriage. The situation was quite different in the Roman Catholic mission. The regulations of the French Lazarist mission which were circulated in the adjacent province of Jiangxi (江西) in 1879 said:

If an unconverted polygynist converts and his first spouse, the only legitimate one, also converts, this man should remain together with his first spouse, without asking for the dispensation or interpellation of the other spouses. They should separate from him, unless they also convert.⁵⁶⁵

The principal wife was regarded as the one and only legal wife while the concubine was only allowed to stay when she, like the rest of the family, converted to Catholicism. Article 94:3 is similar to the last point of the canon. Roman Catholics and Protestants agreed in allowing a wife and concubine to live together with their husband provided that they were all Christians.

The three conditions of the Basel Mission were obviously subject to regulation to protect each party (husband, wife or concubine), none of whom was not willing to divorce. But if the continuation of such marriage caused them feelings of guilt and both parties reached a consensus about separation, the Presbytery of the Basel Mission approved of such an arrangement. Should this be the case, the Basel Mission stipulated that the separated woman (either a wife with a different belief from her

563 Article 391, "If the concubine has borne children, or she is unwilling to remarry, then they should not be separated", *Constitution of the Chaohui Presbyterian Church*, 1907.

564 "If she has borne children, I should say that on no account should they be separated", D. Ferguson, "Relation of Converted Polygamists to Christianity", *The Chinese Recorder*, Vol. XXXVII (1906), pp.187-188.

565 "Si un polygame infidèle se convertit et que sa première épouse, la seule légitime, se convertisse aussi, cet homme devra rester avec sa première épouse, sans dispense ni interpellation des autres épouses, qui devront se séparer de lui, sauf si ces dernières se convertissent également." Les Facultés apostoliques et leur commentaire auxquels s'ajoute un guide à l'usage des missionnaires de la province du Kiang-Si. Poujoulat, *Le mariage dans les chrétientés catholiques en Chine*, p.153.

husband or a concubine who has given birth to children) should not remarry. Her original husband (原夫) should continue to help her should she lack for anything.⁵⁶⁶

Monogamy

Polygyny, or marrying a concubine in addition to the first, official wife, was a common occurrence in the late Qing period. It was regarded by the Confucian gentry as a feasible method to guarantee the birth of male offspring in a family.⁵⁶⁷ However, “poor men, and men of the middle classes, rarely have more than one wife, because of the cost of a large household.”⁵⁶⁸ It was against this social background that both the Protestant and Roman Catholic missions did their best to emphasize the idea of monogamy. Monogamy made up an essential part of the Christian marriage doctrine but, on account of its incompatibility with the Chinese customs, it seems to have taken a long time before it was spelled out to the Chinese Christians. Remarkably, William Dean did not stress it in his tract “On the Couple” nor was this theme explicitly mentioned in the folksong “On Marriage”. This omission might have been because the problem of marrying a concubine was not one which occurred frequently among the small, poor congregation in the initial stages.

In 1865, Languillat, a Jesuit in Shanghai, treated the idea of monogamy in the tract *Sheng Pei Gui An* (圣配规案, *Traité sur le mariage*):

Le Seigneur créa le ciel et la terre et les dix mille choses. Puis Il créa l’homme et la femme (一男一女) et leur commanda de s’unir, pour perpétuer le genre humain. Le mari et la femme (夫妇两人) ne firent plus qu’un seul corps, voici vraiment l’origine du sens du mariage.⁵⁶⁹

While the French translation does not emphasize monogamy as such, the number in the original Chinese text “一男一女” (one man and one woman) and “夫妇两人” (both husband and wife) seems to underline the principle of monogamy quite clearly. In 1874, the Basel Mission was the first among the Protestant missions to declare the principle of “one husband and one wife”, with reference to the Bible (圣书, Holy Book).⁵⁷⁰ The EPM registered this principle in its 1881 constitution: “According to God’s commandments, an correct/orthodox (合道) marriage is that of one man and one woman”.⁵⁷¹ In 1895, the ABM wrote in the same vein: “One husband matches one wife, as determined by the Lord.”⁵⁷²

The reason the missions in this later period all began to stress the principle of monogamy might

566 “其九十六：若圣会中有夫妇，照九十四款不忍相隔别者。倘心有不安，情愿互相离别，长老会则可准之。但如此之妇，不可再嫁。若有缺乏，原夫当帮助。” Article 96, *Regulations of the Basel Mission*, 1874.

567 It was also observed by Fielde, see Adele M. Fielde, *A Corner of Cathay*, p.28.

568 Ibid.

569 This text was translated from Chinese into French by Elizabeth Poujoulat. The original is: “天主造天地万物。即造成一男一女。命之相配，以传人类。夫妇两人本属一体，婚配之义实始于此。” Languillat, Monseigneur, *Traité sur le mariage* (Sheng Pei Gui An, 圣配规案), cote Fch 408 (archives Jésuites de Vanves), 1865. p.4. See Poujoulat, *Le mariage*, p.119.

