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Translation and Proselytization: James Legge's Novelizations of Biblical Narratives*

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<Contents>

Ⅰ. Introduction

In an essay addressed to an assembly of the General Missionary Conference held in Shanghai in 1890, the missionary Alexander Williamson (1829~1890) describes a fundamental difference between translating the Bible for European and Chinese audiences: in the case of the former, "the character of the Bible as a revelation from God was understood, and the heroes, incidents, localities, style and doctrines, less or more known from infancy"[1]; but in the case of the latter, no attitude of reverence for the

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1) *Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China, Held at Shanghai, May 7-20, 1890* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1890), 106 (hereafter *Records*).

Bible existed, not even rudimentary or cultural understanding of its claims to be divinely inspired. Nevertheless, Williamson continues, China is a "great literary nation, with its tens of thousands of reading men, of keen and often just literary tastes sharpened by constant exercise, intolerant of obscurity, impatient of confusion of figures, and on whose ear even non-euphonious sentences grate most jarringly."[2] Hence for Williamson, as it was for many missionaries in China in the mid- to late nineteenth century, two challenges defined the missionary enterprise: how to impress upon the general Chinese populace—almost completely removed from the cultural sphere of the Bible—the sacred character, history, and contents of Christian scripture; and how to translate scripture in a way that is acceptable to a very small, but influential, minority ("tens of thousands of reading men") who were loath to countenance the claims of a sacred text that did not align with their literary sensibilities.

It is in the context of missionary efforts to confront these two challenges in proselytizing the Chinese that we must understand James Legge's (1815~1897) retelling of the stories of Joseph (*Yuese jilüe* ≪約瑟紀畧≫, 1852) and Abraham (*Yabolahan jilüe* ≪亞伯拉罕紀畧≫, 1857) in the style of Chinese fiction. Legge, best known for his translations of the Confucian and Daoist classics, served as a missionary for the London Missionary Society in Malacca and Hong Kong from 1840 to 1870 before assuming the first professorship of Chinese at Oxford in 1876.[3] His respect for Confucian

2) Ibid.

3) For a biography of Legge that focuses on his missionary career, see Lauren Pfister, *Striving for the 'Whole Duty of Man': James Legge and the Scottish Protestant Encounter with China: Assessing Confluences in Scottish Nonconformism, Chinese Missionary Scholarship, Victorian Sinology, and Chinese Protestantism* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004). For a biography that focuses on his time at Oxford, see Norman J. Girardot, T*he Victorian Translation of China: James*

teachings led him to believe that biblical truths could be conveyed, in a preliminary way, through a Confucian framework.[4] In an essay read out to the assembly at the General Missionary Conference in Shanghai in 1877, Legge expresses his basic conviction:

> I do not doubt that there will be an agreement in the Conference, as to missionaries making the best use they can of what is good and true in the Confucian system, to give to the Chinese the knowledge of Christianity."[5]

But the fact that this essay was omitted from the printed record of proceedings due to its support for the term *shangdi* 上帝, a deity in Confucian texts, as a translation for "God" in the Bible indicates how polemical the issue had become. The infamous "Term Question," a controversy over the proper rendering of "God" in the Bible into Chinese, remained unresolved for decades as missionaries debated whether the Judeo-Christian God had revealed himself to the ancient Chinese, and therefore, whether the term *shangdi* properly referred to the God of the Bible.[6] Legge's full commitment to the pro-*shangdi* position,[7] and implicitly,

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Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

4) This is in accordance with the so-called fulfillment theory, officially adopted at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, where Christianity is regarded as able to fulfill the spiritual aims of non-Christian religions and systems of morality.

5) James Legge, *Confucianism in Relation to Christianity* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1877), 11.

6) A full treatment of this controversy is beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that, in general, British missionaries supported *shangdi* as a translation of "God" while American missionaries supported the alternative translation, *shen* 神. For a summary of the historical context of the Term Question, see Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version, or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China* (Sankt Augustin:

to finding revelations of the Judeo-Christian God in Confucian thought, no doubt influenced his decision to publish the two "brief accounts" (*jilüe* 紀畧) of the lives of Abraham and Joseph—in effect, accommodationist translations of select episodes from the Book of Genesis viewed from a Confucian perspective.[8)]

The term *jilüe* indicates that these accounts are condensed versions of biblical narratives and not authoritative translations, even though Legge is far more faithful to the original text than the term might suggest. The same term was used by Giulio Aleni (1582～1649) in his *Brief Account of the Words and Deeds of the Lord of Heaven Incarnate* ≪天主降生言行紀畧≫, a gospel harmonization that was well known to Protestant missionaries in the nineteenth century. In this work, stories are extracted from the four gospels and put into an overarching chronological order; some liberties are taken with the biblical text, but most of its contents are preserved. The earliest Protestant missionary usage of the term appears to be the *Brief Account of the Words and Deeds of Elijah* ≪以來者言行紀畧≫ (first printed in 1841) by Theodosia Ann Barker, a select translation of famous episodes involving the prophet Elijah from 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2.[9)] The works that are most

Monumenta Serica Institute, 1999), 82–90.

7) For Legge's comprehensive defense of his position, see James Legge, *The Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Register Office, 1852).

8) We do not know how much Legge personally authored the two accounts. He most likely enlisted the aid of Ho Tsun-sheen 何進善, who also collaborated with him in other translations. See John T. P. Lai, *Literary Representations of Christianity in Late Qing and Republican China* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 40 n. 6. Ho's role might have been extensive, but Legge would have no doubt given every publication its final approval.

9) See Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications, and Obituary Notices of the Deceased, With Copious Indexes* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1867), 88. The

similar to Legge's "brief accounts" are probably Karl Gützlaff's (1803~1851) "Records of Words and Deeds" (*yanxinglu* 言行錄) of biblical figures like Moses, Daniel, and Paul, whose stories are retold through more or less free translations of scripture. Nevertheless, neither Aleni, nor Barker, nor Gützlaff ever attempted to present scripture in the style of a Chinese novel. Chinese Christian literature written in a novelistic style were not rare at this time, but missionary-writers tended to publish either original novels in Chinese or loose translations of Christian novels from the West.[10] Legge's works, however, are "novelizations" of scripture in the sense that they adopt traditional novelistic conventions, such as chapter titles composed in parallel prose, opening verses that summarize the main themes of each chapter, and common storytelling devices—for example, the "It is said" (*huashuo* 話說) that begins a story and the cliff-hanger endings to each chapter that urge the readers to read on. Also provided are traditional-style commentaries on the text that follow the end of every chapter, filled with moral exhortations that are consonant with Confucian teachings.

