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German Missionaries, Chinese Christians, and the Globalization of Christianity, 1860-1950

By

Albert Monshan Wu

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor in Philosophy
in
History
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Margaret Lavinia Anderson, Chair
Professor Wen-hsin Yeh
Professor John Connelly
Professor Andrew Jones

Fall 2013

**German Missionaries, Chinese Christians, and the Globalization of Christianity,
1860-1950**

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by

Albert Monshan Wu

Abstract

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Albert Monshan Wu

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Margaret Lavinia Anderson, Chair.

This dissertation makes two broad claims about the enduring imprint of the European missionary enterprise on the modern world. The first is self-evident: European missionaries made Christianity a global religion. By pushing and spreading Christianity beyond the boundaries of Europe into every single corner of the globe, missionaries laid the foundation for the transformation of Christianity from a predominantly European religion in the nineteenth century to one that is largely non-European in the twenty-first century. Drawing on previously unopened and unused archives in Germany, Italy, Taiwan, and China, I argue that globalization and indigenization were two sides of the same coin: from the stand-point of German missionaries, their religion became more global, while for Chinese Christians, this already global religion became particularly “Chinese.”

The second argument flows from the first: European missionaries helped to usher in a new secular age; they laid the seeds for the Christianity’s own secularization. Through their encounters with the world, I argue, the European missionary enterprise self-secularized. The missionary experience in China pushed German missionaries and theologians to re-think, and in some cases, renounce, the religious convictions that they once held. As a result of this re-thinking, they devolved and gave up the religious control and authority that they once wielded.

Finally, my dissertation revises the view of the German missionary enterprise in China as a “debacle,” which has long dominated the historical narrative of Christianity in China. I uncover the history of their work, and locate some its successes, showing how the German model laid the foundation for much of the current religious revival in China. The German Protestant and Catholic models of missionary work, considered “conservative” in their stress on individual conversion and evasion of politics, proved remarkably sturdy in the face of a hostile regime, providing the model that drives Christian conversion in China today.

Dedicated to my beloved parents,

吳茂昆 (*Maw-Kuen Wu*) and 唐慧晴 (*Huichin Tang Wu*),

whose unconditional love

propelled every word.

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List of Abbreviations

AG: Archivum Generalatum, Archives of the Society of the Divine Word.

AMZ: *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift*.

BMS: Berlin Missionary Society.

FUHO: Fu-jen University History Office.

SVD: Societas Verbi Divini [Society of the Divine Word]

KHJB: Kleiner Herz-Jesu Bote.

ZM: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*

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Introduction

Christian missionaries helped forge the modern world. If we accept Yuri Slezkine's definition of modernity as "everyone becoming urban, mobile, literate, articulate, intellectually intricate, physically fastidious, and occupationally flexible," missionaries embodied and galvanized all of those trends.¹ Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, European missionaries exported their religion to areas of the globe previously untouched by Christianity. To more effectively convey their message, they assumed different guises, appearing as teachers, doctors, theologians, geologists, botanists, and anthropologists. Along with their religion, they brought secular Western institutions with them, offering an alternative to the extant schools, hospitals, and religious organizations that they encountered. The aggressive, proactive missionary model spawned imitation: rival religious groups—Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Confucians—emulated the Western model of evangelization.² Here is the subject that this dissertation probes: how European missionaries globalized Christianity, and by extension, laid the foundations for the modern global religious landscape.

Yet Christianity's globalization was not only generative, it was also destructive: the mere presence of this foreign religion evoked antagonism from local actors who saw Christianity as synonymous with imperialism, bent on destroying cherished traditions. Anti-Christian hostility and violence erupted throughout the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Native Christian converts appropriated these anti-imperial critiques and argued for the creation of national churches, independent from European control. Confronted with the possibility of the collapse of the complete missionary enterprise, European missionaries re-formulated their ideas about the relationship between Christianity and other religions, and calls to "indigenize" Christianity abounded. The impetus to indigenize Christianity, I argue in this dissertation, emerged from the missionary perception of failure. In some cases, missionaries renounced the religious convictions that their predecessors held. Others gave up the religious control and authority that they once wielded. In both cases, they believed that by making Christianity devoid of European "color," it could expand further to other parts of the world. The tension between a simultaneously globalizing and indigenizing Christianity formed the heart of the nineteenth and twentieth-century missionary enterprise: as Christianity spread throughout the world in the nineteenth-century, it simultaneously adopted indigenous and local forms.

Thus, this dissertation focuses on the missionary encounter—this is not a dissertation that views European missionaries as agents of modernity who dragged their non-European antagonists and Christian converts into the modern world. Rather, this dissertation examines how Christian missionaries and Chinese Christians simultaneously shaped, and were shaped, by the interaction between the impulse to globalize and indigenize. It explores how missionaries laid the foundation for the transformation of

¹ Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1.

² David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 167.

Christianity from a predominantly European religion in the nineteenth century to one that is largely non-European in the twenty-first century. It also investigates how native Chinese Christians challenged European notions of Christianity, prompting Europeans to consider how Christianity could adopt non-European forms that they once criticized. This encounter was by nature dialogic, and the conversation circled around the problem of how to make a religion with universal claims adopt particular forms, and in turn, how a global religion could assume a local look. The two processes of globalization and indigenization, I contend, must be studied together.

I am not the first to make such claims. Throughout his career from the 1920s to the 1960s, the religious historian Kenneth Scott Latourette argued that globalization and indigenization were two inseparable currents in the course of Christian history. Christianity gained traction throughout the globe only when it indigenized; by shedding its Eurocentrism in the twentieth century, Christianity became a truly universal religion. Writing in 1949, Latourette noted that Christians had only begun to revoke their European roots: Christianity, Latourette wrote, “is in process of achieving independence of Western civilization and is on the way to becoming universal and divorced from any particular culture.”³ Latourette predicted that the spread of Christianity would accelerate once it disassociated itself from its imperial past. And here, Latourette proved a prophet: in the second half of the twentieth century, Christianity advanced rapidly throughout the “Global South”—Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia.

Drawing on Latourette’s insight, my dissertation shows how globalization and indigenization were two sides of the same coin. Specifically, it examines how a group of European missionaries—Germans—made Christianity “Chinese,” and by extension, global. My dissertation shows how this development was pushed forward not only by German missionaries, but simultaneously by indigenous Chinese Christians. From the stand-point of German missionaries, their religion needed to become globalized, while for Chinese Christians, this already global religion was becoming particularly Chinese.

Latourette did not find any drawback to the rapid expansion of Christianity. Buoyed by developments that he saw in the global ecumenical movement and confident in the restorative and unifying message of the Christian Gospel, Latourette expressed a faith in Christianity’s ability to heal the divisions and conflicts of the world. Latourette predicted that “the emergence of a world Christian Community” could create “a single company of worship, trust, and service.”⁴ This world Christian community could encourage a diversity of Christian expression, while at the same time be united by its piety.

Much of the recent scholarship in the study of “world Christianity” or “global Christianity” has shared Latourette’s optimism. Scholars such as Lamin Sanneh and Joel Carpenter extol Christianity’s transformation into a global faith, arguing that Christianity “is more vigorous and vibrant in the global South than among the world’s richer and more powerful regions.”⁵ Studying the globalization of Christianity, these scholars argue, reminds

³ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Emergence of a World Christian Community* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 61.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lamin O. Sanneh and Joel A. Carpenter, eds., *The Changing Face Of Christianity: Africa, The West, And The*

us that Christianity was always a malleable, global religion, and the “colonization” of Christianity by Europeans—like the history of European imperialism—was only a temporary phenomenon in the broad sweep of the history of Christianity.⁶ As Andrew Walls writes, “cross-cultural diffusion has been necessary to Christianity. It has been its life’s blood, and without it the faith could not have survived [. . .]. The missionary movement from the West, therefore, seen in the context of the total history of Christianity, is one of a series of major cross-cultural diffusions.”⁷

This dissertation questions the optimism that Latourette and subsequent scholars have had in Christianity’s unifying power. It seeks to show how indigenization and globalization created a fragmented Church, wracked with divisions, rather than the unified and coherent one that Latourette envisioned. Even though Western missionaries were united in their belief in globalizing and indigenizing Christianity, they disagreed about how to actually *make* Christianity more native and particular. Thus, liberal Christian visions clashed with conservative ones; the denominational cleavages that wracked Europe were exported to China. These European exports also engendered local resistance. Throughout the 1920s, liberal Chinese Christians and Chinese Communists alike worked together to strip the missionary enterprise of its imperialist elements. Thus, it was not that far a leap for Chinese clergy and Chinese Christian intellectuals to reject and desert their former Western Christian mentors, causing a further rift within the global Christian community. Many of these schisms are still operative in China today.⁸

The gulf created by these acrimonious debates foreshadows another, broader trend in the world Christian community: the divergence between a secularizing Europe, which by the twenty-first century has increasingly abandoned its Christian faith, and the Christianity that has marched throughout the globe. Again, Kenneth Scott Latourette was prophetic. Writing in 1962, Latourette predicted that the future of Christianity in Europe was in peril, even as it seemed to spread to the rest of the world at an unprecedented rate.⁹ For Latourette, the globalization of Christianity and secularization of Europe were overlapping historical narratives. In his magisterial five-volume work published in the 1950s and 1960s, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, Latourette argued that the Christian missionary movement was forged in a time of crisis for European Christianity. Christian missionaries

World (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), vii. For other works that encapsulate the cheery view of Christianity’s globalization, see Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002); Lamin O. Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity?: The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003); Idem, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁶ Diarmaid MacCulloch pursues this approach in his broad synthesis of the history of Christianity. See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, Kindle ed. (London: Allen Lane, 2009).

⁷ Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 67.

⁸ The best work on contemporary Christianity in China is Richard Madsen, *China’s Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁹ See, for example, Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age: A History of Christianity in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Volume 5: 20th Century Outside Europe* (New York: Harper, 1962), 521-523.

moved abroad because they were challenged by secular forces, and they hoped that their work could counter the spread of secularism at home.¹⁰

Latourette did not see the potential decline of Christianity in Europe as a trend to be mourned. Rather he celebrated the possibility of Christianity's triumph throughout the rest of the world at the expense of its vitality in Europe.¹¹ And indeed, Latourette's vision has come to pass. In his 2002 book, *The Next Christendom*, the scholar of religion Philip Jenkins reported the dramatic increase of Christians in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, while church attendance in Europe has stagnated or declined. By 2025, Europe will have the third largest number of Christians, behind Latin America and Africa, and by 2050, only one-fifth of the world's Christian population will be European. "Soon," Jenkins writes, "the phrase a 'White Christian' may sound like a curious oxymoron, as mildly surprising as 'a Swedish Buddhist.' Such people can exist, but a slight eccentricity is implied."¹²

Scholars since Latourette have located the crucial moment of this divergence between a secular Europe and a global Christian community in the post-war period, especially the 1960s. In an *ad limina* address to Brazilian Bishops in 2009, Pope Benedict XVI described the secularization within the Catholic Church as a by-product of the Second Vatican Council:

Beloved Brothers, in the decades that followed the Second Vatican Council, some have interpreted openness to the world not as a requirement of the missionary zeal of the Heart of Christ, but rather as a passage to secularization, seeing in it several values of great Christian depth, such as equality, freedom and solidarity, and showing that they were ready to make concessions and to discover areas of cooperation. So it was that certain leading clerics took part in ethical debates in response to the expectations of public opinion, but people stopped speaking of certain fundamental truths of faith, such as sin, grace, theological life and the last things. They were unconsciously caught up in the self-secularization of many ecclesial communities; these, hoping to please those who did not come, saw the members they already had leave, deprived and disappointed. When they meet us, our contemporaries want to see what they see nowhere else, that is, the joy and hope that come from being with the Risen Lord.¹³

For Benedict, the motors of secularization came within the church itself: members within the church, spurred by Vatican II, had given up on basic tenets of Christianity. Other historians have also pointed to the 1960s as a critical moment in the modern history of

¹⁰ Of course, now there is a burgeoning amount of scholarship that shows how Enlightenment ideas themselves were not at complete odds with religion, but were in themselves a form of religious faith. For the best overview of this recent shift in historical scholarship, see Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay," *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 (2003 Oct): 1061-1080.

¹¹ Latourette, *The Emergence of a World Christian Community*.

¹² Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

¹³ Pope Benedict XVI, "To Brazilian Bishops: Society Thirsts for Spirituality," accessed 12 March 2013, <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=9108>.

Christianity. Scholars of European religious history, such as Lucian Hölscher, Hugh McLeod and Callum Brown, also date Europe's true moment of religious change and secularization to the 1960s.¹⁴ This interpretation is not limited to European religious history. The historian of American religion, David Hollinger, for example, has written that the ecumenical Protestant encounter with religious diversity inspired a moment of intense self-critique after World War II.¹⁵ Much of the literature that focuses on the post-war era attributes shifts to the era of mainline ecumenical Protestantism. In this narrative, the softening of the missionary impulse is associated with the advance of religious liberalism: Christian missionaries embraced other cultures and religions because they were moved by liberal trends in Christianity, such as a historical-critical reading of the Bible, and within the American context, the rise of Social Gospel ideas.¹⁶

In this dissertation, I examine the seeds for these later secular shifts. By focusing on the decades immediately after the First World War, another narrative emerges. It is true that, like their liberal counterparts, conservative missionaries also called for the establishment of indigenous churches throughout the world, free from Western imperial influences. But the conservatives had a radically different notion of how indigenization should work or function in the Christian world. Conservative German missionaries, I argue, adopted an openness to the world and to other cultures not because they were moved by the liberal challenge to accept religious diversity. Even though on the surface conservatives welcomed pluralism and devolved institutional authority just as liberals did, they articulated a different version of indigenization, often drawing upon Pietist and conservative Catholic traditions. They viewed these new formulations of the missionary work as possible bulwarks against not only the forces of secularization, but also against the advance of a form of "liberal-modernist" Christianity.

The need to reconsider the purpose and nature of missionary work grew especially urgent for German missionaries in the decades after the First World War, as they nervously viewed the spread of liberal Christian values worldwide. German missionaries couched their rhetoric and their ideas within the framework of success and failure: as they warily eyed the numerical success of their liberal American and British counterparts, Germans saw their own missionary work as a failure, in desperate need of change and reform. Because of these experiences with failure, missionaries began a process of "self-secularization": they softened their critiques of other religions, and in some instances gave up on previously cherished beliefs. Thus, whereas Pope Benedict refers to self-secularization pejoratively, considering it

¹⁴ See Lucian Hölscher, "Europe in the Age of Secularisation," in *Secularisation in the Christian world: Essays in Honour of Hugh McLeod*, ed. Callum G. Brown, M. F. Snape, and Hugh McLeod (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010); Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2009); Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Hölscher notes the transition in missionary rhetoric, but points to the post-war period. Brown argues that secularization did not occur in Britain before the 1960s.

¹⁵ David A. Hollinger, "After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Ecumenical Protestantism and the Modern American Encounter with Diversity," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 1 (2011 Jul 06): 21-48.

¹⁶ See, for example, Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1997); Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker, eds., *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural history* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2003).

a willing retreat from Church orthodoxy, I argue in this dissertation that missionary self-secularization arose from a sincere engagement with the world. It emerged from humbling and humiliating experiences within the missionary field.

This dissertation thus studies the consequences of this perceived failure of Christianity. It draws upon Paul Cohen's observation that

Modern students of Chinese history have all too often focused on the process of Western impact and Chinese response, to the neglect of the reverse process of Chinese impact and Western response. The missionary who came to China found himself confronted with frustrations and hostilities that he could hardly have envisaged before coming, and which transformed him, subtly but unmistakably, into a *foreign* missionary [. . .]. The Western impact-Chinese response approach, in other words, oversimplified things by assuming that Chinese-Western interactions in the nineteenth century were a one-way street in which all the traffic flowed from West to East.¹⁷

This dissertation, then, is an attempt to look at how the nineteenth-century missionary encounter was a two-way street, from which all parties left changed. Ultimately, the dissertation asks: how do individuals and groups, armed with an ideology and theology that promises success—one that guarantees the universality of its appeal—respond to rejection? How do groups adapt, modify, and justify their beliefs in the face of a feeling of failure?

Why China? And Why Germans in China? Or, the Perception of Failure

The perception of failure was especially pronounced among missionaries working in China. In the twentieth century, China had the largest number of foreign missionaries in the world, yet had paltry results when compared with other non-Muslim countries.¹⁸ Besides making fewer gains numerically than they hoped, missionaries in China also criticized themselves for failing to engage with challenges from Chinese intellectuals. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the majority of learned Chinese had viewed Christianity as a foreign religion, alien to Chinese civilization and norms. Instead of adopting Christianity, they turned to other secular Western ideologies, such as Communism and pragmatism.¹⁹ After the Communist regime expelled missionaries from their borders, the dominant narrative that surrounded missionary work in China deemed it a “debacle.”²⁰

The Communist expulsion of Western missionaries came as the most recent in a long chronicle of Christianity's struggles with the Chinese state. The first documented

¹⁷ Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*, 2010 reissue ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), xl.

¹⁸ Wilbert R. Shenk, “Contextual Theology: The Last Frontier,” in *The Changing Face Of Christianity: Africa, The West, And The World*, ed. Lamin O Sanneh and Joel A Carpenter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ For the choices that Chinese intellectuals had to make, see Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

²⁰ See, for example, David Paton, “First Thoughts on the Debacle of Christian Missions in China,” *African Affairs* 51, no. 202 (1952), 33.

Christian presence in China appeared during the Tang Dynasty, in 635, when Persian Nestorians traveled to China.²¹ In the cosmopolitan and religiously diverse Tang Dynasty, Nestorian Christians found a warm welcome: the emperor Taizong formally greeted the procession of Nestorian missionaries, ordered Nestorian scriptures translated into Chinese, and decreed that Nestorianism was to be protected and “practiced throughout the land.”²² This tolerant atmosphere did not last. By the middle of the 800s, cultural conservatives and xenophobic nativists gained control of the court, and the Emperor Wuzong ordered all Nestorian Christians to register with the state. Secular authorities were now responsible for the ordination of clergy.²³ The Nestorian Christian community was decimated with the fall of the Tang dynasty in 907. But according to Marco Polo’s accounts, remnants of the Nestorian community survived well into the 14th century.²⁴

Marco Polo’s travels belonged to a second wave of contact between European Christian missionaries and the Chinese state. From 1245 to 1253, Pope Innocent IV sent a group of Franciscans to try to make diplomatic contact with the Mongols, with the intent of converting them to Christianity. The Franciscans failed to convert the Mongols, but their travelogues sparked an interest in the Far East. Franciscan writings roused groups of Italian merchants, including the Polo brothers, to travel to China in search of riches. Marco Polo’s writings inspired within the European imaginary of China a notion of a fantastic, rich place, glamorous world.²⁵ This period of contact was not a complete failure, as several influential Mongol tribes converted to Christianity, and the official Yuan policy tolerated the religion.²⁶ But Christianity remained marginal within the broader Yuan religious landscape, and whatever influence Christianity had among Mongol leaders was balkanized as the surviving Nestorians and newer Catholics squabbled over converts.²⁷ The period of Mongol toleration of Christianity also did not last. With the fall of the Yuan Dynasty, the xenophobic Ming Dynasty came to power. The Ming associated Christianity with foreign merchants and the Mongol ruling clan, and banned it.

A third era of Christian contact with China flourished in the early modern era, when hundreds of Jesuit missionaries flooded East Asia.²⁸ The Jesuits, led by pioneers such as Matteo Ricci, entered China in the years 1582-1583, gaining permission to reside in the

²¹ Archaeological evidence suggests that Christians arrived in China as early as 57-75 CE. The Mar Thoma Church in India has always claimed that the Apostle Thomas made it to India. For an overview of these debates, see Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 5-6.

²² Ibid., 9. For more on the fascinating history of Nestorianism in China, see Nicolas Standaert, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China. Volume One: 635-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Roman Malek and Peter Hofrichter, eds., *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia* (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2006).

²³ Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 10.

²⁴ Ibid., 13.

²⁵ George Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 301-302.

²⁶ For more on the history of the Mongols and their engagement with Latin Christendom, see Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410*, vol. The medieval world (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005).

²⁷ Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 13.

²⁸ There is an extensive literature on the early modern Jesuit missions. For a good overview of sources, see Standaert, *Handbook of Christianity in China. Volume One*. For more on the relationship between the Portuguese empire and missions, see Liam M. Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit mission to China, 1579-1724* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

southern province of Guangdong.²⁹ Ricci formulated a policy of “accommodation”—accepting and learning traditional Chinese rituals and beliefs, concentrating his forces on urban areas, and focusing on the elite. The Jesuit strategy enjoyed success, converting several high-ranking Chinese officials, such as Xu Guangqi.³⁰ The Jesuit monopoly of the mission field ended in the 1630s, as mendicant orders—the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians—began sending missionaries to China. The new players opposed the Jesuit infatuation with the elite, instead emphasizing evangelization among the rural poor.³¹ The mendicants also rejected Jesuit accommodation with traditional Chinese customs and rituals, arguing that Chinese ancestor worship ceremonies were not civic functions, but religious ones.

The conflict between these different missionary approaches came to a head during the Chinese Rites Controversy.³² The Vatican rejected the Jesuit position in 1704, decreeing that Chinese Christians were not allowed to participate in traditional Chinese rites or community festivals. The Vatican’s move angered the Qing emperor Kangxi, who ordered in 1706 that only missionaries who followed Ricci’s model be allowed to stay in China. The Emperor expelled the others. Kangxi’s son, the emperor Yongzheng, went one step further, declaring Christianity a heterodox, forbidden religion.³³ Once again, the Chinese state had clamped down on Christianity, and it remained officially a forbidden religion until the 1840s. Local Christian communities managed to survive without much foreign missionary support.

The fourth age of Christian expansion into China was, for the Western missionaries, its most dramatic, and the most traumatic for the Chinese. In the nineteenth century, a series of wars with different European powers humiliated and battered the Qing state.³⁴ The Treaty of Tianjin of 1860 that ended the Second Opium War allowed Christian missionaries access to the Chinese interior. As a result, European missionaries flooded into China with dreams of converting the Empire. Never before had China witnessed such a strong Christian presence, as Catholics were now joined by a diverse range of Protestant missionary societies.³⁵

²⁹ Ricci’s fascinating career has inspired much good scholarship. See, for example Jonathan Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985); Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City: Matteo Ricci 1552-1610*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Mary Laven, *Mission to China: Mission to China: Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Encounter with the East* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011).

³⁰ For the best work on the first generation of Chinese Catholic converts in the Late Ming and early Qing dynasty, see Huang Yinong 黃一農, *Liang tou she: Ming mo Qing chu de di yi dai Tian zhu jiao tu* 兩頭蛇：明末清初的第一代天主教徒 [The Two-headed Snake: The First Generation of Catholic Converts in the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties] (Xinzhu Shi: Guo li qing hua da xue chu ban she, 2005).

³¹ For an in-depth look at the work of Spanish Dominicans in Fujian Province, see Eugenio Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins, and Friars: Christianity as a Local Religion in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

³² For the best work on the Chinese Rites Controversy, see George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: From its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985); David E. Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994).

³³ Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 32.

³⁴ The classic work on this is John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).

³⁵ The first Protestant missionary to enter China was the London Missionary Society pioneer Robert

Nineteenth-century missionaries, and Western imperialism more broadly, presented an unprecedented political, intellectual, and social challenge to Chinese society. Earlier Qing rulers viewed the Jesuits as curiosities, useful in introducing the empire to Western commodities and ideas, but hardly a civilizational alternative; in the early modern period, Christianity seemed a religion that could supplement Chinese civilization, not supplant it. By the nineteenth-century, Christianity and Western civilization posed a serious threat to the intellectual supremacy of Confucianism.³⁶ Protestant and Catholic missionaries led the assault on traditional Chinese society—as Ryan Dunch notes, missionaries were involved in “the introduction of Western medicine; campaigns against footbinding (in the name of the “natural” foot), opium consumption, and “superstition;” the adoption of rationalist, graduated, and (in theory) universal education; individual choice in marriage; demands for political representation.”³⁷ The list does not end there: missionaries also attempted to import Western legal concepts to China, and introduced new geological and scientific techniques.³⁸ The nineteenth-century missionary enterprise was inseparable from the Chinese experience of modernity.

The missionary assault on traditional Chinese society produced a violent backlash among the Chinese. Anti-Christian violence erupted throughout the late nineteenth-century, finding its most expression in the Boxer Uprising of 1900.³⁹ The persistence of anti-Christian sentiment among Chinese elites and the broader populace forced missionaries to face the fact that their religion was rejected. Missionaries read contemporaneous reports of the rapid spread of Christianity throughout Africa and agonized over the lack of similar conversion rates in China. Because of these perceived failures, Western missionaries fought and debated amongst themselves about correct theology and effective missionary practice. Some missionaries argued that in order for Christianity to survive outside of Europe, they needed to encourage Christianity’s indigenization in China.⁴⁰ In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the “indigenization question” occupied a central place within European

Morrison, who arrived in Guangzhou in 1807. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 43. For the best biography of Morrison, see Christopher Hancock, *Robert Morrison and the Birth of Chinese Protestantism* (London: T & T Clark, 2008).

³⁶ For the clearest elucidation of this threat, see Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate*. For a debate about whether the “Western impact” actually mattered, see Cohen, *Discovering History in China*. Cohen doubts the extent to the impact of Western imperialism, but concedes that Western imperialism loomed large in Chinese consciousness. See *Ibid.*, xiv-xxv.

³⁷ Ryan Dunch, “Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity,” *History and Theory* 41, no. 3 (2002), 317.

³⁸ For more on missionary attempts to import Western law to China, see Lydia He Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). For missionary translations of texts in geology, see Shellen Xiao Wu, “Underground Empires: German Imperialism and the Introduction of Geology in China, 1860-1919” (Dissertation, Princeton University, 2010).

³⁹ On the Boxers, see Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). For anti-Christian movements throughout the nineteenth century, the classic work is Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963). For its twentieth-century manifestation, see Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-28* (Notre Dame, IN: Cross Cultural Publications, Cross Roads Books, 1988).

⁴⁰ For more on the “indigenizing principle,” see Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 7-9.

and American missionary circles, as they sought to conceive of new, more successful policies.

Yet little consensus emerged among Western missionaries about how they should encourage indigenization. While Protestant missionaries agreed that they ultimately wanted to establish a fully independent, indigenous Chinese Church, they clashed over their visions regarding how the church should look or function in Chinese society. Catholic missionaries concurred about the necessity to ordain more native Catholic bishops, but they disagreed about the pace of indigenization, as well as the practical steps and measures to establish a Chinese Catholic episcopacy. Undergirding these quarrels was the fear of declining European influence abroad, coupled with rivalries among Western nations and churches. Thus, even though a energetic discussion of indigenization dominated Western missionary circles in the late nineteenth century, missionaries rarely put these ideas into practice. They justified their reluctance by citing the “spiritual immaturity” of Chinese Christians, not yet ready to take over responsibility of a church without Western guidance and leadership.

Then came the onslaught of the First World War. The war dealt a devastating blow to the supply of financial and personnel support that European missionary societies could rely on. In the 1920s, desperate for money and staff to continue basic operations, European missionary societies were forced to incorporate non-Europeans into their ranks. The indigenization question was thus no longer a question about an abstract future, but about an urgent reality. Missionary societies altered their institutional hierarchies, incorporating Chinese Christians into positions previously open only to Europeans. The addition of Chinese Christians into the organizational leadership changed more than its demographic makeup: it also changed the theological outlook of various missionary societies, particularly how the societies viewed their relationship to traditional Chinese society.

Before the war, Europeans missionary societies, Catholic and Protestant, portrayed traditional Chinese culture—which they termed, largely incorrectly, as “Confucianism”—in a negative light. Confucianism, they believed, had prevented China's modernization, and they called for Confucian ideas to be replaced with Christian and more broadly, Western values. Once the enemy, after the First World War Confucianism became an ally. In the 1920s Christian missions came under severe attack from secular critics both in the West and in China, especially from Communists. Missionaries believed that in order for Christianity to retain its relevance in the face of new global ideologies such as fascism and communism, it needed to adapt itself to local concerns and cultures. Hoping to find more allies in China in order to stem a rising Communist threat, missionaries sought to make Christianity more “Chinese.”

Chinese Christians were themselves at the forefront of efforts to find common ground between Christianity and traditional Chinese culture. They began to articulate their own theological and ideological positions, challenging European missionary practices and ideas. Some missionaries took these Chinese challenges seriously. These “self-secularizing” missionaries embarked on the difficult path of altering, and in some cases, renouncing their former criticisms of Confucianism. Some missionaries went one step further, arguing that a synthesis between the ideas of Christ and Confucius was crucial to Christianity's future survival, in both China and in the world. Incorporating the Chinese critique of Christianity, these missionaries wrote about how Confucius's aspiration for harmony between man and nature could teach an important lesson to the mechanized West. But self-secularization was

not a smooth, easy process; the reactions within the missionary enterprise to the Chinese challenge were not monolithic. While some missionaries embraced the shifts, others resisted and refused to alter their ideas or relationship to the Chinese. Yet ultimately, this dissertation reveals that despite the internal conflict and disagreement among the German missionary enterprise, the missionary experience with failure pushed it to give up formerly cherished beliefs about Christianity's relationship to the world.

The German case provides particular insights into this perception of failure in ways that a study of the Anglo-American missionary enterprise cannot. Ever since their entrance into China, a sense of loss suffused the writings of German missionaries, as they warily and competitively measured themselves against their American, British, and French counterparts. The Germans were "late-comers" in both the missionary and the imperial game. Like their colonial counterparts, German missionaries chafed under the dominance of other missionary nations. After the First World War, they felt a special "spiritual" bond to the Chinese, as both were on the losing end of the Versailles Treaty. German Protestants criticized Americans' Social Gospel theology, and accused Americans of being more interested in spreading American ideas of democracy and progress than the Christian message. German Catholics railed against French attempts to maintain their religious Protectorate in China.

These accusations were not merely resentful perceptions: in comparison to their American, British, and French counterparts, German missionaries and mission theologians did advance different visions for the modern Church in China. German Protestants believed that every single nation had to produce its own, unique "Church of the People" (*Volkskirche*), which reflected their own national history. They argued that modern Church could be strengthened through diversity; the modern Christian landscape had to become fractured. German Catholics, inspired by the work of the missionary theologian Josef Schmidlin, encouraged the Vatican to reject the French model of carving out a pseudo-state, rather, they wanted to make the Church "not an intruder in any country."⁴¹

Indeed, the dominant narrative in the historiography of Christianity in China has been shaped by studies of American, British, and French missionaries, not least from the impression that the German missionary enterprise was decimated by the First World War. Latourette himself proclaimed that the war had largely destroyed the German missionary enterprise. The reason for the neglect is also partly statistical: in terms of numbers of German missionaries in China, Protestant missionaries were far outnumbered by the Americans and the British, and German Catholic missionaries ranked far below those of the French and Belgian.⁴²

While it is true that German missionaries were far outnumbered in China, Germans nonetheless had a major presence intellectual and cultural trends in global missionary circles, due to the influence of German theology on the rest of the world. German missionary theologians, both within the Protestant and the Catholic sphere, set the grounds

⁴¹ Benedict XV. *Maximum Ilud*, Apostolic Letter on the Propagation of the Faith Throughout the World, 30 November 1919, <http://www.svdcuria.org/public/mission/docs/encycl/mi-en.htm>, 16.

⁴² For exact statistics, see the appendix in R. G. Tiedemann, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume 2, 1800 to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 977-1004.

for much of the missionary debate. German theological divides—between Pietist and conservative, conservative Catholic and liberal Catholic—shaped the broader missionary enterprise not only in Germany, but the broader missionary community in China.⁴³ Contentious theological debates were of course not peculiar to the Germans: before the First World War, the disagreements between German liberals and conservatives compared similarly to arguments found in American, British, and French circles. After the First World War, however, German missionary theologians fashioned themselves as distinct from their counterparts. In particular, they stressed that they had been humbled by their wartime experience and yearned for a new form of theology. The Germans accused the Americans, British, and French of arrogance, a by-product of their victory in the war. The Germans, on the other hand, argued that failure had taught them valuable lessons, and articulated a different approach to missionary work than their counterparts.

I must stress that the idea of “failure” that I employ is one of perception, rather than an objective assessment of the Christian enterprise in China. Much of the literature on Christian missions in China published in the 1960s reinforced and reified the German missionaries’ sense of their own failures. Scholars in the 1960s, such as John King Fairbank, Joseph Levenson, and Paul Cohen, also pondered the expulsion of missionaries from China after the victory of Communism. Their studies, at their core were attempting to answer the question that dominated Cold War era studies—why had Communism succeeded? Had Christianity been successful in China, it could have stemmed the popular embrace of Communism. Since Communism was incompatible with Christianity, the Chinese Communist victory assumed the failure of Christian missions.⁴⁴

In the past thirty years, however, historians of Christianity in China have reassessed the narrative of “success” and “failure” regarding the missionary enterprise in China. With the loosening of restrictions on religion in the 1980s, journalists and other China-watchers began reporting that a religious revival gripped the Chinese religious landscape. By 1996, Daniel Bays was estimating that there were some 30 million Chinese Christians, almost ten times the number of Christians thought to be in China in 1949.⁴⁵ These reports surprised scholars who thought that whatever religious institutions existed had been decimated in the Cultural Revolution. Works by Daniel Bays, Ryan Dunch, and Jessie Lutz have instead recast the missionary enterprise as a relatively successful one—even though the missionaries may have failed to convert China into a Christian nation, they introduced elements of what the missionaries had all along assumed would be a by-product of their goal: China's

⁴³ There is, of course, a quite large literature on the history of German missionaries in German. Much of the scholarship in German tends to focus on a single missionary group, or a single confession. Other than Horst Gründer, *Christliche Mission und deutscher Imperialismus: eine politische Geschichte ihrer Beziehungen während der deutschen Kolonialzeit (1884-1914) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Afrikas und Chinas* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1982), there are few books that study both Protestant and Catholic missionaries.

⁴⁴ John King Fairbank, ed., *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate*; Paul Cohen, “Christian Missions and their Impact to 1900,” in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 10: Late Ch’ing 1800-1911, Part 1*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

⁴⁵ Daniel H Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), ix.

modernization.⁴⁶ My dissertation reflects this recent scholarship and assumes that the Christian missions were a relatively “successful” enterprise. Yet I am less interested in assessing how the Christian missionary project in China “failed” or “succeeded.” Instead, my dissertation focuses on how missionary perceptions of failure led to changes in their own enterprise.

Chinese Christians themselves occupy a central place within this dissertation. Much of the recent historiography, in searching for the origins of the Three-Self Patriotic Church or of indigenous churches that make up the current “house Church” movement, have focused either on left-leaning and progressive Chinese Christians, or on conservative popular evangelists.⁴⁷ But indigenization was more broadly based than either of these approaches imply; a vast swath of moderate Chinese Christians contributed to the debates and discussions on indigenization. Among several such prominent moderate Chinese Christians was Chen Yuan, the President of Furen University, administered by German Catholics; another was Ling Deyuan, a pastor trained by German Protestants. This dissertation looks at the different intellectual choices made by all Christians in China—missionaries as well as Chinese themselves.

By incorporating the voices of Chinese Christians, and how Chinese Christians made Christianity their own, this dissertation also participates in a major historiographical shift within the field of Chinese history. As Nicolas Standaert has pointed out, historians of Christianity in China writing before the 1960s conformed to an “impact-response” model, asking how Christianity, as a product of the West, influenced Chinese society, and how Chinese society either rejected or embraced Christianity.⁴⁸ Latourette’s work was a prime example of this impact-response model, depicting how Christianity made an impact on the Chinese landscape, primarily from the perspective of European missionaries. Starting in the late 1970s and early 1980s, especially with the appearance of Jacques Gernet’s study *Chine et christianisme*, scholars have turned to studying the Christian Church from a more sino-centric perspective.⁴⁹ Standaert has noted that this change constitutes a paradigm shift “from a mainly missiological and Eurocentric to a Sinological and Sinocentric approach.”⁵⁰

A study of indigenization emphasizes how Chinese Christians made Christianity their own, how they interpreted and understood Christianity within the broader traditions of Chinese culture. But it also does not assume that Christianity and Chinese culture were fundamentally and irreducibly at odds, as Gernet controversially argued in his work.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Tiedemann, *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 2*; Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China, 1857-1927* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

⁴⁷ See, for example, the excellent Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁴⁸ See Nicolas Standaert, “New Trends in the Historiography of Christianity in China,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 83, no. 4 (1997): 573-613.

⁴⁹ Jacques Gernet, *Chine et christianisme: Action et réaction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982). The English translation is Idem, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁵⁰ Standaert, “New Trends in the Historiography of Christianity in China,” 574.

⁵¹ See for example, Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact*, 212. Gernet writes, “The Christian idea of a personal God, now angry, now merciful, who created the world and governs and intervenes in the details of individual existences and who has a history since he became incarnate in a particular place at a particular time, is

Rather, as Chinese Christians tried to synthesize and make Christianity “Chinese,” they found commonalities between the two cultures. And they did this brave work in the face of a host of odds and oppositions: a rising tide of anti-Christian Chinese nationalism, intellectual attacks on the nature of religion, a destabilizing political scene through the destruction and chaos in the escalating Sino-Japanese War, and finally, the Communist expulsion of foreign missionaries in 1951. Instead of seeing the Chinese Christians as “failures,” or “traitors,” or “proto-Communists,” I am more interested in the fruitful intellectual and institutional work that was produced amidst such obstacles, and how Chinese Christians drew upon both Christianity and their training in traditional Chinese culture to respond to broader political and social threats. These broader threats included global ones, and the Chinese Christians whom I study were well-attuned to such global shifts and movements. Chinese Christians encountered and engaged with the broader modern world through the missionary societies, as well as through letters to the missionary home board. They were thus much more aware of broader global affairs than we previously assumed.

In this dissertation, then, I follow the lead of Ryan Dunch, who argues that we should view missionaries and Chinese Christians as belonging to the same “global modernity.” Rejecting the view that missionaries dragged Chinese Christians into modernity, Dunch writes,

The starting place is to understand missionaries in the context of a globalizing modernity that altered Western societies as well as non-Western ones in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; missionaries, in other words, were simultaneously agents of the spread of modernity vis-à-vis non-Western societies, and products of its emerging hegemony.⁵²

For Dunch, the modern, globalized world is produced through synchronous processes of homogenization and rupture; the task of the historian is to elucidate how different missionary and indigenous actors contributed to both of these processes. He proposes that when we should focus on missionaries as actors engaged in “intercultural communication,” rather than as “agents of a hegemonic Western culture.”⁵³ In Dunch’s view, indigenous Chinese Christians are just as valuable objects of study as the Western missionaries. My dissertation is an attempt to answer Dunch’s challenge; it tries to map the modern, global world that missionaries and indigenous Chinese Christians simultaneously inhabited.

Global Christian Missions and the Question of Transnationalism

By allotting equal attention to German missionaries and Chinese Christians, I am inspired by another historiographical shift, this time in the historiography that examines the relationship between imperialism and missions. In an article written in 1974, Arthur

countered by the Chinese idea of an impersonal Heaven which is at one with the order of nature and its limitless power of production. For the Chinese, there is something divine in the very functioning of the universe, but it is a divine quality that is immanent in the world. There is no being or truth which transcends it.”

⁵² Dunch, “Beyond Cultural Imperialism,” 318-319.

⁵³ Ibid., 324.

Schlesinger Jr. articulated the dominant paradigm of scholarly analysis of missionary work in the 1960s and 1970s: missionaries were viewed as agents engaging in “cultural imperialism,” which Schlesinger defined as the “purposeful aggression by one culture against the ideas and values of another [. . .], accompanied by political, economic, or military pressure.”⁵⁴ Edward Said further developed this line of thinking: missionaries, in short, were hand-maidens of empire.⁵⁵ In this view, Christian missions, joined forces with of the Western imperialism and capitalism to form what was one of the most disruptive global forces that shaped the nineteenth-century landscape.

As Jean and John Comaroff note, a “historiographic revolution” since the 1990s and 1990s has reassessed the missionary contribution towards the Western imperialist project. The center for this historiographical shift has been located in studies of the British empire, particularly in Africa. The Comaroffs themselves posit a cautious revision. To them, viewing missionaries as surrogates to empire “is not wrong. But it is distortingly simplistic.”⁵⁶ The Comaroffs portray missionaries as “benevolent” imperialists, who serviced the British empire, but they nonetheless credit missionaries for being key members in providing the impetus and training for Africa’s modernization.⁵⁷ Missionaries, for example, encouraged widespread literacy, a cornerstone for the indigenous critique of imperialism during both the colonial and post-colonial period. The Comaroffs thus argue that British missionaries inadvertently trained their future critics; they sowed the seeds for their own later destruction demise.

Critics of the Comaroffs have rejected the premise that missionaries were cultural imperialists. Andrew Porter, for example, writes, “Highly effective as missions were in promoting cultural change, they were amongst the weakest agents of ‘cultural imperialism.’”⁵⁸ Porter attacks the concept of “cultural imperialism” as a slippery term; Said and the Comaroffs use “culture” in different, often contradictory ways.⁵⁹ Other critics point to the shaky historical evidence that indicts missionaries. Ryan Dunch notes the limited influence that missionaries had with colonial governments, and how, in fact, missionaries often worked against the mercantile and political interests of their compatriots.⁶⁰

More importantly, for Dunch and Porter, the term “cultural imperialism” renders invisible the agency of indigenous actors. Said argued that cultural imperialists drew their power from the “silence of the native.”⁶¹ Yet, as Porter persuasively claims, “natives were

⁵⁴ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., “The Missionary Enterprise and Theories of Imperialism,” in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 360.

⁵⁵ See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Idem, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 128-133.

⁵⁶ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 1: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 8.

⁵⁷ Idem, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 6.

⁵⁸ Andrew Porter, “‘Cultural Imperialism’ and Protestant Missionary Enterprise, 1780-1914,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25, no. 3 (1997 Sep), 388.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 372-374.

⁶⁰ Dunch, “Beyond Cultural Imperialism,” 308.

⁶¹ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 118.

rarely silent or inactive.”⁶² Instead, indigenous actors creatively navigated the institutions that the missionaries created, at times exploiting missionary structures to advance their own interests. Porter thus exhorts scholars to turn their attention towards indigenous actors, rather than cultural imperialism.

Porter and other historians are indebted to scholars of religion, who have produced pioneering studies on “indigenous agency.” Theologians such as Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh argue that a focus on indigenization illuminates not only how Christian converts conceived of Christianity, but also how Western missionaries altered and shifted their views as a result of the missionary encounter.⁶³ They challenge scholars to look beyond the Western missionary as the sole agent of change, and instead to focus on the dialogue between the West and the non-West. This dissertation attempts to answer the challenges of Porter, Walls, and Sanneh: it studies the conversations and conflict that German missionaries had with Chinese Christians. It examines how both German missionaries and Chinese Christians emerged from the exchange with different visions and ideas about Christianity.

This dissertation, then, focuses on the missionary encounter, it studies the dynamic relationship between European and non-European actors. This dissertation thus also incorporates insights from recent trends in “transnational” history. As Jürgen Osterhammel writes, Europe “should not be conceived as a hermetically enclosed interior domain, but rather as a civilization, which was open at the margins, whose influence radiated out into the world while at the same time absorbing influences from without.”⁶⁴ So too should we understand the relationship of Christianity to the modern world: the boundaries of Christianity and Christian missionary work were porous, constantly shifting, shaped by a variety of transnational actors, missionaries foremost among them. As missionaries crossed national and international borders, they encountered a whole host of international organizations and figures. Their movement occurred also in the non-physical realm of ideas: missionaries transgressed and created new intellectual and theological norms. Missionaries absorbed new ideas and changed their minds when challenged and pushed by civilizations and ideologies, such as Confucianism. An assessment of German missionaries and Chinese Christians thus reveals the contours of both the material and non-material divisions that they traversed.

The goal of my study is thus not that of Latourette’s — it is not a comprehensive study of how Christianity became a “global” religion in the 19th century, nor does it claim that Christianity became a global religion only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I am interested, rather, in the processes of globalization, and how Christian missionaries tried to export their religion abroad and how the encounter with other cultures altered European Christianity’s truth claims. The case of Christianity in China shows how the faith’s

⁶² Porter, “‘Cultural Imperialism’ and Protestant Missionary Enterprise,” 386.

⁶³ Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, xviii. See also Lamin O. Sanneh, *Encountering the West: Christianity and the Global Cultural Process: The African Dimension* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); Idem, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008).

⁶⁴ “Forum: Asia, Germany and the Transnational Turn,” *German History* 28, no. 4 (2010 Nov 18), 518.

globalization, from the beginning, was challenged by sources both inside and outside of the faith.

The “Invisible Man” of German History

Furthermore, a study of German missionaries illuminates how Germans helped to transform our modern global religious landscape. David Blackbourn has noted that the stereotype of Germans in the nineteenth-century has long been, in the words of Friedrich Hölderlin, that “Germans were ‘rich in thoughts but weak in deeds.’”⁶⁵ Hoping to reverse that image of Germans as only “poets and thinkers,” (*Dichter und Denker*), Blackbourn argues, “Germans were not inert bystanders [. . .]. The world became smaller in these years and the Germans helped to make it so. Through their ideas and practices, through travel, material exchange and networks of communication, they contributed to the making of a new world.”⁶⁶ German missionaries were among the central agents who helped bring about this new world. A study of German missionaries, I argue, alerts us to the multifaceted way in which Germans brought Christianity and their own German national interests abroad.

