
A HUNDRED YEARS OF CHINA METHODISM

WALTER N. LACY



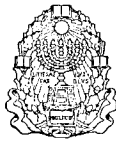
ABINGDON-COKESBURY PRESS

New York • Nashville

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TO MY FATHER *and* MOTHER

who, from 1887 to 1925, labored for the building of the
church in China

whose mortal remains lie buried in Chinese soil
in that sacred cemetery in

Foochow

and whose influence led their five children
also to have a share in the development of
The Methodist Church in China

FOREWORD

"CONSIDER THE PAST AND YOU WILL KNOW THE FUTURE," SAYS A CHINESE proverb. "The past must live or else the future dies," R. P. Shuler once wrote in *The Upper Room*. "The fountains are in the yesterdays. The streams root back into the mists and clouds. They flow today, but the showers fell in the other days."

In September, 1947, the Methodist Church in China marked its centennial. Its fountains were in the yesterdays, the showers that brought it to the fruitage of today fell in days now gone; its healing and life-giving streams which are flowing today root back into mists and clouds. We dare not forget these; they must be made known to our children and our children's children.

Perhaps they are right who say we should look forward rather than backward. It is just as true today as it was when Frank D. Gamewell penned these words in China twenty-seven years ago: "Prospect, not retrospect, is the demand of present world conditions, and yet in all our planning there must be the backward as well as the forward look." The Methodist Church in China had to live a century before it could face the problems and developments of its second century. If any other excuse is necessary before I tell this story of my church in the land that was so long my home, it is that

For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.

I have not written this book to be stacked on the shelves of historical libraries. I have written it to preserve for the church of the coming centuries some of the significant facts and records of the first century of China Methodism. I have written it for those Chinese and Americans and other Methodists and other churchmen who want the inspiration of what has been done in order to do what remains to be done. I want the reader to see that the church that was brought from the United States to China in sections is now a united church at home in China, a church which is Chinese, though a part of a world-wide church.

John W. Bricker once said: "Only about one tenth of one per cent of what happens ever gets into the history books." Doubtless he is right, for many things must have happened through this century that are not even

mentioned in my unused material. I have not tried to make this a factual compendium but rather to select the significant and typical in order to give an impression of the general movement. Burton J. Hendrick, in the prologue to *Bulwark of the Republic*, says: "Anyone who embarks on a survey of one hundred and fifty years finds an abundance of material." And so I have found it. To keep the story within the limits of this volume I have had to deprive my readers of many a fascinating incident and many an item, for the omission of which I may be criticized by those who have shared in the events. So many missionaries and so many Chinese, whose names are not mentioned, have had a part in the building of this church. They are as immortal as any, and I wish it had been possible to include a complete roster of the noble roll.

R. S. Maclay, that great Methodist pioneer builder in China, said in an address which he made in New York when the Methodist Episcopal Church had been in China just twenty-five years:

I am not here to tell the story of our struggles and victories in China, but I may be allowed to state that when the history of our China mission is written, it will constitute one of the brightest pages in the glorious records of our church, a page over which the good of all lands and ages will linger with delight.

The seventy-five years that have passed since these words were spoken have so fully borne out this prediction that I believe this book is justified.

I have not solved one problem that has perplexed me throughout the preparation of this work: the orthography of proper names, personal and geographical. The Chinese whose names appear in the story of the earlier years have disappeared from the later pages, and hence their names as then spelled have outlived them. The national language spelling, as used in later years, has commonly been used in the names of men and women now living. Exceptions even to this occur, as, for example, in the names of Bishop Z. T. Kaung and James Ding, who are known to many in the United States by the local spelling of their names. One matter of uniformity has, however, been followed in the spelling of personal names: the given names are all spelled with capitalization of both names, separated by a hyphen—thus altering, to that extent at least, the quoted orthography.