570 Article 92, *Regulations of the Basel Mission*, 1874.

571 Article 372, “按上帝之诫命，合道之婚姻乃一男一女”，*Constitution of the Chaohui Presbyterian Church*, 1907.

572 Chen Yishan, *Fleeing Error, Seeking Truth*, p.72.

perhaps be explained by the fact that Christianity had by then spread more widely and entered the families of the higher strata. Consequently, the matter of marrying concubines became more pressing in the congregations and emerged as an urgent problem with which the foreign missions had to deal. The article “Why the Holy religion forbids concubinage”, published in 1895 by Chen Yishan, discusses the idea of monogamy for the American Baptist congregation, stressing that “He did not create a man with two women, or a woman with two men.”⁵⁷³ Chen Yishan was keen to persuade the Chinese to eliminate the custom of marrying concubines and he cited an extreme case of a family tragedy which was caused by the jealousy between the wife and the concubine. The missionaries, however, were aware that the abolishment of the polygynist marriage would not be easy. Duncan Ferguson, an English Presbyterian missionary who served in South Taiwan from 1889 to 1923,⁵⁷⁴ wrote in 1906 that: “No doubt in a few cases it [sending away of a concubine] will be a real joy to her [the wife]. But in the majority of cases she will not welcome the change, because it was she herself who connived at the marriage of the secondary wife [concubine]; she wanted a servant, or it may have been like Sarah when she arranged for Abraham to marry Hagar.”⁵⁷⁵

Amanda Porterfield states that the American Congregationalists in Africa were not open to compromise on the issue of polygyny: “While the liberal Anglican Bishop Colenso defended the practice of baptizing polygamists, the Americans insisted on defining admission to Christianity in terms of Protestant rules and sentiments about marriage.”⁵⁷⁶ Whether the ABM in China also strictly opposed concubinage has not yet been clearly established. Certainly, the Basel and the English Presbyterian congregations were more flexible than the American Baptists in introducing the Christian teachings on marriage in general and in dealing with the problem of marriage to a concubine in particular.

In 1906, Ferguson noted that several missions in China had allowed or required converted polygynists to retain the wives whom they had married before their conversion: “The synod of China connected with the Presbyterian Church in America, the Basel Mission, the EPM in Swatow and the China Inland Mission. My information about the last mentioned may be wrong, but in all probability there are other missions which have adopted this regulation.”⁵⁷⁷ The Basel Mission made a clear distinction between those who had concubines before and who acquired them after their conversion. Article 92 discusses this as follows: ⁵⁷⁸

1. One husband with two wives contradicts the commandment of Jesus our Lord. It is not allowed by the Holy Church. Thus it should be rectified if there is no guilt in one’s heart (不亏心).
2. Married concubines if they are heathens do not commit the same sin of adultery as the disciples of Jesus. For the Holy Book not only instructs the principle of one husband and one wife, it also

573 Ibid.

574 A city in southern Taiwan, where the EPM had an important station.

575 Ferguson, “Relation of Converted Polygamists”, p.186.

576 Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon*, p.129.

577 Ferguson, “Relation of Converted Polygamists”, p.188.

578 Article 92, *Regulations of the Basel Mission*, 1874.

instructs the indissolubility of marriage. Thus whether to divorce the concubine or not, it should be judged according to different situations, rigid decisions should not be applied.

3. If someone who had married a concubine, now wishes to be a disciple of Jesus, then, according to the regulations of our Holy Church, he should separate from his concubine first, if he feels no guilt in his conscience (不亏心). But if a serious sin will be caused by the separation from his concubine, it is preferable not to do so. This tolerant regulation is not a normal one and only temporarily applicable in the initial stage of planting the church.

“Feeling guilty or not” is a factor emphasized by the Basel Mission, which led to more flexible resolutions than the rigid opposition posed by the ABM, which is revealed in the tract *Fleeing Error, Seeking Truth*. Nevertheless, they shared the same basic points: the principle of monogamy as an ideal Christian marriage and that Christians were not to marry a concubine: “For those had joined the Holy Church, they should definitely not marry a concubine. Those who marry a concubine commit the sin of adultery, and should be dismissed from the Holy Church.”⁵⁷⁹ Thus, the tolerant attitude was shown only to the men who had married a concubine before their conversion.

The regulations of the EPM in Swatow were similar to those of the Basel Mission. The following four regulations were drawn up in 1881, and were integrated into the 1907 constitution:

389: If a man married a concubine before he heard the Gospel, he should be forgiven his ignorance according to the doctrines of Gospel. But in deciding whether to accept him for baptism or not, the church should make a detailed investigation, research the doctrines carefully and let him know that he has violated God's commandment. The church should not easily ignore his sin.

