

Mr. Mi said: "If you will sincerely confess your sins and change your evil ways and follow the way Jesus the Savior and not worship graven images of God and Buddha but piously worship only the lord and master of heaven, earth, and all beings and eradicate all traces of the obscene and evil behavior of your past and rid yourself of deceitful and false words, then, next Sunday, on the sabbath, you may receive baptism. If you cannot do this, you may not receive baptism."

I said: "I will obey all that you have taught me." And on the following Sunday, at noontime, I went to implore Mr. Mi to baptize me. Mr. Mi asked me again whether I would confess and renounce all my evil deeds and then read with me several passages from the Holy Scriptures. He then knelt down with me to pray to the Lord our God to bestow his grace upon me and used his hand to sprinkle a bit of pure water on my head.

After I received baptism and expressed my thanks in prayer to the Lord, I then asked Mr. Mi: "What is the sign of people who believe in Jesus?"

Mr. Mi said: "To fully concentrate one's heart on doing good is the sign of people who believe in Jesus."

I thanked Mr. Mi and returned to my small room and sitting alone there felt happy in the belief that I had obtained pardon from the lord for my great sins. Then gave myself a new name: "Xueshanzhe" [the one who studies good]. This meant that in the future I would concentrate on changing my evil ways and studying the good and would not dare to do evil.

8.3 EXECUTIONS OF TAIPING REBELS AT CANTON, 1851

Under the Qing legal code, no crime, except perhaps patricide, was regarded as more serious than the crime of insurrection. Joining a rebel band was the ultimate political risk one could take under the imperial system and rebels could look forward to no quarter from government forces sent to crush them. The document that follows dates from the first year of the Guangxi insurrection and describes most vividly the punishment meted out to groups of Taiping followers sent to Canton for punishment.

In the course of the year 1851, more than 700 unfortunate persons were executed at Canton. The severity of the mandarins seemed to increase in the same proportion as the extension of the insurrection; and every day some arrested in a place, and some unhappy wretch, shut up in a bamboo cage, or shackled like a wild beast, was brought from the province of Guangxi or the revolted districts of the Guangdong. Generally they had not to wait for their sentence; in case of insurrection, the superior authority of the province has a right

to inflict capital punishment, and makes abundant use of this sanguinary privilege. An execution is a horrible thing in any country, but in China its horror is doubled by its attendant circumstances. We give here the letter of one of our friends, who had the melancholy curiosity to be present at the execution of fifty-three rebels of the Guangxi.

"On the 1st of May," he writes, "I attended an execution with three of my friends. The street in which these frightful scenes occur, is situated as you are aware, without the walled city of Canton, towards that part of the suburbs which lies to the south along the river. This narrow, dirty street, which is about 100 meters long and 15 wide, is called by the Europeans, the 'Potter's Field.' All the houses on each side are in fact inhabited by workmen who make common services of porcelain, and those portable furnaces which you have often seen in the poorest houses, and in the floating residences on the river. For fear that a Chinese Scholar like you may dispute names with me, I must tell you at once that this dismal place is called by the natives, T'sien-Tse-Ma-Teou [*Qiansi matou*], or the 'Quay of the Thousand Characters,' in allusion to the numerous signs which are seen there from the river.

"We arrived there at ten o'clock in the morning, and took our station in front of a shop belonging to a mender of old stockings. This was an excellent position to take a survey of the whole ceremony, and we remained there quietly till noon, at which time some soldiers and officers attached to the service of the mandarins, arrived to clear the street and thrust back the curious. As in Europe, the persons who came to see the spectacle were the vilest dregs of the populace,—dirty, ragged people, with sinister countenances, who wandered about the ensanguined soil; where most likely they had already seen the execution of a number of their companions, and perhaps of their accomplices.

"In a short time the roll of the tam tam announced to us the arrival of the whole procession. Mandarins of every degree, with the red, white, blue, or yellow ball, riding on horseback, or carried in palanquins, and followed by an escort of musicians, *shirri* [police officers], and standard-bearers, alighted at a short distance from the place of execution. Contrary to their ceremonious habits, they arranged themselves in the dismal enclosure.

