

## FEATURE

# The Presbyterians in My Hometown

## Calvin Mateer and the Tengchow College: The First College in China

by Moses Chu

### The Beginning

Since ancient times until the end of the Qing Dynasty, Chefoo (now Yantai) was within the prefecture of Tengchow, a name which ceased to exist once China became a Republic in 1911. Presently, Tengchow (now Penglai, located 40 miles west of the city of Yantai) is within the district government of Yantai. As I write about my hometown, Chefoo, Tengchow is naturally included.

It is amazing that the first college in China was established in Tengchow in 1876, and not in Canton, Shanghai and Beijing. It was built on the ruins of the "Temple of Goddess of Mercy." But the name, Tengchow College of Liberal Arts, was not formally given and declared publicly until 1882, the second year in the reign of Emperor Kuang Hsu. In two years, the college enrollment reached 70. Schools of the early 1860s in Tengehow, like the Hunter Corbett School in Chefoo, were only 6-year primary and 4-year middle schools. When Calvin Mateer, the founder and principal of the boys' school, formerly established a college in Tengchow, Hunter Corbett added new classes in theology and teacher-training at his school in Chefoo.

The Chefoo School was then renamed as the "Hunter Corbett Academy" in 1886. Hunter Corbett and Calvin Mateer had many things in common; both were born in Pennsylvania in the same year, received D.D. degrees, married but without children and came to China in 1863 by the same boat. There had been a very close relationship and cooperation between them. Along with other colleagues, they worked together in disaster areas of Shantung province during the famine of 1876-1877 and in other areas struck by flooding, drought, and the plague of



*Rev. Henry Winters Luce*

locusts in 1889-1890. But, unlike Hunter Corbett in opening pre-college schools all over the eastern Shantung, Calvin Mateer did not expand his activities of opening a college elsewhere other than in Tengchow and its adjacent areas.

Mateer hired accomplished scholars - Xiu Cai, Lin Sheng, and Ju Ren as his tutors and school teachers. At the time, since a English-Chinese dictionary was not available, he had to manage the class using a Japanese-English dictionary and engaged a Chinese language tutor to help in his work. This was particularly essential when he wrote science text books. In a few years,

his hard work enabled him to gain mastery over the Chinese language. He studied many Chinese classics, he was able to recite the San Zi Jing, or three-characters classics, without mistakes. In his speeches and sermons he often quoted the teaching of both Confucius and Mencius from "The Four-Books:" the Great Learning, the Doctrine of the Mean, the Analects and the Book of Mencius.

\* Official titles for those who pass the civil service examination based on Chinese Classics at various stages

### Dedication

Mateer's aim was to create best teachers of the highest academic and moral standards, and to train pastors to spread Christianity in China. His opinion was that since social superstitions had held China back from keeping up with the developing world, this situation can be improved only by spreading the doctrine of Christianity. He also believed that only the science could make the people and the country productive by improving the living and intellectual standards. He insisted that English should not be taught to Chinese, unless it was absolutely necessary, because the graduates should teach and serve the common people in China. In order to achieve his goal, he started to write text books in Chinese.

1895 marks Mateer's 34th year of writing and teaching. He set a record of finishing 28 books, duly published, for middle school and college students. 80% of the 28 were books on science. Seven other books were written or compiled by his colleagues and students under his initiative and guidance. Prominent text book publishers in Shanghai found these books a great resource of literature and enjoyed the fact that these materials could be copied free of copyright issues. In addition, He organized news clubs, a YMCA, a debating society, etc. in the school. He opened a small pharmacy for the students. He administered local anesthetics for tooth extraction, dressed wounds and applied plaster casts.

Mateers forbade the use of tobacco and alcohol either inside or outside the campus. Often he made inquiries into the conduct of his students. Usually he was stern and serious in manner, a splendid image in those days of a school principal. So much respect, love and fear were interwoven in the minds of his students, thereby earning him a nickname of "Di Lao Hu." His name in Chinese was Di Kao Wen, with Di as his surname. His nickname meant "Di, the Tiger." At any noisy gathering of students, one only had to utter the words "Lao Hu" for a prompt hush to follow. Both my parents were educated in Tengchow and many interesting stories were told of him whenever their former school mates or friends came to visit.

