

Beyond the Cambridge Seven: The Rev. Arthur Twistleton Polhill and the Dazhou Fú Yīn Táng

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The church is on an interesting journey in Mainland China. On the one hand, it is on track to be the most Christian country in the world by 2025.¹ On the other hand, many Chinese Christians do not fit into the neatly defined denominational categories recognised elsewhere (sometimes referred to as “postdenominational”), and there is a great deal of theological and practical idiosyncrasy that would make many “orthodox Christians” uncomfortable.² It must be remembered that this is a product of China’s peculiar history and geopolitical circumstances, and the church outside of Mainland China is not without its own peculiarities. It is pleasing to note, however, that in spite of China’s political vicissitudes over the last century, the landscape is still peppered with visible reminders of the labours of the China Inland Mission, other mission agencies, and indeed the Chinese themselves. To illustrate, I present a case study of one of the lesser-known members of the Cambridge Seven: Rev. Arthur Twistleton Polhill (formerly Polhill-Turner), MA (1862–1935).³

Arthur Polhill was the youngest member of the Cambridge Seven, and he is reckoned to be the first of the seven to seriously consider mission to China (initially signing up with the Church Missionary Society).⁴ This article examines his life and legacy of faithful, persistent labour in China, particularly the completion of a large Fú Yīn Táng (福音堂)—Gospel Hall—in Dazhou, Sichuan (达州, 四川) and what remains of this today. The Cambridge Seven still stir the imagination, and this is thanks in no small part to John Pollock’s popular book on the group.⁵ He describes the call of the seven men to join the China Inland Mission, but apart from a brief epilogue little information is given about their subsequent careers. This article will cover some of the major landmarks of Arthur’s missionary career in China, though there will be many omissions. It is hoped, however, that this summary will serve as a helpful reference point for

a more thorough analysis of his life and work at some future date.

Early life and call to the mission field

Arthur was born on 7 February 1862, in Bedfordshire, to Captain Frederick Polhill-Turner MP and Emily Frances Polhill-Turner.⁶ Emily’s family, the Page-Turner Barrons, were a wealthy aristocratic family, so according to custom the Polhills adopted Turner as a suffix to their own surname. In 1902, Arthur and his missionary brother, Cecil, removed the “Turner” part by deed poll, “to suit the times.”⁷ Arthur was the youngest of a total of three Polhill brothers, but he was, by about the age of ten, the same height as his older brother Cecil (1860–1938) and outgrew him as an adult.⁸ The two younger brothers seemed to share a close bond with one another: they became missionaries together, as did their sister Alice, and they co-wrote their (unpublished) memoirs, *Two Etonians in China*.⁹ The eldest brother, Frederick Edward Fiennes (1858–99), inherited responsibility for the family estate in England but died when he was just forty-three.¹⁰ The two younger Polhill brothers are, therefore, seen as a kind of “double act,” but they were really very different and were rarely in the same place for very long after their probationary period came to an end in China in 1888.¹¹ This article will say very little of his older brother (of whom I have written at length elsewhere) and instead focus on Arthur’s independent work.¹²

Arthur enjoyed sporting distinction at Eton and the University of Cambridge. At the latter he played football with the Old Etonians F.C., one of the best clubs in the country in those days. The Old Etonians won the All England Association Cup (later known as the Football Association or FA Cup) in 1879 and 1882.¹³ Arthur was not in the squad on those occasions, but he writes in his memoirs, “I had the pleasure of touring with them round the North of England and Scotland. Anderson, Kinnaird



The Cambridge Seven in a photograph taken in Shanghai. Back row (from the left): C. T. Studd, M. Beauchamp, S. P. Smith. Front row: A. T. Polhill, D. E. Hoste, C. H. Polhill, W. W. Cassels. *China's Millions* (1885): 162.

and Rawlinson, the Goalkeeper, were amongst the team. We beat Sheffield and Edinburgh University, but succumbed to the Glasgow Queen's Park and Dumbarton.¹⁴ Professional football was evidently in its infancy: "I was amazed at the way the Scotch Backs used their heads to strike the ball in mid air. It was rather new to us Southerners."¹⁵

Arthur's life changed in 1882 when an unrefined North American evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, had the temerity to address the nation's polished elite at Cambridge. Arthur writes of the time:

Mr D. L. Moody was a short thick-set man, with a broad American accent, and rather a dramatic manner, as he preached on Daniel, representing him as a man dressed in a frock coat, and carrying in his tail coat pocket a scroll and drawing it out with gusto, to the amusement of the Students, amounting to merriment... The last night... saw a wonderful change from the previous Sunday night; a crowded gathering, but so still you might hear a pin drop: a sense of awe and realization of the presence of God, no laughing or joking... the writer was drawn by the simple text Isaiah 12.2 and decided for Christ that night.¹⁶

The tradition in many wealthy families in Victorian times was that the eldest son would inherit the family estate, the second son would join the military, and the third son would become a lawyer. The Polhill-Turners were no exception,

but after Arthur's conversion he transferred from law student to theology student, i.e. from "Law" to "Grace". "The tone of the College was indeed greatly changed. The great Law College, now might be said to be 'under grace'. The tide of revival continued to rise for the two following years, to the great delight of the principal of Ridley Hall, Rev. H. C. G. Moule, afterwards Bishop of Durham. I had transferred from Trinity Hall to Ridley Hall."¹⁷

