Endnote: The Complex Legacy of British Colonial Missionary Endeavour

There can be no question that the British presence in China, like other European nations, left its mark on culture, politics and society. In religion, through the missionaries, and with which this edition of Orientis Aura (volume 7) has been concerned, the legacy of Robert Morrison lives on.

There are other luminaries too. For example, the Bishop Ronald Owen Hall, the visionary bishop of Hong Kong and Macau, and who was instrumental in the foundation of the Ming Hua Theological College on Hong Kong Island. Ronald Owen Hall, CMG MC and Bar, was an Anglican missionary bishop in Hong Kong and China in the mid-20th century. As an emergency measure during the Second World War, with China under Japanese occupation, he ordained Li Tim-Oi as the first woman priest in the Anglican Communion.

Hall had just finished his schooling when the First World War broke out, during which he served as an infantry and staff officer. He was decorated with the Military Cross and Bar, and rose to the rank of Major. After the war, Hall took his degree at Brasenose College, Oxford, on the shortened degree course run in the immediate post-war years, and also trained at Cuddesdon. He became a leader of the British Student Christian Movement and was appointed to the national staff in 1920.

Hall attended the World's Student Christian Federation conference in Peking in 1922. He became friends with young Chinese Christian leaders, including T. Z. Koo (Gu Ziren), an evangelist, and Y. T. Wu, founder of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in China. Ordained in the early 1920's in Newcastle Cathedral for work with the Student Christian Movement, Hall later became Vicar of St Luke's Newcastle upon Tyne. In 1932 he was appointed Bishop of Victoria, Hong Kong, and then after the Second World War from 1951 of the smaller Diocese of Hong Kong and Macau, retiring in 1966. He was (and is) known in Chinese as 何明華 (Mandarin: He Minghua; Cantonese: Ho Ming Wah); 何 approximates the sound of "Hall" and 明華 means

"understands Chinese people". He remains to this day a revered figure in modern Chinese Christian history.

Hall was described as a "legendary figure" with a "burning compassion for the less privileged" in his time. He emphasized the needs of ordinary people, especially victims of social upheaval, including migrants. As Bishop of Hong Kong, he advocated for the poor and supported the Chinese revolution. Before World War II, Hall established an orphanage in Tai Po Hong Kong, which later became the St Christopher's Home. Under his leadership, the Anglican Church became a major partner with the Hong Kong government in the provision of social services.

Whilst Bishop of Hong Kong, Hall ordained the first woman priest in the Anglican Communion. The Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, and of parts of China, had made it impossible for Anglican priests to get to neutral Macau – which had a number of refugee Anglicans but with no priest. Li Tim-Oi had already been made a deaconess in Macau by Hall, and had been authorized by him to give the sacraments to the Anglicans in these extenuating circumstances. In January 1944, Li travelled through Japanese-occupied territory to meet with Hall in the small town of Xing Xing, as yet unoccupied by the Japanese. It

was here that he ordained her as a priest. The Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, William Temple, confided to others his conflicting views, but he felt compelled to take a public stand against it. But Hall's place in Anglican Communion history was assured by his continued campaigning for Li Tim-Oi, and his extraordinary and dedicated work in welfare and education, rooted in the social gospel thinking he had first developed through his Student Christian Movement ministry.

When the war ended in 1945, Li, to avoid controversy, gave up her licence as a priest, though never renounced her ordination. At the Provincial Synod of the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui in Shanghai in 1947, Hall tried but failed to receive retroactive approval in canon law for Li's ordination. Despite that, Hong Kong continued to pioneer women's ordination to the priesthood, and was the first Anglican Province to officially do so in the early 1970's, long before other nations.

In 1948, Hall was awarded the Order of the Brilliant Star with Plaque by Chiang Kai-shek. In 1965, in recognition of his work, the University of Hong Kong awarded him the Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa). In the 1966 Queen's Birthday Honours, Queen

Elizabeth appointed Hall Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG). Hall died on 22 April 1975, and is buried in Lewknor. References to Hall can be seen around Hong Kong. The Ming Hua Theological College is named after him. So is Ming Hua Tang, a hostel of Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong: Hall was one of the founders of Chung Chi College. He was also instrumental in the setting up of the Hong Kong Housing Society. The Bishop Ho Ming Wah Chinese Centre was opened in London in 1987.

David Paton's 'RO': The Life and Times of Bishop Hall of Hong Kong was published in 1985. The College archives at Cuddesdon (Oxford) have a picture of Hall as a student there, taken in 1920. An icon of Bishop R O Hall was painted by a local artist, Siobhan Fraser, and was presented to the Archbishop of Hong Kong at the Dedication of the Lecture Theatre in March 2013. The original icon now hangs in St. John's Cathedral, Hong Kong Island. The icon depicts scenes from R O Hall's life – his distinguished service in the Great War, the orphanage (St. Christopher's Home) and the ordination to priesthood of Florence Li Tim Oi.