In 1879, Calvin Mateer went back to the United States to attend a general meeting of the Presbyterian Church. After the meeting, he entered the renowned Baldwin Locomotive Works (established in 1854) in Philadelphia as a trainee for several months, so that his experience could be used in Tengchow. In 1893, he attended The Industrial Exhibition held in Chicago to buy instruments and equipment for his workshop and laboratory at Tengchow College. Previously, he brought to Tengchow testing chemicals, a boiler with a Watt engine, a dynamo, a diesel engine, electroplating equipment, screw machine, gas-welding and tools needed for masonry, blacksmithing, and carpentry. In those days the brand new setup was probably a prototype and the first of its kind in China. He bought enough instruments for his physics and biology classes. Once a year there would be a day for showing his workshop to the public; some 12,000 visitors saw his first exhibition, and he was always there to answer questions.

### Relations with Chinese Military

Mateer often helped the local military in doing repair work. A friendship developed between he and Yuan Shih-Kai, an officer under General Sung Ching, the regional military commander. Once a soldier behaved badly to a female student and some of the male students came to her rescue. This triggered a fight between

soldiers and students, and became a very serious incident. Finally an amicable settlement was reached through the mediation of Calvin Mateer and Yuan Shih-Kai.

More than 10 years passed. During this period. Yuan Shih-Kai earned many promotions. He was the viceroy in Korea during the Sino-Japanese War in 1894 and then the governor of Shantung province. During the time of the Boxer Rebellion (1900) when the missionaries and their families were in grave danger, Calvin Mateer wired Governor Yuan Shih-Kai for help. Yuan sent soldiers to escort the evacuees who were traveling from interior cities to Yang-jue-Gou aboard a steamer for Chefoo. I have seen this picture showing over 70 people, including children. Yuan Shih-Kai also asked Admiral Sa to dispatch the flagship Hai-Chi to Tengchow in order to accommodate evacuees going to Korea. On arrival in Korea, they took temporary lodging in the Presbyterian Center in Pyongyang, (now the capital of North Korea) until the peace treaty was signed in September of the following year. Among the evacuees from Tengchow was the two year old Henry Robinson Luce, who later became the founder of Time, Life, and Fortune, the most popular magazines in the United States before WWII. This child was born in Tengchow, and his father Henry Winter Luce was also a Presbyterian missionary and a teacher at Tengchow College. By virtue of his influence and efforts in the United States, he later raised a large sum of money for the college.

Under Governor Yuan Shih-kai, no foreigners were harmed during the Boxer Rebellion throughout the Shantung province. The friendship that existed between him and Calvin Mateer was the primary factor. This particular development in Shantung angered the Empress Dowager Tsu-Hsi who wanted the governor to be summoned to the capital (Beijing) for punishment. However, before this could happen the joint force of the eight foreign powers had already invaded and occupied the capital, ransacking the palace and the summer palace or Yi-he Yuan. The empress Dowager had to flee the

capital. Later, the case against Yuan Shih-kai was quietly dropped. When China became a republic in 1911, Yuan Shih-Kai was chosen to be the first president.

### Community Service

In 1890, a committee for translating the Bible was formed by scholars from the eastern, central, and Northern provinces of China. Little progress was made until Calvin Mateer was elected as the committee chairman in 1898. The committee convened once a year, mostly in Tengchow and Chefoo with diverse opinions expressed in a tense atmosphere. The translation work moved very slowly. At the death of Calvin Mateer in 1908, only the New Testament was completed and the Book of Psalms barely completed. It took more than ten years for the translation of the Chinese Bible to be completed and published for the first time. It was called the "He-He-Ben" or The Union Version, a standard translation which is considered the best version and is still used throughout the world by Chinese speaking Christian churches.

When Calvin Mateer was the principal of the Tengchow College, he designed gratuitously for the local businessmen a grain grinder, husking machine, coal-ball making machine, hemp twisting and weaving machines for making bags. His conviction was that improvement of the livelihoods for the common people should go side by side with the spread of the Gospel and that the former would automatically promote the latter. Prior to establishing the school's formal status as a college in 1882, 11 students had already successfully passed the college examination. During Calvin Mateer's tenure at Tengchow College, 68 students graduated between 1887 and 1895 (the year of Mateer's resignation). This makes a total of 79 graduates. Their names and individual photographs appeared in "The Chronicles of the Tengchow College."

