

# TO THE PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES

LABOURING AT HONGKONG,  
AND THE FIVE PORTS OF CHINA.

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DEAR BRETHREN,

As the controversy regarding the most proper term to be used as a translation of Elohim and Theos into Chinese, has latterly assumed a new feature, and as we understand some effort is being now made to elicit an expression of opinion in favour of one of the terms contended for, we have deemed it expedient to put on record our view of the question, and to make our brethren acquainted with the present state of the case, previous to their committing themselves to a term which we conceive to be philologically wrong, and which we are sure no man can prove to be philologically right.

This being a matter of such serious moment, viz. the right representation or otherwise of so important a word, before so numerous a people as the Chinese, we trust our brethren will bear with us, while we state the reasons which lead us to reject *Shin*; and, retaining our conviction of the superiority to it of *Te*, or its cognates, shew the steps by which we have been led to the adoption of the term which we now propose, as under all the circumstances of the case the most unobjectionable.

We beg leave first to present before you, the reasons which have induced us to reject *Shin*.

1. *Shin* never has been employed by any Chinese writer to designate God by way of eminence, and would, if so used, in the version of the Scriptures, involve an *absurdity* in the estimation of every well-educated Chinese.

2. The real meaning of *Shin* is *invisible being* or *essence*, and as such is used and understood by the Chinese in the sense of *spirit*. It is applicable as well to the spirit of man, and the living principle in irrational animals and plants, as it is to the highest being of whom the Chinese have any conception. A term, therefore, which is common to all these, cannot convey any idea of *Divine nature*.

3. Although some of the spirits, who are called *Shins* by the Chinese, are worshipped, *Shin* does not necessarily

mean a worshipped being, neither does the use of it convey in itself the notion of divine worship, nor imply that beings so designated ought to be worshipped. Worship with regard to the Shins is an *accident*, not an *essential element*.

4. The term Shin being applied to the spirits of heaven, earth, and man, to invisible beings both good and bad, high and low, honoured or derided, is, in its general acceptation, equivalent to the word *spirit* in western languages. To say, therefore, that there is but one Shin, and no other, that Jehovah knows of no other, and that the devils believe this, is to utter what, according to the meaning of the term, as used and understood by the Chinese, amounts to a falsity.

5. The word Shin, when used in the possessive, as belonging to a person, must according to the *usus loquendi* of the Chinese, be understood of the spirit possessed by that person, and not the god worshipped by him. Hence the phrase "my God" or the "God of Abraham" could not, if Shin were employed, be intelligibly expressed in Chinese, without a circumlocution.

6. The word Shin, when used in connection with sacrificing to the god of a progenitor, must be understood as conveying the idea of sacrificing to the manes of ancestors.

7. The word Shin being the most expressive term in the Chinese language for spirit, whether concrete or abstract, we should, were it used for God by ourselves, or by others, whom we might be unwilling to offend, be deprived of a most useful term in its proper and legitimate acceptation, compared with which no other term in the language is so definite.

8. The word Shin having been rendered spirit by the best European Sinologues, and used in the sense of spirit, by the Roman Catholic writers in China, whose influence throughout the country is more extended than that of Protestants, there is little chance of the latter being able to establish a *usus loquendi*, in favour of their own mode of employing the word, particularly when that mode is denounced by the Chinese themselves as wrong.

On the above grounds, and considering that Theos, though used generically in the New Testament, is, in fact, in one hundred instances to one, a sort of proper name, we feel constrained firmly to remonstrate against the use of Shin for God, and to declare our determination not to adopt a version of the Scriptures in which that term is so employed. Some of us have been for more than two years employed in preparing a revision of the New Testament, which is, as far as



we can make it, philologically correct; the insertion of such a term in it, as a translation of *Theos*, would, we conceive, render the whole work unclassical and contemptible; by which means, our labour would not only be lost, as far as our own making use of it is concerned, but the work would be in our opinion spoiled for any efficient use to others.

The Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society, by their resolution, bearing date November 28, 1848, decided, "That in the best judgment they could form, after due consideration of this subject, it appeared that *Shin* was not the appropriate word to be employed for expressing the Divine name." We were then informed by the Secretary, in coming to this resolution, that there was great unanimity among the members, who had all, as he believed, attentively read the printed documents. The Editorial Superintendent, the Rev. W. C. Mellor, writing under date October 20th, 1849, says, "The Resolution, adopted by the British and Foreign Bible Society, in November, 1848, may still be considered as expressing a correct view of the subject." He adds "that in the terms employed in that Resolution 'the Divine name' was not intended to refer to the name *Jehovah*, nor was the word *Divine* used in the extended sense according to which it is referred by some to a heathen deity or false gods. By the Divine name was intended the name *God*, when used of Him who is called *Jehovah*; and it is hardly necessary to enlarge upon the reasons on which it was thought that *Shin* is not the appropriate term to express this, since one of the principal reasons for such a conclusion is furnished in the admission made by Drs. Boone and Bridgman themselves, that the Chinese have not used *Shin* as the Greeks and Romans used *Theos* and *Deus*, to designate by way of eminence the highest being of whom they have conceived." After this resolution and explanation, we cannot allow ourselves to think that the Bible Society will go back, and adopt a term which they have already rejected in its higher sense, particularly when further admissions are now made by Drs. Boone and Bridgman, which will doubtless lead that influential body to object to the use of *Shin* more strongly than ever.