Exactly how and when Arthur decided to become an overseas missionary in China, rather than a parish vicar in England, is not absolutely clear. Broomhall and Pollock suggest the decision came after being given a copy of Hudson Taylor's *China's Spiritual Need and Claims* by fellow student Montague Beauchamp, probably sometime in 1882.¹⁸ Hudson Taylor (1832–1905) had founded the China Inland Mission (CIM) in 1865, and by 1883 he had returned to the UK for a recruitment drive. It is not unlikely that Arthur read Hudson Taylor's work, but the principal of Ridley Hall, the evangelical Anglican Handley Moule, probably influenced Arthur too. Moule's two brothers, Bishop George Evans Moule (1828–1912) and Archdeacon Arthur Evans Moule (1836–1918), had by 1884 already been serving in China for many years with the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS).¹⁹ This probably explains why Arthur had initially signed up to go to China with the CMS before switching to the CIM around November 1884.²⁰ Indeed,

Arthur—who became an ordained Anglican—retained a strong connection to the CMS even though he was technically a missionary of the CIM.

Arthur may have been the first of the Cambridge Seven to seriously consider mission to China, probably as early as the winter of 1882–3, but he was not the first to sign up with the CIM. Dixon E. Hoste—the only member of the seven not to have actually studied at the University of Cambridge—holds that honour, having written to Hudson Taylor on the subject in July 1883. Stanley P. Smith, the son of a London surgeon, followed in March 1884. Smith then influenced the young Anglican curate, William W. Cassels, to join in October 1884. Smith also influenced the outstanding cricketer, C. T. Studd, named on "the Ashes" trophy, to join in November 1884 and this in turn influenced Montague Beauchamp, son of Sir Thomas William Brograve Proctor-Beauchamp, to join soon afterwards.²¹ It is likely, then, that Arthur switched from the CMS to the CIM after he observed his esteemed fellow students joining the CIM. (All six men were present at a joint CIM-CMS meeting in Cambridge in November 1884).²² He had probably, I suspect, received assurances that he could retain a connection to the CMS, as an ordained Anglican, while being a member of the CIM at the same time.

As for his brother, Cecil, Arthur had been encouraging him to become an evangelical Christian since his own conversion at the Moody campaign of 1882.²³ By January 1885, Cecil too had decided to join the China Inland Mission. The decision of seven fit, young, well-connected men, giving up almost guaranteed lives of privilege and comfort in England for a hard life of itinerant mission work in unindustrialised, rural China caused something of a stir. (Imagine the effect of the current captain of the England football squad announcing his early retirement to become an overseas missionary). They toured the nation's universities and held rallies in large halls, entreating other young, intelligent men to become missionaries. The last of these on the eve of their departure, in the now-demolished Exeter Hall on the Strand, in London, had more than three thousand in attendance and was covered in *The Times*.²⁴ Arthur was just twenty-two when he left London for China with his brother and five compatriots on 5 February

1885.²⁵ He would spend most of the next forty-three years of his life there.

After arriving in Shanghai on 18 March 1885, the Cambridge Seven were just over a fortnight later separated into two groups and sent to different parts of China.²⁶ On 4 April, Arthur, his brother, and C. T. Studd took a boat up the Yangtse and Han Rivers—for there were no trains inland in those days—deep into the heart of China to the city of Hanzhong (汉中), in Shaanxi province.²⁷ Here they undertook language training as probationary missionaries and tasted the rigours of itinerant mission work in the surrounding cities, towns, and villages. It was difficult and frequently life-threatening work. They had already witnessed one of their party, a Chinese Christian, being swept away by the river to his death on the journey inland, and in 1886 the two brothers were stoned by the inhabitants of Langzhong (阆中, formerly Paoning), in Sichuan.²⁸ The missionaries of inland China were not unacquainted with violence, but this would have given them a strong sense of being close to “real” New Testament Christianity. It is perhaps no surprise, under such a heightened spiritual atmosphere, that at one stage the Polhill brothers and C. T. Studd set aside their Chinese grammar books and began praying for the Pentecostal gift of Mandarin, but after a brief reprimand from Hudson Taylor they wisely returned to their language studies.²⁹

In 1888, Arthur relocated to Bazhong, Sichuan (巴中, formerly Pacheo or Pachow), “a pretty little walled city,” to become the leader of his own station. In the same year, he married fellow-missionary Alice Drake and they spent ten years together in the city between 1888 and 1898.³⁰

In 1899, they relocated again to Dazhou (达州, formerly known as Suiting, Suiting-fu, Suiding-fu and from the 1930s as Tahsien), “beautifully situated on the north side of the Ku [Zhou] River, a clear crystal stream,” where they laboured until the Boxer Uprising.³¹ China had been humiliated by foreign powers for decades. The British twice went to war against the Chinese to assert their right to trade opium, a highly addictive and socially destructive narcotic, but the French, Dutch, Germans, Japanese, and others had also conjured their own pretexts for



Alice Polhill (née Drake). *China's Millions*, British edition (February 1907): 25.

relieving the Qing Empire of control over large swathes of their territory.³² Missionaries were openly opposed to the opium trade, but extremely vulnerable to the anger of the subdued people. Montague Beauchamp wrote to England in 1885, “Are you not surprised that any Chinaman will listen to the Gospel from an Englishman? I am sure I am.”³³

