

GODLY WORDS?

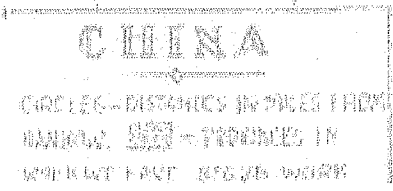
*A History of the Term Controversy
in Missouri's China Missions*

Church History 331

Prof. Brenner

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CHINA
CIRCLES - DISTANCES IN MILES FROM
HANKOW. SQUIGGLY LINES - PROXIMITY IN
WEEKS BY RAIL - 800 MILES PER WEEK

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以色列人這群新大王(五五七)

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant, there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument,'" Alice objected.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

~Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

"From a distance, one's adversaries seemed fiends, but with a closer view, one saw their sincerity and it was as great as one's own."

~Walter A. Miller, Jr., *A Canticle for Leibowitz*

"...memory sometimes seems to act by queer quirks, conveniently eliminating facts that do not fit in well with one's theory."

J. P. Meyer, Letter to E. E. Kowalke, November 17, 1937

在我們前出外語(五三三)

是個男大王

那和華是一路大王

中至王至尊者是希臘國人

上帝和耶穌是同樣的大王

WORDS OF INTRODUCTION

In George Lillegard's opinion the word *Shang-Di* was fit for the devil. In one of the first letters he wrote during the Missouri Synod's bout with the Chinese Term Controversy, Lillegard related the following story:

"Eleven years ago I received a pamphlet, describing a scene in Hell. Satan was pictured as receiving reports from his emissaries to earth, expressing more or less satisfaction over what they had to report. But when one devil returned in great haste and reported that he had succeeded in getting a prominent missionary and Sinologue to advocate the use of the word *Shang-Di* as a name of the true God, the devil rose in triumph and a great shout rang through the vaults of Hell, since their great stronghold, China, thus was saved for them!"¹

Later on, in the same vein, he contended, "If we must have the name *Shang-Di* in our Bibles in China, let it be as the name of the prince of Hell and all its hosts! That is where it belongs."²

Many people disagreed with Lillegard. In fact, the majority of Protestant missionaries felt *Shang-Di* was the best Chinese word available for translating the word "God." In some instances, they even suggested that Lillegard's word of choice, *Shen*, was often appropriately translated as "devil" or "demon."³

Such a stark difference of opinion was commonplace in the long history of debate over the Chinese Term Question. That "Question" was essentially, *What term in the Chinese language best renders the biblical "Elohim" and "Theos" ("God," "god," and "gods")?*

Over the course of centuries, different Christians came up with different answers. The Nestorian missionaries of about 650 A.D. chose *Aloha (Eloah)*, a transliteration of the Syrian word for God.⁴ Around a thousand years later, Roman Catholic missionaries tried various words. Early on they used *Shen*, but then switched to the term *T'ien Chu* ("Heavenly Lord").⁵ Later the Jesuits began using the terms *Shang-Di* (the name of the god the emperor worshipped) and *T'ien* ("Heaven"). In the 1700s the Dominicans and Franciscans had strong disagreements with the Jesuits over the use of *Shang-Di* and *T'ien*. Controversy rose to a boil. It took over a century and several papal decrees before the matter was settled. *T'ien Chu* became standard in Catholic teaching and translation.⁶ In the 1800s, Protestant missionaries first chose the term *Shen*. For a while they used it without debate, but the peace was not

¹ George O. Lillegard, *A History of the Term Controversy in Our China Mission and the Chief Documents in the Case* (Jamaica Plan, MA, 1930. Printed as Manuscript), p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³ cf. Gebhardt and Lillegard, "Definition of the Terms 'Shen' and 'Shang-Ti,'" January 26, 1928, J. P. Meyers Files, Wisconsin Synod Archives, Mequon, Wi, p. 4.

⁴ Lillegard to Missionaries, March 10, 1925, "What Term shall our Mission Use for God in Chinese, Shen or Shang-Di?" in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 4 [10]. For a *Shang-Di* advocate's interpretation of the history of the Term Question, see: Zschiegner to the Chinese Term Question Committee, October 30, 1936, "The Use of the Terms 'Shen' and 'Shang Ti' in Chinese," in J. P. Meyer Files, Wisconsin Synod Archives, Mequon Wisconsin.

⁵ George Lillegard, *The Chinese Term Question: An Analysis of the Problem and Historical Sketch of the Controversy* (Shanghai: The Christian Book Room, 1935), p. 27-29.

⁶ Lillegard, "What Term," in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 4 [11-12].

meant to last. As the work of translating the Bible began in earnest, the Term Question became the source of heated debate. Protestants narrowed the question down to the two terms: *Shen* and *Shang-Di*. The debate would rage for decades, coming in waves of great intensity. For years, two separate translations would reflect the opinions of their respective bodies: the American Bible societies used *Shen* exclusively, the British Bible societies used *Shang-Di*. Still, missionaries always felt strongly that there should be a unified practice and translation among Christians in China. By the turn of the century, a compromise had been made. A "Union Bible" was produced that made use of *both* terms. However, not all missionaries were satisfied and the Term Question lived on.⁷

In 1924, the persistent little Term Question made its way to the doorstep of the Missouri Synod's China missions. It took its seat at the China General Conference in 1924, and, as was its custom, it became a controversy. It refused to budge for nearly five years, but with reluctance finally moved on. However, Missouri was not free yet. The Term Question hopped a steamer to America and for nearly two decades it dropped in at the conventions of the Missouri Synod, the Norwegian Synod, and the Synodical Conference. It visited numerous district and circuit pastoral conferences. It was at home in the halls of seminaries and on the typewriters of synodical presidents. The Term Question survived the length of World War II. Conceivably, it only went away in 1947 because more heated and destructive problems overshadowed it.

Below, I will endeavor to tell just the first part of the story of this great "difference of opinions" in the Missouri Synod's China Mission. I will look especially at the years 1924-1929, when the controversy was mainly a matter on the mission field in China and in the halls of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The second, *American* phase of the controversy will have to be saved for another time.

For the historian of the Term Question, the assessment of Frederick Brand seems on target, when he described it as an "extremely difficult subject."⁸ This "subject" involves linguistic, cultural, exegetical, and theological subtleties. It involves the ancient, immense, crowded land of China, a place bustling with so much complexity that generalizations, always faulty, become absurd. Finally, it involves people. The men who lived this little chapter of history were intelligent, complex, *Christian* men—both saints and sinners—and it shows. This history cannot be divorced from their lives and personalities—and yet, our access to their lives and personalities is very limited from this distance in time. All of these complexities suggest strongly that an inexperienced twenty-six-year-old's history paper will fall woefully short of the mark.

To this, one more difficulty must be added.

⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 4-6 [14-25].

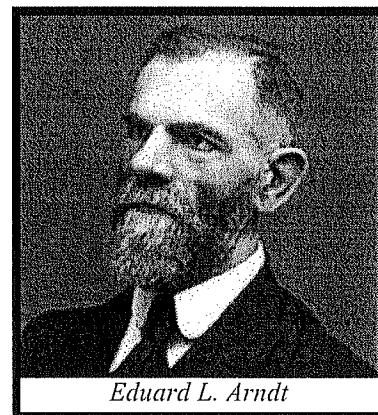
⁸ Brand to Simon and Cloeter, July 26, 1928, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 113.

Our God encourages us not to pass judgements on disputed matters without the testimony of at least two witnesses. I must confess that I have not always been able to find even two witnesses. In many cases, I have had only the testimony George of Lillegard to guide me as I tried to piece together the movements of the Term Controversy. For that reason, as well as my close ties to the synod of which Lillegard was an integral part, I do not doubt that my history will be biased. I am certain that exposure to the broader testimony available in the Missouri Synod archives would prove the wisdom of Solomon, "The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him." (Proverbs 18:17). No doubt, further study would change and refine my understanding of the controversy and those involved. This limitation being acknowledged, I have endeavored to be fair and honest in presenting what is largely "Lillegard's side" of the Term Controversy. I ask for the reader's graciousness in what follows.

Setting the Stage: Two Strong Missionaries

The Term Controversy in the Missouri Synod involved many high-profile men. Its historian will come across names such as Pfoth, Fuerbringer, Arndt, Graebner, Ylvisaker, Meyer, and Kowalke. Pastors, professors, and presidents people the stage. But it begins, particularly, as the story of two Lutheran missionaries: Eduard L. Arndt and George O. Lillegard.

In 1911, Rev. Arndt, already nearly fifty years old, decided that the time had come for Missouri to begin solid confessional Lutheran mission work in China. After overtures to the Missouri Synod produced no action, Arndt took it upon himself to rally support for China missions. On May 1, 1912, through his efforts, an independent mission society was formed, the Evangelical Lutheran Mission for China. Less than a year later, Arndt and his family set sail for China. Things were slow-going at first. It would take nearly three years before another Missourian would join Arndt in China. In the meantime, Arndt worked on his own to extend the mission by establishing schools. Bit by bit, the mission grew. After years of apparent disinterest, Missouri finally listened to Arndt's pleas. In September of 1917, the synod officially took charge of the missions in Hankow, China.⁹



A year before Arndt had set sail, the old Norwegian Synod had already begun its own mission project in China. In 1912, that synod had called a twenty-four year old graduate of its seminary, George Lillegard, as its first missionary to China. Lillegard's service for that synod would last only a few short years. In 1915, Lillegard returned home to visit his ailing father. While there, he found his synod heading in theological directions he could not follow. Lillegard refused to return to the mission field of this synod under such circumstances. Eventually, Lillegard would be among the small band of pastors who gathered at Lime Creek in June of 1918, to form a new Norwegian Synod. However, Lillegard's years in China were not over. In May of 1921, Lillegard returned to China as a representative of his new synod under the auspices of the Missouri Synod's Board for Foreign Missions.¹⁰

And so it was that George Lillegard and Eduard Arndt became co-workers in China.

Neither Arndt nor Lillegard was a man afraid to stand his ground against opposition. Arndt's biographer writes, "Arndt was a man with strong convictions that often brought him into conflict with those who did not see things his way."¹¹ Arndt's strong will was an asset when it came to learning the difficult Chinese language. After only six months in China, he preached his first Chinese sermon. This

⁹ Cf. Richard Henry Meyer, "The Missouri Evangelical Lutheran Mission in China, 1913-1948" (Master's thesis, Washington University, June, 1948), pp. 1-4.

¹⁰ Theodore Aaberg, *A City Set on a Hill: A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1918-1968* (Lake Mills, IA: Board of Publications Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1968), pp. 82-83.

same strong will kept him in Hankow, in 1927, when all missionaries were ordered to leave. Arndt refused to leave and stayed to help negotiate the release of two native lay workers.¹² Lillegard demonstrated a similarly strong will in his decision to part ways with the old Norwegian Synod. His confessional fortitude would serve him again through the long years of the Term Question and the difficult years during the dissolution of the Synodical Conference.

However, their strong convictions also made these men ripe for strong disagreements. Lillegard had demonstrated a great deal of courage when he parted with the old Norwegian Synod to stand with hardly more than a baker's dozen of confessional pastors. His fellow missionary apparently did not share the same perspective in the area of fellowship. Arndt's biographer writes, "In China [Arndt] maintained close contacts with *all* Lutheran missions, and he supported German missionaries stranded in China during the First World War. He preached in the German Community Church during the war"(emphasis added).¹³ This different "approach" to fellowship was a serious conflict waiting to happen.

Before he came to the field, Lillegard was apparently aware of Arndt's "peculiarities" in regard to fellowship practices and, perhaps, had in mind to straighten things out.¹⁴ If so, it did not go according to plan. In 1922, Arndt traveled to the old Norwegian Synod's seminary in Shekow to join in their tenth anniversary celebration. Other missionaries, who had accompanied Arndt, later repented because they had joined in prayer and worship. They also reported that Arndt had gone so far as to give a speech to the assembly at the celebration. Lillegard was deeply offended. He expressed himself to Arndt in writing, "I think I have the right to ask that my brethren in the mission field shall be more anxious to 'keep the brotherhood' with me than with my opponents."¹⁵ From Arndt's correspondence with Lillegard, it is not clear what exactly had taken place at Shekow. Arndt refused to admit that he had done anything improper and was offended at the official charge of unionism posted by the missionaries at their last conference.¹⁶

The already tense relationship between Arndt and Lillegard would be stretched to its limits when they became the point men of opposing sides in the Term Controversy. But in spite of this, the two men were sometimes very civil with each other. Their letters to each other before, and even during, the Term Controversy are often friendly. A striking example of this is found in a letter from May of 1925. In it Arndt wrote with a warm, gospel-rich concern, encouraging Lillegard's and his family as they battled with severe illness.¹⁷ Their letters to each other often end with greetings for each other's families and blessings on their work.

¹¹ <http://chi.lcms.org/collections/fa/M-0005.htm#BIOGRAPHICAL>

¹² Cf. Edward J. Arndt, "Pi and Li, Two Counter Revolutionaries," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, Winter 1994, pp. 158-170.

¹³ <http://chi.lcms.org/collections/fa/M-0005.htm#BIOGRAPHICAL>

¹⁴ George Lillegard, "Who has made Accusations?" in the George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN, p. 1.