Having referred to the letter of the Rev. Mr. Mellor, it becomes us now to detail the attempts which have been made in consequence, both by the Delegates and the Shanghai Missionaries, to bring about, if possible, some agreement among the contending parties. Both parties took up very carefully the consideration of the proposition thrown out by the above-named gentleman, to employ one term for false

gods, and another, or the same somewhat modified, for the true God. Thus *Pe Shin*, for that God, and *Shang Shin*, for the high God, came under discussion ; but they were distinctly and unanimously rejected : *Pe Shin*, because it was not idiomatic, and did not mean *the God*, or God by way of eminence. In the passage of Mr. Medhurst's Reply, in which Mr. Mellor met with the phrase, it was not proposed as a genuine Chinese expression, but as one which would, if it had been employed for God by way of eminence by the authors of a certain version, while Shin alone was employed for false gods, have shewn that the authors of it used Shin as the generic for God. But it was not so employed, and could not have been, because the authors would not have deemed it idiomatic Chinese. To the phrase *Shang Shin*, which, to Mr. Mellor, seemed a sort of amalgamation of the two terms, both parties were equally averse. First, because Shang does not in such a connection mean Supreme, but high ; and the phrase, which is Chinese, is used to denote 上帝 *sháng shîn*, the spirits on high, as distinguished from the 下神 *hēa shîn*, spirits below ; in other words, the 天神 *t'heen shîn*, celestial spirits, as opposed to the 地祇 *té k'he*, terrestrial spirits. For an account of these, and the way in which they are used, see *Theology of the Chinese*, pp. 33, 34, 48, 49, 78. Inquiry, page 107, and a tract on the true meaning of the word Shin, page 21. On consulting the above references, it will be perceived that, to use such a term as this would bring us into so close a contact with the Chinese system of superstition, that both parties resolved at once to avoid it : another reason is that it is not monadic, and would not be understood in the monadic sense. The principle of Mr. Mellor's suggestion, however, was taken up and canvassed, so as to ascertain whether it could be complied with in any way. With this view, some suggested the employment of the transferred word Eloah, to be employed in every instance in which the true God was intended, and Shin for false gods. This proposition was fairly before the Delegates, and the whole of the Shanghai Missionaries, for several days, but was on trial rejected as unphilosophical. For in the First Commandment, in John x. 35 ; 1 Corinthians viii. 5, together with 1 Kings xv. 21, 27, it was felt, that the same term ought to be used for God, whether true or false, because the force of the passages mainly depends on the employment of the same term ; this objection would apply to *Shang Shin* also, if used for the true God, and Shin for false gods ; and as



there were many other passages of Scripture in which different terms could not be used, it was agreed, that it would be better to use the same term throughout.

Having been unable to adopt the principle of two terms when the true and when false gods were meant, the Committee of Delegates entered into a familiar conversation, as to what could be done to arrange their differences; when Drs. B. and B. acknowledged that, notwithstanding the term which they had all along contended for was, in their opinion, the most general name that could be obtained for the objects worshipped by the Chinese, yet there were objections to it; one of which they had already admitted in their letter to Mr. Mellor, of March, 1849, viz. that Shin is never used by Chinese writers for God by way of eminence; and another, which they now admit they were not before convinced of, viz. that the word is frequently so used by Chinese writers, that from the context it must be understood to mean *spirit*. From this last use of the word arises, they said, a serious difficulty, viz. that of saying "there is only one Shin;" for should any reader understand it as meaning "there is only one spirit," the affirmation would be false.

To meet this, difficulty Drs. Boone and Bridgman proposed, to put on the title page of the New Testament, and of every tract and book they issued, a definition of the sense in which they used the word, viz. that "they used the word Shin as the general name of all objects of worship. That they never used it in the sense of spirit. The Creator of heaven and earth is the only Shin, whom men should worship. His name is Jehovah." \*

\* Subsequently the following definition in Chinese has been proposed; but, as it does not affect the principle under discussion, we leave the above English definition as it was at first presented.

此書內神字非泛指  
也謂人所拜之神耳  
若是有神人所弗拜  
者此書內弗稱神也  
夫創造天地之神曰  
爺和發舍此而外人  
皆不當拜之矣因爺  
和發云除我外爾不  
可有別神也  
此書內神字有濃淡  
之別其濃者即係爺  
和發之神其淡者乃  
爺和發不容我等所  
拜之神也

On this suggestion being made, it occurred to the opposite party, that, if Shin could be used with a definition, so could Te. For Te is undoubtedly employed for God by way of eminence in the Chinese classics and standard writers, while it is also used for some other worshipped beings. If it could be right, therefore, to use Shin with a definition, to the effect that Shin is not used in the sense of spirit (in which sense the Chinese do use it), but as a general name for all worshipped beings (to which the Chinese do not restrict it) and for the former and ruler of all things (in which acceptance the Chinese never employ it, and to which use of the word they object as soon as it is propounded;) it would be at least as right to employ Te with a definition, to the effect, that Te is not used for deceased emperors (for which the Chinese do use it), but for God by way of eminence, the former and ruler of all things (in which sense the Chinese do use it), with a further extension not only to a few, but to include all worshipped beings (in which wide acceptance the Chinese do not use it.)