The Boxer Uprising began to unfold in 1899 with Chinese paramilitary groups gathering at town boxing grounds (hence the “Boxers”) or temples to vent their anger. Crowds would gather to watch them enact spiritual possession by characters from popular operas such as the Monkey King (Sun Wukong) or the God of War (Guangong).³⁴ They recruited young men and taught them trance-like rituals in order to initiate them for conflict. Some parts of China were also gripped by drought, and rumours began to spread that Christians had poisoned wells and supernaturally held back rain clouds. The dominance of some Chinese Catholic communities and their exemption from paying idol taxes served as another source of resentment. By 1900, the Boxers had murdered around two hundred foreign missionaries and thousands of Chinese Christians until the Eight Nations Alliance defeated the joint Boxer-Chinese Imperial Army in August 1900, after a tense fifty-five day standoff in Beijing. It is still possible to see the marks on the large bronze cauldrons (once used for water in case of fire) in the Forbidden City in Beijing, where it is said Alliance soldiers sharpened their bayonets.

Foreigners in Sichuan province, where Arthur’s family were stationed, escaped much of the horror. He writes in his memoirs:

The Empress Dowager then telegraphed to the Governors throughout China: “The foreigners must be killed; even if the foreigners retire, they must still be killed.” The wording of the telegram was allegedly altered by two friendly mandarins... ‘sha’ [for] ‘kill’ being changed to ‘pao’ [for] ‘protect.’ The Yangtze Viceroy... also advised Governors and Viceroy to refrain from murdering foreigners... Yuan Shi Kai, Governor of Shantung, suppressed the Boxers in his province, and Yung Lu forbade the use of heavy artillery against the Legations in Peking. Providentially by these means the majority of the missionaries in inland China escaped.³⁵

After a short break in England, Arthur and his family were able to return to Dazhou in 1902 where he spent the rest of his missionary career.³⁶

The diocese of Western China

Arthur and fellow-Anglican Rev. William Cassels occupied unusual positions in the China Inland Mission. They were both ordained Anglicans and Cassels would, in 1895, be appointed Bishop of Western China.³⁷ This meant that both men were *de facto* members of the Anglican Church Missionary Society as well as the China Inland Mission, and Cassels was both Bishop of Western China and the China Inland Mission’s Superintendent of Sichuan. It was an admirably ecumenical step for the Church of England at that time—indeed, rather too ecumenical for many Anglicans in England.³⁸ Both missions were active in Sichuan (a province roughly twice the size of the entire United Kingdom), amongst other missions, so the CMS was allotted part of the western section of Sichuan (from Chengdu northwards and west of Langzhong, the episcopal seat of the bishop), while the CIM section of the diocese was often described as the “eastern” section of the diocese.³⁹ The CIM had stations as far west as Kangding (southwest of Chengdu, very much not in the eastern section of the province), but presumably there were no Anglicans under the bishop’s jurisdiction in the CIM west of Langzhong.

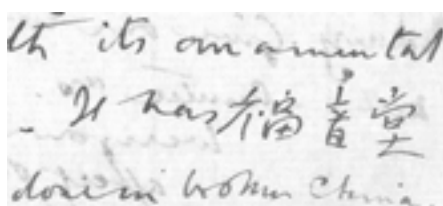
Table 1. Stations of the CMS and CIM in Sichuan (excluding outstations)

CMS Stations (modern spelling, simplified Chinese) ⁴⁰	CIM Stations (modern spelling, simplified Chinese) ⁴¹	
Anhsien (Anxian, 安县) Chengtu (Chengdu, 成都) Chungkiang (Zhongjiang, 中江) Chungpa (Zhongba, 钟坝) Hanchow (Guanghan, 广汉) Lungan (Long'anzen, 龙安镇) Mienchow (Mianyang, 绵阳) Mienchu (Mianzhu, 绵竹) Mowchow (Maoxian, 茂县) Sintu (Xindu, 新都) Tehyang (Deyang, 德阳)	Chentu (Chengdu, 成都) Chungking (Chongqing, 重庆) Fushun (Fushun, 富顺) Kaihien (Kaixian, 开县) Kiangtsin (Jiangjin, 江津) Kiating (Leshan, 乐山) Kiongchau (Qionglai, 邛崃) Kùhien (Quxian, 渠县) Kwangyuen (Guangyuan, 广元) Kwanhien (Guankouzhèn, Dujiangyan, 灌口镇, 都江堰) Liangshan (Liangshan, 凉山) Luchow (Luzhou, 泸州)	Nanpu (Nanbu, 南部) Pachau (Bazhong, 巴中) Paoning (Langzhong, 阆中) Shunking (Nanchong, 南充) Siaooshi (Xiaoshi, Luzhou, 小市, 泸州) Sintientsi (Xiandianzi, 新点子) Suifu (Cuiping, Yibin, 翠屏, 宜宾) Suiting (Dazhou, 达州) Tatsienlu (Kangding or Dartsedo [Tibetan], 康定) Wanhsien (Wanzhou, 万州) Yingshan (Yingshan, 营山)

The Dazhou Gospel Hall

One of the peaks of Arthur's time in Dazhou was undoubtedly the completion of a large multi-purpose Gospel Hall. This led to the station becoming, in his opinion, "the most complete up to date station in the district if not the mission."⁴² The idea for a new home and five-hundred seat church was borne, in many ways, out of Arthur's unsatisfactory living conditions in the city.⁴³ He wrote to the deputy director of the mission, Dixon E. Hoste, in August 1903, explaining that the house where his family lived was damp, too small, difficult to access, and in an area surrounded by opium dens and brothels.⁴⁴ The building work started the following year—23 February 1904—and by April it was well under way.⁴⁵ He wrote to his brother about the news with his customary informal greeting, "Dear Old Cec":