¹⁵ Lillegard to Arndt, July 23, 1923, in the George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN.

¹⁶ Arndt to Lillegard, July 26, 1923, in the George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN.

¹⁷ Arndt to Lillegard, May 27, 1925, in the George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN.

I have gone into such depth regarding these two men because the conflict between them was never far away throughout the controversy. Arndt always considered Lillegard to be the ringleader of the *Shen* men. Lillegard, even after Arndt's death, considered Arndt to be one of his main opponents. The strong wills of these two men had a very significant effect on the ardent nature of the controversy.

However, it would be incorrect to treat the Term Controversy as a clash of only *two* personalities. Lillegard was not the only one who had a tenuous relationship with Arndt. In his history of the Missouri's China Missions, Richard Meyer explains what things were like leading up to 1924.

For some time there had been a certain amount of ill feeling among the missionaries, much of it centering around Rev. Arndt. He had absented himself from the 1923 China General Conference because of work he had planned for himself in Hankow, and was absent again in 1924. The other missionaries felt there was no valid reason for these absences. Furthermore while Arndt had been requested to present a paper on "The Chinese Term for God" at the conference in 1924, he sent one concerning "The Chinese Term for Hell" instead. He had also made certain charges against the China General Conference which led the missionaries to appoint a committee to interview him in an attempt to smooth the troubled waters.¹⁸

Other tensions existed over decisions the Board for Foreign Missions had made according to Arndt's requests and against the wishes of the China General Conference.¹⁹ It seemed to the other missionaries that Arndt's station in Hankow and his personal philosophy of missions received preferential treatment by the Board.

Nor was Arndt the only one with whom missionaries had rough relationships. Missionary Lawrence Meyer was apparently held in ill favor by a number of the other missionaries. The Australian of the group, Missionary C. D. Nagel, wrote to Lillegard in May of 1925, stating emphatically, "Meyer MUST be put out of the Seminary [in Hankow]."²⁰ In 1926, it seems Nagel's wish came true. Due to health problems Meyer was forced to return to the States permanently.²¹ Nevertheless, Lillegard and others would complain about Meyer well into the next decade.

Before 1924, however, all of these tensions were just strong flavors in the brewing pot. Not until that summer would the little Missouri mission begin to drink this bitter tea with vigor.

Kuling, 1924: The Term Question becomes a Controversy

Through the generous gift of the Walther League, the Mission had constructed a retreat center in the quiet mountains of Kuling. Here missionaries would gather for rest and relaxation. It was also here that they held the annual meetings of the China General Conference. And it was here that the Term Controversy began, somewhat quietly, in the summer of 1924.

¹⁸ R. Meyer, "Missouri Evangelical Lutheran Mission," p. 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ "Spike" (Nagel) to Lillegard, May 27, 1925, in the George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN.

²¹ Albert Ziegler, "Biographical Sketches of LC-MS Mainland China Missionaries" (Florida, 1982, photocopy), p 70.

At that year's China General Conference meeting, in the absence of Missionary Arndt and his assigned paper, the missionaries took up the Term Question. Lillegard lead the discussion. As he later reported it,

We proceeded, then, to discuss the Term Question...considering mainly its linguistic phases on the basis of the usage in the 'Shang-Di Bible' itself. We soon came to see that Shen was the proper translation of Elohim and Theos and that Shang-Di was not a translation at all, but a proper name, substituted for the general terms in the originals, where the sense would not be entirely destroyed by such a substitution.²²

At that conference, the missionaries voted 11-2 in favor of the resolution:

Since there has been a controversy among the missionaries in China from the beginning and also among Chinese scholars, as to whether the term for God, Shang-Di, was once used to denote the one true God, or to denote merely the *chief* of the gods, like Zeus and Odin in the Greek and German pantheons, Resolved, That we use the term Shen in our own printed literature, with the understanding that the term Shang-Di be taken up for further discussion at next year's Conference.²³

Missouri's Board for Foreign Missions had the final responsibility for passing all the actions of the China General Conference. Upon receiving the missionaries' resolution, the Board wrote in response, "If the (Chinese) Bible and our Christian hymns use the term Shangti, it is a great question whether it is wise to make a change in our literature at this time. The main and important thing would seem to be to fill the term with biblical thought."²⁴ Urged on by this response, Missionary Klein wrote a paper attacking the use of *Shen*. Missionaries Gebhardt and Scholz joined Lillegard in formulating responses.²⁵ The war of words was on.

The Terms of the Disagreement: Shen and Shang-Di

After the 1924 Conference, most of the missionaries had taken up positions in either the *Shen* or the *Shang-Di* camp. A few remained uncertain. In order to help us understand the reasoning of the two sides (and the indecision of those in the middle), a basic sketch of the two terms, *Shang-Di* and *Shen*, is in order.

Shang-Di is a combination of two terms. "Shang" means "above." "Di" (also often transliterated, "Ti") means "emperor." Together they mean something along the lines of "highest emperor" or "supreme ruler." No one ever raised serious contentions about the literal meaning of *Shang-Di*. Harsh scrutiny came quickly, though, because *Shang-Di* was the name of a Chinese god. In a sense, this was a fact no one denied. They couldn't deny it because an altar stood in the Forbidden City dedicated to *Shang-Di*. It was historical fact that *Shang-Di* was the chief god of the Chinese *imperial*

²² Lillegard, *A History*, p. 2 [5] (numbers in brackets indicate paragraphs)

²³ Quoted by Lillegard in *A History*, p. 2 [6]

²⁴ Quoted by Lillegard in *A History*, p. 2 [7]

religion. The “*Shen* men” consistently held that *Shang-Di* sat alone as the chief idol of the Chinese pantheon. However, some *Shang-Di* advocates contended that the term was applied to *more* gods than this one idol.

Whereas there was agreement on the literal sense of *Shang-Di*, the basic meaning of *Shen* was hotly contested. Its proponents insisted that its basic sense was “divine being.” The *Shang-Di* advocates insisted that its basic sense was “spirit,” “mythical being,” or even “demon.” Both sides could cite many examples from “common” usage against one another. The ease with which they could find these examples suggests that *Shen* has a fairly wide spectrum of meaning. Wider, at least, than the English word “god.” For the *Shang-Di* advocates this vagueness meant *Shen* could be used only in a limited way. For the *Shen* men, this vagueness was an opportunity. With time and use, the biblical ideas would naturally overcome this weakness of *Shen*.

Why did the missionaries differ so starkly in their understanding of these two terms? It was not merely a matter of linguistic savvy or ineptitude. Both sides could rally support from the literature of the day. Instead, it seems that the way a missionary interpreted the facts in the Term Question had much to do with the way a missionary perceived the state of the mission field.

For Lillegard and other *Shen* advocates, the mission field was a theologically fragile place. The record of history revealed that the two foes of the Lutheran church, unionism and liberalism, often found their beginnings in the mission field.²⁶ Lillegard felt it was part of his call to guard the mission from these dangers. In his eyes *Shang-Di* presented just such a danger.

From the beginning of the controversy, Lillegard had his arguments organized in well-disciplined regiments, ready to strike against *Shang-Di*—he came to the 1924 conference already fully loaded. Well before 1924, Lillegard had undertaken a great deal of private research on the Term Question. Well after 1924, he would hold out the literature of *Shang-Di* enthusiasts as the best demonstration of the word’s problems—problems that were not merely *linguistic*, but *theological* as well.

“I have no desire to keep a single argument for *Shang-Di* from the knowledge of the Committee—especially since it is these arguments which in the first place convinced me that *Shang-Di* is the wrong term. If any brother insists, after hearing and analyzing all the arguments for *Shang-Di*, that the term can still be used, my quarrel with him will concern the whole field of religion—Chinese false religions and heathen religions in general as well as the whole field of Christian theology.”²⁷

In Lillegard’s opinion, the men who had historically rallied around *Shang-Di* were “liberalists” and often crass syncretists.²⁸ They latched on to *Shang-Di* because, “A great advantage accrues from the use of the term *Shang-Di* for God, viz., that we are able to tell the Chinese: We do not preach to you new gods, but

²⁵ Lillegard, *A History*, pp. 2-3.

²⁶ Lillegard to the Faculty, December 29, 1928, Lillegard, *A History*, p. 117.

²⁷ Lillegard to the Chinese Term Question Committee, December 17, 1936, p. 4.

the same, whom your forefathers knew and partly served..."²⁹ Many others who supported *Shang-Di* had come to that position through a tainted desire for false unity.³⁰ For these reasons, Lillegard could find no room for compromise on *Shang-Di* as the equivalent of *Elohim* and *Theos*. He and others believed that, whether by intention or accident, the use of *Shang-Di* as an equivalent to *Elohim* and *Theos* was, at best, subtle syncretism, if not brash idolatry.³¹

Because Lillegard saw the mission field as a place that needed to be protected, he was always concerned about the long term. Earlier, he had voiced his disapproval with the way Arndt rushed to make Chinese converts into teachers for the mission. "We have enough work to do in this last great fortress of heathendom without spending precious time trying to undo the work that unworthy representatives have done under our aegis in the communities we hope to evangelize!"³² Lillegard was convinced that long-term hard work would always reap a greater harvest.³³ So, also, when it came to the use of *Shang-Di*, Lillegard was willing to make sacrifices *now* in order that the mission might be preserved for the future.

Those missionaries who supported the use of *Shang-Di* saw the mission field in a different light. To them it was a place of *opportunity*, a place where a door was open for missions *right now*. In a human sense, they did not want to do anything that would obstruct their message. As they developed their arguments over the years, their position would become largely pragmatic. Since their converts had grown used to *Shang-Di*, and since the great majority of Chinese Christians used *Shang-Di*, the missionaries felt it would cause unnecessary difficulties to change to the exclusive use of *Shen*.³⁴ These concerns were *not* based on a misunderstanding of conversion. The *Shang-Di* advocates knew that the gospel alone converted souls.³⁵ For this very reason, they felt comfortable using *Shang-Di*. They had used it without trouble and were convinced that those who heard them proclaim "the gospel of *Shang-Di*" were believers in the only true and saving God.³⁶ In their eyes, the Term Question quickly became a distraction from the more important work of the kingdom. The heated debate that it brought with it was mainly an example of "useless personal arguments."³⁷

²⁸ Lillegard, "What Term," in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 5 [22].

²⁹ *Ibid.*, quoting Faber.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5-6, [24].

³¹ Lillegard, "An Examination of the Papers on the Term Question Prepared by Members of the Concordia Seminary Faculty," December, 1926, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 40 [1]. He writes, "...the term *Shang-Di* is, so to speak, the very symbol and banner" of "crass syncretism."

³² Lillegard to Arndt, January 21, 1924, in the George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Hankow Faculty to Board of Foreign Missions, March 4, 1937, in the J. P. Meyer Files, Wisconsin Synod Archives, Mequon, WI, p. 7.

³⁵ "Our understanding Christians of today were confused heathen of yesterday. How were they enlightened? by a "term"? or by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel?" Missionary Klein to M. Graebner, May 20, 1937, in J. P. Meyer Files, Wisconsin Synod Archives, Mequon, WI, p. 1.

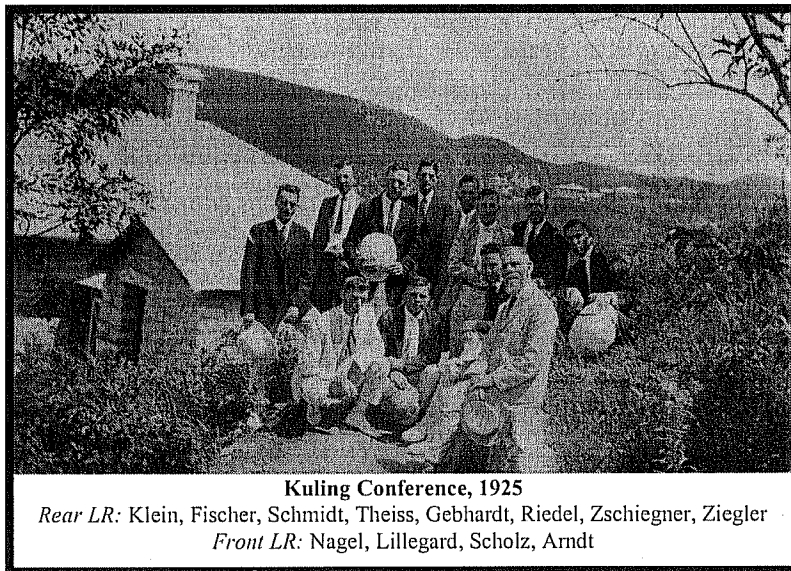
³⁶ Hankow Faculty to Board of Foreign Missions, March 4, 1937, pp. 7-8.

³⁷ Max Christian Emil Zschiegner, "Ambassador on the Yangtze: Max Henry Zschiegner (1897-1940)," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, Spring 1999, Vol. 72, No. 1, p. 24.

If we assume the basic integrity of the missionaries, the difference in their perception of the mission field and mission strategy may help us to understand their different understandings in regard to the basic nature of *Shen* and *Shang-Di*.

