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A LETTER

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY,

PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY ;

ON THE

PANTHEISTIC AND ON THE BUDDHISTIC TENDENCY OF THE
CHINESE AND OF THE MONGOLIAN VERSIONS OF
THE BIBLE PUBLISHED BY THAT SOCIETY.

BY THE REV. S. C. MALAN, M.A.,

OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND VICAR OF BROADWINDSOR, DORSET.

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A LETTER,

ETC., ETC.

MY LORD,

I TAKE the liberty of addressing you—the PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY, on a subject of importance connected with that Society, and relating to China. I wish to draw your Lordship's attention to a matter of far greater moment than bales of silk, or chests of the fragrant leaf from the Bo-hea hills; though it be about the Middle-Kingdom. I come to plead the cause of the CHINESE VERSION OF THE BIBLE.

About two years ago, I happened to visit the Depository of the Bible Society, for the purpose of making extracts from a manuscript, most kindly placed at my disposal by the Committee of the Society. During a conversation with one of the Secretaries, I then heard for the first time of the long and weary fight that had lasted for years among Missionaries in China, and among their friends at home, as to which of the two terms SHIN or SHANG-TE, should be used as a rendering for GOD, in the translation of the Chinese Scriptures. I heard also at the same time, that no member of the Committee of

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the Bible Society was able to decide the point ; and that therefore, the Society was driven to refer it to Missionaries in China ; some of whom advocated one term, while others strongly urged the claims of the other. So that, in fact, the Bible Society was either divided on the subject, or, perhaps, indifferent as to the result.

I had no opportunity of hearing more about it, until some months after ; when an anonymous pamphlet, published in this country, and called "*Shin v. Shang-Te ; or, Antagonistic Versions of the Chinese Scriptures,*" etc., fell into my hands. This pamphlet, which professes to give an impartial review of the controversy, is written by a member of the Bible Society of thirty years' standing, who urges that Body in the strongest and most partial terms, to decide in favour of the word of his own choice, SHIN, as a rendering for God. But, although the writer admits that he is "the only person in England capable of giving a determined exhibition of an opinion on the subject," his arguments appeared to me so faulty, and the way of putting them so weak, that I felt great regret so important a question as the one discussed, should be left in such hands and be treated in such a manner. And I thought, that, if it were possible to make the question rest—not on mere opinion—but on the only foundation on which it ought to rest, namely, on matter of fact, it would both contribute materially to the spread of true Christianity in China, and also do service indirectly to the cause of the Bible Society ; by settling the only course to be followed on sound principles, in reference to this important question.

I then began to study the matter as deeply as the Chinese authorities I had at hand would allow. These, however soon *demonstrated*—for their evidence can be called by no other term—on what side the truth lies. And I was not long in coming at the deliberate conclusion, to which I adhere, that, to hesitate in the choice of the proper term for God in Chinese, can proceed from no other source whatsoever, than from either ignorance or prejudice; two very common accidents, I regret to say, among those who are intrusted with the spreading of CHRIST'S kingdom among the heathen.

But, since the Chinese term for 'God' is intended to render the Hebrew and the Greek originals, I also investigated, as a matter of course, the etymology and the real nature of the Hebrew and Greek terms for God, used in the Bible. And I thus brought together in the small volume, "*Who is God in China, Shin or Shang-Te?*" etc., irrefragable proofs of the meaning of the originals, and of corresponding terms in Chinese; each severally, and the whole collectively borne out by a great number of examples, purposely quoted in order to assist Missionaries in their studies, which they mostly follow at a distance from books of reference; as well as in order to shew, that this question is not one of mere opinion; but that one side of it only can be right; I mean that which rests on facts. My work is, of course, not free from defects; but they are accidents in it only. For, as to the matter of the work—as to the ground upon which I stand, and as to the facts I bring forward to shew, that SHANG-TE is the only Chinese equivalent for 'God,' and

that SHIN, is only 'spirit,' *δαίμων*, and practically Deity, I challenge refutation. And moreover, I add fearlessly, that to deny those facts, argues on the part of him who does it, as I said before, either ignorance, or it may be, prejudice. For scholarship is not a matter of opinion; it rests on proofs, that are incontrovertible. This assertion, I am well aware, might appear arrogant and conceited under other circumstances; but in a matter of such importance, it is necessary to take a decided stand. And in so doing, I am borne out not only by my own intimate conviction of the merits of the case; by the repeated thanks I have received for my work from some of the oldest and ablest missionaries, all strangers to me; but also by the concurring witness of all competent judges in China and in England.

Having thus succeeded in establishing on a more solid ground than had, in some respects, been done before, the fact, that one term only, out of the two proposed, is a correct rendering of the word 'God,' as it is used in Scripture, I naturally informed the Bible Society, that I would gladly supply at cost price copies of my work, for gratuitous distribution among their Agents and Missionaries in China.

In answer to my application, I received, to my great astonishment, the following letter from the Rev. W. Meller, Foreign Editor of the Bible Society, dated Woodbridge Rectory, April 26, 1856,—

“ Dear Sir,

“ I have to inform you that the Committee did

not feel that they should be justified in purchasing any copies of your publication, as this can hardly be regarded as a defence of any principle adopted by the Bible Society. In the difficult controversy which has for sometime engaged the Missionaries in China, the Committee of the Bible Society have forborne to pronounce any decision as to the merits of one view or the other, considering that they must be far less competent to form a judgment, than Missionaries resident in the country; and they have therefore aimed at holding the neutral ground, of being ready to aid the publication of the Word of God, with either one term or the other, as any adequate number of English Missionaries might apply for such aid, supported by the societies with which they are connected."

It is to this laxity of principle in a matter of this kind, MY LORD, that I wish, in particular, to draw your attention. But in order that you may be able to appreciate fully the extent of its bearing, and of the consequences involved in this want of decision on the part of the Bible Society, I must briefly tell you the state of the case, fully made out in detail in the work above alluded to.