I am now watching the carpenters begin to erect the house. They are putting up 2 scaffoldings – before they begin – then the beams are put up and fitted together which will take place tomorrow. Already it...can be seen for miles around. Standing on a bit of hill – with nothing to hide it – save perhaps one or two trees near which give some grateful shade. The view is truly



The Chinese Characters for 'Gospel Hall' in a letter between Arthur and his brother.

grand – so refreshing gazing at lovely mountains, trees and cottages.⁴⁶

By August the complex was complete:

The Opening Day Aug 28 was just 6 months and 5 days from Feb 23 the day we started our boundary walls and 1 day under 6 months since the carpenters started work. Entering from the main street from East gate which runs by the river you turn up a passage some 20 yards – when you enter an ornamental gateway which is also conspicuous from the street itself – the first object that strikes you is the big church in front of you built in Chinese style with rounded top. The roadway passes on the left side next you ascend a flight of steps and pass a block of buildings containing the men's guest halls on one side facing roadway on the other side facing the back – the women's guest halls at the top of the roadway stands a round ornamental gateway leading into garden and dwelling house – this stands on the highest ground, and so gets a grand

view on all four sides – the street below is hidden by trees and you look over on to the hills – on the north west side we see the city walls some 200 or 300 yards away. So it is a wonderful combination of country residence and yet proximity to crowded city.⁴⁷

The CIM's periodical, *China's Millions*, was strangely mute about the opening of this new building, and there are no labelled pictures of it in the Polhill family papers, but Arthur did send pictures to his brother of himself standing in front of a large building.

In the photo below, the partially obscured writing above the doorway seems to confirm that it is, indeed, Arthur's Gospel Hall for he wrote to his brother, in June 1904, shortly before the building work was complete, "it really looks finished – and pretty with its ornamental corners and top. It has 福音堂 [Fú Yīn Táng] over the doorway done in broken China."⁴⁸

Arthur's activity was also occasionally reported on in one of the periodicals



An unlabelled photo in the Polhill Collection. Arthur can be seen on the right.

of the Church Missionary Society, *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China*. From this periodical there is another picture of the east side of the Gospel Hall, with the ornamental corners of its rounded roof partially visible.⁴⁹

A small, package-stamp sized version of this photo was also added to a circular that Arthur wrote on 1 July 1905, so it is likely that he took this photo himself.⁵⁰ Another from *China's Millions* (1915) is taken from the west wing of the building and gives some idea of its not inconsiderable length.

The wider mission in Dazhou

The Gospel Hall was not the only success story in Dazhou. Arthur had the very able assistance of Dr. William Wilson FRSA, “a clever doctor, surgeon... dentist [and] enthusiast in experimental science, especially electrical, including the practical side of making models to work, and showing electrical experiments.”⁵¹ Wilson opened a hospital in Dazhou in 1900, but gradually gave his time over to science lectures as the medical work was handed over to Dr. Julius Hewitt.⁵² Arthur, an accomplished amateur photographer, gives us an intimate snapshot of Wilson at work in his laboratory in which the contrast between ancient and modern, east and west, is vividly portrayed. Unlike so many photos of the period, the subject has assumed a much more natural posture, not facing the camera, but eyes down, engrossed in his work and almost unaware of the photographer.

Wilson left the CIM in 1910 to join the YMCA in Chengdu, and his science hall was later taken over by a Girls’ School (opened by the

missionaries), complemented by a Boys’ School in a separate building.⁵³

Dazhou outstations

The list in Table 1 does not include the many outstations of each of the main stations. By 1911, Dazhou alone had at least seven.⁵⁴ Many of these were under the leadership of the Chinese themselves. Revival meetings held by CIM missionary Albert Lutley (1864–1934) in 1910 had given new fervency to many of these outstations. According to Arthur, “Mr [Albert] Lutley’s Revival Meetings began a new era for our work in many ways. There is a deeper spiritual tone and a more fervent spirit, as well as the leaving behind of many insincere followers.”⁵⁵ Lutley joined the CIM in 1887, having responded to “the hundred” recruitment campaign.⁵⁶ He rose to Superintendent of Shanxi and became a firm admirer of the Chinese evangelist Xi Shengmo (“overcomer of demons”), a.k.a. Pastor Hsi.⁵⁷ Lutley seems to have travelled throughout China exercising a kind of proto-Charismatic ministry of renewal. For example, *China’s Millions* (1910) records, “Mr A. Lutley, whom God has so abundantly used in his own province, Shansi [Shanxi], and also in Shensi [Shaanxi], is to go to Bishop Cassels’ district...to conduct a series of meetings there. Will you not pray that the Spirit of the Lord will be poured out upon the Chinese in this district. May there be such a mighty manifestation of His power that many who believe on Him may be quickened and many who know Him not, born again.”⁵⁸ Min-yueh-chang (Mingyuexiang, 明月乡)—“clear moon village,”—was one of the Dazhou outstations touched by the new spirit of renewal.⁵⁹