"Then arrived the criminals. They were fifty-three in number, each shut up in a basket, with his hands tied behind his back, his legs chained, and a board inscribed with his sentence hanging from his neck. You have often met in the Chinese streets a pair of coolies carrying a pig stretched out at its full length in a bamboo case. Well, just imagine a human being put in the place of the unclean animal, and you can form an idea of the fifty-three unfortunate creatures in their cages. When the cages were set down, they were opened and emptied, just as when a pig is turned out at a butcher's shop. I examined these unfortunate wretches with attention: they were worn out with hunger, and looked more like skeletons than living beings. It was evident that they had suffered the most dreadful privations. They were clothed in loathsome tatters, wore long hair,

hair approached the fatal spot, shrieking aloud in wild disorder. These unhappy beings were endeavoring to distinguish their fathers, their husbands, and their children, among the headless corpses. It was a frightful scene to see them hurrying about, pondering, and constantly mistaken among these headless remains. This search continued all day, accompanied by a mournful noise; funeral dirges being mingled with cries and sobs. The women never ceased repeating that kind of chant common to all funeral ceremonies and which was composed, it is said, in the time of the Mings. It is a sort of rhythmical plaint, in which the same words constantly recur: 'Oh, misery! Oh, despair! My happiness is gone forever! Your kindness will no longer soften the bitterness of life! Alone and bereaved of all, I can only weep and die over your ashes!' and so on.

"To these details, which I saw with my own eyes, I should add some others which have been communicated to me by the Chinese. When the criminals left their prison, each was provided with a cake. This was one of those pies cooked by steam, and filled with sweetmeats, that you have often seen on the table of mandarins.

"I asked the reason of this practice, and was informed that the criminal stomach was filled for two reasons. First, that the illusion of blood should not be too copious; and, secondly, that the soul, famished by too long an abstinence, might not torment those who separated it from its mortal tenement. I give you this explanation, that nothing may be omitted. The following particular statement is curious. It was given me by a man of letters, who stood by my side during the horrid spectacle. The execution did not take place quite according to rule. Generally the culprit is brought before a kind of altar, formed of stones brought from the eighteen provinces. This expiatory altar is raised on the day previous to the execution, and when all is over it is taken down. This custom—so thought my informant—is excellent. It inspires the criminal with feelings of contrition, because he seems to pay the penalty of his crime before the inhabitants of the empire."

8.4 AND 8.5 PRECEPTS AND ODES
PUBLISHED BY HONG
XIUQUAN IN 1852 AND
1853: "THE TEN
COMMANDMENTS" AND
"THE ODE FOR YOUTH"

Examinations of the Taiping movement have shown that three major sources for the rebel ideology were the *Zhou Li* and other Confucian classics, Christian tracts and translations of the Scripture published by foreign

and the dishevelled tail attached to the crown of the head, had been reduced to a third of its usual length. They had evidently belonged to the insurgent bands, who had adopted the fashion of the Mings, and allowed all their hair to grow.

"Many of these unfortunate persons were very young: some were not sixteen years of age; while others had gray hair. Scarcely were they thrown on the ground pell-mell, when they were compelled to kneel; but the greater part of them was so debilitated from suffering, that they could not keep in this position, and rolled in the mud. An executioner's assistant then picked them up, and arranged them all in a row; while three executioners placed themselves behind them and waited the fatal moment. You doubtless recollect those horrible figures whom we have often seen together in the *cortege* [procession] of the criminal judge of Canton—those figures dressed in a red blouse, and wearing a copper crown, adorned above the ears with two long pheasant's feathers. Well! These were the executioners who now waited the signal with a rude and heavy cutlass in their hands. These enormous weapons are about two feet long, and the back of the blade is two inches thick: altogether it is a cumbrous instrument, shaped like a Chinese razor, with a rude handle of wood.

"A mandarin who closed the *cortege*, then entered the enclosure. He was adorned with the white ball, and held in his hand a board, inscribed with the order for execution. As soon as this man appeared the frightful work began. The executioner's assistants, each clothed in a long black robe, and wearing a sort of head-dress of iron wickerwork, seized the criminals from behind, and passing their arms under the shoulders of their victims, gave them a swinging movement, which made them stretch out their necks. The executioner who was now in front, holding his sword in both hands, threw all his strength into the weapon, and divided the cervical vertebra with incredible rapidity, severing the head from the body at a single blow. The executioner never had to strike twice; or even if the flesh was not completely cut through, the weight was sufficient to tear it, and the head rolled on the ground. An assistant then levelled the victim with a kick, for the corpse would otherwise have remained in a kneeling position. After three or four decapitations, the executioner changed his weapon; the edge of the blade seeming completely turned. The execution of these fifty-three wretches only lasted some minutes.

"When the last head had fallen, the mandarins retired from the scene as silent as they had come. Seeing the highest provincial officers present at the execution of these unfortunate men, I was struck with the reflection that in all countries—horrible to say—the political scaffold has been elevated instead of graded. After the departure of the mandarins, the executioner picked up all the heads, and threw them into a chest brought for the purpose. At the same time the assistants took the chains off the victims as they lay in a pool of blood. The heads were carried away, but the bodies were left on the place of execution. 'A lamentable scene then commenced. A troop of women with dishevelled