Kuling, 1925

During the year leading up to the next China General Conference, letters traveled back and forth between the missionaries. Private discussions were held. Theses were written up. In 1925 when the



Kuling Conference, 1925

Rear LR: Klein, Fischer, Schmidt, Theiss, Gebhardt, Riedel, Zschiegner, Ziegler
Front LR: Nagel, Lillegard, Scholz, Arndt

conference met again, all members were in attendance, and all were ready to defend their views. Lillegard's sentiments were expressed in a paper on Union Movements in China, and again in the report of the Literature Committee. The *Shang-Di* men, Arndt, Riedel, and Klein, expressed their views in theses. Disagreement was so strong that the conference decided to halt all publication work

until the Board of Foreign Missions could send a representative to a future conference.³⁸

After the conference, Arndt prepared a series of papers and sent them to all the members of the Board for Foreign Missions and the faculty of the St. Louis seminary. According to Lillegard, these papers were filled with personal attacks against him. Furthermore, the arguments presented in these papers would become the standard material used by the *Shang-Di* advocates for the rest of the controversy.³⁹

A Number of "Opinions"

The sudden storm of trouble in the China missions greatly disturbed the Board. Apparently, they had not been fully aware of the animosity that existed between the missionaries. Director Frederick Brand wrote to Lillegard with some surprise at the "militant" tone of his letters.⁴⁰ For anyone who understood the tension of the situation, Lillegard's tone would not have come as a surprise. Lillegard's

³⁸ R. Meyer, "Missouri Evangelical Lutheran Mission," p. 12.

³⁹ Lillegard, *A History*, p. 27.

⁴⁰ Brand to Lillegard, August 3, 1925, in the George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN.

reply acknowledged, "I know that I am prone to use what others consider harsh language." But he asked for understanding, due to the stubbornness of his opponents.⁴¹

As papers poured in stateside, the Board turned to the St. Louis seminary for help. In December, the Board chose to submit the Term Question to the St. Louis faculty for their expert "Opinion" (*Gutachten*). The faculty in turn elected Prof. Fuerbringer, along with the two professors who were currently Board members, William Arndt and Martin Sommer, as a special committee to examine the Term Question. These men would be responsible for drawing up two faculty Opinions over the course of the next year. Prof. Theodore Graebner also made a point of putting his opinions in writing for the missionaries at this time.⁴² The writings of these men would have a great impact on the minds of the missionaries—many of whom had studied at their feet.

The first faculty Opinion was finished in time for Director Brand to bring along when he visited the China mission, in the summer of 1926. That summer, the General Conference sessions lasted from July 28 until August 25. Towards the end of the conference, Brand read the first Opinion to the missionaries.⁴³ It stated that the Term Question was "not purely doctrinal or theological, but largely philological and linguistic."⁴⁴ After a brief examination of the two terms, the Opinion stated that either *Shang-Di* or *Shen* could be used with "proper instruction." It added, "The term whose usage seems to involve greater difficulties, in our opinion is Shen. And since the majority of Protestants use the term Shangti, we hold, that this term, namely Shangti, should be used in our Mission."⁴⁵ The faculty held unanimously that no one should "be condemned as a heretic for using either term with the proper explanation."⁴⁶

This Opinion was not what the *Shen* men had hoped for; their reaction was strongly negative. Since the division among the missionaries was so strong, at the urging of Brand, the General Conference decided to send representatives from both sides to meet with the St. Louis faculty for further consideration of their positions.⁴⁷ Missionary Gebhardt was scheduled for furlough at the time and Missionary Arndt was granted a special furlough in order to meet with Gebhardt and the faculty.⁴⁸ Over the course of these meetings Missionary Gebhardt was persuaded by the faculty that *Shangti* not only *could* be used, but *should* be used.⁴⁹ It seems he was swayed largely due to the faculty's contention that *any* idol name could be used for God. Prof. Fuerbringer had added weight to this contention by

⁴¹ Lillegard to Brand, September 15, 1925, in George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN.

⁴² Lillegard, *A History*, pp. 23-24 [103-104], 27-28 [138].

⁴³ R. Meyer, "Missouri Evangelical Lutheran Mission," pp. 12-13.

⁴⁴ "An Opinion on the Question Whether 'Shangti' or 'Shen' is to be used as the Term for 'God' in Chinese," in Lillegard *A History*, p. 31 [150].

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34 [169].

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34 [170].

⁴⁷ Lillegard, *A History*, p. 34 [172].

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35 [173].

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35 [174].

demonstrating that even the Bible used idol names for God when it used *Logos* and *Kyrios*.⁵⁰ Gebhardt's report to the missionaries explained, "I do have linguistic objections to the term Shangti, but that is a factor that is not decisive, as a false use of language in time becomes a correct one."⁵¹

Gebhardt's report helped to sway some missionaries who had been undecided. They now felt they could accept *Shang-Di*. However, Lillegard responded quite negatively to the "what's-in-a-name" attitude of the faculty. They should have founded their opinions on the significance the Bible attached to names, rather than on "Shakesperean half-truth."⁵² Missionary Arndt's report only served to fire the ire of the *Shen* men even more. He had recorded that some faculty members at the meetings remarked, "Our missionaries verily should have more important things to do than thus to haggle over names."⁵³

A second faculty Opinion followed shortly after the September meetings with Gebhardt and Arndt. It was largely a summary of the discussions held at those meetings. When this opinion was received, along with word that Gebhardt had accepted the use of *Shang-Di*, the Conference decided to resume the printing of its *Catechism* and the Chinese *Lutheran Witness* using the term *Shang-Di*.⁵⁴ However, discussions with the faculty and the Board continued unabated.

Disagreements with the First Opinions

The arguments presented in the faculty Opinions and the responses of the *Shen* men became the "canon" of the Term Question in Missouri Synod circles. When debate moved to America, few new ideas (though a great many new words) were added to the arguments presented by either side. Here, then, we will examine some of the main disagreements between the *Shen* men and the first two Opinions.

In the first Opinion, the faculty wrote, "It seems to be established...that Shangti now is a *proper name* among the Chinese, referring to an idol, to the chief god of the Chinese Pantheon..."(emphasis added).⁵⁵ This was exactly what the *Shen* men were reporting. However, the faculty went on to say that also *Elohim*, *Theos*, *Gott*, and *God*, "are not common nouns or generic terms, but really proper nouns."⁵⁶ They considered the many occasions where these terms were used of false gods, idols, or earthly rulers to be "figurative." They explained, "This usage is...based on a metaphor, the idols of the heathen being called gods because they were given the exalted position which really belongs to the true God."⁵⁷

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35 [175] Fuerbringer's explanation of this contention, written for the missionaries is contained in Lillegard's *History*, Document VIII, pp 36-37 [in German].

⁵¹ Quoted by Lillegard, *A History*, p. 36 [175].

⁵² Lillegard, "An Examination," December, 1926, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 42 [9].

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 35 [174].

⁵⁴ R. Meyer, "Missouri Evangelical Lutheran Mission," p. 13.

⁵⁵ "An Opinion," in Lillegard, *A History* p. 31 [152].

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32 [154].

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32 [154].

The suggestion, that *Elohim* and *Theos* were proper names, bewildered Lillegard. He did not find it appropriate for a conservative Lutheran seminary to hold such a position—it was contrary to “the answer of conservative scholars to the Higher Critics on the use of the divine names in the Old Testament.”⁵⁸ In his response to the first two Opinions, Lillegard spent a great deal of time addressing the issue of “proper names.” He wrote, “The Faculty uses the term ‘proper name’ with regard to words which lexicographers and grammarians ordinarily list as appellatives, i.e., ‘common nouns,’ or descriptive names.”⁵⁹ He demonstrated this via *Webster* and pointed also to Gesenius, Keil, Delitsch, Pusey, Hengstenberg, Thayer, and Winer—all of whom supported the generic understanding of *Elohim* and *Theos*.⁶⁰ In a certain “dogmatic sense,” Lillegard could acknowledge that *Elohim* and *Theos* were proper names—they belong rightly only to God himself. But from an etymological and language-based perspective, this was not tenable.⁶¹ Only the tetragrammeton was a true proper name for God.⁶²

The conclusion that the faculty reached on the basis of their position on “proper names” was the exact opposite of the *Shen* men’s position. The faculty reasoned that since *Elohim* and *Theos* were proper names, the use of a generic term to render them was inappropriate. Thus, “If *Shen* means a divinity, a being to be worshipped, being a *generic* term, then it *cannot* simply be used as a translation for the term God...”(emphasis added).⁶³ And later again, “It will be noted that the very fact that *Shen* is a generic term is the thing which is causing the difficulty.”⁶⁴ This turned the position of the *Shen* men on its head. They had argued, and would hold to the end, that *Elohim* and *Theos* were generic terms, and, for that reason, *Shen* was the most appropriate Chinese word with which to render them.

The faculty’s reasoning in regard to *Shang-Di* was equally troubling for the *Shen* men. Because the faculty considered *Elohim* and *Theos* proper names, it came to the same conclusion regarding terms such as *Logos* (λογος), *Kyrios* (κυριος), and *Soter* (σωτηρ). They also argued that all of these terms had been the proper names of idols or false gods.⁶⁵ On this account, they suggested that the use of an idol’s proper name for God had precedent even within Scripture. So also, *Shang-Di* could be properly used of God.

Lillegard again objected vigorously. “[W]hen the Faculty seeks to prove that proper names of heathen gods can be used as names of the true God, by appealing to such examples as that of *Theos*,

⁵⁸ Lillegard, *A History*, p. 34 [172].

⁵⁹ “An Examination of the Papers on the Term Question prepared by Members of the Concordia Seminary Faculty,” December, 1936, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 42 [11].

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42 [12].

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43 [13].

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 43 [14].

⁶³ “An Opinion,” in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 32 [158].

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33 [159].

⁶⁵ Sommer and W. Arndt to Brand and the Conference of Missionaries in China (“The Second Faculty Opinion”), October 2, 1926, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 38 [189] (Cf. Fuerbringer’s explanation, Doc. VIII, in Lillegard, *A History*, pp. 36-37 (*auf Deutsch*)).

Kyrios, and *Logos*, it is confounding two entirely different things.”⁶⁶ In Lillegard’s mind, distinctions needed to be made between titles, and proper names—such distinctions even children could make. The use of *Kyrios* easily demonstrated such a distinction. While some “spoke of the Lord ‘Jesus Christ’, others spoke of the Lord ‘Serapis’ or ‘Caesar.’”⁶⁷ The *proper names* were distinctive. The *title*, “Lord,” was common. Thus the Paul could proclaim to the Corinthians, “There are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one Lord, Jesus Christ.”⁶⁸

This also meant that using a proper name like *Shang-Di* was linguistically absurd. It was equivalent to translating the Greek *anthropos* (“person”), with the name “Schmidt.” Nor could *Shang-Di* readily be used according to its original meaning, “ruler on high.” Again, the example of “Schmidt” furnished a ready illustration. “The name Schmidt does not suggest to me a worker in iron or other metals, but a fellow-missionary, etc. The original meaning of a name may have something to do with its choice in the first place...But once that name has become established as a proper name, its etymological meaning is no longer of any practical importance.”⁶⁹ In the same way, Lillegard argued, the Chinese hearer did not think, “ruler on high,” when he heard, “Shang-Di.”

The discussions regarding the use of idol names led naturally into the discussion of “safeguards.” From its very first Opinion the faculty had always qualified its recommendations for the use of *Shang-Di* with a tag—it should only be used with proper “explanation,” “information,” or “safeguards.”⁷⁰ The *Shen* men could agree with that statement—depending on what was meant by “safeguards.”

Lillegard was consistently frustrated in his attempts to explain his concept of “safeguards” to the faculty and the Board. Before the faculty had ever entered the discussion, Lillegard and Gebhardt had explained the *proper use* of the term *Shang-Di*.

The term “Shang Ti” may be used for the true God only if all the following conditions are fulfilled: a). It must not be used as if it were a *translation* of any Biblical name for God (because it *is* not). b). It must not be used as a *proper name*, but as a term of honor or rank, in accordance with the *original* meaning of the term. (A usage that is hardly *possible* in the spoken Mandarin.) c). It must not be so used that confusion with the heathen and syncretistic use of the term would result. d). It must not be used, if it gives offense to any one.⁷¹ (Gebhardt & Lillegard’s emphasis)

The above is admittedly a very limiting definition of “safeguards.” Nevertheless, it did outline *an* acceptable use of *Shang-Di*. Apparently, the faculty and the Board did not understand this position. They often spoke as if Lillegard and the *Shen* men could not conceive of *any* proper use of *Shang-Di*.

⁶⁶ “An Examination,” December, 1926, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 44 [17].

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45 [23] (quoting Prof. Case, “The Evolution of Early Christianity,” pp. 115).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45 [24] (1 Cor. 8:5ff).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46 [29].

⁷⁰ “An Opinion,” in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 31 [153].

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26 [127].