Minyuexiang

Arthur’s visit to Minyuexiang, in August 1911, illustrates the courage of the missionaries and the converts and the very real risks they faced. Shortly after arriving in the village, the missionaries took a brief excursion to nearby Liutsi-pin (possibly Liuchixiang), where a Chinese convert brought his idols out to be burned whilst they all sang hymns.⁶⁰ This provoked an angry response from a large crowd of his family members and others who placed red paper on the convert’s house, proclaiming it as their ancestral hall. The missionaries ripped the paper down and retired to the house next door to pray. The convert’s house was then broken into and robbed, but as the missionaries were praying the crowd dispersed. When they returned to Minyuexiang the next day, they learned that the opposition leaders from Liu-tsi-pin were members of a secret society and had planned to bring two hundred men to Minyuexiang to murder the Christians. According to Arthur, “We prayed about it and waited. Mr Kang, the Evangelist, came up from Tung-hsiang [Xuanhan, 宣汉] and exhorted the street elders that they must take steps to protect us. However, it is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in man, ‘Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe!’ In two days’ time things were all quieted down and there was no further trouble.”⁶¹ Before his visit to Minyuexiang there had “only” been four Christians baptised and eight persons admitted as catechumens (those studying and preparing for baptism), but by the end of his visit he had baptised a further six and admitted a further nine as catechumens.⁶² In addition, the Minyuexiang Christians, under the



Photo from the West Wing of the Dazhou Gospel Hall. *China’s Millions*, British edition (June 1915): 89 .



Photo of the East Wing of the Dazhou Gospel Hall. Arthur Polhill, Circular, 1 July 1905 (Polhill Collection).



Dr. William Wilson at work in his Science Hall. Arthur Polhill, Circular, 1 July 1905 (Polhill Collection).

leadership of Mr. and Mrs. “Liao-Si-Ku,” had raised almost half of the \$80 required to rent a mission hall.⁶³ Less than two months after Arthur’s visit, the Xinhai (辛亥) Revolution⁶⁴ broke out in Hubei, followed by province-by-province declarations of independence from the resented ethnic Manchu Qing dynasty, eventually resulting in the abdication of the monarchy.⁶⁵

Dazhou after the revolution

The Dazhou Gospel Hall itself seems to have survived the revolution of 1911, the War Lord Era, and the Civil War, at least until Arthur’s retirement in 1928, but fighting caused the city to be evacuated in 1933.⁶⁶ It was safe for missionaries to return in January of the following year, but they found the Gospel Hall and other missionary properties had been ransacked:

Suiting [Dazhou] seems to be worse, only a few seats remain in the church, the rest having been broken up for firewood. The foreign house is an empty shell. Not a scrap of furniture remains below, and upstairs only a few empty boxes...floorboards have been torn up and holes dug in the walls and floor in search for silver. All the windows have been deliberately smashed. Doors have been taken away. The garden is littered with torn up books and broken glass and pots. Not a single bed remains in the place.⁶⁷

In addition, it was estimated that about fourteen church members and enquirers had lost their lives by being caught up in the conflict.⁶⁸ The missionaries did not give up easily, however, and sent Chinese helpers to reoccupy their properties, but by August 1934 they had to be evacuated

again until October of the same year.⁶⁹ The work and ministry of the Chinese Christians in Dazhou seems to have been particularly important at this time. For example, the station had a strong women’s work under the lady evangelists: “Mrs Lui,” “Miss Lü,” and “Miss Chen,” who formed a “Women’s Evangelistic Band” in 1938.⁷⁰ By 1950, when Dazhou was occupied by the victorious Communist Army, the work had recovered enough for “revival meetings” to be held by Miss Ellen Lister, and in December of that year the church was “decorated beautifully” for a Christmas Eve Carol Service.⁷¹ Miss Marion Parson reported that the lady evangelist, Miss Chen, gave the Christmas Sunday address, but the Western missionaries were living in China on borrowed time. In January 1951, it was reported that Miss Lü (by this time sixty-seven years old) and a younger co-worker, Miss Wang Fei-Yuin, who had a “settled work in Tahsien,” were being asked to lead “revival meetings” in a neighbouring station, but by July 1952 Miss Parson and Miss E. Barkworth were forced out of Dazhou altogether and relocated to Singapore and then Malaysia.⁷² It was the end of an era for Western mission work in China, but by no means the end of Chinese Christianity.

Dazhou today

Dazhou is now a huge city of almost 6.5 million people. Could there be any remains of the Gospel Hall? Did it survive the Cultural Revolution? Arthur described its location as on the north side of the river, near the east gate of the city wall, and a map search does locate a Dazhou City Gospel Hall in the Tong Chuan district which is on the north side of the river, and on the east

side of the city. The physical building that Arthur erected is no longer there; the current church is located on the first floor of a modern building above a clinic. But it is satisfying to know that something remains of Arthur’s labours and those of his Chinese co-labourers. Buildings may be demolished, but the walls of the “City of God” are imperishable. The Earthly City fluctuates between cultures and political rivalries, but the City of God transcends these transitions and opens her gates to those who seek to love God over self—“there the public treasury needs no great efforts for its enrichment at the cost of private property; for there the common stock is the treasury of truth.”⁷³