390: If the concubine has borne no children, and she is willing to leave (her husband), she may be allowed to remarry another convert. But the husband should ask the Presbytery to which he is attached for an inspection and decision in advance, so as to avoid offending this woman (concubine).

391: If the concubine has borne children, or she is unwilling to remarry, then they should not be separated.

392: Since a man could not separate from his concubine for this reason (the latter's unwillingness), he should be reminded explicitly that taking concubine [the point is that concubinage is NOT marriage] is sinful and is prohibited by the Church, only if the situation does not change (事势固结). If an inspection is carried out and it is found that he is pious in his attitude to God, plus that there is no other encumbrance, then the Church can accept him for baptism, but he is forbidden to hold office in the Church.⁵⁸⁰

393: Since this problem is of significant concern and complicated, rather than make a decision by itself, the local Presbytery should report to the General Synod first. Only after the General Synod's careful inspection and permission can the local Presbytery received the sinner for baptism.⁵⁸¹

579 Article 97, *ibid*.

580 An important issue to which Porterfield also refers: not only were there degrees in allowance for divorce, there were also degrees of membership: Baptism alone, or Baptism and 'offices' – only those adhering to the highest norms may take office.

581 *Constitution of the Chaohui Presbyterian Church*, 1907.

It is interesting to compare this with the discussion of the same problem in Taiwan. In his article, Ferguson showed that polygyny (polygamy) was permitted in the Old Testament.⁵⁸²

Polygamy was tolerated and regulated in the Old Testament. It was most likely also tolerated in the apostolic church. It was one of the evils which, like slavery, was left to be gradually eradicated. The conditions of the church in the East being very similar to those of the apostolic church, we should follow the example of the early church leaders.

This allowed Ferguson to admit men who had concubine as members of the church.⁵⁸³

I would say that his secondary wife, if she had borne no children, should be given the choice of leaving her husband, he making adequate provision for her. If she be willing, then let them be separated (\approx Article 390); if unwilling, let them continue as husband and wife. If she has borne children, I should say that on no account should they be separated (\approx Article 391). I would say that such a man, if admitted, should never be allowed to take office in the church so long as he was the husband of more than one wife (\approx Article 392). I would not leave it to the local Kirk Session to decide on his admission, but let each case be decided on its own merits by the supreme court⁵⁸⁴ of the church. (\approx Article 393).⁵⁸⁵

Article 390 of the Swatow mission strongly emphasizes the preference that the emancipated concubine marries a convert, depriving her of the choice to marry a non-convert. This seems strange at first glance but it also probably should be understood as the Christian congregation taking care of this concubine. The Taiwan General Synod required the husband to make adequate provision for his ex-concubine. In its 1874 Regulations, the Basel Mission took a similar stand and ruled that “should a concubine lack sustenance before her remarriage, her ex-husband should provide her with financial help.”⁵⁸⁶ This resolution charged the ex-husband with the responsibility of taking care of the ex-concubine, at least until she could remarry.

The MEP in Chaozhou has not left any sources which would give clues to how it solved the problem of concubines in the Christian congregation. The regulations of the French Lazarist mission in the adjacent province of Jiangxi (江西) in 1879 give some ideas of what the direction might have been:⁵⁸⁷

1. If an unconverted polygynist converts and his first spouse, the only legitimate one, also converts, this

582 Ferguson, “Relation of Converted Polygamists”, pp.175-188.

583 The articles within the brackets are the same regulations as those of the EPM in Swatow.

584 The same as the general synod in Swatow.

585 Ferguson, “Relation of Converted Polygamists”, pp.187-188.

586 Article 95, *Regulations of the Basel Mission*, 1874.

587 “1. Si un polygame infidèle se convertit et que sa première épouse, la seule légitime, se convertisse aussi, cet homme devra rester avec sa première épouse, sans dispense ni interpellation des autres épouses, qui devront se séparer de lui, sauf si ces dernières se convertissent également.

2. Si la première épouse ne se convertit pas mais accepte de cohabiter pacifiquement et sans offense au Créateur, il devra se séparer des autres épouses.

3. Si la première épouse, toujours, refuse de se convertir et de cohabiter sans offenser le Créateur, il faudrait alors l’interpeller et si elle répond négativement aux deux questions d’usage, le mari pourrait contracter mariage avec une autre épouse catholique, en répudiant cependant ses autres épouses.