A study of German missionaries in China sheds light, however, not only on the globalization of Christianity outside of Europe, but also on the religious landscape in Germany. In 1968, John King Fairbank wrote that the American missionary was the “invisible man of American history.”⁶⁷ So too, in German history—missionaries and missionary leaders on the home front have long been neglected in German histories of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Like their American and British counterparts, when missionaries have entered the broader narratives of modern German history, they have appeared in studies of the period from 1871-1918 as, at best, willing cultural imperialists, and at worst, lackeys of the German Empire.⁶⁸ In these narratives, some enlightened few—liberal missionaries such as Richard Wilhelm or trailblazers like Karl Gützlaff—have been credited with challenging the triumphalist, essentialist, and racist assumptions of their time, but they are seen as voices crying in the wilderness.

As the Comaroffs and others have argued with regard to British missionaries, I argue that German missionaries were also complex figures who wielded broad influence at the German provincial and national level in ways that often were unconnected to geopolitics or imperialism. Missionary journals and letters were often the only point of contact that broad segments of the German population had with foreign lands, civilizations, and ideas. *Missionswissenschaft*, or missiology, was considered a serious realm of theological study, and

⁶⁵ David Blackbourn, “Germany and the Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1820,” *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 51 (2012), 10.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁷ John King Fairbank, “Assignment for the ‘70’s,” *American Historical Review* 74, no. 3 (February 1969): 861-879.

⁶⁸ Horst Gründer articulated this position clearly in his influential *Gründer, Christliche Mission und deutscher Imperialismus*. It is also repeated in the work of Klaus Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand in der “Musterkolonie” Kiautschou: Interaktionen zwischen China und Deutschland 1897-1914* (München: Oldenbourg, 2000), and also articulated in Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*. Even in recent works, missionaries are described as solely agents of the “civilizing mission.” For example, see Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 93-100.

missionaries occupied important academic positions long before Germany developed significant imperial ambitions. The Protestant and Catholic mission societies at the heart of my dissertation lived through the end of two empires—Bismarck's and Hitler's—and a Republic. By comparing these mission societies and investigating the broader changes in the German missionary enterprise for over more than a century, my dissertation shows that the missionaries' allegiances were never a mere reflection of the state and the society to which they belonged. It also shows how the Germany that these missionaries inhabited was sometimes far from the nationalist, imperialist, and militaristic Germany portrayed in much of our state-centered historiography. By studying German missionaries, we can map the contours of a more transnational Germany and investigate more closely how both international and national thinking changed, co-existed, and conflicted with one another.

My dissertation thus joins the growing recognition in modern German historiography that the state and its representatives are not always the most significant agents, and certainly not of cultural change.⁶⁹ Yet the transnational actors in my story, German missionaries, remained—especially conservative ones, and even Catholic ones—at heart, nationalists; that is, certain of their own *German* intellectual and spiritual heritage and of its capacity to convert the world. Despite their nationalism, however, they were not racial chauvinists, and the language and lexicon that they used to defend their theology and understand the lands that they hoped to convert took extraordinary new directions as a result of the encounter with their Chinese. These changes were partially fueled by missionary alarm at the rise of global Communism. Yet the changes were real: Protestant and Catholic missionaries tailored and altered Christian rituals to a Chinese audience, and they began to ordain more Chinese clergy, in order to prepare the Chinese to lead the missionary work independently. The missionaries and their efforts affected even the way Christianity was depicted to people in Germany, since now they wrote in pro-Confucian tones that would have seemed repulsive to missionaries only a generation earlier.

Besides examining how German missionaries shaped the German religious landscape, this dissertation also puts the stories of Protestant and Catholic missionaries in dialogue with one another. Historians have focused on how confessional conflict has shaped the social, political, and cultural boundaries within modern Germany.⁷⁰ For the most part, Imperial Germany has emerged from these studies as confessionally divided and full of religious conflict. Yet, few studies have looked closely at the history of interdenominational cooperation.⁷¹ My study of the German missionary enterprise offers an essay into the writing

⁶⁹ For a discussion of the “transnational” turn in German history, see the useful “Forum: Asia, Germany and the Transnational Turn.”

⁷⁰ For an overview of the literature of nineteenth-century German religious history, see Margaret Lavinia Anderson, “Piety and Politics: Recent Work on German Catholicism,” *The Journal of Modern History* 63, no. 4 (1991): 681-716. Classic works include David Blackbourn, *Class, Religion, and Local Politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The Centre Party in Württemberg Before 1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); Idem, *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Bismarckian Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); Jonathan Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁷¹ Margaret L. Anderson, “Interdenominationalism, Clericalism, Pluralism: The Zentrumsstreit and the Dilemma of Catholicism in Wilhelmine Germany,” *Central European History* 21, no. 04 (1988): 350-378. Some attempts to address this gap are found in several essays in Helmut Walser Smith, ed., *Protestants, Catholics, and*

of a bi-denominational, if not always an inter-denominational, history of Germany. While Protestant and Catholic missionaries competed with one another in China, they also had many opportunities to cooperate. Catholic missiologists learned from and cited their Protestant counterparts. In the colonial space of Qingdao, German Protestants and Catholics worked together to build schools, even as the relationship between Protestantism and Catholicism worsened in Germany itself.

German Catholic and Protestant missionaries alike were faced with sets of overlapping and competing claims. On the one hand, their religion required them to think in a cosmopolitan and global manner, asking them to cooperate with missionaries from other nations, and at times, from other confessions. On the other hand, as national rivalries intensified in the early-twentieth century, nationalism demanded them to place German national interests above their global commitments. This dissertation examines how missionaries navigated these tensions. Focusing on how individuals and institutions articulated loyalty both to religion and state, I argue, strikes to the heart of the central questions of modern German history.

Sources and Structure of the Dissertation

Reflecting the experiences of the missionaries themselves, I have crossed national borders in search of sources, locating them in Germany, Rome, China, and Taiwan. The German archival sources come from three mission societies, all which kept meticulous records: the Berlin Mission Society, the Society of the Divine Word, and the liberal *Allgemeine evangelische protestantische missionsverein*. Some of these sources have never been exploited in the scholarly literature. I have attempted to survey a broad selection of materials — pamphlets, journals, newspapers, and other literature that the mission societies and the broader missionary community produced. While the histories of the BMS and the SVD have been covered in some detail, they have been written primarily by “house historians” — missionaries recounting the history of their own societies.⁷² The scholarly literature on these two mission societies has dealt mainly with the period of the *Kaiserreich*, ending in 1918.

My dissertation also seeks to articulate the voices of the Chinese Christians. A quick note on Chinese sources used in this dissertation: even though I was able to spend time in China, many of the archives that I attempted to use were either destroyed or inaccessible. The papers of Furen University, which are partially preserved in Taiwan, was my richest Chinese archival source. Some Chinese materials exist in European archives, such as letters from Chinese Christians to their missionary supervisors in Europe and meeting minutes that document encounters between Chinese Christians and European missionaries.

Jews in Germany, 1800-1914 (New York: Berg, 2001).

⁷² The standard internal histories of the Berlin Missionary Society have been written by Julius Richter and Hellmut Lehmann, who were both intimately connected with the Berlin Missions Society. Julius Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft* (Berlin: Verlag der Buchhandlung der Berliner Evang. Missionsges, 1924); Hellmut Lehmann, *150 Jahre Berliner Mission* (Erlangen: Verlag des Ev.-Luth. Mission Erlangen, 1974); Idem, *Zur Zeit und zur Unzeit: Geschichte der Berliner Mission 1918-1972 in Drei Bänden*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Berliner Missionswerk, 1989). Richard Hartwich has played a similar role for the SVD. See Richard Hartwich, ed., *Steyle Missionare in China: Beiträge zu einer Geschichte*, 6 volumes (Nettetal: Steyler Verl., 1983-1991).

Alongside unpublished archival sources, I have drawn upon journals, newspapers, and other published materials to resurrect some of these lost Christian voices.

This dissertation is divided into three parts. The first part provides the nineteenth-century context for missionary work and missionary ideas about indigenization. It consists of two chapters, one set in China, the other in Germany. Chapter one is an intellectual biography of Ernst Faber, one of the most prominent and important German missionaries in the 19th century. This chapter details the life of Ernst Faber, a German missionary who worked in China from 1860 until 1898, considered to be one of the most influential China missionaries in the nineteenth-century. In reports for his German audience, Faber wrote openly about the shortcomings of the missionary enterprise and his inability to make inroads into Chinese society. Faber engaged in life-long correspondence with major missionary leaders and theologians in Germany, and his arguments about Confucianism shaped how Germans understood China (e. g., Max Weber read and cited Faber's work). Faber moved deftly between liberal and conservative missionary circles, and his career reveals how the fault lines separating religious liberalism and conservatism in the nineteenth-century were much more porous than we think. Faber's rejection of Confucianism and traditional Chinese culture illustrates the vision of reform and modernization and reform that nineteenth-century German missionaries proposed in China. Faber's Euro-centric vision was rejected by his successors, who worked instead to build an indigenous Chinese church.

My second chapter asks: why did "indigenization" become such a buzzword in the early 1920s? Even though Western missionaries had raised the question of indigenization in the nineteenth century, it was not until the 20s that missionary theologians—Catholic and Protestant alike—and Chinese Christians agreed that the goal of missions was to create an independent Chinese Church. It shows how missionary theologians of both churches read and influenced each other's works, and thus how the German missionary enterprise was much more cross confessional than we have assumed. Indeed, I argue that the Chinese approach to indigenization, which they called the *Bense* (literally translated as "native color") church, resembled German ideas more than American ones. But the Chinese nonetheless rejected certain elements of German theology that they considered imperialistic. German missionaries, American missionaries, and Chinese Christians had different, sometimes conflicting ideas about how to establish an indigenous, independent, Chinese Church.

The third chapter commences the second part of the dissertation: transformations in the Protestant and pietist Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) and the Catholic *Societas Verbi Divini* (SVD). Once theologically conservative and vehemently anti-Confucian, in the 1920s and 1930s they both came to grips with Confucianism—and Communism. Although the latter was as yet only a threat, the perception of danger pushed German churchmen of both confessions to turn towards Confucianism as an ally. The political situation in Germany was just as important here as the one in China: German missionaries embraced Confucianism because they witnessed the threat of Communism in both countries. I also compare the German experience with other international missionary organizations, and argue that the German embrace of Confucianism was conditioned by their particular experience of failure after World War I.

While Chapter three tracks ideological changes, Chapter four examines institutional shifts in the Berlin Missionary Society. The Berlin Missionary Society in the late

nineteenth-century was reluctant to ordain Chinese pastors. By the 1930s, it had embarked on an energetic path of turning over control to the Chinese. This chapter pays close attention to the relationship between the missionaries in China and the leadership in Germany. Correspondence between missionaries in China and Germany shows that while growing appreciation for Confucianism had opened the Church to values within Chinese culture, it was ultimately the political situation in Germany, and the Nazi ban on foreign currency exchange, that forced the Berlin missionaries to turn control of their congregations over to the Chinese.

The situation of Catholics was somewhat different. Ever since the early 18th century, the Vatican had condemned the compromises with Chinese culture associated with sixteenth-century Jesuits such as Matteo Ricci. Any accommodation by Catholic missionaries to indigenous practices was thus suspect in the Vatican, and nowhere more than in China. When a new generation of Church leaders emerged in the 1920s, the Vatican stance towards accommodation began to shift. And while German Protestants, even in China, had been deeply affected by the National Socialist regime change in Berlin, the Catholic missionaries, even in a “German” order like the SVD, were still more determined by policies emanating from the Vatican than by developments specific to their country of origin. My chapter examines how the SVD responded to the new Vatican policies and began to indigenize its missionary work. Moreover, it shows how SVD missionaries, in spite of their ultra-montanism, resisted Vatican proposals, preferring to pursue their own pace of indigenization.

With chapter six and seven, we enter the third and final part of the dissertation: how the Chinese experienced and interpreted indigenization. Chapter six focuses on the life of Ling Deyuan, the first Chinese pastor groomed by the Berlin Missionaries to manage a congregation independently. Why did Ling, who was raised, educated, and trained by the Berliners, join the Chinese Communist Three-Self Patriotic Church after 1949? I argue that other than experiencing dramatic and traumatic political events and suffering in a war-torn, shattered country, the discussions surrounding indigenization in the 1920s prepared Chinese Christians to accept and join the Patriotic Church. The chapter also examines how the catastrophic events in German political life prevented the Berlin missionaries from delivering on their promises to continue supporting their Chinese Christian workers financially.

Chapter seven looks at another Chinese Christian who joined the Chinese Communists in renouncing Western missionaries: Chen Yuan, President of the Catholic University in Beijing, also known as Furen University. In 1933, the SVD took over Furen University. This chapter examines how Chen responded to the new missionary administration. In particular, it details how Chen rejected the Catholic vision for a university education, proposing a specific Chinese nationalist view instead. The SVD missionaries, in spite of their rejection of Nazi attempts to affect school affairs, had lost moral legitimacy in the university due to their connection to Germany. It was partly due to this loss of moral legitimacy that furnished Chen with a rationale for denouncing the SVD missionaries in 1949.

Why focus on these two individuals in particular? My choice of Ling and Chen was partly shaped by the nature of my sources: out of the Chinese Christians that I traced, they left behind a significant paper-trail. Of course, I do not claim that these two individuals

stand for the totality of the Chinese Christian involvement with Christian missionaries: my narratives do not emphasize the Chinese Christians who left China for Taiwan, nor the Christians who resisted the Communists and took their churches underground. I was unable to find evidence for underground church membership among the pastors of the Berlin Missionary Society. On the Catholic side, the Cardinal Thomas Tien ranks as the most prominent Chinese SVD who chose to leave Taiwan. Yet I have decided to minimize his part in the dissertation because there already is a significant literature on him.⁷³

While I acknowledge the limited vistas that individual stories and narratives oversee, Ling and Chen do represent different levels and types of engagement with German missionaries. Ling influence remained at the provincial level, and his name has been recorded within county-level records. Chen, on the other hand, wielded a national platform; he was an important and revered public intellectual. By surveying their experiences, I hope to illuminate how the German missionary experience shaped Chinese Christianity both at the local and national level, within the villages of Nanxiong and Shixing county, as well as the metropolitan cities of Beijing. Ling and Chen's stories alert us to how Christianity survived in surprising places.

Moreover, I choose Ling and Chen precisely because they decided to stay and cooperate with the Chinese Communists. Ling and Chen's stories attune us to the ironies of history, and reveal how the missionary encounter helped lay the foundation. Just as the Comaroffs locate the origins of African post-colonial critique within the missionary encounter, so do I detect, within the stories of Ling and Chen, continuities between the pre and post-1949 Chinese Christian approach to the Chinese state. Their engagement with German missionaries, I argue, prepared and armed them with the anti-imperial, anti-Western rhetoric that the Chinese Communists could accept. Their stories also alert us to the actual political, intellectual, and social options that they had, and help us to understand the monumental and dangerous individual choices that Chinese Christians had to make after the Communist victory in 1949.

Finally, On Globalization and Modernity

Some final words on the words "globalization" and "modernity, and how I use them in this dissertation. Scholars have noted that "trans-nationalism" and "globalization" have become buzz words, often used imprecisely when characterizing a whole host of different phenomena. J. Timmons Roberts and Amy Bellone Hite provide one of the clearest definitions of how scholars might legitimately use the term globalization when writing about economies:

Although the world has long had important international linkages, globalization refers to integration where firms are interdependent, production is linked on a global scale, here is a dramatic increase in visible and invisible trade, and national economies are connected.⁷⁴

⁷³ See, for example, Ernest Brandewie, *The Last Shall Be First: The Life of Thomas Tien Keng-hsin, China's First Cardinal* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2007).

⁷⁴ J. Timmons Roberts and Amy Hite, eds., *The Globalization and Development Reader: Perspectives on*

Can we—or should we—think of the mission society as a firm or a large multi-national corporation? In many ways, the broader story of Christian mission societies mirrored that of the rise of a multi-national firm in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mission societies began in the nineteenth century as independent units, competing for Chinese souls. They became more interdependent over time, as missionary groups tried to form larger coalitions in the broader goal to convert China to Christianity. As a result of this interdependency, the workforce of the church—its clergy, the makeup of its membership—diversified over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Like the story of multi-national corporations, the story of nineteenth and twentieth-century missionary societies is the struggle between the centralization and decentralization of power. The church’s evolution, in many ways, mirrored the transformations of a multi-national corporation in the twentieth century. Like firms, the church too responded to and reacted to broader political, social, and economic changes. For example, the fate of the missions depended on the financial strength of the home country; when its capital dried up, the missions could not survive.

Yet the Church was not a corporation. The single unifying goal of corporations like Apple or General Motors is the maximization of profit, by making the largest number of products at the lowest and most efficient cost. Profit margins are calculable; the bottom line, quantifiable. Eternal salvation, on the other hand, has no price tag: “for what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”⁷⁵ While all mission societies had a single and common goal of fulfilling Christ’s Great Commission,⁷⁶ interpretations and understanding of that Commission were plural and diverse, at times contradictory. The markers of the “disciples” that the missionaries were supposed to make, or those even of a good missionary, were contested. As the theologian Andrew Walls has pointed out, the fundamental tensions between the universalism of the Christian message and the particular context in which that message is generated has been present within Christianity, as they lay within the Gospels themselves.⁷⁷ These tensions surfaced constantly within the mission fields of China.

The “economic” analogy also stops working precisely when our story gets most interesting. In many ways, the individuals in my story were not economically “rational” actors. The European missionaries chose to move to a foreign place at great individual sacrifice; Chinese Christians risked the scorn and distrust of their friends and fellow villagers, as well as the disapproval of their family members. Thus, the question at the heart of this work concerns how religion responds to a modern, globalizing, rapidly changing world. It tells the stories of individuals and institutions who drew upon their faith to understand the dislocation and disruption that characterized so much of the world from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. It examines how certain religious ideas and structures remained tenaciously entrenched even in the midst of dramatic worldwide shifts, as well as how other beliefs disappeared. Ultimately, I am interested in asking: how do members of an institution who proclaim universal, eternal truths—including the claim of

Development and Global Change (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 12.

⁷⁵ Mark 8:36

⁷⁶ Matthew 28: 19

⁷⁷ Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 7.

serving an immutable God—deal with change in the world, as well as change within the institution itself?

The answers that German missionaries and Chinese Christians formulated in response to these dramatic changes—and the questions that they further posed—I argue, reflect the problem and paradoxes of modernity. Of course, modernity is a term surrounded by analytical and conceptual muddiness; as Webb Keane writes, “Modernity is certainly in danger of meaning everything and nothing.”⁷⁸ Despite the difficulty in pinpointing a precise definition of the term, Keane posits one undisputed claim: “Across the ethnographic spectrum, the idea of the modern is crucial to people’s historical self-understanding. It is part of both elite and popular discourses, imaginings, and desires [. . .]. The idea of the modern has become a ubiquitous social fact.”⁷⁹ Keane argues that evangelizing religions, and by extension, the missionary encounter, acted as crucial motors in fostering and circulating ideas about modernity.⁸⁰

For Keane, the missionary encounter promoted these concepts through what he calls “moral narratives of modernity.” Keane notes that these narratives are multifaceted and heterogeneous, yet he locates several common threads:

Briefly, in this narrative, progress is not only a matter of improvements in technology, economic well-being, or health but is also, and perhaps above all, about human emancipation and self-mastery. If in the past, humans were in thrall to illegitimate rulers, rigid traditions, and unreal fetishes, as they become modern they realize the true character of human agency. Conversely, those who seem to persist in displacing their own agency onto such rulers, traditions, or fetishes are out of step with the times, anachronistic premoderns or antimoderns.⁸¹

For the German missionaries and Chinese Christians in this dissertation, globalization and indigenization were competing and complementary “moral narratives of modernity.” German missionaries argued that the Chinese could be liberated from the shackles of their traditional societies by joining their global religion. The Chinese countered by proposing that their indigenized form of Christianity could emancipate European Christianity from the bondages of Western imperialism. Through these dialogues, German missionaries and Chinese Christians proceeded to define the boundaries of Christianity, at time expanding while other times shrinking the contours of who could be considered a Christian.

The missionary encounter thus pushed German missionaries and Chinese Christians to ask “modern” questions. Again, I draw upon Webb Keane, who writes that becoming a modern subject entailed asking questions such as, “What does it take to be modern? What

⁷⁸ Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 47.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 42-43. For more on the relation between missionaries and modern subjectivity, see Peter van der Veer, *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 1996); J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

⁸¹ Keane, *Christian Moderns*, 6.

are its promises and its threats? Who is included or excluded? Are we there yet?”⁸² German missionaries and Chinese Christians asked similar questions. They asked, “What does it take to be Christian? What are Christianity’s promises and its threats? Who is included or excluded? Are we Christian yet?”

In both cases, German missionaries and Chinese drew upon their religious belief to justify their political actions. Thus, faith — and its discontents — is the thread that runs throughout the whole dissertation. I study how people held on to their faith, how they altered it, and how they relied it during times of immense trial and tribulation. In contrast to other studies on globalization, the stories that I try to tell are not those of grand, impersonal, invisible market forces, but those of a deeply personal, local, and human nature. I hope to understand how individuals and institutions *experienced* the dislocation and confusion of the modern, global world, how they responded to it with their faith, and in turn, transformed world around them. This dissertation posits that German missionaries and Chinese Christians helped make a new world by their actions; in the process of their conversations, they themselves became modern.

⁸². Ibid., 48.

Part I.
Nineteenth-century Context and Ideas

Chapter 1.

Ernst Faber and the Consequences of Failure

Introduction

The year before his death in 1898, the German missionary Ernst Faber reflected on his forty-year career in China. His account of the early missions work was suffused with a tone of disappointment. He wrote openly about his difficulties in adjusting to the climate and environment of southern China, the diminutive numbers of converts to Christianity, his frustrations with learning Mandarin and the local Guangdong dialects, and the overwhelming loneliness that he felt working in rural parishes.¹

Yet upon his death, Faber was regarded by his missionary colleagues as one of the most important Western missionaries working in China. His obituary in the *Chinese Recorder*, the most widely read missionary journal in China, hailed Faber as “one of the very highest authorities in regard to the history, literature and religions of China.”² Gustav Warneck, the founder of Protestant missiology (*Missionswissenschaft*) in Germany, called Faber “the most important missionary of Chinese affairs, who grasped the central problems of mission work with a steady and brilliant hand.”³

Considered by his peers as one of the most influential missionaries in China, Faber described his own work in terms of failure. He lived a life that was simultaneously provincial and cosmopolitan, national and international, particular and universal. The nineteenth-century world that Faber navigated was filled with seeming contradictions. His original aspiration had been to become a provincial blacksmith, but he ended up spending the most productive years of his life in cosmopolitan Shanghai.

¹ Ernst Faber, *Theorie und Praxis eines protestantischen Missionars in China* (Heidelberg: Evangelischer Verlag, 1910), 21-23.

² “In Memoriam. Dr. E. Faber,” *Chinese Recorder* 30 (Dec 1899), 581.

³ Gustav Warneck, “D. Ernst Faber. In memoriam,” *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift. Monatshefte für geschichtliche und theoretische Missionskunde* 27 (1900), 155.



Figure 1: Ernst Faber in 1898. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

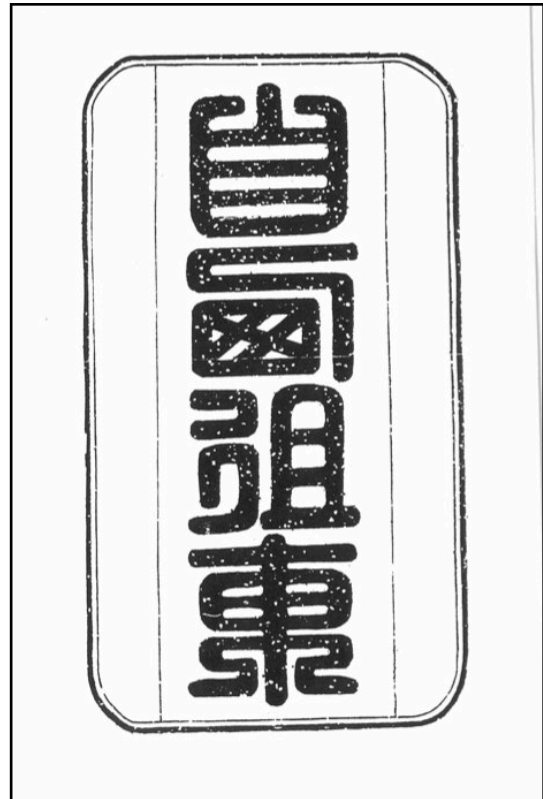
Educated in a conservative Protestant milieu, Faber later broke with the Pietist establishment, earning the bulk of his recognition from the literary work that he produced for the liberal General Evangelical Protestant Missionary Society (*Allgemeine evangelisch-protestantische Missionsverein*). When he left for China in 1864, Germany was not yet a unified state, and he was embedded in an international missionary community filled with British and Americans. By the time he entered Jiaozhou in 1897, however, he was traveling under the banner of the German *Reich*. He preached a message that he considered universal and eternal, but struggled with translating that message into languages—Mandarin, Cantonese, and Hakka—that lacked the vocabulary to express those truths precisely.

Compared to other famous German missionaries, such as his predecessor Karl Gützlaff or his successor Richard Wilhelm, Ernst Faber has been neglected in the historiographical literature. This is due, in part, to the difficulty of placing Faber in familiar historical narratives. His career does not conform to the “missionary going native” model celebrated in studies of Gützlaff and Wilhelm.⁴ Unlike Wilhelm and Gützlaff, both of

⁴ I am indebted to James Brophy to alerting me to this phrase. For an example of such a biography of Gützlaff, see Jessie G. Lutz, *Opening China: Karl F.A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2008). For such an account of Richard Wilhelm, see the chapter on “Orientalists and ‘Others,’” in Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

whom donned Chinese attire and professed a love for Chinese traditions, Faber never embraced Chinese culture, and until his death continued to yearn for the eventual triumph of Christianity over Confucianism. His work has also remained largely inaccessible to a Western audience: while he wrote tracts and pamphlets in English and German, his *magnum opus*, *Civilization, Chinese and Christian* (Figure 2), was published in classical Chinese.

Figure 2: Cover page of Faber's *Civilization, Chinese and Christian*.



The purpose of this chapter is not only to recover a neglected figure, but also to use Ernst Faber's experience as a lens through which to view the myriad tensions and contradictions that characterized German missionary work in the second half of the nineteenth century. Faber's missionary career highlights the transformations in the German missionary community, as well as in its work in China. Faber stood at the center of a vigorous theological debate between liberal and Protestant missionary communities in Germany. His career, sandwiched between two of the greatest religious uprisings in modern Chinese history, the Taiping Rebellion of 1864 and the Boxer Uprising in 1900, also occurred, not accidentally, during one of the most fertile and formative periods of the expansion of Christian missions in China.

Despite entering China during a period of Protestant expansion, Faber perceived his initial encounter with China as a personal failure. In this chapter, I argue that Faber's early experiences with failure, rooted deeply in his own distaste for Chinese culture, forced him to re-calibrate and alter his approach to missions. Failure, or more precisely, perceptions of failure, brought about change. Beginning his career as a street evangelist and church builder, Faber switched tactics mid-career, instead devoting his attention to a scholarly engagement

with Confucianism. He was not alone: many of his contemporary missionaries, such as James Legge, Young J. Allen, and John Nevius, also saw their early efforts at direct missionary conversion as a failed endeavor and re-oriented their work as a response. By focusing on how Faber adapted his missionary tactics in response to his own perception of overwhelming failure, I join a growing literature in the historiography of Christian missions that focuses on how missionaries themselves were transformed by their encounters in the mission field, rather than examining solely how missionaries transformed the lands that they tried to convert.⁵

Faber's adaptations were informed not only by the frustration of working as a missionary in China, but also by what he saw as a failure among Western Protestants to provide a united missionary front in Germany. Compared with theologians and missionary leaders at home, entrenched in theological and denominational disputes, Faber was flexible and willing to engage in cross-denominational cooperation in China—not the least because his work depended on the assistance of other denominations, often from other countries. Thus, while Faber began his career trained and employed by the Pietist Rhenish Missionary Society, he eventually broke with the pietists, instead becoming employed by the liberal *Allgemeine evangelische Protestantische Missionsverein*. By the end of his life, he yearned for a more diverse, “ecumenical” approach to mission work, rather than the narrow confessional and national outlook that continued to divide the mission enterprise in Germany.

Yet, Faber's career also demonstrates the limits to such openness. Faber continued to dismiss Confucianism. His writings about China remained polemical. To the end of his life, he embodied the aggressive, chauvinistic Protestant missionary movement of the mid-nineteenth century, convinced of Christianity and Europe's unmatched superiority. Faber's recalcitrance thus helps us to examine the contours of the concept of “transnationalism.” As Patricia Clavin reminds us, transnationalism “is first and foremost about people: the social space that they inhabit, the networks they form and the ideas they exchange.”⁶ Faber peregrinations brings into sharper focus the transnational networks and communities that existed among the Western powers in China in the nineteenth century—as well as what they did not include.

Thus Faber's career also challenges the triumphalist assumptions often underlying transnational narratives. Works on transnational history, Clavin argues, tend to focus on the “consistently progressive and cooperative” character of exchange, leading to a “teleological history of globalization in which modern societies grow increasingly enmeshed.”⁷ Stories of “repulsion, rather than attraction” have not been emphasized in the literature.⁸ But Faber's story illuminates how deep-rooted this epistemological repulsion remained throughout the nineteenth century: even decades of living in China and the cosmopolitan space of

⁵ Works such as Brian Stanley and Alaine M. Low, eds., *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of Empire* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2003); Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002); J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) show the dialogic relationship between foreign cultures and missionary leaders at home.

⁶ Patricia Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism,” *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 04 (2005 Nov 15), 422.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 424.

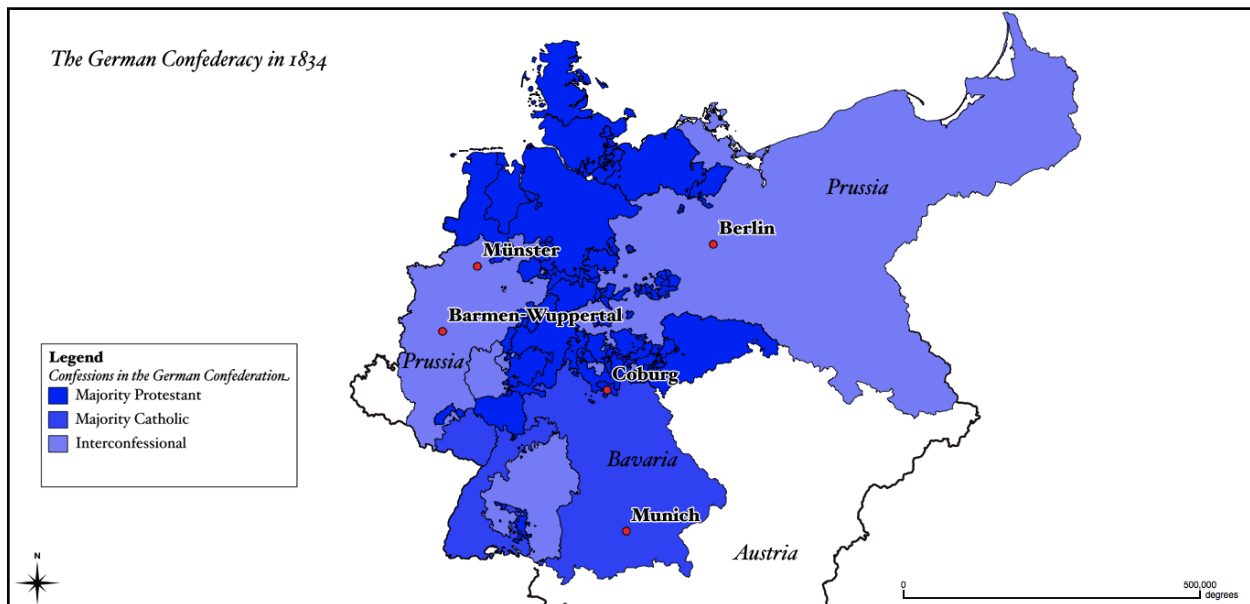
⁸ *Ibid.*

Shanghai, of a deep engagement with the Confucian classics and the Chinese language, as well as a commitment to ecumenical cooperation, could not eradicate his fundamental contempt for China.

Provincial Beginnings

Ernst Faber's early provincial upbringing contained few hints that would foreshadow his eventual cosmopolitan life. He was born on the 25th of April, 1839, in Coburg, a Saxon town about 100 kilometers north of Nuremberg. Coburg was predominantly Protestant, with a population of about 10,000 in 1843. As early as 1530, when Martin Luther spent six months in the Coburg Fortress and continued his translation of the Bible, Coburg boasted a tradition of being a bastion of Protestantism in a largely Catholic surrounding.

Faber was born into a pious Protestant family, and his mother instilled in him a "wonderful fear of God."⁹ He was the third of eight children. His father, once an affluent tinsmith, fell on hard times, and the younger Faber spent his childhood in a state of near poverty.¹⁰ Though a good student in his youth, Faber was forced to follow his father's footsteps due to his family's financial difficulties. From the ages of eleven to thirteen, he apprenticed to become a blacksmith. After finishing his apprenticeship at sixteen, Faber wandered throughout the German lands, traveling through Saxony, Silesia, and Berlin. The loneliness and hardship during his travels would remain with him for the rest of his life.¹¹



Map 1: Ernst Faber's world. The German Confederation in 1834. Data courtesy of German Historical Sources.

Faber ended up in Münster, which marked a turning point in his life. Münster was a predominantly Catholic city, and his fellow journeymen would often tease him as a

⁹ Rainer Axmann, "Lebensabriss des E. Faber," *Jahrbuch der Coburger Landesstiftung* 34 (1989), 395.

¹⁰ Ibid., 398.

¹¹ Ibid., 397.

“heretic.”¹² Feeling ostracized, Faber joined a Protestant youth group, where he found the “peace in his soul that [he] had so long been seeking.”¹³ He became good friends with a fellow member of the youth group who had decided to become a missionary.¹⁴ In 1858, they traveled to Barmen together, hoping to join the missionary seminar of the Rhenish Missionary Society (*Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft*). After a year of preparatory courses, Faber passed the entrance examinations and became a seminary student of the Rhenish Mission.

Founded in 1828, the Rhenish Mission drew inspiration from a pan-European wave of missionary enthusiasm, following the founding of the London Missionary Society in 1794.¹⁵ The London Missionary Society reflected an incipient trend in the religious landscape of Europe in the early nineteenth century: these Protestant missionaries hoped to transcend what they saw as the denominational divisions that wracked Protestant missionary efforts in the eighteenth century. Evangelical, inter-denominational and international, the Basel Mission Society was founded in 1815, the first German mission society that followed the London Missionary Society’s model.¹⁶ It was immensely popular. In 1821, for example, the Basel Mission Society started an annual missions festival, where missionaries reported on their experiences, filled with revivalist explications of the Bible. The popularity of mission festivals soon spread throughout the German lands.¹⁷ Missionary societies publicized their activities and achievements in their own journals and publications, informing the public of their work abroad.

Amidst this enthusiasm for foreign missions, the Rhenish Mission emerged as a combination of three smaller mission societies from the Prussian Lower Rhine provinces of Elberfeld, Barmen and Cologne.¹⁸ From its inception, the Rhenish Mission was international: the first Rhenish missionaries obtained financial and institutional support from the London Missionary Society example and were stationed in South Africa.

Yet, despite these international and cross-denominational connections, denominational and confessional differences remained. While the British missionary societies were largely informed by the evangelical and Methodist anti-slavery movements of the eighteenth century, the Rhenish Mission was a child of the Pietist movement that swept through the German lands in the early eighteenth century. Pietists in the early nineteenth century traced their roots to the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Pietism of Philipp Jacob Spener, August Hermann Francke, and Count Zinendorf’s Moravian Brethren. They were further galvanized by the massive transformations that the French and Napoleonic

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Paul Kranz, “Aus D. Ernst Faber’s Leben,” *Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft* 16 (1901), 129.

¹⁵ Eduard Kriele, *Geschichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft: Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, vol. 1 (Barmen: Missionshaus, 1928).

¹⁶ For more on the British missionary enterprise, see Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*.

¹⁷ Karl Rennstich, “Mission – Geschichte der protestantischen Mission in Deutschland,” in *Geschichte des Pietismus, Bd. 3: Der Pietismus im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert*, ed. Gustav Adolf Benrath, Martin Sallmann, and Ulrich Gäbler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 315-316. These festivals continued to be popular well into the 20th century, and the successor of the Basel Missionary society, continues to put on missionary festivals today.

¹⁸ Kriele, *Geschichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft*, 18. The Elberfelder Missionsgesellschaft was founded in 1799, while the Barmer Missionsgesellschaft was founded in 1818.

revolutions brought to the European political landscape. Pietist revivals swept through England and the German lands, as “awakened” Protestants saw the revolutionary upheaval as a sign of the apocalypse.¹⁹ Inspired by this awakening, a wave of Protestant missionary societies were founded on Pietist principles in the 1820s, including the Rhenish Mission.²⁰

Witnessing the crumbling of the old order throughout the German lands, German Pietists adopted an anti-Enlightenment stance that stressed personal devotion and spirituality, in hopes that a return to personal piety would hasten the coming of God’s divine order on earth.²¹ Pietists upheld the Bible as the foundation of a religious and moral outlook on life, and viewed a literal and strict interpretation of biblical truth as a means of combatting the challenges of Enlightenment rationalism. The revival of Pietist ideals was an attempt to redeploy and re-strengthen Protestant Christian values as they came under attack from Enlightenment reformers and skeptics. Thus, while British missionaries brokered agreements with some Enlightenment ideals due to alliances in the British anti-slavery movement, German Pietists remained vehemently anti-Enlightenment.

Friedrich Fabri (Figure 3), who was appointed the director of the Rhenish Missions in 1857, was a product of this Pietist milieu. Under Fabri’s direction, the Rhenish Missions gained prominence within the landscape of missionary societies.²² The Revolutions of 1848 shaped Fabri’s theological, social, and political outlook. Fabri viewed 1848 as the greatest crisis in Christendom since the Reformation, and saw the rising “social question” as one of the most important problems that theologians had to face.²³ The upheaval and unrest of 1848 was at its core a moral and religious abnegation of Europe’s Christian past, Fabri believed, this social fragmentation could only be cured by promoting the “power of the Gospel.”²⁴

While he despaired over the political crises of 1848, Fabri had faith in the restorative power of foreign missions. In his 1859 book, *The Origins of Heathenism and the Duties of Missions to the Heathens*, (*Die Entstehung des Heidenthums und die Aufgabe der Heidenmission*) Fabri wrote that through the “catastrophe of Babel,” and humankind’s hubris, humanity was divided into multiple races, nationalities, and languages.²⁵ The goal of foreign missions was

¹⁹ Pietism is a much debated and difficult concept to define, and the continuities between 17th and 19th century Pietism has been widely discussed. The best overview of Pietism is the four volume *Geschichte des Pietismus*. For the 19th and 20th century, see volumes 3 and 4, Martin Brecht, Martin Sallmann, Gustav Adolf Benrath, and Ulrich Gäbler, eds., *Geschichte des Pietismus. Bd 3: Der Pietismus im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Hartmut Lehmann, ed., *Geschichte des Pietismus. Band 4: Glaubenswelt und Lebenswelten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

²⁰ The three largest missionary societies formed in the 1820s were the Berlin Missionary Society, the Rhenish Missionary Society based in Barmen, and the Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft based in Bremen.

²¹ Hartmut Lehmann, “Die neue Lage,” in *Geschichte des Pietismus, Bd. 3: Der Pietismus im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert*, ed. Martin Brecht, Martin Sallmann, Gustav Adolf Benrath, and Ulrich Gäbler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 7-8.

²² The best book on Fabri is Klaus J. Bade, *Friedrich Fabri und der Imperialismus in der Bismarckzeit: Revolution, Depression, Expansion*. (Freiburg i. Br.: Atlantis-Verl., 1975.).

²³ Ibid., 34-35.

²⁴ Ibid., 46-47.

²⁵ Friedrich Fabri, *Die Entstehung des Heidenthums und die Aufgabe der Heidenmission* (Barmen: Langewiesche’s Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1859), 51-53.

to “end heathenism,” which would bring about world peace, as people would be reunited under the “wonderful humility” of God.²⁶ Like other influential Pietists, Fabri saw the nineteenth century as a new phase of missionary work that would witness the spread of Christianity throughout the whole world and would hasten the Second Coming.²⁷ Missionary work would also counter the spread of revolutionary ideas elsewhere: the democratic ideas of the French Revolution, socialism, and individual egotism would be conquered by the work of God through foreign missions.²⁸

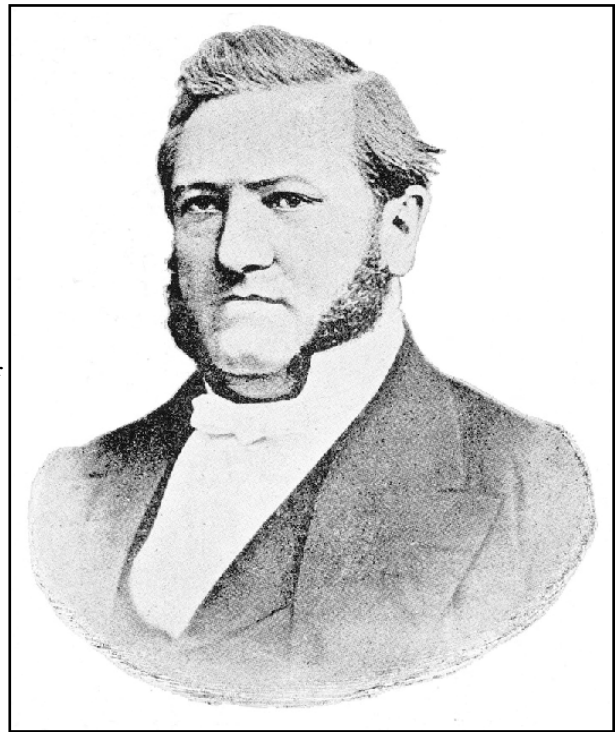


Figure 3: Friedrich Fabri. Painting courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

In 1857, Fabri solidified the missionary curriculum and raised funds for the establishment of new buildings and classrooms.²⁹ He strengthened the Rhenish Mission’s relationships with local and international youth groups, and his energy and charisma attracted young men, not only from the German lands, but also from England, Greece, North America, and even Russia.³⁰ Amidst Fabri’s ambitious expansion of the Rhenish Mission’s work, Ernst Faber entered the society in 1858. Faber quickly became Fabri’s “favorite student” (*Lieblingsschüler*), and Faber considered Fabri a surrogate father.³¹

Finishing his courses at the Rhenish Mission Seminary in four years, Faber furthered his studies in Basel. Afterwards he spent two semesters studying at the University of

²⁶ Ibid., 52-58.

²⁷ Ibid., 77-79.

²⁸ Ibid., III.

²⁹ Kriele, *Geschichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft*, 173-186.

³⁰ Ibid., 185.

³¹ Ibid., 261.

Tubingen.³² In March of 1864, the Rhenish Missions decided to send him to China. Before his journey to China, Faber spent a summer learning natural sciences at the Zoological Museum in Berlin and geology at the Geographical Institute in Gotha.³³ On the 14th of August 1864, he was officially ordained as a missionary. Within a month, a British ship, the “Arab Steed,” headed for China, with Faber as a passenger.

Faber’s familial background typified the mid-19th century Pietist missionary. The missionary seminar allowed lower-class youths a chance at upward mobility, an opportunity to leave their provincial homes and encounter the wider world. But it also put them in harm’s way. The trip to China was perilous. Accounts of accidents, sickness, and fear of impending doom filled Faber’s travel diaries.³⁴

The patchwork nature of the missionary’s training in the 19th century emerges from accounts of Faber’s early career. The missionary was not a specialist: he was expected to engage in a multitude of disciplines, ranging from zoology to theology. Faber would even learn English and receive a rudimentary training in the medicine on the steamship trip.³⁵ What was missing from this variegated training, however, was even a basic introduction to the language and customs of the Chinese. Missionaries were scarcely equipped with the requisite preparation to engage with Chinese society before their trip. What drove them were the grand promises of Pietism: internal, social, and political transformation of the Chinese through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Becoming a China Missionary

Faber traveled to China during a time of momentous expansion for the Protestant missionary enterprise. The first Protestant missionary, Robert Morrison, had entered China only half a century earlier, in 1807. The initial decades of Protestant missionary work grew slowly, as the Qing empire restricted the missionaries to Canton and Portuguese Macao.³⁶ The area of missionary work expanded after the first Opium War to the five treaty ports of Canton, Shanghai, Fuzhou, Amoy, and Ningbo. Further edicts in 1844 and 1846 provided more toleration to Chinese Christians.³⁷

The truly revolutionary expansion of missionary work came with the Sino-French agreements of 1858 and 1860 in the wake of the second Opium War. These treaties allowed Catholic and Protestant missionaries to preach freely throughout the Chinese empire. Chinese Christians were also guaranteed the right to practice Christianity without being punished.³⁸ Thus the “unequal treaties” lay the foundation for the “unprecedented growth”

³² Axmann, “Lebensabriss des E. Faber,” 397-398.