Drs. Boone and Bridgman could not but admit the justice of the employment of a definition on one side, as well as the other, however much they might disapprove of the term proposed on the other side, as well as of its definition.

Having arrived at this point, we took the terms with the definitions, and submitted them to the most intelligent Chinese to whom we have access, and the result was the following opinion. First, with respect to Shin they said, it would be to little purpose to say, that Shin is not used in the sense of spirit, as that is the real meaning of the term as defined in the imperial Thesaurus, and used by all Chinese. To define it as the general name of all worshipped beings would be a mode of explanation not to be met with in any Chinese writer; and to say that the former and governor of all things was Shin, *par excellence*, would be applying the term to a use which was not only unprecedented but absurd. Such a definition as this, so opposed to the native use of the term, and attaching to it an entirely new sense, would be rejected as soon as read by every intelligent Chinese, would be ascribed to the foreigner's ignorance of the language, and would be remembered only to be repudiated. Secondly, with regard to Te, they said there could be no doubt that it was used for deceased emperors as well as for the former and governor of all things, with a few other worshipped beings, and that a definition might settle in which sense the writer intended it; but to that part of the defini-



tion, which extended Te to all worshipped beings, they demurred and said that there were worshipped beings who were never called 'Tes. We might, therefore, if we pleased, define Te as including all spiritual beings who are worshipped, but it would be unusual and improper.

Now, though the Scripture nowhere says, that the terms Elohim and Theos include all the host of worshipped beings; yet it sometimes applies these terms to beings, who would not, if the Chinese knew what was intended, be called by them Te; we thought, therefore, that it would be *forcing the language* so to employ it; though by no means so much as would be the elevating of Shin to designate pre-eminently the ruler and governor of all things.

As the Chinese is a language spoken by hundreds of millions, and stereotyped by a literature of thousands of years, we felt that it would be irrational to attempt to subvert or modify it as the above definitions would do. Definitions are either logical or illogical. An illogical definition is no definition at all, but a misconception or a misrepresentation, neither of which has any weight with reasonable men. We considered, that we have difficulties enough to contend with in attempting to overturn the false systems of religion and philosophy current among the Chinese, and it would be most unwise to add to those difficulties by waging war against their language. Infinitely more easy would it be to adopt a transferred term, to which no previous sense had been attached, than to forbid the using of a native term in the sense which had been attached to it by hosts of lexicographers and classical writers, and to force the employment of it in a sense revolting to their philological taste.

With regard to the use of a transferred term, a difficulty meets us at the threshold. The Apostles, in disseminating religion through Gentile lands, did not transfer the Hebrew term, but adopted the indigenous word for God wherever they went; and it could not be wrong, some may say, to follow the example of the apostles. But to this we may reply, the Apostles never met with such an anomalous case as that which now meets us in China. The term which they found employed for God by way of eminence was not employed for the human soul, and all spiritual beings and essences; while the term which designated God by way of eminence, was used for the mass of worshipped beings. They had therefore ready-made to their hands a term that went high enough, in the sense of God *par excellence*, and could be employed for worshipped beings generally, without force or constraint,

while it did not go down to the human soul. In conversation with Dr. Boone, it was found that he no longer insisted on this argument, drawn from the practice of the Apostles among the Greeks and Romans, because the Chinese language presents anomalies, which the Greek and Latin never did.

Those Chinese, who have become most familiar with our Scriptures and views of Theology, being at the same time intelligent men and independent thinkers, frankly confess, that they have not a term so generic, and capable of so wide an extension as the one we are seeking for ; and urge, without any suggestion from us, that the most rational and unobjectionable plan would be to *transfer the term*. On being asked, whether the Chinese would treat with scorn a book which contained words of foreign origin, they reply, that there is no feeling of contempt for such a practice, but, on the contrary, they conceive that, when foreigners have to introduce new ideas they must be expected to bring with them new terms. They then adduce the case of the Buddhists, who once came to China, as we do now, to introduce a foreign religion, and brought with them terms, which were once as new and as strange as ours, but which, by frequent use, have become familiar, and are now incorporated into the language ; so that the literati have no objection to employ 般若 pwan-jö, in the sense of wisdom, and 波羅奕 po-lo-meih, as meaning "yonder shore ;" though none of the characters of which these terms are composed, whether separately or collectively, have the slightest reference to the ideas intended to be conveyed. As to the difficulty of getting a new term into common use, they say, (and this is much to the point,) the words 菩薩 Poo-sä used for worshipped beings, and 阿彌陀佛 O-mè-to-füh, the proper name of their chief deity, though formerly foreign to the language, having been once introduced by the Buddhists, are now so thoroughly familiar, that both terms are in the mouth of every woman and child throughout the empire ; and in proportion, as our religion becomes diffused, the terms which are peculiar to it will become diffused also. This corresponds with our own experience ; for, when we first arrived, the name of Jesus was comparatively unknown, but now it is familiar to every one who has once heard us preach, or read a single tract. We fully admit the propriety of translating every translatable word ; but we still insist that, where a word has no corresponding term to represent it, in the language into which we are translating, but only a word which either



"runs over," (as Dr. Boone confesses Shin does,) or is not sufficiently extensive (as we acknowledge Te to be), instead of hazarding a misconception or a contradiction, the best way is to transfer the term.