4. Enfin, ayant obtenue une dispense, ce même homme pourrait aussi choisir l’épouse qu’il préfère parmi toutes les autres, pourvu qu’elle se fasse baptizer. Mais il convient de noter dans ce cas qu’il faut interpellier la première épouse avec juste une question: veut-elle se convertir? En cas de réponse négative de la première épouse, il devra, après le baptême de celle qu’il a élue, renouveler le consentement et

man should remain together with his first spouse, without asking for the dispensation or interpellation of his other spouses, who should separate from him, except if they likewise convert.

2. If the first spouse does not convert but agrees to cohabit peaceably and does not offend the Creator, he (the husband) should separate from the other spouses.

3. If the first spouse persistently refuses to convert and cohabit without offending the Creator, he should summon her to answer questions. If her answers to the two questions which are usually asked are negative, the husband can contract a marriage with another Roman Catholic spouse, in the meantime repudiating the other spouses.

4. At last, having acquired a dispensation, that same man can also choose a spouse he prefers among all his spouses, provided that she is baptized. But it is appropriate to note that in this case that he should summon the first spouse and ask just one question: does she want to convert? Should the first spouse give a negative response, after the baptism of the one he has chosen, he should renew the consent and marry according to the rituals of the Church, having been well understood repudiated all the other spouses.

In a comparison between the regulations of the Basel Mission, the EPM and the MEP, two points stand out: all of them tolerated the presence of concubines, but in different degrees. Both the Basel Mission and EPM were tolerant towards those who had concubines before their conversion but the French Roman Catholic Mission only tolerated the existence of concubines in an all-Christian family. Under all other three circumstances, the French Roman Catholic mission implemented the principle of monogamy. It was willing to sacrifice the principle of the indissolubility of marriage to guarantee the principle of monogamy. The Basel Mission went the other way round. More interesting still, the right to decide whether or not to let a concubine go was granted to the husband in the case of the Basel Mission, to the concubine in case of the EPM and in the French Roman Catholic Mission, to the principal wife.

Mutual Respect and Love

In her work on Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries, Porterfield emphasizes that American female missionaries who were trained by Mary Lyon propagated companionship and mutuality in marriage among their new converts abroad.⁵⁸⁸ This theme was developed in greater detail by Robert, who links the way the missionaries saw their own marriages with those of the newly converted Christians. In this section, I shall trace the way in which the various missions tried to instil the ideal of “the Christian home”.⁵⁸⁹

The ABM required that husband and wife show their mutual respect and love. It decreed that a

Pépouser selon les rites de l’Eglise, en ayant, bien entendu répudié toutes les autres épouses.” *Les Facultés apostoliques et leur commentaire auxquels s’ajoute un guide à l’usage des missionnaires de la province du Kiang-Si* Poujoulat, *Le mariage*, p.153.

588 Porterfield, *Mary Lyon*, p.82.

589 Dana Robert suggests that, “a major component of the missionary home that contrasted with the surrounding culture was mutual respect between husband and wife, with the missionary wife a coworker with her husband.” See Robert, “The ‘Christian Home’”, p.160. Though it refers to the missionaries, not the converts, mutual respect was also what the missionaries wanted for their converts.

couple should “treat each other with respect” (相敬如宾). The folksong “On Marriage” says “a couple should respect and love each other”. The regulation of the Basel Mission also required that “being the disciples of Jesus, a Christian couple should respect and love each other, help each other to achieve salvation”.⁵⁹⁰

The EPM emphasized the husband’s love for his wife, “The husband should love his wife as himself: loving your wife is the same as loving yourself”.⁵⁹¹ In 1916, Wan Enhong (万恩鸿), a male Christian member of the Basel Congregation, wrote that “a wife should respect and love her husband”, for “God had told women: you should love and admire your husband”.⁵⁹² In order to prove his point, he went through the Old Testament and listed many texts to show what an ideal Christian woman should do.⁵⁹³ “How a woman should treat her husband” ranked the first among the five obligations for a Christian woman.⁵⁹⁴ Wan Enhong went on to say that “a woman should exercise restraint in her love of her husband. It will cause a disaster if she indulges herself too much in her love of her husband.”⁵⁹⁵ He quotes the story in Genesis which recounts how, having been seduced by the snake, Eve asked Adam to eat the fruit on the tree of life, which angered God, whereupon they were expelled from the Garden Eden.

