

The *Dramatic* Story of Chinese Sabbathkeepers

Here is disclosed one of the most ASTOUNDING episodes of history. It is like reliving the experiences of the judges and prophets of old!

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Good News, December 1955, pages 5-7

(reprinted in the *Good News*, Nov-Dec 1990, pages 15-18)

London, England

FOR SEVEN years I have wanted to write this little-known inspiring drama of human experience. *Until now* I have never been able to uncover all the records which I knew must exist.

Thanks to the British Museum Library and sellers of rare oriental books in London, I am able to give you these facts from the records.

The Mystery Begins

This dramatic account commences with the year 1813. It begins in a small village some little distance from the important city of Canton, China. Here the chief character in the drama, Hung-sui-tshuen, was born. For ease of pronunciation, I shall call him Hung.

Hung came from a royal family. His father and mother, as well as many other relatives, had previously fled to South China as a result of the Manchu invasion.

By the time Hung was 16 he had become proficient in the usual course of Chinese education. At 18 years of age he was appointed schoolmaster of his native village by unanimous acclamation of the townspeople.

Five years later he was given a set of books. Translated into English, the title of these books was "Good Words for Exhorting the Age." At the time, the books appeared of little value to Hung.

The next year, 1837, Hung lost an advancement in his scholastic rank because his Manchu superiors were jealous of his ability and fearful of his ancestral background. This loss so upset him that he became quite ill.

The Manchus, remember, were Mongolian warlords who seized China-now they are the Communist overlords who rule China.

During the period of recuperation, Hung had an extraordinary vision. A record of the vision is preserved in Theodore Hamberg's booklet, "The Visions of Hung-sui-tshuen." Hamberg was a missionary of the Basle Evangelical Society to China (a Swiss institution).

In the vision Hung was seemingly transported to the presence of a great Sovereign Ruler. There he was confronted by an old woman-women at that time were regarded lower than animals-who said to him, "Thou dirty man, why hast thou kept company with yonder people and defiled thyself? I must now wash thee clean." He was then, in vision, taken to a river and washed in the water. After this he was conducted into a large building where his heart and other inward parts were removed and replaced by new ones! Then he was given a sword, a seal, and fruit to eat which he found sweet to his palate.

Upon awakening, he was astounded at the vision, but could not determine its meaning. When Hung fully regained his health, he began to reform his conduct as best he knew.

Hung-sui-tshuen continued as a village schoolmaster for several years more, giving the vision no further thought. Then, one day, his cousin Le searched through Hung's bookcase and noted the unusual contents of the volumes "Good Words for Exhorting the Age." In them were a number of whole chapters of the Bible, according to the translation of a Dr. Morison; many sermon-essays on varied Bible texts; and other statements founded on Scripture.

Le told his cousin Hung what he had found. Hung then began to look through the books which had lain untouched on the bookshelves for seven long years. He was amazed to find that in the quoted chapters from the Bible there was a partial explanation of the vision he had received six years before.

Discovering the Bible

In those parts of the Scripture which he possessed, Hung found the Heavenly Father described-the great Sovereign Ruler revealed in his vision years before. Then he read of Jesus, the "elder brother of many brethren." In our versions it is rendered: "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29) . He learned that Jesus was sent as Saviour and as messenger. He read that one needs to repent and be baptized to obtain the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 38) . From these verses he understood the meaning of being washed in water and of having his heart and inward parts renewed.

Hung and his cousin Le then baptized one another. They prayed to God, promised not to worship evil spirits, and cast away their idols. Hung, being a literary man, composed poetic verses to explain his conversion to his friends:

"When our transgressions high as heavens rise
How well to trust in Jesus' full atonement;
We follow not the demons, we obey the holy precepts,
Worshipping alone one God."

After destroying his [idols](#) in the little school in which he taught, Hung and his few friends were forced to flee into the interior of China. He preached what little he knew as he journeyed into the south-central provinces of China. Once again he became a school teacher (between 1845 and 1846).