Here we cannot refrain from adverting to the opinions of Drs. Turner and Robinson, of New York, (the latter of universal celebrity, as a Greek and Hebrew lexicographer and biblical critic.) on this much-agitated controversy. After suggesting that the translators should apply to a considerable number of prominent texts, in which the name of God occurs, the terms thought by both parties to be most proper, in the hope of such application leading to some harmony of opinion,—they say, "If this should not be the case, it is suggested secondly, whether it may not be practicable to *abandon every Chinese term, and to introduce a new one*, either the oriental *Aloah*, or the Greek *Theos*, or the English *God*, as may best harmonize with the genius of the language. The following considerations may seem to justify the latter course. It is a possible course, because new terms have often been incorporated into old languages, in order to express thoughts for which there was no word precisely equivalent in the vernacular tongue; and, notwithstanding the peculiarity of the Chinese, there is probably no reason why such an example might not here be followed. Indeed this has actually been done in the Syrian inscription, which to express God adopted the Syriac word 阿羅訶 *Alo-ho*. This substitution of a new word, would require nothing more than some kind of explanation. It would be far easier for the Chinese to be made to understand what we Christians mean by the English word *God*, as applied to the Supreme Being, and also to supposed divinities, than for us rightly to comprehend the precise meaning of their *Shang-te* or *Shin*. Such a substitution would tend slowly to supersede the old terms, and along with its gradual use to introduce true views of the nature and character of the Supreme God."

The above was transmitted to the Committee of Delegates by the Secretary of the American Bible Society, as the only judgment the Committee of that Society could at the time give on the subject.

The Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society, under date April 14th, 1848, recommended, that there be impressed on the minds of the revisors the urgent necessity of their speedily coming to an agreement, by transferring into Chinese symbols the Greek word *Theos*.

The London Tract Society has also urged the adoption of some similar expedient.

It may not be amiss, likewise, to allude to the remarks of Dr. Bowring, the Consul at Canton, who has written on the subject of our controversy in the Chinese Repository for November, 1848, wherein he says, "The combatants have been struggling, through incompetent means for an unattainable end; they have been seeking in the Chinese mind and in the Chinese language, for what was never there. No sagacity, however active, no labour, however persevering, will extract from mind or matter what was never in them. Let us consider what it is we propose to communicate to the Chinese intellect. What are the attributes of the *God* whom we seek to make known? (After enumerating those attributes he goes on to observe,) To associate his name and nature, with any representation, is to dishonour him. True conceptions of God are the foundations of religious knowledge. Are the materials of such a foundation to be found in the Chinese tongue? I know not where, or how. The Chinese notions of all the objects, whose names have been proposed, one after another, to represent the God-head, are low, sensual, material. They are such as can neither be safely blended with, still less be made a substitute for, the high and sublime revelations of Divinity. The national mind will be found reflected in the national language; that, and nothing more; and the national language, in its turn, is but the counterpart of the national mind. But the opening and elevating influences of civilization, in the field of moral, intellectual, or religious progress, must create for themselves new words and forms of speech, and must draw these words and forms from the source whence that progress emanates. So it is with the sciences; and so it must be with religion. If the infinite attributes of the Scriptural God are to be found concentrated in any one word, select and employ that word. But if there be no such word, let us not lower the spiritual God we worship to the gross and grovelling standard of Chinese divinities. In looking at the changes which the conversion to Christianity introduces into the language of heathen nations, we shall find them crowded with many foreign words having their source in Missionary teachings. Every such word was at first a mystery, then it became a text; and by preaching on such texts, Christianity made its way. Mohammed understood this; wherever he went, no name but *Allah* was ever allowed to represent *the one true God*. In every language, among



every people, where Islamism has been produced, Allah and Allah only has been recognized as the sole object of worship. This brings me to the immediate object of this communication. By what word can the God of the Bible be most becomingly introduced to the Chinese? No name, nor fit association being discoverable in their language, they must be planted there. (He then goes on to propose *Jah*, which being the proper name and not the appellative for God, does not suit our purpose.) Dr. Bowring concludes by saying, that his object is only respectfully to suggest to those specially occupied with the subject the means of solving a great difficulty, and closing a perplexing controversy."

To the general strain of Dr. Bowring's remarks, there can be little or no objection. One idea, not touched upon by him, is, that the Chinese language not only wants a proper term whereby to represent the perfections of the true God, but it wants also a generic, which, while it is capable of being *used* for the highest being of which they have any conception, includes all worshipped beings, *and goes no farther*. As they have therefore no appellative for God, in the Scriptural usage of the term, we must introduce one; and the one we propose is *Aloah*, accompanied by the following translation, "wherever *Aloah* is used, it refers to the beings whom men sacrifice to and worship. They do not know, however, that the most honourable and without compare is only one Jehovah, besides whom no other ought to be worshipped. Jehovah is the proper name of *Aloah*."