The Chinese hold that there are in Nature, two principles, male and female, positive and negative, weak and strong, high and low, superior and inferior—which they term the YANG and the YIN. The combination of those two principles constitutes Nature; which is vivified by male emanations of the YANG, said to reside in the sun,

which is called for that reason, TAE-YANG “the Great Yang;” and by female influences, of the YIN, said to dwell in the moon, which for that reason also is called TAE-YIN or “the Great Yin.” And the *emanation* of both those principles chiefly from the two great luminaries respectively, is called SHIN, that is, Spirit.

This SHIN, or Spirit, of both those principles in general, but of the YANG in particular, is said to pervade the universe, and to give entity to the various objects of creation; in all of which it dwells. This, however, does not happen at random; for this SHIN is expressly sent down from heaven by SHANG-TE, the Supreme Ruler, who is heaven personified; and who, like “Heaven” and “the Most High” in Daniel and elsewhere in Scripture, is One and alone, Father, Lord, Supreme, good, just, and all-powerful; a judge and a rewarder of men, both high and low.

SHIN, then, which, from its nature is a *collective* noun, corresponds obviously to *anima mundi* of the Latin philosophers; to *ψυχὴ τοῦ κόσμου, δαίμων* of the Greeks; and practically, to a vague, indefinite Deity. It is also said of the spirit of man and of beasts, whether good or bad; and it is also liable to lose its energy.

Since, however, SHIN pervades all objects in nature, the Chinese have singled out a good number of them, as *objects of worship*, for the sake of the SHIN, or Spirit, which is supposed to inhabit them. And each of those objects, is thus called a SHIN—practically, and familiarly, ‘a god.’ They constitute the *Pe-Shin* (hundred) ‘multitude of Shins’ of Chinese polytheism.

Some SHINS, however, are worshipped, not under a visible form ; as for instance, the SHINS of the four quarters, &c., and their worship takes place last of all ; for some of them are not even held to be gods at all. But the worship of SHANG-TE occupies always the first and most solemn position in the ritual observances of the Chinese nation ; and none but the Emperor, who is SHANG-TE'S eldest son, has a right to offer a sacrifice to him.

Some of the Protestant Missionaries seeing on the one hand, SHANG-TE, one, alone and supreme, ignorantly identified him with Jupiter ; and would none of him on that account. And, on the other hand, seeing the Chinese worship their many SHINS or 'gods,' said at once : we will translate GOD by SHIN, which means 'gods' ; thereby falling, evidently, into a grievous error of judgment and of doctrine. Lest I should be supposed, unwittingly to mistake or to misrepresent them, I will quote the words of the American Bishop Boone on the subject :* " This is not a question which demands much depth of learning. Plain common sense is all that is needed. If it be admitted that the Chinese have many gods—and Dr. Medhurst himself has said, 'That it is more easy to find a god than a man in China'—then it cannot require a greater amount of learning to ascertain by what name they call them, than to ascertain by what name they designate the genus man."

This reasoning, however, shews, in fact, little 'common sense' ; for it refutes itself. It argues that because

* *Shin v. Shang-Te.*—p. 5.

‘a man,’ and ‘men,’ leave correctly on the mind the generic idea of ‘man,’ therefore ‘a god’ and ‘gods,’ works of men’s hands, or at least, ‘idols,’ give the generic idea ‘GOD,’ with which however they have, in fact, naught in common ; since GOD is *alone* of His kind ; and they ARE NOT. The generic idea of ‘a god’ and ‘gods’ is, obviously, ‘a thing worshipped,’ whatever it be, good or bad ; call it ‘a divinity’ ; and if Bishop Boone’s idea of GOD be that, then his reasoning is correct. But we may well wonder and grieve at such a sentiment on the part of one who has the charge of souls ; especially when this reasoning, which is carried on against the idiom of the Chinese language as well as against true doctrine, is made the ground of strong and bitter party spirit among the Christians in China.

Other Missionaries of better understanding, who believe in the Personal GOD of Scripture, and who thus distinguish between Him, His Spirit, and His other personal attributes, and who do not think that because God is Spirit, therefore Spirit is God—adopt as equivalent for the Scriptural GOD, the one Personal GOD of the Chinese, SHANG-TE. Of these are all the best Chinese scholars, such as Dr. Medhurst, of Shanghaë ; Dr. Legge, of Hong-Kong ; Mr. Milne ; and, as Dr. Medhurst writes to me, “all the English and German Missionaries, who nearly are at one on this subject. The Americans, and not all of them, still hold out for Shin as the generic for GOD.” And with them, this question of SHIN for GOD, appears to be, as a friend of mine in Her Majesty’s service, lately come from China, tells me,—more like the watch-

word of a party, kept up with bitter animosity, than as the result of an indwelling conviction on the part of those who hold it.

The question then resolves itself into this: Those among the Protestant Missionaries who believe in One Personal God, adopt very properly for Him, SHANG-TE; and they also use idiomatically SHIN, for His Spirit. While those who do not appear to believe in a Personal God, but only in a Deity, and that too of a collective kind, adopt SHIN, Spirit, for GOD; and in so doing, they not only perpetuate among the Chinese both Polytheism and Pantheism; but as a matter of course, they render their translations of Holy Scripture, unintelligible to the Chinese. As for instance, when they tell them of *Shin-tche Shing-Shin*, 'the Holy Spirit of Spirit,' varied occasionally with "*Shin-tche Shing-Fung*," the holy-wind of Spirit, and other like incomprehensible or contradictory terms, for "the Holy Spirit of God;" and for other personal attributes when predicated of 'a Spirit' only, and not, as they are in the Bible, of a Personal God.

I will only bring forward one out of many testimonies to the real acceptation of SHIN, from a very great scholar, Mr. A. Rémusat, who, long before this controversy assumed its present importance, wrote in a note to his edition of the *Chung-yung* of Confucius, ch. xvi. 3: "Rien de plus obscur que ce qui est dit des *Kwei-Shin* dans les livres Chinois." "On pourrait cependant conclure du passage qui nous occupe que le sentiment de Confucius sur ces esprits (SHIN), se rapprochait beaucoup du Spi-

nosisme et des idées exprimées dans le fameux passage de Senèque, si souvent cité.” *Quæst. Nat.*, ii., ch. xlv. “Eundem quem nos Jovem intelligunt (altissimi homines) custodem rectoremque universi animum ac spiritum, mundani hujus operis dominum et artificem, cui nomen omne convenit. Vis illum fatum vocare? non errabis.—Vis illum providentiam dicere? recte dices. Vis illum naturam vocare? non peccabis.—Vis illum vocare mundum? non falleris,” etc.