Due to the heavy burden at school, Calvin Mateer decided in 1895 to resign and transfer his duties to his assistant, Watson M. Hayes, D. D. After the completion of educational

works for 30 years including 11 years as the principal of the College, he wanted to have enough time to work in his laboratory and workshop and to write, teach, translate, publish, preach, travel, etc. Through his experience of 25 years in language studies he wrote a book entitled "Mandarin Lessons" which was sold and read widely. He used the profits for helping poor students and for new purchases for his workshop.

### Transition Years

Mateer's successor, Watson M. Hayes, left Tengchow College to establish a provincial college in Tsinan (Jinan) (the provincial capital) in 1901 at the invitation of Yuan Shih-Kai, the governor of Shantung province. He brought with him five former graduates of Tengchow College to assist him, working as teachers. He successfully established the college in Tsinan, and also founded the first daily newspaper in the province. He made a proposal to the Manchu Royal Court that, following the international custom, Sunday ought to be declared a day of rest throughout the country. This was finally adopted with a letter issued to him expressing appreciation.

Watson M. Hayes was succeeded by Paul D. Bergen, D.D. as the principal of the Tengchow College in 1901. After three years, he supervised and undertook the task of moving the college to Weihsien (now Weifang) in 1904. Weihsien was halfway by rail between Tsingtao (Qingdao) and Tsinan. Simultaneously, the Tengchow College merged with a college founded by British Baptists in Tsingchow (now Yidu). A new name, "Guang Wen," was created by taking one Chinese character from each former school. The new school became a university with arts, theological and medical colleges with 120 students. It took one more year for the laboratory and workshop to be moved and set up in the new college campus, due to the limited transport using only mules. Calvin Mateer erected a windmill near his workshop, a landmark visible for few miles southeast of the city of Weihsien. The campus was named "Le Dao Yuan" or "The Courtyard of the Happy Way."

In 1903, one year before the college moved to Weihsien, Calvin Mateer attended an annual general meeting of the Presbyterian Church held in Los Angeles. He publicly declined to be nominated as the Chairman. He stood by the vow he made in New York before his departure in 1863, "I shall work among the Chinese people, die, and be buried there." His service as the Chairman of the Bible Translation Committee was an important contribution in the coming years. By the time the translation of the New Testament into Chinese was completed in Chefoo during the summer of 1906, the committee had met over eight times for 2-6 months each time in Peking (Beijing), Tengchow, or Chefoo.

In 1908, the committee meeting was held again in Chefoo when Mateer was ill, presumably from amoebic dysentery, a deadly disease in the absence of a proper cure in those days. He went to Tsingtao and entered a German hospital for treatment but died there at the age of 73. His casket was brought to Chefoo for burial. My father, a graduate in 1908 of the college, and then a teacher of science in the Paoting Military Officers' Training College, rushed back to Chefoo to attend the memorial and burial ceremonies. In a particular picture I was able to identify him in the front among a group of mourners. His writing using a brush pen on the bottom of the picture reads, "On October 4th, 1908, the Burial of the Most Reverend Dr. Calvin Mateer took place at Temple Hill Cemetery, Yantai."

### Shandong University

In 1915, Paul Bergen, the principal of the Guan Wen University, died after a short illness and was buried in Weihsien. In 1917, the college moved to Tsinan and merged with medical colleges from Hankow, Nanking, Peking, and Mukden, giving a new name "Chefoo University" with additional support from over ten foreign missions. The site is now being used by Shandong University.

On the campus of Chefoo University, two memorial buildings were built named after

Mateer and Bergen respectively. Henry Winter Luce traveled to the United States several times with much success to raise large sums of money for the construction of the new campus in Tsinan. He later went to Peking to help Leighton Stuart, the principal of the Yencheng University, again to raise money in order to add new buildings including the Luce Hall donated by his son, Henry R. Luce, the managing director of Time, Life, and Fortune magazines. The senior Luce had to retire early, having suffered peptic ulcers for many years. He died the night of the Pearl Harbor incident on December 7, 1941, in his son's home in Greenwich, Connecticut, obviously due to shock and grief. That night, Lin Yu-Tong was among the guests of the Luce family. His daughter-in-law, Clair Boothe Luce, was the first congresswoman and lady ambassador in U.S. history. She held the post of ambassador to Italy from 1953 to 1957.