For their own part, the faculty didn't clarify what they had in mind for "safeguards" until November of 1927. In the meantime, the most in-depth explanation they offered was: "Words and names are conventions. They are symbols. What is important is that they be filled with the proper content."⁷² To Lillegard, this sounded like fine theory, but he offered the standing challenge, "Come out to a heathen land and try to do this, and see how far you will get!"⁷³

Still another matter irked the *Shen* men. Throughout the controversy, the faculty and Board consistently avoided what the *Shen* men perceived to be one of the most significant differences of opinion in the Term Controversy. In the first two opinions, and at the meeting with Arndt and Gebhardt, the faculty had judged it irrelevant "whether the Chinese religion once upon a time was monotheistic and Shangti was a term designating the one true God."⁷⁴ This statement referred to an opinion, held by Arndt, that "Shang-ti and the Most High of Melchizedek were historically the same."⁷⁵ The same or similar thoughts would be voiced by other *Shang-Di* supporters for the length of the controversy. By dismissing this opinion as irrelevant, the faculty refused to pass judgment on its *doctrinal* validity, a thing that the *Shen* men hotly contested. The *Shen* men felt the opinion that the *Shang-Di* "of the classics or of ancient China was at some time or other the true God," was a clear indication of doctrinal error⁷⁶—it went against the biblical testimony regarding the natural knowledge of God.⁷⁷ The faculty's refusal to address this matter was effectively a refusal to decide whether certain missionaries were guilty of "heretical" notions or not. This was not a question that would go away. Well into the next decade, Gebhardt would continue to argue that the Term Question was essentially about the natural knowledge of God.

A Different Kind of Conflict

While debate between missionaries and faculty would continue after the Kuling Conference of 1926, it would become considerably more difficult to carry on. Only days after the missionaries left Kuling, the military activity of the *Kuomintang* (the Chinese nationalist party) came directly into the province, and into the towns, where the Missouri missionaries were stationed. The missionaries found themselves in the midst of a revolution. By Christmas all the missionaries had been pulled out of their various towns to the relative stability of Hankow, which was under the protection of the British. But this protection was also fleeting. In April of 1927, the American consulate encouraged all of the missionaries

⁷² "The Second Faculty Opinion," October 2, 1926, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 38 [187].

⁷³ "An Examination," December, 1926, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 46 [28].

⁷⁴ "An Opinion," in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 31 [152].

⁷⁵ Theo. Graebner to Lillegard, May 10, 1926, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 28 [140].

⁷⁶ "An Examination," December, 1926, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 50 [47].

⁷⁷ Gebhardt and Lillegard, "Thesis on the Term for God in Chinese," in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 26 [123].

to withdraw to Shanghai. Only Arndt and his daughter refused to leave. Soon, many of the missionaries were returning to the U.S. where many received calls—thus leaving the mission field for good.⁷⁸

Disputed Passages

In spite of the problems in China, the controversy continued, and, to some degree, intensified. Lillegard had been among an earlier group of missionaries who returned to the States in March on special furloughs. Once Lillegard was in the States, Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker, the Norwegian Synod representative on the Board of Foreign Missions, arranged a meeting between Missionaries Scholz, Gebhardt, and Lillegard, and the St. Louis Faculty. As a result of this meeting, the faculty agreed to reconsider its previous opinions. It elected Professors Theodore Engelder and Theodore Graebner as its new committee to study the Term Question. According to Lillegard, this committee promised to meet with him and the other *Shen* men, but this promise never materialized, in spite of Lillegard's persistence.⁷⁹

In the absence of meetings, more letters were written. Most notably, Prof. Engelder wrote concerning certain passages that the *Shen* men believed clearly forbid the use of *Shang-Di* as a name for God. Exodus 23:13, Joshua 23:7, and Hosea 2:16-17 were subject to particularly close scrutiny. These passages had been mentioned briefly in the previous Opinions, but now they were taken up in earnest. When the faculty's third Opinion was presented in October, it would reiterate the opinions expressed in Engelder's letter. The later fourth Opinion would treat the passages at even greater length.

From the beginning the faculty judged that these passages were not applicable to the situation in China. They judged that, in general, it could be said that Hosea 2:16-17 (verse 17: "I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked.") "shows conclusively that the worship of the true God must never be blended with the worship of idols."⁸⁰ "But to let the passage refer to the outward use of certain words would be a literalistic conception of the passage, which fails to do justice to its meaning."⁸¹

Regarding Exodus 23:13 ("Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips."), and the similar passage in Joshua, the faculty's opinion was modified over the course of the Opinions. The first Opinion stated, "The meaning must be that we should not use the names of other gods as though these idols were really gods; for instance, in oaths."⁸² It denied that the passages were a prohibition against all "utterance" of idol names, "because in that case we could not read our Bibles aloud."⁸³ In the third and fourth Opinions, they added the possibility of a second understanding of

⁷⁸ R. Meyer, "Missouri Evangelical Lutheran Mission," pp. 13-16.

⁷⁹ Lillegard, *A History*, pp. 53-54 [202].

⁸⁰ "An Opinion," in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 33 [166].

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34 [166].

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 33 [162].

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 33 [162].

Exodus 23:13. The passage forbade idolatry, but, even further, forbade *any* utterance of idol names. "God will not have His people (Israel) take the name of an idol upon their lips in familiar conversation."⁸⁴ The faculty noted that several commentators understood the passage in this way. Nevertheless, they maintained that the passage still would not apply to the situation in China. "We are convinced that this prohibition concerned only the Jewish people."⁸⁵ It was ceremonial, not moral law. Thus, the faculty reasoned, under either interpretation, the passages did not apply to the use of *Shang-Di*. The passage could only apply if one insisted on taking the second interpretation as *moral* law, in which case *Shen* would also be forbidden, for it, too, was an idol name. On the other hand, if a person understood the passage according to the first interpretation, as a prohibition of idolatry, *Shang-Di* was not forbidden by Scripture, for "Certainly, none of our missionaries would use the name of any Chinese divinity 'as though this idol were really a god.'"⁸⁶

Lillegard, along with two young missionaries, Martin Simon and Arnold Cloeter, wrote extensively in objection to the faculty's interpretations.

If this means that you consider there are only two alternatives, either that the names can be mentioned freely, and even applied to the true God, or that they must not be mentioned at all in any manner, then I consider that you are ignoring the fundamental principle of Bible interpretation, that Scripture must interpret Scripture. When I find that Moses, who records this command, himself mentions the names of idols, then I consider that I have the right to mention them in the same way that he does, viz., in condemnation, or in recording the facts of history; and that to press these words to exclude even such a "mentioning" is unwarranted.⁸⁷

What the passage forbade was mentioning the names of idols *with admiration*. This was what was being done when *Shang-Di* was used by the missionaries, for "No man would ever think of naming his children, far less his God, after a heathen idol, if he did not hold that idol in admiring esteem."⁸⁸

But the real sticking point was not the interpretation of these passages. It was the application to the situation in China. Lillegard explained,

You state also that "none of our missionaries is using the name Shang-Di—for the purpose of worship." I have said and written repeatedly that our missionaries have been using an idol name in their worship of God, and this is what I consider is plainly prohibited in the Bible...It is vain also to claim that the word is used apart from its associations with the heathen idol in the case of Shang-Di. For it is definitely claimed, even in our own mission, that the Chinese Shang-Di was the true God. If this claim is not established (which it cannot be), then it should be clear that it is really *the idol name* that is being used of the true God, not "an innocent collection of letters," nor a name that is applicable to the true God without danger of syncretistic identification of Jehovah

⁸⁴ Engelder and Graebner to the Board of Foreign Missions, October 1, 1937, "The Faculty's Third 'Opinion,'" in Lillegard, *A History*, *Ibid.*, p. 59 [223].

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59 [225].

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59 [224].

⁸⁷ Lillegard to Engelder, July 20, 1927, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 56 [211].

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

with an abomination of the heathen. Hence the Bible passages in question do apply in their full force to the situation in China.⁸⁹

Though both sides exhausted many words in regard to the interpretation of these passages, the great divide between them was in their perception of the mission field. The faculty assumed that all the missionaries were theologically sound men who used *Shang-Di* in a proper way. The *Shen* men believed that certain missionaries were guilty of syncretism, and that those missionaries convicted themselves with their own words.

Wearing Thin

By this time, the participants in the Term Controversy were growing weary. Both sides demonstrated a marked loss of patience. For their part, the Board and faculty had had enough of discussion. After three opinions and numerous meetings, they thought it was time to move ahead.

Along with the third faculty Opinion, the Board sent a stern letter. This letter, in particular, raised the objections of the *Shen* men—the Board seemed to be blaming the *Shen* advocates for the entire controversy. But another matter was even more troubling to the *Shen* men. For the first time, the Board suggested that those missionaries who opposed *Shang-Di* should leave the mission. They wrote that any missionaries who felt compelled to reject the use of *Shang-Di* in the mission should “state their reasons, whereupon the Board will, ‘respect their position and permit them to withdraw.’”⁹⁰ It was not just the *Shen* men who were unhappy with this decision. On November 18, 1927, in response to this letter, Missionary Zschiegner, who would later lead the Hankow seminary in writing defenses of *Shang-Di*, wrote in his diary, “Fischer received St. Louis faculty's opinion on term question with the letter from the Board: ‘All who do not comply by adopting Shang Ti as the proper term for God—can withdraw from the mission!!’... ‘Is that the way to settle this matter?’”⁹¹

From the Board's perspective, such action was justified. The Term Controversy had not been without effect on the mission's fledgling Christians. St. Louis professor Martin Sommer (also a member of the Board for Foreign Missions) wrote in January of 1928 to defend the Board's actions. He explained that the Board *had* no choice but to act. “[T]he contentions and differences of opinion on this matter, together with the *urging of Scripture against the use of Shangti*, seriously interfered with the work of our Mission in China, tended to confuse simple Christians, generated bitterness and blocked our public testimony in the press.”⁹² Such a situation could not be allowed to continue any longer.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56 [212].

⁹⁰ Quoted by Lillegad in *A History*, p. 66 [245].

⁹¹ Max Christian Emil Zschiegner, “Ambassador on the Yangtze: Max Henry Zschiegner (1897-1940),” (*Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, Spring 1999, Vol. 72, No. 1), p. 24.

⁹² Sommer to Missionaries in China, January 12, 1928, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 77 [3].

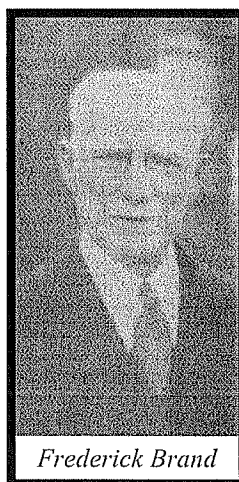
The Board may also have hoped for an opportunity to make a fresh start on the mission field at this time. The unrest in China during the first half of 1927 had resulted in the loss on a great number of missionaries. But now a new group of missionaries was entering the field. These missionaries had arrived in the fall of 1926, only to be withdrawn to Shanghai, but they had not returned to America. Now, after the political situation had settled down, these missionaries were picking up where the others had left off. The Board hoped that these men would be free from the strong opinions that fueled the Term Controversy. For that reason, it must have been particularly frustrating when two of these young missionaries began to agitate concerning the use of *Shang-Di*.

Missionaries Martin Simon and Arnold Cloeter were fresh out of the seminary in 1926. Over the course of their first brief months in Hankow and then later in Shanghai, they had become acquainted with the Term Question. To them, the correctness of the *Shen* men's position was clear. It became all the more clear early in 1928, when Cloeter came into contact with one of the Hankow lay leaders who explained to him that the *Shang-Di* of the Bible and the *Shang-Di* of Confucius were the same God.⁹³

In November of 1927, Director Brand addressed a letter to the missionaries pleading that they reconsider their positions. He urged, "God help you, my dear young brethren, to divest yourselves of all preconceived opinions and to be guided solely and alone by the testimony of the Scripture."⁹⁴ Brand's plea assumed far too much. The "testimony of Scripture," as interpreted by the faculty, was under great scrutiny by Simon and Cloeter; it would not convince them to adopt the faculty's position.

In the wake of the third Opinion, the controversy seems to have taken a turn for the worse. Accusations began to multiply. A sad pattern can be observed in the correspondence of this period of the controversy. It is as follows: *Person A* accuses *Person B* of being "unbrotherly" and making false accusations. *Person B* responds that such a suggestion shows *Person A's* failure to be brotherly and, thus, it constituted a false accusation itself!⁹⁵ Suffice to say, true brotherliness towards the opposition was a rare commodity by this time.

Relationships were disintegrating, especially between Lillegard and Director Brand. Lillegard was aware of how difficult it was to "avoid personalities" when a debate was so heated, but he felt that the faculty and Board were trying to sabotage his name. He had long been convinced that Missionary Arndt had circulated slander and lies about him, telling the faculty that he was chiefly responsible for the controversy and that the other *Shen* men were just Lillegard's "satellites."⁹⁶ Now, Lillegard felt the



Frederick Brand

⁹³ "Letter on Syncretism in our Mission," Cloeter to Board, February 13, 1928, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 78 [282-283].

⁹⁴ Brand to General Conference in China, January 20, 1927, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 67 [248].

⁹⁵ Cf. the exchange between Brand and Lillegard in Documents XVII and XVIII, in Lillegard, *A History*, pp. 66-68.

⁹⁶ Lillegard to "Gyps" (Gebhardt), March 6, 1926, in George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN.