But that is not the GOD of the Bible. And if it be asked how such a term as SHIN could ever be thought a fit substitute for GOD, it must have originated in ignorance of the language, and it must be kept up by prejudice. For of the American missionaries who are now almost the only left in favour of SHIN, Dr. Medhurst writes to me: “In argument, I think them fairly beaten; but the obstinacy of the human mind will not allow men to give up a long-cherished opinion, so long as there is the shadow of a reason to hold on by. The English Bible and Missionary Societies have coincided with us in opinion, and the recent resolution to issue a million New Testaments with SHANG-TE throughout for GOD, and SHIN for Spirit, will go well nigh to defeat the object of our opponents to get up a *usus loquendi* in favour of their term.” This desirable and important object, however, would be both hastened, and, in a great degree, secured by the timely decision of the Bible Society in the matter. For it certainly appears from Mr. Meller’s letter, that Dr. Medhurst was under a false impression; and that the Bible Society has *not yet* “coincided in opinion” with

him and his learned associates, as to the choice of the proper term for 'GOD.'

It is, then, MY LORD, for a Personal GOD, and against a collective Deity only,—as a fit object of Christian worship for the Chinese,—that the Bible Society has been repeatedly called upon to take a decided stand. And it is upon this simple, and yet all-important, question, that the Bible Society has hitherto refused to avow itself; pleading its inability to form a judgment, and, at the same time, professing its readiness to uphold either side. In other words—and to look at it as it seems to be—the Bible Society appears to care little for the result; whether the Chinese worship the GOD of Christians or continue Pantheists, or Polytheists; so that a certain amount of copies of the Bible be printed and circulated, in order to swell the number of their returns.

For, admitting the fact, probably true, that among their managing members there is no one able to form an opinion on this subject, which involves a knowledge of Chinese, not usually cultivated in England, why does not the Bible Society abide, as it professes to do, by the opinion of competent judges? And why does it not frankly admit a principle, instead of preferring to be carried about with every wind of doctrine in this respect? willing, rather, with the same hands to scatter food and poison indiscriminately? For, on the one hand, the Bible Society co-operates in the publication of the million copies of the New Testament, which are being issued with SHANG-TE for GOD; and on the other hand, it reprints in this country copies of St. Luke and of the Acts of the

Apostles, according to the partial and incorrect version of Dr. Morrison. It is indeed 'partial,' for while acknowledging SHANG-TE to be "GOD and SUPREME GOD," and "SHIN, or 'gods,' to denote a sort of spirits like the Roman genii or the Greek dæmons," Dr. Morrison, nevertheless and most unaccountably, renders the GOD of the Bible, by this very word SHIN, which he rightly tells us is only an inferior deity.* It is true that this edition of St. Luke and of the Acts of the Apostles was issued in this country in 1845; but it is evident from Mr. Meller's letter to me, that the Society would be ready to defend this publication at the present day; as far, at least, as Dr. Morrison's contradictory use of SHIN and of SHANG-TE is concerned. Thus, in fact, the Society counteracts with one hand what the other hand attempts to do.

I well remember the late respected Secretary of the Bible Society, the Rev. Mr. Brandram, saying to me, while shewing me over the warehouse of the Society: "We are neither learned nor literary men here; we print books and circulate them"; and I recollect being struck at the time with, to my mind, the strange incongruity between such an admission on his part, and the heavy responsibility that rests on the Society as a BIBLE Society; not, indeed, set apart, but self-established, for the diffusion of the Word of GOD. Since, unquestionably, the responsibility of the Society, which is none the less for being taken in hand *proprio motu*, lies, not in the number of copies printed, sold, or distributed, but,

* See his Dictionary, vol i., p. 163; iii., p. 539; and i., pp. 178, 804.

rather, in the quality of those copies; in the faithful manner in which the word of GOD is transmitted through them.

But, as matters stand at present, one might almost ask, What does the Bible Society understand exactly by the *Bible*. Since, assuredly, there is a limit to human alterations of the sacred text, beyond which it ceases to be the record of GOD's Truth.

For we see that, as regards the millions in China, the Bible Society appears indifferent as to what version is published. A version may have SHIN, 'deity or spirit;' or it may uphold SHANG-TE, the Supreme GOD, as Missionaries think best. The Society is pleased to abide by their verdict, whatever it be; whether correct, prejudiced or ignorant. For some of them, we see, cannot even understand that GOD is not, and cannot be, a generic term, since He is alone of His kind, and therefore has no sort of connexion with 'a god' and 'gods,' called such only by figure of speech, and not for any quality of godliness inherent in them. And that to make Him who alone is, to consist only in the abstract or generic idea presented to the mind by, and gathered from, 'a god' and 'gods,' the work of men's hands, that ARE NOT, is truly to sin against His awful majesty. But, however grievous this error be as regards ourselves, it is increased a thousandfold when forced upon unsuspecting heathen, against reason, and in contradiction to the very meaning of the words of their language. For in this we may follow the insurgents, who, being Chinese, write their language idiomatically. They use SHANG-TE, as Yaou

and Shun did four thousand years ago, for GOD; and they also adopt SHIN for spirit, according to its real and only meaning. For our versions of the Bible should be in the idiomatic language of the nation for which they are made; and not, as is too often the case, in a dialect of our own.

Moreover, this peculiar choice of our own terms, often implies grave consequences in doctrine. I will pass over the Romish versions of the Bible, sanctioned and distributed by the Bible Society, which have repeatedly been alluded to by others; although I do not understand how a version that implies the substitution of the Virgin Mary for OUR LORD JESUS, even in one instance, can be more justifiable on principle, than a Socinian or an Unitarian version. But I will at present advert to another version, which is not less important because it is less known; I mean to the Mongolian New Testament,* translated by Messrs. E. Stallybrass and W. Swan, many years resident in Siberia, and published in this country by the Bible Society in 1846.