Conclusion

Missionaries of the CIM were expected to wear Chinese dress in order to help them better identify with the Chinese until 1907, when it became discretionary.⁷⁴ After the revolution of 1911, however, it could be dangerous to look too traditional. According to a ditty from the time, “One cannot mix with people if he does not cut his queue. But if he cuts it he must fear what [the War Lord] old Chang Hsün will do.”⁷⁵ Shortly before his retirement, in 1928, Arthur is pictured in his 马褂 (mǎ guà) jacket, remaining faithful to the CIM’s original principle of wearing Chinese clothing, with four Chinese Christians similarly attired.⁷⁶ It is typical of the single-minded determination that characterised his forty-year tenure in China. It is perhaps one of the Chinese men, with whom he is pictured, that we owe some thanks for the maintenance of the Dazhou Gospel Hall. After retirement, in 1928, Arthur became the vicar of St. Mary’s Furneux, Pelham and enjoyed a few short years of English parish life, where he could comfortably walk the entire parish boundary in a day and the threat of murder by secret societies was far less likely.⁷⁷ It is not really possible to sufficiently summarise the lasting impact of an active Christian life like Arthur’s, but his missionary career overlapped with his friend and bishop, William Cassels, who wrote of the results of forty years of labour in the diocese shortly before he died in 1925: “When I came here nearly forty years ago, there was no Mission House or Church...no Christians nor even a catechumen of any kind. Now over 10,000 converts have been baptised...now twelve tried men have been admitted to Holy Orders....

There are also in the diocese ninety-eight licensed preachers, not including colporteurs, Bible-women and others.”⁷⁸ Arthur died at his home in Letchworth in 1935 and joined the Church Triumphant.⁷⁹ **MRT**

¹ Tom Phillips, “China on course to become ‘world’s most Christian nation’ within 15 years,” *The Telegraph* (19 April 2014), <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/10776023/China-on-course-to-become-worlds-most-Christian-nation-within-15-years.html> (accessed 13 February 2019).

² Fenggang Yang, Joy K. C. Tong, and Allan H. Anderson, eds. *Global Chinese Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity*, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Vol. 22 (Boston: Brill, 2018), 8; Karrie J. Koessel, “China’s Patriotic Pentecostals,” in *Global Chinese Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity*, 245, fn 10. “Postdenominational” in theory, but in reality many Chinese churches have opted to identify with a particular theology and/or ecclesiology (such as Reformed and Presbyterian, Reformed and Congregational, or Pentecostal and Congregational, etc.), often in continuity with the mission that started the church, but sometimes on the basis of subsequent conviction.

³ The Cambridge Seven were: Montague Proctor-Beauchamp (1860–1939), Rev. William W. Cassels (1858–1925), Arthur T. Polhill-Turner (1862–1935), Cecil H. Polhill-Turner (1860–1938), Stanley P. Smith (1861–1931), Charles T. Studd (1860–1931) (all of whom studied at Cambridge) and Dixon E. Hoste (1861–1946) (who did not study at Cambridge).

⁴ J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis: A Biographical List of all Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900* (Cambridge: CUP, 1953), s.v. “Polhill-Turner (post Polhill), Arthur Twisleton.” Both Broomhall and Pollock estimated Arthur to be the first to seriously consider the mission field. A. J. Broomhall, *Assault on the Nine*, Hudson Taylor and China’s Open Century, Book 6 (Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton and Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1988), 334; John Pollock, *The Cambridge Seven: The True Story of Ordinary Men Used in no Ordinary Way* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2006), 37.

⁵ Pollock, *The Cambridge Seven*, first published as *The Cambridge Seven: A Call to Christian Service* (London: IVP, 1955).

⁶ Venn, s.v. “Polhill-Turner, Arthur Twisleton.”

⁷ Arthur Polhill, “Proposal for an Eton Mission to the East” (c. 1904), ed. John Usher, Polhill Collection Online, <https://pconline.org.uk/browse/13-papers/281-proposal-for-eton-mission-to-the-east-arthur-polhill> (accessed 15 March 2019) [PCO or PC for Polhill Collection].

⁸ He seems to have been about the same height as the eldest brother, Frederick Fiennes.

⁹ *Two Etonians in China: Reminiscences of Two of the “Cambridge Seven” Missionary Band (Cecil and Arthur Polhill)* c. 1925–6; Cecil’s chapters and some of the manuscripts have been digitised at the PCO, <https://pconline.org.uk/about-the-collection> (accessed 18 March 2019), while Arthur’s chapters and manuscripts are in the PC.

¹⁰ Administration of Frederick Edward Fiennes (died 24 December 1899), filed on 17 November 1900. London Probate Office, Royal Courts of Justice, the Strand, London.

¹¹ Pollock writes of them together in the chapter titled “The Brothers.” Pollock, *The Cambridge Seven*, 27.

¹² For example, John M. Usher, “‘For China and Tibet and for World-Wide Revival’ Cecil Henry Polhill (1860–1938) and His Significance for Early Pentecostalism” (PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2015).

¹³ See the Football Association website under www.thefa.com/competitions/thefacup/more/finals (accessed 1 October 2018).

¹⁴ Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 4.

¹⁵ Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 4.

¹⁶ Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 6.

¹⁷ Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 7.

¹⁸ Pollock, *The Cambridge Seven*, 37 and Broomhall, *Assault on the Nine*, 334.

¹⁹ Gordon Hewitt, *The Problem of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910–1942*, Vol. 2 (London: SCM, 1977), 264. Bishop George Evans Moule was serving at the time of the Taiping Rebellion; Archdeacon Arthur Evans Moule and his wife served in China from 1861–96 and from 1902–10.

²⁰ See “A Five Days Mission Relative to Work in Foreign Lands [12–17 November 1884]” flyer in the China Inland Mission collection, School of Oriental and African Studies library, Russell Square, London, UK [SOAS]. Arthur is listed at this meeting as a representative of the CMS.