*Aloah* is, as is well known, the singular form of that term which has been adopted by the Sacred writers, for expressing the idea of a God, any god, as 2 Chronicles xxxii. 15; Daniel xi. 37, 38, 39; Hebrews i. 11. It is also used for God by way of eminence, Deuteronomy xxxii. 15, 17, and very frequently in Job, probably the most ancient of the Hebrew writers. The reason why we suggest *Aloah*, rather than the plural form *Elohim* is, because we have a precedent for it in Chinese. It is found in the Syrian monument, erected A. D. 718, at Se-gnan-foo and discovered by some Chinese workmen, A. D. 1625. For an account of which, see Kircher's *China Illustrata*, and the *Chinese Repository* for May, 1845. This inscription exhibits internal evidence of having been drawn up by some one thoroughly acquainted with Chinese classical literature, and at the same time initiated in all the views of Christianity taught by the Syrian Church of that age, which, though differing in some important particulars from the Protestant Church of the present

day, was yet sound as it respects its views of the Divine existence and perfections. There is here presented before us the case of an individual, much better read in Chinese than any Protestant Missionary can pretend to be, and holding views not dissimilar from our own regarding the God-head, who could not find in the language any term that effectually answered his purpose for expressing God, and was therefore driven to transfer the word. The transferred term, in the shape we now propose, has thus been already brought before the Chinese mind ; and, though all results of the labours of the Syrian Missionaries are obliterated, the term thus introduced has retained some hold of the Chinese mind, for we meet with it in a work of purely Chinese origin, called the 性命圭旨 *Síng míng kweí ché*. The term *Aloah* is likewise more easily represented by Chinese characters than *Elohim*, and is, therefore, likely more readily to become familiar to the Chinese ear. Notwithstanding which, if *Elohim* in the plural form be insisted on, as that most frequently used in the ancient Scriptures, we have no special objections to it.

It will be proper to remark here, that we intend to use the transferred word generically, as a representative of *El*, *Eloah*, *Elohim*, *Theos*, and *Theoi*, wherever they occur, whether for the false gods or true. Should any one object, that we are thus calling the contemptible divinities of the heathen by the same appellation, which we use for the true God ; we can only say, that we feel safe in following Scriptural example. The Apostles had the option of calling the true God *Theos*, and the false gods *daimones*. in every instance, if they chose ; but they did not choose ; and in alluding to the heathen deity Remphan, they have called him *Theos*, with the article before it. So in recording the false views entertained by the Lycaonians in regard to Paul and Barnabas, whom they supposed to be Jupiter and Mercury, the term *hoi Theoi* is used with reference to those beings.

The reasons for the transfer of the term, we conceive to be the following :

1. We cannot go wrong in so doing. We cannot be said to use an improper word. It is sanctioned by the Scriptures : we are therefore right in employing it, unmistakably and incontrovertibly right.

2. We free ourselves thereby from all mixture with Chinese superstition. Those, who employ the term *Shin*, are ever in danger of having it coupled, at least in the minds of the heathen, with *Kwei*, evil spirit. *Shin* and *Kwei*, are corre-



lative terms, and are generally classed together by Chinese speakers and writers. In doing which the Kwei is put first. The term also includes an invariable reference to the Chinese system of the Yin and the Yang, from association with which the native mind cannot escape, if the term Shin be used. The word *Te* also, even when referring to the Supreme, does not allude to a Being of infinite perfections like Jehovah. But, by the use of the transferred term, we free ourselves at once from all these shackles, and are left at liberty to give our own views of the meaning we attach to Eloah, whether in the monadic or generic sense.

3. We are violating no rules of language; no philological difficulties lie in our way, but those inseparably connected with a new term, which will be rapidly decreasing every day, from the first moment after we have employed it, until they have entirely disappeared.

4. We are much more likely to succeed in creating for ourselves a *usus loquendi*, by adopting a new term and translating it, than we are by taking an old term, diverting it from its proper sense, and applying it to a use utterly revolting to the philological taste of the people.

The only objection to the use of the transfer, which we have heard worth considering, is, that we cannot make efficient use of it, in arguing against polytheism. The Chinese, it is said, are a polytheistic people, and no weapon will be of force to counteract polytheism, but the employment of the same term for God, which polytheists have been accustomed to employ for their false objects of worship. To this we reply, the strength of this objection materially depends on the real meaning of the word employed. If the essential meaning of the term Shin be, as we think we have shewn, *pneuma*, or *spirit*; then the fact of the Chinese having worshipped many Shins, only proves that they are polypneumatis and not polytheists. Again, it does not always follow, that the word used for the objects of worship among a pagan people, is a fit term for us to use in order to promote the worship of the true God, or even to put down polytheism; for the Koords have been said to worship the devil, and will not endure to hear his name mentioned; they by no means repeat it themselves, nor any thing that resembles it in sound: so that they never utter the usual name for the Tigris, near Mosul, *El Sat*, from its resemblance to *El Satan*. Now no one would contend that a Missionary to the Koords, should employ Satan as the appellative for God, in order to put down the worship of devils. We by no means admit,

however, that we cannot as effectually oppose polytheism by a transferred word, as by using a native term. We call our God Eloah, we use Eloah as the generic for worshipped beings, and we tell them that they are not to worship any other being that may be called Eloah, but the one who made heaven and earth. Besides which we may denounce the worship of the heathen under the name which they themselves employ. They say they worship the Shins, which we call spirits, we tell them they are not to worship spirits; they worship Kweis, which we call devils, we tell them they are not to worship devils; nor any other being visible or invisible but Eloah, and the one Eloah who produced and governs all things. Further, the use of Shin as the generic for worshipped beings, does not include all that the Chinese worship; it does not necessarily include Shang-te, who is considered by the advocates of Shin to be a false God, because when the Chinese talk of sacrificing to the Shin, they do not intend thereby Shang-te: nor when a man is told not to worship the Shins, does he think he is transgressing the prohibition by worshiping Shang-te, whom he considers superior to the host of Shins, though, as to his spiritual nature, Shang-te may himself be called a Shin.