We have just heard, of Pantheistic Scriptures for China, and of Romish Bibles for Europe; but what shall we say to a Buddhist Bible for the High-lands of Buddhism in Central Asia? And yet, I fear it is so. I say, "I fear" only; for, as I have not within reach the means of ascertaining it so fully as with regard to the Chinese terms, I venture my remarks on this subject, more as hints, than as positive assertions.

* It is a great pity that edition was not, like the Old Testament, printed in the Mongolian, instead of the Mandchu character.

The translators had to choose one of two terms for GOD in Mongolian, *Tegri* and *Burchan*; and they chose *Burchan*, after Dr. Schmidt, who had previously translated the Old Testament and parts of the New, into Mongolian at St. Petersburg. Whatever be the etymology of the term *Burchan*—whether originally from *Bugh*, *Bug*, (as if from *Bhaga*, ‘worshipful,’ (or *Buh*), and *Chan*, or *Khan*, ‘king’ or ‘prince’—certain it is that in all the classic works in Mongolian to which I have access, *Burchan*, denotes Buddha, and no one else.*

As of old in Ariyana, we notice, among the Tatar tribes that have embraced another absolute religion, like Buddhism or Islamism, a very common feature in such changes; that is, the original term for GOD applied by the new religionists, to inferior deities only, out of hatred or spite. Thus, for instance, in the Zend-Avesta, the *daevas*, originally the good *devas* of Brahmanism, are always taken in evil part; like the good *δαίμων* and *δαίμονες* of Greece, that never were spoken of in after ages but as evil spirits. In like manner in this very instance, the introduction of Buddhism into Mongolia brought in the term *Burchan*, Buddha, as expressive of him who is the highest object of their worship; while the original term for GOD, *Tegri*, is used only for inferior deities, as I have shewn.† *Burchan*, or Buddha, is *Tegri-yin Tegri*, ‘God of Gods,’ and even Khormuzda or Indra is styled *Tegri*, like the rest. Thus too, the Tatars who embraced Islamism, and with it the faith in Allah the God of the Qoran, call GOD by that name, and

* See Appendix I.

† See Appendix I.

apply the original Tatar word *Tañri*, or *Tegri*, to false gods only. *E. g.*, in the good Turkish version of the New Testament, published by the Bible Society at Paris, in 1827, we read, in Acts xvii. 18, *bu gharib Tañrilerin ikhbar idijisi görünür*, “he seemeth to bring tidings of strange gods”; and also xiv. 11, that the gods *Tañriler*, etc. But in St. John x. 34, 35, “I said ye are gods,” etc., we read very properly, *didumki siz illahlar siñiz*, etc.

We gather from this, 1) that, the use of *Burchan*, or Buddha, for GOD, in a translation of the Bible, is very questionable indeed; and 2) that the use of this term *Burchan* in the plural, *Burchad*, for ‘gods,’ in the Old and New Testaments, is not idiomatic, if *Burchan* is retained for the true GOD. In that case *Tegri* would be more correct; after the example of the classic Mongolian writers above quoted.

But since the translators had the choice of the word *Tegri*, of pure Tatar origin, and in use for ‘GOD’ previous to the introduction of Buddhism into Mongolia, it seems a pity that they did not adopt it. For both from its etymology and from its constant use in most of the Tatar dialects, it is not liable to the same objections as the term *Burchan*, which applies especially to Buddha, in the Buddhist country of Mongolia.*

We find then, that in all versions, except the Mongolian, intended for Buddhist countries, the translators have adopted the least objectionable term for ‘GOD,’ in order to avoid the chance of connecting in any way the idea of the GOD of the Bible with ‘the God’ of the Buddhists;

* See Appendix II.

that is, Buddha himself. Whereas in Mongolian, in which there is the choice of the term *Tegri*, a far better equivalent for 'GOD' than *deva*, or *phára*, or *phrá*, it has been left aside, and *Burchan* has been chosen instead, though not without misgivings as to its propriety; for Dr. Schmidt writes, on the heading of his version of the Old Testament, *Yahowa-Burchan-u kagotchin tis-tament*, "the Old Testament of Jehovah-Buddha," words which can convey but a very incongruous idea of the original to the Burjats, for whom those words were intended. And here we must remark the strange fact, that among the Kalmuks, whose tongue is a dialect of the Mongolian, from which tribe they differ in religion, the supreme epithet *Burchan* is used by, I believe, the same translator, Dr. Schmidt—to denote 'false gods,' while *Dedu* is applied to God. Thus, in St. John x. 35, we read, *Te deduyin nogod mun gemen bi ögulemui*, "I have said ye are like a class, or sort, of dedus (gods)"; while we find in Acts xiv. 11, "the gods," etc., rendered by *Börgad inu gumuni dursu*, etc., "the Burchans (the gods) like men," etc.; and ver. 15, "turn *amidu dedu-du* to the living God," etc. So nearly allied are the Mongols and Kalmuks in race and in language, that at one time it was thought possible to make one version of the Bible do for both. And yet we now find the term *Burchan*, Buddha, used in these two sister-versions, made to mean in the one, 'the true GOD,' and in the other, 'a false god' only! Surely, this seems to shew either carelessness or inaccuracy on the part of the translators.

As regards the relative use of SHANG-TE and of SHIN

in Chinese, it is entirely different from that of *Burchan* and of *Tegri* in Mongolian. SHANG-TE answers exactly (as I have shewn at great length in *Who is God in China?*) to *Θέος*, and SHIN to *δαίμων*; while *Burchan* corresponds to *Ζεύς*, and *Tegri* to *Θέος*. In Chinese writings there are no absurd legends about SHANG-TE, as there are about Buddha. It is impossible to read a page of a Buddhist book without loathing the very thought that a term used to designate Buddha should be applied to our GOD. Not so, however, with either *Swayambhur-Bhagavān* in archaic Indian lore, or with SHANG-TE in the oldest works in Chinese. The ideas conveyed to Brahmans and to Chinese by their respective terms, may well be modified or otherwise rectified by Christian teaching to convey an idea of the GOD of the Bible. SHANG-TE, for instance, is one and the same from everlasting; his seat is in Heaven, from whence he looks upon the affairs of men. He appoints Emperors and deposes them; he rewards and punishes; he commands and enforces obedience; in a word, he does upon the earth what he pleases—always for good. And as regards the Self-Existent and Worshipful Being of Brahmanical faith, we read of him repeatedly in Indian classics, as for instance in this passage of the Laws of Manu, ch. i., written B.C. cir. 1200.