Previous scholarship, by treating these two "brief accounts" as successful examples of works that combine biblical narratives with Chinese novelistic conventions, has tended to overlook their fraught missionary and evangelical context.[11] Even if it is possible to see these two works as embodying the

Bodleian Library contains a copy of Barker's text.

10) For a discussion of the different kinds of Chinese Christian fiction in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Oh Soon-bang, "Man Cheong Jungmun Gidoggyo Soseol ui Jeonguiwa Beomju" ("Late Qing Chinese Christian Fiction: Definitions and Categories"), *The Journal of Chinese Studies* 57 (2011): 33-57.

11) See, for example, Lai, *Literary Representations of Christianity*, 40-50. Also, in a modern annotated edition of the *Brief Account of Joseph*, the work is described as "more vivid than the Bible, a model example of the fusion of the Bible and Chinese literature, worthy to be called a Chinese novelization (*yanyi* 演義) of scripture." Oh Soon-bang, Li Sher-shiueh, and John T. P. Lai, eds., *Qingdai Jidu*

Chinese tradition of explicating history in a popular style,[12] the difference is that they were explicating a sacred history little known to Chinese audiences. If it is generally true that "[o]ne of the most important and conspicuous features of literature's relation to religion is…that of affirmation,"[13] then in the context of Protestant missionary activities in China in the nineteenth century, an important qualification is needed: while rendering scripture in a popular style is apt to broaden its appeal, it also risks tarnishing the text's sacred character in the eyes of the Chinese. As Robert Morrison (1782~1834) writes in his critique of Walter Henry Medhurst's (1796~1857) translation of the gospels, the Bible, when rendered in a familiar style, may end up being treated as nothing more than "a parlor-book."[14] Hence, Legge's choice to cloak two of the Bible's most famous patriarchs in the garb of Chinese sages needs to be understood in the context of the controversy over the extent to which scripture should be conformed to Chinese literary sensibilities. In order to situate Legge's works in this context, this article begins by examining two important precursors: the Delegates' Version, a translation of the Bible intended to appeal to learned

Zongjiao Xiaoshuo Xuanzhu (Christian Fiction in Qing China, 1709~1907: An Anthology with Commentary and Annotations) (Taipei: Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, 2018), v. 1, 297. Translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

12) See John T. P. Lai, "*Shengjing* de Zhongguo Yanyi—Li Yage Shizhuan Xiaoshuo *Yuese Jilüe* (1852) Yanjiu ("Literary Translation of the Bible into Chinese: James Legge's Historical-biographical Novel *Yuese Jilüe (Life of Joseph, 1852)"), Hanxue Yanjiu (Studies in Sinology)* 31.1 (2013): 161-85.

13) Anthony C. Yu, "Literature and Religion," in *Comparative Journeys: Essays on Literature and Religion East and West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 2.

14) Quoted in Patrick Hanan, "The Bible as Chinese Literature: Medhurst, Wang Tao, and the Delegates' Version," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 63.1 (2003): 203.

readers through a polished literary style; and Legge's own Cantonese pamphlets on the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the story of the prophet Daniel's friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, intended for a wider (and mostly illiterate) audience. The article then shows how the "brief accounts" exhibit both a learned and popular style, while at the same time performing the delicate task of extracting the biblical stories from their original narrative arcs in order to emphasize their socio-ethical, rather than the more controversial theological, implications.

Ⅱ. The Delegates' Version

For Protestant missionaries in China in the mid- to late nineteenth century, the perceived gap between existing Chinese-language translations of the Bible and what the Chinese literati might consider an acceptable translation was a source of constant preoccupation.[15] Some translators, including Medhurst, sought to translate the Bible into a classical prose that would cause the least offense to native literary sensibilities.[16] But the result, the so-called Delegates' Version, received pushback from missionaries who feared that "the inexperienced unspiritual reader, deceived by the familiarity of the rhythm, is liable to mistake Christ for Confucius, to his peril."[17] In fact, the Delegates' Version is more faithful to the original text of scripture (especially the New Testament) than criticisms of it might suggest, but nonetheless, some missionaries remained skeptical of the idea that literary polish and

15) For details, see Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 25-75.

16) For more on Medhurst's role in the translation of the Delegates' Version, see Hanan, "The Bible as Chinese Literature," 197-239.

17) *Records*, 52.

accommodations made for Chinese taste should determine how scripture ought to be rendered. The American missionary John Wherry (1837~1918), for example, would have preferred the more literal Bridgman-Culbertson version published in 1862: despite its occasional "harshness," he notes that the reader "is less likely to mistake divine teaching for common-place Chinese morality, than in reading some of the freer versions."[18)]

Legge, who was competent in both Hebrew and Greek, played an early role in the translation of the Delegates' Version, and later vigorously defended it. In 1843, he participated in a conference in Hong Kong (newly ceded to England) where the need for a new translation of scripture was agreed upon.[19)] Appointed to a committee to decide the question of how to translate "God" into Chinese, Legge took part over the next few years in the translation of a portion of the New Testament; later, he attended an 1850 meeting of the delegates in Shanghai to translate the Old Testament.[20)] Though his participation did not continue to the end, Legge clearly shared in the vision of the project, convinced that learned Chinese readers could not be persuaded to give credence to a text unless it had an air of erudition. In an 1852 letter to Arthur Tidman (1792~1868), Secretary of the London Missionary Society, Legge defends the Delegates' Version of the New Testament, particular the epistles, against concerns about the difficulty and inexactness of its prose, arguing that "[t]he Epistles were never written to be understood by the careless and unthinking reader."[21)] He takes for granted

18) Ibid., 53.

19) Ibid., 50-51.

20) For details, see Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 76-81, 98.

21) Walter Henry Medhurst, *Reply to Dr. Boone's Vindication of Comments on the Translation of Ephes. I: in the Delegates' Version of the New Testament: By the Committee of Delegates, Also, a Letter on the Same Subject, from J. Legge, to Dr. Tidman, Secretary of the London Missionary Society* (Shanghai: London

that attentive readers would give the sacred text the careful study that it requires, and bristles at the idea that scripture ought to be rendered in such a way that "every sentence shall be intelligible at once"[22]—both because scripture's meaning is not always plain even in the original languages, and because, in that case, a version would presumably need to be made for every Chinese dialect.