We have thus endeavoured to present before you the steps, by which we have been led to the adoption of the transferred term, and the reasons for its adoption. We intreat the consideration of the above remarks by all our readers; and respectfully suggest that the question is not now, which of two native terms, both in some respects objectionable, should be chosen; but whether the original word, against which no believer in Divine Revelation dare raise his voice, ought not to be preferred to either. The time is come, we conceive, when a stop ought to be put to this protracted controversy. The contending parties have done their best to advocate their respective terms, and have found that objections lie against both hypotheses. The advocates of Te have seen them on their side, and the propounders of Shin on theirs. The former are willing, on account of the difficulties which lie in the way, to retire from the contest, and adopt the transferred term; the latter acknowledge their difficulties, but seem resolved to abide by their favourite word, with a definition. We could have done the same with equal justice, but have resolved rather to give up the native term than adopt it with a definition, restricting or extending the sense beyond what is warranted by native authorities. How much more untenable the term Shin is, with the proposed definition, needs



only to be adverted to, in order to be perceived. It has been said that, when a number of definitions is given of a word in the dictionaries, we are at liberty to reject the mass, and say that we confine ourselves to one. Granted. But we are not at liberty to reject the only meaning given in the principal Thesaurus, introduce a definition that is entirely new, and understand a word in a sense in which it never has been employed by any native writer or speaker, since the language was formed. Such utter contempt for classical usage, and such an entire subverting of a language, we would not attempt; and we cannot resist the conviction that it will be unavailing. No nation would tolerate such liberties with its language; and men will affix their own meaning to words, notwithstanding our definitions to the contrary. If a definition is to be adopted, let the authority for it be produced, or let it be at once abandoned. Why attempt to force a language so well established and so widely extended as the Chinese? Instead of struggling against such monstrous difficulties, which will not, when overcome, yield the advantages which are anticipated; how much better would it be at once to give up a term, which is demonstrated to be untenable. The chief advocates of Shin have now condemned it. Every volume they intend distributing, every tract they propose to print, will carry the condemnation of their favourite term on the face of it. The definition is fatal to it. A native term that needs to be thus defined, restricted, and perverted to a use never before known in native books, is not the term to be chosen. It is wrong, decidedly and radically wrong; *and no definition can make it right.* It has been urged that we must translate every translatable word; but the necessity for so defining the native word, fixed upon as a translation, is in itself an admission that the term in question is not translatable; at any rate, that the term chosen most certainly does not represent the idea contended for. Why, therefore, attempt an unattainable end by incompetent means, and provoke the ridicule of every well-informed Chinese; *thus throwing additional obstacles in the way of their reception of the truth?* Far better to transfer the word, and acknowledge in words, what is now acknowledged in deeds, that the language wants the precise term, in seeking for which so much trouble has been expended in vain.

We urge the above considerations on the Missionaries, the more especially because the majority of them have but recently come to the country, and cannot have felt so much as others

the difficulty of the subject. The reasons adduced seem to call upon all those interested in the conversion of the Chinese to pause, until from a thorough knowledge of the classics and extensive intercourse with the people, they may be in a fit position to form a judgment. Those who have enjoyed the most of these advantages are the first to abandon native terms; and the probabilities are that the longer men study, the more they will see the insufficiency of such terms. As a proof of this we need only refer to the example of Drs. Morrison and Milne, both of whom discovered, towards the end of their career, the inadequacy of the old term Shin to convey their ideas to the Chinese, and resorted to various modifications of the same in order to express what they thought was included in the word God. See Dr. Milne's admission regarding Shin in the Indo-Chinese Gleaner, quoted in the Inquiry p. 128, and the list of terms for the Deity employed by Dr. Morrison in his Domestic Instructor, referred to in the Inquiry, pp. 157, 158. The common adoption also of the terms 真神 Chin-shin, 主神 Chod-shin &c. (which though supposed to be Chinese are mere barbarisms, and only provocative of a smile among intelligent natives), is proof that the modern advocates of Shin do not like to use it altogether alone, when they have to make known to the Chinese the God whom they worship. The late admission of the most talented advocate of Shin, that he has discovered, since he wrote his Essay, that Shin means more than he thought it did, shews that time is necessary to give the Missionary proper ideas of native terms; while it holds out to those who differ from him the expectation that a further prosecution of his inquiries will bring him to acknowledge, what the best Sinologues have long ago discovered, that the first, and chief import of Shin is *spirit*, and that it does not necessarily mean God at all.