“This universe was as yet in darkness, imperceptible, undefinable, undiscoverable by reason, indiscernible, as if it were altogether asleep.”

“Then He who exists by Himself (*Swayambhur-Bhagavān*) the Most High, who is Himself imperceptible, He made this

universe, composed of great elements, perceptible. He, the Almighty, shewed Himself and dispelled the gloom.”

Whereas the Buddhist legends and absurd stories told of Buddha are of a very different nature. And the bare fact of a ‘succession of Buddhas’ is alone sufficient to render such a term as *Burhan*, applied to Buddha only, an unfit equivalent for the GOD we worship.

Those suggestions, MY LORD, are only by way of shewing that the heavy responsibility of a *Bible-Society* is not wholly discharged by the mere expensive printing and publishing of numerous copies of the Bible. It is easy, and, so far also, convenient, to lay the burden of that responsibility on the shoulders of others, be they missionaries, agents, or others, not official members of the Bible Society. But experience teaches us that this only tends to multiply versions, some of them more or less faulty, and that, after all, the responsibility of those manifold versions still continues to rest with the Society that publishes them.

Considering then, on the one hand, the great evil that follows from the lax principle of the Bible Society in declining to exercise any control over the translations of the Bible published wholly or in part at the expense of the Society;—and, on the other hand also, the great good that would result from a firm adherence, on the part of the Society, to sound principles of translation, one cannot help deeply regretting that so influential, so liberal, and so benevolent a Body, should not feel jealous of such high prerogative. If, in the important

case of the Chinese version, the Bible Society would awake to its heavy responsibility as a BIBLE, and not a mere Book, Society, and either listen to the repeated warnings of the ablest judges, such as Drs. Medhurst and Legge, Mr. Milne, and others ; or choose from among her members men able to pass a just and sober judgment on the quality of the versions published, instead of ignoring the subject altogether, the Society would at once raise its character, and rise in importance as an instrument for good at the present time. The objectionable nature of the term SHIN, and the just claims of the term SHANG-TE, as equivalents for ' God ' in the Chinese Scriptures, have both been made as plain as they can possibly be to all who are open to conviction, by common sense, by sound argument and, especially, by proofs. Why, then, does the Bible Society, upon which the whole responsibility rests, prefer to plead ignorance of facts, or incapacity to judge of proofs made plain, rather than adopt the course open to bold and candid men, the CHOICE OF RIGHT, be the result what it will ?

It appears from the latest accounts that the American Bible Society and the American Missionaries alone, and not all of them even, adhere convulsively to the Deity SHIN, against reason and against language. For I hear from one of the ablest men in China, who is an old resident there, under date Feb. 5th, 1856, that " several Americans are wavering in their adhesion to *Shin*. I read to one of them your remarks, that no one with a competent knowledge of the original and Chinese languages could arrive at their conclusion" (that *Shin* is God). " He

seemed to admit that the best of the argument was with us ; but rather pool-pooled the subject as of small importance. This is the way with a good many of the younger men among them. They 'rather guess' that their seniors are wrong, but are not prepared to take an independent course of their own. What you say is too true, that many come into the mission-field, unfurnished for the work before them, and incapable of that mental application to the study of the language, which is absolutely necessary in order to constitute one a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. In the meantime, while the *Shin* men are doing little in preaching, and some of them are fagging away upon a new version of the Scriptures, of which the parts that I have seen are in the style of the 'Old Paths,'—equally rugged and unintelligible ; the New Testament in the Shinghaë version is going abroad far and wide through the country, accompanied largely with the preaching of the Gospel. Churches of Chinese are being gathered, many of whose numbers are characterized by an appreciation of the truth and an energy of character which lead me to hope that ere the end of the present century, Christianity will have gained a positive footing in the Empire."

We see, then, that even Americans, who had pledged themselves to 'the Spirits,' SHIN, begin to waiver in their adherence to them ; so that, in truth, their actions need not influence those of the British and Foreign Bible Society. For we may think that since, in their *revision* of the AUTHORIZED VERSION of the English Bible, the American Associations have not much improved it, they

are not likely to be more successful in Chinese, as we have just heard. The Bible Society, then, not only may, but ought to, take a stand worthy of the cause it professes to embrace, and of the means at its disposal, independently of men's opinion, and for the sake of right and of good alone: instead of placing that very cause in jeopardy, by a want of Christian honesty and of manly spirit, which her supporters have a right to expect. There now exists a version of the Bible in Chinese, published at Shanghaë, which although not perfect, may rank in excellence next to the AUTHORIZED VERSION of the English Bible, for style and for accuracy. The path of duty then is plain and open before the Bible Society, in declaring that it will from henceforth issue that version only, and no other.

Let us put this responsibility upon the lowest ground—that of self-interest. We have heard of countless reams of paper wasted, and of thousands of public money laid out to little or no purpose, in abortive, and therefore useless versions of the Bible; and I have myself seen boxes of the Society's books wasted at stations where they could be of no use. If the Bible Society profess only to print and to publish Bibles, irrespectively of their intrinsic merit as versions, even then, it ought from a feeling of honest pride and of self-sufficiency, aim like the Elzevirs of the Stephens of old, at stamping its publications with a character for accuracy and excellence.

If, however, we rest the claims of the Bible Society on a higher ground—philanthropy, the very name of which excludes all petty considerations of self-love and of

self-interest of any kind—still is the Society's errand to do good unto men, and not harm. But it is not doing good unto them, to offer them one good version of the Bible with the right hand, and to hold out another that is injurious with the left. It is not doing good to the Chinese, to vote even a million copies of the New Testament to teach them to worship their God and our's; and at the same time to print thousands of copies of the same book, to teach them to worship a Deity, which is neither our God nor their's. Especially, when this is done to please both parties; thus from want of a timely decision, pleasing neither.