In the same year as his letter to Tidman, Legge published his *Brief Account of Joseph*, which reflects some of the erudition and polish of the Delegates' Version.[23] Some of the characters that his work uses are difficult and drawn from classical texts, and the commentaries that follow each chapter freely allude to passages from the Confucian canon. In this sense, the work appeals to learned readers. But Legge hardly expected that most, or any, of his readers would make a careful study of the text. His assumption, in fact, was that the audience would be precisely of the "careless and unthinking" type. The preface notes that those who read the Bible tend to drift off to sleep; novels, on the other hand, capture their interest. Despite Legge's defense of the Delegates' Version, he had to address a practical dilemma that proselytization entailed: a learned translation of the Bible might appeal to some readers, but even those readers might become impatient with such a text, while the vast majority of the Chinese were illiterate and could hardly be expected to sit through a reading of scripture without some

Mission Press, 1852), 79.

22) Ibid.

23) It even shares with the translation some of its phrasings. For example, Genesis 47:3-4 is almost identical in the *Brief Account of Joseph* and the Delegates' Version, although Legge uses Sinicized pronouns such as "Your subject" (*chen* 臣) and "Your Majesty" (*bixia* 陛下). For the text of the *Brief Account of Joseph*, I use the annotated edition in Oh Soon-bang, et al., *Qingdai Jidu Zongjiao Xiaoshuo Xuanzhu*, v. 1, 302-28. I also consulted the Bodleian Library copy of an 1870 reprint.

encouragement. The *Brief Account of Joseph* therefore appears to seek a middle ground between a learned version of the Bible and a version with enough novelistic flair to attract a wider audience.

Ⅲ. The Cantonese Pamphlets

In the midst of debates over how exactly to translate scripture so that it might be accessible to both learned and popular audiences, some missionaries proposed a two-pronged approach: “Scriptures ought to be rendered both in the antique style, for scholastic use, and in the modern style, for popular use.”[24] Missionaries were of course agreed that the Word of God should not be added to or subtracted from, but in practice, oral explications of scripture no doubt required some freedom to express the Word of God in (para)phrases that were intelligible to the hearers.[25] The question is whether these colloquial explications ought to be written down and printed, and given the seal of authority as scripture.

Legge’s two Cantonese pamphlets on the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego give us some clues as to where he stands on this question. It is likely that these two pamphlets predate both the *Brief Account of Joseph* and the *Brief Account of Abraham*.[26]

24) *Records*, 42.

25) Apparently, some missionaries performed extempore translations of written versions of the Bible into dialects as the occasion required—a practice that was met with some disapproval. See *Records*, 65.

26) See Shin Kataoka and Yin-Ping Cream Lee, eds., *Wan Qing Minchu Ou Mei Chuanjiaoshi Shuxie de Guangdonghua Wenxian Jingxuan (Selected Cantonese Publications by Western Missionaries in China (1828~1927))* (Hong Kong: T. T. Ng Chinese Language Research Centre, 2022), 68-69, suggesting a publication

Legge himself writes that these pamphlets were meant to facilitate presentations of these biblical stories at a time when he did not yet speak the dialect fluently:

> They were produced early in my mission life in Hongkong, and before I was familiar with the speaking of Cantonese in any connected narrative or discourse. I used to go from house to house, and shop to shop; and where I had the opportunity, to tell off or read these two stories, which often led to interesting conversation.[27]

Had Legge been more familiar with the Cantonese dialect at this stage of his missionary career, he might have attempted oral explications of these stories. But being insufficiently practiced in the dialect, he had these pamphlets printed so that he could read the stories aloud to his listeners. Proselytization is rarely a matter of distributing pamphlets alone, as the above reminds us—the pamphlet itself would have only been the starting point for further conversation, though a missionary must be resigned to the possibility that it just might be the final word for many readers. As such, it must be sufficiently accurate and accessible. Both pamphlets by Legge contain largely faithful translations of the original biblical text, but several features already reflect the techniques that Legge would use in his later novelizations.

Neither pamphlet yet uses any of the novelistic conventions that we see in the accounts of Abraham and Joseph, though both contain the biblical story

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date of 1844 for both pamphlets.

27) Quoted in James Dyer Ball, *Readings in Cantonese Colloquial: Being Selections from Books in the Cantonese Vernacular with Free and Literal Translations of the Chinese Character and Romanized Spelling* (Hong Kong: Kelly & Walsh, 1894), viii.

followed by a lengthy commentary. The main text of *Repentance of the Prodigal Son* ≪浪子悔改≫, for example, spans just over three pages, but a commentary spans more than seven pages, focusing on the nature of repentance and the forgiveness of God.[28] This story is one of the most famous in the New Testament: a son, wishing to possess his share of the inheritance before his father has passed away, demands it from his father and then squanders it; he returns to his father in repentance, and finds that his father has been waiting for him all along. For the most part, Legge's version downplays contextual specificity in favor of more immediately understandable references: for example, "one of the citizens of that country" (Luke 15:15)[29] whom the son hires himself out to after squandering his wealth is simply translated as "the headman" 事頭.[30] The text also adds narrative color, for example, in emphasizing the son's realization of his wretched state: when the son says to himself, "I will set out and go to my father" (Luke 15:18), Legge translates it as "this scoundrel that I am, let me just return home" 混賬咯我都翻去罷咯.[31] Additional phrases that evince a more colloquial and explanatory mode are typical: for example, "after he thought this to himself" 佢心裏想完, "who would have thought that" 誰知, "this son proceeded with what he had been planning [to say]" 個個仔就依佢先頭所想, and "that old man heard him speak in such a way" 個個老頭聽佢咁話, none of which are found in the original text.[32]

In his commentary on the story, Legge reduces the parable to a single

28) James Legge, *Langzi Huigai (Repentance of the Prodigal Son)*, Bodleian Library copy, n.d.

29) All English translations of the Bible are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) version, one of the more literal translations of scripture.

30) Legge, *Langzi Huigai*, 1a.

31) Ibid.