Drs. Boone and Bridgman propose by capitalizing the word, or by cutting a heavier character for it, to call the increased attention of the reader to the term, when used for the true God. The intelligent natives distinctly assure us, that such capitalizing or emphasizing of a character makes no alteration in its meaning. It is done sometimes out of compliment, in official documents, but the Scriptures have nothing to do with compliments. To shew the unutility of such an expedient, let it be considered what would be the effect where the word *spirit* so dealt with in books printed in our language. Would the meaning of the term be in the slightest degree altered thereby? Would a new idea



be elicited therefrom? We think not. But what it was before, so it would remain, were it printed in letters of gold, and a separate page allotted to it every time it occurred. The mode of capitalizing God and Lord in the editions of the Scriptures, printed in European languages, is a mere modern invention. No Socinian would be induced to believe in the Divinity of Christ were we to print the word *Lord*, when it referred to the Saviour, in full capitals; it would only shew the idea the publisher had of the person referred to, but it would not add one argument in favour of our Lord's Divinity. And so with Shin, if it means, as it does, spirit originally, it will mean spirit always, however typographically distinguished.

We subjoin a few remarks on the letter of the Rev. Mr. Mellor, above alluded to.

With respect to the employment of two terms, as the translation of Elohim and Theos, when the reference is to the true or false gods respectively, as proposed by Mr. Mellor, we refer to what has been said in the preceding part of this letter.

It will be merely necessary here to allude to the remarks of the Editorial Superintendent, regarding Shin being the term "which most comprehensively and appropriately expresses the genus of worshipped beings." Upon this we may observe, that such an idea is new to the Chinese. No lexicographer nor commentator ever gave this as the definition of Shin; the term *Shin* cannot be shewn to have any reference to such an idea, either in its etymology or practical application; it has nothing of the meaning of worship in it, and it is never limited by the Chinese to worshipped beings. Shin refers perpetually to the soul, and the spiritual energies of living men, which are never worshipped; Shin is therefore not the most appropriate term for expressing the genus of worshipped beings in Chinese, no more than *animal* is for expressing the genus of rational beings on earth. It is comprehensive enough, and too much so; it includes vastly more, and therefore is not the term to express the identical idea. In this view of it, Shin is not equivalent to Elohim or Theoi, even when used in the plural sense, for it includes the human soul, which those terms never did.

If we be asked, what then is the generic for worshipped beings in Chinese? we answer, distinctly and advisedly, *there is no such term in the language.*

Mr. Mellor then goes on to notice a quotation from the Chinese Repository, which states, that "no native writer

has ever exhorted his countrymen to sacrifice or to worship any class of beings called *Te* or the *Tes*." With regard to this, we may observe, that a commentator on the *Chow-le* says, "When the people *prayed* for wind and rain, cold or heat, it was more than what *one Te* could have procured for them, and therefore they *prayed to the whole five*." When the *Heaou-king* classic speaks of *Wăn-wang's offering* the ancestral *sacrifice* to the *Shang-tes*, the commentator says, that "these *Shang-tes* were the *five Tes* of the different quarters." In the *Chow-le* again, the king is described as "putting on certain robes of ceremony when *he sacrificed to the five Tes*." On this subject, see *Inquiry*, pages 53, 56, where the writer attempts to shew that the five *Tes* were a class of beings honoured with religious worship, and next only to the Supreme, according to Chinese ideas. In the ritual observed in the present day, according to the laws and statutes of the reigning dynasty, *prayers* are drawn up, which are *directed to be offered* up to different beings at stated periods. According to this, the emperor has to offer a prayer to *Shang-te*, at the time of the celestial sacrifice, in which he must call himself *servant* to the Supreme, and his officers, fellow-servants, whom he is reverently to lead on to *present their offerings*. According to the same ritual, it is directed that the emperors of the former dynasties, who have received their apotheosis as *Tes*, are to be worshipped; but, on this occasion, an officer is to be deputed to perform the duty. In compliance with the same, *Kwan-te*, a deified hero, is to be worshipped, regarding whom the emperor issues a command, that sacrifices be offered to him.

The correspondent in the *Repository* asserts, however, that no native writer has *exhorted* his countrymen to pray to, or worship the *Tes*. To this we reply, that the simple statement that they are worshipped, with directions that they shall be worshipped, is sufficient to prove that they were ranked among worshipped beings, whether men were exhorted to worship them or not.

It is further affirmed by the said correspondent, that "the Chinese classics are full of *exhortations* to sacrifice to the Shin, to worship the Shin, to pray to the Shin, &c." Upon this we remark, that if the Chinese classics are full of such *exhortations*, it is strange that some of us, who have been studying the Chinese classics for so many years, cannot find them. If they are there, let them be pointed out. It is true, we do find statements relative to the Shins being worshipped, sacrificed and prayed to, as we do with regard to the



Tes, but no express exhortations so to do. There is indeed an exhortation to "respect the Shins," but it is followed by a caution, "to keep them at a distance." See Theology of the Chinese, page 31.

As to Christian writers, previous to 1846, not having warned the Chinese against the worship of the Tes, we can only say that, up to that period, the subject had not been so fully brought before Christian writers, as sufficiently to impress them with the fact, that false Tes were worshipped by the Chinese, or to lead them to think it necessary to warn men against it. That they do now, is evident from the preaching and tracts, of those who think with Dr. Boone, as well as of those who differ from him.

A quotation is given from the Lun-yu, regarding prayers being offered up to the Shins above, and the K'hes below; (for a full account of this subject, see the Theology, page 33.) If this quotation is brought forward, with a view of shewing that the Shins above and K'hes below, are worshipped beings, we do not deny it, but refer to a quotation now given to shew what sort of worshipped beings they were.