²¹ Broomhall, *Assault on the Nine*, 336–42.

²² See “A Five Days Mission.”

²³ Cecil Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 10.

²⁴ Pollock, *The Cambridge Seven*, 99–100. The Strand Palace Hotel now occupies the former site of Exeter Hall. For more information, see Leonard Cowie, “Exeter Hall,” *History Today* 18, no. 6 (1 June 1968): 390–7.

²⁵ Technically, the Polhill brothers were not members of the CIM when they left London. The CIM London Council Minutes record, “it was proposed that they [the Polhill brothers] should proceed to China without formal identification with the mission which they could form after a time if on both sides it seemed desirable.” CIM Minutes of London Council, 13 January 1885, SOAS. But by May 1886, both brothers had written out by hand the Principles and Practices of the CIM (part of the first section of the CIM missionary exam), signifying their commitment to and acceptance to the CIM. A signed copy of the P&Ps, dated 25 May 1886 at “Hanchong” (Hanzhong), and countersigned by J. W. Stevenson (deputy director) is available at SOAS. For more on the study course for CIM probationers, see Alwyn Austin, *China’s Millions: The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007), 250–4.

²⁶ Benjamin Broomhall, ed., *The Evangelisation of the World: A Missionary Band, A Record Consecration of Appeal*, 3rd ed. (London: Morgan & Scott, 1889), 22, <https://archive.org/details/evangelisationw00brooogooq> (accessed 13 February 2019).

²⁷ Montague Beauchamp actually joined them as far as Wuhan (formerly Hankow or Hankou), but he returned to Shanghai and then joined the remaining members of the group in Shanxi. Thus, the two groups were initially stationed in neighbouring provinces: Shaanxi and Shanxi. Broomhall, *The Evangelisation of the World*, 24; Broomhall, *Assault on the Nine*, 374–5.

²⁸ Liao, “a native Christian and a great favourite,” was employed by Dr. William Wilson and his wife Caroline Wilson, CIM missionaries in Shaanxi, who were escorting the new missionaries to their first station. Cecil Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 33–34. The inhabitants of Langzhong, on observing the Polhill brothers retire outside the city wall each morning for prayer, believed them to be prospecting for precious stones. Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 39–40.

²⁹ Usher, “‘For China and Tibet and for World-Wide Revival’”, 62.

³⁰ Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 52.

³¹ Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 70, PC.

³² See for example, A. J. Broomhall, *Over the Treaty Wall*, Hudson Taylor and China’s Open Century, Book 2 (Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton and OMF), 375–90.

³³ Broomhall, *The Evangelisation of the World*, 49.

³⁴ Austin, *China’s Millions*, 397.

³⁵ Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 73, PC.

³⁶ They arrived in England on 17 March 1901.

China’s Millions, British ed. (April 1901): 62, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:218118>.

They began their return journey to China, by the Trans-Siberian Railway, on 1 October 1902. *China’s Millions*, British ed. (October 1902):

144, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:218131>. They arrived in Shanghai on 31 October 1902. *China’s Millions*, British ed. (January 1903): 8, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:218496>, (accessed 13 February 2019).

³⁷ Marshall Broomhall, *W. W. Cassels, First Bishop in Western China* (London: China Inland Mission, 1926), 180. A Queen’s Warrant was granted to the Archbishop of Canterbury to create a diocese of “those parts of the province of Szechwan and Kweichow [Sichuan and Guizhou] in the Empire of China as lie to the north of the 28th parallel of latitude.” A huge area, about three times the size of England. In May 1919, Cassels wrote that in an eight-year period he had spent more than 700 days travelling and still not visited all the stations in his diocese. Broomhall, *Cassels*, 305–6.

³⁸ The chief complaint being that Cassels could not be at one and the same time an Anglican bishop and a superintendent of an interdenominational mission. Broomhall, *Cassels*, 196–206.

³⁹ Hewitt, *The Problems of Success*, 284. See also *China’s Millions*, British ed. (July–August 1903): 102, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:218496> (accessed 19 March 2019). The other missions included, for example: the American Baptists, American Episcopal Methodists, Canadian Methodists, and the Society of Friends.

⁴⁰ Hewitt, *The Problems of Success*, 283–4. See also Map of the Diocese of Western China (Western Section) in *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (April 1913): 17 and R. G. Tiedemann, *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2015), 143. The CMS archival material is held at the Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, UK, and much of this has been digitised by Adam Matthew Digital (<https://www.amdigital.co.uk/>), for which a subscription may be required. There is additional archival material at the CMS office in Oxford, UK.

⁴¹ From *China’s Millions*, British ed. (July–August 1903): 102. See also ‘Map of China’ (1900) at the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g7821e.ct005537/?r=0.229,0.306,0.121,0.094,0> (accessed 18 March 2019).

⁴² Arthur Polhill to Cecil Polhill, 3 August 1904, PC.

⁴³ Arthur cites the seating capacity to his brother as seven hundred in Arthur Polhill to Cecil Polhill, 18 July 1904, PC, but this was before its completion. In the 1920s, he would cite the seating capacity of the church (more accurately) as five hundred. Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 93.

⁴⁴ Hoste subsequently forwarded the letter to his brother Cecil. Arthur Polhill, Copy of Letter to D. Hoste, 17 August 1903, PCO, <https://pconline.org.uk/browse/14-cim/371-arthur-polhill-copy-of-letter-to-d-hoste> (accessed 15 March 2019).