³³ Ibid., 398.

³⁴ To read the trip recounted in almost daily detail, see Ernst Faber, “Aus Br. Faber’s Reise-Tagebuch,” *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* (1866): 163-176.

³⁵ The British ship traveled through London and Holland, and on the way Faber improved his English and helped train a captain who “barely understood medicine.” Idem, *Theorie und Praxis*, 21.

³⁶ Paul Cohen, “Christian Missions and their Impact to 1900,” in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 10: Late Ch’ing 1800-1911, Part 1*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 548.

³⁷ Ibid., 550.

³⁸ Ibid., 552-553.

within the missionary movement after the 1860s. As Paul Cohen has noted, between 1864 and 1874, the number of Protestant missionaries almost quadrupled, from 189 to 436. By 1905, that number leapt to 3,445, an almost nine-fold increase.³⁹ Faber traveled to China amidst the first wave of this excitement for the opening of China and the dreams of converting this vast land to Christianity.

The mid-nineteenth century German Protestant enthusiasm for missions in China can be traced to the work of Karl Gützlaff (Figure 4). Gützlaff was educated at Johann Jänicke's missionary seminary in Berlin (the precursor to the Berlin Missionary Society), and entered China as an independent interpreter in the 1830s. Gützlaff argued that Christianity in China needed to rely on native, rather than foreign missionary work; he wrote that in order for China to ever become Christian, it needed to be converted by the Chinese.⁴⁰ Gützlaff founded the Chinese Union, an organization that drew heavily upon indigenous Chinese preachers and other Chinese Christian workers.



Figure 4: Karl Gützlaff. Painting Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

But in order to expand, the missionary enterprise still needed foreign missionaries to train the native clergy. Gützlaff traveled throughout Europe and England, trying to drum up financial support and attract new personnel. His tours sparked a “China fever” among the German lands in the early 1850s. He was received by the king and queen of Prussia, and his travels throughout Europe were advertised in major newspapers. As a result of his European

³⁹ Ibid., 555.

⁴⁰ Jessie G. Lutz and Rolland Ray Lutz, “Karl Gützlaff’s Approach to Indigenization: The Chinese Union,” in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 270-271.

tour, hundreds of support societies formed, and not only in the German lands. Money flowed to the Chinese Union.⁴¹

Gützlaff, noting that German missionary societies lagged behind their English and American counterparts in their presence China, encouraged Germans to start sending missionaries to China.⁴² Previously focusing solely on Africa, the Basel and Rhenish Missionary Societies decided to send men to China, persuaded by Gützlaff's exhortations. In 1847, the Rhenish Missionary leadership sent two missionaries, Ferdinand Genähr and Heinrich Köster, to China.⁴³ The two landed in Hong Kong, and spent their careers in Canton, establishing the Rhenish mission's work.⁴⁴ The Rhenish Mission Society's early efforts in China were modeled after Gützlaff's Chinese Union. The Chinese Union orived a failure, however, as many of Gutzlaff's trusted Chinese assistants turned out to be "unscrupulous characters" who "spent their expense money on opium."⁴⁵

Despite Gützlaff's early failures, Western missionary societies intensified their penetration into China. This period of rapid expansion triggered a rise of anti-Christian sentiment among Chinese elites. As Paul Cohen has noted, elite hostility towards Christianity increased in the 1860s, when the Chinese anger at the Taiping Rebellion, Western gunboat diplomacy, missionary interference in local and provincial affairs, joined a longer tradition of anti-Christian thought in China.⁴⁶ The 1860s saw a "growing torrent of violently anti-Christian pamphlets and tracts," followed by anti-Christian violence, which spread throughout China after the 1860s.⁴⁷ Local Chinese gentry and low-level officials rejected Christianity, often promoting violence, which ended in the 1860s with several dramatic and highly-publicized missionary murders.⁴⁸ Christianity posed myriad political, social, and ideological challenges to the power structures of the local Confucian elite, and Confucian intellectuals fought back. Anti-Christian sentiments did not subside, and found its most lethal iteration in the Boxer Uprising of 1900.⁴⁹ Faber experienced this anti-foreign sentiment almost immediately upon his arrival. While he was in Hong Kong, inspecting some of the local schools, Faber walked by a field, where some twenty to thirty Chinese men were working. Once the workers saw him, they started yelling, "Kill the foreigner, kill the foreign devil."⁵⁰

⁴¹ Ibid., 274.

⁴² Ibid., 272.

⁴³ Lutz, *Opening China*, 295-296. See also Kriele, *Geschichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft*, 95.

⁴⁴ Kriele, *Geschichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft*, 95-97.

⁴⁵ Cohen, "Christian Missions and their Impact," 551.

⁴⁶ Idem, "The Anti-Christian Tradition in China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 20, no. 2 (1961), 169-170.

⁴⁷ Idem, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 45.

⁴⁸ For a detailed account of both official and gentry anti-Christianity, see Cohen, *China and Christianity*, especially chapters 3 and 4.

⁴⁹ The best account of the Boxers is Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). See also Paul Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). and Lanxin Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War: A Multinational Study* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

⁵⁰ Ernst Faber, "Das Losan Gebirge," *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* (1866), 249.

After a short stay in Hong Kong, Faber spent a summer in Canton before occupying his first major inland missionary station in Humen (虎門). The southern China that Faber first encountered had just witnessed the Taiping Rebellion, which Frederic Wakeman has called “the world’s most disastrous civil war,” one that “cost China somewhere between ten and twenty million souls.”⁵¹ The Taiping Rebellion exacerbated existing tensions among the diverse landscape of people who inhabited the region—the Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien, Chaozhou, and Mandarin.⁵² In the wake of the Taiping Rebellion, conflict between the migrant Hakka and local Cantonese erupted: this “forgotten war” left more than a million dead.⁵³

Encountering such difficult conditions, Faber’s early reports to the Rhenish Missions described his frustration with unfettered gloom. His missionary reports were so negative that the editors offered a disclaimer to their readers, stating that even though Faber’s reports were of a “critical nature,” they stemmed from a desire to see the missionary movement grow in China, and one could learn from “mistakes” and find a better way to move forward.⁵⁴ Faber’s complaints ranged from the unbearable summer heat and the “downright uncomfortable living conditions”⁵⁵ to the “dirty” and “terrible” Chinese air, water, and streets.⁵⁶ The inland missionary station that he found in Humen was in “bad shape”—almost nobody attended services.⁵⁷ At most there two to three people sat in the pews. There were only eight students in the missionary school that the Rhenish Mission founded, no baptized Christians, nor any catechumens.⁵⁸ Faber felt especially dejected in his first week in Humen, as he sat in an empty chapel attempting to understand his Chinese assistants preach.⁵⁹ Depression and loneliness continued to pervade his reports for the first several years; he remained the only European in the larger area for eight years.

His primary human contact, other than occasional visits to Hong Kong, were his Chinese Christian “assistants” (*Gehilfen*), who introduced Faber to every single facet of

⁵¹ Frederic E. Wakeman, *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1839-1861* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 3. For more on the Taiping Rebellion, see the new book by Stephen R. Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012). Other than Wakeman’s *Strangers at the Gate*, classic works include Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970) and Jonathan Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (London: HarperCollins, 1996).

⁵² To get a sense of the diverse landscape in Canton, see Nicole Constable, *Christian Souls and Chinese Spirits: A Hakka Community in Hong Kong* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁵³ For more on this “forgotten war,” see Liu Ping 劉平, *Bei yiwang di zhanzheng: Xianfeng Tongzhi nianjian Guangdong tute da xie dou yanjiu* 被遺忘的戰爭: 咸豐同治年間廣東土客大械鬥研究 [The Forgotten War: The Hakka-Cantonese War in Guangdong During the Reign of Xianfeng and Tongzhi] (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2003).

⁵⁴ Ernst Faber, “Aus China,” *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* (September 1867), 257.

⁵⁵ Idem, *Theorie und Praxis*, 21.

⁵⁶ Idem, “Das Losan Gebirge,” 247.

⁵⁷ Idem, “Erfreulicher Bericht über Fumun-Tschei,” *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* (1866), 259. Faber reported his “pleasant” news that he had made progress in his understanding of Chinese and saw the interest in Christianity grow as a result of their work.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 260.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Chinese society. Faber spent four hours each day in language instruction, learning Mandarin, Hakka, and Cantonese.⁶⁰ The Chinese Christian assistants also exposed him to the Chinese classics, teaching him the Confucian canon. For his first several of years, Faber depended on the Chinese for street evangelism. In particular, he relied on the Wang family, an important local Chinese Christian family converted by Gützlaff. By the time he met Faber, the patriarch of the family had been an evangelist for over thirty years. The eldest son of the family, Wang Qianru, (王謙如) became Faber's close collaborator, eventually becoming the first Chinese pastor ordained by the Rhenish Mission.⁶¹ Despite these close personal relations, Faber expressed reservations about the family. "Old Wang," Faber wrote, was not a "polished" speaker, but he "knew enough and had experienced enough of Christianity to be able to present its truths."⁶² Even though Wang Qianru was more charismatic than his father, the younger Wang was still "weak in Christian experience."⁶³

Feeling unconfident in the language, Faber chose not to preach in Chinese. "The Chinese are scoffers by nature," he explained, and "even though some would find my preaching interesting, they would find amusement in my blunders of speech."⁶⁴ He argued that it would be difficult for foreigners to spread the Gospel through preaching, due to their limited grasp of Chinese. Instead, Faber turned to medical missionary work. The missionary station handled between four and six hundred cases a year, with sicknesses ranging from skin diseases to diarrhea, and he performed surgeries on eyes and teeth. Faber and his Chinese assistants used the medical visit as an opportunity to evangelize.⁶⁵ They also made house visits, which they also combined with an opportunity to spread the Gospel. Due to the trust that the medical missions established in Humen, church attendance and school registrations saw an increase in numbers within the first two years of his missionary work, and Faber saw this as a positive sign.⁶⁶

But this early optimism soon faded, as the amount of medical work became overwhelming, and the mission station remained understaffed. Despite all the effort that he invested, Faber felt that medicine as a means of evangelizing was ultimately a failure. "Maybe only one person in a thousand would convert to Christianity" as a result of his medical work, he conceded.⁶⁷ Faber's early years show the improvisatory and haphazard nature of the mid-19th century missionary enterprise in China. Trained primarily as a geologist and botanist, he had never officially learned medicine, and he readily admitted that he had made mistakes as a medical missionary.⁶⁸

Having failed at medical missionary work, Faber turned to print as his next venture. Faber's first major publication in Chinese, *Sermons on the Book of Mark* (馬可講義), provides

⁶⁰. Ibid., 264.

⁶¹. For Faber's own recollections and descriptions of the Wang Family, see Ernst Faber, *Bilder aus China* (Barmen: Verl. des Missionshauses, 1877), 47-48.

⁶². Idem, "Aus China (September 1867)," 267.

⁶³. Ibid.

⁶⁴. Ibid., 266.

⁶⁵. Ibid., 260.

⁶⁶. Faber, "Erfreulicher Bericht," 260-262.

⁶⁷. Idem, *Theorie und Praxis*, 21.

⁶⁸. Ibid.

insight into the collaborative process between the missionary and the local Chinese Christians. Starting in 1867, one of his Chinese assistants transcribed into the local Hakka dialect the various sermons that Faber gave on the book of Mark. After collecting more than about seven years worth of material, Wang Qianru helped to translate the sermons from Hakka into classical Chinese. The book was thus a joint effort between Faber and his Chinese Christian assistants, including Wang, Chen Dexun (陳德勳) and Chen Xiaoxin (陳效新).⁶⁹

The book reflects Faber's Pietist approach. The sermons emphasized a close reading of the Bible, familiarity with the Bible's central themes, and the centrality of preaching to the success of missions.⁷⁰ The book provided an exegesis of Mark, but also served as a manual for Chinese Christian preachers. It instructed Chinese preachers on how they should engage their audiences, doling out advice such as "when preaching, one should not use foul language, lest one lose the dignity of the message."⁷¹ Tips for how to debate with learned Confucian scholars were also included:

Debate is like two armies preparing for battle, one must know the enemy's canon as well as one's own, and thus when debating Confucian scholars, even though you need to defend the principles of the Bible, you can use the Confucian canon to also convince them of their follies.⁷²

Despite Faber's heavy reliance on his Chinese assistants, he nonetheless wrote openly about his distrust of Chinese national character. He felt that the young Chinese who entered the mission schools still "always placed Confucius above the Bible."⁷³ They were still far from "losing their love of the national sage." In order to win the Chinese over, missionaries needed to engage the Chinese in their own language if they were to convince them of the falseness of Chinese thought and superiority of Christianity.⁷⁴ The missionaries, Faber argued, needed to insulate the Chinese from any non-Christian influences. To prevent the young Chinese from being tempted by the knowledge offered by the Confucian classics, the missionaries should only teach the Bible and Western knowledge in missionary schools and refrain from teaching the Chinese canon. Faber wrote, "[C]osmopolitanism is not the beginning, rather it is the end of one's development."⁷⁵

Faced with a paltry number of Christians in his pews, Faber realized that he needed to reconceive his tactics. It was necessary, he charged, for missionaries to learn to read Chinese in order to "attack the old system" of Confucian learning.⁷⁶ He thus turned his own focus to studying the Chinese classics. Other than relying on his Chinese Christian tutors,

⁶⁹ Ernst Faber, "Ma ke jiangyi," in *Dongchuan Fuying, di shisan ce*. 東傳福音, 第十三冊, 中國宗教歷史文獻集成 (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2005), 100. For more on Wang Qianru, see R. G. Tiedemann, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume 2, 1800 to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 256.

⁷⁰ Faber, "Ma ke jiangyi," 100.

⁷¹ Ibid., 102.

⁷² Ibid., 103.

⁷³ Ernst Faber, "Aus China," *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* (October, 1867), 294.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 295.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ernst Faber, "Das Studium des Chinesischen," *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* (April 1869), 109.

he turned towards the classical Chinese translations of James Legge, comparing them with the original text themselves.⁷⁷ Stimulated by this encounter with the Confucian classics, Faber began to argue for reform in missionary training. In one of his reports to the Rhenish Missions in 1869, he criticized the poor training that missionaries received before arriving in China. Faber admitted that prior to entering China, he had never planned to dedicate his time to writing and reading the Chinese classics. He came to China under the assumption that he would spend most of his time preaching, and thus had spent most the first several years in China learning the local dialect. Yet the influence of educated Chinese on local politics remained so strong that he decided that he needed to learn classical Chinese in order to become a more effective missionary.⁷⁸

Faber the Literary Missionary

In order to combat Confucianism, Faber started writing and publishing more in Chinese in the early 1870s. He realized that he needed more Biblical tracts and “suitable literature for the Chinese” to distribute in his travels to the countryside.⁷⁹ He printed tracts and digests, written in Hakka and Cantonese, in order to reach members of the rural populace. Instead of giving the tracts away for free, he decided to sell them because he felt that the “Chinese would treasure them more since it had cost them something.”⁸⁰ Faber boasted that he sold more than 200,000 copies of his tracts, and that due to their popularity, the London Missionary Society’s Religious Tract Society in China asked to reprint and reissue them. Faber later estimated that half a million people in Guangdong had purchased the tracts.⁸¹

In 1870, Faber wrote a series of opinion pieces for a Chinese newspaper, comparing the Prussian educational system with the Chinese one. The editorials came to the attention of the influential missionary W. A. P. Martin, who circulated them among various Qing officials.⁸² Martin introduced Faber’s writing to Young J. Allen, who had just established in Shanghai the first missionary journal published in Chinese, *Church News* (教會新報), and Allen invited Faber to contribute.

Allen had started *Church News* in 1867 in Shanghai in hopes of engaging Chinese intellectuals, literati, and reform-oriented bureaucrats, and convincing them of the necessity of reforming the Chinese Confucian world order. *Church News* provided news reports from all around the world, and it became “the primary sources of information for Chinese interested in the West.”⁸³ In an early example of missionary self-secularization, the *Church News* changed its name to the secular *Wanguo Gongbao* (萬國公報, translated as *Chinese Globe Magazine*, and later, *A Review of the Times*). According to Adrian Bennett, they were the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 100.

⁷⁸ Warneck, “D. Ernst Faber. In memoriam,” 147.

⁷⁹ Faber, *Theorie und Praxis*, 25.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Adrian A. Bennett, *Missionary Journalist in China: Young J. Allen and His Magazines, 1860-1883* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 97.

“most important magazines of ideas published in China before the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895.”⁸⁴

Faber’s first publications in *Church News* criticized the Chinese educational system. He wrote that the West had “academies and schools of various sizes, funded by both public and private money, and increasingly the state had taken on the responsibility of educating its citizens.”⁸⁵ In “Prussia alone, men, women, poor, and rich, were all compelled to go to school from the ages of 7 to 15, and if they resisted, their parents would be punished.”⁸⁶ Thus, “there are very few illiterate men and women in Prussia.”⁸⁷ In order for China to modernize, Faber argued, it should follow the Prussian model and also institute mandatory education for its children. Faber, too, had followed the broader shift in early self-secularization, turning towards secular institutions to uncover solutions for China’s problems.

At the same time, Faber started publishing tracts and digests in English and German, introducing the Confucian tradition to his fellow missionaries and a broader German audience. Faber’s first major publication was *The Teachings of Confucius (Lehrbegriff des Confucius)*, published in 1872. It surveyed the *Lunyu*, *Daxue*, and *Zhongyong*, three of the core texts of the Confucian canon. Using a Protestant interpretation of the Chinese classics, Faber distinguished between the historical Confucius and the “Confucius who is wrapped up in the incense of sacrifices — between the doctrine which was promulgated by him and the explanations of later centuries.”⁸⁸ After a brief historical overview of the various texts that constituted the Confucian canon, Faber provided a concise introduction to what he perceived as the central ideas and tenets of Confucianism. His project was at heart comparative, as he sought to identify various concepts common to Christianity and Confucianism, such as Confucian definitions of “man,” “heaven,” and “God.”

Faber listed twenty-four “defects and errors of Confucianism.”⁸⁹ His evaluation of Confucianism was not completely negative—he prefaced his list of Confucian deficiencies with the disclaimer that there was much to admire about Confucianism, and that in certain aspects “Confucianism almost echoes the doctrines of Christian revelation.”⁹⁰ For example, Confucianism, like Christianity, believed in an afterlife, as well as transcendent moral laws that bounded all human action.

For Faber, Confucianism’s primary failure lay in its inability to articulate an understanding of the ideas fundamental to Christianity: sin, salvation, and God. Confucianism, which to Faber was a theological system, had “no relation to a living God,” it was “generally devoid of a deeper insight into sin and evil,” and it knew “no mediator, none

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ernst Faber, “Xiguo Shuyuan,” *The Church News* (教會新報) 3 (July 1, 1871), 213.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ernst Faber, *A Systematical Digest of the Doctrines of Confucius According to the Analects, Great Learning and Doctrine of the Mean*, trans. Paul Georg von Mollendorff (Hongkong: China Mail Office, 1875), 1.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 124.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

that could restore original nature in accordance with the ideal which man finds in himself.” In a Confucian worldview, “it is impossible to explain death.”⁹¹

Faber also pointed to the social problems that Confucianism encouraged, such as polygamy, a reliance on superstition, the subjugation of women as “slaves,” and the “deification of parents.”⁹² As a result, Confucianism worshipped genius and “deified man.”⁹³ Thus, Faber concluded, “Confucianism is incapable of effecting for the people a new birth to a higher life and nobler efforts, and Confucianism is now in practical life quite alloyed with Shamanistic and Buddhistic ideas and practices.”⁹⁴

Faber’s book was well received by the missionary community. In the *China Review*, E. J. Eitel, of the London Missionary Society, praised Faber as “a thorough Chinese scholar, well versed in Confucian literature, ancient and modern, a man of learning and independent thought, and a veritable book worm.”⁹⁵ Other than some minor complaints, Eitel wrote that he had “nothing but admiration and praise of this concise digest and critical view of the ethical system of Confucius.”⁹⁶ Eitel took Faber’s critiques of Confucianism one step further: “[W]e cannot discover in Confucius, in his life or teaching or writings, anything extraordinary... He was simply a Chinaman; his very weaknesses, his very errors, were characteristically Chinese.”⁹⁷ Moreover, Eitel attributed the negative traits of Chinese society to this Confucian legacy. Confucius “left the Chinese their feudal system, their concubinage, their ancestral worship, their idolatry, their superstition.” Confucius “was a great man — from a Chinese point of view. His teaching is the very essence of philosophical wisdom — to the mind of a Chinaman.”⁹⁸

Faber and Eitel’s criticism of Confucianism belonged to mainstream opinion of most Western missionaries at the time. Missionaries, for the most part, believed that China needed to make a choice between Christianity and Confucianism. James MacGowan, of the London Missionary Society, for example, asked in a popular tract:

Which shall the nation choose, Christ or Confucius? Shall it be the great sage whose chilly hand has held the nation bound for all these ages, or shall it be the Son of Man, whose heart throbs with sympathy for every human being, and whose gentle touch, the inheritance of the Church, brings hope and comfort to men today? Need we doubt what the answer will be?⁹⁹

These attacks on Confucianism and Chinese traditional culture made an impact on the Chinese readers of the *Church News*. By the 1870s, Chinese writers had adopted the Western critiques of traditional Chinese society, and they followed the missionary line of

⁹¹ Ibid., 124-125.

⁹² Ibid., 124-126.

⁹³ Ibid., 126.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 127.

⁹⁵ Ernst Johann Eitel, “Confucianism,” *China Review, or Notes and Queries on the Far East* 1, no. 4 (1873), 261.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 262.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 263-264.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 264.

⁹⁹ John MacGowan, *Christ or Confucius, which? or, The story of the Amoy Mission* (London: London Missionary Society, 1889), 208.

criticizing traditional practices of footbinding.¹⁰⁰ Chinese writers and converts advanced ideas about how to reform the Chinese educational system along the theoretical lines that Faber and his fellow missionaries advocated.

Faber's publications and writings suggest that he knew his audiences. He did not write provocative, accusatory pieces in Chinese; rather, his pieces in *Church News* contained a measured tone of clinical reason. For his Western audience, he wrote in a much more inflammatory style, seeking to mobilize support for the mission society. Faber's publications in *Church News* introduced his Chinese audience to Western secular institutions, while his writings in Western journals criticized the moral, religious, and cultural conditions of China. By 1876, he had essentially abandoned street preaching, partly due to laryngitis and damaged vocal chords, but also because of the increasing amount of attention that he devoted to his literary work.¹⁰¹

By the early 1880s, another dimension appeared in his writing: besides articulating the superiority of Christianity, he began to articulate the superiority of Western civilization. Whereas in an earlier decade, Faber used Prussia as a basis of analysis and comparison in *Church News*, Faber now talked of the "West" as a unit. He drew examples from Germany, America, England, France and Russia to illuminate his comparisons. When compared with his earlier writings in his sermons on Mark, it was clear how far Faber's preoccupations had shifted. While his sermons on Mark mainly focused on with methods of conversion, institution building, and preaching the Gospel, now he argued for the importation of Western values and culture into China as the primary means of bringing modernization.

¹⁰⁰. Adrian A. Bennett and Kwang-Ching Liu, "Christianity in the Chinese Idiom: Young J. Allen and the Early Chiao-hui hsin-pao, 1868-1870," in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 196.

¹⁰¹. Kranz, "Aus D. Ernst Faber's Leben," 131.

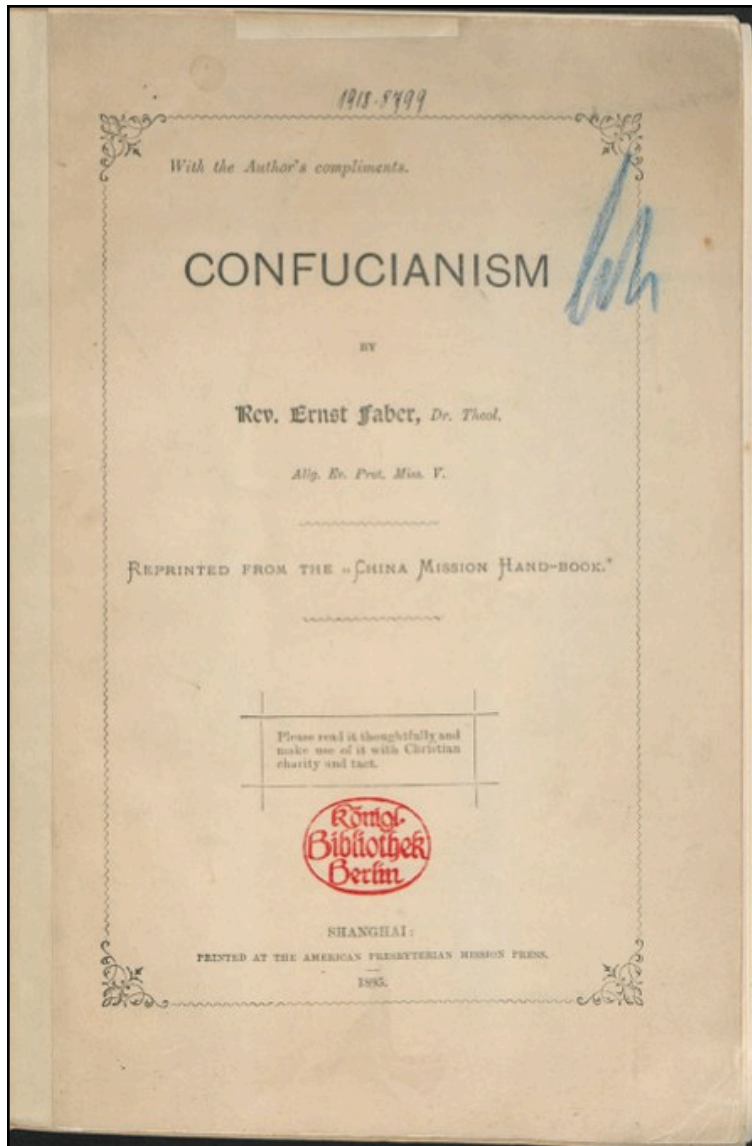


Figure 5: One of Faber's publications on Confucianism, published in 1893.

Break with Pietism and Faber's Liberal Turn

In 1880, a disagreement erupted in the Rhenish mission between Faber and Friedrich Fabri, culminating in Fabri's expelling Faber from the missionary society. The scandal began as a personal conflict between Faber and Wilhelm Hubrig, a member of the Berlin Missionary Society who had helped found the Rhenish mission's middle school in Canton. Faber and Hubrig had a long-standing conflict, mainly stemming from personality differences. When Hubrig returned to Germany after his wife's death, two younger missionaries of the Rhenish Mission took over the administration of the school at Canton. Upon Hubrig's unexpected return three years later, Faber asked Fabri to keep the school within the hands of newly minted Rhenish missionaries. In his request, Faber criticized

Hubrig's work, arguing that the new missionaries could carry out the work in a more inspiring fashion.¹⁰²

Faber's criticism of Hubrig incensed Fabri. He chastised Faber for insubordination and disrespect towards Hubrig's work as the founder of the school at Canton. Knowing that Faber and Hubrig had long-standing personal disagreements, Fabri accused Faber of orchestrating dissension among the ranks.¹⁰³ Fabri disparaged Faber for lacking "any imprint of common civil morality, justice, or fairness."¹⁰⁴ The younger missionaries in China further escalated the conflict, accusing Fabri of acting despotically, claiming that they were "not missionaries of Dr. Fabri...but of the Rhenish Mission."¹⁰⁵ In April of 1881, the Committee of the Rhenish Missions called Faber and the young missionaries "irreverent and arrogant," and found it "morally impossible" to continue its cooperation with the missionaries in China.¹⁰⁶ In addition to firing all of the China missionaries, the Committee decided to abandon its work in Canton, turning over the mission stations to the BMS.¹⁰⁷ The Rhenish Mission would never again have a major missionary presence in China. The fallout between Faber and the Rhenish Mission Society epitomizes the gulf that separated the missionary leadership on the home front and the missionaries working in the field in China. Missionary leaders in the Germany believed that a certain institutional hierarchy and protocol needed to be followed. Missionaries in the field, however, often saw such protocols as inflexibility and an impediment to their actual work.

The incident also shows how confessional and denominational differences still often divided and separated missionaries in the field. Faber and the new missionaries criticized Hubrig for advancing a "dogmatic Lutheranism," which contradicted the Rhenish Mission's inter-denominational vision.¹⁰⁸ Theological and personal disagreements were intertwined, their relationship a reciprocal one.

With his expulsion from the Rhenish Missionary Society, Faber's was now jobless. Yet he wanted to stay in China, and he survived primarily by receiving support from private donations from friends in Germany, who paid for his costs. Gustav Warneck, then the editor of the influential *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift*, asked for donations in his journal, and funnelled money to Faber.¹⁰⁹

Faber's break with the Rhenish Mission in 1880 allowed him to devote all of his efforts to writing. In 1884, he published *Civilization, Chinese and Christian* in classical Chinese. The first edition of the book contained seventy-two chapters, divided into five sections. Faber addressed the book to the "intellectuals and bureaucrats of China's Empire,

¹⁰². Kriele, *Geschichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft*, 263.

¹⁰³. "An die General Versammlung der Rheinisch-Westfaelischen Missions-Gesellschaft," in Archives of the Vereinte Evangelische Mission, Wuppertal, 3.087, 261.

¹⁰⁴. Ibid., 256.

¹⁰⁵. Ibid., 269.

¹⁰⁶. "General-Versammlung der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft," *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* 38 (1881), 101.

¹⁰⁷. Ibid., 102-103.

¹⁰⁸. Kranz, "Aus D. Ernst Faber's Leben," 131.

¹⁰⁹. Heyo E. Hamer, "Zur Begegnung von E. Faber und W. Spinner in Shanghai," *Monatsbeft für Evangelische Kirchengeschichte des Rheinlandes* 39 (1990), 294.

who could benefit from the book's content."¹¹⁰ The book was intended as a primer for an educated Chinese audience, and was never translated into German.

In his preface, Faber wrote that he hoped to use the work to “warn and awaken the Chinese.”¹¹¹ Even though the Chinese had for some time sent scholars and students to the West, and they had brought Western ideas and technical skills back to China, “the students had lost the essence of Western learning, and only learned the superficial, skin-deep aspects of Western ideas.”¹¹² The Chinese failed to recognize that the “truths and teachings of Jesus Christ” formed the foundation of Western civilization.¹¹³ Because of Christianity, Western civilization was like a “beautiful tree, able to bear succulent fruit.”¹¹⁴ Without this foundation, “the tree of China would produce fruit that was sour and bitter, and it would ultimately wither and die.”¹¹⁵ However, it was not just the Chinese who had rejected and ignored the teachings of Christianity, he conceded but even “intellectuals of the West, who deny Christianity's centrality to Western civilization's material wealth and power.”¹¹⁶

Faber thus argued that Chinese reformers and intellectuals needed to embrace Christianity in their “quest for wealth and power.”¹¹⁷ In each section of the book, Faber compared a Western institution or idea with a Chinese one in order to demonstrate Western superiority. Faber used charity for the poor as one instance for his civilizational critique. “Beggars of all sorts, young and old” roamed the streets of China, and the “regular populace was trapped in poverty.”¹¹⁸ Even though many charitable individuals existed in China, wealthy individuals primarily extended assistance to family members. Individuals devastated by “natural disaster or sickness,” and who had no family to rely on, were thus forced into a mendicant life.¹¹⁹ In Germany, charitable work too had started as a “private matter,” but the “state now knows that poverty is not just a burden on the population, but a crucial element of the nation's future,” and thus had turned to taking on the burden of caring for the poor.¹²⁰ Faber further asserted that the Western state's attention to charity originated with Jesus's teaching, which was rooted in Jewish traditions of sharing property and caring for the poor.

Faber's Eurocentric and Christian assumptions blinded him to the reality of Chinese charitable networks in the nineteenth century. While he was correct in noting that private philanthropy and family kinship played a central part in Chinese charitable relief for the poor, he failed to recognize that the Qing state had a long tradition of providing poor relief for “solitary peoples” without families, such as widows, widowers, orphans, or the elderly

¹¹⁰. Ernst Faber, *Civilization, Chinese and Christian* (自西徂東), vol. 1 (台北市: 文海出版社, [1884] 1996), 7.

¹¹¹. Ibid., 1.

¹¹². Ibid., 2.

¹¹³. Ibid.

¹¹⁴. Ibid., 3.

¹¹⁵. Ibid.

¹¹⁶. Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁷. Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁸. Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁹. Ibid., 5.

¹²⁰. Ibid.

without children.¹²¹ Nor did he realize that Confucianism did promote a state-based notion of charity, whereby an emperor and dynasty's legitimacy was judged by the state's ability to provide for the economic livelihood of all of its subjects.¹²² It is true, however, that much of the Qing state's ability to provide these services eroded after the Taiping Rebellion, and Faber was experiencing a state that had ceded much of its control of charitable work to local elites.¹²³ Nonetheless, the local elites did fill the vacuum left by the central state, and the post-Taiping period saw the expansion of elite-led charitable institutions in the realm of welfare and education, in order to promote social stability.¹²⁴

Faber's interpretation of Chinese history illuminates his Eurocentrism. Even though the Chinese had a long and esteemed study of history, Faber charged, they myopically studied only the history of China.¹²⁵ Western historians, on the other hand, studied the histories of multiple nations and peoples, including the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Jews. The West thus drew lessons and ideas from a much wider pool of resources, learning from the "rise and fall of various nations and countries."¹²⁶ Western approaches to science and learning were much more "systematic and specialized," making scientists afraid to "talk about anything with requisite amount of knowledge."¹²⁷ Chinese learning, on the other hand, was "dilettantish and unsystematic (雜亂)." While Faber was correct that Chinese historical writing was certainly not free from a long tradition of Han Chinese chauvinism, he did not mention the tradition of Chinese historical writing, dating back to Ban Gu (A. D. 32-92), that acknowledged China's position in a broader geographical and culturally pluralistic context.¹²⁸ He also failed to recognize—or was ignorant of—intellectual movements within the Chinese tradition that resembled Western science, as well as Chinese interest, ever since the Ming dynasty encounter with the Jesuits, in Western science itself.¹²⁹

These comparisons of Western and Chinese notions of charity and history typified Faber's manner of argument. He pointed to major social, political, and moral issues that both China and Western states needed to tackle – for example, poverty, education, and the military. He then described how Western institutions dealt with the problem, often arguing that it had Judeo-Christian origins; he then explicated the Chinese concept, pointing to the Confucian origins of the problem. In all of his chapters, Faber asserted the superiority of Western ways to those of the Chinese.

¹²¹ Janet Y. Chen, *Guilty of Indigence: The Urban Poor in China, 1900-1953* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 6-7.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹²⁴ On elites and local activism, see Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

¹²⁵ Faber, *Civilization, Chinese and Christian*, 297.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 298.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 301.

¹²⁸ Q. Edward Wang, "History, Space, and Ethnicity: The Chinese Worldview," *Journal of World History* 10, no. 2 (1999): 285-305.

¹²⁹ For more on Chinese indigenous sources of science, see Benjamin A. Elman, *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

It is difficult to estimate how widely *Civilization, Chinese and Christian* was circulated: Faber himself claimed that the work “gained a widespread circulation among the literati throughout all of China,”¹³⁰ while the Christian Literature Society for China estimated that by 1902, 54,000 copies of the book had been sold.¹³¹ It is clear, that *Civilization, Chinese and Christian* gained the attention of important Chinese reformers and modernizers. In 1884, the viceroy of Liang-Guang, (兩廣總督) Zhang Zhidong (張之洞), who was one of the most vocal and influential advocates in the Qing bureaucracy for the modernization of China along Western lines, tried to get Faber to join the Chinese civil service, but Faber refused, citing his busy schedule with literary work.¹³² Eight years later, Zhang extended another invitation to Faber to work on a translation project of major Western works into Chinese, but again Faber would refuse.

Faber’s refusal to work with Zhang is revealing. Other reform minded missionaries, such as the American Methodist Young J. Allen and the Welsh Baptist Timothy Richard, welcomed the opportunity to work with Chinese reformers. According to Adrian Bennett, Allen “considered it his responsibility to ameliorate, if possible, the Chinese literati’s antagonism toward the missionaries and their converts”¹³³ and saw an appeal to the interest of the Chinese literati in Western science and practical learning as a way to do so. Allen emphasized the common ground between Christianity and Confucianism, going so far as to say that “Jesus has the heart of Confucius and Mencius.”¹³⁴ Timothy Richard was close to influential Chinese reformers such as Li Hongzhang, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao. Faber, on the other hand, enjoyed no relationship with Chinese intellectuals. He did not feel the pressure to provide practical, scientific advice for the Chinese, and instead devoted his writing to philosophical attacks on Confucian. Self-protective, Faber himself saw philosophical attack as his primary contribution: while Chinese intellectuals knew a great deal about the practical benefits of the West, they were ignoring the “theoretical insights and uniqueness of Christianity.”¹³⁵

Faber was perceptive about Chinese intellectuals’ reasons of rejecting the “theoretical insights” of Christianity. While reform-minded intellectuals were willing to accept the practical and scientific lessons that Western missionaries hoped to impart, they rejected, for the most part, the Western missionary dream of making China Christian.¹³⁶ As Paul Cohen notes, even reformers who had converted to Christianity in their personal lives hid their Christianity in their public writings and appeals.¹³⁷ Chinese modernizers did not want their plans to be painted as “Christian,” as the mainstream of Chinese intellectuals

¹³⁰. Faber, *Theorie und Praxis*, 26.

¹³¹. Douglas Brent Whitefield, “Ernst Faber,” in *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*, <http://www.bdconline.net/en/stories/f/ernst-faber.php>.

¹³². See correspondence between Zhang Zhidong and Gu Hongming, 06 February 1892, in Zentralarchiv der Evangelischen Kirche der Pfalz, Speyer, Abt. 180.01, Nr. 192, 74-76

¹³³. Bennett and Liu, “Christianity in the Chinese Idiom,” 191.

¹³⁴. *Ibid.*, 192.

¹³⁵. Faber, *Theorie und Praxis*, 26-27.

¹³⁶. See Paul Cohen, “Littoral and Hinterland in Nineteenth Century China: The ‘Christian’ Reformers,” in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 223.

¹³⁷. *Ibid.*, 223-224.

continued to be attached to the possibility of a Confucian-based reform of Chinese society. Faber's literary work thus did provide an alternative to the majority of Western missionary writings that hoped to introduce Chinese reformers to Western science and methods of reform: he did provide a systematic moral and philosophical critique of Confucianism, rooted in his Christian and Pietist principles.

Faber's literary appealed to the newly formed liberal Protestant missionary society, the *Allgemeine evangelische Protestantische Missionsverein* (AepMV hereafter), which invited him to become its first missionary to China in 1885. Only a year earlier, the Swiss pastor Ernst Buss, the son of a Basel missionary inspector, founded the AepMV in Weimar. Buss had a vision of reforming German missionary efforts along more liberal lines.¹³⁸ The AepMV was founded with a more democratic and open structure, as its work was dictated more by a general assembly, rather by a smaller group of committee members.¹³⁹ The AepMV would eventually count counted prominent Protestant liberal scholars such as Adolf von Harnack, Ernst Troeltsch and Martin Rade, editor of *Christliche Welt*, among its supporters.¹⁴⁰

Ernst Buss and the AepMV positioned themselves in opposition to the Pietist missionary societies. Buss wrote that the AepMV was the first missionary society grounded in the "principles of liberal theology," and further declared that the new mission society was uninterested in the traditional methods of missionary work: they had no desire to "build new churches in heathen lands."¹⁴¹ Instead, they wanted to engage in "secular" work, such as building schools, hospitals, and literary missionary work. Buss was influenced by the ideas of Ernst Langhans, a Swiss professor of systematic theology and co-founder of the Church Reform Society, who had criticized Pietist methods in the 1860s as "humbug" and "preposterous."¹⁴² For Buss, the Pietists erred in not distinguishing between "civilized" (like the Chinese) and "non-civilized" peoples (like the "Hottentots").¹⁴³ Langhans accused the Pietist presses of exaggerating their "success" within the mission field.¹⁴⁴ The Pietists had utterly failed in their missions to those cultured civilizations with their own high cultures such as the Hindus and the Chinese. The "fanatical" Pietist enterprise was filled with "outdated tradition, dogmatism, intolerance, and literalism."¹⁴⁵

The AepMV saw itself as embodying a "new" approach to missionary work that consciously sought to overtake the "older" pietistic forms of evangelization. It proclaimed that its central mission was to develop and organize a Chinese national church that would be "appropriate" to the local conditions by "leaving the new Christians alone, so that they

¹³⁸ Lydia Gerber, *Von Voskamps 'heidnischem Treiben' und Wilhelms 'höherem China'* (Hamburg: Hamburger Sinologische Gesellschaft e.V., 2002), 74-77.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 76.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 75.

¹⁴¹ Heyo E. Hamer, *Mission und Politik* (Aachen: Verl. an der Lottbek im Besitz des Verl. Mainz, 2002), 249.

¹⁴² Ernst Friedrich Langhans, *Pietismus und äussere Mission vor dem Richterstuhle ihrer Vertheidiger* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1866.), 395.

¹⁴³ Idem, *Pietismus und Christenthum im Spiegel der äusseren Mission. Erster Theil: Der Pietismus*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Verlag von Otto Wigand, 1864), 23.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 30-34.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 459.

could avoid an imitation of non-Chinese forms.”¹⁴⁶ Instead of preaching to the “primitive peoples” (*primitiven Völker*), they would concentrate on the cultured, and would take a top-down approach rather than a bottom-up one.¹⁴⁷ The missionary society would also only send fully trained academics into the field, so that they could engage in “theological and philosophical debates and arguments.”¹⁴⁸

Supporting Faber’s literary work was thus extremely attractive to the AepMV. Ernst Buss wrote in 1885 to Faber, “You should be free to live out your convictions, continue to be effective as you have been as you see fit, and we will be pleased if you continued the literary and apologetic activity that you have initiated already.”¹⁴⁹ Faber thus had the blessing from the AepMV to continue his literary endeavors, publishing on Confucianism and Chinese religions through the help of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge, and not engage in any pastoral or congregational duties.¹⁵⁰

With financial support from the AepMV, Faber transferred to Shanghai, where he could continue to expand his literary work. Unlike in Humen, where he worked as the only European for eight full years, Faber was thrown into a fully international metropolis, more modern, more industrialized, and more cosmopolitan than he had ever experienced, even in Germany. As the prominent German Sinologist Otto Franke wrote of his own time in Shanghai, the Shanghai “settlement was very international, although the English dominated, with an impressive majority, the total administration, finance, and security system.”¹⁵¹ Indeed, the British here had developed their own culture and fashioned their own identities as “Shanghaianders.”¹⁵²

Faber immersed himself in this international community. In particular, he worked in close collaboration with British and American missionaries: he joined the British-run Chinese Book and Tract Society, which later became the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge. Through this organization, he came to meet other missionaries, such as Timothy Richard, who had been leading the effort to engage with the Chinese gentry.¹⁵³ Faber was also a valued member of German clubs in Shanghai, and often was consulted not only by members of the missionary community, but also by merchants and other officials. He wrote for a diverse array of periodicals.¹⁵⁴ By now, he had become a publicly recognized intellectual within the international community in China.

¹⁴⁶ Julius Richter, *Das Buch der deutschen Weltmission*. (Gotha: Klotz, 1935), 221.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Hamer, *Mission und Politik*, 426-427.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 225.

¹⁵¹ Otto Franke, *Erinnerungen aus zwei Welten* (Berlin: Verlag Walter de Gruyter, 1954.), 61; Hamer, *Mission und Politik*, 217.

¹⁵² Robert Bickers, “Shanghaianders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937,” *Past and Present* (1998), 170.

¹⁵³ In his memoirs, the influential missionary Timothy Richard described Faber as “one of the profoundest students of Chinese literature,” and a “weighty man of dry humor.” See Timothy Richard, *Forty-five years in China* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes company, 1916), 219.

¹⁵⁴ Hamer, *Mission und Politik*, 233.