Confucian doctrine also requires that husband and wife should “treat each other with respect as a host treats his guest” (相敬如宾), but the Christian doctrine spoke of “the mutual affection and respect” and the equality between male and female: “male and female are equal before God”.⁵⁹⁶ The missionaries taught the Chinese that a “woman is not inferior to man as an intellectual and responsible being”.⁵⁹⁷ In 1908, a semi-monthly magazine entitled *Chao Sheng* (潮声) which was produced in Swatow published an editorial for the purpose of encouraging female education. Great emphasis was placed on the beneficial influences of the educated women on their children and the significance of this relationship for the fate of China. However, the author of this editorial, an educated man, adopted a negative path when commencing his argument. He imputed the weakness of the Qing Empire to the ignorance of women, which amounted to half of the population of China. He believed these ignorant women exerted a bad influence on the other half, the male population, including their children and neighbourhood. All of this resulted in “the debility of the nation and the corruption of local government, which caused the disdain for and oppression of the Chinese by the foreigners.”⁵⁹⁸

590 Article 87, *Regulations of the Basel Mission*, 1874.

591 Article 372, “夫当爱妇, 犹基督舍身爱会。夫当爱妇如己, 亦若是爱妇, 即爱己”, *Constitution of the Chaobai Presbyterian Church*, 1907. Based on Eph 5:22-28.

592 Wan Enhong, “Virtuous models”.

593 The scriptures he quoted were: Genesis 1:28; 2:7, 18, 21-24; 3:2, 16, 20; 6:34-35; 27:6. Exodus 2:1-3. 1 Joshua 2:1. Judges 16:4. Ruth. 1:8. Samuel: 1:22; 25:18.1 Kings: 17: 12-23; 2 Kings: 4:8. Esther 4:21 (?). Proverbs 1:1-9. Song of Songs 1:7, 2:3, 16.

594 The other key points in Wan Enhong’s article are: How should a woman treat her husband’s parents? How should a woman treat her children? How should a woman treat a stranger? How should a woman be patriotic?

595 “但系爱丈夫, 都爱照法。系爱过头, 就有大害。”Wan Enhong, “Virtuous models”, p.3.

596 *The Mirror for the Female Christian*, Preface.

597 Robert, “The ‘Christian Home’”, p.153.

598 “所以一个妇女, 为歌册曲册所害, 致到不正派, 不明白, 不知古今事, 连那厝边个妇女, 亦共伊平平样。还不只厝边妇女被害, 连妇女个仔弟, 穆伊大人个衰样, 亦就平平衰去。尔想我中国四万万, 除妇女之外, 正存到二万万。只二万万又为妇女所教衰, 算起来, 中国人咁做无人就是了。无怪国家今日障衰疲, 地方今日障腐败, 致到被洋人看轻, 被洋人

In the 1940s the Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong (费孝通) thought that the indifference between husband and wife in rural China (Guangxi province) was attributable to the fact that Chinese society maintained clear gender divisions. During the day, both husband and wife engaged in their own fields of labour, the man doing farm work and the woman housework. He wrote: “So far as I know, most of the couples in rural areas do not need to communicate much with each other (用不着多说话的), (in a woman’s, an interviewee of Fei Xiaotong, own words in the 1940s) ‘There is actually nothing to say’”.⁵⁹⁹ Fei Xiaotong points out that in the rural area of China, the rustic idyll of talking and laughing, tender affection and so forth existed only in groups of the same gender and age, men keeping with other men, women with women and children with children. These groups kept a distance between each other, except in matters to do with work and procreation.⁶⁰⁰ It was within this sort of social context that the Chinese cultivated the characteristic of restraining and withholding affection for the opposite sex in the public sphere.⁶⁰¹

A Chinese couple seldom called each other by their given names, as revealed in the words of two Bible-women. Aunt Luck (Du Rui, 杜瑞) recalled that her husband never called her by any name at all. When he wanted her to do anything, he said, “Here, you.”⁶⁰² Long (Ding Ling, 丁铃) said: “Chinese women do not say ‘my husband’. If they wish to speak affectionately, they say ‘the children’s father’; otherwise they simply say ‘he’.”⁶⁰³ Husband and wife ate apart. In the families of the lower classes, the men had the right to eat first and the women ate what was left, to guarantee the maintenance of “manpower” in a family by giving the male workers reasonable food.⁶⁰⁴ People seemed to forget that well-fed women bear healthy children.

The Basel Mission wanted a couple not only to show mutual respect and love at home, but also to demonstrate this in the public sphere.⁶⁰⁵ This demand was decidedly awkward for Chinese. The Bible-women of the American Baptist Church also noticed the difference in behaviour between Westerners and the Chaozhou people. Long (*Ding Ling*) recalls that “...neither did husbands and wives walk together in the street nor allow themselves to be seen in each other’s company.”⁶⁰⁶ Treasure (吴真宝), matron of the *Ming Dao* Women’s School, observed the courtesy shown towards ladies by the American and English gentlemen in Swatow, and remarked that:

(I wish) my country women were treated by their men folks with like respect. I hope within a hundred

糟蹋，被洋人欺负。” “Xing nüxue shizai yi” 《兴女学实在易》 [It is very easy to promote female education], *Chaosheng* 《潮声》, in the first day of the fourth intercalary month, 1908.