32) Ibid., 1b.

easily digestible lesson, in this case, the young son's repentance and his father's forgiveness as an illustration for our need to turn back to God and God's unconditional forgiveness in Jesus Christ. The commentary focuses on the younger son, even though the original story is as much about the elder son as the younger. In fact, since the elder brother's anger toward his father for forgiving his brother is the culmination of the parable, it is arguably the parable's main point, meant as a rebuke to the Pharisees and scribes in the original audience, all "elder brothers" who claim to obey God, but who share none of God's heart for the lost. Legge's commentary, however, incorporates the elder son into his main lesson, as an illustration of how God's forgiveness is more unconditional than man's forgiveness. So focused, in fact, is the pamphlet on the younger son that the final part of the parable is somewhat carelessly translated: when the elder son accuses his father of not even giving him and his friends a "young goat" to celebrate (Luke 15:29), the term is erroneously translated in the Chinese as a "young calf" 牛仔[33]—thus completely missing the comparison that the elder son is making: that his father would kill a young calf for his brother, but not even a young goat for him. And yet, though the part of the story about the elder son could have easily been omitted, Legge preserves it to keep the parable intact. In Luke's gospel, the Parable of the Prodigal Son follows the parables of the lost sheep and lost coin, all addressed to the Pharisees and scribes, and it is likely that all three parables were meant to be taken together. Even though it might have been an easy choice to single out this parable for an evangelical tract, the question of how to extract a biblical story from its narrative context in order to present it to an audience unfamiliar with scripture has no easy answer. We see the problem more acutely in Legge's rendering of the

33) Ibid., 2a.

story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in Daniel 3.

Falling into the Furnace and Not Burned ≪落爐不燒≫, which tells the story of Daniel's three friends who are thrown into a furnace for refusing to worship an idol, consists of over five pages of main text, followed by over six pages of commentary (though the commentarial section is indented from the top of the page by the length of three characters).[34] It begins with an explanation of the story's historical context: King Nebuchadnezzar is described as a fierce and prideful ruler, who lived, we are told, in the same era as some of the Zhou kings, and who besieged Jerusalem for its refusal to pay tribute. This depiction in effect reduces the conflict into a simple contest between good and evil, which belies the complexity of the original story, where Nebuchadnezzar is as much an instrument of God's punishment on his people as he is an antagonist. In an apparent effort to identify Daniel and his friends, who are exiled to Babylon, as Confucian sages, the text describes them as "all having outstanding talents that rise above their peers" 皆有出類拔萃之才,[35] a phrase derived from a passage in *Mencius* 2A.2 that is specifically applied to Confucius.[36] In the *Brief Account of Joseph*, Joseph is also described as "peerless in his intelligence" 聰明絕倫.[37] The Bible, however, never focuses on the men's intelligence, but rather on their faithfulness.

Because the story of Daniel's friends is told apart from the larger narrative of the Book of Daniel, much of the narrative tension in the original is lost. Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream had resulted in the

34) James Legge, *Luolu Bushao (Falling into the Furnace and Not Burned)*, Bodleian Library copy, n.d.

35) Ibid., 1a.

36) See James Legge, *The Works of Mencius*, Vol. 2 of *The Chinese Classics* (Hong Kong: At the Author's, 1861), 72.

37) Oh Soon-bang, et al., *Qingdai Jidu Zongjiao Xiaoshuo Xuanzhu*, v. 1, 304.

king's confession that Daniel's God is "a God of gods and a Lord of kings" (Dan 2:47). The king's decision to construct a golden image and require all to worship it, which immediately follows this confession in the narrative (though a long time might have since elapsed), is therefore highly dissonant. The pamphlet, by presenting the furnace episode as a standalone story, avoids this complexity in Nebuchadnezzar's mercurial character. Moreover, because we are not given the full narrative arc, the sudden absence of Daniel is puzzling; he is mentioned as though he were the main character in the beginning of the pamphlet, but then disappears from the story altogether. The original biblical narrative also does not explain Daniel's absence in this episode, but the context implies that he might have been shielded from the proclamation to worship the image while at the king's court, while his friends were in the province—and of course, Daniel himself would face his own trial in the lions' den in Daniel 6. That Legge does not simply omit Daniel from the story suggests that he felt bound to preserve the general biblical context, though the inclusion of Daniel results in a seemingly superfluous character.

Although the commentary to the story predictably calls for the worship of the true God, the bulk of it lauds the character and actions of a "gentleman" (*junzi* 君子) in the Confucian tradition: if one succeeds in being such a gentleman, "after one dies, one's spirit and soul can be saved and can delight in heaven's good prosperity" 死後靈魂得救, 可享天堂嘅美福.[38] Legge compares Daniel's three friends with the "great man" (*da zhangfu* 大丈夫) in *Mencius* 3B.7, he who "cannot be swayed by riches and honors, and would not bend to awe and force" 富貴不能移, 威武不能屈.[39] The

38) Legge, *Luolu Bushao*, 3b.

39) Ibid., 4b. Cf. Legge, *The Works of Mencius*, 141.

friends' loyalty to God is also compared to loyalty to one's sovereign: if treason against one's sovereign is a great evil, how much more is treason against God who shows more grace than a sovereign? In short, the emphasis in the commentary is on individual and social ethics. Legge describes what the friends did in this case as "righteousness" (yi 義), alluding to the passage in *Mencius* 6A.10 on choosing "righteousness" over life itself.[40] The appeal to the authority of the *Mencius* presupposes a relatively learned audience (though granted, the quotations are among the best-known passages in the *Mencius*), but the story itself is also written in a colloquial form that could reach even the illiterate. Following these pamphlets, Legge's accounts of Joseph and Abraham might be considered more mature examples of evangelical tracts that seek to appeal to both learned and popular audiences. Difficult decisions, however, that arise from extracting biblical stories from their larger narrative arcs would also present themselves in these longer and more complex texts.

Ⅳ. The *Brief Account of Joseph*

The *Brief Account of Joseph*, which tells the story of how Joseph is sold by his brothers as a slave, but later saves them after becoming the prime minister of Egypt, consists of 51 pages of main text and commentary, divided into six chapters, with an additional three pages of illustration. The preface, which is identical to the preface for the *Brief Account of Abraham* published five years later, makes the following claim:

40) Legge, *Luolu Bushao*, 6b. Cf. Legge, *The Works of Mencius*, 287.