Faber also became one of the most active and influential missionaries in the Shanghai General Conference in 1890, a group that attempted to unite all of the major Protestant missionary societies in China. At the conference, he led various panels and boards that advised and set directions for how to translate and interpret the Chinese classics to the West. He also sat on panels that talked about the relationship between the Chinese government and religious freedom.¹⁵⁵

The diary accounts of Wilfred Spinner, the AepMV's first missionary to Japan, give a sense of Faber the person, as well as the life that he led. Upon meeting Faber, Spinner observed that he was a "small, but powerfully built man," who "carried on his face the sorrows of previous experiences and strains of the work in China's inland."¹⁵⁶ Spinner commented that Faber was "not a practical man," often taken advantage of for his kindness, and suffered from strains of hypochondria.¹⁵⁷ Spinner further remarked that Faber was "truly pious."¹⁵⁸ He refused, Spinner noted, to wear Chinese garb.¹⁵⁹

Even though he was now employed by a liberal Protestant society that promoted a more inclusive, respectful attitude towards Confucianism, Faber continued to attack Confucianism's moral and theological foundations throughout his stay in Shanghai, developing further his thesis that in order for China to embrace Christianity, its Confucian roots had to be thoroughly destroyed. Confucianism protected "the stronghold of Chinese heathenism, which *must* be taken, if the battle is to be won."¹⁶⁰ He believed that the Confucian classics provided the foundation for the various social injustices that he saw within Chinese society: concubinage, ancestor worship, divination, blood revenge, and the encouragement of absolute subordination of the populace. He railed against them

Faber's synthesis of Chinese history found its culmination in his tract "China in the Light of History." He wrote the tract in the wake of China's humiliating defeat by the Japanese in 1895, which proved to Faber that Confucianism could not deal with the modern world.¹⁶¹ The weakness of China's current economy and industry was rooted in ancient Chinese history: ever since the Zhou dynasty, the Chinese emperor had wielded "absolute power" and a "despotic will."¹⁶² Confucius and Confucianism enabled and promulgated a spirit of "subordination," which led to the ossification of hierarchical structures and corruption within the larger Confucian bureaucracy.¹⁶³

China's religions helped to prop up a weak and corrupt Chinese state. Faber compared Daoism to Roman Catholicism and the Greek Orthodox Church, "ancient

¹⁵⁵ *Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China, held at Shanghai, May 7-20* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1890), 438-439.

¹⁵⁶ Hamer, *Mission und Politik*, 426.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 217-222.

¹⁶⁰ Ernst Faber, *Chronological Handbook of the History of China* (Shanghai: The General Evangelical Protestant Missionary Society of Germany, 1902), iii.

¹⁶¹ *Idem*, *China in historischer Beleuchtung* (Berlin: Haack, 1900), 5.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 13-24.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 27.

religions” that reflected the “soul and spirit” of everyday life.¹⁶⁴ Daoism, originally a spiritual religion, had developed into a religion of superstition, filled with numerous gods and formalistic rituals. The Chinese emperor, Faber explained, stood at the head of this religious system and functioned as a Daoist “Pope.”¹⁶⁵ Faber evinced his Protestant stereotypes of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Church as backward and false spiritually.

Confucianism, for Faber, emerged as a movement to reform the problems within ancient Daoist religion. Yet unlike Luther’s Reformation, Confucianism was a reform movement that “wanted nothing new.”¹⁶⁶ Confucius, Faber argued, rejected the “morality of activity,” and instead promoted “passivity” and “indifference.”¹⁶⁷ Confucianism embraced traditional patriarchal structures, the existing social order, and encouraged the stabilization of hierarchical power relations. Buddhism was even worse: it had “less positive substance than Confucianism,” since it preached a disengagement from the world.¹⁶⁸ Yet, the widespread adoption of Buddhism in China, a foreign religion from India, proved that China could be receptive to the religions of other cultures, and Faber argued that this was a sign that Christianity could gain a foothold in China.¹⁶⁹

Faber continued to argue that the “dark night” of China’s situation in the 19th century stemmed from the deep-rooted, pernicious hold of Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism on the Chinese psyche. The Emperor was nothing more than a “High Priest” (*Oberpriester*)¹⁷⁰ presiding over the spiritualistic rituals of superstition that filled the countryside. China’s outdated Confucian educational system stymied progress. Max Weber read and cited Faber’s translations of Confucius in his work, and Faber’s ideas about Confucian bureaucratic culture and its relation to broader religious culture found their way into Max Weber’s 1915 work, *Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*. Faber’s argument that China did not develop a spirit of capitalism because of its Confucian ideas also permeates Weber’s work.¹⁷¹

Faber’s missionary reports thus helped to construct what George Steinmetz has called a “Sinophobic” worldview, which depicted China and Confucianism as passive, backward, and despotic.¹⁷² Steinmetz argues that the majority of late-nineteenth century German intellectuals embraced this Sinophobia because of the “temporary class alliance between the German *Bildungsbürgertum* and the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie,” and most of the German intellectuals supported the commercial opening of China and further

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 38.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 40.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 41.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 43.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 49-50.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 50.

¹⁷¹ Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, trans. Hans K. Gerth (New York: Free Press, 1951).

¹⁷² George Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 414. Steinmetz does note, however, that professional German Sinologists remained committed to the older tradition of Sinophilia.

colonial expansion into it.¹⁷³ Like the majority of German intellectuals, Faber supported the consolidation of commercial relations between China and the West, and advocated for the opening of China's borders to Western countries.¹⁷⁴ Yet he also criticized the British for focusing on commercial rather than humanitarian interests.¹⁷⁵ In his vision, the Western encounter with China needed to remain primarily cultural and humanitarian: missionaries needed to act as ambassadors of Western culture. Missionaries therefore needed to obtain a broader understanding of science, politics, and Western philosophy in order to help reform China. But true to his Pietist roots, Faber argued that the primary goal of missionaries in China should still remain the converting China to Christianity, not social work, to alleviate misery and suffering.¹⁷⁶

Faber also did not fully embrace the aggressive new Western imperialism of the 1890s. He was skeptical of the need for an official German imperial presence in China. His experience in Shanghai, and his observations of British and American dominance in China, convinced him that Germany had already come too late to the imperial game. In 1897, reviewing W. A. P. Martin's *Cycle of Cathay*, Faber warned against the perils of Germany's obtaining a formal protectorate in China. In a prophetic passage, Faber argued against further German expansion into China:

I do not begrudge the other Powers for staking out property in China, but for Germany, I would consider such a property in China a misfortune. The expense would be enormous. Competition from England, especially via India, [and from] Russia, France, Japan and the United States would make a successful outcome for Germany impossible. In the case of a European war, Germany would be cut off. Frequent rebellions of the Chinese population would be unavoidable, and inevitable friction among the Western Powers would not be long in coming. Germany would have to spend millions each year and merchants would lose hundreds of thousands.¹⁷⁷

Germany did not heed Faber's suggestions, and in November of 1897, Germany acquired Jiaozhou Bay as a protectorate¹⁷⁸ Soon thereafter, the AepMV requested Faber to move into Qingdao in order to be closer to the German political establishment. The first German Protestant missionary in Qingdao, Faber arrived there on the 5th of April, 1898. But uninterested in building new missionary stations, he continued instead occupy himself with

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Faber, *China in historischer Beleuchtung*, 59.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 51.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 62.

¹⁷⁷ Ernst Faber, "Dr. Martins Charakteristik der chinesischen Zustände," *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* (1897), 140; Gerber, *Voskamps und Wilhelm*, 170.

¹⁷⁸ The history of the taking of Jiaozhou Bay has been accounted in numerous places, for the best and most succinct accounts, see John E. Schrecker, *Imperialism and Chinese Nationalism: Germany in Shantung* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); Klaus Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand in der "Musterkolonie" Kiautschou: Interaktionen zwischen China und Deutschland 1897-1914* (München: Oldenbourg, 2000); Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*.

writing and translation. His stay in Qingdao was not long. On September 26, 1899, Faber died after a week-long bout of dysentery.¹⁷⁹

Conclusion

A year after Faber's death, the Boxers swept throughout northern China, calling for the expulsion of Christian missionaries. Faber's dreams of a Christian China appeared more remote than ever. By the time of his death, almost all of Faber's purported goals for converting the China to Christianity seemed to have failed. His early dream of establishing a local, indigenous, financially sustainable church in Humen was unsuccessful. He saw very few conversions to Christianity among the literati and other elites. A strong faction within the Qing bureaucracy continued to resist even the Western ideas that Faber and his fellow missionaries advocated. At every turn, Faber's Chinese audience seemed to reject his message.

Western missionaries were hardly prepared for such a vigorous rejection. As Faber's early career shows, mid-19th century missions work was understaffed, missionaries were sent to China with little to no preparation for the culture they were going to encounter, and not surprisingly the missionaries themselves often disagreed over the best methods to spread Christianity in China. These conflicts were at times theological, as Pietists and liberal Protestants disagreed over the method and purpose of evangelization, and at other times personal, as egos clashed in the field. Often they were both.

Faber's career shows us that the boundaries and definitions of "liberal" and "conservative" employed in Germany—and perhaps the boundary and definition of missionary and secular scholar as well—were often crossed when the missionaries entered China. Yet even though "conservatives" and "liberals" debated the method and approach to missions, they were united in their attack on Confucianism. Conservatives and liberals alike agreed that in order for China to become Christian, Confucianism was something that needed to be overcome and replaced by Christianity.

Discussions of the missionary's failure to successfully convert the Chinese to Christianity are not new conclusions. Yet Faber's career shows us that, surprisingly, missionaries themselves were cognizant and extremely sensitive to their lack of success in China. Faber wrote about these failures honestly, and he responded by changing his missionary tactics and approaches to evangelization. Practical and savvy, he adjusted his positions to ones that he believed would be successful. Abandoning the traditional route of direct, individual conversion, he became passionately engaged in civilizational critique. Deeply aware of his Chinese and Western audiences, he crafted arguments strategically. For that he had to learn theirs. Once a street preacher, he transformed himself into a prolific analyst and translator of the Chinese classics and texts, a form of self-secularization, in that it brought him into realms of anthropology and history that had little connection with

¹⁷⁹ Despite his early death in Qingdao, he nonetheless published one of the most influential books on North Chinese botany that the German *Reich* would use for its survey of the Chinese colony. See Ernst Faber, *Botanicon Sincicum: Notes on Chinese Botany from Native and Western Sources, Part II*. (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Limited, 1892).

Christian doctrines, narratives, and rituals. Like so many German Christians of his century, he began as a pastor and ended as a scholar. China “modernized” him.

How representative was Faber's experience? Many of the most influential early missionaries in China had biographies that mirrored his. James Legge, the most important sinologist of the century in the Western world, also started out as a Pietist missionary, in his case, for the London Missionary Society. But he soon experienced various “painful events” and became frustrated with the lack of results and the difficulty of learning the various Chinese dialects in the field.¹⁸⁰ Convinced of the need to engage with the Confucian classics, he published translations that were foundational in the establishment of Sinology as an academic field. Young J. Allen also started his career as an itinerant preacher in the rural areas surrounding Shanghai, but soon became dissatisfied with the mission's attempts to reach the Chinese by preaching.¹⁸¹ Among missionaries in China, those who wrote for the educated classes and engaged with Confucian literati were still in the minority, but their reach and influence made a decisive impact on the mission field both in China and in the West.

Allen and Legge's careers have been used as examples of the West's successful engagement with China. Adrian Bennett has argued that Allen's “conversion” was a precursor to a turn towards liberal Social Gospel ideas in America, and an increasing tolerance and acceptance of traditional Confucian culture. In the case of James Legge, Norman Girardot posits that Legge's “views gained a new degree of tolerance, comprehensiveness, and synthetic consistency” with his ever longer exposure and contact with the Chinese classics.¹⁸²

Figure 6: Young J. Allen. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 7: James Legge. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

¹⁸⁰. Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental pilgrimage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 36-37.

¹⁸¹. Bennett, *Young J. Allen*, 28-29.

¹⁸². Girardot, *Victorian Translation of China*, 11.

Faber never experienced the “conversions” that Legge and Allen exhibited. Unlike Legge, Faber did not—and without a Doctorate, could not—return to Germany to take up an academic position: he stayed in China for the rest of his life. Unlike Allen and Timothy Richard, who also stayed in China, but became deeply involved with the Chinese reform movement, Faber refused to become involved in practical politics, even when offered the opportunity to work for Zhang Zhidong. His writing remained primarily a philosophical attack on Confucianism. In spite of his prolonged engagement with the Confucian classics, his abandonment of his Pietist roots, and his transfer to a more liberal missionary society, Faber did not become less critical Chinese culture. Rather, his increased engagement with Confucian classics, coupled with his immersion in cosmopolitan society, provoked greater confidence, and indeed certainty, about his critique of Confucianism. Instead of being softened to a more liberal and accepting understanding of Chinese culture, Faber’s experience in China crystallized his belief in the superiority of the West. His observations of the deficiencies of Chinese civilization clarified and defined for him the qualities that he believed were common to the West. His initial failures in empty-pewed churches were now in the past; Confucianism—or more specifically, its defects—could provide partial explanation for those failures.

Faber’s career thus challenges an implicit linkage in the historical narrative of Christianity in China about the relationship between missionary theory and practice, between Sinophilia and its relations to the Confucian elite. In this narrative, the Jesuits respected and accommodated Chinese traditions because of their engagement with the elite: practice came to inform theory. This broader analysis continues: nineteenth-century missionary practice, on the other hand, was shaped by its engagement with the uneducated masses, which, along with rising Western confidence, led to missionary chauvinism. Here, missionary experience informs theory, or at least attitudes. But in the case of Faber, the extended encounter with the “Other,” did not change his missionary ideology. In the case of Faber, his Pietist worldview remained the driving force behind his missionary practice. He evinced a slight movement towards the liberal *Kulturprotestantismus* of his colleagues in the AepMV, but not an overwhelming shift.

In this sense, Faber’s consciousness was very much forged, using Fritz Ringer’s phrase, in the “German mandarin” tradition. He was, like the German mandarin pastors and theologians that Ringer describes, a Protestant whose overarching concern was the “value and sanctity of the individual soul,” and who “derived his authority from his religious mission.”¹⁸³ In his last testimony, *Theory and Practice of a Protestant Missionary in China*, Faber argued that what mattered most in missionary work was spreading the “love of God,” and, in particular, a “personal relationship with God.”¹⁸⁴ The methods and practice of preaching the “love of God” could be manifold. Hoping to transcend the “narrow confessional outlook” of the Pietist and liberal debates of the 1860s and 1870s, Faber argued for a more united front, a sustained effort for inter-denominational cooperation in the mission field.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 19-21.

¹⁸⁴ Faber, *Theorie und Praxis*, 8.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

Faber's "conversion" from a narrow confessional outlook to a more ecumenical one seems peculiarly dramatic in the context of the divisive confessional debates that polarized the German missionary and theological community. In Germany, Faber's reassessment of his missionary methods was not a trivial matter. By changing his occupation from evangelist to academic, then, Faber traversed a major theological divide. This was partly a function of geography: Faber's experience in China—of cooperating and working with British, American, and other European missionaries—led him to argue for a "diversity" of missionary methods and approaches, and he called for consolidating different missionary societies in China.¹⁸⁶ But while missionaries in the field like Faber were forced to cooperate with other confessions and denominations, the Protestant missionary enterprise in Germany continued to be sharply divided by confessional conflicts well into the twentieth century, as German Pietists engaged in vehement debate with liberals about the best method to conduct missionary work. In 1906 and 1907, Gustav Warneck and Ernst Troeltsch conducted a bitter polemic, rehashing the Pietist and Liberal debates of building churches or secular institutions from almost forty years earlier.¹⁸⁷ Faber's cross-confessional spirit also extended to Catholicism: compared with Warneck's anti-Catholic polemics, Faber appears relatively enlightened about Catholicism.¹⁸⁸ Faber, for example, wrote that even though he disagreed with the ecclesiastical hierarchies of the Catholic Church, "I wish from the bottom of my heart, even for the Catholics missions, good results."¹⁸⁹

Other than his openness to cross-confessional cooperation, Faber also differed from other missionaries on the home front in his willingness to cooperate with missionaries from England and America. In Europe, a gulf existed between German missionary leaders and their Anglo-American counterparts. William R. Hutchison writes that ever since 1866, at the German Continental Missions Conference held in Bremen, German missionary leaders exhibited "a growing consciousness and concern about Anglo-American missionary methods and presuppositions."¹⁹⁰ This concern grew into an outright attack on American missionary methods. In 1897, Gustav Warneck delivered a rousing attack on the American Y. M. C. A. leader John Mott's calls to "Evangelize the World in this Generation."¹⁹¹ Warneck and other German missionary leaders further snubbed their Anglo-American counterparts in 1900, when Mott (later a founder of the World Council of Churches) tried to convene an ecumenical missionary conference in New York, and the Germans refused to send delegates.

Faber's career thus represents a moment in the German missionary enterprise that welcomed and eagerly cooperated with other missionary nations, a moment that the Swiss historian Herbert Lüthy has labeled the era of "the Protestant International."¹⁹² Faber's

¹⁸⁶. Ibid., 7.

¹⁸⁷. I discuss the debate between Troeltsch and Warneck further in chapter two.

¹⁸⁸. For one of Warneck's anti-Catholic works, see, for example, Gustav Warneck, *Protestantische Beleuchtung der römischen Angriffe auf die evangelische Heidenmission. Ein Beitrag zur Charakteristik ultramontaner Geschichtschreibung*, 2 vols. (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1884-1885).

¹⁸⁹. Faber, *Theorie und Praxis*, 20.

¹⁹⁰. William R. Hutchison, "Innocence Abroad: The "American Religion" in Europe," *Church History* 51, no. 1 (1982), 79.

¹⁹¹. Ibid.

¹⁹². See the preface in Herbert Lüthy, *La Banque Protestante en France de la Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes à la*

career was marked by transnational cooperation between the German and Anglo-American missionary enterprise: he traveled to China on an English boat, he published widely in English and by Anglo-American presses, he was widely reviewed by English-speaking missionaries, he was a prominent presence at the Protestant ecumenical conferences in Shanghai, and his final years were spent in the cosmopolitan space of Shanghai. His final testimony, then, can be read as an impassioned call for recognizing the plurality and diversity of missionary methods, but also a united front on behalf of Christianity among the Western nations.

Yet Faber's career also reminds us that entering a transnational, cosmopolitan space does not inevitably lead to progressive, cooperative, or liberal ideas. Instead, Faber's career points to the dogged persistence of, using Patricia Clavin's phrase, "transnational repulsion."¹⁹³ Faber's transformation from a provincial tinsmith to a cosmopolitan missionary was more geographical rather than intellectual. The failures that he experienced in his early years in China made a deep mark on him. Although he altered his missionary tactics, his fundamental distaste for the Chinese and Chinese culture remained unchanged throughout his life. This distaste—a "repulsion" that he cultivated and justified over time—inspired him to create, articulate, and disseminate a particular mode of thinking, a structure of analysis, in which the "West" possesses a fundamental "core," a unified being that compels recognition of its superiority. In this mode of thinking, two behemoth categories of "West" and "Chinese" were placed side by side, their complicated histories simplified in a mostly ahistorical and essentialist way.

Faber's career illustrates the complicated nature of the cosmopolitan identities that were constructed in the nineteenth century. Kwame Anthony Appiah has celebrated the idea of a "rooted cosmopolitan"—an individual who is simultaneously tied to specific nations, histories, or people, while still pledging allegiance to a universal form of worldwide citizenship.¹⁹⁴ Yet Faber's life demonstrates how difficult "rooted cosmopolitanism" thinking is: despite all of his learning, his travels, and his experience, Faber never shed his allegiances to the West, or Western notions of superiority. He was, at best, a reluctant cosmopolitan, rather than a rooted one.

Révolution, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Éditions de L'EHESS, 1959-1961).

¹⁹³ Clavin, "Defining Transnationalism," 424.

¹⁹⁴ For discussion of the concept of the rooted cosmopolitan, see Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006) and Idem, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). See also the collection of essays in Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, eds., *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

Chapter 2.

From Anti-Confucian to Anti-Communist: German Catholic and Protestant Missionaries Embrace Confucianism

Introduction

In 1902, not long after the fires from the Boxer Uprising were quelled, Georg Stenz, a German Catholic missionary from the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), published *In the Home of Confucius*. Stenz wrote the book to introduce his German readers to the sights and sounds of Shandong and the German leasehold Jiaozhou Bay. It was also intended to be a primer about the basic contours of Chinese history, contemporary Chinese society, and the moral “characteristics” of the Chinese people. Stenz recounted a meeting with the 76th direct descendent of Confucius, Kong Lingyi (孔令貽), in Qufu (曲阜), the hometown of Confucius. Stenz was unimpressed by Kong; he commented, “the young man made no impression on me. He knew almost nothing of the situation and learning of Europe. He was also extremely corpulent and lived a thoroughly Chinese existence.”¹

Stenz was even less enthusiastic about other symbols of Confucius’s legacy. He sarcastically referred to Confucius as “his holiness” (“*Heiligen*”) and called Qufu the “Chinese Mecca, the bulwark of all pagans.”² His writings depicted China as a country filled with superstitious pagans, and he excoriated the thoroughly religious and pious nature of the Chinese people.³ Apart from Qufu, Stenz reported, “funerary temples” and “funerary groves” filled the Chinese rural landscape.⁴ The shrines reflected the decadent, depraved nature of popular Chinese culture: “how many millions are wasted each year on incense, and burning silver and gold paper...The whole life of the Chinese is filled with gods.”⁵

¹ Georg M. Stenz, *Unter Heimat des Konfuzius: Skizzen, Bilder und Erlebnisse aus Schantung* (Steyl: Druck und Verlag der Missionsdruckerei, 1902), 103.

² Ibid., 104. Stenz did express, however, admiration for the Confucian temple and its environs, writing that a “a conscious sense of awe” fell over him in the “deep stillness and silence that reigned of the majestic old trees” surrounding the Confucian temple. See also George Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 417.

³ Georg M. Stenz, “Der chinesische Christ,” *Steyler Herz-Jesu-Bote* 28, no. 4 (January 1901), 54.

⁴ Idem, *Unter Heimat des Konfuzius*, 108.

⁵ Idem, “Der chinesische Christ,” 54.

Stenz was not alone in his condemnation of the Chinese religious landscape. In the pages of the SVD's main publication, the *Kleiner Herz-Jesu Bote*, Stenz's fellow missionaries dismissed the religion of the Chinese as "superstition" and referred to Chinese pagodas and temples as "houses of the devil." The Chinese who believed in these rituals were referred to as "servants of the devil."⁶ The SVD bishop of Yanzhou, Johann Baptist Anzer, called Yanzhou the "bulwark of the devil."⁷ The SVD's writings were not only descriptive, they were cautionary as well: these widespread religious practices, with Confucianism at its head, threatened the Christian missionary effort in China.

By 1935, however, the SVD had changed its tone when talking about Qufu, Confucianism, and traditional Chinese culture more broadly. The same periodical that published Stenz's accounts of Qufu as the "bulwark of the devil" thirty years earlier now described it in glowing terms. The missionary M. Hermanns referred to the city as the "greatest Confucian sanctuary in all of China, the hometown of the Sage" (*Weisen*).⁸ Throughout the piece, the title of Confucius a "wise man" and a "sage" was no longer accompanied with the sarcasm permeated Stenz's accounts; the tone of Hermanns's piece was reverential, not polemical. Hermanns noted that 1935 was the first year that the Nationalist government celebrated Confucius's birthday as a national holiday. He concluded "as the star of Confucius rises, so he will point further to Jesus Christ."⁹

The SVD was not the only missionary organization that reconsidered its relationship to Confucianism. In the same year that Stenz's *In the Home of Confucius* appeared, Carl Johannes Voskamp, an influential missionary in the Protestant Berlin Missionary Society (BMS), published an anti-Confucian tract, *Confucius and China Today*. Voskamp was one of the most vocally antagonistic missionaries towards Confucianism in the early 1900s. *Confucius and China Today* was one of many tracts that Voskamp published in the hopes of discrediting Confucianism. Like Stenz, Voskamp included an account of a visit to Qufu. Voskamp described masses of Chinese worshippers, their "eyes seeing only the shadow of Confucius," holding slabs proclaiming Confucius's greatness, "bowing and prostrating themselves" in front of Confucius's grave.¹⁰ In the early 1900s, he denigrated all Confucian ceremonies and rituals. But by the 1920s, like the missionaries in the SVD, Voskamp's attitude towards Confucianism had changed. After the First World War, he never published another major anti-Confucian treatise. And when he did write about Confucianism, he exhibited respect for Confucius's ideals.

Both the BMS and the SVD thus underwent a radical transformation, from a vehemently anti-Confucian stance in 1900 to a pro-Confucian one. Whereas in the early 1900s, German Catholic and Protestant missionaries argued that Christianity needed to replace Confucianism in China, by the 1930s, they saw the fates of Christianity and

⁶ Klaus Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand in der "Musterkolonie" Kiautschou: Interaktionen zwischen China und Deutschland 1897-1914* (München: Oldenbourg, 2000), 331.

⁷ Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, 417.

⁸ P. M. Hermanns, "Wie ich Konfuzius' Stammhalter sah," *Steyler Missionsbote* 63, no. 2 (Nov. 1935), 48.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁰ Carl J. Voskamp, *Confucius und das heutige China: Ein Vortrag, gehalten vor dem Ausbruch der Boxerbewegung* (Berlin: Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1902), 1-2.

Confucianism as inseparable. Both the BMS and the SVD thus went from a vocal Sinophobic position to a Sinophilic one in the span of thirty years.

The first part of this chapter examines how the BMS and the SVD constructed an anti-Confucian, Sinophobic worldview. This not a new insight; other scholars have written about how German missionaries held traditional Chinese culture and Confucianism with contempt.¹¹ George Steinmetz, for example, has argued in his influential book, *The Devil's Handwriting*, that Europe was broadly Sinophilic in the 16th and 17th centuries, due to the influence of positive Jesuit depictions of China.¹² This broadly Sinophilic tone was subsumed in the 18th and 19th centuries, due to Europe's increasing imperial expansion into East Asia. In the German case, Steinmetz argues, Sinophilia returned after Germany officially grabbed a protectorate in Jiaozhou, especially in the years from 1905 to 1914. He attributes this shift to the influx of more liberal, pro-Chinese Sinophiles to positions of power in German Qingdao. Steinmetz cites the influence of the Seminar for Oriental Languages (*Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen*), which included a coalition of liberal missionaries, such as Richard Wilhelm, and liberal scholars, such as Otto Franke, as one of the primary reasons for this Sinophilic comeback.¹³

Steinmetz's argument implies that the new group of scholars who entered China were trained in liberal, secular milieus, and thus were predisposed to this Sinophilic tradition in Europe. In a way, then, it is unsurprising that Steinmetz's characters became Sinophiles, and promoted a Sinophilic outlook. Steinmetz is not alone in his praise for liberalism. Liberal theology, especially the ascendancy of liberal Social Gospel, has been cited by scholars as the main agent of change behind this "conversion of missionaries" from a chauvinistic, paternalistic worldview to an emphasis on inclusion and tolerance.¹⁴ Pearl S. Buck, for example, has been heralded as an example of this missionary "conversion."¹⁵

Focusing on German colonial policy in Qingdao, Steinmetz dates the beginning of a Sinophilic turn in German colonial policy to the decade preceding the First World War, in this chapter, I argue that this shift in a Sinophobic worldview in the late nineteenth century eroded immediately after the First World War. For German missionaries Sinophobic descriptions of Chinese culture persisted until the eve of the First World War. It was the catastrophe of the war that pushed them to rethink Christianity and European civilization's relationship towards Chinese Confucianism and traditional Chinese society.

While I argue that the shift to Sinophilia among German missionaries who worked in China occurred after the First World War, I follow Steinmetz's lead by pointing to geo-

¹¹ For example, see Lixin Sun, *Das Chinabild der deutschen protestantischen Missionare des 19. Jahrhunderts: eine Fallstudie zum Problem interkultureller Begegnung und Wahrnehmung* (Marburg: Tectum, 2002); Lydia Gerber, *Von Voskamps 'heidnischem Treiben' und Wilhelms 'höherem China'* (Hamburg: Hamburger Sinologische Gesellschaft e.V., 2002); Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand*. Few works, however, put the Catholic and Protestant missionary enterprise in dialogue with one another.

¹² Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, 362-363.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 467-507.

¹⁴ See, for example, Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Lian Xi writes about Pearl S. Buck in his book. Also see Hilary Spurling, *Pearl Buck in China: Journey to the Good Earth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

political rivalries as a motor driving these transformations. Steinmetz argues that between 1905 and 1914, “both the navy and the Foreign Office were increasingly oriented towards improving relations with China in order to secure a possible ally as Germany became isolated inside Europe.”¹⁶ German colonial officers repudiated their previous encroachments on Chinese sovereignty. They also fostered events that bridged the gap between Chinese and Germans: “Germans and Chinese attended local theatrical events together.”¹⁷ German missionaries, like their state counterparts, were deeply sensitive to their geo-political position in relation to other missionary countries. Protestants were primarily concerned with American and British missionaries, who dominated the international missionary scene. The German Catholics, on the other hand, were worried about different international players: the French and the Vatican.

Steinmetz also points out that Chinese “native resistance” before 1914 was largely ineffective in dramatically altering German colonial policies.¹⁸ After the war, Chinese nationalism had grown into a formidable political force. The Chinese nationalists viewed the Paris Peace Conferences as a betrayal. They charged that instead of cleaving to his own purported principles of self-determination and returning the German holdings in Jiaozhou and Qingdao to China, Wilson himself had agreed to use the former German leasehold as a bargaining chip to entice Japan to join the League of Nations.¹⁹ Chinese anger unleashed itself most visibly in the May 4th demonstrations at Tiananmen Square. Reinforcing the political critique of Western hypocrisy was the Chinese intellectual assault on West ideas, Christianity among them. The prominent intellectual Liang Qichao, who observed the Paris Peace Conferences, commented that Europeans “are like travelers in the desert and have lost their direction [. . .]. They are in utter despair [. . .]. They once had a great dream about the omnipotence of science. Now their talk is filled with its bankruptcy.”²⁰ The triumphant Western Powers—most of all the Americans—could claim little moral authority after their showing in Paris.

The Chinese critique of the Allies found resonance among the Germans. Shattered by their experience in the war, the Germans found themselves linked to the Chinese: they were both on the “losing” end of the peace treaties. Germany, stripped of its extraterritorial claims in China, was now a diplomatic equal, rather than a foreign aggressor. German businessmen benefited: as William Kirby writes, “The loss of ‘extrality’ brought German entrepreneurs into an unexpectedly favored position vis-à-vis nationals of other Western nations.”²¹ A long-time admirer of Germany, Sun Yat-sen sought to make military deals with German officials, telling them, “You Germans are now disarmed. Now you must arm China; that is most likely your only salvation.”²² Because of Germany’s catastrophic experiences in

¹⁶ Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, 493.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 507.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 493.

¹⁹ For a gripping account of the negotiation, see chapter 24, “A Dagger Pointed at the Heart of China,” in Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001).

²⁰ Cited in Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 12.

²¹ William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 17.

²² Cited in *Ibid.*, 33.

the war, it was able to rebuild commercial ties with China surprisingly quickly. German missionaries also benefited from this pro-German sentiment. After the war, former Confucian opponents sought to build relations with their former missionary adversaries. The German missionaries also touted the spiritual connections that the Chinese and the Germans shared, as defeated nations. Thus, by the 1920s, the geo-political situation had pushed German missionary circles to change their writings about Confucianism.

The softening of anti-Confucian sentiment is particularly evident within the histories of the BMS and the SVD. In this chapter, I examine how missionaries from the BMS and the SVD wrote about Confucianism, and how their attitudes towards Confucianism changed from the late 19th century to the late 1930s. By focusing on the BMS and the SVD, I hope to show how two missionary societies—considered to be two of the most anti-Confucian in the 19th century—became infused with a pro-Confucian character. I argue that in the case of German conservative missionaries, it was not the influx of liberal ideas that prompted a shift towards an increasingly pro-Confucian, Sinophilic view. Rather, the conservatives were drawn to Confucianism because they saw Confucianism as an anti-liberal ally.

German Protestant and Catholic missionaries, over time, de-coupled Confucianism from what they saw as the “essence” of Chinese culture. In the early 1900s, most Christian missionaries saw Confucianism as exemplifying the defects of Chinese “characteristics.” But by the 1930s, these assumptions had faded away, largely because Confucianism itself had declined as a political, institutional, and ideological threat. Missionary definitions of the “essence” of Chinese culture were thus constantly shifting. So too were the alliances that the Christian missionaries attempted to make. Most surprisingly, by the 1930s Christian missionaries sought to ally themselves with enemies that they had previously sought to destroy. In order to understand how dramatic the transformation was, we must first investigate the histories of the missionary societies. Let us begin, in Prussia in the early half of the 19th century.

Short Histories of the BMS and the SVD

Despite similar trajectories in their attitudes towards Confucianism, the early histories of the two missionary societies could not have been more divergent. The BMS was the consummate Prussian “insider.” In 1800, Johannes Jänicke, an influential Moravian Brethren pastor of the Bethlehem church in Berlin, founded the first missionary school in Germany. Jänicke’s church attracted many of the religiously awakened noblemen and members of the Prussian elite, who were committed to anti-Napoleonic action through a strengthening of Prussia’s moral and pietistic values.²³ Jänicke also trained many of the most influential early German missionaries, including Karl Gützlaff.

In 1824, a group of pious laymen involved in Jänicke’s church founded the BMS. Theologically, the mission society saw itself as a bulwark against “the soul of odious

²³ Robert M Bigler, *The Politics of German Protestantism: The Rise of the Protestant Church Elite in Prussia, 1815-1848* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 129-130. Among Janicke’s church were members of Baron von Kottwitz’s circle.

Rationalism" (*der Seelen verhassten Rationalismus*) and the "enthusiasms of Romanticism." (*Schwärmereien der Romantik*).²⁴ From its inception, the BMS enjoyed a special relationship with the elites of the Prussian state. The governing board of the Berlin missions was filled with Prussian officials and state administrators. From 1833 to 1838, the Gerlach Brothers, Leopold and Ernst Ludwig, conservative Pietist Lutherans who helped establish the *Kreuzzeitung* and became part of the infamous Camarilla surrounding Friedrich Wilhelm IV, sat on the board of the mission society. Due to these connections, the BMS enjoyed a special relationship with the conservative government of Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who had instilled within his government a new set of conservative politicians in order to stem the tide of liberal revolutionary fervor.²⁵ Other than high-level conservative Protestant politicians, the society was also filled with important and famous Berlin pastors and spiritual leaders, who were invited to join the committee because of their "upstanding moral character."²⁶

The leaders of the BMS did not see China as their primary missions field. Instead, they sent their first missionaries to South Africa in 1833. The society started sending missionaries to China in 1869, but it did not officially establish a missionary station in China until 1882, when missionaries took over the abandoned mission stations from the Rheinische Mission.²⁷ The BMS started its missions in Guangdong, Southern China. In 1898, when Germany obtained the leasehold of Jiaozhou Bay in Northern China, the BMS gladly entered Qingdao at the invitation of the German state.²⁸

Unlike the BMS, the SVD founders had their eyes set on China as their primary missions field from its formation. The SVD was also intimately involved in the German takeover of Qingdao. Despite its close involvement in the German takeover of Qingdao, the SVD was a quintessential "outsider" to the Prussian state. The SVD began in 1875, when Arnold Janssen, a German from the Rhine region, founded a missions seminary across border in Steyl, Holland.²⁹ A founder of a popular journal that helped to raise money for

²⁴ Julius Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft* (Berlin: Verlag der Buchhandlung der Berliner Evang. Missionsges, 1924), 4.

²⁵ Ibid., 21.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ See chapter I in this dissertation, in the section "Break with Pietism."

²⁸ For more on the German claims in Shandong, see John E. Schrecker, *Imperialism and Chinese Nationalism: Germany in Shantung* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

²⁹ So far, the best histories on the founding and history of the missionary organization is found in Karl Josef Rivinius, *Weltlicher Schutz und Mission: Das Deutsche Protektorat über die Katholische Mission von Süd-Shantung* (Köln: Böhlau, 1987). Klaus Mühlhahn draws on much of Rivinius's work in his section on the SVD in Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand*. For detailed histories, timelines, and sources, the SVD missionary Richard Hartwich has published archival document in a six-volume series that covers the history of the mission society until the year 1926. See Richard Hartwich, ed., *Steyler Missionare in China. VI. Auf den Wogen des Chinesischen Bürgerkrieges, 1924 - 1926*. (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1991); Richard Hartwich, ed., *Steyler Missionare in China. IV. Geistlicher Führer seiner Chinamissionare Rev. mus P. Wilh. Gier 1922* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1991); Richard Hartwich, ed., *Steyler Missionare in China. V. Aus Kriegsruinen zu neuen Grenzen, 1920 - 1923*. (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1989); Richard Hartwich, ed., *Steyler Missionare in China. III. Republik China und Erster Weltkrieg, 1911 - 1919*. (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1987); Richard Hartwich, ed., *Steyler Missionare in China. II. Bischof A. Henninghaus ruft Steyler Schwestern, 1904 - 1910*. (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1985); Richard Hartwich, ed., *Steyler Missionare in China. I. Missionarische Erschliessung Südshantungs 1879-1903* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1983); Richard Hartwich, ed., *P. Arnold Janssen und P. Josef Freinademetz, Briefwechsel 1904-1907: Korrespondenz zwischen zwei*

missions, Janssen decided to move his operations to Holland because of Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, which resulted in the expulsion of Catholic priests and orders from Germany. Janssen hoped that the seminary would provide a safe haven for German priests, and simultaneously train them to become missionaries. Janssen also envisioned that the Society would help German missionaries compete with French Catholic missionaries, who dominated the East Asian missionary landscape.³⁰

From the beginning of its foundation, the SVD had to juggle multiple loyalties. SVD missionaries had to prove that they were simultaneously German and Catholic. They had to prove to the German empire that they were willing subjects, while also showing their allegiance to the worldwide directives of the Sacred Propagation of the Faith of Rome. A fine line that it had to walk, the Society trumpeted its nationalist loyalties in its early years. The missionaries willingly aided and accepted support from the German imperial authorities. They also advanced the cultural and political aims of the German empire. The missionary society's aggressive evangelizing helped Germany to claim a protectorate in Northern China in 1897, and scholars, such as Joseph Esherick, have cited the SVD's presence in Northern China as one of the main causes that helped foment anti-Christian sentiment, leading to the Boxer Uprising in 1900.³¹

Seligen (St. Augustin: Steyler, 1978).

³⁰ Rivinius, *Weltlicher Schutz und Mission*, 221-223.

³¹ See chapter 2 in Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).



Figure 8: Arnold Janssen. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia commons.

BMS and SVD views of Confucianism

Even though the two missionary societies were founded in different confessional milieus and historical moments, they found themselves as neighbors in the German colonial space of Qingdao, competing for the souls of unconverted Chinese. Despite the difference in their historical and theological foundations, they exhibited a striking similarity in their missionary approaches. Both missionary societies were “fundamentalist” organizations: missionaries from both societies saw themselves as warriors for God, armed with the mission of battling against the “power of Satan in China,” entrusted with the goal of rooting out “superstitious” and “devilish” beliefs in China.³² For the SVD and the BMS,

³² Klaus Mühlhahn, for example, has characterized the SVD before 1900 as a “fundamentalist Catholic

Christianity was a revolutionary, earth-shattering ideology. They believed that Christianity could bring China from its pre-modern, oppressive state, into the modern world. The Chinese needed to be saved from the darkness in which they lived, and brought into light. In Protestant and Catholic missionary periodicals alike, the world was described in sets of binaries — Christians and non-Christians, metaphors of light and darkness, good and evil, modern and backward.

In the Berlin Missionaries' depictions of China in the nineteenth century, the China that they entered was full of "pictures of death" (*Bilder des Todes*). China was a place filled with misery, poverty, and injustice. The root causes of Chinese social injustice was personal sin, and missionary conversion narratives would piece together a triumvirate of traditional Chinese evils that the missionaries opposed — superstition, polygamy, and opium addiction. It was the duty of "all children of God, as it is of all thinking humans, to alleviate such heathenish misery and brutality."³³ BMS missionaries often employed the life of a single person to illustrate the various problems and miseries that plagued China. To demonstrate the poverty of Chinese society, for example, one missionary, Wilhelm Leuschner describes a single "poor, young, chinese Mother," who in her arms holds a newly born baby daughter. The baby and mother are "caught up in superstition," and her husband will "hate her because she can will never produce a son."³⁴

SVD missionaries also described China as a place filled with superstition, heathen pagodas, and evil spirits.³⁵ Furthermore, SVD missionaries described China as a place filled with danger, poverty, and social squalor. In his description of Yanzhou, one of the major cities in Northern Shandong, Stenz described the city as full of beggars and robbers, posing danger to missionaries hoping to spread the Gospel.³⁶

Thus, both missionary societies viewed China as backward, filled with superstition. The missionaries did not attribute these superstitious beliefs to the sole influence of Confucianism: they were equally critical of other Chinese religions, such as Buddhism and Daoism. For Protestant missionaries especially, Chinese religious practice was beset by idolatry. As Gregory Adam Scott notes, "the contents of the temples presented frightening examples of idolatry gone wild, and Buddhist priests were usually targets of criticism for their dullness and sloth."³⁷ Spiritual degeneracy, missionaries charged, caused Chinese poverty. Missionaries further focused on the dangerous political and social conditions that they faced when promulgating the Gospel. Part of this fit into the genre of missionary reportage, which lionized missionaries for entering dangerous, inhospitable lands for the sake of the Gospel. But the SVD and BMS's tones also fit into a larger shift in the discourse on China in the late 19th century towards a Sinophobic mode. As George Steinmetz notes,

organization," filled with "anti-modern and anti-liberal" tendencies." See Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand*, 326-327.

³³ Friedrich Wilhelm Leuschner, *Bilder des Todes und Bilder des Lebens aus China*, Neue Missionsschriften (Berlin: Buchhandlung der Berliner ev. Missionsgesellschaft, 1901), 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁵ Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand*, 331.

³⁶ Georg M. Stenz, "Umschau in einer chinesischen Großstadt," *Kleiner Herz Jesu Bote* 23, no. 1 (1895), 21.

³⁷ Gregory Adam Scott, "The Dharma Through a Glass Darkly: On the Study of Modern Chinese Buddhism through Protestant Missionary Sources," *Shengyan yanjiu* 2 (July 2011): 47-73.

the mid to late 19th century was the height of a period of Sinophobia, when European depictions of China became racialized, and European writers described China as stagnant and despotic.³⁸

The SVD and the BMS helped to construct such a view. Georg Stenz, for example, wrote that “the Chinese, overall, showed extremely unsympathetic traits to Europeans,”³⁹ and he portrayed the Chinese as pathological liars, suspicious, materialistic, unthankful, and lazy.⁴⁰ These were common tropes within 19th century missionary writings on China. As the scholar Lydia Liu writes, “avarice, cowardice and callousness are staple categories of a long-standing missionary discourse about Chinese character that need not surprise the reader.”⁴¹ But the missionaries used these tropes to create a moral critique of not only the Chinese, but Europeans as well. Stenz pointed out that even though these traits of avarice, cowardice and callousness were “staples” among the Chinese, these traits were widespread in Europe. The prevalence of these sins among Europeans was even less excusable, since “they knew of Christianity and the teachings of the Ten Commandments.”⁴²

Sinophobia reached its height right before the Boxer Uprising in 1900, which initiated a wave of fear over the “Yellow Peril” in Europe. Missionaries who lived through the Boxer Uprising needed to create narratives and find answers to explain such violent anti-Christian sentiment. For the Berlin Missionaries, Confucius was the primary culprit who brought about the “divisions and the angry anarchy” of China.⁴³ Voskamp called Confucius the “uncrowned king of China, who stands and is worshiped as a demigod by his people.”⁴⁴ For Voskamp, the Chinese lived in the “shadow of this man, who died 2500 years ago,” whose ideas had left such a “strong stamp on the being and practices of the Chinese state and popular life.”⁴⁵

Voskamp’s book, *Confucius and China Today*, is representative of the Berlin Mission’s view of Confucius. In it, Voskamp belittled Confucius as “having produced absolutely nothing original. For him, progress was a burden and conservatism was to be valued above all.”⁴⁶ Even though Confucius the man could not be held responsible for all of the problems in Chinese society, he nonetheless founded Confucianism as a moral system, which, to Voskamp, hindered any movement towards independent and innovative thinking.

³⁸ For the Rise of Sinophobia, see Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, 384-431.

³⁹ Stenz, *Unter Heimat des Konfuzius*, 19.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 20-26.

⁴¹ Lydia He Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 46. For more discussion about National Character, see Ch. 2, “Translating National Character.”

⁴² Stenz, *Unter Heimat des Konfuzius*, 25.

⁴³ Voskamp, *Confucius und das heutige China*, 10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.



Figure 9: The middle figure is Carl Johannes Voskamp. Photo from the *Berliner Missionsberichte*.