599 Fei Xiaotong 费孝通, *Xiangtu zhongguo* 《乡土中国》 [The Country Life in China], Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1998. p.41.

600 Ibid.

601 Ibid., p.42.

602 Aunt Luck, Fielde, *Pagoda Shadows*, p.104.

603 Ibid., p.150.

604 Fielde, *Pagoda Shadows*, p.1. The custom of women eating after men and taking a food of lesser quality was considered a sign of “paganism” by the missionaries. Conversely the symbol of Christian mutual respect was husbands and wives eating together. See Robert, “The ‘Christian Home’”, p.153. Missionaries promoted this idea in Chaozhou, just as they did in other regions of the world. See Porterfield, *Mary Lyon*, p.82.

605 “The Christian couples should show the mutual respect and love to each other, either at home or out doors.” (凡耶稣门生为夫妇者，或在家中，或出外，亦当表明相敬相爱之情。) Article 101, *Regulations of the Basel Mission*, 1874.

606 Fielde, *Pagoda Shadows*, pp.150-151.

years or more, when Christianity shall have come to cleanse out hearts and change our manners, the Chinese wives may walk out with their husbands, and go with them to meetings, and that those who are married may not be ashamed to have others see that they like to talk with each other, and are good friends.⁶⁰⁷

The Bible-women Long and Speed (Lu Kuai, 陆快) tried to put Adele Fielde's instructions that a Christian couple should show their respect and love for each other in the public sphere into practice. After they became Christians, Long and her husband, Yao Zong (姚宗), attended chapel together. She kept in mind that, in the beginning, God made a man and his wife to be company for each other.⁶⁰⁸ Speed also ate with her husband and walked with him to church. But she was scolded by a woman who told her that she ought to be ashamed of herself for violating the local customs. Speed replied to her that:

Marriage was instituted by God himself, and that my own marriage was arranged for me by the elders of my family; and if my husband and myself were ashamed of having been married, then we should fail in piety and in filial duty, for we would disesteem the ordinance of God and the decision of our elders.

She went on to ask her:

If it was better for a man to go beside his wife and mother in the street, or to lead along a courtesan as so many men are proud to do, because that shows that they have money to spend. When one is ashamed of what is right, it will not be long before one is proud of doing wrong.⁶⁰⁹

Long and Speed's words reveal how they could use elements of Confucian ethics to defend the new choices they were making. Long attributed this to the "company" of husband and wife made by God, namely an equal relationship. Speed focused on the perfection of the marriage instituted by God and arranged by the elders of her family.

Models for Virtuous Women

Female missionaries everywhere were careful not to encourage too much independence and freedom among their female converts.⁶¹⁰ In China, Majorie King notes that missionaries in the Christian schools confirmed female subordination to men by discouraging women from working outside the home and concentrating on improving their traditional roles in a patriarchal system.⁶¹¹ What was the situation in Chaozhou?

All three Protestant missions were concerned about the guiding role of the husband in relation to his wife. The ABM folksong "On Marriage" says "the husband is his wife's guide" (夫是妻纲). One of

607 Miss Fielde was writing in a magazine article printed in Boston in 1888, see Helen Norton Stevens, *Memorial Biography*, p.120.

608 Fielde, *Pagoda Shadows*, p.150.

609 Stevens, *Memorial Biography*, p.121.

610 For instance, Fidelia Fiske, a woman missionary educated at Mount Holyoke, was critical of what she perceived to be the desire for a mastery of men expressed by Nestorian women, and she urged these Nestorian women to be more, not less, submissive to their husbands. Porterfield, *Mary Lyon*, pp.82-3, something also referred to by Robert, "The 'Christian Home'", p.152. She emphasized the Christian virtue of humility as a model for women's behaviour, and a wife's submission to her husband should be based on affection rather than coercion.

611 Marjorie King, "Exporting Femininity", pp.117-136.

the EPM regulations reads: “The husband is his wife’s guide, just as Christ is the guide of the Church”.⁶¹² In 1916, Wan Enhong, a catechist who worked for the Basel Mission, wrote: “The man is a woman’s head, he exercises authority (管理) over the woman”.⁶¹³ The EPM required that “the wife should be subordinate to her husband according to the Lord’s command...she should be submissive to her husband in everything just as the whole Church of Salvation should be submissive to Christ”.⁶¹⁴ Both the ABM and the Basel Mission stressed that the wife should be the helpmeet of her husband in their family. The folksong “On Marriage” says, “a wife should assist her husband with great reverence”. When Wan Enhong said: “The wife should be her husband’s assistant”, he meant “not only physically, but that she also should take care of her husband wholeheartedly in spirit”.⁶¹⁵ Such adjurations reflect the idea of “female piety” which permeated the Victorian period, when women were believed by evangelicals to have a more moral and submissive nature than men. Women seemed especially suited to providing children with moral instruction and being the ‘glue’ which held the family together in a time of social upheaval.⁶¹⁶