Visits a Missionary

At the close of 1846 Hung journeyed to Canton after hearing that a Christian missionary from the West resided there. He studied there under Mr. Roberts, the missionary, for almost a month, and read new portions of the Bible. Young missionaries from abroad, also studying under Mr. Roberts, were jealous of Hung's talents and earnestness. They brought about his removal! Hung left the city somewhat saddened.

Returning to south-central China, Hung found that the number of villagers who listened to him and were baptized soon numbered almost 2000. They had to form congregations among themselves, and became known as "the congregations of the worshippers of God." For short, they were dubbed "God-worshippers."

Continuous study of the Bible convinced Hung that his people should not smoke tobacco or opium-which the British were selling to the Chinese-that they should refrain from intoxicating drinks except under special circumstances, and that the [Sabbath](#) should be observed on the *seventh day*. The missionaries were quite displeased about the fact that "the Sabbath is observed not upon the same day as in Europe, theirs being the Saturday of our reckoning."

Hung further noticed that [Jesus didn't rise: on Sunday morning](#), but "three days after his death"!

In reading the Old Testament books of Moses-the books of the prophets were not available to him in Chinese-Hung was convinced that God had given His people a *calendar*. The only different calendar of which Hung knew was the Roman calendar brought to China by the Jesuits. Since the Jesuit Catholics claimed to be Christians, and used the Bible, he thought they also must have the God-given calendar. He adopted it. Consequently, he could not understand the [annual festivals of God](#), which are based upon the [Sacred Calendar](#).

Think, for a moment, of the earnestness of these Gentile folk who lacked large portions of God's revelations. How *thankful* we ought to be to have the *entire* Word of God whenever we need to use it. And remember, most of those whom Hung baptized *could not even read Chinese!* They had to be taught orally each Sabbath-and that mainly from the Old Testament.

The Marriage Ceremony

The number of new converts steadily grew. Marriage ceremonies had to be performed. Hung examined the Bible *and found the answer!* Here is a description of their ceremony:

“When the bridal party are all met together, they proceed to the church . . . and after many prayers and a severe examination of the bride and bridegroom’s theological tenets, THE MINISTER JOINS THEIR RIGHTS HANDS TOGETHER, and when each have accepted the other, pronounces a concluding benediction. . . . Divorce is not only not permitted, but actually unknown or thought of.” (From Lin-Le’s book, *Ti-Ping Tien-Kwoh*, page 317).

How exactly like the marriage ceremonies God has ordained in His Church today!

Does not this demonstrate the guidance of God?

Beside these changes, the Chinese converts of Hung ceased to practice the binding of women’s feet, began to lay aside the custom of polygamy, ceased to deal in the slave trade, and became obedient to the laws of God as revealed to Israel through Moses.

In order to be converted, they taught as follows:

“They”-the converts--“must kneel down in God’s presence, and ask Him to forgive their sins.” Following baptism, the form of which Hung did not understand perfectly. “they must continue daily to supplicate Divine favour, and the Holy Spirit’s assistance to renew their hearts, saying grace at every meal, keeping holy the Sabbath day, and [OBEYING ALL GOD’S COMMANDMENTS](#), especially avoiding [idolatry](#). They may then be accounted the children of God. . . .” (From Lin-Le’s book, page 315.)

The Next Great Step

To begin with, Hung and his converts were not fully acquainted with the instructions found in the New Testament. They had to be guided mainly by Moses’ instruction found in the law. But notice what they did:

When the prosperity and learning of the God-worshippers was noised about the countryside, many in distress sought the protection of these Sabbathkeepers. Whole families of afflicted and destitute came to them, as well as outlaws who fled from the power of the oppressive Manchu dynasty. Once again Hung looked into the Bible. He saw the example of David. “And everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him (David) ; and he became a captain over them” (1 Sam. 22:2).

Hung therefore became a captain over his fellow Chinese He instructed them according to Moses’ law and punished offenders accordingly. *These Chinese malcontents*, like those of

David, *were not converts*, but merely willing to do as Hung instructed because they disliked the Manchu overlords.