But, let us put the duty of the Bible Society upon the only ground on which it ought to rest—the highest of all—that of giving liberally to mankind the WORD OF GOD—pure and unadulterated. Can this office be undertaken lightly and thoughtlessly? Can a conscientious and responsible body of men devolve upon others, indiscriminately, the awful responsibility of seeing that the Word given is the WORD OF GOD, and not, as it may be, partly the 'word of man.' We see by repeated examples that it is a vain thing to trust entirely to the opinion of this or of that man only, in versions of the Bible; for 'many men have many minds'; while the Bible has only ONE. This then should be left to be ascertained not to one or two individuals, who look at it through the coloured medium of their own, more or less partial mind; but this sense of the Bible, if made out by Missionaries abroad should, at all events, be sanctioned by as rigid an inquiry as is practicable at home; ere the

Society takes upon itself the awful responsibility of issuing that particular version as a correct image of the original WORD OF GOD. For after all, the versions published by the Bible Society, wholly or in part, become wholly or in part fruits of that Society. And they are estimated neither for their size nor for their colour ; but for the flavour of their wholesome and ripe estate.

And the good done in the Earth by the influence of the Word of GOD, does not depend on the number of copies of it, so much as on the blessing of GOD that may rest upon that Word. One copy of the Bible blessed of GOD to one poor ignorant man, will have done more good ultimately, than hundreds of copies printed and sent about without sufficient care in the due discharge of this important office ; and, therefore, with little well-grounded hope of blessing from on High upon that work. For GOD'S promise abideth still. It is still as true as in the days of the prophet that : "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater : so shall my Word be that goeth out of my mouth : it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it."

It is impossible, MY LORD, that with such a promise as that, the millions of copies of the Bible that have been hitherto circulated by the Bible Society, should have had no greater result in good, if they had all been prepared in a devout spirit and with proper care ; and then

sent forth, not as shipments of goods, but as the WORD OF LIFE, on its solemn errand to save the World. According to GOD'S gracious promise, His Word cannot return unto Him void ; but it must "PROSPER in the thing whereunto HE sent it." Not otherwise. And it cannot be said to go forth as His Word, when sent by the same hands in a double form, as in the case of the Chinese Scriptures—each form contradicting the other. For both cannot be right ; and therefore both cannot be the Word of GOD ; since one teaches GOD as He is ; and the other teaches Him as He is not.

In speaking of so solemn an errand as that of giving the Bible to the heathen, one may well be in earnest. Let the Bible Society then, look well to it. It is not a matter of little or of no moment, which may be done to-day one way, and to-morrow another way, at the whim of Missionaries to whom the matter is carelessly referred by men too little mindful, perhaps, of the heavy responsibility that rests upon them. No. For we know and see, that all Missionaries are not capable judges in matters even of their own province. But it is a question which involves, in general, the highest principle ; and which, in this particular case, is a question of life or death to the Chinese. It is whether they are to be taught to believe in GOD as we, and they, do ; or to be forced against the evidence of their own tongue, and of their highest authorities in literature, to adopt as creator of the world, a Deity only, which, they know, emanates from the sun that shines on them, and is one with their own animal spirits ! Surely that is no boon

to those poor helpless heathens, sitting in the shadow of death, and in that gloom, feeling after GOD if haply they may find Him. It is not shewing an earnest love for their real welfare to give them at once two Bibles and two Gods, caring little which of the two they choose. It is sowing among them with one hand wheat, and with the other tares. It is planting, not so much a Christian Church, as a nursery of future sects and heresies, in the still benighted empire of China.

And this is also, and of course, no question of Church party, since the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; the London Missionary Society; the Wesleyan Society; the Loo-chooan Missionary Society; the Chinese Evangelization Society; and I believe, also, the Church Missionary Society,—all deliberately side together for SHANG-TE. It is a question of giving to the heathen the Word of GOD as much as we can, pure and unadulterated. Before this awful task, all sects and all parties ought to disappear like stars in the bright light of the morning sun. It is a work of the truest philanthropy, that should be carried out on the broadest principles of the love of men. But there can be no real philanthropy without sound principles; and no principle is sound which professes as the Bible Society does in the case of Chinese Scriptures, to abide equally by either side; that is, in truth, by neither. For doubtless and consistently with such a rule of action, if the Society were applied to for a grant to publish Romish copies of the Chinese Bible, with neither SHANG-TE, nor SHIN, but with T'HEEN-CHOO in it, for 'GOD,' its aid would be granted.

I would, therefore, respectfully lay before YOUR LORDSHIP the very great danger, and the grave consequences, of this, I may say, want of principle on the part of the Bible Society. It is a mistake, I apprehend, to suppose that it does more good by thus halting between two opinions, in the clearest evidence of right and wrong for any one who will open his eyes and see; for, of course, there is no describing colours to men who will not see. We know what the holy Apostle says of a double-minded man, how “unstable he is in all his ways.” And we also know, from experience, that such a want of consistency on the part of a public body, made up of many men and of many minds, carries with it the germ of its own dismemberment. Union is strength, and union implies principle. But where no fixed principle is avowed, as it appears clearly from Mr. Meller’s letter to me, we must expect disunion.

The Bible Society, therefore, cannot wonder at men of principle, quite independently of the form of Church to which they may belong, withdrawing themselves from a Society that follows no definite line of action; and which is ready to publish the best, as well as the worst, version of the Bible at the same time.

This cannot be done with impunity: for, however much or little we be responsible to men, to OUR MASTER we stand or fall; and His blessing does not rest on the tares knowingly or carelessly sown in His field. For the same showers that fall to bless the good grain and cause it to grow for the final harvest, fall as a curse on the weeds heedlessly scattered over the earth, and prepared

only for their own destruction. This would matter but little in a private undertaking: but when the seed sown is the WORD OF GOD, the field the WORLD, and the reapers the ANGELS at the last day, surely we ought to pause ere we set our hand to the work, lest we should be found wanting in our beginning and condemned in our last result.