For Voskamp, Confucianism inhibited originality by requiring its followers to devote all of their energies to ancestral worship. By inculcating such obsessive ancestral worship, Confucianism “binds the people of today with those of yesterday, the living with the dead. Instead of inspiring the Chinese to hope for a better future as other countries do, instead the Chinese people stare into the darkness of their past.”⁴⁷ As a result, “almost 400 million living Chinese are slaves to the uncounted millions of the dead.”⁴⁸

But the situation was not hopeless for Voskamp. He believed that the Chinese people exhibited wonderful spiritual values: “the Chinese are masters of patience, perseverance, common sense, and kindness.” The problem was not intrinsic to the people, but rather a matter of reforming the system and the worldview—Confucianism shackled the inherent goodness of the Chinese. Once the Chinese had been released from the bonds of Confucianism, and liberated with the Christian country, “the people can be lifted and the country will regenerated.” Voskamp concluded, “the Gospel is the new element that must be introduced to China.”⁴⁹

The SVD missionary Rudolf Pieper agreed with Voskamp’s analyses. In a book introducing his German audience to the traditions, cultures, and ideas of China, Pieper also

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

excoriated the cult of Confucius that reigned in China. For Pieper, Confucian devotion prevented intellectuals and elites from taking Christianity seriously. Pieper noted,

For an educated Mandarin to convert to Christianity, it is no small sacrifice for him to leave the idea of a Confucian 'holiness' behind and accept Christian sanctity... The first question that the European missionary is asked by Chinese intellectuals is, 'have you read the Books of Confucius? If one answers 'No,' then the missionary is forever regarded as an uneducated man. Even if the missionary is well trained in the arts and sciences of his European home, it accounts for nothing in the eyes of the educated Chinese elite.⁵⁰

For Catholic missionaries, the dogged ignorance among the gentry towards Christian and Western learning helped facilitate the high incidences of anti-Christian violence the countryside, as local officials turned a blind eye towards incidences of robbers and bandits terrorizing Chinese Christians and church property. Before the Boxer Uprising, the SVD missionary supervisor Josef Freinademetz argued that the rising tide of anti-Christian violence, compounded with the Chinese provincial government's blatant disregard of the Tianjin treaty's provision to protect foreign missionaries, signaled a "future full of horror and terror" for Western missionaries. Freinademetz ended his report with an appeal and an implicit threat: "the local mandarins must begin to perform their duties of honoring the conditions of the treaties of protecting Christian missionaries from harm."⁵¹ SVD missionaries thus blamed the local Confucian gentry for failing to stop the escalation of anti-Christian sentiment earlier. SVD missionaries ultimately believed that the Boxer Uprising should be blamed on local Confucian gentry who had failed their "duties of administering justice (*Gerechtigkeitspflege*)."⁵²

But as Steinmetz has pointed out, a surprising multivocality existed in the mission community. Pieper himself admitted that there could be various interpretations of Confucius's legacy. Pieper recognized Confucius's historical importance, pointing out that he was "to the educated Chinese world, what Jesus is for us Christians, Muhammed is for Islam, and Socrates is for the Greeks."⁵³ He pointed out that even though Confucius's teaching amounted to nothing more than a "crass materialism,"⁵⁴ Confucius himself could not be blamed for not knowing of the higher spiritual world of Christianity; Confucius taught "what he could know as a pagan."⁵⁵ Pieper wrote, "I hold Confucius, as a pagan philosopher, in much higher esteem when compared to other so-called 'Christian' philosophers, who throw Christianity over board, put themselves in God's throne, and search for satisfaction in dirty, vile sensuality."⁵⁶ Pieper objected less the actual ideas and teaching of Confucius, as Voskamp had. Rather he criticized the followers of Confucius,

⁵⁰ Rudolf Pieper, *Unkraut, Knospen und Blüten aus dem "blümigen Reiche der Mitte"* (Steyl: Verlag der Missionsdruckerei, 1900), 572.

⁵¹ Josef Freinademetz, "Wer trägt die Hauptschuld an der Bluttat von Tschantjatschuang?," *Kleiner Herz Jesu Bote* 25, no. 5 (1898), 39.

⁵² Anton Volpert, "Ein Mandarin, wie er sein soll," *Kleiner Herz Jesu Bote* 23, no. 6 (1896), 46.

⁵³ Pieper, *Unkraut, Knospen, und Blüten*, 570.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 577.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

who transformed his teachings into “the most formidable bulwark of the educated elite in opposition to the advance of Christianity in China.”⁵⁷

Yet, in the late 19th and early 20th century the BMS and the SVD worked against the Jesuit tradition of honoring and venerating Confucius as a philosopher of world-historical importance. Instead, they sought to point out the particularity and locality of Confucius, and in so doing to belittle his theoretical and ideological significance.⁵⁸ He was ultimately the “national hero of the Chinese people, the false idol of millions.”⁵⁹ For the SVD and the BMS, Confucius was the false prophet who led the Chinese astray; they needed Jesus and Christianity to reform their “mistaken ways.”⁶⁰

In the aftermath of the Boxer Uprising, Steinmetz argues that “Sinophilia made a powerful comeback” in the broader German public.⁶¹ Kaiser Wilhelm II’s infamous anti-Asian slurs, exemplified in his infamous *Hunnenrede*, provoked a public outcry. The Socialists in the *Reichstag* pounced on this opportunity, and condemned the atrocities committed by the Germans in their retaliatory expedition against the Boxers.⁶² Reflecting these sympathetic public portrayals of the Chinese, liberal missionary societies transformed and changed their approach. The famous liberal missionary Richard Wilhelm founded the Confucius Society, which encouraged exchange, dialogue, and eventually a synthesis between German and Chinese culture. Wilhelm rejected the view of Western superiority over that of China.⁶³

The conservative SVD and BMS rejected such a synthesis and continued their vehement critiques of traditional Chinese society until the First World War. While the liberals interpreted the Boxer Uprising as a moment of Western imperialistic barbarism, for the conservatives, the Boxer Uprising only confirmed the negative influence that Confucianism as an ideology held over the Chinese people. Moreover, the defeat of the Boxers convinced the conservative missionaries that a new day was dawning for the spread of Christian missionaries in China. Stenz boldly proclaimed, “In 1900 the Chinese Boxers drank deep of Christian blood, but once more this blood of the martyrs became the ‘seed of new Christians.’”⁶⁴ For Stenz, the Boxer Uprising thus could potentially lay the foundations for the flourishing of Christianity in China.

The Chinese Revolution of 1911 also provided the missionaries with optimism. Even though he was a monarchist and no fan of revolutionary upheavals, Voskamp saw the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ See Lionel Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

⁵⁹ Pieper, *Unkraut, Knospen, und Blüten*, 570.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 577.

⁶¹ Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, 494.

⁶² Ibid., 495.

⁶³ There is a large literature in German on the career of Richard Wilhelm. See, for example, Hartmut Walravens and Thomas Zimmer, eds., *Richard Wilhelm (1873-1930) Missionar in China und Vermittler chinesischen Geistesguts* (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica Steyler Verlag, 2008). For the best overview of Wilhelm’s career in English, see “Orientalists and ‘Others,’” in Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁶⁴ Georg M. Stenz, *Twenty-Five Years in China, 1893-1918* (Techy, IL: Mission Press, 1924), 121.

Chinese Revolution as the breakthrough that Christianity needed to gain a more solid foothold in China. Voskamp wrote,

during times of Revolution, it has been revealed how rotten the Chinese national character has become through the long years of injustice, tyranny, and the shameful oppression of all human rights. The Chinese lack a spirit of liberated courage, and instead the Chinese spirit is dominated by slavish fear. That the Holy Spirit, that wonderful artist, will build his church on such material and in such conditions, is something unprecedented and worthy of praise.⁶⁵

SVD and BMS missionaries saw the defeat of the Boxers and the fall of the Qing empire as an opportunity. Here, finally, was a chance for China to break with its Confucian past and dismantle the shackles of Confucian ideology. The smoldering ruins and cataclysmic suffering portended a hopeful future for Christianity in China; it was only in the wake of such radical change that Christianity could find grounds to erect its church upon.

The Impact of World War I on the BMS

The First World War changed everything. It shattered the confidence that both missionary societies held in the eventual triumph of Christianity in China. It completely altered the institutional and intellectual landscape of the BMS and the SVD, and uprooted their critiques of Confucianism and traditional Chinese society.

The biggest blow that the First World War dealt was institutional. On the eve of the first World War, the BMS was at the height of its influence in China. Its operations in China had grown rapidly since Germany had claimed Jiaozhou Bay as a protectorate in 1898. Within fifteen years, the BMS had established three major stations in the German protectorate, employed eight permanent missionaries, paid seventy-two Chinese helpers, and counted more than one thousand registered Chinese Christians. It also administered three elementary and middle schools that had more than three hundred children. Along with its work in the South of China, the Berlin Missionary society boasted almost 10,000 baptized Chinese Christians, thirty missionaries, more than 300 paid Chinese helpers, fifteen major stations, and around 300 or so smaller missions outposts.⁶⁶

The most dramatic impact on the mission occurred in Northern China. The mission in Qingdao had depended heavily on support from the German colonial government, and the Japanese occupation devastated it. After the war, only two out of seven missionaries remained in Qingdao, and the mission society could barely afford to pay the salaries of the various Chinese preachers, evangelists, and teachers.⁶⁷ Many of the German missionaries in Qingdao had spent much of the war in Japanese POW camps, and their missionary activities had been disrupted or effectively halted. The BMS was desperately in need of

⁶⁵ Gerber, *Voskamps und Wilhelm*, 138.

⁶⁶ *Jahresbericht der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1913* (Berlin: Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1913), 212. The statistical accuracy of the registered Chinese Christians can be debated and are difficult to verify.

⁶⁷ Hellmut Lehmann, *Zur Zeit und zur Unzeit: Geschichte der Berliner Mission 1918-1972 in Drei Bänden*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Berliner Missionswerk, 1989), 13.

money, and by 1924 would end its operations in Jiaozhou, turning over its mission stations, as well as Voskamp's employment, into the hands of the American Lutherans. The BMS's foray into Northern China, which it had so jubilantly celebrated only two decades before, had failed. Commenting on the end of the society's influence in Northern China, Voskamp wrote, "These painful experiences have given us new perspectives on Germany's relationship to the other peoples (*Völkern*) of the World."⁶⁸

Beyond the immediate institutional concerns, the First World War also strained the BMS's relationship to the rest of the international Protestant missionary community. Ever since the start of the war, since most of the German missionaries operated in British territories, "German missionaries became aliens on enemy territory."⁶⁹ At the beginning of 1919, German missionaries, Protestant and Catholic, had been repatriated from Allied colonies in Africa and India. Under pressure from the Allied powers, and primarily from the French, the Chinese government had also begun a process of expelling German missionaries from Shandong in 1919.⁷⁰ German Protestant and Catholic missions leaders, such as Karl Axenfeld and Joseph Schmidlin, were united in their vocal criticism of Article 438 in the Versailles Treaty, which they interpreted as a confiscation of German pre-war missionary property. Joseph Schmidlin, the most famous Catholic missiologist and counterpart to Gustav Warneck, called Article 438 "a complete destruction of German missions inside of the Allied controlled territories."⁷¹ Axenfeld called the Article an "outrage" and "the most immoral demand ever made by any government."⁷² The German Protestant reaction to Article 438 exacerbated the tensions with the Anglo-American establishment; leading members of the British community saw Article 438 as safeguarding German property, while the German missionary establishment viewed Mott and Oldham with increasing suspicion.⁷³

The German Protestant Missions Council (*Deutsches Evangelisches Missionsausschuss*), a coalition of the most influential German Protestant missions leaders, refused to send delegates to an International Missions Council in 1921, despite the influential Englishman J. H. Oldham's repeated appeals to "come back to a world which is learning more and more to think internationally—a world enormously different from the world of 1914."⁷⁴ Many Anglo-American missionary leaders, such as Franc Lenwood, saw this German refusal to join the international conference as a serious affront to international cooperation. In a series of contentious letters with Friedrich Würz, the Missions director of the Basel Missions Society, Lenwood remarked,

⁶⁸ Voskamp himself had suffered during the war. His son Gerhard died during the Japanese siege of Qingdao, and Voskamp spent much of the time under house arrest in Qingdao, unable to move freely among the various missions stations that he was in charge of supervising. See the files in the Archives of the Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, BMW 1/ 6288.

⁶⁹ Keith Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J. H. Oldham* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 147.

⁷⁰ Andrzej Miotk, *Das Missionsverständnis im historischen Wandel am Beispiel der Enzyklika "Maximum illud"* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1999), 50-51.

⁷¹ Josef Schmidlin, "Der Todesstoß gegen die deutschen Missionen?," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 9 (1919), 191.

⁷² Clements, *Faith on the Frontier*, 167.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ "Abschrift eines Teils aus dem Brief von Mr. J. H. Oldham, London, an Missionsinspektor F. Würz," 18 July 1921, BMW 1 / 8234: Deutscher Evangelischer Missionsausschuss (DEMA) Krieg, Bd. 6.

There is still something of the feeling that Germans belong to a different type of humanity... Once more I say it would have been impossible to make a greater mistake, or to do anything more hostile to the essential interests of German Missions and to their return, than that at this great Conference Germany should have refused to be represented [. . .]. It seems to me that the Germans have ceased to remember the possibility that they themselves may be, or have been, wrong at all.⁷⁵

Lenwood's comments reflected animosity between the Germans and Anglo-Americans stemming to before the First World War. In 1900, John Mott organized an ecumenical conference in New York, intending to bring together all of the major Protestant missionary countries to one conference. The German missionary establishment looked upon Mott's ambitions with suspicion. Gustav Warneck, the most prominent German mission theologian, delivered a rousing attack on John Mott's calls to "Evangelize the World in this Generation." As a result of Warneck's provocations, the German Protestant Missions Committee refused to send delegates to the New York Ecumenical Conference in 1900.⁷⁶ Even the Edinburgh Conference of 1910, which was lauded later in the 1950s by J. H. Oldham and John R. Mott as one of the groundstones in the international ecumenical movement, was fraught with national rivalries. For many leading members of the German Protestant missionary movement, Edinburgh merely confirmed their suspicion of the growing Anglo-American domination in world missions.⁷⁷

When John Mott and other Anglo-American leaders proposed the idea of convening a General Conference in Shanghai in 1922 to discuss the future of the Chinese Church, the Berlin Missions agreed to send a delegation. The conference of 1922 brought into fruition an effort, dating back to the 1870s to bring together all of the major Protestant missionary societies and denominations in China. In 1907, during a conference celebrating the 100th anniversary of Robert Morrison's foray into China, the missionaries had discussed the idea of organizing a National Interdenominational Council.⁷⁸ But the missionaries decided that China was still not ready for this type of national organization. After the Edinburgh Conference of 1910, the China Continuation Committee was formed, with John Mott as its chairman. The Committee was "appointed to fill the interval until a more representative Council could be brought into existence."⁷⁹ The executive committee and staff of the Committee were a mix of Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries, dominated primarily by the Americans. C. Y. Cheng, then a pastor of a Chinese Independent Church in Beijing, and E. C. Lobenstine, of the American Presbyterian Mission, became joint secretaries of the committee.⁸⁰ The C. C. C. held annual meetings, and also formed special committees that

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ William R. Hutchison, "Innocence Abroad: The "American Religion" in Europe," *Church History* 51, no. 1 (1982), 79-80.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ E. C. Lobenstine, "Report of the China Continuation Committee to the National Christian Conference," in *The Chinese Church: As Revealed in the National Christian Conference Held in Shanghai*, ed. Frank Joseph Rawlinson, Helen Thorburn, and Donald MacGillivray (Shanghai: The Oriental press, 1922), 47.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 55. Cheng became famous for helping to make a congregation previously owned by the London

would investigate and give reports on the state of Christianity in China. Funding for the C. C. C. came primarily from North American and Great Britain.⁸¹

The C. C. C. had, from its inception, been designed as a “temporary committee serving in a transition period.”⁸² After seeing the destruction of the World War to the state of missionary societies, coupled with a rising sense of nationalism among Chinese Christians, the C. C. C. decided that the “time has already arrived when Church and even Mission policies should no longer be so largely determined by the foreigner.”⁸³ The C. C. C. thus decided to call a meeting to order, to select a new National Christian Council, that would be the face of the new Chinese Christian Church. In May of 1922, the first National Christian Conference (NCC) met in Shanghai, in order to assess the “past work of the Christian movement,” as well as to discuss “the future development of the Chinese Church.”⁸⁴ The Council was a mixture of Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries, and for the first time there were more Chinese Christians than foreign missionaries at the conference.⁸⁵ More than 130 denominational groups, with a total of 1185 people, attended the conference.⁸⁶ At the conference, the Chinese Christian C. Y. Cheng was elected permanent chairman of the council.⁸⁷ “For the first time,” Frank Rawlinson triumphantly proclaimed, “Christian opinion found national and united expression.”⁸⁸

Yet proclamations of Christian unity were largely rhetorical. The leadership of the NCC consisted primarily of mainline, liberal missionaries. From its inception, conservative missionary groups criticized the NCC for its heavy emphasis on the Social Gospel and its support of modernist theology. The Southern Baptists of America refused to send delegates to the Conference in 1922, and by 1926, the China Inland Mission and the Christian and Missionary Alliance, two of the largest members of the group, withdrew from the organization.⁸⁹

The BMS missionaries debated, from the beginning, whether to send missionaries to the conference. Ultimately, they sent four missionaries and four Chinese Christians, with Lin De-en among them, to the conference.⁹⁰ Although they had refused to send delegates to conferences in Europe, BMS leaders agreed to participate in the General Conference in Shanghai. The conference presented an opportunity for the newly appointed director,

Missionary Society independent. He is a neglected figure in the historiography of the Chinese Church. See Liu Jiafeng 劉家峰, *Liyi yu ronghe: Zhongguo jidutu yu bense jiaobui de xingqi* 離異與融合：中國基督徒與本色教會的興起 [Difference and Integration: Chinese Christianity and the Rise of an Indigenous Church] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe 上海人民出版社, 2005), 205-206.

⁸¹ Lobenstine, “The Chinese Church Revealed,” 70.

⁸² Ibid., 75.

⁸³ Ibid., 76.

⁸⁴ Frank Joseph Rawlinson, Helen Thorburn, and Donald MacGillvray, eds., *The Chinese Church: As Revealed in the National Christian Conference Held in Shanghai* (Shanghai: The Oriental press, 1922), 30.

⁸⁵ See Ibid., 21. There were 474 Chinese Christians, and 453 foreign missionaries.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929), 797.

⁸⁸ Rawlinson, Thorburn, and MacGillvray, *The Chinese Church Revealed*, VIII.

⁸⁹ Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 797.

⁹⁰ *Jahresbericht der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1922* (Berlin: Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1922), 151.

Siegfried Knak, to make his first official tour to inspect all of the missionary holdings in China. Voskamp also attended the conference.⁹¹

International tensions mirrored themselves at the 1922 conference in Shanghai. Voskamp and Knak felt slighted and beleaguered by not only the Anglo-American missionaries, but by the Chinese leadership at the Conference as well. “My personal impression is that the Chinese leadership ignored us,” Voskamp noted, and “they deliberately side-stepped the problem of German missions in China.”⁹² Despite the rhetoric of unity at the conference, Voskamp and Knak left feeling pessimistic about a future united front among the various Christian denominations. The field remained too fragmented, with too many languages and different agendas. Knak noted that no language unified the Chinese Christians, let alone within the foreign mission societies.⁹³

More troubling to Knak and Voskamp was the increasingly liberal and “modernist turn” among leading American missionaries. Voskamp complained about the dominance of American Social Gospel theology at the conference, reporting that the “practical Americans” were much more interested in “progress, education, democracy, and freedom” than preaching Gospel along the lines of the “Bible and the Reformation.”⁹⁴ The American dominance at the conference had a real impact on the Chinese Christians, who had adopted much of the American liberal thinking. Similarly, Knak complained about the dominant influence of “American liberal theology,” and how, as a “result of the War,” the Chinese Christian leadership at the conference had a “particularly American make-up.”⁹⁵ He mocked the “American peculiarities” that were evident throughout the conference. He scorned “the constant, often senseless hand-clapping, the ballet-like dances of young Chinese women, which should be show-cased at a musical performance rather than a conference, the often invocation of the so-called equal rights for women.”⁹⁶

Yet Knak did come away from the conference agreeing with some of the proclaimed goals of the Church council. He was thoroughly impressed by the opening speech of Cheng Jingyi, who had once been a student of Voskamp’s old assistant, Song En Phui. Cheng, Knak wrote, was a man that one could “look up to with confidence and respect.”⁹⁷ In his opening address to the Conference, the Chairman C. Y. Cheng argued that Christianity in China still faced serious challenges because it was “regarded as a foreign religion.”⁹⁸ Christianity, Cheng continued, “is a universal religion and is capable of adapting itself to the needs of every land in every age, should become naturalized in China.”⁹⁹ In order for Christianity to become an indigenous Christian institution, Cheng believed that the Chinese Christian

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Carl J. Voskamp, Bericht des Jahres 1922 von Miss. Sup. C. J. Voskamp. Tsingtau, Nordchina, 13 February 1923, BMW 1 / 6288: Tsingtau West bd. 2, 355.

⁹³ *Jahresbericht der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1922, 151.*

⁹⁴ Lehmann, *Zur Zeit und zur Unzeit*, 8. See also Carl J. Voskamp, Bericht des Jahres 1922 von Miss. Sup. C. J. Voskamp. Tsingtau, Nordchina, 13 February 1923, BMW 1 / 6288: Tsingtau West bd. 2, 356.

⁹⁵ *Jahresbericht der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1922, 150.*

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 151.

⁹⁸ Rawlinson, Thorburn, and MacGillvray, *The Chinese Church Revealed*, 32.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Church must “develop along lines that will make it independent of foreign control, and free from the stigma of being a foreign institution.”¹⁰⁰ The diversity of the Christian landscape was so vast, Cheng pointed out, that “no one particular plan or method” would determine how the Church would become independent.¹⁰¹ In order to achieve this goal, Cheng called for the “whole-hearted co-operation of Chinese Christian and Christian missionary. They must work shoulder to shoulder. Their united efforts are essential.”¹⁰² At the end of the conference, Frank Rawlinson triumphantly proclaimed, “In this Conference ‘the Chinese Church,’ the subject of all its thinking, became a visibile entity in a way not true hitherto.”¹⁰³

Knak agreed with Cheng that the time had come for the Church in China to become independent from foreign influence. Yet he did not share Rawlinson's confidence nor the generally triumphant tone of the reports that the NCC generated. For Knak, the conference raised more questions than it solved. The relationship between missionaries and their Chinese congregations remained a largely unsolved question. It was unclear to Knak whether missionaries should now be considered “in the service” of the Chinese church and under “Chinese leadership.”¹⁰⁴ He further saw the splits between the various political and theological differences among the different denominations as being too large to breach. Moreover, Knak thought that the NCC's desire to establish a “national” Church for all Chinese Christians to be united under as an impossible fantasy. In reality, this united national Church would be a vehicle for “certain parties and personalities to advance their own particular political goals.”¹⁰⁵ In reality, as the minorities at the Conference and in the council, Knak feared that the so-called “National Church of China” would be a way for American missionary societies to continue their dominance within China. Voskamp agreed with his analysis, writing that “for many of the Anglo-American missionaries, the development of their missionary work also means an advancement of their political interests.”¹⁰⁶

For Knak, the most difficult hurdle for independence “was not financial, but rather, independence from foreign ideologies.”¹⁰⁷ The biggest danger that the Chinese Church faced, Knak argued, was the influence of “modernist theology that many American carry with them.”¹⁰⁸ At the conference, Knak was encouraged by the fact that most of the Chinese Christians he met held onto beliefs strongly grounded in the Bible. But the Chinese “theological independence was not great, and their experiences in the faith are not very deep.”¹⁰⁹ Knak was thus afraid that this American liberal-modernistic theology would sway the uncertain faith of the Chinese Christians. Knak noted that at the conference, a missionary even had the gall to suggest that “the birth of an independent Chinese Church

¹⁰⁰. Ibid., 33.

¹⁰¹. Ibid.

¹⁰². Ibid., 36.

¹⁰³. Ibid., VII.

¹⁰⁴. *Jahresbericht der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1922, 152.*

¹⁰⁵. Ibid.

¹⁰⁶. Carl Johannes Voskamp to the Committee, n. d., BMW 1/ 4326: Voskamps, Personalia, 194. Ibid.

¹⁰⁷. *Jahresbericht der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1922, 151.*

¹⁰⁸. Ibid., 153.

¹⁰⁹. Ibid.

would help the churches of the West, and free the Western Church from its unfruitful theological arguments.”¹¹⁰

Nationalist resentment rather than true theological disagreement fueled these criticisms. After the war, the Berlin missionaries embarked on a plan to inculcate new and closer ties with other German missionary societies that they had previously disagreed. Before the war, the Berlin missionaries had refused to work with liberal German missionaries; after the war they embraced the missionaries because of nationalist sympathies. When the liberal Weimar Mission founded a German Protestant congregation in Qingdao in 1923, the Berlin Missions was now willing to provide some assistance to help them run the congregation and the affiliated school.¹¹¹ Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, the Berlin, Barmen, and Basel missionary societies had various theological disagreements. But immediately after the war, they came together to form a German-speaking alliance within China.

The BMS surfaced from the war a changed organization. For one, they had a more narrow geographical reach: the financial devastation of the war forced them to abandon their missionary holdings in northern China. They also willingly isolated themselves from the broader international community, seeking to build alliances only with other German missionary organizations. The Berlin Missionary Society thus emerged from the war as a more nationalist organization, committed to building a more expansive German missionary presence throughout the world.

The Impact of World War I on the SVD

Like their Protestant counterparts, German Catholic missionaries faced the danger of expulsion from the mission field after the war.¹¹² Here, the SVD's Catholic identity and international connections helped them to stay in China. The SVD Bishop of Shandong, Augustin Henninghaus, appealed to the seven French bishops in China for help. As a result, the French bishops lobbied for the SVD to continue to stay in China.¹¹³ The SVD's American connections also proved to be a major asset. The SVD had established a mission presence in America in 1895, and by 1909 had opened a mission seminary in Techny, Illinois. The SVD had allies in America, who helped advocate for them to the American government. James Cardinal Gibbons made a plea to the State Department, protesting the Chinese government's plans to expel German missionaries and priests from China, citing the SVD's American affiliations.¹¹⁴ One SVD missionary acknowledged the importance of the American effort: “we have to thank America for being allowed to stay and continue our

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ For discussion about the future of a German school in Qingdao, see, for example, Wilhelm Seufert to Johannes Witte, 24 February 1923, Zentralarchiv des Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz, Abt. 180. 1., Nr. 230., 106-110. Personal enmity between Voskamp and Richard Wilhelm continued, and can be found in numerous letters in the archive.

¹¹² Hartwich, *Steyle Missionare in China. III*, 526.

¹¹³ Ibid., 531-532.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 533.

work in China.”¹¹⁵ The SVD had another major international advocate: the Vatican. Msgr. Jarlin, the Bishop of Beijing, procured a guarantee from General Marshall Foch that Henninghaus and his missionaries would be able to stay in China.¹¹⁶

What surprised the German Catholics the most was the support that they garnered from non-Christian Chinese. A coalition of local elites, including notable and worthy local members of various organizations, literati, merchants, and government officials had petitioned the government to allow the German missionaries to stay.¹¹⁷ Even the descendants of Confucius had signed the petition. Henninghaus himself was shocked by the support of the Kong family, noting,

this is noteworthy, because for decades, the largest opposition to the establishment of missions in Yenzhoufu has come from the descendents of Confucius, who were afraid of losing the sacred hometown of Confucius to Catholic missionaries. But it has come to pass that those, who, twenty two years ago were enemies, now have proven to be sincere and sympathetic friends.¹¹⁸

Despite this groundswell of international support, the question of personnel remained a serious concern. The First World War left the SVD’s mission stations understaffed, as the SVD’s headquarters in Germany no longer had the financial capability to continue to train European missionaries. As a result of this diminished financial capability, the SVD underwent an internal debate about whether to send their American brethren.¹¹⁹ Some members of the SVD leadership believed that the missionaries should remain solely European. One missionary leader questioned “whether cooperation between American and European missionaries in the same area will not create problems, because worldviews and living habits are so different.”¹²⁰ On the other hand, the bishop Augustin Henninghaus argued that the SVD needed to internationalize. Besides, Henninghaus continued, the missionary leadership had already relied on the American branch and had further promised American diplomats that more American priests would be sent to China. Furthermore, Henninghaus noted, “the Chinese now hold the Americans in very high esteem.”¹²¹ Ultimately the SVD leadership decided that “it would only be an advantage if we had American missionaries here.”¹²² In October, 1919, the first three missionaries from the American Province of the SVD received their orders to enter the missions field in China.¹²³

More broadly, the First World War sparked a serious discussion about the purpose and methods of missionary activity in the world, and Europe’s own centrality within the

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 534.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 536.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 537.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 597.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 600-601.

¹²³ Ibid., 601. The three missionaries were Father Frederick Gruhn, and then-seminarians Clifford F. King and Robert B. Clark.

arena of world missions.¹²⁴ The German Catholic missiologist Joseph Schmidlin called for a reconciliation not only of the diplomatic relations among warring nations, but also a reconsideration of how the “practical and theoretical facets of international missionary operate together.”¹²⁵ In practical terms, European Catholic missions faced a financial crisis. Even though the number of missionary vocations from Europe did not drop dramatically overall, funding for missions disappeared after the war, as European missionary societies could raise hardly less than half of their pre-war income.¹²⁶

Pope Benedict XV’s encyclical *Maximum ilud* emerged from these reflections on the future and fate of Catholic missions. In the Encyclical, Benedict XV affirmed the importance and centrality of overseas missions to the Catholic Church’s work in the world. Asserting the universality and non-Eurocentric character of the Catholic Church, Benedict wrote, “The Catholic Church is not an intruder in any country; nor is she alien to any people.”¹²⁷ Benedict thus encouraged missionary societies to further train local, “indigenous clergy;” the missionary “must make it his special concern to secure and train local candidates for the sacred ministry.”¹²⁸ Encouraged by the Pope’s exhortations, the SVD opened its membership to include a more diverse set of peoples. In the decade after the First World War, the SVD opened new branches across the globe, including mission seminaries in Poland, Slovakia, Kansu, Honan, England, and India.

For years, the SVD had engaged in a vigorous debate about whether to allow Chinese priests to enter the order and become members of the Society. Even though the SVD had trained and ordained local diocesan priests since the early 1900s, it had been reluctant to accept local Chinese priests into the order.¹²⁹ Bishop Henninghaus and other missionaries opposed the idea on the grounds that they “could not find worthy Chinese priests.”¹³⁰ They also argued that Chinese priests needed stronger German skills before they should be allowed to enter the missionary organization. Nevertheless, in 1924, they accepted their first Chinese novitiates into the order.¹³¹

By the late 1920s, the mission society witnessed a drastic change in its sociological makeup. The newer generation of missionaries, consisting of a mixture of nationalities, worked side by side in China for the Gospel under the SVD banner. What began as a nationalistic, pre-dominantly German missionary society had now transformed into a genuinely international organization, with an increasingly diverse membership.

The BMS and the SVD thus survived the war having learned very different lessons. The SVD, which already had an international element to its organization before the war,

¹²⁴ Miotk, *Das Missionsverständnis*, 45.

¹²⁵ Josef Schmidlin, “Weltfrieden und Weltmission,” *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 9 (1919), 7.

¹²⁶ Miotk, *Das Missionsverständnis*, 40.

¹²⁷ Benedict XV, *Maximum Ilud*, Apostolic Letter on the Propagation of the Faith Throughout the World, 30 November 1919, <http://www.svdcuria.org/public/mission/docs/encycl/mi-en.htm>, §16.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, §14.

¹²⁹ Ernest Brandewie, *The Last Shall Be First: The Life of Thomas Tien Keng-hsin, China’s First Cardinal* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2007), 45.

¹³⁰ Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China. III*, 236-237.

¹³¹ I will cover the discussions and debates around admitting Chinese priests in more detail in chapter 4.

became even more global in perspective and makeup. This transition to an international organization helped the SVD to emerge from the First World War a stronger institution, as it could rely on its American branch both for financial and political support. The BMS, on the other hand, lacked the international cooperation and support. Rather than confront this weakness, the BMS doubled down on its nationalist ties. While the SVD altered its methods to become more international, the BMS did little to make such adjustments.

The New Culture Movement Criticizes Confucianism and Christianity

Change was also spurred by another set of actors who made their voices on the national and international scenes: Chinese Christians. In the immediate years after the war, a new generation of confident Chinese Christian intellectuals, especially among the Protestants, emerged, demanding that the Western missionaries devolve control of the missions to the Chinese. Many of these Chinese Christian leaders were young men who had lived through the Boxer Uprising and came into their own during a two-decade period that scholars have dubbed the “Golden Age” of Christian missions.¹³² After the Boxer Uprising, Western missionary societies poured in resources and personnel to China. Their efforts bore fruit: the number of converts increased rapidly. Chinese Protestants numbered around 100,000 in 1900, and by the early 1920s had grown five-fold to around 500,000.¹³³ Catholic conversions grew at a slower, but nonetheless steady pace, and the total number of Chinese Catholics far outnumbered Protestants.¹³⁴ These converts received education from missionary schools; the most brilliant of them traveled abroad, mainly to the U. S.¹³⁵ By the early 1920s, a cohort of Chinese Christian intellectuals had returned from the West, carrying with them diplomas from the best divinity schools. These articulate, confident young men came to inhabit what Daniel Bays calls the “Sino-Foreign Protestant Establishment.”¹³⁶ They viewed Western missionaries not as adversaries, but rather as partners whom they could work with to create a new, Chinese Church.

Non-Christian Chinese traveled abroad as well. The majority of Chinese students without missionary sponsorship enrolled in universities in Japan; others went to the United States and Europe. Radicalized by ideas ranging from Dewey to Hegel to Marx, they brought their learning back with them, founding journals, publishing houses, literary societies as venues to foment cultural reform and a new intellectual climate. Spurred by Chinese nationalism, scholars and activists hoped use these venues to create a reform the Chinese nation. In this heterogeneous “New Culture Movement,” some Chinese intellectuals like Hu Shi, promoted a new vernacular language in order to disassociate China from its Confucian past.¹³⁷ Picking up on these currents, influential writers, such as Lu Xun,

¹³² See Daniel H. Bays, “The “Golden Age” of Missions and the “Sino-Foreign Protestant Establishment,” 1902-1927,” in *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

¹³³ Ibid., 94.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 115.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 101.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 99. Bays lists the most prominent members, almost all born in the decade from the 1880s and 1890s, as Cheng Jingyi (1881-1939), Yu Rizhang (1882-1936), Wang Zhengting (1882-1961), Liu Tingfang (1891-1947), Zhao Zichen (1888-1979), Hong Ye (1893-1980), and Wu Leichuan (1870-1944).

¹³⁷ There has been a large literature on the New Culture Movement, including vigorous debate over what to call it. For a good overview of the literature, see Kai-wing Chow, Tze-ki Hon, Hung-yok Ip, and Don C. Price,

injected the ideas of Western evolutionism, drawing from the works of Lamarck, Darwin, and Spencer, into their fiction to develop a modern nation.¹³⁸ Others, such as the Buddhist monk Taixu, turned towards Buddhism, finding within the synthesis of Buddhism and Western culture a medium to modernize the nation.¹³⁹

The claims of the members of the New Culture Movement were diverse, but they were united in their outrage over the proceedings at the Paris Peace Conferences in 1919. The main Chinese aim at the Peace Conferences was to reclaim the German colonial holdings in Shandong, which had been occupied by the Japanese since 1914. Despite overwhelming international public support for the Chinese sovereign claims to Shandong, the Versailles Treaty handed the territory to Japan. Outraged, on May 4th, 1919, 3000 students gathered at Tiananmen Square to protest the treaty, urging the Chinese representatives not to sign the treaty. Luo Jialun, a student leader and later prominent scholar who became the president of Qinghua University, called the protests the “May 4th Movement” in an article published several weeks after the protests.¹⁴⁰ Soon, the New Culture Movement found a political voice. Throughout China, even in remote provinces, Chinese nationalist protests formed, as Chinese participated in street demonstrations and boycotts of Japanese goods.¹⁴¹ The young Mao Zedong, hearing of the news from the inland province of Hunan, railed against the Western powers, referring to them as “a bunch of robbers bent on securing territories and indemnities,” at the same time that they “cynically championed self-determination.”¹⁴²

The Paris Peace Conference had revealed Chinese Christianity as politically impotent. The delegation of Chinese plenipotentiaries at Paris were filled with individuals who espoused a Christian education and outlook. The head of the delegation, Lu Zhengxiang, was the son of an assistant to Protestant missionaries, had received his training from Western-style schools, and had converted to Roman Catholicism when he married a Belgian.¹⁴³ The thirty-two year old Wellington Koo, the most charismatic Chinese figure at the Paris Peace Conference, the thirty-two year old Wellington Koo, who eloquently argued for the return of Shandong to China, had studied at the missionary-operated college in

eds., *Beyond the May Fourth Paradigm: In Search of Chinese modernity* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008).

¹³⁸ The literature on Lu Xun is vast. For more on the way evolutionary works influenced Lu Xun, see Andrew F. Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

¹³⁹ See Don A. Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

¹⁴⁰ See Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6. The legacy of the May 4th Movement has inspired much scholarly literature. The classic works are Tse-tung Chow, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*; Benjamin I. Schwartz, ed., *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement: A Symposium* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

¹⁴¹ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, Kindle ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Kindle location 4009.

¹⁴² Ibid., Kindle location 4025.

¹⁴³ MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 323-324. For more on the fascinating life of Lu, see Nicholas M. Keegan, “From Chancery to Cloister: The Chinese Diplomat Who Became a Benedictine Monk,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 10, no. 1 (1999): 172-185.

Shanghai, St. John's before completing a doctorate at Columbia University in New York.¹⁴⁴ With the failure of these moderate intellectuals, This

For radicals like Mao Zedong and Chen Duxiu, Christianity was lumped in with Western imperialist hypocrisy. As Daniel Bays writes, even though several Chinese intellectuals drew attempted to modernize their religious traditions, the New Culture Movement “was quite anti-religious in general, and anti-Christian in particular.”¹⁴⁵ Critics of Christianity hoped to eradicate it from the Chinese landscape, calling it an arm of Western cultural imperialism. Missionaries continued to wield extraterritorial status in China, a fact that needed Chinese nationalists.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, Chinese intellectuals turned the missionary critique of traditional Chinese culture on its head: Chinese intellectuals, under the influence of Marx and Dewey, now called Christianity “superstitious,” referring to Christianity as regressive and unmodern. As Joseph Levenson has noted,

In the seventeenth century, Chinese opposed Christianity as un-traditional. In twentieth-century China, especially after the first World War, the principal anti-Christian cry was that Christianity was un-modern. In the early instance, then, Christianity was criticized for not being Confucian; this was a criticism proper to Chinese civilization. In the latter instance, Christianity was criticized for not being scientific; and this was a criticism from western civilization.¹⁴⁷

The political and intellectual attacks by the New Culture Movement and the May 4th Movement on Christianity were not completely unwelcome among Chinese Christian intellectuals leaders. Chinese Christian leaders cleaved to their belief that Christianity was still relevant for China's modernization, but they joined the New Culture Movement's denunciation of Confucianism. As Daniel Bays comments that the Christian leaders of the Sino-Foreign Protestant Establishment “shared many of the same diagnoses of China's ills, for example the dead hand of Confucius and tradition, a patriarchal social structure that was obsolete, and a venal and corrupt politics.”¹⁴⁸ By the 1920s, other than a minority of Chinese conservatives, such as “the Last Confucian” Lian Shu-ming, the vast majority of the Chinese intellectual sphere had rejected Confucianism as retrograde.¹⁴⁹ Instead, they yearned for more radical, modern ideologies to take Confucianism's place. Many, for example, turned to Chinese Communism.¹⁵⁰

From Anti-Confucian to Anti Communist

¹⁴⁴ For an account of Koo's time at St. John's, see Stephen G. Craft, *V.K. Wellington Koo and the emergence of Modern China* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 8-13.

¹⁴⁵ Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 108.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate. Volume 1: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (Doubleday, 1964), 123.

¹⁴⁸ Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 107.

¹⁴⁹ Guy S. Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

¹⁵⁰ The best work on early Chinese Marxism remains Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

At the same time that Confucianism was coming under unprecedented scrutiny from Chinese intellectuals, German missionaries tempered, or in some extreme cases, renounced their previous criticism of traditional Confucian ideas. The most famous of these German “converts” to Confucianism was the liberal Protestant Richard Wilhelm. Wilhelm advocated for a turn towards the East and an embrace of Confucianism as a means to reinvigorate Christianity in the West.¹⁵¹ In his influential 1925 book, *Die Seele Chinas*, Wilhelm called for a “synthesis of not only two cultural spaces, but also of two humanities.”¹⁵²



Figure 10: Richard Wilhelm. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Knak and the conservative Pietists recoiled in horror at Wilhelm’s radical embrace of Confucianism. In a letter to Voskamp, Knak lambasted Wilhelm, calling him “hardly a missionary,” and claiming that he had “very little experience in parish work.” Had Wilhelm more experience with actual Chinese congregations, Knak wrote, he would have experienced the various “moral flaws” of the Chinese, rather than proffering an “idealized” image of the Chinese people.¹⁵³

Despite its refusal to embrace Wilhelm’s vision for a synthesis of East and West, the BMS’s stance on Confucianism underwent an extensive shift after the War. Nowhere was this more obvious than in Voskamp’s writings. After the war, Voskamp showed more respect for Confucius’s ideals than he had before the War. In his book, *The Chinese Preacher*, published in 1919, Voskamp described Confucius’s teachings as foreshadowing Christ. He called Confucius one of the few “spots of sunlight in the 3000 years of China’s dark

¹⁵¹ Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 470-471.

¹⁵² Richard Wilhelm, *Die Seele Chinas* (Berlin: Verlag von Reimar Hobbing, 1926), 149.

¹⁵³ Siegfried Knak to Carl Johannes Voskamp, 15 May 1926, BMW 1/ 4326: Voskamps, Personalia.

history.”¹⁵⁴ In an unpublished manuscript written in 1924, “The Chinese Classics and the Gospel,” Voskamp further presented Confucius as a Christ-like figure, arguing that had China followed the actual ideals and teachings of Confucius, it could have avoided many of China’s modern problems.¹⁵⁵

Voskamp was responding in part to the iconoclasm of the New Culture Movement and the May 4th protests. He exhibited ambivalence towards the May 4th Movement. Encouraged by the reformist and modernizing aims of the New Culture Movement, he praised Chinese intellectuals for their efforts in eliminating traditional Chinese practices such as concubinage, foot-binding, and Chinese “superstition,” all long-time goals of the Western missionary movement. In particular, he admired Cai Yuanpei, the Chancellor of Beijing University, as a Chinese intellectual who embodied the “spirit of Confucian thinking.”¹⁵⁶ He argued that Cai’s ideas of reform stemmed from his deep Confucian background and his “correct interpretation” of the Confucian classics.

But Voskamp criticized the May 4th movement for its anti-religious and materialist outlook. Voskamp argued that the May 4th reformers, who had studied in the West, had brought back the worst of the West’s teachings—materialism, atheism, and Communism—and had thus mis-interpreted the Chinese Classics. He argued that “one can find many criticisms of materialism within the Chinese Classics,” and warned that even though “Chinese students would do well to study Western European ideas and methodology, they should not ignore the invaluable values of Chinese culture or native Chinese spiritual values.”¹⁵⁷ For Voskamp, then, Confucianism was now an ally, rather than an enemy. Confucianism was summoned as an ally in the global battle between religion and atheism, spiritualism and materialism. Voskamp, who had campaigned so vigorously against Confucian values in the early 1900s, now hoped for the “correct interpretation” and, in a sense, a revival of Confucian values in China. Yet, what had not changed for Voskamp was how this “correct interpretation” of the Chinese classics could be achieved. For Voskamp, “the bridge between Occident and Orient remains in Jesus Christ alone.”

Knak, who followed the political and intellectual situation from Germany, also expressed ambivalence about the May 4th movement. He admired the May 4th Movement’s idealism, its attack on Chinese patriarchy and superstition, and its work in translating Western ideas and literature into Chinese. He also praised Hu Shi’s attempt to promote a vernacular Chinese literature. Knak wrote that the May 4th movement

inculcated a truly new spirit among intellectuals. While beforehand intellectuals would rather sit around in tea houses and concern themselves with aesthetic hobbies, Buddhist speculation, and immoral aristocrats, now a

¹⁵⁴ Carl J. Voskamp, *Der chinesische Prediger* (Berlin: Buchhandlung der Berliner ev. Missionsgesellschaft, 1919), 37.

¹⁵⁵ Idem, “Die Chinesischen Klassiker und das Evangelium.” Unpublished manuscript, July 1924, BMW 1/4326: Voskamps, Personalia.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

majority of the students are seriously engaging with the questions through the guidance of moral personalities and reasonable consideration.¹⁵⁸

But like Voskamp, Knak criticized the May 4th movement for its embrace of leftist thinking, “stemming from Soviet Russia,” which he targeted as the major sponsors behind the Chinese anti-Christian movement.¹⁵⁹ Due to the machinations of these left-leaning intellectuals, missionaries were now described to the Chinese public as “spies for the imperialist powers.”¹⁶⁰ Equally troubling to Knak, missionaries had to quell spiritual doubt that had been freshly fomented in the community of Chinese Christians and pastors.¹⁶¹ Chinese Christians were inundated with May 4th ideas, crystallized in the ubiquitous slogan “all religion is superstition; science is greater than religion.”¹⁶²

With the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in 1920, the German Pietists saw themselves under further attack from a global enemy. In his reports, Knak regularly described the global threat of revolutionary and anti-Christian movements that confronted the BMS. In 1926, for example, Knak described South China as overrun with “Communist propaganda” and “Russian agitators filling the land with their flyers and speeches.”¹⁶³ Knak intimated that these “Russian agitators” had infiltrated local the local militia groups and the government in Canton.¹⁶⁴

Knak believed that Christendom was in a moment of crisis. There were periods in history, Knak argued, when the “Gospel spread through the earth as if carried by Angels’ hands.”¹⁶⁵ The 1920s was not such a period. Knak wrote, “Christendom is standing on the dock...It is hard times. The good news of God’s grace and salvation of sin is not what people want to hear.”¹⁶⁶ The world had transitioned to a “period of secularism.”¹⁶⁷ Christianity faced a challenge from “that magical word, science,” which led people to focus on the material rather than the spiritual world. The worldwide missionary movement was also threatened by nationalists who rejected the presence of foreign missionaries in their lands.¹⁶⁸ Finally, the success of the Russian Revolution had spawned Bolshevik imitators across the globe. For Knak and the BMS missionaries, they now sought allies in order to defeat a common enemy on multiple global fronts. The “voices of Chinese Christians, find an echo throughout East Asia, in South Africa, in Russia, and also in Germany.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁵⁸. Siegfried Knak, *Die chinesischen Christen unter den gegenwärtigen Wandlungen in China* (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1928), 30.