> 此紀雖似小說之體，實非小說之流。蓋非無是事而憑空描形畫影，亦非因是事而任意插葉添花，乃據事直陳，不敢稍有加減於其間。
>
> This account, though it appears in the style of a novel, is not in fact in the same genre as a novel; it does not depict and fabricate out of thin air events that never happened, nor does it take a true event and arbitrarily "graft on leaves and add blossoms." Rather, it tells the events as they happened, not daring in the slightest to add or subtract from them.[41]

Legge's novelization of a biblical narrative, intended to reach a popular audience, required a disclaimer. The "novel" (*xiaoshuo* 小說) was still at this time a genre of low repute in China, while the biblical narrative is part of a sacred text. The missionary must assure a reader who approaches this text that, despite the trappings of a popular literary form, it is worth his careful attention.[42] The preface also proceeds to justify the work's existence: it explains that when people read the Bible, they inevitably drift off to sleep, but with novels, "they read them without tiring, and once they open them, they do not put them down" 觀之不倦，披之不釋.[43] It is because of such careless readers that this work is necessary. But the more this work succeeds in "pleasing the crowd," the more it risks displacing scripture itself.

Hence, we have the bold claim that nothing has been added to or omitted from the biblical narrative, as though the work were an unaltered version of the sacred text. It does not, however, displace the biblical narrative, but

41) Oh Soon-bang, et al., *Qingdai Jidu Zongjiao Xiaoshuo Xuanzhu*, v. 1, 302.

42) Representations of biblical stories in popular literary forms are, of course, not uncommon. Verse paraphrases of the Bible have existed since the early medieval period, and plays about the nativity and Christ's passion have been common sources of entertainment from the middle ages up to the present day. The difference, however, is that the audience is expected to know that a sacred text is the basis for these literary retellings, something that a missionary could hardly expect from a Chinese audience in the nineteenth century.

43) Oh Soon-bang, et al., *Qingdai Jidu Zongjiao Xiaoshuo Xuanzhu*, v. 1, 302.

instead reflects it faithfully—and yet it is necessarily different from it, since otherwise it would have no reason to exist: this is the central tension of this work. But the claim is misleading. Although it may be true that the main story is unaltered, we can easily identify numerous small additions and omissions, even apart from the more substantial omissions that we will address later.

There is no doubt that some details are omitted simply to avoid confusing the readers, such as Joseph's claim to be able to perform divination (Gen 44:15) and his fiscal policies in Egypt (Gen 47:15-26)—the former for potentially suggesting that divination is a legitimate practice, and the latter for being overly technical. Genesis 42:30-34, where the brothers recount to Jacob their conversation with the lord of Egypt (that is, Joseph, though unbeknownst to them), is omitted because of its repetitiveness. (Legge does not always avoid repetitions, but in this case, he might have been trying to limit the length of an already long chapter.) A cultural taboo—the fact that the Egyptians eat apart from the Israelites (Gen 43:32)—is also omitted. There appears to be only one omission due to carelessness: the line describing how the brothers "sat down to eat a meal" (Gen 37:25) after casting Joseph into a dry well is inexplicably omitted, even though it is one of the most memorable verses in the passage, succinctly capturing the brothers' cruelty and heartlessness.

Additions to the text that imbue it with more narrative color and provide explanations are more common than omissions, much like in the Cantonese pamphlets. For example, when the brothers agree with Judah's plan to sell Joseph to Midianite traders, the original "And his brothers listened" (Gen 37:27) becomes the more colorful "All replied, 'What you have said is very much in accordance with our humble desire'" 眾曰：所言甚合愚意.[44] Other additions contextualize the text for readers unfamiliar with the geography and

culture of the Ancient Near East. For example, time indicators give a sense of the geographical distance between places, such as when the man whom Joseph encounters at Shechem tells him that his brothers "had left a few days ago" 數日前離此[45] for Dothan, where the original text simply reads, "They have moved from here" (Gen 37:17). Jacob's command for Joseph to put his hand under his thigh to swear that he will not bury him in Egypt (Gen 47:29) is given the explanation that, "As it turns out, putting a hand under the thigh is the way to make vows in nations of the West" 原來放手腿下, 乃西國說誓之例 (the same gesture is longer glossed in the *Brief Account of Abraham*).[46] To complete the historical context of the story, an additional sentence is added at the very end of the account to summarize what happens four hundred years later to the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt.

Generally, the narrative of the *Brief Account of Joseph* is prone to explaining too much. For example, it gives a somewhat unnecessary accounting of how the number seventy (the number of people from Jacob's household who arrive in Egypt) is arrived at.[47] And when Joseph is thrown into a pit by his brothers, we are told that it is because there was no water in the pit that he did not drown, whereas the original text simply notes that the pit was empty with no water in it (Gen 37:24), leaving it to the readers to interpret its significance. Later, when Joseph is sold to Midianite traders, Reuben, who had persuaded his brothers not to kill Joseph, is apparently absent; we do not know this from the original text until we are told that Reuben returned to find Joseph no longer in the pit (Gen 37:29). The *Brief*

44) Ibid., 305.
45) Ibid.
46) Ibid., 324.
47) Ibid., 321.

Account, however, points out that, “as it turns out, when the traders passed by, Reuben was not there” 原來客人過時, 流便不在.[48] John T. P. Lai suggests that Legge is addressing a textual flaw in the biblical text by inserting this explanation,[49] but it seems more likely that the insertion is intended simply to underscore what careful readers would have noticed anyway.

In an apparent attempt to attract readers, the text makes use of various literary and cultural clichés, and does it so often that it becomes at times wearisome, or even unnecessarily jarring. To describe Potiphar’s wife’s lust for Joseph, the text, following the conventional trope of the lewd woman, translates the original “[she] lifted up her eyes at Joseph” (Gen 39:7) as “she stirred up her licentious thoughts, and looked askance [at him] with a pair of lustful eyes” 動起淫念, 斜著一雙色眼.[50] When referring to Pharaoh’s dream, it calls it “a dream of Nanke” 南柯一夢,[51] an idiom derived from a Tang story about the Governor of Nanke (literally, the Southern Tributary State) that came to refer to an illusion. But Pharaoh’s dream turns out to be a prophetic vision, far from an illusion, such that the term used is hardly appropriate. Other expressions that portray Pharaoh’s court as though it were a court in imperial China seem to go too far to accommodate Chinese readers, as though they cannot be trusted to imagine that there are other cultures distinct from their own. An egregious example of a jarring use of a literary cliché is the text’s rendering of Jacob’s instruction to his sons during a famine to go to Egypt and purchase food: the original “Go down and buy

48) Ibid., 305.