The Bible Society then, must thank itself, and no one else, for the secession of many, formerly devoted, members from its ranks. Many will waive a form of Church, who, very properly, cannot forego principle, or trifle with conscience. Were the Bible Society fully alive to its responsibility,—as a Society professing to diffuse the WORD OF GOD, free from adulteration; and were it intent on discharging that responsibility as well and as conscientiously as it can, instead of carelessly devolving it upon others,—it would number many more able, learned, devout, and devoted men than it does. It would cease to consider itself, as its own Secretary admitted, a mere book-making firm; because it would, as a body, have a good conscience of sacrificing everything to sound and unflinching principle in the translation and in the circulation of the Bible. There would then be no room for a TRINITARIAN BIBLE SOCIETY; the very name of which at once reflects upon the BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY for some culpable neglect, if not error, on some vital points of true Christianity. That branch also of the labours of the FOREIGN TRANSLATION COMMITTEE of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which is devoted to translations of the Bible, would not have

been called for, side by side, with the large enterprize and copious funds of the BIBLE SOCIETY. For assuredly, none but absolute necessity, the result not of opinion or of fancy, but of violence done to principle, could have induced those influential Societies to form themselves apart from the mother-stock. Even individuals must renounce their wish to co-operate with the Bible Society; as for instance, in my own case; I am forced to decline the offer of £50 made me by that Society, for carrying through the press an edition of the New Testament in Modern Armenian, because I could not conscientiously co-operate with men who avow no fixed principle in their versions of the WORD OF GOD; and who seem to look more to the number than to the truthfulness of the copies published.

Surely, MY LORD, the due discharge of such heavy responsibility on the part of the Bible Society deserves the earnest attention of its members. It is one thing to take in hand a responsibility of this kind, and it is another thing to fulfil it as faithful stewards of such a deposit. It is easy for the Bible Society to collect and to grant sums of money for even a million copies of Scripture in Chinese, or in any other language; for that involves no principle. But it is a culpable neglect of principle, on the part of that same Society, to avow that it is willing and ready to uphold and to distribute two contradictory versions in the same language—one that teaches the truth that “GOD is Spirit”; and the other, that proclaims the falsehood, that “Spirit is GOD.”

It is well, indeed, to be able to distribute largely the

means of lasting good, and to make it the daily business of life to think of nothing else than the diffusion of the WORD OF GOD. But it is better, by far, to keep in this respect a conscience void of offence before GOD, whose Word we handle, and before man, to whom we give it. So as to be able to say, with St. Paul, that we do it, “not as many, which corrupt the WORD OF GOD, but as of sincerity, but as of GOD, in the sight of GOD, speak we in CHRIST.”

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's obedient humble servant,

S. C. MALAN.

APPENDIX.

I.

Thus, *e. g.*, in *Uligeriin Dalai*, ch. ii., we read, *ilatchu tegus nogtchigsan Burchan anu*, etc., "the supreme-perfect-anterior Buddha"; and so repeatedly. Also in *Altan gerel*, ch. xxvi., many times, as *Ananda Burchan-u dsarlik-yar tegun tchilen*, etc., "in accordance with Buddha's command, Ananda," etc. Likewise in the *Dsanglun*, ch. vii., we read often the same name of Buddha, with its accompanying epithets; as well as throughout the legend of *Bogda Gesser Khan*, and in the annals of Eastern Mongolia, written by *Ssanang Ssetsen Tchungtaidschi*, published by Dr. Schmidt.

In those same works, however, we find the term *Tegri* applied to all gods but Buddha. Thus, for instance, in the *Uligeriin Dalai*, above quoted, we read, *Ai, tegri-yin tegri Burchan*, "oh! god of gods, Buddha!" And *ibid.*, *ai tegri gumun-u tegedu, Burchan-a*, "O Buddha! who art above god and man." Again, *ibid.*, *tegri-yin köpegun*, "son of God," etc. Also in *Altan gerel*, ch. xxvii., quoted above, we read, *Tegri-ner-on getcher-i töritgel ögai ötchigtchi*, "having glanced at the region of the gods without restraint," etc. Likewise in *Dsanglun*, ch. vii., above quoted, we read, *Tegri-ner ergun köndoleged segiktchi böloge*, "the gods became the protectors of and held in honour" *Buyan orshiksan*, etc. And in *Bogda*

Gesser Khan, also above alluded to, we find very frequently the term *Tegri*, used for 'a god' that is not Buddha. Thus, ch. i., we read that of old, and ere *Sikamuni Burchan-i Nirwan-u ötchegulku örida*, "Sakyamuni Buddha had made example of Nirwana," *Khormusda Tegri Burchan-dur mörgusa getchu etchibe*, "the god Hormuzd bowed to Buddha and said," etc.

We gather, then, an additional proof that *Burchan* is an epithet especially belonging to Buddha, among the Buddhists of Mongolia,—from the fact that the term *Tegri* is thus used conjointly with *Burchan*. For *Tegri* is no other than the common Tatar word *Tañri*, in use among the Uighurs; or *Tañara*, or *Tagara*, among the Jakutes, in Siberia. This word properly means 'Heaven,' and it is also adopted to render God. Thus we find it in Uighur, both for 'heaven,' for 'God,' and for 'divine;' as *e. g.*, in petitions from the inhabitants of Chamul to the Emperor of China: *Tañri khakhan serintchib neder ma*, "the heavenly Emperor will graciously accept," etc.* And as regards *Tañara* in Jakutish, we find, in a confession of faith in that language, the expression, *Xristos Tagara ola*, or better, *Kiristäs Tañara yola*, "Christ the son of God;"† and, *tojon Tañara*, "Most-high God;" as well as *Tañara sariarha*, "the heaven, or the sky, is clear," etc.‡

In most of the many Tatar dialects which use this word *Tañri* or *Tangri*, for the Spirit of heaven, or God, according to their notions, there is also a special word for the visible or material heaven; as, *e. g.*, in Mongolian, *okdargoï*; and in other idioms, *kök* or *kük*, "blue," etc., as in the Tatar of Orenburg. In this language the only word used for God is

* Klaproth's *Spr. u. Schr. der Uighuren*, pp. 9, 28, 29. A. Remusat. L. Tartares; lang. Ouïgour. l.c.

† Böhlingk, *Die Spr. der Jakuten, Einleit.*, p. 51, 52.

‡ *Ibid.*, *Wörterb.*, p. 90.