Board, and Brand in particular, was doing the same. He wrote to Brand, "No attempt should be made to blame everything on some one individual, as if there could have been no disputes without him."⁹⁷ In spite of this plea, Brand would later write to Simon and Cloeter, "The brethren who took it upon themselves to lead you, immature as you were, into this subject, will have to account to God for much. I pray continually that God may not hold it against them. It will not be difficult to show that they have not been a blessing in this matter to our foreign mission."⁹⁸ Unfortunately, the relationship between Lillegard and the faculty and the Board would not improve as time passed.⁹⁹

A Word to End All Words

In March of 1928, the fourth and final faculty Opinion was submitted. It consisted largely of a reiteration of the faculty's previous arguments, especially of their stance on the disputed passages. But this Opinion does distinguish itself by its strong tone of *authority*. It is clear that the faculty was no longer open to debate.

This time the faculty's position on the disputed passages is considered conclusive: "The Scripture passages quoted for the exclusive use of Shen have been shown to contain no such proof, and this really decides the issue."¹⁰⁰ The Opinion stresses that "the charge is *not* being made that Shang-Ti is being used by our missionaries for the purpose of honoring the false god." This seems odd since Lillegard, Gebhardt, Simon, and Cloeter had all voiced such charges, if not with those exact words. Again, this illustrates the strength of each side's perception of the state of the mission field—it determined how all the evidence in the controversy was viewed.

The Opinion's conviction of its own authority is particularly striking when it deals with the Chinese linguistic matters. In regard to the meanings of the terms *Shang-Di* and *Shen* the faculty acknowledged, "We find that there is a contradiction of testimony."¹⁰¹ But this did not cause them to be flexible about these matters. They go on, "However, we have not only counted our witnesses, but have also weighed them, and have reached the conclusion that Shang-Ti is the title of the deity, designating it as the Supreme ruler; and that Shen is a term for divinity, commonly applied to the world of spirits worshipped by the Chinese, also to the departed souls and to the human soul."¹⁰² Once again it confirms the faculty's position regarding proper names: "We cannot admit the argument advanced for the exclusive use of Shen on the assumption that it is a generic name and that God is a generic name. We deny both

⁹⁷ Lillegard to Brand, January 20, 1928, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 68 [258].

⁹⁸ Brand to Simon and Cloeter, July 26, 1928, ("The Board's 'Ultimatum'"), in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 113 [367].

⁹⁹ Cf. the ugly exchange between Brand and Lillegard in 1936 letters: Lillegard to Brand, July 6, 1936; Brand to Lillegard, July 20, 1936; Lillegard to Brand, July 23, 1936 (copies of these letters can be found in the J. P. Meyer Files, Wisconsin Synod Archives, Mequon, WI).

¹⁰⁰ Graebner and Engelder to Simon, March 17, 1928, ("The Fourth Faculty Opinion"), in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 93 [7].

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94 [7].

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

contentions.”¹⁰³ More to the point they proceed, “We find no Scripture proof for the statement that in the Christian messages to the heathen only a generic name for God can be used for the Elohim or Theos of Scripture. Nor do we hold that Theos, Elohim, is generic.”¹⁰⁴ Finally, in regard to *Shang-Di*, the opinion is emphatic: “Shang-Ti is *not* the highest god in the Chinese pantheon as was Zeus in the Greek, etc.” (emphasis added).¹⁰⁵ This statement the opinion calls a correction of “assumptions embodied in our earlier opinion.”¹⁰⁶ Then it concludes, “Shang-Ti *unquestionably* is the simple word for god alongside of T’ien; and furthermore has none of the connotations of the myths which center about the names of Jupiter and Zeus” (emphasis added).¹⁰⁷

The Board requested that those who had objections to make against this Opinion should present them in writing before the next plenary Board meeting on May 8 and 9. Gebhardt, Lillegard, Simon, and Cloeter all submitted responses. Though Gebhardt had been convinced that the use of *Shang-Di* was an adiaphoron, he was still concerned that errors concerning the natural knowledge of God had never been addressed. He also had strong disagreements with the Opinion’s linguistic positions.¹⁰⁸

According to Lillegard, when the Board finally met in May, the meeting quickly descended into a flurry of personal attacks, mostly directed against Lillegard. The meeting ended with bitterness and dissatisfaction. After this time, Lillegard became concerned to make his position a matter of public record. He explains, “Since our position had been so persistently misrepresented and misunderstood to date, and every effort had been made to fasten upon us various errors which we never had held, we sent the Board a summarized statement of our stand for entry upon its minutes. We wanted this on record, so that appeal could be made to it against any further misrepresentations in the future.”¹⁰⁹ Lillegard was preparing to take the controversy to a new audience.

Not long after that meeting—in June—Lillegard accepted a call to serve a Norwegian Synod congregation in Boston. He later explained why he chose to leave the mission: “Since so much personal animus against us had been revealed in this last Meeting, we thought that the Board might take a more reasonable attitude on the Term Question, if only we were out of the way; and that thus at least the other ‘Shen missionaries’ would be saved for our China Mission.”¹¹⁰ He offered his resignation to the Board, with explanation that it would become effective July 15.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 94 [9].

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 95 [11].

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ A. Gebhardt, “Objections to the Faculty Opinion Addressed to the Missionary Simon,” in Lillegard, *A History*, pp. 95-98 [311].

¹⁰⁹ Lillegard, *A History*, p. 110 [354] (N.B. Regarding “we.” Throughout *A History* Lillegard speaks of himself in the plural. Perhaps this felt natural since he viewed this matter not as *his* cause, but as *our* cause, namely, the *Shen* men and the entire Missouri and Norwegian synods.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 112 [361].

To Lillegard's great chagrin, within two weeks of July 15, the Board issued a new letter to Missionaries Simon and Cloeter, which Lillegard labeled the "Ultimatum." In it, Brand detailed an uncompromising position toward any missionary who refused to allow the use of *Shangdi*.

"We do not force you to employ the term Shang Ti in your preaching and teaching as your term for God. But we do insist that no missionary in our service should demand that either term be outlawed from his station, from the literature printed by us, and from personal and conference intercourse, always with the understanding that it be used in proper scriptural manner."¹¹¹

Brand explained further that the Board's position, as represented in the faculty opinions, "will ultimately have to be assumed by all missionary-brethren who desire to labor with us in our foreign mission enterprise." Then comes the "Ultimatum":

"Now, if you, my dear brethren, should still feel constrained to declare that for reasons of conscience you cannot tolerate the use of the term Shang Ti and must therefore decline to fellowship in all our work with those brethren who wish to employ it, and that you also must decline to permit them to use it in our literature and at your stations, we shall make no further efforts to hold you in the service of the Mission. We cannot and will not attempt to rule over your conscience. Neither can we any longer permit the division in our China Mission to continue and to hamper and disrupt our whole work, which is the work of the Lord. With a view to removing even seeming bondage from your conscience, we grant you permission to come home as soon as your desire. While we should deeply deplore to lose your missionary services in China, we hold that we must suffer this in the interest both of your conscience and of our work. In fact, after all this laborious consideration of the Term Question, every brother who now cannot join the Faculty and the Board should consider it his duty to disturb the brotherly relation and to hold up the work of the Lord no longer, and should voluntarily retire. Brethren, we have been patient and long-suffering in the sincere hope of ultimately winning all brethren to our biblical position. The time to close the controversy and to take a definite and final stand has surely come."¹¹²

He concluded the letter with a final plea, "O, my dear brethren, for the sake of the suffering of our blessed Savior, be likeminded."¹¹³

In August, Missionary Simon presented his resignation. Missionary Cloeter's resignation followed a few months later. The Board accepted these resignations under protest from two of its members—Dr. S.C. Ylvisaker and Rev. J.F. Boerger.

The Reaction to the "Ultimatum"

More than likely, Brand fully expected the resignations of Simon and Cloeter. But he was naive if he thought that the Term Controversy would end there. The *Shen* men hadn't objected merely to the fact that *they themselves* had to use *Shang-Di*; they were opposed to the very idea that it should be used at all. The mere removal of their presence from the mission field would not end their protests. Instead, their

¹¹¹ "The 'Ultimatum,' in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 113 [364].

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 113 [366].

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 114 [368].

protests now intensified because they believed that they had been severely mistreated and *forced* out of the mission.

After the "Ultimatum," Lillegard's action became much more methodical. Over the next months, he wrote private admonitions to the St. Louis faculty and the Board of Foreign Missions. He was endeavoring to follow the course of Matthew 18, and one could suppose that he did follow the letter of the law. But his "admonitions" were not written in a style fit for winning his brothers over.

Clearly, Lillegard did not have an ideal relationship with the Board and the faculty. If his reports of the words of his opponents are accurate, he was only responding in kind. But his "admonitions" cannot be justified on that account. His letter to the faculty members, some of whom were on the Board for Foreign Missions, is particularly caustic. Here are some excerpts:

One of your members has accused us of possessing the spirit of Anti-Christ, 'making that a sin which is not a sin,'—and this although that which we stamp as sin is simply any identification of the true God with a heathen god, nothing less and nothing more. This charge needs rather to be returned against the St. Louis Board. For it is certainly a manifestation of the spirit of the Anti-Christ when men are persecuted for conscience' sake, as our brethren now are by being barred from the work to which they had dedicated themselves and to which they had rightly been called.¹¹⁴

Thus far the St. Louis Faculty has shown itself less fair and more papistic in its treatment of its missionaries than even the Catholic Popes.¹¹⁵

It is Mission History that liberalism and unionism have begun on the mission fields and from them spread to the home churches. It looks as if History were going to repeat itself in the case of the Missouri Synod. Our Mission Board's flirtation with the unionistic, Bolshevistic Committee of Reference and Counsel; its toleration on our mission field of such confirmed unionists as Missionary Arndt while eliminating the more conservative missionaries who had opposed him and his supporters; and its decisions on the Term Question,—all point in that direction.¹¹⁶

To the Board, Lillegard wrote a *final* clarification of his position regarding a permissible use of *Shang-Di*. "To state my position again,—although ringing changes on this subject has become utterly wearisome to me,—: *Shang-Di* could be used as a designation of the true God, if it were used as meaning 'Supreme Ruler,' its original connotation. But it cannot be used of *Elohim* and *Theos* any more than our 'Supreme Ruler' could be so used in English. That would be a *linguistic* error."¹¹⁷ His final paragraph begins by using words from a letter the Board had written to him,

I must, therefore, *deplore very much* that the Mission Board should so persistently misinterpret a position which I have continually sought to explain, illustrate, and emphasize in every way possible. I hope that the day will yet dawn when the Board will make some more serious attempt than it evidently has yet to understand me as I want to be understood, and to apply the rule: "Put the best construction on everything," also to my writings on the Term Question. (emphasis added)

¹¹⁴ Lillegard to the Faculty, December 29, 1928, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 116 [381].

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 117 [382].

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 117 [383].

¹¹⁷ Lillegard to the Board, January 26, 1929, in Lillegard, *A History*, p. 118 [390].

It would have taken an *extremely* humble and generous spirit to receive such “admonitions” in a “brotherly spirit.” From their tone, one wonders if Lillegard was interested in winning his brothers over, or merely preparing for a new frame of battle. Perhaps Lillegard suggests as much when he writes about his expectations concerning the letter to the faculty,

“We had not really expected that this admonition would bring about any change of attitude on the part of the members of the St. Louis Board and Faculty, much though we hoped for it. But we wanted it on record that we had admonished them thus privately, before taking the matter up in the more public manner that now evidently would be necessary.”¹¹⁸

In a similar vein he explains, “We had long been convinced that only a public discussion of the Term Question and the whole situation in our China Mission would avail to bring about any change for the better.”¹¹⁹ Lillegard wanted to achieve what was best for the mission, but one is doubtful that he went about it in the best way.

In a circular letter to the missionaries in March of 1928, Lillegard had expressed hopes that the duplicity of the Board could be made plain. Lillegard, and it seems others, had what might be called a “conspiracy theory” about the opposite ways in which the *Shen* and *Shang-Di* advocates were being treated. He complained of the Board showing favoritism to the *Shang-Di* missionaries, particularly Klein, who had been able, with the Board’s help, to purchase a house in the mission field at the same time that *Shen* missionaries were being encouraged to take calls stateside.¹²⁰

One can see how the *Shen* men could weave such a conspiracy theory. By the end of 1928, almost all the missionaries who had initially supported the exclusive use of *Shen* in 1924 were no longer missionaries in China. Only three of the eleven remained: Missionary Gebhardt, who had changed his position; Missionary Max Zschiegner, who was indifferent regarding the terms; and Missionary John Fischer. Fischer would leave on furlough in 1930 and decide not to return.¹²¹ From facts such as these, suspicious minds would find plenty of fuel for theories, and such theories would often be spun in the years to follow.

American Convention

The decisions of the Board in the summer of 1928 became the decisions of the synod in 1929. At the Missouri convention held that summer, the Board’s report was accepted with little discussion. This was a travesty to Lillegard. In preparation for the convention, and in answer to a statement sent out by Missionary Arndt, Lillegard had sent out two pamphlets to all the officers and visitors of the

¹¹⁸ Lillegard, *A History*, p. 117 [385].

¹¹⁹ Lillegard, *A History*, p. 121 [403].