⁴⁵ Stated in a letter of the same date to his brother Cecil. Arthur Polhill to Cecil Polhill, 23 February 1904, PC.
⁴⁶ Arthur Polhill to Cecil Polhill, 4 April 1904, PC.
⁴⁷ Arthur Polhill to Cecil Polhill, 30 August 1904, PC.
⁴⁸ Arthur Polhill to Cecil Polhill, 10 June 1904, PC.
⁴⁹ See *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (April 1910): inside cover.
⁵⁰ Arthur Polhill, Circular, 1 July 1905, PC.
⁵¹ Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 96.
⁵² Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 93.
⁵³ *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (October 1911), 12. This had been started by Caroline Wilson and Miss F.J. Fowle in 1903. Arthur Polhill, *Two Etonians in China*, 88.
⁵⁴ Tung-hsiang (Xuanhan) and Sin Lin (walled cities); Lanpa-chang, Hwang-kin-keo, Tsin-chi-chang, Ren-shih-pu, and Min-yueh-chang. *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (October 1911), 13–14.
⁵⁵ *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (October 1911), 14.
⁵⁶ Austin, *China's Millions*, 230.
⁵⁷ See Lutley's comments on the late Pastor Hsi in his report discussed at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910). Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 142.
⁵⁸ "Tidings from the Provinces," *China's Millions*, North American ed. (February 1910): 22, <https://archive.org/details/millions1910chin/page/22> (accessed 20 March 2019).
⁵⁹ *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (October 1911): 14.
⁶⁰ *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (October 1911): 16.

⁶¹ *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (October 1911): 17.
⁶² *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (October 1911): 16.
⁶³ *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (October 1911): 11, 17.
⁶⁴ The Chinese zodiac, unlike the Greco-Roman zodiac, is based on twelve animals that recur in twelve-year cycles (these represent the "earthly branch" of the Chinese calendar); 1911 was the year of the boar (hài-亥) [commonly known as the year of the pig], as were the years: 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, and the present (2019). Alongside the zodiac are ten "heavenly" or "celestial stems" (based on the traditional belief in the existence of ten suns). In 1911, it was the xin (辛) stem (lit. to offend superiors), thus xinhai (辛亥) revolution. Corresponding to the heavenly stems are five elements (one element for every two celestial stems), so that 1911 is sometimes known as the year of the metal pig (jinhai - 金亥).
⁶⁵ James E. Sheridan, *China in Disintegration: The Republican Era in Chinese History 1912–1949* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 29.
⁶⁶ "Editorial Notes," *China's Millions*, British ed. (September 1931): 174, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:222171>; "The Red Terror in East Szechuan," *China's Millions*, British ed. (December 1933): 224, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:222682> (accessed 13 February 2019). See also *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (April 1934): 14–15.
⁶⁷ "Editorial Notes," *China's Millions*, British ed. (March 1934): 56, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:222939> (accessed 13 February 2019).

⁶⁸ Dazhou was by this time also known as Tahsien. "Editorial Notes," *China's Millions*, British ed. (May 1934), 96, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:222939> (accessed 13 February 2019).
⁶⁹ *China's Millions*, British ed. (November 1934), 217, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:222939> (accessed 13 February 2019).
⁷⁰ *The Bulletin of the Diocese of Western China* (January 1936): 11 and (July 1938): 2.
⁷¹ *Four Streams: Diocesan Association for Western China Bulletin* (May 1950): 23, 26–28.
⁷² *Four Streams: Diocesan Association for Western China Bulletin* (January 1951): 16; (July 1952): 10.
⁷³ Augustine (Henry Bettenson's transl.) *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans* (London: Penguin, 1984), Book V:16.
⁷⁴ See William Cooper, *The Book of Arrangements [Principles of the CIM]* (Gang'King: Shanghai Mercury, 1890), under "Instructions," "The Missionary (except in certain localities) will wear the Chinese dress," 24. OMF Archive, Borough Green, UK. See also, D. E. Hoste, "My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ" (23 April 1907), OMF International Archives AR5.1.1, Box 1, Folder 2.
⁷⁵ Sheridan, *China in Disintegration*, 66.
⁷⁶ See 剑桥七杰 (Cambridge Seven) at Baidu: <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%89%91%E6%A1%A5%E4%B8%83%E6%9D%B0/1504923> (accessed 18 March 2019).
⁷⁷ Venn, s.v. "Polhill-Turner (post Polhill), Arthur Twistleton."
⁷⁸ Hewitt, *The Problems of Success*, 286.
⁷⁹ Venn, s.v. "Polhill-Turner (post Polhill), Arthur Twistleton."

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No.	Name.	Date of Arrival.	From.	Age.	Previous Occupation.	Denomination.	Chinese Name.
219	H. W. Cassels B.A.	10.3.15	London		Clergyman	Ch. of E.	蓋
220	Stanley P. Smith B.A.	10.3.15	do		Cambridge University Student		司米德
221	C. T. Studd B.A.	10.3.15			University Student		
222	M. Beauchamp B.A.	10.3.15			University Student	Ch. of E.	章
223	A. Polhill-Turner B.A.	10.3.15	Brighton		at Cambridge University		杜明德
224	C. Polhill-Turner	10.3.15	Brighton				杜
225	D. E. Hoste <small>Born at Okehampt., 23 July, 1861.</small>	10.3.15			Military Officer		何斯德

Entries of the Cambridge Seven in the CIM Register of Missionaries held in the archives at the OMF International Center in Singapore.