Tañri or *Tangri*; and it is adopted in the version of the New Testament into that language, published at Astrachan in 1818, in 8vo. Thus, *köklü ātānur* “your heavenly Father,” and *bir Tangri ve jumleñun ātāsi*, “one God and Father of all,” Eph. iv. 5, etc.; and even in Acts of the Apostles iv. 11, and in such other passages, ‘gods’ is rendered by *Tangri-lar*, the plural of *Tangri*; shewing how entirely this word *Tangri* is identified, among those tribes, with their idea of God, such as it is. We know not for certain whether or not it has travelled westward from China, but it may be a remnant of the Chinese *Theen-li*, “Rule, or providence of heaven.”

II.

The translators may possibly have been led to adopt this term, *Burchan*, by noticing that it corresponds to the Sanscrit *Bhagavān*, ‘worshipful,’ applied to the Supreme Being in Buddhist works written in Sanscrit. As, for instance, in the *Sandharma pundarīka* in the *Lalita vistara*, and in numerous other Buddhist books of the same kind, we read, repeatedly, *te deva : imam asrutapurvam dharman srutwa Bhagavato-antika* : “those gods, having heard, while standing before Bhagavān, the law unheard before,” etc. But *Bhagavān* was borrowed from the oldest Brahmanical works, such as the *Laws of Manu*, where it is said of *Swayamb’hur Bhagavān avyakto*, “the worshipful and invisible self-existent God;” and was applied to Buddha only when, at the advent of Gautama Buddha, B.C. 400, the Buddhist religion prevailed over India. Clearly then, although the Sanscrit terms *Bhagavān*, or *Swa-*

yamb'hu, might be much better equivalents for "God" than the term *deva* 'a god,' because they convey the nearest and best idea of the God of the Bible, found in old Sanscrit, yet those terms become inadmissible for God, in a country, and among people, to which they convey only the idea of the special object of worship called Buddha. I cannot, therefore, but fear lest the term *Burchan*, which applies only to Buddha in classic Mongolian like *Bchom-ldan-hdas* in Tibetan writings, is likely to convey a false idea of God to the Buddhists of Central Asia. It is, in a great degree, as if the Apostles, instead of adopting *Θέος*, had used the term *Ζεύς*, Jupiter, to denote God, in Greek. Of two terms, originally identical, they chose the one which conveyed no idea of an *individual*, although it conveyed an idea of a *personal* God; because the ideas connected with that *individual* god *Ζεύς*, or Jupiter, in the mind of the Greek people, would have stood in the way of a correct notion of the only true God, or *Θέος*, whom they preached.

The case is, I believe, precisely similar in Mongolia. There they have *Burchan* or *Buddha*, answering practically in that country to Jupiter in Greece; and they also have *Tegri*, which, in meaning and acceptation in classical writings, agrees almost exactly with *Θέος*. The choice, therefore, of the term *Burchan*, instead of *Tegri*, seems liable to great objections.

I believe I am borne out in making the above remarks, by noticing the different course followed in other translations, also for Buddhistic countries.

Thus, in the Pali version of the New Testament published at Colombo in 1835, by, I think, the Rev. J. Clough, Wesleyan missionary, we find the term 'God' rendered, rightly or wrongly, by *Deva*. I say rightly or wrongly, because, although this term *Deva* has been adopted, not only in this version, but also in the Sanscrit and in most other versions made in languages derived from it—*Deva* never means God,

but only 'a god.' Examples of it occur in every page of Sanscrit classics, as well as in Pali; as *e. g.*, in the Maháwanso, ch. i., l. 51 sq. *Samiddhisumanó náma devó*, the (deva) god called Samiddhisumana, *Bhuddhánomatiyáyéwa*, "at the command of Buddha," took a tree, etc. *Devóhi só Nágadípé, manussánantare bhavé ahósi*, "that god (in a former existence) had been born a human being in Nágadīpa," etc. This defect of translation in using 'a god' for 'God,' which, strictly speaking, is inevitable if *deva* be adopted, is set forth in such passages as these:—Acts xix. 26; xvii. 23; and especially in 2 Thess. ii. 4, where the want of an article in Pali makes *deva* 'a god,' a very unfit rendering of the original. Be that as it may, the translator chose that alternative rather than adopt one of the many epithets of Buddha, which, like *Burchan* in Mongolian, denote the highest object of worship in Pali writings. But he seems to have felt the inconvenience of *deva*, 'a god,' judging from the manner in which he renders Gal. iv. 8, "by nature are no gods,"—*sabhāvato adevānam*, ("him who, or that which) own-naturally (is) not-godlike."

Likewise, in most of the Cingalese versions of the Bible, none of the epithets of Buddha were chosen to represent 'God'; but the terms *deviyan*, *deviyan-wahanse*, and *deviyan-hanse*, which although plural, are an idiomatically correct appellation of God. Whereas *deviyo*, adopted in a later version, is open to the same objection as *deva*. This shews how difficult it is sometimes to find a suitable equivalent for 'God' among nations that know Him not; and what excellent judgment and learning it requires, not to err on this point.

The translators of the Bible into Burmese have adopted also a similar course. They have left aside Buddha with its several epithets; and they have rendered 'God' by *bhurá*, pronounced *phará*. This word, which bears a remarkable resemblance to the Egyptian Pharaoh, or Phrá, or Phará, is used in Burmese like *Deva* in Sanscrit and in Pali, for 'a

god,' and also as an epithet for a great man or ruler, etc. It was adopted also by Romish Missionaries in their Burmese Catechism, printed at Rome in 1786. But as it might be liable to some misconception, whenever 'gods' (idols) are mentioned in the New Testament, the translators add the word *nat*, which applies to inferior deities in Burmah and in Ceylon. Thus, in Acts xiv. 11, we read, *Nat phurá-t'ho-thee*, 'the nat-gods,' for 'the gods;' but in St. John x. 34, 35, *theng-t'ho thee bhurá pyeet-kya*, "ye are god-s."

Lastly, in the Siamese version of the New Testament, printed at Bangkok in 1850, by American Missionaries, 'God' is rendered by *Phra: Phra:-ong*, which corresponds to the Burmese term above mentioned; and which, like *dēva*, is often applied to great men, to priests, etc. This term has been chosen with preference to *Phŭtta: Buddha*, divine, all-wise, etc., or even to *Phra-Phutti:-chao*, "Lord-God-Supreme;" because this is applied to Buddha, in the sacred writings of Siam.

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