Geographical locations, on the other hand, have outlived the spelling of their names, sometimes two or three times. The present official postal spelling would mean nothing to the hosts of people who have through the decades given to and prayed for the work, for example, at Lekdu, now spelled Lutu, or at Nanping, more familiarly and widely known as Yen-ping—city and conference—and before that as the long-bing field of the Foochow Conference. It has seemed best, therefore, to follow the line of least resistance, and in general to use the contemporary spelling. A cross

FOREWORD

index to alternative spelling of geographical names has therefore been provided at the end of the book.

It is a source of real regret that I could not find certain records of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, covering quite a period of years. Many apparent omissions in the story of the China Mission and Conference are due to that loss.

Of the many people who have helped me with this book, all too few can be named here.

I owe a very great deal of gratitude to my wife for the many times her memory of events and persons served to supplement or check facts and data before I dared to write them down. But to an even larger degree I appreciate her willingness over the past ten years to devote our vacations to this purpose, making the best of her time while I explored library stacks, or copying extracts for me from dusty volumes, and then during those days when I was putting on paper those findings amid the quiet surroundings of our vacation spots. And she has borne with me through these years while I have devoted most of my Sunday evenings to typing, editing, and revising what had been written.

Miss Myrtle Cline, research librarian at the Board of Missions library, and later at Union Theological Seminary, New York, has given most valuable aid. Again and again I have had to ask her to get information on some point or check conflicting statements on my cards. In every case she has not only dug out the material, if it was to be had at all, sweating sometimes in attic stacks in the heat of summer, but always anxious to have me call on her again and again, and never failing in her encouragement. The accuracy of many an item in this book is due to Miss Cline.

My special thanks must be expressed to the librarians and their assistants at Baldwin-Wallace University; Mount Union College; Ohio Wesleyan University; the Methodist Historical Library, Boston; the Missionary Research Library, New York; the former Library of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Nashville; the former Library of the Board of Foreign Missions of The Methodist Episcopal Church, New York; the Library of the Division of Foreign Missions of The Methodist Church, New York; the Burton Historical Library of the Detroit Public Library; and the Cleveland Public Library. Their willingness and co-operation have been a very great help in finding the wealth of material that they made available.

My thanks are also expressed to the following persons who have generously loaned precious manuscripts in their possession: the late Mrs. Spencer Lewis; the Rev. Lloyd F. Worley; and the librarian of the former Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Also to Mrs. C. F. S. White, for the gift of the diary and considerable personal correspondence belong-

ing to her father-in-law, Moses White, from which I have quoted in spite of his statement written nearly a year before he sailed for Foochow, and after several weeks had passed without any entry in his diary: "Another reason why I have neglected writing is that I have a great horror of the book-making mania of the present age and I am unwilling to have anything I may write printed after I am dead for the sake of making another book."

The following persons have read much or all of the manuscript while it has been in preparation; and without their continued encouragement, their frank criticisms, and their valued suggestions, I would hardly have dared offer it to the publishers: The Revs. Frank T. Cartwright, J. W. Cline, C. B. Rappe, Hubert L. Sone, E. M. Stowe, Louis C. Wright; Bishops John Gowdy, Paul B. Kern, Carleton Lacy, Ralph A. Ward; and Dr. C. V. Thomas.

To the following persons for reviewing and criticizing certain sections on which I needed their help I am also extremely grateful: The Revs. Perry O. Hanson, J. C. Hawk, C. S. Heininger, F. P. Jones, F. Olin Stockwell; and Mr. Paul P. Wiant.

Mrs. George F. Fitch wrote the section on the Epworth League, and Mrs. John Gowdy the section on Bishop Bashford, both at my request; both graciously permitted me to edit, abbreviate, and supplement what they wrote. To them both my appreciation is greater than I have been able to express to them personally.

Having expressed my inadequate thanks to many and valued critics and assistants, I am willing to let the book convey as best it may the story of three missions from the United States which in a hundred years have become a church at home in China. This panorama of achievement, which I have seen while I have been writing it, is presented in the following pages

Lest we forget, lest we forget!