The woman missionaries went beyond simply promoting the idea of “the husband guiding the wife, the wife submitting to and serving the husband”, they actually stressed the self-denial and self-sacrifice of a Christian wife. Porterfield’s research on India indicates that the belief in the importance of women’s devotion to patriarchal family structures was something which missionaries and Hindus held in common.⁶¹⁷ In an introduction to the book *Memoir of Mrs Lucy T. Lord, of the Chinese Baptist Mission*, William Dean wrote that he regarded Mrs Lord as a model of a missionary wife:

Those who labor to render their home a heaven, and their husband happy by lightening his cares, training his children, soothing his sorrow, sympathizing in his success, and lending their counsel and co-operation in his duties, may be said, in the highest sense, to perform the missionary work of a missionary’s wife.⁶¹⁸

The missionary wife and mother was regarded as the core of a Christian home, being the “glue” which held the family together in a time of social upheaval,⁶¹⁹ and this attribute was also expected of the women in the new Christian family. Speed, a Bible-woman trained by Adele M. Fielde in 1870s, revealed her ideas about the local Christian family:

A family is like a tub,⁶²⁰ it cannot be one unless all the parts are in place. The hoops support the staves, and the staves support the hoops; and if either portion fails in its duty, the whole is scattered. It is only when each member is staunch, firm and in correct position, that the household is complete. The wife and mother is like [sic] the hoops of the tub, when she fails to hold her proper place there is a breaking up of the whole.

612 Article 372, “夫为妇纲，犹基督为会纲”，*Constitution of the Chaohui Presbyterian Church*, 1907.

613 Wan Enhong, “Virtuous models”, p.3.

614 Article 372, “妇从主命，当顺其夫。……教会全体，会服基督。妇凡事服夫，亦宜如是”，*Constitution of the Chaohui Presbyterian Church*, 1907.

615 “为肉身爱来帮手，为灵魂更过爱合心来关顾。” See Wan Enhong, “Virtuous models”, p.3.

616 Robert, “The ‘Christian Home’”, p.137.

617 Porterfield, *Mary Lyon*, p.88.

618 Lucy T. Lord, Edward Clemens Lord, *Memoir of Mrs Lucy T. Lord, of the Chinese Baptist Mission*, Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1854. Introduction by William Dean, as quoted in Dana Robert, *American Women Mission*, p.73.

619 Robert, “The ‘Christian Home’”, p.137.

620 A utensil made of wooden planks used mainly for taking a bath. It is called “*Jiao tong*” (脚桶) in Cha Zhou dialect.

She should, therefore, be honoured for her usefulness.⁶²¹

The gender division which demanded that the wife sacrifice herself for her husband by taking care of the household, thereby allowing her husband to pursue success in his career and in society, can be dated back to the Industrial Revolution, when evangelical Christians saw men and women as having essentially different natures. The man's proper sphere was the world of work, in which he earned wages. The woman's sphere, on the other hand, took her out of the competition for wages by centering her in the home.⁶²² The ABM underscored the self-sacrifice of wife to husband the most, representing the mid-nineteenth century ethic of the middle-class American women which has been called "The Cult of True Womanhood" by Barbara Welter. This ideal was characterized by the cardinal virtues of "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity."⁶²³ It is understandable that not a few woman missionaries who taught in the Christian schools at the turn of the century affirmed female subordination to men by discouraging Chinese women from working outside the home and confirming their traditional roles in a patriarchal system.⁶²⁴

The self-sacrifice of a Christian wife serving the achievements of her husband was very similar to what the Confucian gentry required of a wife in a male-dominated society. But why should a Christian wife comply? In 1916, Wan Enhong of the Basel Mission paraphrased the ideas which were prevalent among the common people: "Because women are weak intrinsically, they cannot stand up and take charge of anything".⁶²⁵ He agreed with this. He carried the matter further, stressing the significance of the husband honouring his wife: "The wife has prestige if her husband is together with her/supports her."⁶²⁶ This tied in well with the dictum "A wife's honour increases as her husband's position rises" (妻以夫贵), which was so deeply rooted in the minds of the Chinese in the past and even still is nowadays.

The ABM and the Basel Mission sought justification in the same scriptures when discussing a woman's virtues. In 1916 Wan Enhong based his analysis on Proverbs 31:10-29. Sixty-two years later, Lu Renmin, a Baptist minister in Hong Kong, did so too, referring to "each word of the Proverbs as a precious gem of pearl and jade (字字珠玑), a mirror for the women of the future generations to treasure...as precious as a cup of cool water to a thirsty man."⁶²⁷ The ideas propagated by the ABM and Basel Mission had an exceptionally long life.