¹²⁰ Letter from Lillegard to “Missionary Brethren” dated March 10, 1928 [Bethany Archives—BA].

convention.¹²² Furthermore, Missionaries Simon and Cloeter had issued an appeal to the convention against the actions of the Board in handling their cases. Lillegard felt these had been ignored. He felt that the controversy had been misrepresented as merely a linguistic matter. He also felt strongly that the faculty had been terribly inconsistent in rendering its opinions. "When our missionaries prove Shang-Di is the proper name of an idol, like Jupiter, Zeus, they [the faculty] answer: 'It does not make any difference. It can be used even so.' When our theologians in this country prove that the proper name of an idol cannot be used for God, they answer that Shang-Di is not the proper name of an idol after all."¹²³ In reaction, he began work on his 157-page pamphlet, *A History of the Term Controversy in Our China Mission and the Chief Documents in the Case*. He carried on a great deal of correspondence with individuals he felt were open to hearing his position. And he prepared for a publishing flurry to get the word out about the injustices that had gone on in regard to the Term Controversy.

Lillegard was not alone in his strong reaction. In protest against the convention's action and, even more, against the action of the Board of Foreign Missions, Ylvisaker and Boerger entered their resignations to the Board. Simon and Cloeter wrote letters of appeal, first to Missouri President Pfothenhauer, and then to the vice-presidents of the synod. American pastors began to take note of the controversy and began to take sides.

Observations

In a controversy like the one we have examined, both sides become eager to place blame. Edward J. Arndt, the son of Missionary Arndt, and a leading historian of Missouri's China Mission places the blame squarely on Lillegard's shoulders. "Lillegard was very ambitious and eager to get even with former Norwegian fellow missionaries. Lillegard's chief weapon was the SHEN-SHANGTI CONTROVERSY."¹²⁴ This is a very one-sided judgment with which I cannot agree.

In the great number of Lillegard's letters and essays which I have read, I found no indication that his concern about the Term Question was anything other than sincere. He deeply desired to guard God's honor and the souls to whom the missionaries were preaching. I do not question his motives; but I do have criticisms of his methods.

I believe that Lillegard's sincere love for God and the lost souls of China was hindered, rather than helped, by his rather harsh style of presenting his arguments—at least in writing. From the various excerpts of Lillegard's writings, I hope the reader has gained an appreciation for his rather pointed way of

¹²¹ Later, in 1936 another of the original Shen advocates, Missionary Albert Ziegler, would return to the mission field in China. He had departed in 1927 due to the political upheaval in China at that time.

¹²² *The Chinese Term Question and Confucianism and Christianity: A Review*. (Both documents can be found in the WLS archives.)

¹²³ Lillegard, *A History*, p. 135 [425].

¹²⁴ Edward J. Arndt to Peter Harstad, June 3, 1988, in George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN.

stating things. One appreciates his clarity, but sometimes shudders at his bite. Early on, even some of the other *Shen* advocates asked Lillegard to speak with more care. Very quickly, after the 1924 General Conference, Lillegard had begun to include information about the Term Question in the Chinese *Lutheran Witness*. In response, Gebhardt expressed his wish that Lillegard would show more patience so that the missionaries could discuss the issue without pressure and find unity before they stir up controversy in the missions.¹²⁵ Lillegard ignored this advice. He was of the opinion that in matters of controversy, no change of heart would be produced in the opposition “if they think we’re afraid of them” or if they think we will do nothing more than voice “some gentles protests.”¹²⁶ More often than not, Lillegard chose the force of facts over the persuasive powers of gentle words. He wanted there to be no doubt that his position was correct. He was an absolute stickler for the facts. When his opponents misread his words or misquoted a source, he pounced on them. Even in his acerbic “admonitions,” one can’t so much criticize his facts as his style of presenting them.

Such a strategy was deeply flawed. Lillegard’s forcefulness forced his opponents to react, rather than reevaluate. He had legitimate concerns about the affects of using *Shang-Di*; but he often framed them in such a way that any *concession* from his opponents would be a *confession* of either their ignorance or idolatry. This was not the way to woo hearts and win brothers—especially when those brothers have a strong sense of pride. Certainly, Lillegard was not the only one guilty of writing to win the argument rather than the brother, but he was guilty nonetheless. And one can understand how, once sides had been chosen, Lillegard would soon seem to be the antagonist.

But Lillegard’s opponents also demonstrated their “Old Adam.” It always seemed very striking to me that the Board and faculty so quickly became “experts” of matters involving the Chinese language. A greater willingness to listen, and a greater reluctance to write “expert opinions” would have served the interests of everyone involved. One wonders if Lillegard’s position as an “outsider”—a member of the little Norwegian Synod—played a part in the way the faculty perceived his authority on the Term Question and so quickly took the side of the *Shang-Di* advocates. While I only have Lillegard’s documents and his explanation to work with, from what I have seen in writing, it does not appear that the faculty ever gave Lillegard an unbiased ear.

I have struggled to understand the reason for the stark difference in the way the two sides explained and understood the terms, the “safeguards,” the passages, and the different missionaries. My best answer has already been given above. I believe they saw the mission field in fundamentally different ways. To Lillegard and a good deal of his fellow missionaries, the mission field was in danger of the influence of syncretism and unionism. To the *Shang-Di* advocates, the mission field was a place of

¹²⁵ Gebhardt to Lillegard, January 18, 1925, in the George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN.

¹²⁶ Lillegard to Scholz, June 8, 1925 in the George O. Lillegard Files, Bethany Archives, Mankato, MN.

opportunity and urgency. They knew their own hearts. They believed that they understood the faith of their converts. The Board and faculty likewise believed that Missouri men would act in accord with God's will. From this distance in time, the validity of these different perceptions cannot be gauged accurately.

And so we are left with questions: Were Lillegard's concerns taken seriously enough? Was the Board's treatment of missionaries fair? Did the faculty's Opinions exert unwarranted sway over the missionaries understanding of the Term Question? Did pragmatism overpower true confessionism and careful instruction? Were the *Shen* men misguided in their concerns? Did their persistence create more harm than good? Was the controversy theological? Or largely personal?

Finally, I will not venture to tally my vote as to the correct answer to the Term Question. The later decision of the 1938 Synodical Conference and the 1947 Missouri Synod Convention to leave the linguistic questions to the missionaries¹²⁷—if a bit ironic considering the way things began in 1924—seems the path of wisdom still today. Some of the most pertinent matters that guide the selection of a word for “God” in another language are not justifiable on any other basis than *Sprachgefühl*.¹²⁸ Lillegard appears to have had solid linguistic arguments for preferring *Shen*, but, as one Bible translator notes, “where a long-standing tradition is concerned, especially in the case of the Bible and the highly emotive issue of God's very name, the words of scholars do not often carry much persuasive weight.”¹²⁹

Epitaph

In April of 1929, Eduard Arndt died in his sleep in his home in Hankow. The great advocate of *Shang-Di* in China was silenced. By 1930, the most vocal opponents of *Shang-Di* were no longer serving in China. Years later, Missionary Zschiegner would report that the Term Question had ceased to be an issue in China after 1928. The Missouri China Mission was free from the strife of controversy.

But as the new decade began in America, it was evident that sometime between the summers of 1928 and 1930 the Term Controversy had migrated to America. Appeals had been submitted. Resignations were on the table. Documents had been sent to presidents, professors, and pastors. Local pastors conferences were buzzing with the foreign sounds of “Shang-Di” and “Shen.” The Term Question was ready to break out in strength once more.

¹²⁷ For more information, see the Synodical Conference Proceedings from 1938 and the Missouri Synod Convention Proceedings from 1947.

¹²⁸ German, a “feeling for the correct idiom.”

¹²⁹ Ernst R. Wendland, *Boku Loyera: An Introduction to the New Chichewa Bible Translation*, (Blantyre: Christian Literature Association in Malawi), 1998, p. 117.

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I owe a special note of thanks to Ernst R. Wendland and Missionary Rob Siirila. Both gave me their instruction via e-mail as I sought to better grasp the linguistic issues involved in the Term Question. If this paper has demonstrated a failure to grasp those issues, however, it should bear no reflection on them.

ADDENDA I—Timeline of major events in the Chinese Term Controversy, 1912-1952

- 1912
- Ev. Lutheran Mission for China organized by E.L. Arndt
 - Old Norwegian Synod calls Lillegard as its first missionary to China
- 1913
- *Mar* Arndt arrives in Hankow to begin mission work in China
- 1915
- Lillegard returns to the States to visit his ailing father
- 1917
- Lillegard breaks from fellowship with the old Norwegian Synod
 - *Sept* Missouri Synod officially takes over China Mission
- 1921
- *June* Lillegard arrives in Hankow
- 1924
- China General Conference discusses the Term Question
 - Conference vote 11-2 to remove Shang-Di from future mission literature
 - Board of Foreign Missions objects to resolution
 - Missionaries begin to write at length about Shangdi and Shen
- 1925
- China General Conference holds further discussion regarding the Term Question
 - *Dec* Board of Foreign Missions decides to submit the Term Question to the St. Louis Faculty
- 1926
- *May* St. Louis Faculty issues its First "Opinion" on the C.T.Q.
 - *Oct* St. Louis Faculty issues its Second "Opinion" on the C.T.Q.
- 1927
- *Mar* Many missionaries depart China due to the Nationalist Movement in China
 - *June* Meeting of St. Louis Faculty and Missionaries Gebhardt, Scholz, and Lillegard
 - *Oct* St. Louis Faculty issues its third "Opinion" on the C.T.Q.
- 1928
- *Mar* St. Louis Faculty submits its Fourth Faculty "Opinion"
 - *June* Lillegard resigns, accepts call to Norwegian Synod congregation in Boston, Massachusetts
 - *July* Board for Foreign Missions sends "Ultimatum" to Missionaries Simon and Cloeter
 - *Dec* Lillegard sends letter of admonition to Faculty
- 1929
- *Apr* Missionary Arndt passes away in his sleep at home in Hankow
 - *June* 34th Missouri Synod Convention
 - accepts Mission Board's report regarding the Term Controversy
 - Board members Boerger and Ylvisaker submit their resignations in protest to the action of the Mission Board and the Synod
- 1930
- *Jan* At the request of Pres. Pfothenauer, the Foreign Mission Board agrees to reconsider its actions regarding the Term Controversy
 - Boerger and Ylvisaker withdraw their resignations
- 1932
- *June* 35th Missouri Synod Convention
 - receives numerous appeals regarding the Term Controversy
 - resolved to submit matter to a special committee
- 1935
- *June* 36th Missouri Synod Convention
 - Kruse-Koehler report on the Term Controversy submitted
 - recommends the use of *Shangdi* be discouraged and the mission use *Shen* exclusively
 - report accepted, no action taken on recommendations
- 1936
- *Apr* Gebhardt begins to write to the other missionaries regularly, objecting to the use of *Shangdi*
 - *June* Norwegian Synod (ELS) passes resolution regarding the Term Controversy
 - *Aug* 35th Synodical Conference
 - receives numerous appeals regarding the Term Controversy
 - approves the appointment of a Committee to study the Term Controversy
 - *Sept* Letter from Fuerbringer to J.P. Meyer regarding formation of Synodical Conference Committee

GODLY WORDS: A HISTORY OF THE TERM CONTROVERSY IN MISSOURI'S CHINA MISSION

- Dec* Chinese Term Question Committee holds its first meeting in River Forest
- 1937 •*Apr* Chinese Term Question Committee meets a second time in River Forest
- Nov* Chinese Term Question Committee meets a third time in River Forest
- 1938 •*Apr* Chinese Term Question Committee meets a fourth time in River Forest
- June* 37th Missouri Synod Convention
- Aug* 36th Synodical Conference accepts report of the Chinese Term Question Committee
 - Theses regarding theological principles accepted
 - Resolved to leave the matter to Missouri
- 1939 •*June* Norwegian Synod (ELS)
 - discusses the Term Question briefly
 - refers matter to General Pastoral Conference for further study
- 1940 • 37th Synodical Conference Convention
 - Proceedings make no mention of Term Question
- 1941 •*June* 38th Missouri Synod Conv. assembled in Fort Wayne, IN
 - Appeals received regarding the Term Controversy
 - Standing Committee recommends the Term Controversy be considered a closed issue
 - report tabled until next convention
- 1944 •*June* 39th Missouri Synod Conv. assembled in Saginaw, MI
 - Standing Committee recommends the Term Controversy be considered a closed question
 - Term Controversy referred to a new committee for further study
- Aug* 38th Synodical Conference assembled in Cleveland, OH
 - Last mention of the Term Question in Synodical Conference Proceedings
 - Appeals from Lillegard and the Norwegian Synod withdrawn to await Missouri's action in 1947
- 1945 •*June* China Mission no longer a budget item in Norwegian Synod Proceedings
- 1947 •*July* 40th Missouri Synod Convention
 - Translation principles accepted
 - Resolved that Term Controversy be considered a closed issue in synodical meetings
- 1952 •*July* Last LC-MS missionary in China withdraws due to Communist takeover

ADDENDA 2—Catalogue of documents pertaining to the Chinese Term Question
in the J. P. Meyer Files

Folder #1

Pamphlets by George Lillegard and others

George O Lillegard

- May, 1929—*The Chinese Term Question*. Geo. Lillegard
-15 pages
-sent to all the Officers and Visitors of the Missouri synod in June of 1929
- 1929 [?]*—Confucianism and Christianity: A Review*. [Reprinted from *Lutheran Sentinel* May 1 and 15, 1929]
-12 pages
-sent to all the Officers and Visitors of the Missouri synod in June of 1929
- May 1930 *The Facts with Regard to "Shang-Di" and "Shen."*
-8 pages
-prepared for use in the Mo. and Norw. Synods to exonerate *Shen* supporters of accusations that they were "distorting the facts"
- 1930—*A History of the Term Controversy in Our China Mission and the Chief Documents in the Case*.
-157 pages
-covers history of the Term Question from 1924-1930
- 1935—*The Chinese Term Question: An Analysis of the Problem and Historical Sketch of the Controversy*. (2nd Ed with Addenda)
-40 pages + Addenda
- 1935[?]*—Book Review of R.W. Matthews, An Examination of the Terms Used for Translating the Word 'God' into Chinese.*
- August 3, 1937—*An Open Letter* to the Pres. Committee, and Secretaries of the American Bible Society
-15 pages

R. W. Matthews

A contemporary of Lillegard and an advocate of Shang-Di

- 1935—*An Examination of the Terms Used for Translating the Word 'God' into Chinese*.
-66 pages

G. C. Willis

A contemporary of Lillegard and an advocate of Shen

- February, 1936—*An Open Letter* to the Pres. Committee, and Secretaries of the British and Foreign Bible Society
-13 pages
- May, 1936—*Open Letter No. 2* to the Pres. Committee, and Secretaries of the British and Foreign Bible Society
-15 pages
- June, 1936—*Open Letter No. 3* to the Pres. Committee, and Secretaries of the British and Foreign Bible Society
-11 pages

W. H. Kruse & E. W. Koehler

Appointed by 1932 Missouri's Convention to study the Term Question

- *Report on the Term Question*. W. H. Kruse & E. W. Koehler (Missouri's C.T.Q. Committee, 1932)
-23 pages

Folder #2

Gebhardt Manuscript

Arnold Gebhardt [?]