WALTER N. LACY

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INTRODUCTION

IN THE CHANCEL OF A METHODIST CHURCH IN CLEVELAND IS A BEAUTIFUL rose window in shades of blue. Another window in the same church is varicolored, and depicts six scenes, each different but each forming a unit in the symbolism. The glass of this window has been colored with pigments externally applied, rich in shading and harmony, but varying in intensity and permanency. In contrast, the rich blue of the rose window has been fused into the glass. The rare beauty of this window results from the fact that the coloring is not an externally applied stain, but is equally innate throughout all sections; the pigment which was introduced into the molten flux was extraneous to it but became an inherent part of the glass.

For the past century China has been at the mercy of foreign nations. The Opium War, the Boxer attack, with the treaties which resulted, and the invasion by Japan were only more notable manifestations of these impacts from outside. Japan, the United States, and the European powers have been for a hundred years using diplomacy and force, commerce and intrigue, to secure for themselves something which they have coveted and which they felt they could get from China.

To a nation which had a history, a literature, and the beginnings of democratic government when Jesus was telling his people to seek first the kingdom of God, there came younger nations which had grown faster, seeking gain for themselves. Whether Anglo-Saxon or Muscovite, Nipponese or Latin, the nations of the world during the past century have looked to China as a field for acquisition.

But simultaneously most of these nations have had something to offer to this race which had always been so rich. Opium was already being supplied to China when the war of 1840-42 took Hong Kong away from China, and the narcoticization of the country has continued to this day. And the land that had invented gunpowder was given firearms, grenades, and airplanes with which to defend itself against the aggression of those nations which had outstripped it in the means and the will to warfare.

Fortunately, however, the Western nations offered with the other hand the roots of peace and good will. The greedy merchant and the covetous statesman were accompanied by the missionary who came to China to preach good will and to share with the Chinese the blessings which the Christian church had brought to those who lived on either side of the Atlantic Ocean. The people of Europe and North America have, for nearly a hundred and fifty years, been giving to the people of the Orient the best that they have,

sometimes, it is true, tainted with their own faults and idiosyncrasies, and flavored with their creeds and rituals, but nevertheless given with the sincere belief that the church of Christ, as it had been built in the so-called Christian countries, was needed and would be welcome in those lands in the life of which it could become a part.

During the past century China has gone through fire. But for a hundred years now American Methodism has been pouring into this changing nation the rich blue of its life; the molten flux which the century has produced has had the spirit of the Wesleys fused into it.

From the landing of American Methodist missionaries in Foochow and Shanghai, with the spread of the church through Kiangsi and Anhwei to Chengtu and beyond, through Shantung, radiating from Peking, and on to Kalgan—

From missions whose policies and detailed programs were prescribed by board offices in New York and Nashville, to the election by the Chinese of Chinese to be bishops and administrators of the ten conferences of the church in China—

From the founding of a little day school in Foochow through schools for boys and girls to the colleges and professional schools, and on to its interdenominational co-operation in great universities—

From the handling out of pills and salve by the missionaries, to the self-supporting, well-equipped hospitals, where surgery, ophthalmology and dental care could be combined with the healing of the soul—

From the private publication of three hundred copies of Matthew's Gospel and the purchase of a font of double pica Chinese type, through the local printing presses in nearly every conference to the establishment of a great Publishing House, the publication of a *Christian Advocate*, and a share in the translation of the Bible—

From the renunciation by Sia Sek-Ong of any financial support from American sources, through contributions of water chestnuts and sacks of beans to help support the institutions of the church, to the day when a Chinese layman could say, "Now the people give to the Lord"—

From the day that Isabel Atwater White gave her life for the women of China, and every one on the streets of Nanchang knew the name and spirit of Dr. Ida Kahn, to the time when the women of East China sent a woman missionary to the prewar frontier of Yunnan—

From the renting of a fifteen-by-fifty-foot room for a chapel to the \$325,000 church with its neon-lighted cross where two thousand people found help and comfort daily—

From the time when churches had Epworth Leagues before they had young people to the great student conferences on the surf-beaten island of Pootoo—