Next, Hung remembered the sword that he had seen in the vision. He read in the Bible of “The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon” (Judges 7:14, 20). He felt responsible for his people as did the *judges* in Israel of old.

Here is what Dr. Bridgeman wrote of the next turn of events: “Their government is a theocracy, the development apparently of what is believed by them to be a new dispensation. As in the case of the Israelites under Moses, they regard themselves as directed by one who has been raised up by the Almighty to be the executor of His will on earth.” (Page 211 of Lin-Le’s work.)

By 1851 the malcontents had increased by tens of thousands. They proclaimed Hung-sui-tshuen the ruler of a new dynasty administering a heavenly or Celestial Kingdom. Hung tried to follow the pattern of David and Solomon, mentioned in I Chron. 29:29: “Then Solomon sat upon *the throne of the Eternal*, as king instead of David his father, and prospered.”

The new dynasty was entitled the “Tai-ping,” meaning the kingdom of “our Sovereign,” the One who created heaven and earth.

The malcontents, to protect their domain, were at first conscripted for defense. Then Hung read in the law what Moses said: “When thou goest forth to battle against thine enemies” the enemies of the Tai-pings already persecuted them for religious and political reasons—“the officers shall speak unto the people, saying: What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house . . . What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? let him go and return unto his house” (Deut. 20: 1, 5 , 8) . Hung therefore made army service a *voluntary* matter!

The soldiers were instructed to pay the country people for whatever food and clothing they required on their journeys. Vast areas of China were freed from the Manchu oppressors. By 1860 the movement gained such power that it attracted international recognition. Several thousands became faithful converts and upwards of 50,000,000 Chinese were living in prosperity and at peace under the Tai-ping administration of God’s laws.

The Hand of the Jesuits

In abolishing the idols of the country, the Tai-pings naturally destroyed the images of Mary and the saints, as well as those of the Buddhists. The ire of the Jesuits was aroused. They persuaded the French forces in China to support the ruling Manchu dynasty with whom they had previously been quarrelling.

Next, the British and American missionaries- who had obtained barely 1500 converts through years of work-were jealous of the fact that so many people were turning to the truth without their missionary activity. The missionaries began a deliberate campaign to malign the Tai-ping.

They accused them of rejecting the Bible, of denying Jesus Christ, of wanton slaughter of innocent victims. The true reports of honest missionaries were squelched! British commercial agents, interested in selling opium to the Chinese, became fearful of the loss of revenue.

REMEMBER THIS WAS THE ERA OF THE OPIUM WARS-when foreigners, particularly the British, were seeking to dominate China by forcing them to buy opium.

The British and other foreign elements forced the Manchus to sign treaties legalizing the opium trade. This placed the armies of the Tai-pings in a serious predicament. The British assured the Chinese revolutionists that they would remain neutral and only protect British property from destruction. In reality the British sent arms to the Manchus, and the Manchus imported arms in ships flying the American flag!

During all this time the converts of Hung were publishing the Bible as best they could. Time and again they implored their Christian White Brethren across the sea to send them missionaries to instruct them better. Most missionaries refused to go.

What a condemnation of our people- Israel-the people chosen for a job we have refused to perform! When our people could have brought the truth, they refused to do so. And when we did send missionaries, they brought nothing but a Babel of confusion to the Gentiles.

A Plea Refused

The Tai-ping also sought to trade with the British. They sent an army to Shanghai to open negotiations with their professing Christian white brethren. Said the leader of the Tai-ping regiments to the British, American, Portuguese and other foreigners in Shanghai: "I came to Shanghai to make a treaty in order to see us connected together by trade and commerce; I did not come for the purpose of fighting with you. Had I at once commenced to attack the city and kill the people, that would have been the same as the members of one family fighting among themselves." (Page 283 of Lin-Le's work.)

Remember that these Chinese did not know the kind of Christianity professed by the Western World!