49) John T. P. Lai, “Fictional Representation of the Bible: Chinese Christian Novels of the Late 19th Century,” *Literature and Theology: An International Journal of Religion, Theory and Culture* 28.2 (2014): 204.

50) Oh Soon-bang, et al., *Qingdai Jidu Zongjiao Xiaoshuo Xuanzhu*, v. 1, 307.

51) Ibid., 311.

grain for us there, that we may live and not die" (Gen 42:2) becomes "You all should go there and make the purchase, so that our lives may be prolonged and we may not die—is that not a wonderful idea?" 爾曹往彼采買, 俾得延命不死, 豈不美哉.[52] The last clause, which might be rendered more colloquially as "isn't that a swell idea!", is wholly inappropriate to the context.

Apart from these small additions and omissions, having to extract the Joseph story from the Book of Genesis means that decisions have to be made to exclude passages that may be central to the original narrative, but not as much to the standalone story. Unlike the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the story of Daniel's friends, both of which are short and relatively self-contained, the story of Joseph dominates the last third of Genesis, cannot be fully understood without the context of the earlier generations of the patriarchs, and contains a seemingly unrelated story—that of Judah and Tamar—wedged in between the brothers' plot against Joseph and the start of Joseph's service under the Egyptian captain Potiphar. It is no surprise that the story of Judah and Tamar is omitted, as well as other passages ostensibly extraneous to the main plot, such as the genealogy of Jacob's descendants (Gen 46:8-25) and Jacob's prophecies (Gen 49:1-28). The Judah and Tamar story, where Judah unknowingly has relations with his twice widowed daughter-in-law, might have also been omitted out of respect for cultural sensitivities. But beyond these reasons, the omission of this episode along with the genealogy and prophecies can be explained by their significant theological implications.

The figure of Judah, ironically, is arguably the most important character in the Joseph story, if we take a wider perspective of the narrative. It is Judah

52) Ibid., 314.

who comes up with the idea of selling Joseph to Midianite traders, he who volunteers to be the pledge for Benjamin's safety when Jacob refuses to let Benjamin go down to Egypt, and he who gives the celebrated speech before Joseph (then still in disguise) where he volunteers to be his prisoner in place of Benjamin. This character—initially responsible for Joseph's fate, and then ultimately redeeming himself through a selfless act to protect Benjamin (Joseph's only brother from the same mother)—is also later the subject of Jacob's most famous prophecy, that "the scepter will not depart from Judah," traditionally understood as a prophecy about the Messiah (Gen 49:10). All this makes the story of Judah and Tamar crucial to the narrative, highlighting Judah's weaknesses, as well as willingness to acknowledge his wrong, in light of his later pivotal role in redeeming himself and his brothers in Joseph's eyes through his repentance. Joseph, in comparison, is a relatively bland character who has no faults—though commentators have long regarded him as a type for Christ. The significance of Judah is further accentuated by the genealogy that lists Judah's sons, especially Perez (born of Tamar), who will be an ancestor of the Davidic line (see Ruth 4:18-22). But the choice to focus on Joseph in this extracted tale renders the character of Judah relatively inconsequential, as though any other brother could have easily played the same role, and obscures the messianic implications of the original text.

That Legge downplays these implications comes as no surprise given his focus in the commentaries not on the theological issues in the text, but on its socio-ethical implications, especially in Confucian terms. Although the main text is far from colloquial, containing many difficult words and phrases drawn from the classics,[53] it is in the commentaries where Legge's appeal

53) There are indications that Legge might have sought to simplify the language as much as possible, though he is not consistent. When Jacob blesses Pharaoh in

to learned readers is most obvious. These commentaries follow the practice in the Cantonese pamphlets of emphasizing social and individual ethics. For example, in the commentary to the first chapter, Jacob is criticized for failing to "manage his household" (*zhijia* 治家)—an ideal from the *Great Learning* ≪大學≫—because of the partiality that he shows Joseph.[54] The commentary also encourages people to "enlarge and complete" (*kuochong* 擴充) their better nature—a reference to *Mencius* 2A.6 about enlarging and completing one's benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge[55]—so that they may repent. Lastly, it faults the brothers for their lack of filial piety in deceiving their father, though it also quotes from Ephesians 6:4, warning fathers not to provoke their children to anger. Legge's strategy appears to be to invoke canonical texts, both the Confucian classics and Christian scripture, as containing the interpretive key to understanding this story, putting both on an equal footing. Legge emphasizes the universal (filial piety, fraternal love, etc.) rather than the particular, applying the language of the Confucian classics broadly to Christian scripture. His overarching purpose seems to be to make the biblical story as amenable as possible to Confucian interpretation, avoiding more controversial readings that are particular to Christian exegesis. Only in the commentary to the last chapter of Joseph's account does Legge offer a historical view of sin, beginning with the Fall, and continuing through Noah, the calling of Abraham, and the promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants. And it is to Abraham that

Genesis 47:7, Legge uses the term "wishing long life" (*zhushou* 祝壽), whereas the Delegates' Version has the more accurate, but less common, "proclaiming a blessing" (*zhugu* 祝嘏). But later, the term *zhugu* is used to describe how God has blessed Jacob and how Jacob blesses Joseph's sons. See Oh Soon-bang, et al., *Qingdai Jidu Zongjiao Xiaoshuo Xuanzhu*, v. 1, 321, 324-25.

54) Oh Soon-bang, et al., *Qingdai Jidu Zongjiao Xiaoshuo Xuanzhu*, v. 1, 306.

55) See Legge, *The Works of Mencius,* 77-80.

Legge would turn in his second novelization.

Ⅴ. The *Brief Account of Abraham*

Viewed from the perspective of Legge's accommodationist inclinations, Abraham's story is, on the whole, more difficult to render than Joseph's.[56] Joseph's story—with its depictions of injustice, lust, betrayal, turns of fortune, and forgiveness and reconciliation—has an immediate appeal to any audience. But Abraham's story focuses almost entirely on the relationship between Abraham and the God who calls him, with several episodes that are well known for their Christological implications. The crux of the Genesis narrative has always been the lineage of faith that starts from Abraham and continues through Isaac, Jacob, and his twelve sons. When the *Brief Account of Joseph* extracts the Joseph story from this narrative arc, much of the legacy of the patriarchs is downplayed, such that even the covenant in Genesis 46:2-4—where God appears to Jacob, proclaims himself "the God of your father" (Gen 46:3), and renews his promise to make him into a great nation—is omitted. But by starting the narrative with Abraham, the forefather of them all, Legge is able to explain the history of God's people from the moment of Abraham's call.