During WWII (1941 -1945) after the Pearl Harbor attack by Japan, the old Le-Dao-Yuan campus was turned into an internees' camp by the Japanese military. Nationals of all allied countries from north China were imprisoned there until its liberation on August 17, 1945. There were about 1,500 internees. Many books were written about the life in the camp, by famous writers such as Mary T. Previte of New Jersey, now an assemblywoman in the state council and Dr. Norman Cliff of England, a retired church minister and the author of more than ten books. Both of them were born in China.

Watson M. Hayes was the founder and principal of the North China Theological Seminary established in Tenghsien. He and his wife were interned by the Japanese military in the Weih sien Internees' Camp. For many reasons he refused to be repatriated under the "Prisoners Exchange Project" organized by the International Red Cross. Aside from Mrs. Hayes, his son accompanied him in the camp. He died in 1944, just one year before the liberation.

## Remembrance

When I lived in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in the 1980's, I obtained enough materials with the help of the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia for writing Dr. Mateer's life story in Chinese. I made telephone calls to more than ten Mateer families in his hometown, Harrisburg, but none had any knowledge of this beloved and respected Calvin Mateer. He had no children and his wife of the first marriage who was teaching in the girls' school, died ten years earlier than Calvin Mateer. They both were buried in the cemetery on the north slope of the Temple Hill in Chefoo. This cemetery was less than one mile from my parents' house where I grew up. Even though his death occurred seven years before I was born, his image, work, and love for his students and the Chinese people is forever in my heart. In the sitting room of my parents' house in Chefoo, his photograph was one among many hanging on the wall.

Demand for competent teachers was high in those days. Calvin Mateer's best students were eagerly invited to teach in the Capital University (1898-1900), the predecessors of the Beijing University, St. John's University, Paotin Military Academy, Yunan Military School, and many prominent middle schools. When I attended the middle school of the Yih-Wen Commercial College, practically all the teachers of science, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology were his students, or graduates of the College in Weih sien.

Calvin Mateer toiled in China for over 40 years. According to his own estimate, he traveled 12,000 miles and gave 8,000 speeches and sermons besides class lectures. But he did not write his own biography. Calvin Mateer admired the teachings of Confucius and often hailed him as a great teacher and saint. He followed the steps of Confucius: "A person who forgets to eat when he is buried in his work, who forgets all his worries when he is happy, and who is not aware at all that his old age is coming on!" They both lived to the same age - 73.

The recent discovery of the tombstone of Hunter Corbett, his colleague, prompted me to write to Mr. Liu Ming-Wei, the director of Yantai Local Chronicles Office, requesting information on other tombstones in the cemetery. His explanation was that the former tomb area was leveled a long time ago and presently standing on the site are rows of tall buildings. In fact, none other than the Corbett's tombstone was found in the city garrison area. How and why only this particular one was preserved and protected is a mystery. When a memento like a tomb or tombstone is lost, all that can be done now is to have the story briefly retold.

*Moses Chu was born in Huangxian W (or Longkou w). Shandong, China in 1915 and was educated at Yib Wen*

*Commerce College, which succeeded Hunter Corbett Academy in the Temple Hill District of Chefoo, Shandong. During the chaos in China following the end of World War II, he, his wife and three children left Qingdao in 1948 for Taiwan and then Hong Kong T. They eventually emigrated to Africa. In Mauritius and then Tanzania. Moses Chu became a successful textile manufacturer before coming to the U.S. in 1973. He engaged in farming and dealing in agricultural products until formally retired in 1996. In his retirement years, Mr. Chu has become a historian, researching and writing extensively about Chefoo and missionary work in Tengchow. Most of his articles appeared in Shangtung (Shandong) Digest, Taipei, Taiwan, China. He has collected an extensive archive of photographs and memorabilia of Chefoo, Shandong, China. He is currently residing in Tempe, Arizona.*