In the 儀禮 E-le, section 8, where the text speaks of the Shang-hēa Shins, the commentator says, that "the 上下神 upper and lower spirits are not the most honourable in heaven and earth." He says further, that the 上神 Shang shins are the spirits of the sun and moon, while the 下神 hēa shins are the spirits of the hills and rivers, and not of the same rank with the 天帝 T'hēen tés, nor the 人帝 Jin tés.

It has been urged further, that "Shin is a term inclusive of the highest being to whom worship is offered, or, in other words, the Chinese in their native polytheism have conceived of no being exalted above the nature of a Shin." This remark, if compared with the preceding quotation, will need to be considerably modified. To which we may add, that notwithstanding Te, Shang-te, and T'hēn-te, whether used in the singular or plural, are all called Shins, because they are spiritual beings, and belong to the invisible world; yet, that the term Shin does not suggest to the mind of the Chinese the idea of the highest being, is evident, because, when speaking of what the highest being is and does, they never say that Shin is and does the things referred to: but they do say that Te is and does such things; consequently, Te intimates to them a higher being in his acts and attributes than does the word Shin.

The quotation made by Dr. Boone from the Pei-wăn-yun-fu, with the comment thereon, has been already we conceive, sufficiently explained, in the Reply to Dr. Boone's Essay, pages 24, 25, 35, 36 ; where it was shewn that the 天神 T'héen-shin are there said to be most honourable and without compare, because the *reference in that particular passage is to Shang-te, and because of the connection of the Shin,* there spoken of, with *Heaven or the Divinity.* But, that the Shin and the T'héen-shin, in the general acceptation of the terms, are not the most honourable classes in the universe, is evident from the above quotation from the E-le, and from a variety of passages already adduced in the Inquiry.

An assertion of Drs. Boone and Bridgman is then adduced, to the effect "that earth, the second God in the Chinese pantheon, as all allow, is never called a Te." To this phraseology we object, as thoroughly foreign to Chinese views. They never say that T'héen is the first god in the Chinese pantheon, and that Te is the second &c. But as to this, every one is of course at liberty to use what phraseology regarding the Chinese system of worship he pleases. With respect to the fact of earth never being called a Te, we beg leave to refer to the second Collection of Imperial Odes, 48th section, and 26th page, in which Earth, when sacrificed to at the summer solstice, is expressly called a Te. This quotation has already been brought before the attention of Drs. Boone and Bridgman, in the written discussions which were formerly carried on between the various members of the Delegation.

It is further stated, that Shin is in frequent use among Chinese writers, in such phrases as seem most appropriately rendered when the word is taken as meaning *gods*: thus the Shin of the rivers, the Shin of the hills, to swear before the Shin, may the Shin protect you, &c." To this we reply, that, though such terms may be rendered the gods of the hills, and the gods of the rivers, there is no impropriety in rendering them the spirits of the hills, the spirits of the rivers, &c. particularly when it is remembered, that the word Shin itself is explained in the Imperial Thesaurus (which is the highest authority we have) as meaning spirit; that its essential and original meaning, as explained by commentators, is spirit; and that in the phrases alluded to, the Shin of the hills, &c. the commentators expressly tell us, that the word alluded to means the 氣 k'he, spirit or spiritual influences of such hills. See the Theology of the Chinese, pages 66, where the



words 靈 līng spirit, and 氣 k'he spiritual influences, are employed as explaining what is meant by the Shins of the hills. As to swearing before the Shins, and looking for their protection, it is evident, that men may be conceived of as swearing in the presence of spiritual beings, and looking for protection, to the inhabitants of the invisible world generally, as much as to the class of beings called gods.

Respecting the suggestions of Mr. Mellor, which follow the quotations from Drs. Boone and Bridgman, we have little to say, except what has been already remarked in this letter; to which we may be permitted to add, that Shin, under no possible form or combination, would suit our views; we therefore urge its absolute rejection as a translation of Theos and Elohīm. With regard to one suggestion of Mr. Mellor, viz. that "Shang-te seems to be open to strong objection from its being the name of one of the deities already worshipped by the Chinese," we will merely refer to Dr. Morrison's Syllabic Dictionary, under the word 上 Shang, page 727, where he remarks, "上帝 Shang-te, the high or Supreme Ruler; this epithet, though seeming to express the Christian idea of the Deity, is however applied to more than one divine personage." As the above was penned before this controversy came up, it may be considered independent testimony. It is also in accordance with our own experience; see Answer to the queries of a brother Missionary.

Mr. Mellor's remarks in his last paragraph go to establish the position we have now chosen, that the best and safest mode is to transfer the term.

We remain,

Dear Brethren,

Your's Respectfully,

W. H. MEDHURST.  
JOHN STRONACH.  
W. C. MILNE.  
W. LOCKHART.  
W. MUIRHEAD.  
J. EDKINS.

Shanghai, January 30th, 1850.

We subjoin a translation of the first Commandment in which the transferred word is contained.

阿	余	及	阿	曰	阿
羅	而	脫	羅	我	羅
訶	外	汝	訶	耶	訶
	不	於	携	和	垂
	可	賤	爾	華	誠
	別	役	出	爾	其
	有	者	埃	之	一



也耶和華者阿羅訶名也  
和華而已不可別有所崇拜  
拜者不知至尊無對則一耶  
凡言阿羅訶指人所祭祀崇