The extract, which I have just quoted from a longer letter, was sent to the foreign authorities in Shanghai for the following reason: When the Tai-ping, who assumed the British were neutral, came to Shanghai, they were fired upon by the British. According to a correspondent of the *North China Herald*, "They [the Chinese Tai-pings] waved [he hand, begged our officers not to fire, and *stood there motionless*, wishing to open communications and explain their object!"

Retreating for safety, the Tai-pings encountered a missionary, Mr. Milne. In order not to have him injured in any battle, they sent guards with him to the city of Shanghai. After delivering Mr. Milne safely to his white brethren, the guards were shot down by British soldiers upon the city well!

A Great Mistake

Hung could not understand the action of the Christian nations from across the sea. In sorrow he withdrew from all contact with foreigners, but continued to study the Bible with the faithful.

He permitted his commanders to disperse their armies throughout the walled cities of his domain. The Manchus had been badly defeated and no attack was expected. This-plus a miscalculation of the British and French intentions-proved disastrous.

Although the official government statements from abroad implied that England would remain neutral, the actual deeds perpetrated against the Chinese demonstrated the opposite. The British marshalled the Manchus against the Tai-pings and gradually brought about their retreat and downfall. This short article cannot contain all the information which competent historians have amassed. But, as Gladstone, the British Prime Minister, once said, this action will go down as one of the blackest marks in history against Britain.

As a result of foreign intrigue, the Manchu army and religious persecution, these Chinese Sabbathkeepers, including Hung, perished for their faith. Long after the death of those faithful Chinese to whom God revealed a measure of His truth, the malcontents who had associated with them arose again in rebellion against the Manchus. They called themselves "The Righteous Fists of Harmony"-or "Boxers." Their rebellion- the Boxer rebellion-was aimed at the foreigners and especially missionaries. But the Sabbath and God's laws had long been forgotten by them.

WHY Communism Engulfs China Today

We are reaping the reward of our sins in China today! To the carnal Chinese the European nations seemed unprincipled liars, devoid of every virtue recognized by men! From that time on the spread of the Word of God among the Chinese met with little success. No wonder Communism has engulfed the country.

When thinking of the fate of those Sabbathkeeping Chinese and their ignorant comrades who sought their protection, I am reminded of Paul's exhortation in Hebrews: "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness . . . waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens. . . . And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword. . . . (Of whom the world was NOT WORTHY)" (Hebrews 11 : 32-38.)

How unworthy the world is may be understood by the deliberate falsity of recorded history in describing the Tai-Ping Rebellion.

Missionaries and politicians alike have accused them of committing acts of which only the enemies of the Tai-pings were guilty. The Tai-pings were maligned just as David and his followers were.

Thanks to the cooperation of British booksellers and librarians I am able to give you these true facts now.

“The White Man’s Burden“

The most important summary of this drama of human experience-the book which is the basis for this little-known record-was written by a white man who used a Chinese name, Lin-Le. The work is entitled “Ti Ping Tien Kwoh, the History of the Ti Ping Revolution.” It was published in 1866 in London.

Here is a lesson we must never forget!

How we ought to appreciate what we know of God’s Word! And to realize that this drama was occurring in far-off China when God’s people in America were splitting up as the dying branches of the [Sardis Church Era](#)!

Our own people-Israelites, God’s chosen-refused to restore the truth they received. Our great denominations followed the path of the opium-peddling businessmen. But the Chinese, for 200 years in bondage to the Manchus, looked to the Word of God as best they knew.

“Their laws were framed and already constituted when the New Testament”- in its fulness-
“came into their hands.” (From page 152.)

Perhaps we can now realize the FULL WEIGHT of our responsibility in carrying out the gospel of the Kingdom of God to all nations. God has chosen us-His faithful few in an Israel filled with sin - to carry the LIGHT through radio, television and the printing press to those who abide in darkness.

Let’s shoulder our responsibility and prove that we can carry “the white man’s burden”! ’