However, the British colonial exploitation of non-colonial territories – China in this case – has a darker side to it. British commercial interests in China during the 18th century led to two Opium Wars (1839 to 1842 and 1856 to 1860), the sequestration of Hong Kong, and the subjugation of the Qing Dynasty. But for many British men in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, the commercial opening up of China and its military and political emasculation was seen as an opportunity for missionary work and the spreading of the gospel. The issues raised in Mark O'Neill's book (Frederick: The Life of My Missionary Grandfather in Manchuria) also help to throw some interesting light on false memory syndromes regarding Protestant missionaries and identity issues. O'Neill provides moving details on the hardships faced by most pioneering Protestant missionaries from the 19th and 20th centuries.

However, O'Neill also notes that

> "…the missionaries' attitudes to marriage was similar to that of the wider foreign community in China…many had Chinese mistresses or girlfriends [but] chose women from their own countries when it came to the question of marriage…". (*Frederick: The Life of My Missionary Grandfather in Manchuria* – JFC Publishing, 2012, p. 37).

For example, the diplomat Sir Robert Hart, probably the most significant British civil servant under the Qing Dynasty, kept a Chinese mistress who bore him three children. It was common practice for unmarried Englishmen resident in China to keep a Chinese girl. In October 1854, Hart noted following his purchase of a teenage sex servant that "some of the China women are very good-looking: you can make one your absolute possession for 50 to 100 dollars and support her at a cost of only 2 or 3 dollars per month". Hart purchased women for sex as he liked to "have a girl in the room…to fondle when [he] please[d]" His purchase of Chinese sex workers occurred over a 20-year period.

When it came time for Hart to wed, he chose Hester Bredon, a woman from an impeccable British family. She was 18 when they married in 1866, and with Hart being 31, this represented an unremarkable and quite conventional age gap in the colonial era. Hart paid off the Chinese woman with $3,000 dollars and sent the children to Britain so they would not embarrass him in Shanghai with their presence. Hart communicated with them through his lawyer for the rest of his life, though he was later forced to acknowledge his paternity. Married to Hester, Hart did not

resume purchasing Chinese sex workers until after Hester returned to England with their children in 1876.

Hart was the epitome of British colonial organisation and entrepreneurialism. He established rules and regulations in China for taxation, customs duty, import and export, the civil service and local organisation. He received numerous honours, including several knighthoods, honorary doctorates, decorations (e.g., Norway, France, China, Denmark, etc) and a baronetcy (Kilmoriarty, County Armagh). There are still roads named after him in Tsim Sha Tsui (Hong Kong), Beijing, and Shanghai, as well as a school named after him in Portadown, Northern Ireland. Interestingly, a rare Chinese species of lizard is also named after him.

The British colonial exploitation of China in the late 19th and early 20th century often plays second fiddle to the story of slavery and racism in the 18th and 19th centuries. Few remember – except perhaps in China – that the severe shortage of male manual labour during the Great War led the British to recruit the Chinese Labour Corps, whose role it was to clear the battlefield of corpses, mines and live ammunition. They also loaded and unloaded cargoes, built railway lines and aerodromes, dug trenches and filled

sandbags. The British hired close to 100,000 Chinese labourers during the war, and in the months following the armistice, their role was to dig graves, bury bodies, roll up barbed wire, and search for and unearth unexploded ammunition.

The British also hired tens of thousands of Egyptians, Indians, black South Africans and many from the Caribbean to undertake this work, but the Chinese Labour Corp was by far the largest. The Corps were paid a small fraction of the rate for ordinary soldiers. Furthermore, they were made to live in conditions more closely resembling concentration camps and permitted to write only two letters a month to send home. The three-month journey by sea from the Franco-Belgian theatre of war proved too much for many, who chose to commit suicide by drowning themselves overboard. Those who did return home to China received no recompense or recognition from the British, other than a small gratuity if they had been wounded. In contrast, the Chinese working for the French, who had already acquired the same rights as French citizens, were allowed to stay, and many chose to do so. The British did not officially recognise the contribution of China to their war effort. In a further betrayal, German interests in the Chinese region of Shandong were handed

over as concessions to Japan (Article 156 of the Versailles Peace Treaty) who were an ally of the British in the Great War. (O'Neill, 2012, pp. 112-121.).

Robert Morrison would, I am sure, have been critical of Hart and others who pursued material and commercial interests with such partiality. What we learn from these remarkable essays and articles in volume 7 of Orientis Aura is just how much is still owed to Morrison, and what an important figure her remains in the life of Macao's history.

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