¹⁵⁹. *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁶⁰. *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹. I discuss in further detail how Chinese Christians responded to these secular attacks in chapter six.

¹⁶². *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁶³. Siegfried Knak, “Unsere Mission in China unter den antichristlichen Strömungen,” *Berliner Missionsberichte* (1926), 25.

¹⁶⁴. *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵. Siegfried Knak, “Unzeit?,” *Berliner Missionsberichte* 3 (March 1926), 31.

¹⁶⁶. *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷. *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁶⁸. *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁶⁹. *Ibid.*, 31.

For Knak, only Christianity and Christian missions could truly liberate the Chinese people.¹⁷⁰ China still needed Christian missions in order for it to be truly transformed. Like Voskamp, Knak recognized that Christian missionaries needed to rethink their relationship with the Chinese classics. Understanding the Chinese classics and the history of Chinese culture, he wrote, was crucial for Christianity to take root in China. Knak argued that lasting changes “cannot be delivered without much contemplation or discussion about China’s history, its present, its piety, and its spiritual heritage.”¹⁷¹

Yet Knak remained critical of Chinese Christianity. He warned that “syncretism” between Chinese indigenous religion and Christianity could diminish the messages and truths of the Christian Gospel. At the Jerusalem Conference of 1928, Knak wrote, Chinese representatives showed their “lack of understanding of the essence of Christianity, when they talked about how little difference there was between Confucianism and Christianity.”¹⁷² He further railed against the dangers of the “relativism that dominates our epoch.”¹⁷³ In “regular daily practice,” missionaries too often only advertised Christianity as a “better form of the Confucian ethic.”¹⁷⁴

In the 1920s, Knak and the BMS missionaries significantly altered their method of engagement with their traditional enemy, Confucianism. No longer the primary threat to the promulgation of the Gospel in China, the grounds of the battle had shifted, the enemy had changed. The enemy now was liberal-modernistic theology, global Bolshevism, and a rising anti-Christian movement that was abetted by Chinese nationalism.

Knak and the BMS were not the only ones within the German missionary landscape who thought along these lines. Knak’s view of Confucianism was typical among the leading members of the German Protestant Missions Council *Deutsche Evangelische Missionsauschuss Committee*, a coalition of missions directors of all of the largest, oldest, and most conservative German Protestant mission societies — including Basel, Bremen, Barmen, and the Moravian Brothers.¹⁷⁵ As Wilhelm Oehler, a missions inspector for the Basel Mission, wrote in 1930, “China is in the midst of a decisive transformation in its whole spiritual foundation. It now has a new Bible. The classics that Confucius had collected and edited 2400 years ago, and had held such a dominant position in China for so long, is now dethroned. Sun Yat-sen now sits in that throne.”¹⁷⁶ The missions director of the Basel Mission Society, Karl Hartenstein, also spoke of an “anti-Christian front” of relativism, secularism, Bolshevism, and nationalism.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁰ Knak, *Die chinesischen Christen*, 16.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 49.

¹⁷² Ibid., 50.

¹⁷³ Siegfried Knak, *Säkularismus und Mission* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1929), 25.

¹⁷⁴ Idem, *Die chinesischen Christen*, 50.

¹⁷⁵ For more on the *Missionsauschuss*, see Werner Ustorf, *Sailing on the Next Tide: Missions, Missiology and the Third Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2000).

¹⁷⁶ Wilhelm Oehler, “Der alte Missionsbefehl im neuen China,” *Jahrbuch der vereinigten deutschen Missionskonferenzen* (1930), 50.

¹⁷⁷ Karl Hartenstein, *Der Kampf um Christus im Fernen Osten* (Stuttgart: Evang. Missionsverlag, 1937).

For Knak and the BMS, what remained unchanged was the antidote for China's salvation. China still needed the message of "Jesus Christ in his biblical shape and the biblical Gospel from the Holy God, who hates sin but loves the sinner and offered his son on the cross in order to save the world."¹⁷⁸ Ultimately, Knak and the BMS did not waver on the idea that China needed to convert to Christianity.

The SVD's Changing Conceptions of Space

Like the BMS, the SVD also saw itself as having come under attack from a global enemy. In the 1930s, the image of China as a dangerous place, full of enemies against the Gospel, proliferated the SVD's missionary journals. The yearly and monthly reports about China were littered with descriptions of robbers and bandits, who threatened to destroy missionary properties.¹⁷⁹ Yet, the enemies who threatened the safety of the missionaries in China were now the Chinese Communists, "the Bolsheviks," who disrupted and opposed the missionary work of the German missionaries in China.

Missionaries described the "battle for China" as one between the forces of Christianity and an alliance between "Bolsheviks" and "nationalists."¹⁸⁰ The missionary Adam Mayer, working in Shandong, called Chinese Communism a "brother of Chinese nationalism, and has for the past ten years been tied together, knocking on the gates of the Middle Kingdom."¹⁸¹ Mayer wrote that anti-Christian nationalism was undergirded by an anti-religious, anti-Christian sentiment.¹⁸² In the schools, Bolsheviks and nationalists combined to advance slogans that called for a "rejection of Christ."¹⁸³ The influence of these secular nationalists had penetrated the local elementary schools in Shandong. Mayer reported, with dismay, that the elementary schools taught Darwinism to the students, and reprinted a page from the textbook that showed the evolutionary scheme of humankind from an ape to human.¹⁸⁴

Whereas in the 19th century the missionaries saw the enemy as a localized, inept, Confucian bureaucracy, now the enemy was a global, implacable, Communist insurgency. In 1932, reporting on how Bolsheviks who had come "determined not to negotiate" had stormed a missionary school in Haidian, Henan, the missionary August Zmarzly commented that "there are such similar types of people in Germany as well."¹⁸⁵ The missionaries thus lumped the Communist threat in China into a broader wave of "world revolution."¹⁸⁶ But at the same time, there was something distinctly Chinese about this Communist insurgency: it

¹⁷⁸ Knak, *Die chinesischen Christen*, 51.

¹⁷⁹ See for example, Augustin Henninghaus, "Neujahrsgruss aus Yenschowfu, Südschantung, China," *Steyler Missionsbote* 59, no. 4 (January 1932): 73-81.

¹⁸⁰ Adam Mayer, "Der Kampf um China," *Steyler Missionsbote* 58, no. 3 (December 1930), 49-50.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Adam Mayer, "Bunte Missionspost," *Steyler Missionsbote* 59, no. 1 (1931), 21-22.

¹⁸⁵ August Zmarzly, "Bolschewisten stürmen eine Missionsschule," *Steyler Missionsbote* 60, no. 2 (1932), 49.

¹⁸⁶ Mayer, "Der Kampf um China," 49.

was the latest incarnation of a xenophobic Chinese nationalism, intent on destroying the advances of the Gospel in China.

The Catholic missionaries thus aggressively defended themselves against the Communist and anti-Christian accusations that they were merely “handmaidens” of Western Confucianism. The missionaries claimed that they were only in China for the “love of the China, out of concern for the state of the world missions; it is honorable to shed our blood for the sake of a new, free China.”¹⁸⁷ What did the missionaries love about China? The life of poverty, the ideal of martyrdom, and the dream of converting the largest country in the world still comprised the attraction of China. In this way, they continued to marshall the tropes of traditional Catholic missionary work.

But ironically, missionaries came to show increasing admiration for their old nemeses: traditional Chinese culture and Confucianism. In a short conversion biography of a Chinese maid, “Martha,” for example, the missionary Albert Schote praised her “true Chinese character.”¹⁸⁸ Schote wrote Martha was a thoroughly “clever” woman, able to save and manage her resources in ways that preserved her income.¹⁸⁹ In the early 1900s, when missionaries used the word “clever” (*Klugheit*), it was a code word to describe the Chinese as characteristically “deceitful” and “full of lies.”¹⁹⁰ But by the 1930s, Schote wrote of Martha’s “cleverness, frugality, and religious piety.” These tools aided her faith and provided tools to become Christian. To be “Chinese” and “Christian” were no longer fundamentally contradictory identities.

But perhaps the transformation of the SVD's attitudes were no where more evident than in the career of Augustin Henninghaus. On the eve of the First World War, Henninghaus believed that Confucianism was in the midst of revival, and he foresaw a “battle between the young, emerging Christendom in China with the new materialistic heathens and a re-animated Confucianism.”¹⁹¹ He saw evidence of this Confucian revival among not only conservative scholars, but a whole host of “high-level bureaucrats, governors, and military men,” who “supported the establishment of Confucianism as a state religion.”¹⁹² Henninghaus concluded that far from being destroyed by the Boxers and fall of the Qing dynasty, the old forces of tradition and Confucianism exhibited a remarkable resilience: “in every case, the heathens have shown that they are in no way inclined to evacuate their positions for Christianity without a battle.”¹⁹³

After the war, Henninghaus’s strident criticism and combative tone towards Confucianism softened. In 1926, Henninghaus published a biography of Josef Freinademetz, one of the first two SVD missionaries sent to China. The purpose of the biography was

¹⁸⁷. August Zmarzly, “Was wollen die Missionare in China?,” *Steyler Missionsbote* 59, no. 4 (January 1932), 83.

¹⁸⁸. Albert Schote, “Eine weise Rose aus dem blumigen Reiche der Mitte,” *Steyler Missionsbote* 59, no. 4 (1932), 86.

¹⁸⁹. *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰. Stenz, *Unter Heimat des Konfuzius*, 183. Also see Lydia Liu’s chapter on national character in Liu, *Translingual Practice*.

¹⁹¹. Augustin Henninghaus, “Neujahrgruss an die Wohltäter der Mission Süd-Schantung,” *Steyler Missionsbote* 41, no. 4 (January 1914), 56.

¹⁹². *Ibid.*

¹⁹³. *Ibid.*

partly propaganda, as the SVD leadership hoped that the Vatican would canonize Freinademetz.¹⁹⁴ But the biography was also pedagogical. Henninghaus hoped that future SVD missionaries could learn from Freinademetz's example.¹⁹⁵ Henninghaus described a "lively debate" he had with Freinademetz the first time they met. Freinademetz started to "sing the praises of the Chinese. He praised their good characteristics, their strong family values, and compared them favorably to their modern morals and customs of those who live in big cities."¹⁹⁶ But Freinademetz's "praises had gone too far."¹⁹⁷ As Henninghaus put it, "if the Chinese were really so good as Freinademetz presented," he argued, "then there was no possibility of corruption among the heathens, and that would be impossible."¹⁹⁸

In hindsight, Henninghaus wrote that his objections stemmed from his own "cheekiness as a young man, who could hardly speak any Chinese and had no real understanding in China."¹⁹⁹ After twenty more years of experience in China, he had come to appreciate and embrace Freinademetz's position. The missionary should not exhibit hubris. It was not the missionary's place to criticize the Chinese: "There is nothing more harmful to a missionary's work to constantly point out the mistakes and problems of people, and to constantly compare and complain about how one's great nation is so much better or different from China, when one knows or feels so little about China."²⁰⁰

Henninghaus used Freinademetz's example to remind his fellow missionaries that a "true China missionary must have love for the Chinese."²⁰¹ Henninghaus argued, "the missionary comes to China, not to make the Chinese into Germans or French, but rather alone to make them into good Christians."²⁰² Moreover, Chinese Christians should strive to remain Chinese Christians, and they should not "reduce their love of their own nation."²⁰³ It was through the natural process of coming in contact with missionaries and peoples of other nations that "the Chinese will become conscious of their own national characteristics and shortcomings."²⁰⁴ Ultimately, the responsibility of the missionary was that of becoming a "spiritual father" to the Chinese.²⁰⁵ As Freinademetz himself wrote, "How could I not love the Chinese? They are our children!"²⁰⁶ Henninghaus could not resist his paternalistic impulse. But this paternalism was now tempered; Henninghaus now recognized that Chinese nationalism could be merged with the Gospel.

¹⁹⁴ The SVD got its wish in 2003, when Freinademetz was canonized alongside the founder of the Society, Arnold Janssen.

¹⁹⁵ Augustin Henninghaus, *P. Jos. Freinademetz S.V.D. Sein Leben und Wirken* (Yenchowfu: Kath. Miss., 1926), V.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 154.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 157.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.

The synthesis of Catholicism, Confucian ideas, and Chinese nationalism found its way into the *Steyler Missionsbote*, the missionary society's main journalistic organ. Reports about Confucius and Confucius's descendants became overwhelming positive. In 1936, the missionary Rudolf Pötter boasted that he and Henninghaus were the “only two Europeans invited to the wedding” of the 77th direct descendent of Confucius, Kong Decheng (孔德成).²⁰⁷

In 1937, Pötter's report about Kong's son was overflowing with praise. The young Prince Kong was “decorated with the highest honors from the Nanjing Government, and stood in the inner circles of the President.”²⁰⁸ The festival ended with the Chinese saying, “all who live within the ends of the earth (the four seas) are brothers.”²⁰⁹ Kong was planning a worldwide tour to Rome to visit the Pope, and the missionaries helped Kong translate the “beautiful letter” that he had written to the Pope.²¹⁰ A joyous photograph accompanied the picture.

The artistic depictions and pictures that were published in the journals also underwent a radical shift. Pictures of “Sinicized” versions of the Virgin Mary proliferated the journal. In one image, the Virgin Mary, dressed as a Chinese mother, cradles the young Jesus, a Chinese child. They stand in a grove adorned with bamboo (see Figure 11).²¹¹ In another painting, they are sitting in a pagoda surrounded by bamboo (see Figure 12).²¹² In another remarkable image, a nativity scene features Jesus and Mary as Chinese and the three Magi as Confucian scholars (See Figure 13).²¹³

This was a far cry from the missionary journal's early artistic works, which depicted Jesus and the Virgin Mary exclusively within the artistic traditions of the West (See Figure 14). Only thirty years earlier, Georg Stenz had described his encounter with “crowds of slit-eyed Chinese,” their eyes filled with “cunning, pride, and scorn,” dressed in “ragged clothes that did not hide their filthy bodies.”²¹⁴ The missionaries' departure from Stenz's era was now complete: if once they described the Chinese as “slit-eyed,” now they represented Jesus with this very characteristic.

Yet, traces of the old contempt for Chinese culture remained. The missionaries continued to criticize traditional Chinese patriarchy as one of the major impediments to the promulgation of the Gospel in China. The missionary also continued to link the Chinese patriarchal system with the “authoritarian concept” that “provided the stability of this thousands year-old kingdom.”²¹⁵ Missionaries continued to report stories of widespread

²⁰⁷ Rudolf Pötter, “Hochzeit im Hause Konfuzius,” *Steyler Missionsbote* 64, no. 9 (1937), 246. Kong Decheng died in 2008, and was the last descendent of Confucius who earned a courtly title of Duke.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ “Maria Jungfrau, hilf, das ich schau, dein Kind an meinem ende,” *Steyler Missionsbote* 62, no. 8 (1935): 211.

²¹² “Mutter, gib mir nun dein Kind,” *Steyler Missionsbote* 65, no. 8 (1938): 211.

²¹³ “Und sie opferten Gold, Weihrauch, und Myrrhen (Mt. 2, 44. Chinesische-japanischer Mischstil),” *Steyler Missionsbote* 59, no. 4 (1933): 89.

²¹⁴ Stenz, *Twenty-Five Years in China*, 7.

²¹⁵ Jakob Marquart, “Alt-Chinas Hauptstütze: das Elternrecht,” *Steyler Missionsbote* 59, no. 3 (December 1931), 56.

opium addiction, replete with pictures of degenerate opium smokers.²¹⁶ In an article about “Chinese courtesy,” the missionary Jakob Marquart described the various traditional customs of the Chinese, in particular their gift-giving and table manners. “The mortal enemy however is that the Chinese are always polite externally, because it is a beautiful appearance, while internally they feel rage and anger because one could harm them physically or financially. The result of all this external courtesy is that one never knows what the Chinese are thinking.”²¹⁷ Only through Christian love and truth could these customs and manners be made “authentic” and “true.”²¹⁸

Conclusion

On the surface, the SVD and BMS’s transition from Sinophobia to Sinophilia mirrors much of the narratives described in Steinmetz’s *The Devil’s Handwriting*. The SVD and BMS descriptions of China were part of a larger Sinophobic discourse that dominated 19th century European views of China. For the SVD and the BMS, the turn towards a more Sinophilic view, or rather, more pro-Confucian point of view, did not occur until the 1920s, after the First World War had delivered devastating blows to their missions. While the SVD and the BMS both started out as primarily nationalistic, predominantly German mission societies, the war forever changed the makeup and approach that these missionary societies took towards their engagement with Chinese culture and Confucianism. The SVD became more international, while the BMS became even more trenchantly nationalist.

Yet continuities remained between the missionary writing before and after the war. Missionaries continued to depict China as an unruly, dangerous, wild place, full of bandits, robbers, and enemies to the Gospel. The main change in the early 20th century was that their enemy had shifted from a local Confucian gentry to a global Communist insurrection. The BMS and SVD’s Sinophilic turn thus was not an embrace of liberal theology, or of liberalism in general. Instead, SVD and BMS missionaries adopted a Sinophilic tone in order to combat the effects of the “liberal-modernist” nexus. Confucianism, or traditional Chinese culture, was used as an ally in a global battle against atheism, rationalism, and materialism. The missionaries hoped that Confucianism could be harnessed to more effectively convert China to Christianity. Moreover, the missionaries no longer saw this battle as one with just the soul of China at stake. The stage now global, they believed that converting China to Christianity had geopolitical consequences—a failure in China meant a success for the Communist and atheist insurgency worldwide, which was just as perfidious in Europe as it was in Asia.

The missionary *rapprochement* with Confucianism was also fueled by the Chinese disavowal of it. Criticism of Confucianism emanating from the New Culture Movement filled the air, and the new generation of

The transformation of the missionaries’ attitude towards Confucianism also entailed change on the ground, in the congregations. Their reconfiguration of ideological alliances

²¹⁶. August Zmarzly, “Zur Opiumfrage in China,” *Steyler Missionsbote* 60, no. 4 (1933), 93.

²¹⁷. Jakob Marquart, “Chinesische Höflichkeit,” *Steyler Missionsbote* 60, no. 4 (1933), 104.

²¹⁸. *Ibid.*

also impacted the missionary society's institutional structures. In particular, positive re-evaluation of Confucian culture made both mission societies more open to Chinese Christian leaders. After the 1920s, both the SVD and the BMS made a concerted effort to "indigenize" their leadership and to push for an independent Chinese Church, with Chinese leaders at the helm of the church. This aggressive push to indigenize their missionary societies reshaped the hierarchical structure and demographic makeup of the mission, which had a lasting impact on the way missionary work was conducted. Why did missionaries decide to indigenize their societies in the 1920s? How did different missionaries, from different missionary nations, understand the term "indigenization?" It is to this intellectual history of the term "indigenization" that I now turn.



Figure 11: Madonna with Child standing amidst bamboo grove. From the *Steyler Missionsbote* in 1935.



Figure 12: Chinese Madonna with child. Painted by Lukas Tscheng. From the *Steyler Missionsbote* in 1938.



Figure 13: Sinicized Nativity scene. From the *Steyler Missionsbote*, 1935.



Figure 14: Nineteenth-century depictions of Jesus. From the *Kleiner Herz Jesu Bote*, 1895.

Chapter 3.

The *Volkskirche*, the Bense, and the Indigenous Church

Introduction

After the First World War, German missionaries faced the gravest set of existential challenges since they first entered China. For one, they faced a new set of Chinese opponents: a new generation of secular Chinese intellectuals, empowered by the New Culture Movement, criticized Western missionaries as agents of imperialism; their critiques developed into a full-blown anti-Christian movement after 1922.¹ Chinese Christians, dismayed by what they saw as a betrayal by the Western powers at the Paris Peace Treaties, joined their secular nationalist counterparts in criticizing the chauvinist tendencies of Western missionaries. But these critiques were not new: missionaries had been forced to face anti-Christian voices ever since the nineteenth century. What made the post-war situation particularly dire was the decimation of financial support for missionary societies from Europe. The post-war landscape crippled the finances of the German missionary societies, rendering them unable to train and send the same amount of European missionaries to China as they did before the war. The Versailles Treaty further fragmented the tenuous relationships that Western missionary countries had developed before the war. Threatened with expulsion from China, Germans turned to their American, British and French counterparts for aid. When the Versailles Treaty nonetheless stripped the German missionaries of their right to remain in China, German resentment towards the victorious missionary countries intensified. Faced with a serious anti-Christian challenge, dwindling finances, and bitter resentment between Western missionary groups, the entire German missionary enterprise in China faced an acute crisis.

In response, missionaries and Chinese Christians put their faith in an idea that they believed could offer an antidote to these problems: the “indigenous Chinese Church.” Promoting indigenization, some missionaries argued, neutralized Western rivalries. No longer would missionaries compete to create a “German,” “British,” “French,” or “American” Church in China. Instead the Western missionaries could focus on transferring power to the Chinese and make confessional disagreements irrelevant. Creating a Chinese

¹ For overviews of the Chinese anti-Christian movement in the 1920s, see Tatsuro Yamamoto and Sumiko Yamamoto, “II. The Anti-Christian Movement in China, 1922-1927,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1953): 133-147; Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-28* (Notre Dame, IN: Cross Cultural Publications, Cross Roads Books, 1988).

Church could also help the Chinese counter the criticisms of their secular counterparts: an indigenous Chinese Church removed the taint of Western imperialism. For American missionaries, indigenization fit perfectly with the political aims of Wilsonian self-determination. For German missionaries, turning over the administration of the church to the Chinese solved their financial dilemma.

Thus, in the 1920s, “indigenization” became a buzzword within Christian circles in China; important European and American missionaries, along with prominent Chinese Christians, all called for the establishment of a Chinese “indigenous church.” As Kenneth S. Latourette writes, after 1918, “the word ‘indigenous’ became a slogan... it was usually taken to mean a Church led and supported by Chinese, and in doctrine, forms of worship, and organization conforming as far as possible to Chinese rather than to Occidental traditions.”² While the theological parameters were most vigorously debated among Protestants, the idea appealed across confessional lines: leaders within the Catholic Church also argued that the Roman Catholic Church not only had to ordain more indigenous clergy but also rapidly itself more rapidly to the local culture that it encountered. Native actors also supported indigenization; Chinese Christians advanced their own proposals for how to build their own Church. Yet even though all sides agreed to encourage indigenization, the term itself was an unstable, ambiguous one: no one could accept a working definition of the term. Europeans, Americans, and Chinese actors disagreed about what indigenization should look like, or how to establish a Chinese Church.

In the 1920s, German Protestants, for example, argued that they could offer a distinctly *German* approach to the problem of indigenization—the *Volkskirche*. Yet even among German missionaries, vigorous debate ensued over the definition of the term. As the influential missiologist Johannes Hoekendijk wrote in his ground-breaking 1948 work on German missionary conceptions on the relation between the Church and the *Volk*, “any attempt to precisely identify [how German missionaries employed the term] *Volksstum* will turn solid steps into hesitant and unstable ones.”³ Hoekendijk notes that the definition of the term *Volkskirche* shifted as quickly as the political and social context around it in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴ At times understood as synonymous with the “national church” (*Nationalkirche*), at other times seen as congruous with the “racial church” (*Rassenkirche*), the *Volkskirche* was understood differently by a wide-range of missionaries, theologians, and missionary society leaders. Some missionary theologians, such as the missionary theologian at the University of Giessen Heinrich Frick, defined the *Volkskirche* broadly, offering it as an antidote to American and British imperialism. Other missionary leaders, such as the director of the Berlin Missionary Society Siegfried Knak, believed that the creation of a *Volkskirche* meant the export of distinctly Lutheran ecclesiastical forms to missionary lands. Yet others found the *Volkskirche* within a Romantic, organicist critique of modern

² Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929), 801.

³ Johannes Christian Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk in der deutschen Missionswissenschaft*, trans. Erich-Walter Pollman (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1967), 138.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 119-121.

civilization.⁵ In all cases, German missionaries saw the *Volkskirche* as a panacea, a future solution for the global crisis that they found themselves in after the war.

At the same time that the German missionaries debated the definition of the *Volkskirche*, Chinese Christian leaders argued for the creation of a church of “native color” (the *Bense* Church 本色教會). Just as German theologians struggled to settle on a stable definition of the *Volkskirche*, Chinese Christians offered heterogeneous views about what constituted the *Bense*. Some reformers were interested solely in the question of personnel, proposing that the *Bense* Church should retain the institutional structures of the missionary church and replace European leadership with Chinese. Others tried to forge a new synthesis between Confucianism and Christianity; they argued that the crisis of Western civilization could be solved through the importation of traditional Chinese ideas. In spite of these different conceptions of the *Bense*, the Chinese theologians of the *Bense* were, like their German counterparts, committed to an anti-imperialist stance.

Thus, Protestants and Catholics, liberals and conservatives, Germans, Americans, and Chinese all had different visions for how a Chinese Christianity should look, and they argued vigorously for the establishment of their own agendas. These differences were formed by different historical experiences and theological debates. The German idea of the *Volkskirche* emerged from nineteenth-century theological battles between liberal and conservative German missionaries. On the other hand, the Chinese movement to create a church of “native color” *Bense* (本色) appeared in the 1920s from discussions among a coalition of British and America-educated, left-leaning Chinese Christians. These different visions were shaped not only by theological traditions, but also by geo-political rivalries, national resentment, and racial ideologies. In this chapter, I trace the different approaches of German, American, and Chinese Christians regarding indigenization in China, and the conflict and accommodation that emerged when these ideas came in contact with one another. The debates surrounding indigenization reveal the contours of the missionary field in China that emerged throughout the 1920s.

Indigenization and the Volkskirche

The concept of indigenization has a history that long predates the 1920s. As the scholar of missionary history Andrew Walls argues, the question of how and whether to indigenize Christianity has occupied theologians ever since the days of the early Church, when the Apostles confronted the problem of how to convert outsiders to Christianity. Two broad principles, both rooted within the Gospels but often at odds with one another, emerged from the long discussions surrounding missionary work: the “indigenizing principle” and the “pilgrim principle.” The “indigenizing principle” assumes that God created and celebrates the diversity and plurality of world cultures. Potential Christians cannot—and should not—be asked to forego the culture, place, and social relations from where they are born. Working primarily under the guidance of an “indigenizing principle,” the missionary must translate Christianity into a local context; his primary task is to make the Church indigenous to the culture that it encounters.⁶

⁵ Ibid., 144.

⁶ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll,

Holding this “indigenizing principle” in check is the “pilgrim principle.” The “pilgrim principle” assumes that Christian converts must transcend the society from which they are born, since Jesus’s Gospel opposes almost all secular social and political values. As Andrew Walls writes, “Jesus within Jewish culture, Paul within Hellenistic culture, take it for granted that there will be rubs and frictions—not from the adoption of a new culture, but from the transformation of the mind towards that of Christ.”⁷ With the “pilgrim principle” as their guiding light, missionaries expect new Christians to “convert” not only to Christianity but also to a new social and political culture: Christian converts are expected to leave their cultural values behind.

This struggle between the indigenizing and pilgrim principle has manifested itself differently throughout the history of Christianity’s global expansion. The Chinese Rites Controversy during the early modern period can be described as fundamentally a conflict between the pilgrim and the indigenizing principle: the Vatican argued that the Chinese needed to reject their Confucian traditions, while the Jesuits argued that Christianity could accommodate traditional Chinese rituals. Germans were involved in these debates: the Jesuit missionary Johann Adam Schall von Bell, for example, became a trusted advisor to the Qing emperor Shunzi, and voiced his support for accommodation.⁸ The Jesuits thus cleaved to the side of the indigenizing principle, while the Vatican defended the pilgrim principle. The Qing emperor Kangxi saw the Vatican position as Western European hubris, subsequently outlawing Christianity and expelling missionaries from China.⁹

The Vatican’s triumph during the Chinese Rites Controversy marked a new era of the pilgrim principle’s dominance among Western missionary circles, which extended into the nineteenth century. European missionaries, for the most part, conceived of Christianity and Western culture as synonymous. Conversion to Christianity meant absorbing Chinese and Africans into the universal culture of Western civilization. And the promises of Western modernity lured many non-Europeans. Chinese and African Christians enthusiastically abandoned their previous traditions, clothes, and culture, and embraced Western dress, language, and behavior.¹⁰

This is not to say that all Western missionaries cleaved to the pilgrim principle: some missionaries still advanced and developed ideas surrounding the indigenous principle. As early as the mid-nineteenth century, Protestant missionaries such as the British Henry Venn, a member of the Church Missionary Society, and the American Rufus Anderson, a leader in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, argued that the

NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 6-9.

⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁸ For more on Adam Schall von Bell, see Alfons Vāth, *Johann Adam Schall von Bell SJ: Missionar in China, kaiserlicher Astronom und Ratgeber am Hofe von Peking 1592-1666* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1991).

⁹ The literature on the Chinese Rites Controversy is vast. One work that offers a good overview are George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: From its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985); David E. Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994).

¹⁰ A prototypical example of the Chinese convert, who abandoned traditional Chinese customs and society was Sun Yat-sen. For his conversion story, see Marie-Claire Bergère, *Sun Yat-sen*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 13-28. For detailed descriptions of Christianity’s appeal to the Chinese, see Jessie G. Lutz and Rolland Ray Lutz, *Hakka Chinese Confront Protestant Christianity, 1850-1900: With the Autobiographies of Eight Hakka Christians, and Commentary* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

church should be rooted in the particular culture in which it encountered. Venn and Anderson became famous for proposing the “three-self formula.”¹¹ In a series of articles published throughout the 1860s, the two missionaries argued that three characteristics marked a truly indigenous church: it was “self-supporting,” or financially independent from the Western missionaries; “self-governing,” led by native clergy; and “self-propagating,” meaning that the native converts themselves become missionaries and engage in missionary work. Inspired by Venn and Anderson’s provocations, European missionaries set about translating the Bible into non-European languages and tried to incorporate non-European clergy into the missionary society’s hierarchies. Yet even though the Gospel was translated into native languages, the missionary attitude towards native cultures was characterized by condescension: the majority of Western missionaries in the nineteenth century yearned for the “Europeanization” and destruction of local cultures. Even Venn and Anderson assumed the superiority of Western culture.¹²

At the same time that Venn and Anderson developed the idea of the indigenous “three-self” church, German missionaries proposed their own alternative: they called for the creation of a *Volkskirche* native to the place where they engaged in evangelism. The missionary idea of the *Volkskirche* emerged from a long history of theological debate among German liberal and conservative Protestant circles. As the theologian Andreas Leipold writes, “The centrality of the concept of the *Volkskirche* in German Protestantism has no parallel in or out of German Protestant churches in Catholicism.”¹³ It was also, as Johannes Hoekendijk argues, for most of its history, employed as a rhetorical device—no actual walls and concrete bounded a *Volkskirche*.¹⁴ As Tobias Sarx argues, the term emerged among German Protestant theological circles in 1800 as a form of “utopian” yearning.¹⁵

Like almost all Protestant genesis stories, some theologians and historians have traced the origin of the term to Luther.¹⁶ As Daniel Borg has noted, Luther used the term *Volkskirche* to describe the “involuntary association to which one belonged by virtue of one’s birth and the beliefs of one’s parents.”¹⁷ While the exact relationship in Luther’s writings between the people and the church remained vague, subsequent interpreters of Luther’s work assumed that the *Volkskirche* conveyed territorial and theological uniformity. Bounded by the Peace of Augsburg principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (whose the rule, his the religion), the ruler of the territory determined both the territorial bounds and the beliefs of the people.¹⁸ The development of the system of the *Landeskirche*, where the local political ruling

¹¹ Wilbert R. Shenk, “Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn: A Special Relationship?,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 5, no. 4 (October 1981), 170-171.

¹² Ibid., 171.

¹³ Andreas Leipold, *Volkskirche: die Funktionalität einer spezifischen Ekklesiologie in Deutschland nach 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 11.

¹⁴ Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 86.

¹⁵ Tobias Sarx, “Zu den Ursprüngen des Begriffs ‘Volkskirche’ um 1800,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 94, no. 1 (2012), 113.

¹⁶ Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 260-261.

¹⁷ Daniel R. Borg, *The Old Prussian Church and the Weimar Republic: A Study in Political Adjustment, 1917-1927* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1984), 2.

¹⁸ For more on the Peace of Augsburg, see Thomas A. Brady, *German Histories in the Age of Reformations, 1400-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 231.

authority (*Landesherr*) served as the episcopal head of the territory, represented this close bond between the secular and the sacred in the German lands. Within this scheme, the *Volk* represented all of the individuals in the *Land*: the *Landeskirche* was coterminous with the *Volkskirche*, but not, as it turns out, synonymous with it.

The central, revolutionary claim of Pietism was to decouple the *Volkskirche* from the *Landeskirche*. In the Pietist worldview, Christian faith ought to be voluntary and self-motivated rather than foisted upon the populace. One became Christian through personal choice, not political, social, or territorial inheritance. The Moravian Brotherhood, established in Herrnhut, grew out of these Pietist ideals. The Brotherhood, with its stress on communal living and simplicity of lifestyle, was a direct affront to the centralized hierarchical church structures of the *Landeskirche*. Reflecting an activist, personally pious impulse, the Moravian Brotherhood established the first large-scale missionary organization, joining forces with the Dano-Norwegian Empire. Here the Pietists conceived of the *Volkskirche* as a church that could transcend the local political authorities and its territorial bounds. The Moravian Brothers traveled to try to create individual *Volkskirche* both at home and abroad, from the German village of Herrnhut to the Caribbean islands on Danish and Norwegian ships.

Demographic, political, and social changes revised the way theologians imagined the relationship between a *Volkskirche* and the existing *Landeskirche*. For one, the political and demographic boundaries of the Peace of Augsburg did not last. In the case of Prussia, territorial expansion had forced the creation of confessional state. By the late 18th century, Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed all lived within the Prussian state jurisdiction, further raising the question: What should the church of the people look like? Even more fundamentally, who were the people? The French Revolution further challenged and severed the bonds between Church and state. Amidst the crumbling of traditional social and political structures, debates surrounding the *Volkskirche* saw a wild upsurge, and the term came into widespread usage.¹⁹ Yet, different interpretations of the term remained. One group of German theologians conceived of the *Volkskirche* as a populist tool, a bulwark against revolutionary attacks on the Church.²⁰ Some theologians conceived of the *Volkskirche* as serving primarily a pedagogical purpose; it was an institution that could teach the uneducated, “simple” church-goers how to read and write.²¹ Others saw the *Volkskirche* as an alternative to what they viewed as the outmoded model of the *Landeskirche*, and they hoped that creating a new *Volkskirche* that transcended the traditional boundaries of the *Landeskirche* could foment unity and solidarity within a fragmented religious and political landscape.²² In all these views, theologians defined the *Volkskirche* in an “activist” way. They saw the *Volkskirche* as the vehicle for that could prevent atomization in an increasingly industrialized society, “bind[ing] the errant individual to the commonweal.”²³

¹⁹ Sarx, “Zu den Ursprüngen des Begriffs ‘Volkskirche,’” 113.

²⁰ Daniel R Borg, “Volkskirche, ‘Christian State’ and the Weimar Republic,” *Church History* 35, no. 2 (July 1966): 186-206.

²¹ Sarx, “Zu den Ursprüngen des Begriffs ‘Volkskirche,’” 115.

²² Ibid., 134.

²³ Borg, “Volkskirche, ‘Christian State’ and the Weimar Republic,” 191-192.

By the end of the eighteenth century and first decades of the nineteenth century, theologians began to inject the *Volkskirche* with romantic organicist and proto-nationalist tones. This formulation of the *Volkskirche* was best articulated in the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher, who employed the term in a series of lectures he gave in 1822 and 1823.²⁴ Schleiermacher barely elaborated on what by *Volkskirche*, he meant, nor how the German people should form a Church. Responding to fears of the “decline of religion” in the early nineteenth century, Schleiermacher argued that Christianity was in a crisis because of its close association with the state. Since the Protestant Reformation, the Church had become “an institution of the state.”²⁵ He criticized the “compulsory membership” (*Zwangsgemeinschaft*) in state-run churches; this subordination of the church to the state had enervated Christianity.²⁶ Inspired by Johann Gottfried von Herder’s idealization of the *Volk*, Schleiermacher argued that a *Volkskirche* could renew and reinvigorate Christianity by tapping into the “beautiful characteristics” (*herrlichen Eigenschaften*) of the people.²⁷ The *Landeskirche* had lost touch with the “simple, noble” qualities of the people. The creation of a *Volkskirche* entailed the establishment of a church independent of the political boundaries of any state, as well as a church that reflected the will of the people.²⁸

By the 1850s, the term came into yet more widespread usage, primarily due to the influence of Johann Hinrich Wichern, the founder of the Inner Mission in Prussia.²⁹ Wichern used the term in his “Protestant Manifesto,” delivered at the Wittenberg *Kirchentag* in 1848. The conference at Wittenberg, a Saxon university town now annexed to Prussia, was a meeting organized by a group of conservative Protestant leaders, concerned by the revolutionary events of 1848. Fearing the decline in popular religiosity and the rise of socialism, Wichern called conservative Protestants to action: “If the people do not come to church, the Church must go to the people.”³⁰ Wichern prophesied, “our Protestant church can and will become a *Volkskirche*, by renewing the people through the Gospel with a new force and penetrate them with the breath of life from God.”³¹ Wichern’s call to create a *Volkskirche* stuck: it became common parlance among the German theological community by the middle of the nineteenth century.³²

Like Schleiermacher, Wichern and other Pietists advanced a critique of the established state churches. In an 1839 essay, Wichern commented, “Ever since the appearance of a state church at the time of Constantine, the church has ceased to be for

²⁴ Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 261. For Schleiermacher’s original use of the term, see Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Die christliche Sitte nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1884), 568-569.

²⁵ Leibold, *Volkskirche*, 13-15.

²⁶ Ibid., 16.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 13.

²⁹ Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 260. See also Ludwig Knöpp, “Die Volkskirche auf dem Missionsfelde. Die Antwort deutscher evangelischer Mission auf die Frage nach Aufgabe und Ziel” (Hessischen Ludwigs-Universität zu Giessen, 1938).

³⁰ Leibold, *Volkskirche*, 19.

³¹ Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 261.

³² Knöpp, “Die Volkskirche auf dem Missionsfelde.”

most people an organization of freedom in the Christian sense.”³³ The *Volkskirche* portended the possibility of creating a “true” Church, a pan-German church that transcended the boundaries of provincial and local churches. As Hartmut Lehmann writes, “most of those involved in the different branches of the Inner Mission came to think of themselves as German Christians first and as members of a particular German state church second.”³⁴ Avowed anti-Catholics, Wichern and other leading German Pietists were allied with a *Kleindeutsch* attempt to establish a German nation, and fervently supported the war against France in 1870. The Pietists hoped that the German *Volkskirche* could “re-evangelize” the workers and revolutionaries whom Christianity had lost to the rising tide of secularism.

Conservatives were not the only ones who yearned for the creation of a German *Volkskirche* as a way to save the church from the religious crisis of the first decades of the nineteenth century. Like their conservative counterparts, liberal clergymen believed that the creation of a *Volkskirche* could achieve what politics could not: unite the German people into one national church. In 1849, Karl von Hase (1800-1890), a prominent Church historian and professor at the University of Jena, proposed his vision of the German *Volkskirche* that later became influential among liberal circles, especially the *Deutscher Protestantenverein*, a union of liberal-leaning clergymen. Hase advanced similar critiques of the traditional *Landeskirche* as his conservative counterparts. The landscape of numerous individual *Landeskirche*, for Hase, fragmented the German people, preventing unification. A *Volkskirche* that captured the religiosity of the people transcended the boundaries of individual states, integrating the Germans into a single church.³⁵ Hase’s vision for a German *Volkskirche* excluded Catholics: he believed that the German Protestant Church was a progressive church of the “future,” Catholicism a Church of the “past.” The future creation of a German *Volkskirche* could thus liberate the German Protestants in captivity in Catholic states, fulfilling Protestantism’s world-historical mission of liberating the individual from authoritarian constrictions.³⁶ Liberals shared the conservative view of the *Volkskirche* as an active, political force. In an 1868 pamphlet defending and defining the aims and goals of the *Protestantenverein*, Daniel Schenkel, a Swiss Professor of the Theology at the University of Heidelberg, wrote, “the Protestant *Volkskirche* is a religious godsend and a national force.”³⁷ Yet, for liberals and conservatives alike, the German Protestant *Volkskirche* was still in a nascent state, with space to grow and develop.

³³ Johann Hinrich Wichern, “Essay on Community [1839],” in David Crowner and Gerald Christianson (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 203-204.

³⁴ Hartmut Lehmann, “Pietism and Nationalism: The Relationship between Protestant Revivalism and National Renewal in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” *Church History* 51, no. 1 (1982), 50.

³⁵ Leopold, *Volkskirche*, 21.

³⁶ Karl von Hase, *Evangelisch-protestantische Dogmatik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1860), 564@354. For a similar argument, see Daniel Schenkel, *Der deutsche Protestantenverein und seine Bedeutung in der Gegenwart: nach den Akten dargestellt* (Wiesbaden: C. W. Kreidel’s Verlag, 1868), 17. Hase’s anti-Catholicism found full expression in Karl von Hase, *Handbuch der protestantischen polemik gegen die römisch-katholische kirche* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1862). For more on liberal Protestant anti-Catholicism, see Michael B. Gross, *The War Against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

³⁷ Schenkel, *Der deutsche Protestantenverein und seine Bedeutung*, 90. “Die Protestantische Volkskirche ist ein religiöser seggen und eine nationale Macht; Preussen kann sie gegenwärtig am wenigstens entbehren.”

And it was here that the liberals and conservatives diverged: they disagreed about *how* they could make the German *Volkskirche* into a real entity. Pietists such as Wichern believed that the *Volkskirche* did not overturn extant social and political institutions. The orthodox structures of family, church, and state were divine. As Wichern wrote, “the state as well as its church are institutions of divine governance in the world [. . .]. Consequently the two cannot be separated entirely from each other.”³⁸ By committing itself to traditional moral and Biblical values, an awakened *Volkskirche* could inject life into the enervated institutions of both the state and the state church. Liberals from the *Protestantenverein*, on the other hand, yearned for the complete separation of church and state. Daniel Schenkel, a Swiss Professor of Theology at the University of Heidelberg, wrote in an 1868 pamphlet defining the position of the *Protestantenverein*, “we must seriously undertake the task of making the Protestant Church independent [of the state churches] and self-governing.”³⁹ A German Protestant national church could only emerge once it had rid itself of the “unbearable burden” of the state churches.⁴⁰

Other than unshackling the church from the political strictures of the state, liberals in the *Protestantenverein* also yearned to create a *Volkskirche* liberated from “theological dogmas.” The statutes of the liberal union declared that it was committed to the harmonizing the church with “the general cultural developments of contemporary society.”⁴¹ Thus, the *Protestantenverein* “recognized the complete validity of modern science” and acknowledged that “religious truths are completely separate from scientific discoveries.”⁴² Eventually, a “true and living *Volkskirche*” could be formed by opening the doors of the Church to the “cultural achievements of the educated,” combatting “dogmatic confessional thinking,” cultivating an “accurate historical portrait of the personality of Jesus,” and a “flexible perception of the authority of the Bible.”⁴³ Thus, while the Protestant clergy needed to steer clear of state power, they needed to involve themselves with the education of the people. A “Protestant *Volkskirche*,” liberals such as Schenkel argued, “is the most reliable guarantee for the care of the overall education of the people (*Volksbildung*) and scientific progress.”⁴⁴

The differences between liberal and conservative conceptions of the *Volkskirche*, while minute, can be distilled to divergent visions of how to incorporate errant individuals in the modern world into a new set of communities, and how these communities could be forged. Liberal Protestants believed that a German national *Volkskirche* could be forged through religious and secular education: modern *Bildung* initiated the atomized individual into communion with other citizens. As Hase proposed, a “cultivated education” (*menschliche Bildung*) and “civic welfare” (*bürgerliche Wohlfahrt*) created bonds of affection between disaffected individual Germans in a united *Volkskirche*.⁴⁵ Moreover, for the liberal

³⁸ Wichern, “Essay on Community,” 205.

³⁹ Schenkel, *Der deutsche Protestantenverein und seine Bedeutung*, 30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁴⁵ Hase, *Evangelisch-protestantische Dogmatik*, 564.

Protestants, this form of religious and scientific *Bildung* was a particularly German trait. Schenkel boasted, “Among all the people in the world, Germany established the first public elementary education; even the least educated learn to read, write, and form their own opinions with regard to personal and public affairs.”⁴⁶ Thus, *Bildung* made the individual simultaneously more German, educated, and Protestant.