No name is given in the paper, but it seems to fit the paper Gebhardt describes in his letters in early 1937

- Manuscript of paper on the Natural Knowledge of God
 - includes many references to dogmaticians
 -

Folder #3 *Various Letters and Essays of Arnold H. L. Gebhardt, 1936-1938*

- April 24, 1936—Gebhardt to Missionaries of MELCHIM, “Why Eliminate ‘Shang Ti’?”
-6 pages
- April 24, 1936—Gebhardt to the Board of Foreign Missions
-regarding furlough and his concerns about the use of Shang-Di
- May 17, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM
-examples from Miss Gertrude Simon of misunderstandings due to Shang-ti
- May 25, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM, “The Term T’ien (Heaven)”
- May 29, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM, “Shen as a Singular”
- June 4, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM, “Is Shang-ti the True God?”
- June 5, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM, “Is Shang-ti the True God?”
- June 6, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM, “‘Shen’ and ‘Shang-ti’ in our Hymnal”
-6 pages
- June 12, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM, “Imperial Heaven Sovereign Earth True Shang-ti”
-2 pages
- June 12, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM, “The Shen-Shangti Combination and Sound Logic”
-3 pages
- June 18, 1936—Gebhardt to
-recounts the Rev. Elmer H. Thode’s experience with a misunderstanding brought about by use of Shang-ti in the Catechism
- June 19, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM, “Is Shang-ti the True God?”
- July 15, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM, “The Mathematical Argument in the Term Question”
-protest against the argument that Shang-ti should be used because that is prevailing Protestant practice
-3 pages
- July 24, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM, “Is Shang-ti the True God?”
-Thesis IV-V
- August 3, 1936—“The Statement “Shang-ti is the True God”- A Criticism.”
- August 6, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM
-objects to the use of *Chen Shen Shang-ti* (“True God Shangti”) in Sunday School Literature
- August 6, 1936—*Protest against “Chen Shen Shang-ti* letter from Gebhardt to General China Conference in the Chinese Lutheran Witness.”
-regarding Lutheran Witness, Vol. IV (1932), no. 26, p. 208, column 1
- August 7, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM
-regarding Shen and Shang-ti in Catechism
- August 7, 1936—Gebhardt to the Missionaries of MELCHIM, “Is Shang-ti the True God?”
-Thesis VI-VII

- August 15, 1936—Gebhardt, “Protest against certain matters in a ‘Reply to the Report of the Term Question Committee of the Missouri Synod dated September 9, 1933,-by the Term Question Committee of Concordia Seminary, December 20, 1933’”
- January 22, 1937—Gebhardt to Board of Foreign Missions
 - a reply to question whether he intended to return to China
 - list of questions meant to prove the weakness of Shangti and strength of Shen
 - list of examples of improper uses of Shangti by China missionaries
- January 26, 1938—Gebhardt and Lillegard to C.T.Q. Committee, “Definition of the Terms “Shen” and “Shang-ti”
-15 pages
- January 29, 1938—Gebhardt, “Who is God? The Correct Approach and the Correct Answer to this Question in Connection with the Chinese Term Question”
-4 pages
- February 2, 1938—Gebhardt and Lillegard, “Requirements for an Unbiased Definition of the Terms ‘Shen’ and ‘Shang-Ti’”
- April 11, 1938—Gebhardt to J.P. Meyer
- April 11, 1938—“The Natural Knowledge of God – These and Antitheses bearing on the Chinese Term Question”
- March 11, 1938—Gebhardt to ?, “Shang-ti in the National Geographic Magazine, Dec. 1936”
- March 30, 1938—Gebhardt to C.T.Q. Committee, “Criticism of ‘The Modern Use of T’ien Shangti and Shen’”
 - written February 16, 1938
 - a rebuttal of the Hankow faculty’s paper, “The Modern Use of T’ien, Shangti, and Shen”
 - 8 pages
- ??? —Gebhardt, “Is Shang-Ti God as the Chinese Know Him through Natural Knowledge?”
-5 pages

Folder #4

Correspondence of George O. Lillegard

- May 31, 1932—Lillegard, “The Interpretation of Hos. 2,16-17 and the Use of an Idol-name for God”
-10 pages
- August 24, 1934—*Excerpt* from letter [Lillegard?] to Kruse-Koehler Committee
 - examples of the Faculty misusing quotes and misrepresenting sources
 - remarks on Koehler’s Theses, goes on to talk about Missouri’s need to repent
 - remarks concerning Ex 23:13
 - charges that St. Louis has changed its understanding since the original declarations in regard to this passage
 - 4 pages
- Sept. 19, 1934—*Excerpt* from letter [Lillegard?] to Kruse-Koehler Committee
 - 6 pages
 - criticizes the Faculty’s use of quotes as “garbled”
 - examples of Faculty Opinions misusing of quotes and ignoring pertinent information
 - examples of Faculty misusing sources from African missionaries and linguists
 - Faculty was arguing that Elohim is a proper name, Lillegard says that contradicts Missouri’s earlier teaching, including Kretzmann’s Commentary on Ex 3,13
 - remarks on Hos 2,16-17 and Ex 23,13
 - [Lillegard] was being called “a legalist” and “Reformed” for quoting the interpretation of men such as Osiander and Keil in support of his exegesis of these passages
- Dec. 17, 1934—*Excerpt* from a letter [Lillegard?] to Koehler
 - on “idol name”
 - 3 pages
- July 6, 1936—Lillegard to Brand
 - regarding slanders Brand directed against Lillegard at Western District Conference
- July 20, 1936—Brand to Lillegard
 - response to letter of July 6, 1936
 - *appended* July 23, 1936—Lillegard to Brand
 - biting reply to letter of July 20, 1936
- ??? —Theodore Laetsch, “Reply to the Charges of Pastors Lillegard, Hanssen and other directed against ‘An Exegesis on Hosea 2, 16.17’ as published in the Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. III, pp 187ff.”
- ??? —???, “V. 16 Alsdann, Spricht der Herr, Wirst du Mich Heissen Mein Mann, und Mich Nicht Mehr Mein Baal Heisen”
-in German
- July 24, 1936—E.W.A. Koehler to Lillegard, “The Use of the Term Shangti”
- July 24, 1936—Lillegard to Koehler
 - reply to “The Use of the Term Shangti”
 - objects to Missouri’s use of the phrase “divested of its idol connotations”
 - disagrees with Koehler’s interpretation of the pertinent passages
- ??? —[Lillegard?], “The Interpretation of Exod. 23, 13, Deut. 12,3, Josh. 23,7, Ps. 16,4, Hos. 2, 16-7, Zech. 13,2”
-6 pages
- ??? —[Lillegard?], “The Exegesis of Ex. 23,13”
-5 pages
- September 24, 1936—Lillegard to Pastoral Conf. of the Western District of the Missouri Synod
 - refuting false charges brought against him at their June 18, 1936 Conference

GODLY WORDS: A HISTORY OF THE TERM CONTROVERSY IN MISSOURI'S CHINA MISSION

- October 5, 1936—Paul T. Melcher to Western District Pastoral Conference
 - regarding accusations Brand made against Lillegard, and the “progress” of reconciliation
- October 9, 1936—L. Fuerbringer to J. P. Meyer
- November 9, 1936—L. Fuerbringer to J. P. Meyer
 - verso Nov. 11 1936—J. P. Meyer to L. Fuerbringer
- November 10, 1936—Lillegard to C.T.Q. Committee
 - Posits questions the C.T.Q. is expected to answer:
- December 4, 1936—Lillegard to C.T.Q. Committee
 - Notes *Lutheran Witness* Nov. 3rd, p. 377 declaration regarding Chinese Term Question
 - Contends that the “generally accepted usage” of (non-Lutheran) missionaries in China is syncretistic, so the decision to follow that usage is *de facto* syncretistic
- December 17, 1936—Letter from Lillegard to C.T.Q. Committee
 - regarding *Modernistic* ideas of the St. Louis faculty
 - recounts personal matters between himself and Brand and Arndt
 - expects better treatment from C.T.Q. Committee
 - 4 pages
- ??? —[Lillegard?], “The Importance of a Correct Analysis of the Biblical Usage of the Divine Names, El, Elohim, and Jehovah, in combating the “Documentary Theory” of the Origin of the Old Testament Books”
 - asserts that Baal is used as a proper name in the Bible
 - 2 pages
- ?, 1937 —Gebhardt to C.T.Q. Committee, “A FEW ITEMS LISTED FOR EASY REFERENCE”
 - “Table of Contents” for Gebhardt’s letters and essays that fill the next 51 pages
 - many of these letters and essays can also be found in J. P. Meyer File Folder #3

Folder #5 *Chinese Term Question Committee Correspondence, Nov. 13, 1936-Nov 11, 1937*

- Nov 13, 1936—Fuerbringer to Meyer
 - in German
 - *verso* Nov. 18, 1936—Meyer to Fuerbringer
 - in German
- Nov. 18, 1936—Meyer to C.T.Q. Committee
 - regarding business before the committee and procedure in respect to commentaries
- Nov. 19, 1936—Ylvisaker to Meyer
- Nov. 20, 1936—Heerboth to Meyer
 - in German
- Nov. 20, 1936—M. Graebner to Meyer
- Nov. 21, 1936—M. Graebner to Meyer
- Nov. 23, 1936—Fuerbringer to Meyer
 - in German
- Nov. 24, 1936—Meyer to C.T.Q. Committee
 - Pastor H. M. Tjernagel agreed to be second Committee member from Norwegian Synod
- Nov. 25, 1936—Pfothenhauer to Meyer
 - in German
- Nov. 26, 1936—Meyer to Brand
 - in German
- Nov. 26, 1936—Meyer to C.T.Q. Committee
 - regarding date for meeting
- Nov. 27, 1936—M. Graebner to Meyer
- Nov. 28, 1936—M. Graebner to Meyer
- Nov. 29, 1936—Kowalke to Meyer
- Dec. 1, 1936—Brand to Meyer
 - in German
 - *verso* Dec. 2, 1936—Meyer to Brand
 - in German
- Dec. 2, 1936—Meyer to C.T.Q. Committee
 - regarding setting date for meeting
- Dec. 2, 1936—M. Graebner to Meyer
 - suggests a framing of the status controversiae
- Dec. 2, 1936—Ylvisaker to Meyer
- Dec. 4, 1936—Fuerbringer to Meyer
 - in German