The *Brief Account of Abraham*, consisting of 47 pages of main text and commentary, is only slightly shorter than its predecessor.[57] It contains many

56) For the text of the *Brief Account of Abraham*, I use the annotated edition of John T. P. Lai, ed., *Wan Qing Jidujiao Xushi Wenxue Xuancui (Anthology of Late Qing Christian Narrative Fiction)* (New Taipei: Ganlan chuban youxian gongsi, 2012), 51-78. I also consulted the 1862 edition.

57) The account is divided into four chapters, with their respective commentaries,

of the features that we have already observed for the Joseph account, including minor deviations from the original in order to add narrative color and to accommodate the text to Chinese cultural expectations (such as rendering Pharaoh's court once again as though it were a Chinese imperial court). Legge's inclination, as usual, is to stay as faithful as possible to the biblical text unless there is a compelling reason to omit certain passages. Episodes such as Abraham's dispute with Abimelech over a well of water (Gen 21:22-34), or Abraham's purchase of a tomb to bury Sarah (Gen 23), could have easily been omitted, or substantially shortened, without any confusion about the main plot, but Legge faithfully translates them. Even the genealogy of Nahor is given in its entirety, even though Legge moves it to a different place in the narrative to set up the visit of Abraham's servant to Canaan, where he meets Isaac's future spouse Rebekah, Nahor's granddaughter.[58]

Some of the more obvious omissions in this account are conspicuously connected to Israel's future conquest of the Promised Land. For example, the battles between the four kings and fives kings in Genesis 14 are for most part translated, even though the details are not necessary to the progression of the core narrative—it would have been sufficient to note that these battles eventually lead to the capture of Abraham's nephew Lot, and thus embroil Abraham in the conflict. The only verses in this passage that are, in fact, omitted are Genesis 14:5-7, where mention is made of the Rephaim, the Horites, the Amalekites, and the Amorites, traditionally some of the Israelites' fiercest enemies in their quest to conquer the land of Canaan. The account of Abraham's covenant sacrifice (Gen 15:7-21) is also omitted, perhaps to

rather than six chapters in the Joseph account. There are no accompanying illustrations.

58) See Lai, *Wan Qing Jidujiao Xushi Wenxue Xuancui*, 72-73.

avoid its theological implications, but likely also because it concludes with another mention of the Israelites' future conquest: God's promise that Abraham's descendants would enter the land of Canaan only after four hundred years of affliction. Even the story of the incestuous union of Lot and his daughters in Genesis 19:30-38, likely omitted due to concerns for Chinese sensitivities about incest (like the story of Judah and Tamar), may have also been omitted because it is the story of the origin of the Moabites and Ammonites, Israel's enemies. Hence, the conquest narrative, which portends harsh trials for God's people and foreshadows the church as militant, seems to be systematically excluded from the account.

If the Joseph story might be told as a continuous tale of adventure, the Abraham story consists more of discrete episodes with theological significance. Legge, however, is reluctant to interpret these episodes through the lens of Christian exegesis. The Abraham chapters in Genesis contain two of the most famous Christological episodes in the whole Old Testament: the visit of Abraham by three men in Genesis 18, before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22. In Genesis 18, when Abraham is visited by three men, the LORD (who might be one of the men) promises him that his wife Sarah shall bear a son. Unlike the Delegates' Version, which transliterates the divine Tetragrammaton as Yehehua 耶和華, Legge simply translates it as "Lord" (*zhu* 主), or avoids translating it altogether.[59] In Genesis 18:22, the original text tells us, without specifying the number of men, that "the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD." The Delegates' Version supplies the number two, in accordance with the traditional view that

59) Ibid., 62. Elsewhere, Legge translates the Tetragrammaton as *shangdi* 上帝, but he is inconsistent. See the translation of Genesis 12:1, 12:7, and 13:18 in Lai, *Wan Qing Jidujiao Xushi Wenxue Xuancui*, 54-55.

these two men are the two angels who arrive in Sodom in Genesis 19:1, and that the third man is the LORD himself.

The *Brief Account of Abraham*, however, specifies that three men went toward Sodom.[60] Lai assumes that this is an error and emends the text accordingly,[61] but it need not be so. By supplying the number three, Legge sidesteps the question of how the LORD could appear in human form, which is consistent with his avoidance of the Tetragrammaton earlier in the same passage. Since all three men have left, it is a less plausible interpretation that God has physically appeared as a person to speak with Abraham. The potential theophany (or even Christophany) is hence obscured in Legge's version of the text.[62] Regardless of Legge's actual view of this controversial passage, there is no doubt that in the 1850s, the suggestion that the Judeo-Christian God may appear in human form had become politically perilous, especially with the claim of the Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 (1814~1864) to be the literal younger brother of Jesus.[63] By contrast, in his Cantonese pamphlet on Daniel 3, published before the Taiping rebels had become a real threat, Legge is less cautious: he translates the name of the fourth man in the furnace who protects Daniel's friends as "the son of God" 上帝嘅仔, even though the original text could also be rendered "a son of the gods" (Dan 3:25).[64] Predictably, in the commentary that follows this

60) James Legge, *Yabolahan Jilüe (Brief Account of Abraham)* (Hong Kong: Yinghua shuyuan, 1862), 9a.

61) Lai, *Wan Qing Jidujiao Xushi Wenxue Xuancui*, 62 n. 55.

62) For a discussion of the complexities in Genesis 18, see Bogdan Gabriel Bucur, *Scripture Re-envisioned: Christophanic Exegesis and the Making of a Christian Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 42-70.

63) Legge's close friendship with Hong Rengan 洪仁玕(1822~1864), a younger cousin of Hong Xiuquan, is well known. See Pfister, *Striving for the 'Whole Duty of Man'*, 43.

64) Legge, *Luolu Bushao*, 3a.

Abraham chapter, Legge avoids any discussion of theology, but focuses on social ethics, such as Abraham and Lot's hospitality in unknowingly entertaining angels.

The sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 is the other episode often given a Christological interpretation. In the original text, Isaac is called Abraham's "only son" whom he loves (Gen 22:2), and commentators have often pointed out how this potentially foreshadows Christ as God's only begotten son. Legge's account translates this verse as follows: "Your only son born from your principal wife is Isaac, whom you love" 爾嫡出子, 止一以撒, 爾所愛者.[65] This is, of course, an interpretation of the biblical text aimed at explaining why Isaac is called Abraham's only son when he has another son, Ishmael, by Sarah's maidservant. The original text does not emphasize Isaac's status as the only son from a principal wife, while the New Testament explicitly refers to Isaac as the only son promised by God (Gal 4:23). Legge avoids the Christological interpretation: in the commentaries to this chapter and the next, he focuses on the distinction between a principal wife's son and a concubine's son, and how God does not regard a son from a concubine as legitimate, because concubinage itself is illegitimate. This is a rather strained social commentary against concubinage based on the biblical text, since God favors Isaac over Ishmael principally because he is the son that God promised, not because he is the son of a principal wife.

But this interpretive strategy by Legge is interesting for another reason: he explains that the reference to Isaac as Abraham's only son is how the biblical text implicitly criticizes the system of concubinage "in the style of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*" 春秋筆法.[66] Here, Legge compares scripture

65) Lai, *Wan Qing Jidujiao Xushi Wenxue Xuancui*, 69.
66) Ibid., 78.

with a Confucian classic that has a hermeneutical tradition where every phrase must be carefully parsed to reveal the sage's moral judgments. It would seem then that scripture must be read with the same kind of care. So what are we to make of a novelization of scripture that freely omits and adds passages? Has Legge ultimately cast doubt on his own enterprise? Perhaps for the sake of proselytization, it is sometimes necessary to render a sacred text more accessible by altering it, even at the cost of obscuring its meaning. Whether that purpose was worth the cost is a question with which Legge, as a missionary, no doubt had to wrestle.

Ⅵ. Conclusion

Both the Joseph and Abraham accounts establish equivalencies between Christian and Confucian ethics in order to make Chinese audiences more amenable to the claims of scripture. Both are written with a literary polish to satisfy the literary sensibilities of learned readers, but are also filled with narrative color that might appeal to those eager to hear a good story. But neither points directly to the theological implications raised by the original biblical texts. In many ways, Legge's focus on social and individual ethics makes these works akin to the "pre-evangelistic dialogues" of Matteo Ricci (1552~1610) in his famous *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* ≪天主實義≫, where arguments about philosophy and ethics precede the presentation of the gospel.

It is telling that Legge never attempted another such work, and that almost none of his fellow missionaries appeared willing to follow in his steps. Only George Piercy (1829~1913) published a similar work, the *Brief Account of*

Elijah ≪以利亞紀畧≫, several years later in 1863, but even then, we can discern an important difference.[67] Piercy also uses chapter titles and opening verses in the traditional novelistic style, but his commentaries are no longer focused on Confucian ethics; instead, they contain far more direct allusions to Jesus and the gospels. The fundamental enterprise of the missionary—"preaching Christ and Him crucified"—had not changed.[68] But the confidence in the accommodationist stance—presenting Christianity in the garb of Confucianism—seemed to have waned toward the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, efforts to present the Bible in a *lingua franca* appeared better equipped to succeed in the context of China's own literary revolution, which cast doubt on the relevance of the whole Confucian tradition and works written in the classical style.

For Legge, Confucian ethics had always been a means to an end. Looking back on his missionary career in his letter to the assembly at the 1877 Conference in Shanghai, he notes that the "all-important" consideration in winning the populace over to the "doctrine of the Cross" is: "How best to awaken in the minds of the Chinese a sense of sin?"[69] He answers that "it is by taking of the things of Christ and showing them to men, that the Holy Spirit convinces of sin and righteousness and judgment."[70] At the end of his

67) For a comprehensive list of biographies of biblical figures written in Chinese by missionaries in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Zhang Yafei, "Wan Qing Shengjing Renwu Zhuanji Yanjiu—Yi Shengjing Jieshou Shi de Shijiao" ("Late-Qing Chinese Biographies of Biblical Figures—From the Perspective of Reception History of the Bible") (PhD Diss. The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2017), 221-34. The only work that appears inspired by Legge's novelizations is Piercy's work on Elijah.

68) Legge, *Confucianism in Relation to Christianity*, 9, paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 2:2.

69) Ibid., 11.

70) Ibid., alluding to John 16:8.

letter, Legge writes, almost as a reassurance to fellow missionaries, that he has not capitulated to the sage:

> Christianity cannot be tacked on to any heathen religion as its complement, nor can it absorb any into itself without great changes in it and additions to it. Missionaries have not merely to reform, though it will be well for them to reform where and what they can; they have to revolutionize; and as no revolution of a political kind can be effected without disturbance of existing conditions, so neither can a revolution of a people's religion be brought about without heat and excitement.[71]

If his novelizations were only meant to pave the way, Legge might have indeed anticipated a greater revolution to come. The accounts of Joseph and Abraham, in their reticence concerning "the things of Christ," could therefore be seen as establishing a mutually acceptable calm before the "heat and excitement" that must inevitably accompany any true conversion.

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71) Ibid., 12.

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<Abstract>

James Legge(1815~1897), best known for his translations of the Chinese Confucian and Daoist classics, spent thirty years as a missionary at Malacca and Hong Kong before assuming the first professorship of Chinese at Oxford. Some of his lesser-known works published in Hong Kong include two "brief accounts"(*jilüe* 紀畧) of the biblical stories of Joseph(*Yuese jilüe*, 1852) and Abraham(*Yabolahan jilüe*, 1857), which

rewrite the original narratives in the style of Chinese fiction. Ostensibly meant to broaden scripture's appeal to Chinese readers, Legge's "novelizations" nevertheless hew so closely to the biblical text that they are largely translations, albeit with some additions and omissions. This paper analyzes these two works in the context of Protestant missionary debates in the mid- to late nineteenth century on how to proselytize the Chinese. It shows how the works are written to appeal to both learned and popular audiences, and how they extract the biblical stories from their original narrative arcs in order to underscore their socio-ethical teachings while downplaying their theological implications.

Key Words : James Legge(제임스 레게), Bible translations(성경 번역), fiction(소설), nineteenth-century Protestant missions (19세기 개신교 선교), literature and religion(문학과 종교), Christian and Confucian ethics(기독교 및 유교 윤리)