On the other hand, Pietists such as Wichern focused on the primacy of “emotional experience;” they valued “inwardness,” (*Innerlichkeit*) a development of the moral self, rather than what they perceived as the undue attention that liberal clergymen paid to overt displays of intellectual prowess. It is not that the Pietists disregarded the intellect. But they argued that the Bible was the primary force of illumination for the mind: as Wichern commented, “The stimulation of the intellect as well as the emotions will find its fulfillment, or at least seek it, in the Word.”⁴⁷ Pietists championed basic literacy—individuals had to learn how to read and interpret the Bible for themselves—but they did not lionize *Bildung* and higher education the way that liberals did. To cultivate internal reflection, Pietists oriented the individual’s attention towards God and the self, through regular Bible studies, personal reflection, and other devotional practices. In a recent article, Alexandra Przyrembel notes that Pietists “constantly framed their work of religious mission in terms of their own self-examination, believing that ‘one should turn to oneself, take care of one’s inner self.’”⁴⁸ These internally transformed individuals were further brought together by what Przyrembel calls “the semantics of religious brotherly love.”⁴⁹ The German historian Franz Schnabel commented in 1937 that the Pietist form of “tireless soul-searching taught a person to give a full account of himself. In the struggle of confession, with suffering and tears, ‘grace breaks through.’”⁵⁰ These broken individuals reconstituted their lives through the embrace of the community. Individual conversion and confession, the deepening of *Innerlichkeit*, rather than scientific knowledge, was the key to social transformation.

German Catholics were also not immune from these debates. A group of reform-minded Catholics also yearned for the creation of a German *Volkskirche*.⁵¹ Most prominent, and controversial, among them was Johannes Ronge, an Upper Silesian priest who was defrocked and excommunicated from the Church for his radical views. Ronge gained notoriety as the founder of the New Catholics, a congregation that ended priestly celibacy, indulgences, devotion of relics, pilgrimages, and other practices of the Church that he considered “superstitious.”⁵² Among his proposals, Ronge called also for the creation of a German *Volkskirche* as a means to resist the ultra-montane movements that he saw prevalent

⁴⁶ Schenkel, *Der deutsche Protestantenverein und seine Bedeutung*, 98.

⁴⁷ Wichern, “Essay on Community,” 210.

⁴⁸ Alexandra Przyrembel, “The Emotional Bond of Brotherliness: Protestant Masculinity and the Local and Global Networks among Religious in the Nineteenth Century,” *German History* 31, no. 2 (June 2013), 175.

⁴⁹ Ibid. See also Wichern, “Essay on Community,” 209-210.

⁵⁰ Cited in Przyrembel, “The Emotional Bond of Brotherliness,” 175.

⁵¹ Tobias Sarx, “Volkskirchliche Konzepte im Revolutionsjahr 1848,” in *Protestantismus und Gesellschaft: Beiträge zur Geschichte von Kirche und Diakonie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert; Jochen-Christoph Kaiser zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Tobias Sarx, Rajah Scheepers, and Michael Stahl (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2013), 198-199.

⁵² Ibid., 198.

within German Catholicism at the time.⁵³ The “Roman hierarchy,” Ronge charged, “meine Menschenwürde unterdrückt wird und ich zu entehrender Slaverei erniedrigt werde.”⁵⁴ As Tobias Sarx points out, the German Catholics who supported the creation of a German *Volkskirche* had different aims from Protestants who used the term: Catholics primarily hoped to affect an internal reform of what they saw as outmoded practice within the Catholic Church, rather than the creation of an institution for broader social transformation and integration.⁵⁵

German missionaries also grappled with the problem of the *Volkskirche*. German Protestant missionaries of all theological stripes agreed on one thing: they wanted to create a church native to the area where they worked. The Chinese, the Japanese, and the Africans needed their own *Volkskirche*, which would reflect the country’s unique cultural characteristics. The Pietist missionary director of the Leipzig Missionary Society, Karl Graul, argued in the 1840s and 1850s that the Churches that missionaries planted must be “rooted in the soil” (*bodenständig*) of the foreign culture.⁵⁶ Liberals agreed. The liberal missionary leader Ernst Buss, whom I will discuss further below, also envisioned a *Bodenständig* church, which “will become stripped of its foreign appearance and don the imprint of the people and its culture.”⁵⁷ Such a church, Buss wrote, “will look completely strange” to Western Christianity.⁵⁸

While they agreed that the goal of missionary work was to create unique *Volkskirche* throughout the world, liberal and conservative missionaries differed on missionary methods. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, German missionary circles became increasingly polarized by a series of debates regarding *how* to conduct missionary work. Before the 1860s, the German Pietist approach to missions had dominated; indeed, all major German missionary societies had Pietist beginnings. Pietist missionary societies devoted their resources to building institutions that could help foster the *Innerlichkeit* of the indigenous converts: they pronounced foreign nations could be converted through “individual conversion” (*Einzelbekehrung*).⁵⁹ Like their counterparts who engaged in mission work within Germany, Pietist missionaries abroad prized the narratives of emotional individual conversion.⁶⁰ They printed Christian tracts and pamphlets in indigenous languages, taught basic literacy, supplied the converted with free elementary education, built churches and preached on the streets. Most importantly, they emphasized the necessity of church-building as the primary method to fostering community.⁶¹ For the most part, Pietists eschewed institutions of higher education and elite *Bildung*, which they considered as too “secular.” Yet even Pietist

⁵³ For more on ultramontanism, see Christopher M. Clark and Wolfram Kaiser, eds., *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵⁴ Sarx, “Volkskirchliche Konzepte im Revolutionsjahr 1848,” 199.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Timothy Yates, *Christian Missions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994),

35. See also Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 63.

⁵⁷ Ernst Buss, *Die Mission einst und jetzt* (Frankfurt am Main: Moritz Diesterweg, 1883), 58.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Yates, *Christian Missions in the Twentieth Century*, 35.

⁶⁰ For more on individual conversion stories, see Albert Wu, “Catholic and Protestant Individuals in Nineteenth-Century German Missionary Periodicals,” *Church History* 82, no. 2 (June 2013): 394-398.

⁶¹ Yates, *Christian Missions in the Twentieth Century*, 35.

missionary societies differed in the specific form that the *Volkskirche* should adopt. The Leipzig Missionary Society and the Hermannsburg Missionary Society hoped to replicate strictly Lutheran churches abroad.⁶² The Basel and the Rhenish missionary societies, rejected such a narrowly confessional approach.

As I mentioned in chapter one, in the 1860s, this Pietist approach came under direct attack from liberal reformers. The most polemical of these critics was the Swiss Reformed Pastor Ernst Langhans.⁶³ Along with his brother Eduard and the theologian Albert Bitzius (the younger), Langhans founded the Swiss Church Reform Society of Bern in 1866. Influenced by other movements for liberal church reform, the Reform Society argued for a deliverance from “rigid dogmatism,” the foundations of “unobstructed research,” and an alliance with other “liberal Protestants” throughout the world.⁶⁴ Langhans had established his reputation two years earlier, when he published a detailed volume attacking Pietist mission methodology. In his work, Langhans, who never served as a missionary overseas, criticized the Pietists for failing to recognize the significant differences among the different types of civilizational cultures they encountered.⁶⁵ The Pietists, Langhans charged, applied a uniform missionary method of individual conversion, rather than tailor their work to particular countries. Most disturbing for Langhans was the damage that Pietist missionary methods wrought on individual converts. “We have witnessed,” Langhans wrote, “the converted being violently ripped from their mother soil, like a poor de-rooted plant — alienated from their own nation’s feeling of peace and despair, literature and learning (*Bildung*), and even their own language. They are like monks who are educated for a religious life, but who lack all objective moral and natural roots in reality.”⁶⁶

Langhans believed that the missionaries ought to engage with the actual culture and history of the peoples they encountered. Too long had Pietist missions been populated with “pious farmers, laborers, and craftsmen,” who were “hostile to education” (*Bildungsfeindlich*).⁶⁷ Langhans argued that missionary societies needed to provide missionaries with more solid and rigorous theological training, so that they could engage in “theological and philosophical debates and arguments.”⁶⁸ Rather than focus on creating a narrowly pious, solely Christian training, missionaries ought to focus on advancing the “free development of men.”⁶⁹ In Langhans’s view, missionary leaders should reject the Pietist obsession with individual salvation as the sole method for social transformation. Instead, liberal missionaries had to devote their energies towards higher education and focus on elites.

⁶² Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 78.

⁶³ Ernst Friedrich Langhans, *Pietismus und äussere Mission vor dem Richterstuhle ihrer Vertheidiger* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1866.), 395.

⁶⁴ “An Unsere Leser,” *Schweizerische Reformblätter* 24, no. 1 (January 1890), 1.

⁶⁵ Ernst Friedrich Langhans, *Pietismus und Christenthum im Spiegel der äusseren Mission. Erster Theil: Der Pietismus*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Verlag von Otto Wigand, 1864), 23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 331.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 340-341.

⁶⁸ Julius Richter, *Das Buch der deutschen Weltmission*. (Gotha: Klotz, 1935), 221.

⁶⁹ Langhans, *Pietismus und Christenthum*, 454.

Another Swiss pastor, Ernst Buss, drew upon Langhans's ideas to found the liberal missionary society, the *Allgemeine evangelische-protestantische Missionsverein* (AepMV) in Weimar in 1884. Like Langhans, Buss had never actively traveled as a missionary, and he garnered attention through a series of works attacking Pietist missionary methodology.⁷⁰ The year before founding the AepMV, he published *Missions, Then and Now* (*Die Mission einst und jetzt*), trumpeting the liberal missionary approach. Surveying the nineteenth-century worldwide religious landscape, Buss marveled at how developments in technology and transportation networks aided Christianity's swift spread throughout the world. Christian missionaries had moved to previously unimaginable areas of the world, encountering and working to bring Christianity to an unprecedented number of "heterogenous cultural forms and religions."⁷¹ Following Langhans's model, Buss stressed the varying "stages of development" of different cultures. He considered China, northern India, and Japan as "highly civilized," ancient cultures and labeled Southern India, Tibet, and Islamic countries as labeled "semi-cultured" (*Halb-gebildete*). Finally, there were the "culture-less" lands of Africa, Australia, islands in the Pacific, and in South America.⁷² Among these different cultural levels, Buss most prized the Chinese, who possessed a "practical and good system of morality, supported by a thousand year-old culture."⁷³

If missionaries wished to flourish in such a diverse and fragmented global religious landscape, Buss argued, they had to adapt their approaches according to the cultures that they encountered. In Africa and other "uncivilized" lands, the missionary's primary goal should be "first to civilize, with Christianity coming hand-in-hand with this civilizing impulse."⁷⁴ The Pietist strategy of attacking the validity of traditional religious cultures, Buss argued, had only fomented distrust and hatred towards Christianity. To gain the trust of local populations, missionary organizations could dedicate their missionary work to help alleviate the material suffering and focus on other charitable work, rather than building only churches. Missionaries, he suggested, did not need to don an overtly Christian guise: they could sneak in Christian values at the same time that they taught secular skills. When helping the natives learn "practical skills" like farming and craftsmanship, missionaries could simultaneously serve as models of "unselfishness, loving, and kindness."⁷⁵ Missionaries should strive to inculcate family values—respect for women, proper discipline of children—and good work habits. These dramatic social transformations were unattainable through the work of the Church alone, and Buss supported an alliance with secular colonial power to achieve these means. Through "colonization and patient cultural missions," Buss argued, "less-advanced cultures could be elevated to a more developed state."⁷⁶

⁷⁰ The work that brought Buss to prominence was Ernst Buss, *Die christliche Mission, ihre principielle Berechtigung und practische Durchföhrung: eine von der Haager Gesellschaft zur Vertheidigung der Christlichen Religion gekrönte Preisschrift* (Leiden: Brill, 1876).

⁷¹ Idem, *Die Mission einst und jetzt*, 39.

⁷² Ibid., 40.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 52.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 53.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 54.

“Advanced cultures,” Buss noted, presented missionaries with a different set of challenges. The Chinese and Japanese did not need guidance from Western missionaries on questions of everyday survival—they already possessed their own systems of agriculture and schooling. If Western missionaries could not offer any charitable and civilizational aid, why, then, did these countries with “high culture” even need Christianity? For Buss, Oriental civilizations lacked the vitality of Western Christianity; these ancient cultures had become stagnant. Thus the primary task of missionaries working in these lands was not charity, but rather to work for a “religious regeneration of the people’s spirit (*die religiöse Regeneration des Volkgeistes*).”⁷⁷ To affect such change, missionaries had to engage with the influential, educated members of society, the gatekeepers of high culture. Yet Buss cautioned that “the more developed the civilization,” the likelier that the educated classes display pride towards their own culture and react viciously towards Christianity.⁷⁸ He thus exhorted missionaries to enter into dialogue with cultural elites; these conversations could only occur if missionaries obtained a deeper understanding of the culture they encountered. Missionaries ought to initiate “concrete studies of the religious and moral state” of the cultures they worked in.⁷⁹ Moreover, it was imperative that missionaries seek the “elements of truth” within the religion and philosophy of these advanced civilizations. Missionaries should engage in comparison, and discover how the message of the Christian Gospels found resonance within other religious systems.⁸⁰ Buss hoped that as soon as Western missionaries demonstrated to the non-Christian elites the analogous truth claims in Christianity to the indigenous religious cultures, Christianity could become more palatable to them. Once converted to Christianity, these influential individuals could in turn create a Christian Church that was “rooted” in “native soil.”⁸¹

In effect, Buss wanted his missionaries to become scholars of comparative religion, and his remarks thoroughly reflect the influence of the rise of the formal study of comparative religions within the European academy in the 1870s.⁸² The scholar often credited with founding this new “science of religion” (*Religionswissenschaft*) was F. Max Müller, a German-born academic specializing who had taught at Oxford since 1850.⁸³ Hoping to find common ground between different religious systems, Müller advanced the claim that Christianity, along with Buddhism and Islam, were religions based on revelation. Yet comparison did not nudge these liberals towards cultural relativism. As Tomoko Masuzawa notes, Müller himself was an advocate for the goals of Christian mission: his study of other religions did not convince him that Christian missionaries should abandon the goal of Christianizing the world.⁸⁴ Liberal Protestants like Müller and Buss remained

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 58.

⁸² For a history of the academic study of comparative religion, see Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, 2nd ed. (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1986). For a critical examination for how religion was “invented,” see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁸³ For a good overview and assessment of Müller’s career, see Idem, “Our Masters Voice: F. Max Muller after A Hundred Years of Solitude,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 15, no. 4 (2003): 305-328.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 315-316.

convinced of the superiority of Christian civilization. Christian missionaries had primarily failed in understanding the essence of other cultures. With better knowledge, missionaries could more easily assert Christianity's superiority.

Liberals thus saw the process of “civilizing” and “Christianizing” as marching hand in hand.⁸⁵ To be effective, missionary work had to don secular guise: working with secular, colonial authorities to build institutions such as hospitals and universities fulfilled the double role of bringing Western civilization and Christianity to the rest of the world.⁸⁶ To liberals, Pietists employed a “one-size-fit-all” approach to missionary work. By employing the same missionary methods throughout the world—church building, street evangelism, stressing individual conversion—Pietists did not take into account different stages of civilizational development. Liberals yearned for more flexible and diverse approaches. In less advanced cultures, missionaries needed to appear as charity workers; in advanced cultures, they had to don a scholarly hat, promoting Christianity through reasoned, intellectual dialogue.⁸⁷ Ultimately, liberals saw Pietist missionary work as coercive, overly emotional, and anti-intellectual. They also saw Pietism as entrenched in traditional dogmas. Instead, as Max Müller argued, Christianity needed “less dogmatism, and more faith.”⁸⁸

On the other hand, Pietists accused liberal missionaries of promoting secularism in disguise. Prioritizing attention towards secular institutions diverted attention from the Great Commission of Matthew: Jesus exhorted the apostles to “make disciples,” not scholars. Emphasizing elite education perverted the egalitarian command of Jesus to convert all people, regardless of class and educational status. Most importantly, *Bildung* introduced doubt of Christian truth, closing off the *Volksgeist* to emotional renewal that they hoped to inculcate.⁸⁹

Warneck, the Rise of Missiology, and Liberal Critics

The field of German Protestant missiology (*Missionswissenschaft*) emerged amidst the backdrop of these polemical debates between Pietists and liberals. Gustav Warneck, considered the founder of the academic study, saw himself as a grand synthesizer. Even though his own ideas remained rooted in Pietist convictions, he advanced the notion of *Volkskirchentum* in the hope of building consensus among the warring parties. Born in Naumburg in 1834 to a needle maker, Warneck went against his father's wishes and pursued the study of theology at the University of Halle, where he enrolled in 1855. Halle was then considered the center of German Pietism, and Warneck studied with a circle of Pietists, notably Friedrich August Tholuck, Friedrich Ahlfeld, and Heinrich Hoffmann. Warneck embraced their evangelical fervor, and was drawn to the Pietist method of reading the Bible

⁸⁵ Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 82.

⁸⁶ Knöpp, “Die Volkskirche auf dem Missionsfelde,” 84-85.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 84.

⁸⁸ Ulrich Berner, “Religionsgeschichte und Mission: Zur Kontroverse zwischen Ernst Troeltsch und Gustav Warneck,” in *Vom Weltbildwandel zur Weltanschauungsanalyse*, ed. Volker Sparn and Walter Drehsen (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), 106.

⁸⁹ For more on *Volksgeist*, see Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 79.

literally. In 1858, Warneck moved to Wuppertal, where he directed an orphanage. Here he came in contact with Friedrich Fabri, then the director of the Rhenish Mission Society. They became good friends, and this laid the foundation for Warneck's interest in missions.⁹⁰ He became a pastor in the region, and also served as a tutor at the Rhenish Mission.

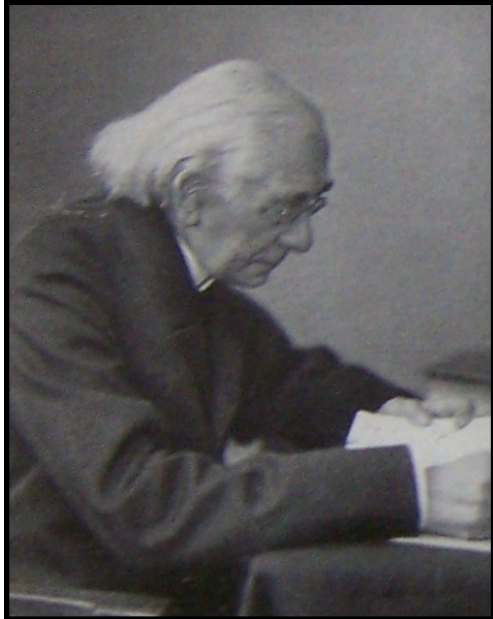


Figure 15: Gustav Warneck. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

In 1871, Warneck returned to academia, accepting a position in the philosophical faculty in Jena. Soon thereafter, he founded, along with Theodor Christlieb and Reinhold Grundemann, the influential missionary journal *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift (AMZ)*. The *AMZ* became the premier scholarly journal dealing with missionary issues, and laid the foundation for missiology's acceptance as an academic discipline. Warneck founded the Continental Missions Conference, a gathering of mission societies to discuss the future of missions. The journal and the missionary conference helped to develop a unified missionary stance and voice within the German Protestant missionary enterprise.⁹¹ In 1892, Warneck published the first of five volumes, *Principles of Protestant Mission (Evangelische Missionslehre)*, which he finished in 1903.

Warneck's influence provided Pietist missionaries with the intellectual and academic legitimacy that they desired. Under his leadership, missiology (*Missionswissenschaft*) became an important area of academic study, an independent field, alongside practical and systematic theology. Warneck held the first chair in the study of missiology (*Lehrstuhl für Missionswissenschaft*) at the University of Halle. Soon universities throughout Germany, the

⁹⁰ Hans Kasdorf, *Gustav Warnecks missiologisches Erbe* (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 1990), 6.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Netherlands, and Scandinavia established chairs and professorships in missiology.⁹² In contrast, seminaries and divinity schools in the United States did not begin to offer courses in the study of world missions until the 1920s and 1930s.⁹³ Pietists could now point to Warneck's erudition and influence to counter Langhans's critique that Pietist missionaries were primarily uneducated farmers and craftsmen.

Warneck's major intellectual contribution to bridging the liberal-conservative divide was to distinguish between "missionary methods" (*Missionsaufgabe*) and "missionary goals" (*Missionsziel*). While he supported the Pietist method of individual conversion, he agreed with the liberals that the eventual goal (*Missionsziel*) was *Volkschristianisierung*. For Warneck, missionaries ought to draw upon the Biblical example of the conversion of Abraham and his family as a model for missionary work. Conversion began with the individual (Abraham), spread to his family and the local surrounding tribes, and finally the people of Israel. Similarly, the process of conversion in the Gospels followed a similar path: it began with Jesus, who then converted the apostles, who then set about rooting the church in a local, then regional, and finally imperial context.⁹⁴

For Warneck, then, the goal of individual conversion was not at odds with the eventual goal of *Volkschristianisierung*. Rather, Warneck conceived of individual conversion as a method in the eventual process of bringing all foreign peoples to Christ. But for Warneck, it was important that mission begin with the conversion of the individual — civilizational development meant nothing without conversion first. Warneck's ideals were still Pietist at its core: conversion was the heart of the work. Furthermore, Warneck explicitly criticized the type of Christianity that liberals such as Müller and Langhans hoped to export. Warneck rejected the idea that mission meant civilizational "development" or "Europeanization," and, drawing upon earlier Pietist ideas, argued that missionary schools should teach in native languages, rather than European languages.⁹⁵ In 1879, Warneck called Max Müller's concept of missionary work a "culture war" (*Kulturkampf*) over the place of scriptural, "Biblical Christianity" in the modern world.⁹⁶ Warneck argued that the "Biblical," traditional, and historical Christianity that Müller rejected underpinned the foundations of modern society, and was hardly at odds with a modern cultural worldview.

But Warneck did acknowledge liberal charges of missionary chauvinism. He argued that missionaries should strive to respect native cultures and values, and try to translate the message of Christianity in ways that indigenous people could understand. "When Jesus tried to convert all peoples to Christianity," Warneck argued, "he tried to make them Christian without asking them to give up their natural characteristics."⁹⁷ Warneck also accepted certain liberal ideas about the necessity for missionaries to inject certain European ideas

⁹² James A. Scherer, "Missiology." Encyclopedia of Christianity Online. Brill Online, accessed 23 June 2012, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-christianity/missiology-M554>.

⁹³ One of the earliest chairs of World Missions was at Yale Divinity School, which Kenneth Scott Latourette assumed in 1921.

⁹⁴ Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 89.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 94.

⁹⁶ Berner, "Religionsgeschichte und Mission," 106.

⁹⁷ Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 94-95.

within the missionary schools, such as hygiene, medicine, and other practices that could alleviate suffering and poverty within the non-Christian lands.

Not all liberals were convinced by the attempts of Warneck and other Pietist theologians to reform their understanding of mission. And the theological grounds of these differences were shifting. In 1900, a polemical debate between Warneck and Ernst Troeltsch, a liberal German Protestant and influential member of the “history of religions” school (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*), in the wake of the Boxer Uprising showed how the fundamental gulf between liberal and conservative theologians had not shrunk, but widened. On the surface, the debate centered around the responsibility of German missionary work for fomenting anti-Western violence. Liberals such as Troeltsch blamed the Pietists and their missionary tactics for exacerbating tensions, which threatened to undermine entire Western presence in China. Warneck defended the missionaries, claiming that they had operated independent of Western imperial ambitions.⁹⁸ Mud-slinging from both sides ensued, each claiming that the other side was more culpable for the violence that they had witnessed.

Aside from assessing blame, at the heart of the debate between the Pietists and the liberals lay the question of Christianity’s position in a secularizing, modern world that had begun to doubt the truth claims of Christianity—of which the Boxers was just a violent expression of these doubts. The debate also revolved around the question of how to consider Christianity’s peculiar, particular claims of salvation in light of the expanding knowledge of complicated with the insights of comparative religious scholars such as Buddhism, Islam, and Confucianism. Troeltsch, like Müller, was a relativist; he believed that missionary work, coupled with the insights garnered from the study of comparative religion could uncover underlying truths united all religions—in his words, the “unity of mankind” (*Einheit der Menschheit*). In spite of his relativism, he was not a detractor of European imperialism and colonialism: Troeltsch shared Müller’s conviction of the superiority of European civilization. For Troeltsch, European imperialism was an undeniably positive force.⁹⁹ Protestant missionaries, similarly, should support the goal of spreading European civilization, and Pietists had failed to grasp this larger purpose. Troeltsch charged the Pietists with viewing success solely in statistical terms, devoting their time to meticulously counting the numbers of converts and baptized that they had won. “The spread and

⁹⁸ For a good overview of the entire debate, see Berner, “Religionsgeschichte und Mission.” For Troeltsch’s initial salvo, see Ernst Troeltsch, “Die Mission in der modernen Welt,” *Die christliche Welt. Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt für Gebildete aller Stände* 20 (1906): 8-12, 26-28, 56-59. For Warneck’s response, see Gustav Warneck, “Missionsmotiv und Missionsaufgabe,” *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* 34 (1907): 1-15; 49-61; 105-122. He also published his response as an individual pamphlet: Idem, *Missionsmotiv und Missionsaufgabe nach der modernen religionsgeschichtlichen Schule* (Berlin: M. Warneck, 1907). Troeltsch responded in the *Zeitschrift für Missionskunde*, see Ernst Troeltsch, “Missionsmotiv, Missionsaufgabe und neuzeitliches Humanitätschristentum,” *Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft* 22 (1907): 129-146. Warneck wrote another response Gustav Warneck, “Noch einmal: Missionsmotiv und Missionsaufgabe nach der modernen religionsgeschichtlichen Schule,” *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* 35 (1908): 49-61; 109-126. Troeltsch got the last word when he published a longer, combined piece in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, Ernst Troeltsch, “Die Mission in der modernen Welt,” in *Gesammelte Schriften: Zweiter Band, Zur Religiösen Lage, Religionsphilosophie und Ethik* (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1913). I draw on Troeltsch’s 1913 publication to discuss his ideas.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 783.

influence of European-Christian ideas around the world,” Troeltsch argued, “cannot be measured by statistics.”¹⁰⁰

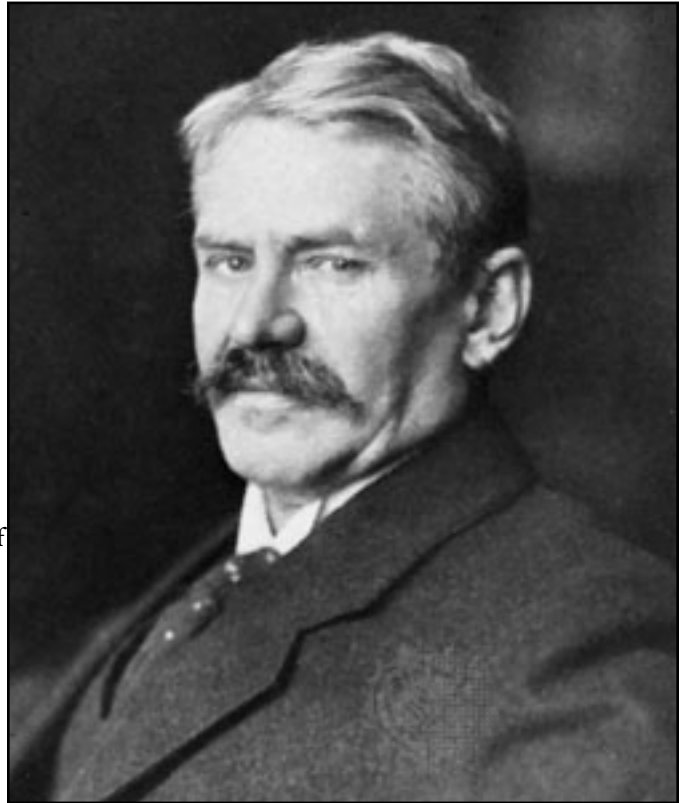


Figure 16: Ernst Troeltsch. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia commons

Troeltsch took issue not with Christian mission *per se*—he prized missionary work for refracting the central religious concerns of the modern world questions of the age, such as the future development of Christianity in the world, the possibility of “understanding” between Eastern and Western civilizations, and for Troeltsch, the most important problem of renewing the Christianity with modern academic insights.¹⁰¹ His critique revolved around the dominance of the German missionary landscape by “the Pietists and the orthodox Lutherans.”¹⁰² Pietist missionaries were constricted by “narrow confessional concerns,” and “an absolute Lutheran conservatism hindered German missionary work abroad.”¹⁰³ Thus, German missionaries had failed to bring the “best of German intellectual and religious life” to the world.¹⁰⁴ Troeltsch saw American and British missionaries as successfully combining intellectual rigor and popular religiosity, whereas German missionaries were seen as synonymous with “only elementary school masters, textbooks, and army discipline.”¹⁰⁵

Troeltsch argued that German missions needed to be reclaimed for the “overall interests of the German people,” rather than remain within the confines of “narrow Church

¹⁰⁰. Ibid.

¹⁰¹. Ibid., 780.

¹⁰². Ibid., 786.

¹⁰³. Ibid., 782.

¹⁰⁴. Ibid., 783.

¹⁰⁵. Ibid.

interests.”¹⁰⁶ This Lutheran orthodoxy contributed to the deep unpopularity of mission work among educated elites in Germany. “The German educated community” (*Gemeinde der Gebildete*) knew little to nothing about German missionary work. Pietist missionaries had also alienated and angered merchants and colonial officers abroad, because they did not “fully cooperate with colonial interests.”¹⁰⁷ The Boxer Uprising, for Troeltsch, was “an inconvenience and expense forced upon the throats of the colonial powers by the missionaries.”¹⁰⁸ More importantly, for Troeltsch, the root cause of missionary unpopularity stemmed from the religious crisis in Germany. The type of faith that the Pietists represented had been discredited within the German academy. “Our people are no longer sure of their faith,” Troeltsch remarked, and “can no longer support exporting beliefs that they themselves do not believe.”¹⁰⁹

To solve this crisis of faith, Troeltsch argued that German missionary societies had to free themselves from the “terrifying whip of confessional and religious fanaticism” and adopt the academic insights of the modern age.¹¹⁰ Comparative religion demonstrated that other religions were equally true and meaningful: “non-Christian peoples are not all Heathens, lost and damned, waiting for their souls to be lifted from Hell and raised to the heavens.”¹¹¹ These different religious traditions had valuable ideas and lessons to teach Europe, and Troeltsch suggested that these religious truths could help renew and revive Christianity in Europe.¹¹² Engaging with these truth claims required one final, radical step: missionaries needed to eradicate the message of Christ and individual conversion from altogether. Troeltsch argued that missionaries should become secular, they needed to dedicate themselves primarily to the realm of social work, charity, and education, instead of Church planting, converting individuals, and preaching the Gospel. He wanted missionaries to work to “alleviate suffering, rather than preach salvation.”¹¹³ For Troeltsch, this type of new, secularized Christianity represented an evolved, modern, higher form of religion.

For Warneck and other Pietists, Troeltsch’s cultural relativism was untenable. The fundamental difference between Pietists and liberals, Warneck charged, revolved around the question of sin in the world. Liberals like Troeltsch “did not believe that the world is completely and utterly sinful and reject the idea that individuals need the saving Grace of God.”¹¹⁴ For Warneck, the diversity of religious expression did not negate Christianity’s central claim that it offered the only path towards salvation; it was only through a personal encounter with Jesus Christ that the sinner could be reconciled to God. This message was fundamentally incompatible with the ideas of the other non-Christian religions. Müller and Troeltsch’s vision of creating a universal religion by finding common threads from other

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 804.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 784.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 785.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 789.

¹¹¹ Kasdorf, *Gustav Warnecks missiologisches Erbe*, 50.

¹¹² Troeltsch, “Die Mission in der modernen Welt,” 793-794.

¹¹³ Ibid., 789.

¹¹⁴ Warneck, “Missionsmotiv und Missionsaufgabe,” 107.

religions was nothing but a “fantastical, poetic dream.”¹¹⁵ Warneck further attacked Troeltsch’s proposal to renew Christianity through the insights of other religions as a form of “syncretism.”¹¹⁶

Warneck agreed with Troeltsch that missionaries should learn more about non-Christian religions. Yet he faulted liberals for “idealizing” non-Christian religions.¹¹⁷ Unlike the Pietists, who had spent decades working on the ground, learning local dialects and languages, Warneck criticized liberals like Troeltsch for operated solely in as world of abstraction. By dealing only in the realm of ideas, liberals had lost all objectivity and characterized non-Christian religions in a more flattering light. Warneck accused the liberal of elitism, neglecting the majority of the indigenous population. Moreover, rather than viewing Christianity as a religion in a state of stasis and requiring renewal, Warneck argued it was the other religions—Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Confucianism—that needed the insights of Christianity to renew it. What pietistic Christianity offered was the revolutionary claim that all people were created equal, and equally needed the love of God. This simple message offered the lower classes a liberation from the hierarchical structures that ensnared them.¹¹⁸

Warneck also attacked Troeltsch for stressing “Europeanization,” rather than Christianization. The goal of missionary work was not to make the non-Christian world European, rather it was “to supplant non-Christian religions with Christianity.”¹¹⁹ The indigenization of Christianity was a “historical fact”—the history of Christianity was littered with examples of Jews, Greeks, Romans, Germans, and Anglo-Saxons integrating the “individual qualities of the people” (*Volksindividualitäten*) with Christianity.¹²⁰ Rather than destroying culture, Warneck charged, Christianity preserved it. It was possible to develop a “Christian Chinese, a Christian Hindu, a Christian Japanese.”¹²¹ Christianity’s crisis did not lay with the basic messages of Christianity, rather, the crisis was fomented by practitioners like Troeltsch: “The Christians themselves do not live what their ethics teach and the Christians themselves do not believe what the Gospel preaches.”¹²²

These disagreements between conservatives and liberals continued within missionary periodicals until the end of the First World War. By attaching themselves so closely to German colonial aims, Troeltsch and the liberals made a crucial tactical error. The end of the First World War not only stripped Germany of its colonies, it also placed the ideal of “Europeanization” through colonialism under question after the First World War. In Germany, theologians like Karl Barth mounted a critique of liberal theology for their complicity in encouraging the war.¹²³ In the realm of overseas missions, the liberals

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 108.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 115.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 1.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 109.

¹²¹ Ibid., 109-110.

¹²² Ibid., 121.

¹²³ One of the best overviews of Karl Barth and the neo-Orthodox turn is Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

essentially ceded the work to the Pietists. While it was difficult for Troeltsch to continue their defense of the merger of the missionary and colonial project, Pietist missionaries eagerly touted their apolitical stance, claiming that their form of Christianity had always been disassociated with the goals and ideas of the colonial project at large. The Warneck line, which was maligned in 1900 because of its association with fomenting the hatred that led to the Boxer Uprising, had become the theologically tenable position in the 1920s. Thus After the First World War, Troeltsch's vision of the expansion of liberal missionary societies never came into fruition. Only one German liberal missionary the *Allgemeine evangelisches-protestantisches Missionsverein*, existed in a sea of Pietist societies.

Children of Warneck: The German Missionary Establishment of the 1920s and Anti-Americanism

Thus, by the 1920s, the German Protestant missionary establishment emerged out of the post-World War I landscape retaining their Pietism: all major leaders of the missionary societies, missionary councils, and academic study of missions remained deeply indebted to Warneck's Pietist legacy. The largest and most influential individual missionary societies—the Basel, the Rhenish, and the Berlin Missionary Society—adopted Warneck's line of individual conversion mixed with eventual social conversion. The one remaining liberal missionary society, the *Allgemeine evangelisch-protestantische Missionsverein*, now had only a limited number of missionaries on its staff, and only sent their missionaries to East Asia, as opposed to the larger missionary organizations that sent missionaries to Africa and Asia.

Beyond the individual missionary societies, Warneck's brand of Pietism marked the most prominent national-level missionary federation, the Protestant Missionary Council (*Deutscher Evangelischer Missionsausschuß*, renamed the *Deutscher Evangelischer Missionsrat* after 1933), founded in 1885 at the Bremen Continental Conference. Warneck and other missionary leaders had conceived of the Council as a way to bring together disparate voices and forge a more effective lobbying voice in Germany and *vis-à-vis* missionary groups and nations.¹²⁴ Warneck served as the Council's first chairman. Fourteen missionary societies—all of whom brandished Pietist credentials—joined the Council.¹²⁵ Member societies each elected between seven and nine delegates to sit on the Council.¹²⁶ The Council held the annual mission conferences, where the representatives of the member societies actively

1995). For a good study of Barth's relationship to American evangelicalism, see Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson, *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2011).

¹²⁴ Werner Ustorf, *Sailing on the Next Tide: Missions, Missiology and the Third Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2000), 141-142.

¹²⁵ The fourteen founding members of the Mission Council included 1. Mission der Brüdergemeine, 2. Basler Missionsgesellschaft, 3. Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft, 4. Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 5. Goßnersche Missionsgesellschaft, 6. Evangelisch-lutherische Mission in Leipzig, 7. Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft, 8. Hermannsbürger Mission, 9. Schleswig-Holsteinische Missionsgesellschaft, 10. Neukirchener Missionsanstalt, 11. Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft für Deutsch-Ostafrika, (Bielefelder Missionsgesellschaft), 12. Neuendettelsauer Mission, 13. Morgenländischer Frauenverein in Berlin, 14. Jerusalemverein in Berlin. Deutsches Kolonial-Lexicon, 103.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 142.

discussed and strategized how their societies should position themselves in relation to the state and other confessions, such as the Catholics. Early on the Council staked out its fundamentally pro-state outlook: its bylines stated clearly that it would cooperate with the *Reich* and “provide to the Colonial Office all the information required by it on missionary issues.”¹²⁷

In 1922, a new organization, the German Protestant Missionary Society (*Deutscher Evangelischer Missionsbund*, which after 1933 changed its name to the *Deutscher Evangelischer Missionstag*) emerged to help organize the expansion of missionary organizations. The members of the Missionary Society, representing 34 organizations in Germany, now assumed control of electing the Missionary Council. Between 50 and 70 representatives from all organizations met at an annual conference, and elected members to the German Missionary Council.¹²⁸ The German Missionary Council represented the broad coalition of all Protestant missionary societies in Germany. It became the face of the German missionary enterprise both within Germany and in the international Protestant arena. After the foundation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1921, the German Missionary Council became the main organization that negotiated and communicated with other international organizations.

Thus, by the 1920s, in one way or another, every major Protestant missionary leader had obtained his theological and missionary training from an institution connected to Warneck. Warneck’s son, Johannes, continued to be a major presence in the missionary scene. With the German liberals essentially vacating the missionary field, Warneck’s influence among German missionaries reigned supreme.

Warneck’s form of German Pietism markedly contrasted with the Anglo-American missionary establishment, which was largely represented by liberal mainline denominations. This fault-line between liberals and conservatives was by no means singular to the German missionary community: in the American context, mainline denominations came under attack from fundamentalists who thought they had focused too much on Social Gospel ideas of civilizational uplift, at the expense of work involving conversion. These mainline denominations stood for what the historian William Hutchison has called “missionary activism.”¹²⁹ Hutchison notes that even though a divide between fundamentalist and mainline ideologies also raged in American missionary work, mainline denominations dominated the national and international forums for missions: the bulk of the delegates who attended the Protestant Edinburgh International Missionary Conference came from thirty-five American missionary agencies. In the case of missionaries to China, 74% of the American missionaries working in China came from mainline Protestant churches with a more liberal outlook.¹³⁰

¹²⁷. Deutsches Kolonial-Lexicon, 103.

¹²⁸. Rainer Hering, “Deutscher Evangelischer Missionstag,” in *Religion Past and Present*, ed. Don S. Browning, Hans Dieter Betz, Bernd Janowski and, Eberhard Jüngel (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

¹²⁹. William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 120-121.

¹³⁰. *Ibid.*, 128.

The German missionary establishment's distaste for Anglo-American missionary work was thus both theological and political. They saw the American missionaries as theologically juvenile and politically opportunist. The mistrust of German missionary leaders towards Anglo-American missionaries dated back to Warneck himself. An outspoken critic of the American missionaries, Warneck described the Anglo-American view of missions as "whimsical," "self-righteous," full of "romantic will o' the wisps...more likely to confuse than to enlighten."¹³¹ In particular, Warneck criticized the American missionary leader John Mott (Figure 17), deeming his missionary "Watchword"—"The Evangelization of the World in This Generation"—as "careless and overly impassioned rhetoric."¹³² The Anglo-Americans, on the other hand, dismissed Warneck as a crank. As William Hutchison has noted, American missionary leaders such as John Mott ignored Warneck's excoriations, seeing Warneck as "a somewhat isolated problem in public relations, not as the voice of a broad constituency or serious ideological alternative."¹³³ This snub by the Anglo-American leaders further fueled the German sense of beleaguerment within international missionary circles.

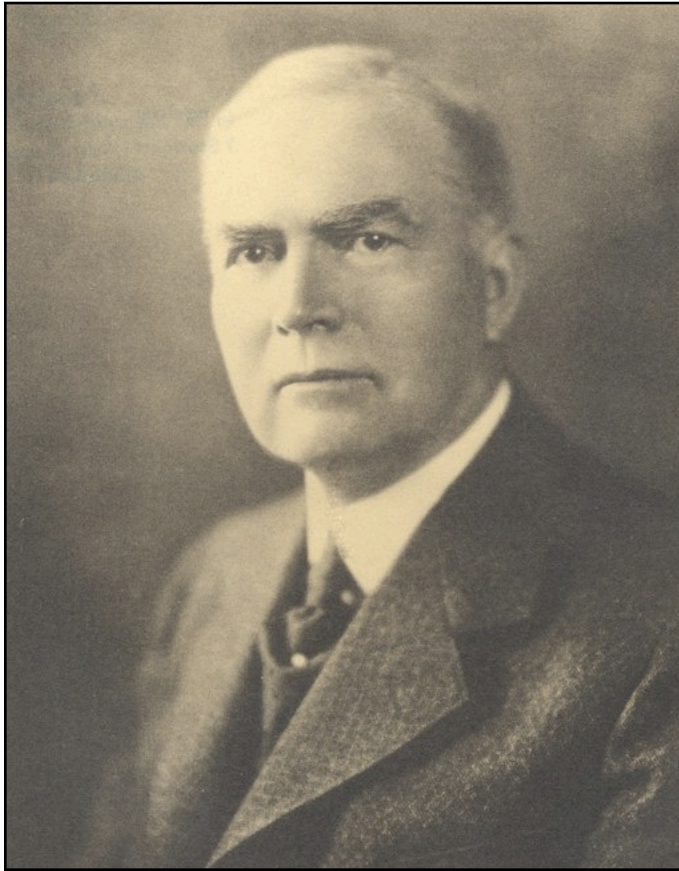


Figure 17: John Mott. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

¹³¹ Ibid., 134-135.

¹³² William R. Hutchison, "Innocence Abroad: The "American Religion" in Europe," *Church History* 51, no. 1 (1982), 79.

¹³³ Idem, *Errand to the World*, 135.

For the generation of Pietist missionary leaders in the 1920s, the post-Versailles geopolitical situation and extension of Anglo-American dominance merely confirmed their anti-American anxieties. They saw the Anglo-American approach to missionary work as politics in disguise: the call for the “Social Gospel” was not grounded in solid theology, but rather in imperial politics. For the Germans, the idea of the *Volkskirche* represented an ideological and theological alternative to the Anglo-American method of missionary work. Drawing upon nineteenth-century discourse, this new generation of missionary leaders also saw the *Volkskirche* as a panacea. It was an anti-imperial alternative to the dominant American model. It could also bridge the liberal and conservative gap within Germany, solving the internal debates that had for so long troubled German missionaries.

One of the most vocal missionary theologians who advanced the idea of constructing a German *Volkskirche* as a bulwark against this encroaching “Americanism” was Heinrich Frick, a rising star in the field of German *Missionswissenschaft* in the 1920s. Born in Darmstadt in 1893, Frick was a man of erudition and broad theological interests. He began his career in the study of comparative religion, producing a dissertation that compared the confessions of St. Augustine with those of the Persian theologian Al-Ghazali. A devout Lutheran, Frick was disgusted by the demise of German missionary work after the First World War. He turned his attention to the study of missionary and in 1922 published *The Protestant Missions: Origins, History, and its Future* (*Die evangelische Mission: Ursprung, Geschichte, Ziel*). The book laid out his vision, interpretation, and historical analysis of the evolution of German Protestant missionary theology from the early modern period in 1914. This work established his academic reputation, and he was promoted to the position of Professor for Practical Theology at Giessen in 1924.¹³⁴ His academic star continued to rise. In 1929, he succeeded the prominent theologian Rudolf Otto at the University of Marburg, inhabiting the chair of systematic theology and missiology.¹³⁵

Frick’s works in the early 1920s encapsulated the anxieties of the broader German missionary leadership. German missionary work was in a state of crisis, he warned, and the whole enterprise required a renewal in its theology.¹³⁶ Frick feared that the end of the German empire portended the demise of German missionary influence. Along with other leading missionary figures, Frick advocated a shift in tactics and ideas to remain relevant in a Protestant missionary landscape increasingly dominated by British and American missionaries.¹³⁷

But what could Germans offer that other missionary nations could not? Frick found his answers in the *Volkskirche*: he saw the *Volkskirche* as a solely “German” contribution to the realm of international missions, the key to Germany’s continued relevance within the world of Protestant missions. Hoping to revamp the *Volkskirche* to counter the challenges of the postwar religious landscape, Frick believed that the establishment of various *Volkskirche* throughout the world could satisfy both the Pietist desire to build native church

¹³⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, “Frick, Heinrich,” *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexicon* 2): 123. Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, Frick, Heinrich, in BBKL

¹³⁵ Georg Wünsch, “Heinrich Frick in memoriam,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 78, no. 7 (1953), 436.

