

CHRISTOPHER A. DAILY:

*Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China.*

(Royal Asiatic Society Books.) xiv, 261 pp. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013. £41.50. ISBN 978 988 8208 03 6.

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As the first Protestant missionary to China, Robert Morrison has been a frequent subject of scholarly and popular interest. In *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China*, Christopher Daily aims to provide a corrective to what he regards as a widespread reverence for Morrison “as a triumphant and creative pioneer” (p. 7) dating back to the influential biography published by his widow, Eliza Morrison, a few years after his death in Macao in 1834. By tracing in detail the educational programme followed in the Gosport Academy, where Morrison studied prior to embarking on his missionary career, Daily presents an alternative interpretation of Morrison as the methodical implementer of the missionary programme devised by his mentor, David Bogue, the LMS director who was that academy’s superintendent and sole teacher.

The strengths of *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China* are considerable. The opening chapter (of five) sets the context clearly and economically, outlining the development of dissenting academies in Britain and the London Missionary Society’s search for a new missionary training strategy following the failures of its early missions in the 1790s. Chapter 2 is perhaps the most successful: it describes and explains the educational content inculcated at Gosport Academy, drawing resourcefully on extant notes made by students at Gosport over several decades, in addition to Bogue’s own manuscripts and Morrison’s mentions. The remaining chapters, based primarily on a close reading of the LMS archives, recount the missionary work undertaken by Robert Morrison and the first few LMS missionaries who came after him, with an emphasis on demonstrating the ways in which Morrison (and William Milne, his first and closest collaborator, also trained at Gosport) continued to act according to the Gosport programme.

Daily’s research is thorough and his insights and arguments merit serious consideration. Certainly his exploration of the influence of Bogue and Gosport on Morrison’s missionary activities adds a dimension to our understanding of Morrison’s ministry, particularly over Morrison’s first decade or so in China. However, how decisive that influence was is hard to assess, because Daily gives little consideration to alternative explanations or contrary evidence. For Daily, Morrison and Milne knew the programme they had to implement, and did so – with no adjustment, no independent judgement, and no accommodation to Chinese realities. In his translating and publishing in Chinese, for example, “Morrison’s unquestioning dependence upon Bogue’s template is so clear that it is dumbfounding” (p. 150), Daily tells us. Yet Morrison’s Chinese publications were not as close to Bogue’s list as Daily contends, and they include works (e.g. on geography and secular history) that do not appear on Bogue’s list. The divergence from “Bogue’s template” is even clearer in the case of William Milne, whose prolific publications in Chinese include many tracts devised to address the specific interests of Chinese readers, in ways that would not have been predictable to Bogue at Gosport. Similar doubts arise around the educational programme at the Anglo-Chinese College, which Daily presents as “Gosport-like” (p. 176) when in fact it appears to have diverged considerably from the Gosport curriculum.

Part of the problem with Daily's argument is that he does not address the extent to which the Gosport education was typical rather than distinctive, and therefore whether the signs of Morrison and Milne following the Gosport programme are in fact signs of a shared conception of educational and publishing priorities, of which Gosport was one expression rather than the template. The latter explanation becomes more likely as we move into the 1820s and 1830s, with new LMS policies and new missionaries in play. For Daily, Morrison "remained loyal to Bogue's mission template and accordingly continued to translate, print, and educate in a prescribed and unquestioning manner" (p. 186), and even the ministry of Liang Fa is presented as simply an implementation of the Gosport model. However, actual mentions of Bogue or Gosport in Morrison's or Milne's letters after 1814 appear to be sparse, and Daily's argument rests more on inference than documentary evidence for the last 15–20 years of Morrison's life.

In sum, therefore, Daily has made a significant contribution by exploring the educational background to Morrison's China mission, but he presses the argument to a point that becomes untenable through the later chapters of the book. Having dismissed the secondary literature in the preface for its dependence on Eliza Morrison's biography, he pays scant attention to it through the remainder of the study. He has a case to make and hews closely to it, leaving other questions unexplored and alternatives or objections unaddressed. This may reflect the book's origins as a PhD thesis (SOAS, 2010) that seems to have had little editorial attention in the publication process, as is also evident in the sometimes florid prose, some dubious transcriptions, and the repeated misuse of "sic" to indicate not errors but variant spellings, emphasis, etc. in the original sources. Daily suggests that his revised view of Morrison as an implementer rather than an innovator has implications for our understanding of Chinese Protestant Christianity today, but he does not explore this or explain it.

Despite these reservations, *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China* presents an important alternative portrait of Morrison and the early decades of Protestant missions to the Chinese. Daily is correct to seek an alternative to the hagiographic presentation of Morrison as the intrepid pioneer and innovator, but his alternative, the Morrison of "unquestioning dependence" on the teacher of his youth, is ultimately unpersuasive. An account of Morrison's ministry that gives full play both to the Gosport educational influence and to Morrison's process of learning and adaptation over his decades on the China coast would be of considerable interest.

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MICHAEL DILLON:

*Xinjiang and the Expansion of Communist Power: Kashgar in the Early Twentieth Century.*

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One of the enduring themes of China's history has been the unsettled relationship between its centre and its geographically and ethnically complex periphery. The Chinese dynastic imagination understood its frontier regions as the edges of