- Dec. 4, 1936—Brand to
-in German
- Dec. 9, 1936—M. Graebner to Meyer
- Dec. 11, 1936—Pfortenhauer to Meyer
-in German
- Dec. 22, 1936—Pfortenhauer to Meyer
-in German
- Dec. 23, 1936—Brand to Meyer
-regarding Gebhardt
- Jan. 7, 1937—Gebhardt to Meyer
- Feb. 4, 1937—Gebhardt to Meyer
 - verso Feb. 8, 1937—Meyer to Gebhardt
-regarding bulky material sent by Gebhardt
-encouragement not to resign
- Feb. 15, 1937—Gebhardt to Meyer
 - sending copies of "A Few Items Listed for Easy Reference"
 - sending mimeographed copies of letter to Board of Foreign Missions, Jan 22. 1937
- April 18, 1937—Kowalke to Meyer
 - verso April 19, 1937—Meyer to Kowalke
- April 19, 1937—Meyer to Lillegard
 - working on scheduling a meeting between himself, Lillegard, and Kowalke
- May 24, 1937—M. Graebner to Meyer
 - enclosed copy of letter from faculty at Concordia Seminary in Hankow to the Board of Foreign Missions
- May 31, 1937—M. Graebner to Meyer
 - feels there is no theological question before the C.T.Q. Committee
 - 7 points Graebner suggests the whole C.T.Q. Committee agrees on
- ??, 1937— "Suggested Outline for Discussion of the Chinese Term Question in the Meeting Held in November 1937"
 - contains the 7 points of Graebner's letter plus an eighth treating the Simon-Cloeter appeal
- July 8, 1937—M. Graebner to Meyer
 - sending copy of letter from Missionary Klein
 - verso July 14, 1937—Meyer to M. Graebner
- July 22, 1937—Lillegard to Meyer
 - meeting in Mankato for Pastoral Conf. from July 27-30
 - meeting with the Mo. Syn. West. District on August 2
 - mentions the "thorough-going questionnaire" and hopes that it will "smoke out" false doctrine.
 - mentions Gebhardt's paper on the Natural Knowledge of God
 - contends that "false doctrine is at the root of the use of Shang-Di in the Mo. Syn. Mission as well as all other missions."
 - mentions Oesch's papers and the troubles in Missouri
 - verso July 24, 1937—Meyer to Lillegard
- Sept. 28, 1937—Kowalke to Meyer
 - asks to have Oct meeting postponed to November so that theses can be properly prepared

GODLY WORDS: A HISTORY OF THE TERM CONTROVERSY IN MISSOURI'S CHINA MISSION

- Sept. 28, 1937—Meyer to Kowalke
 - in German
 - copy of letter rescheduling meeting

- Sept. 30, 1937—M. Graebner to Meyer

- Nov. 3, 1937—Lillegard to Meyer [*Copy of Letter to L. W. Spitz*]
 - goes to length to discredit Brand's discrediting of L.
 - describes situation of slander at West. Dist. Conf. and letters to and from Brand
 - demands retraction by Brand and Amdt

- Nov. 3, 1937—Lillegard to Meyer
 - enclosed copy of questionnaire
 - contends that Brand and other missionaries have a false understanding of the natural knowledge of God

- Nov. 11, 1937—Kowalke to Meyer
 - “Any questionnaire tries one's patience, and 16 semi-transparent pages of questions are a little too much.”

Folder #6

Various Correspondence of the C.T.Q. Committee

- 1935—copy of the Cloeter-Simon appeal

- June 1936—Report of Norwegian Synod (ELS) convention's resolutions on Chinese Term Question
 - 1) support presentation of facts published in 36th Mis. Conv. proceedings (pp. 168-176)
 - 2) Proper name of an idol cannot be used for God because of Ex 23.13; Josh 23.7; Is 42.8; Hosea 2.16-17; Zech 13.2
 - 3) Reject the statement "The proper name of an idol without its idol connotations can be used for God." as a contradiction in terms
 - 4) Consistent use of term to translate elohim
 - 5) Support "Shen"

- July 7, 1936—Boerger to Th. Engelder
 - in German
 - Days of week have no idol connotation for us, same can happen with Chinese Christians. However, mission to heathen can't remove this connotation
 - Use of Shangti will awaken a false conception which must be replaced by a true conception, thus introduces a difficulty that isn't necessary because of Shen
 - Reports that missionary Gebhardt had problems due to using Shangti, to the extent that he felt compelled to ask for forgiveness for using it and causing problems. After FMB's instruction, Gebhardt had been convinced that it was acceptable to use Shangti, but then found this not true to experience.
 - List of accusations and strong reprovals
- appended July 9, 1936—Th. Engelder to Boerger
 - Takes exceptions to Boerger's letter.
 - can fill idol name with Christian content
 - protests against Shangti as idol name would also apply to Shen
 - no clear scripture condemns this opinion
 - deal with each other in brotherly fashion—this must be our approach
 - Engelder is in the Shangti camp—no trouble with Shen, Shen camp has conscience problems with Shangti
 - encourages continued efforts at solution by quiet consistent efforts

- ??1936 —Boerger to C.T.Q. Committee
 - in German

- September 28, 1936—Fuerbringer to Meyer
 - regarding formation of C.T.Q committee
- verso October 6, 1936—Meyer to Fuerbringer
 - in German

- October 30, 1936—Zschiegner to C.T.Q. Committee, "The Use of the Terms 'Shen' and 'Shang Ti' in Chinese"
 - reports that the controversy lasted among our missionaries from 1924-1928, after that it died down
 - says that he (Zsch) was unaware of how heated the controversy was in the States until recently
 - Gebhardt's attempt "to revive the entire question" began with the letter of April 24, 1936, entitled "Why Eliminate Shang Ti?"
 - Gebhardt's letter failed to stir up any questions among the missionaries
 - thus the missionaries, Gebhardt being the only exception, went on record as seen in the Lutheran Witness of Nov. 3, 1936
 - traces history of the Term Question through Jewish, Nestorian, Catholic, and Protestant
 - looks at derivation of T'ien, Ti, and Shang Ti—not generic terms
 - explains why Shen is not workable for both 'god/s' and 'God'
 - peculiarity of Chinese that it needs two words for God/god
 - natural knowledge of God
 - power of the gospel
 - 11 pages

- November 1936—copy of quotation from the Lutheran Witness of Nov. 3, 1936
 - regarding General Conference of China declaration about Shangti and Shen

- December 28, 1936—Expense voucher for C.T.Q. Committee

- December 29, 1936—Minutes from C.T.Q. Committee meeting, December 28-29, 1936
 - 6 pages
 - Simon-Cloeter appeal summarized.
 - items that belong before the Committee
 - letters read
 - Gebhardt, Zschiegner, and W. Arndt interviewed

- ??1936 — ?, “The Testimony of Missionaries Gebhardt and Zschiegner regarding Shen and Shang Di”
 - 2 unevenly cut pages
- December 29, 1936—[M. Graebner?], “Some facts established in the meetings of the Synodical Conference Committee on the Chinese Term Question”
- March 4, 1937—Missionaries at Hankow to Board of Foreign Missions:
 - Max Zschiegner, E. Riedel, Wallace McLaughlin, Adolph Koehler
 - Shen is not a good term because it is unclear: plural, spirits, not the typical Chinese word for God
 - Nanjing Theological Seminary supports use of Shangti (Lillegard notes that NTS is “rankest modernism”)
 - Theos is a nomen proprium like Shangti
 - there are various Shangtis
 - Shen cannot be used “absolutely”
 - Chen Shen Shangti would be better translated “truly divine God” than “true God Shangti”
 - reasons not to use Shen: 1) not Chinese, but “linguistic monstrosity” by standard Chinese and by standard Chinese Christian usage. 2) “would not express the exclusiveness of Christianity” 3) “It would cause endless confusion and offense among Chinese Christians who correctly understand our present usage and can be assumed to understand their own language.” 4) “It would, if enforced, cost the services of many of the missionaries now on the field.”
 - Hankow missionaries haven’t had problems from using Shangti
 - the Gospel is proclaimed with Shangti; the Term Controversy is a hindrance
- March 8, 1937—J. Buenger to Lillegard
 - Buenger feels strongly that pertinent passages prohibit use of an idol’s *proper name* for God
 - Heerboth seems to rely on R. Matthews argumentation
 - expresses need to establish the *status controversiae*, his opinion is that it is a theological difference, not merely a linguistic or exegetical difference
- appended March 24, 1937—J. Buenger to Ylvisaker
 - regarding picture of Confucius hung next to Christian pictures in Catholic missions stations
- appended J. Buenger, “The Theological Difference in the T.Q. Controversy”
 - attempt at compromise in K-K Report was bound to fail because of an issential difference of answers to the question: “How is an idol name divested of its heathen connotations?”
 - wrong to add names to the names God uses for himself in the Bible
- April 5, 1937—Expense voucher for C.T.Q. Committee
- April 7, 1937—Minutes from C.T.Q. Committee meeting, April 6-7, 1937
- April 7, 1937—M. Graebner to Missionary Klein
 - convinced the use of terms is not a sin
 - wonders about effect of terms on a heathen
 - asks whether heathen is confused by use of two terms
- May 20, 1937— Missionary Klein to M. Graebner
 - Holy Spirit, not term, enlightens
 - Klein’s opinion on Shangti and Shen
 - testimonial of personal experience with using Shangti
 - no term converts or even communicates divine truth, only the gospel and Word of God
 - real problem is the blindness of heathen hearts
- November 15, 1937—Expense voucher for C.T.Q. [Shen-Shangti] Committee
- November 16, 1937—minutes from C.T.Q. Committee, November 15-16, 1937
 - discussion of Kowalke/Meyer theses
 - Theses I-IV listed
 - mentions shift in arguments of Shangti advocates
 - Theses (Second Version)
 - mention of Boerger correspondence
 - 4 pages
- November 16, 1937—page 2 of minutes from Shen-Shangti Committee
 - Thesis VI-VIII
- verso March 23, 1938—Meyer to Kowalke
 - regarding Gebhardt and Lillegard’s recent paper

- November 17, 1937—Meyer to Fuerbringer
 - on German
 - information regarding the work and plans of the C.T.Q. committee

- November 17, 1937—Meyer to Boerger
 - in German
 - Meyer wants to meet with Boerger regarding Thesis which he will send to Boerger ASAP
 - verso December 7, 1937—Meyer to Boerger
 - Meyer sends Thesis, hopes to meet in Jan or Feb before Lent begins

- November 17, 1937—Meyer to Kowalke

- November 20, 1937—Ylvisaker to Hankow Missionaries, Gebhardt, and Lillegard
 - chief problem of C.T.Q. Committee has been harmonizing the testimony of the two sides
 - requests Hankow missionaries to draw up reasoning for use of ShangTi, will have Shen people do same, then exchange and allow for rebuttal to made by each group

- March 7, 1938—Ylvisaker to C.T.Q. Committee
 - copies of material from Gebhardt and Lillegard enclosed
 - enclosed—[Lillegard?], “The History of the Chinese Term Question”
 - 9 pages

- March 30, 1938—Ylvisaker to C.T.Q Committee, added message to Meyer
 - Hankow response (written by Zschiegner) enclosed
 - enclosed February 18, 1938—Zschiegner, “The Modern Use of T'ien Shang ti and Shen”
 - 8 pages

- March 28, 1938—M. Graebner to Meyer
 - verso March 31, 1938—Meyer to M. Graebner

- April 9, 1938—Ylvisaker to C.T.Q Committee
 - rebuttal of Gebhardt and Lillegard to Hankow paper enclosed
 - verso March 23, 1938—Meyer to Ylvisaker
 - didn't receive pp. 1-5 of "Definition of the Terms, etc."
 - expresses concerns that Gebhardt and Lillegard may damage the force of their linguistic arguments through their other arguments

- April 22, 1938—Expense voucher for C.T.Q. Committee

- April 23, 1938—Minutes from C.T.Q. Committee meeting, April 22-23, 1938
 - no rebuttal received from Hankow due to war
 - Dr. Ylvisaker's preliminary report
 - appended “Report of the Chinese Term Question Committee of the Synodical Conference” (3 copies)

- May 7, 1938—Kowalke to Meyer
 - verso May 9, 1938—Meyer to Kowalke
 - appended May 3, 1938—Copy of letter from Ed. Koehler to E.E. Kowalke
 - agrees with the sub-committee of four
 - doesn't think it takes a sinologue to answer the Term Question
 - notes “a shifting in the position” among the Shangti advocates

- ??, 1938— “Report of the Chinese Term Question Committee”

Theo. Hanssen File

- July 4, 1938—Mimeographed letter from Theo. Hanssen to Synodical Conference
-4 pts regarding C.T.Q.
- Feb 1, 1939—Theo. Hanssen to College of Presidents of the Missouri Synod
-regarding Missionary Gebhardt's "forced" resignation
- Feb 1, 1939—Theo. Hanssen to Fuerbringer (Pres. of Synodical Conf.)
-regarding doctrinal error by W. Arndt
-addresses Arndt's interpretation of Genesis 1 which leaves the door open for the meaning of "day"
-addresses the difference between 'adiaphora' and 'open questions'
- Feb. 18, 1939—Theo. Hanssen to Dr. Behnken
-Hanssen defends his previous and continued action of seeking publicly to reprove brothers
- April 3, 1939—Theo. Hanssen to Rev. Doerffler
-pt. 4 mentions the dismissal of Rev. Gebhardt and Geo. Lillegard's protest against Arndt's essay dealing with creation
- Mar 1, 1939—Theo. Hanssen to Concordia St. Louis Seminary Board of Control
-Chinese Term Question remains hopelessly unsettled
-Gebhardt's dismissal the major problem
- Sept 30, 1939—Theo. Hanssen to Pres. Behnken and Fuerbringer
-charges Dr. W. Arndt with false doctrine due to his public unwillingness to insist upon the 24-hour day in Genesis 1
- ??, 1939—"Overture to the Thirty-Seventh Convention of the Missouri Synod"
-pt. 3 deals w/ T.Q.
-pt. 4 deals w/ article in the Concordia Theological Magazine 1932 (pp. 187-196) concerning exegesis of Hosea 2:16-17, and a contrary article in Concordia Theological Magazine 1938 (p. 27)