Within a manner which greatly resembled the teachings of Confucian ethics, the harmony of the couple was promoted by both the Protestant and Roman Catholic missions in China. "On the Couple" in *First Steps in the True Doctrine* (真道入门) says a couple should suit each other well (合宜), so as to

621 Stevens, *Memorial Biography*, p.121.

622 Robert, "The 'Christian Home'", p.136.

623 Ibid., p.139.

624 King, "Exporting Femininity, Not Feminism", pp.117-136; Robert, "The 'Christian Home'", p.155.

625 "因为女人生来就系软弱, 自己唔出得头来做乜嘅事。" Wan Enhong, "Virtuous models", p.3.

626 "丈夫系还在, 妇女就有面。俗话讲, 一日有夫千日贵。丈夫系唔在, 妇女就好唔方便。" Ibid.

627 *Xianggang jinxinjiaobui funi liushi zhounian jnian tekan* 《香港浸信教会妇女部六十周年纪念特刊》 [Special Issue on the Women Council of the Baptist Church in Hong Kong], Hong Kong: Hong Kong Baptist Church, 1978. p.5.

inherit eternal mutual blessings.⁶²⁸ The folksong “On Marriage” sang about how “bound by a common cause to live till an old age, they (the couple) find each other congenial and cling to one another as glue”.⁶²⁹ The Basel Mission even passed a regulation to guarantee the harmony of a Christian couple. It read: “Harmony is of great significance between husband and wife, thus they should restrain themselves when they come to disagreement in opinion. They should not burst with anger and curse each other. If harmony is lost between a couple, then the pastor, evangelist, or elder should instruct them leniently and soberly, persuading them to get along well again with each other. If the couple do not follow the instruction, still keep quarreling, then it would be better to dismiss them from the Holy Church (圣会)”.⁶³⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a perspective on the changes in attitude to marriage in Chaozhou. The Protestant and the Roman Catholic missions shared the same themes. When the American, Scottish,⁶³¹ German and French missionaries entered this region in the mid-nineteenth century, they tried to institutionalize contractual marriage among the first two generations of converts and then created a religious environment in which the younger church members could internalize the notion of covenant marriage. The spread of “Christian marriage” was a significant cultural revolution in China.

However, the emphases in each mission were different. The Basel Mission, the English Presbyterian Mission and the French Roman Catholic Mission each tolerated the presence of concubines but in different ways. The Basel Mission and the EPM accepted men who already had concubines before their conversion as church members but the French Roman Catholic Mission accepted the concubines only in an all-Christian family. Another difference is found in the way the three missions allowed for the dismissal of a concubine. The Basel Mission deemed that it was up to the husband to decide. The EPM gave rights to the concubine and the French Roman Catholic Mission left this choice to the principal wife. These differences can be explained chiefly by the different views Roman Catholics and Protestants had on marriage. In all churches, monogamy was seen as essential to divinely instituted marriage, but in the Roman Catholic Church marriage was and is seen as one of the seven sacraments and confirmed in Heaven. This belief made divorce impossible, not just sinful as it is regarded in the Protestant churches. The different views of Roman Catholics and Protestants on marriage seem to have led the Roman Catholics to value the first marriage, including the wife, higher than the others. When it is all said and done, it is not surprising that the Basel Mission gave priority to the man’s decision, because its missionaries were known for their patriarchal outlook. The EPM showed more sympathy to the concubine as the weaker party who suffered most from the concubinage.

628 “同嗣永生之福者”, Dean, *First Steps in the True Doctrine*, “On the Couple”.

629 “一体相关同白首, 情投意合若胶然”, “On Marriage”, *Hymns for Worshipping the True Living God*, no.91.

630 Article 104, *Regulations of the Basel Mission*, 1874.

631 Most missionaries of the EPM came from Scotland.

More research is needed to understand the details.

Hu Weiqing has complained that, “in modern China, the churches who took female emancipation as their own responsibility did not achieve real equality between both sexes within the Christian communities.”⁶³² He might have been expecting too much of the churches. What the woman missionaries taught the local women was a particular type of femininity, not feminism.⁶³³ On the basis of the common ground requiring women’s submission to male authority, the emancipation which the Protestant and Roman Catholic missions brought to the Hoklo and Hakka women helped arouse their self-awareness and assisted them in raising their self-esteem about their position in the household.⁶³⁴ The time was not yet ripe for equal rights.

632 Hu, “The Mode of Misery”, p.303.

633 King, “Exporting Femininity”, pp.117-136. See Robert, “The ‘Christian Home’”, p.155.

634 Jessie Lutz had mentioned this point, see *Hakka Chinese*, p.184.