¹³⁶ Heinrich Frick, *Vom Pietismus zum Volkskirchentum* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1924). Idem, *Die evangelische Mission: Ursprung, Geschichte, Ziel* (Bonn: Schroöder, 1922), 1.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

congregations and the liberals' focus on respecting the individual character of the natives themselves.

For Frick, the establishment of a *Volkskirche* would end the central debate that divided German Protestant missionaries. Through the *Volkskirche*, Frick argued, the “dialectic between *Einzelbekehrung* and *Volkschristianisierung* will truly be synthesized (*Aufgehoben*) to a higher principle.”¹³⁸ Frick agreed with Pietists that individual conversion remained the primary day-to-day goal of the missionary, and the missionary societies would continue to play a vital role in sustaining the convert “just as a mother cares for a child.”¹³⁹ But for Frick, Warneck’s goal of converting a whole people to Christianity (“*Volkschristianisierung*”) was vague: Warneck offered no clear guidelines to measure whether the a people or nation had converted to Christianity. For Frick, the mark of conversion could best be measured through physical institutions, such as the establishment of churches. Yet Frick saw that the previous missionary method of building rural congregations encouraged disorganization. Instead of continuing to establish a fragmented Christian map, dotted by individual congregations, the missionary enterprise needed to help create a central institution that could help organize these scattered churches. Missionaries thus needed to help new converts establish a national Church, a *Volkskirche*, that reflected the cultures and customs of the people. For Frick, despite the international, transcendental message of Jesus’s Gospel, missionaries ultimately had to collaborate with converts on a national project. Frick foresaw a future global Christian landscape inhabited by a panoply of national churches, with each church displaying the “national character” (*nationale Eigenart*) of the people.¹⁴⁰

How, then, should the missionary tailor his approach to different peoples? Here, Frick relied on racial categories: he differentiated among three major types of *Volk* — the “cultural peoples” (*Kulturvölker*), the “natural peoples” (*Naturvölker*), and the *Volk* who lay in-between the “cultural” and “natural.”¹⁴¹ Frick categorized countries like Japan and China as *Kulturvölker*: the “cultural peoples” had a long history and literate culture, and possessed a solid and advanced understanding of their own “national character.”¹⁴² The *Naturvölker*, on the other hand, were tribal peoples who had “weak and ill-developed sense of their own national character.” Countries in Africa, the South Pacific, and Latin America belonged in this category. India was an “in-between” state on this hierarchical ladder, neither a *Kulturvölker* nor a *Naturvölker*.

For Frick, missionaries and missionary societies had to adapt their missionary strategies according to the differences in “racial nature” (*Rassenbeschaffenheit*) that they encountered.¹⁴³ Indigenization and independence were only possible when “the people have the correct spiritual qualifications.”¹⁴⁴ The *Kulturvölker*, possessing high standards of education and strong historical consciousness, were racially prepared for independence.

¹³⁸ Frick, *Vom Pietismus zum Volkskirchentum*, 37.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 33.

¹⁴¹ Heinrich Frick, *Nationalität und Internationalität der christlichen Mission* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1917), 73.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 75.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 74.

When engaging with the *Kulturvölker*, missionaries needed to refrain from methods of “Europeanization,” and the native assistants should preferably be kept “completely free from European national influences.”¹⁴⁵ Drawing on the case of missionaries in China, Frick argued that Chinese cultural identity was so strong that it was inevitable that it clashed with even the smallest hints of European cultural arrogance.

The *Naturvölker*, on the other hand, were not yet prepared for a church life independent of European guidance. For the people of “lower cultural levels” (*die Völker auf niedriger Kulturstufe*), their “racial natures hinder the path towards a fully independent Church.”¹⁴⁶ Even in the case of India, Frick noted, the British attempt to establish a completely independent Anglican Church had failed. In African countries, Frick argued that that missionaries urgently needed to develop “a conscious sense of European culture.”¹⁴⁷ Paternalist practices were needed in places like Africa, because the Africans lacked the necessary consciousness about their “national self.” The Africans, according to Frick, required the help of nations with more advanced national consciousness to help them discover their own “national self.”

Frick and the rest of the German missionary establishment incorporated early twentieth-century racial ideas into their prescriptions for missionaries entering the field. German missionary theologians justified their racial thinking by pointing out that God had created a multi-racial world, originally equal. But sin had entered the world and rendered the races unequal, and it was up to the more advanced Christian nations of the world to help these non-Christian nations develop its own *Volkskirche*. For Frick, the missionary needed to realize that the goal of mission work was “thoroughly national, and the missionary must help each people and civilization establish their own *Volkskirche*. Only through this help and conversion can the national character of the people be fully realized.”¹⁴⁸ These distinct *Volkskirche* not only fostered cultural development, they also served as a protection against the encroachment of American cultural imperialism. For German missionary theologians, the *Volkskirche* became a convenient way to celebrate simultaneously racial diversity and racial superiority. Since each nation and people would develop their own, particular form of the *Volkskirche*, it was not the job of the missionary to establish a German *Volkskirche* in the lands that they worked. But since the German church was itself developed, it was the mission of the German Church to aid and assist other nations create their own *Volkskirche*.

The discussion surrounding the *Volkskirche* approached a form of utopian thinking: missionary leaders saw the creation of numerous *Volkskirche* key to the resurgence of German Protestantism worldwide. Fueled by their resentment towards American and British missionaries and chastened by the decimation of the German overseas empire after World War I, German missionary theologians conceived of the *Volkskirche* as an anti-imperialist institution, a defense against the pernicious influence of American and British power. In Frick’s formulation, the *Volkskirche* became both a celebration of Germany’s unique contribution to global Christianity, as well as a repudiation of Anglo-American missionary dominance. His ideas caught on like wildfire among German missiologists. For

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 79.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 75.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 79.

¹⁴⁸ Frick, *Vom Pietismus zum Volkskirchentum*, 33.

the ensuing decade, the German debates and discussions surrounding the future of worldwide missionary work were dominated by the question of how to establish an indigenous, native *Volkskirche* in the various lands.

German Protestant and Catholic Missionswissenschaft

The Protestants were not alone in their adherence to the idea of the *Volk* as a natural, eternal category. German Catholic theologians after the First World War had also fallen under the sway of racial thinking. As John Connelly writes,

Emerging from, as well as decisively shaping, the life form of German Catholics in the interwar years was a unique interplay of metaphors and symbols that had theological, political, and biological resonance: *Volk* (people, nation), *mystischer Leib Christi* (mystical body of Christ), *Blut* (blood), *Reich* (empire, kingdom), and *Erbsünde* (hereditary or original sin).¹⁴⁹

Catholic theologians also looked to their Protestant competitors and counterparts for inspiration. Josef Schmidlin (1876-1944), often credited and cited as the founding theorist of Catholic missiology, drew upon the ideas of Gustav Warneck.¹⁵⁰ Even though he referred to Protestants as “heretics” who would eventually be re-converted to the “true Church,”¹⁵¹ Schmidlin expressed much admiration for Warneck's agenda of developing a systematic theory of missionary work. He called Warneck's work “pathbreaking” in establishing a broader respect for missiology as a field of study.¹⁵²

Schmidlin thus embarked on a plan to develop Catholic missiology, imitating Warneck's approach. In 1910, Schmidlin established a chair for missiology at the University of Münster, as well as an international Institute for Missiology at the University. He also established in 1911 a journal devoted to the discussion of Catholic missionary work, called the *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* (*ZM*), which he saw as a counterpart to Warneck's *AMZ*.¹⁵³ In the first issue of the *ZM*, Schmidlin devoted significant attention to explaining how German Catholic missiology directly responded to Warneck's Protestant *Missionswissenschaft*. Schmidlin wrote that the purpose of the journal was to make Catholic missiology a “qualified object of academic study” that “conforms to the norms and fundamentals of academic standards.”¹⁵⁴

But Schmidlin made it clear that Catholic missiology had significant differences from that of the Protestants. Even in his first and early issue, Schmidlin attacked Warneck's notion of the *Volkskirche*. The fundamental problem, Schmidlin argued, was that

¹⁴⁹ John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 67.

¹⁵⁰ Yates, *Christian Missions in the Twentieth Century*, 4.

¹⁵¹ Josef Schmidlin, *Katholische Missionswissenschaft* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1924), 2.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵⁴ Josef Schmidlin, “Die katholische Missionswissenschaft,” *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 1 (1911), 11.

Protestants, “with their vague concept of the Church,” could only understand the relationship between the missionary church and the native church in the abstract.¹⁵⁵ For Catholics, however, the relationship between the native and the international Church was clear: all of the rural parishes and missionary work throughout the world folded into the hierarchical structure and framework of the Catholic Church. Catholicism, and the Catholic Church, had a long history of juggling tensions between the particular and the universal; the Protestants were handicapped by their tendency to fall back on an state and national framework inherited from Bismarck’s Germany (*Reichsgedanke*).

Siegfried Knak's Idea of Indigenization

Frick—and by extension, the German Protestant missionary enterprise—viewed the idea of the *Volkskirche* as not only an academic exercise, but as practice. Whereas Frick theorized and proposed a broader framework for how the German missionary enterprise ought to conduct itself globally, individual directors of missionary societies strategized about how to convert the natives. Thus Siegfried Knak (Figure 18), the newly appointed missions director of the Berlin Missionary Society in 1921, embraced Frick’s idea of the *Volkskirche*, and sought to apply the ideas to the specific missionary lands—mainly South Africa and Germany—that the Berlin Missionary Society evangelized.

Knak stood at the center of the German missionary establishment, and came from a family with a long missionary pedigree. His grandfather, Gustav Knak, a famous Pomeranian pastor, was intimately involved in the Jewish mission in Berlin.¹⁵⁶ Siegfried’s father, Johannes Knak, was a trustee of the Berlin Missionary Society, and oversaw the China field. Since his childhood, then, Siegfried had close familial ties to the Berlin Missionary Society. After studying theology with the renowned Martin Kähler in Halle, he became director of the Berlin Mission Society.

Besides becoming an influential leader in Germany, Knak was also an energetic participant in worldwide missionary conferences, making his mark at the Jerusalem and Tambaram conferences of 1928 and 1938.¹⁵⁷ Knak was highly critical of these international missionary conferences. Instead of unifying the international missionary community, Knak saw the conferences as accentuating existing denominational, ideological, and political differences. Dissension and disagreement, rather than clarity and unity, emerged from the conferences. Furthermore, the domination by American and British missionaries at the various conferences, produced, in Knak’s view, a theologically “weak middle ground” that satisfied no one.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹⁵⁶ For more on the Jewish mission, see Christopher M. Clark, *The Politics of Conversion: Missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia, 1728-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹⁵⁷ For conference reports from Jerusalem, see International Missionary Council, “World Mission of Christianity: Messages and Recommendations of the Enlarged Meeting of the International Missionary Council Held at Jerusalem, March 24-April 8th, 1928” (London, 1928). For conference reports from Tambaram, see “Addresses and other records: International Missionary Council, meeting at Tambaram, Madras, December 12th to 29th, 1938.” Oxford, 1939).

¹⁵⁸ Siegfried Knak, *Zwischen Nil und Tafelbai* (Berlin: Heimatdienst-Verlag, 1931), 125.



Figure 18: Siegfried Knak.

For Knak, the German idea of the *Volkskirche* offered an antidote to the feeble theological positions advanced by the Americans and British. Drawing on Herderian views of the *Volk*, Knak's *Volkskirche* was characterized by cultural diversity; the "order" (*Ordnungen*) of God's creation was at heart pluralist. Each *Volk* had its own history, its own structures of authority, its own "cultural soul" (*Kulturseele*).¹⁵⁹ Missionaries ought to identify and honor "the different characteristics of different races as a God-given reality, and help to develop these characteristics to their full potential and maturity."¹⁶⁰

The *Völker*, then, were something as timeless and ageless as the Gospel itself — they were categories that transcended nations, states, politics. As Johannes Hoekendijk has noted, for Knak, the *Volk* was "a vehicle for history in a holy and eschatological framework (*Das Volk als Vehikel der Geschichte in einen heilsgeschichtlich-eschatologischen Rahmen*)."¹⁶¹ Knak's ideas about the *Volk* and the *Volkskirche* were deeply indebted to not only Heinrich Frick, but also to Bruno Gutmann, who argued that the Church needed to root itself in the "thinking organic to the people" (*Volksorganisches Denken*) and in particular in existing family

¹⁵⁹. Ibid., 133.

¹⁶⁰. Ibid., 142.

¹⁶¹. Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 169.

structures.¹⁶² For Gutmann and Knak, the traditional structures of tribe, locality, and age-relations were also created by God. The Gospel thus was not fundamentally at odds with the particularities of these *Völkisch* ideas. To Knak and Gutmann the missionary should ground his preaching of the Gospel within the traditions and ideas of the people to whom he was preaching, and the Church would then organically develop out of these traditional *Volk* structures. Missionary work should not uproot the individual convert. Instead it ought to firmly place the Gospel within those local ideas.

The Americans, Knak charged, sought to inculcate uniform standards and practices across their mission fields, indifferent to the particular locale. The idea of the “Three-Self Church” was equivalent to a checklist. Whether in China or South Africa, the checklist was the same. The *Volkskirche*, on the other hand, recognized cultural diversity. Since the *Volkskirche* was embedded in the cultural mores of each people, each nation's *Volkskirche* would be different: “The Chinese Church should not look like the African, nor the German, nor the English.”¹⁶³

Knak developed his attack on the Anglo-American missionary enterprise in a series of works. *Zwischen Nils und Tafelbai*, his dissertation written at Halle, established Knak's reputation as one of the foremost thinkers on the theology of indigenization in Germany.¹⁶⁴ For Knak, the formative experience that clarified for him the differences between the American and German approach to missions took place in 1922 at the Shanghai National Church Conference. Knak not only resented the dominance of Anglo-American representation at the meeting, but he also viewed the Anglo-American approach to establishing an indigenous Chinese Church as too explicitly political. The Shanghai National Church conference had made it clear that the Chinese National Church was to act as a political entity, rather than an apolitical church.¹⁶⁵ The triumphalism of the Americans was also on display at the 1928 International Missionary Conference in Jerusalem, where German delegates left criticizing the “persistent theological liberalism, heavy dependence on the Social Gospel, an atmosphere of religious relativism, a general disregard for evangelistic missions, and a syncretistic link between Eastern civilizations and the kingdom of god.”¹⁶⁶

For Knak, the American devotion to the Social Gospel stemmed from “young America's...youthful optimism of hoping to transform the world into a paradise through Christian culture.”¹⁶⁷ The problem, Knak argued, with the American approach to mission was that social “evils” could only be solved through the “inner reformation” of the

¹⁶². For more on Bruno Gutmann, see Ernst Jaeschke, *Bruno Gutmann, His Life, His Thoughts, and His Work: An Early Attempt at a Theology in an African Context* (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, 1985). Also see Klaus Fiedler, *Christianity and African Culture: Conservative German Protestant Missionaries in Tanzania, 1900-1940* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) and chapter 2. in Yates, *Christian Missions in the Twentieth Century*.

¹⁶³. Siegfried Knak, *Mission und nationale Bewegung* (Leipzig: Verlag und Bücherstube der Mädchen-Bibel-Kreise, 1933), 8.

¹⁶⁴. Idem, *Zwischen Nil und Tafelbai*, 124.

¹⁶⁵. Idem, “Oekumenischer Dienst in der Missionswissenschaft,” *Theologia viatorum, Jahrbuch der kirchlichen Hochschule* (1950), 165.

¹⁶⁶. John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 81.

¹⁶⁷. Knak, *Zwischen Nil und Tafelbai*, 124.

individual.¹⁶⁸ The German missionary community, Knak observed, was devoid of such illusions and hubris. Not only did it descend from an authentic Lutheran lineage, German missionaries had also incorporated insights from the post-World War I Barthian theological debates, and appropriated dialectical theology into their consciousness.¹⁶⁹ Karl Barth's dialectical theology further illuminated that the relationship between "Orient and Occident," "heathen and Christian" was not one of simple, inevitable Western civilizational triumph over the rest.

As a result of this soul-searching, Knak wrote, German theology was less susceptible to the various "trends" and "fads" that dominated other theological circles, and instead was focused on the "foundational convictions of the Gospel."¹⁷⁰ Compared to the simple, naive "American optimism," then, German missiology has "internalized the purity of the message, and German Protestant missions has thus purged itself of all inner, subjective feeling, and seeks to bring the motivations for missionary work completely in line with the Gospel."¹⁷¹

For Knak then, each mission field posed distinct problems. Drawing upon his experience overseeing a worldwide missionary organization, he noted that it was much easier to establish a *Volkskirche* in Africa — since African patriarchal lineages and clan identities could be easily synthesized with the fundamental message of the Christian Gospel. China posed a much more difficult problem. Knak did not have a clear method for rooting the Gospel in "cultured" lands like China. The problem of how to handle Confucianism troubled him. He inherited, and agreed with, Frick's characterization of the Chinese as a *Kulturvölker*, noting that the Confucian classics were over two thousand years old and still revered. "[S]hould Chinese Christians adopt the Chinese classics, just as the Occident treats the Old Testament?" asked Knak.¹⁷² He had no answer to this question.

Chinese Bense Anti-Imperialism

At the same time that German missionaries puzzled over how Chinese Christianity should deal with the legacy of Confucianism, Chinese Christian intellectuals actively took up the challenge throughout the 1920s. The problem of Confucianism's compatibility with Christianity was for them an old one: after China had been humiliated in the Opium Wars in the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese intellectuals had proposed ways to complement Chinese traditions with the Western challenge. While Christian missionaries largely saw Christianity and Confucianism as incompatible, fundamentally contradictory "civilizations," Chinese intellectuals tried to defend, develop, and update Chinese intellectual traditions to become more compatible with Western ideas of modern society.¹⁷³ Chinese Christian intellectuals in the late-nineteenth century—including Chinese Catholics such as Ma

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 125.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 129.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 129-130.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 130.

¹⁷² Siegfried Knak, *Die chinesischen Christen unter den gegenwärtigen Wandlungen in China* (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1928), 49.

¹⁷³ For the conflict that Chinese intellectuals faced, see Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

Xiangbo and Ying Lianzhi—also sought to work against this fundamental diametrical opposition. But for Catholics like Ma and Ying, a choice was still unavoidable: the Chinese needed to choose Christianity in order to help modernize and save the nation.¹⁷⁴

In the 1920s, a new generation of intellectuals emerged: Chinese Protestants who were members of the National Christian Literature Association of China *Zhonghua Jidujiao Wenshe* (which I refer to as the *Wenshe*). As Peter Chen-Main Wang has noted, the *Wenshe* “was the single most active and influential organization in the 1920s to advocate the indigenization of Christianity” in China.¹⁷⁵ *Wenshe Monthly*, the monthly magazine that emerged from the Shanghai National Church Conference, where Chinese Christians called for a sustained effort to produce an “indigenous Chinese Christian” literature, began publication in 1925. *Wenshe Monthly* contained articles from prominent Chinese Church leaders and theologians, including Zhao Zichen (professor of religious philosophy at Yenching University), Cheng Jingyi (general secretary of the NCC), and Yu Rizhang (chairman of the NCC, as well as the general secretary of the YMCA). Prominent Anglo-American church leaders, such as John Mott, Edwin Lobenstine, Frank Rawlinson, Henry T. Hodgkin, and John Leighton Stuart, were also involved in the magazine.¹⁷⁶ The *Wenshe* represented a coalition of liberal, modernist, Anglo-American Social Gospel interests in China. Many Chinese contributors to the journal were educated in seminaries in either the United States or the United Kingdom. For example, Zhao Zichen earned degrees at Vanderbilt, Yu Rizhang studied at Harvard, and Cheng Jingyi trained at the Bible Institute in Glasgow.

The *Wenshe* leaders, like German missionary theorists and theologians, turned to history to situate the developmental trajectory of the Chinese church. In their quest for previous models of the Chinese Church, Church leaders showed their Protestant bias: they conveniently left out the history of the Jesuits in China and began their narrative of Christianity in China with the entrance of Protestants to China in the nineteenth century. In the first issue of the *Wenshe Monthly*, Cheng Jingyi wrote that the first era of missionary work in China was dominated by conservative evangelical ideals that focused on individual conversion and the reform of individual moral character. Those models stressed worship, fasting, and other forms of personal discipline.¹⁷⁷ Cheng deemed this period of missionary work “anti-modern” and “contemptuous of secular society.” The beginning of the twentieth century ushered in a second period of missionary work. Drawing upon Social Gospel ideals, missionaries exhorted Christians to enter, rather than retreat from, secular society. Salvation of the extant world was as important as securing a spot in heaven. Christianity

¹⁷⁴ More on Ma and Ying will be discussed in the last chapter on Chen Yuan. For the best book on Ma Xiangbo, see Ruth Hayhoe and Yungling Lu, eds., *Ma Xiangbo and the Mind of Modern China, 1840-1939* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

¹⁷⁵ Peter Chen-Main Wang, “Contextualizing Protestant Publishing in China: The *Wenshe*, 1924-1928,” in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Bays (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 292.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹⁷⁷ Cheng Jingyi 誠靜貽, “Bense Jiaohui zhi Shangquan 本色教會之商權 [Discussions about the Indigenous Church],” *Wenshe Yuekan* 文社月刊 1, no. 1 (October 1925): 4-13.

needed to engage with the world, and the Christian message was essential to reform problems in education and industry.¹⁷⁸

But Cheng and other Chinese Christian leaders did not fully embrace the liberal American Social Gospel. Cheng, for example, argued that the Chinese Church remained “ beholden to Western ideas, spirituality, and economics.”¹⁷⁹ In order to construct a Chinese Christianity relevant to the contemporary Chinese political and social situation, the Chinese Church had to unshackle itself from Western dominance. Cheng wrote that an authentically Chinese Christianity would only emerge if it stripped itself of its Western “ colors.” This fully Chinese Church required new institutions, new approaches to education, and new leaders. It also needed new ideas: Cheng called for the development of the theology of the *Bense* Church (本色教會, literally translated as the Church with local colors).



Figure 19: Cheng Jingyi. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The emergence of *Bense* theology was intimately tied with the revolution in intellectual thought encapsulated by the May 4th Movement and the subsequent wave of anti-Christian protests it inspired. The May 4th Movement had developed a critique of religions and more broadly, practices that it considered superstitious and anti-modern. May

¹⁷⁸. Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁷⁹. Ibid., 5.

4th reformers thus criticized not only Christianity, but Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist practices. The central claim of the anti-Christian campaigns of the 1920s held that Christianity was a mere arm of Western imperialism.¹⁸⁰

The *Bense* movement arose out of a desire among Chinese theologians to disassociate Chinese Christianity with charges of foreign imperialism. All major Chinese Christian theologian and church leaders agreed that as long as Christianity in China contained the taint of Western imperialism, it would never gain widespread acceptance in China. Chinese Christian leaders and intellectuals thus went on the offensive: the liberal Christian magazines such as the *Wenshe Monthly* and *Truth Weekly* (*Zhenli Zhoukan* 真理周刊) they published numerous letters attacking American imperialism. A typical letter, published in *Truth Weekly*, called Americans hypocrites for “advocating for democracy and freedom on the surface, while at the same time restricting immigration for Yellow peoples into their country, simultaneously torturing blacks in the South, treating them like animals.”¹⁸¹ These critiques of American imperialism appeared with regularity in the leading Chinese Christian magazines and journals.

Criticizing American imperialism was low-hanging fruit. The more difficult, hotly contested issue involved how to fuse Christianity and traditional Chinese culture. What aspects from Chinese culture should the Chinese Church incorporate? What aspects should it reject? For the most part, the leadership of the *Wenshe* agreed that certain cultural forms could be synthesized. A *Wenshe* pamphlet of 1926 delineated the major areas where Christianity and Chinese culture shared common ground: music, art, dress. Cheng Jingyi argued that Chinese ritual practices (weddings, burials, festivals) could easily find common ground with Christian ones. Christianity could be made to *look* Chinese. The external appearance of Christianity, most Chinese theologians agreed, could be adapted to a local Chinese context without much difficulty.

But what about questions of Christian doctrine? How could some of the fundamental propositions of Confucianism and Christianity—questions of cosmology, relationship to Heaven and Earth, doctrine, and salvation—be harmonized? This was immediately a burning issue for the Chinese Christians of the *Wenshe*. In the first issue of the *Wenshe Monthly*, the theologian Zhao Guanhai addressed the question of Confucianism. *Bense* theology was certainly tasked with the question of how to make local rituals and practices “Christian.” But Zhao argued that *Bense* theology needed to synthesize Christianity with more than just local practice: it had to find commonalities between Confucian ideas and Christian theology. The Chinese classics and Chinese ideas, Zhao argued, did not contradict with Christianity. “In terms of morals and ethics, the Chinese classics have much in common with Christianity... the basic tenets of our Chinese classics have no fundamental contradictions with Christianity.”¹⁸² The work of the Chinese Christian theologian, then, was to draw out these basic commonalities, rather than point to the contradictions.

¹⁸⁰. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*.

¹⁸¹. See “Liang feng you yanjiu jiazhi de xin 兩封有研究價值的信 [Two Letters Worthy of Notice],” *Zhenli Zhoukan* 真理週刊 3, no. 28 (11 October, 1925): 1.

¹⁸². Zhao Guanhai 招觀海, “Zhongguo bense jidujiaohui yu jiaohui zili 中國基督教會與教會自立 [Chinese Christianity and Church Independence],” *Wenshe Yuekan* 文社月刊 1, no. 1 (October 1925), 33.

Some Chinese theologians pushed this argument further: Confucianism and Christianity not only shared common ideas, Confucianism had much to teach the global Christian community. The writer Mi Xingru (米星如), for example, argued that fundamental Confucian ideas about harmony could reform the global Christian Church. In China, Christianity had come to embody “Western materialism, utilitarianism, and imperialism.”¹⁸³ Christianity needed to absorb the insights of Confucianism and become a “transcendental religion of the East, a courteous, peaceful, and humble religion.”¹⁸⁴ Thus, for some more radical theologians, it was not enough for Christianity to adapt itself to Chinese culture. The survival of Christianity in China depended on it learning from the best ideas that Chinese culture had to offer.

Some radical Chinese Christian theologians went even farther than Mi, arguing that Christianity was never a “Western” religion, but rather had origins in the East. Xie Fuya, a theologian who trained at the University of Chicago and Harvard, posited that since Christianity was not a “Western” religion and had its origins in the “East,” the Chinese should not view Christianity as a Western religion. Drawing on insights from the historical critical school of Biblical theology, Xie described to his readers how Christianity began as a Middle Eastern religion before spreading to Europe. Christianity had incorporated the violent and savage elements of the Western barbarian tribes. In order to recapture its peaceful foundation, Christianity needed to turn back to the East.¹⁸⁵

As Peter Wang has commented, a panoply of voices and arguments existed within the Chinese Christian leadership: the *Wenshe* itself was divided about how Christianity and Chinese culture should be absorbed into Chinese culture. And this precipitated downfall of the *Wenshe*. Eventually, the organization was unable to sustain itself due to financial difficulties and ideological incoherence. Even though the *Wenshe* represented a broad-based coalition of liberal-minded Chinese Christian reformers, the more radical reformers criticized the more centrist reformers for passivity, while centrist reformers feared that the radicals were pushing the organization towards heresy. This led to a breakdown in the coalition. As Peter Wang has argued, “The *Wenshe*’s contributors simply could not reach argument on many crucial issues.”¹⁸⁶ The sole common ground shared by the *Wenshe* was their critique of American imperialism. In this sense, the Chinese *Bense* theologians were similar to the conservative German missiologists. Both Chinese and German theologian shared a common critique of the Anglo-American dominance in the mission field, arguing that the American action rarely lived up to its socially egalitarian rhetoric.

¹⁸³ Mi Xingru 米星如, “Diyiqi benkan chuban yihou 第一期本刊出版以後 [In Response to the First Issue],” *Wenshe Yuekan* 文社月刊 1, no. 1 (October 1925), 61.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ N. Z. 謝扶雅 Zia, *Jidu jiao yu Zhongguo si xiang* 基督教與中國思想 [Christianity and Chinese Thought] (Jiulong: Jidujiao wenyi chuban she 基督教文藝出版社, 1971), 3.

¹⁸⁶ Wang, “Contextualizing Protestant Publishing in China,” 305.

Knak Responds to the Wenshe

Siegfried Knak, and the German missionary leadership in general, did not envision a possible alliance between the Germans and Chinese Christian leadership. Knak was intimately aware of the ideas and writings of the Chinese Christian leadership. In a pamphlet entitled *The Chinese Christians*, Knak introduced his German audience to the National Christian Council of China, devoting particular attention to its leaders Yu Rizhang and Cheng Jingyi.¹⁸⁷ Knak disparaged both Yu and Cheng. He noted that Yu, who was educated in America, had “brought back the typical American optimism. In doing so, he supports the strength of the demonic powers in human life, because he has not completely grasped the total depth of words of Christ.”¹⁸⁸ Cheng did not fare much better. Though “level-headed,” “prudent,” and “powerful,” Cheng remained deluded because he “shared in the same type of optimism for the future as Yu.”¹⁸⁹

In Knak’s view, the National Christian Church had come under the influence of “Returned Students”—Chinese Christians who had studied at liberal seminaries in America and then returned home. Their American training had persuaded them to believe that “Christianity and Democracy were indivisible and connected with one another.”¹⁹⁰ Further, these students arrogantly “demeaned the Chinese preachers who had no foreign education.”¹⁹¹ Knak commented that in every congregation in China, Chinese preachers, elders, and other influential Christians been swayed by these men. “Even under the Germans,” Chinese Christians had “with great vigor have entered this fight for the the freedom of their people, and have tried to bind the Christian Church with the movement for democracy”¹⁹²

For Knak, the liberal Chinese Christian reading of the history and future of Christianity in China diverged from that of the German. German missionaries, for Knak, represented an authentic form of Christianity, and their method of individual conversion and preaching the Gospel was well-suited to the modern world. The Chinese Christian leaders, on the other hand, viewed the German emphasis on individual conversion as an outmoded form of Christianity. The historical moment of individual Christian missionaries, who devoted their life to the conversion of individual Christians in rural areas, had passed. Instead, the Chinese Christian leadership believed that the future of Christianity in China lay in urban areas. They also preached the Social Gospel: in order to prove to skeptical non-Christian Chinese the lasting value of Christianity, Christian missionaries and Chinese Christians should seek to bring about broader social change.

In spite of his criticisms of the liberal Chinese leadership, Knak wrote that he “completely understood” the position of the Chinese leaders.¹⁹³ The Chinese, he allowed,

¹⁸⁷ Knak, *Die chinesischen Christen*.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 22.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 24.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 25.

¹⁹² Ibid., 25-26.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 26.

had “every right to fight for the freedom of their Fatherland.”¹⁹⁴ But in their fight for national freedom, “Christian principles are not betrayed, but also that the Christian position and solutions towards basic questions about the living conditions in China are different from those of non-Christians.”¹⁹⁵ He warned that the Chinese Christians in the National Chinese Church exhibited “very little understanding about the essence of Christianity, when they say, for example, that no actual difference between Christianity and Confucianism exists.”¹⁹⁶

Yet not all was lost for Knak. The liberal leadership of the National Chinese Church represented only a vocal minority: the majority of Chinese Christians were farmers, living in rural areas. German missionaries, Knak proposed, could target these rural Christian farmers, and help them develop their consciousness. More importantly for Knak, the Germans, as the “people of the Reformation (*Volk der Reformation*),” possessed a special obligation to “make clear to the Chinese the magnificent grace of God.”¹⁹⁷ Knak emphasized that the German missionary establishment ought to have faith and confidence in its theological traditions. He wrote, “German theology is as imperative as any other theology in China: it is a theology that will combine both divine revelation and humanly piety, and one that will examine the Bible academically and view it as the divine Word of God.”¹⁹⁸ Knak yearned for educated German theologians to travel to China, exhorting German youth to “turn their attention and participate in the massive transformations and hot debates that are occurring in Chinese Christianity.”¹⁹⁹

Conclusion

Knak missed a crucial opportunity to create a lasting alliance with the Chinese Christians when he chose to view their leadership as monolithically influenced by liberal American theology. Indeed, the German missionaries and Chinese Christians shared much common ground: a strong anti-American bent undergirded the *Bense* and the *Volkskirche* movements. Both the *Bense* and the *Volkskirche* began with the assumption that cultures and races were different, and proceeded to theorize that establishing a national Church was the best way to organize Christianity’s varied cultural forms. They cleaved to the “indigenizing principle” through and through: Christianity should adapt to the particular and peculiar culture that it seeks to serve. On the surface, very little theological disagreement actually existed between the Chinese Christians and the German missionary theologians. So, too, between the German missionary theologians and their Anglo-American counterparts—even though the Germans warned about “Americanism” and the threats of American liberal theology, they agreed on the broader missionary goal of developing a native, indigenous Church.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 49.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 51-52.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 51.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Knak and the German missionary leadership thus rejected the Chinese Christian leadership not on theological grounds, but political ones. To Knak and his colleagues, the liberal Chinese Christian leaders—optimistic, devoted to the Social Gospel, and trained in the United States—looked and felt American. They represented the threatening advance of global theological liberalism. The nineteenth century missionary world, once a battle whose victory could be determined by numbers—souls converted, congregations implanted, and territories acquired—had now transformed into a battlefield of ideas. After World War I, the Germans had known they had lost the race for territory. The *Volkskirche* was the idea that provided them a competitive edge: it distinguished them from other Christians in a secularizing world. While liberal Christians fought to make themselves more “secular” in their trumpeting of democratic and liberal ideals, the German missionaries saw the *Volkskirche* as an authentic form of Christianity, rooted in the principles of Luther’s Reformation. A distinctly German contribution to the international field of missionary work, the *Volkskirche* could not be duplicated by other countries.

Thus, national confessional fault-lines continued to organize and divide the international missionary community in the 1920s and 1930s. Governing the debates over indigenization was not the theological question of whether Christianity was a universal or particular religion, but rather *how* to make this universal religion particular and adaptable to each individual country. The answer to the *how* question took on patently political form. The Chinese Christian leadership believed the indigenous Church should strip its imperial “colors” to counter the rise of a vehement anti-Christian movement in the 1920s and the political attacks from the left. German Protestants, on the other hand, responded to attacks from liberals, arguing that the indigenous Church should resurrect its Pietist roots. Even though liberal German Protestants had been engaged within these debates in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, by the 1920s, liberals had retreated from the realm of foreign missions. This precluded a liberal German voice from gaining prominence. German missionaries, for the most part, conceived of the creation of multiple, independent *Volkskirche* as a way to prevent the spread of liberal theology. German missiologists and missionary leaders alike energetically trumpeted the creation of various *Volkskirche* abroad.

Yet the German missionary conception of the mission field as a political battleground for ideas prevented them from developing the independent, indigenous *Volkskirche* that they professed as necessary. Rather than allow the Chinese Christians to develop their own leadership, the Germans argued that the Chinese Christians had been perniciously, irrevocably dragooned by the liberal and modernist theologians of the West. Even though the German missionary leaders proclaimed equal respect for the different races and cultures, they nonetheless advanced a form of veiled paternalism. The Germans believed that, because they themselves had developed a distinct *Volkskirche*, only they could guide the young Chinese Church. It was the special calling of the German missionary to inform the Chinese Christians how the Gospel and Christianity should take Chinese form.

Despite their paternalistic tones, the missionary theologians believing in the *Volkskirche* viewed it as truly emancipatory. They saw the development of the *Volkskirche* as a way to break through the centuries-long animus between two calcified and polarized views of missionary work. The missionaries believed in the *Volkskirche* as a means to combat the national animosities that had so fragmented the international missionary field. The widespread appeal of racial theory, as Hannah Arendt has argued, was at heart anti-national,

a way to transcend the national.²⁰⁰ Racial theories and racial thinking provided the vehicle for missionaries to make good on their promise to Christian converts that they had moved beyond the imperial, Great Power rivalries of the nineteenth century.

And likewise, the Chinese took the Western promises seriously: they enthusiastically embraced the language espousing an indigenous church, which they viewed as resistance to imperialism. The Chinese call for a *Bense* church reflected their recognition as equal members in the global Christian communion. Thus the sense of betrayal ran deep when the rhetoric of equality, coupled as always with indigenization, did not arrive at the rapid pace that the Chinese Christians hoped. I explore the slow implementation of indigenization in later chapters.

In spite of the sluggish progress of indigenizing China, German missionaries and missionary theologians nonetheless drew significant attention to the *Volkskirche* in missionary journals, international conferences, and national settings. Earnest and sharply articulated, the ideological battles impacted the field. Individual missionary societies organized their missionary work based upon the theological principles inculcated by specific institutional and denominational history. In the case of German Protestant missionaries, the idea of the *Volkskirche* governed their organization of Church hierarchy, including the rate at which they ordained and elevated Chinese Christians to positions of leadership, and the type of liturgical practices they allowed. German Protestants thus deployed *Volkskirche* ideas in their institutions. How they put the ideas of the *Volkskirche* into practice is the subject of my next chapter.

²⁰⁰. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), 161.

Part II.
German Actors

Chapter 4.

Implementing Indigenization: The Berlin Missionary Society Tries to Indigenize.

Introduction: Markers of Faith

As I sought to demonstrate in previous chapters, by the early 1920s Western missionaries in China had largely coalesced around an intellectual consensus: Christianity needed to become Chinese. But indigenization entailed more than the ideological shift of synthesizing Christianity with Confucianism. It also involved institutional changes, such as ceding control of the congregations to the Chinese Christians. This process proved to be slow and arduous. For instance, the Chinese congregations under the Berlin Missionary Society did not become fully autonomous until 1936, a full fourteen years after the missionaries and Chinese Christians of National Christian Council in Shanghai in 1922 proclaimed it had adopted the “three-selves”—self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation—and become autonomous of Western missionary supervision.¹ If the majority of missionaries and missionary societies in China emerged from the First World War keen to indigenize, why did it take the Berliners so long to do so?

The BMS was not alone, however, in its reluctance to indigenize. As Thoralf Klein's work on the Basel Missionary Society has shown, Baselers had started discussing indigenization in the 1860s. But they did not fully relinquish their power to Chinese leaders until the 1930s. Most missionary societies, Klein argued, only paid “lip service” to the idea of indigenization.²

Foot-dragging with regard to indigenization was not unique to the Germans. Daniel Bays, the eminent scholar of Christianity in China, has characterized the foreign missionary enterprise in the early twentieth century as rife with talk of abdicating power to Chinese Christians, but few actual results. Even though “the Sino-Foreign Protestant Establishment in the first half of the twentieth century talked frequently of the Three-Self principles,”

¹ Ji Jingyi, *Encounters between Chinese Culture and Christianity: A Hermeneutical Perspective* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 141.

² Thoralf Klein, “Die Basler Mission in China als transkulturelle Organisation: Der Konflikt zwischen autoritärer Führung ‘von oben’ und synodaler Partizipation ‘von unten’ im Prozess der kirchlichen Indigenisierung, 1860-1930,” in *Weltmission und religiöse Organisationen. Protestantische Missionsgesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Artur Bogner, Bernd Holtwick, and Hartmann Tyrell (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2004), 662.

Bays writes, it “did not move very far toward actually implementing them in their Chinese congregations.”³ Bays attributes this slow process of implementation to the remnants of colonialism: “from the 1920s to 1949, attitudes of paternalism persisted among many foreign missionaries, and the influence of foreign financial subsidy remained a potent, if usually an implicit, factor, in most Christian institutions.”

Bays is surely correct that the persistence of colonial paternalism helps explain institutional inertia and resistance to indigenization. But I argue in this chapter that another factor, inherent within the process of Christian conversion itself, also enfeebled the process of indigenization. Obsessed with the perennial problem of legible Christian piety, missionaries energetically sought to suss out the “true” Christians from those they regarded as Christians in name only. In 1926 a Berlin missionary asked bluntly: “Are rice Christians Christians at all?”⁴ Rice Christians, in the words of E. Cobham Brewer, are “converts to Christianity for worldly benefits, such as a supply of rice to Indians. Profession of Christianity born of lucre, not faith.”⁵ The suspicion that their congregations might include “rice Christians” pervaded missionary societies in China. German and Anglo-American missionaries constantly denounced rice Christians, arguing that by paying the Chinese Christians, European missionaries were creating a class of Chinese Christians dependent on European charity. This inquiry, which lasted well into the 1930s, betrayed their ambivalence: what methods could they use to determine whether a person had truly converted? What are the external markers of internal transformation? How can missionaries measure faith? How should we know whether a Christian is a Christian?

Similar questions plagued the early Church fathers. At Antioch, Peter and Paul debated whether Gentile converts to Christianity should observe Mosaic Law. Peter believed that converts ought to be circumcised and follow Jewish dietary restrictions. Paul resoundingly rejected Peter’s reliance on exterior rituals as markers of faith.⁶ But Peter’s view has persisted. The scholar of medieval Christianity, Caroline Walker Bynum, has shown how nuns in the medieval period relied on food and bodily practice to demonstrate their piety and devotion: medieval devotional practice was linked to the body.⁷ Ever since the early church, certain bodily practices have served not only as the site of ritual, but also an external manifestation of piety.

The obsession with the body was not peculiar to medieval explorations of piety, but central to the modern Christian missionary enterprise as well. In their work on the London Missionary Society’s mission to the Tswana in South Africa, Jean and John Comaroff have noted that missionaries were consumed by the “nakedness” of African bodies, which

³ Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 160.

⁴ Heinrich Wahl, “Jahresbericht der Station Tschichin (Chihing für 1925),” 01 January 1926, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

⁵ Brewer’s definition can be found at <http://www.bartleby.com/81/14282.html>.

⁶ The incident can be found in Acts 15, and Galatians 3.

⁷ For example, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

“evoked degeneracy and disorder, the wild and the wanton, dirt and contagion.”⁸ The Comaroffs continue,

[T]he struggles over the way in which Tswana bodies were to be clothed and presented—struggles at once political, moral, aesthetic—were not just metonymic of colonialism. They were a crucial site in the battle of wills and deeds, the dialectic of means and ends, that shaped the encounter between Europeans and Africans. And transformed both in the process.⁹

German missionaries, too, were preoccupied with African bodies and clothing. In an African conversion story about a girl named Antje Niekerk, the Berlin missionary Gabriel Sauberzweig-Schmidt wrote that Antje’s “kingdom of clothing” consisted of “only a pair of miserable lumps.”¹⁰ In Africa, Christianity and Western clothing became synonymous entities: to convert to Christianity was to don the clothing and cultural forms of the West.

In China, missionary reports also concentrated on the Chinese body, but missionary obsessions took on different forms. Missionaries in China centered much of their discussion over the practice of foot-binding. As Angela Zito notes, European missionaries

shared a late nineteenth-century image of the body as ‘natural,’ as the ground of culture, and the source of the labor power that fueled the capitalism and industry so necessary for China’s progress. They conceived of the body as a natural ally, whether in the cause of conversion or civilization, against a Chinese culture that degraded, maimed, and even murdered it.¹¹

In Africa, the missionaries wanted to clothe the naked Africans with the civilization of the West; in China the missionaries hoped to unclothe the Chinese from the shackles of Confucian civilization.

Missionaries were often conflicted about how the Chinese should dress. A certain strand within the Western imagination had long praised Chinese dress as elegant, refined, and luxurious. In the Macartney embassy’s travels to the Qing court in the eighteenth century, for example, William Alexander and George Henry Mason’s compilations of sixty engravings of Chinese life “agreed on the general good sense of Chinese dress.”¹² Missionaries such as Karl Gützlaff and Hudson Taylor famously adopted traditional Chinese garb, arguing that their goal was to help the Chinese adopt the moral virtues of Christianity; external markers were merely external. A debate recalling Peter and Paul at Antioch ensued: many missionaries were scandalized by Gützlaff and Hudson Taylor. Chinese Christians

⁸ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 224.

⁹ Ibid., 222.

¹⁰ Gabriel Sauberzweig-Schmidt, *Antje Niekerk, das Hottentotten Mädchen* (Berlin: Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1890), 2.

¹¹ Angela Zito, “Secularizing the Pain of Footbinding in China: Missionary and Medical Stagings of the Universal Body,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75, no. 1 (2007), 5. For more on footbinding, see Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella’s Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

¹² Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 28.

who adopted Western clothing were seen as elite and modern.¹³ But unlike in Africa, clothing was less intimately tied with conversion, primarily because missionaries themselves were conflicted about whether the Chinese needed to abandon their own clothing and adopt Western styles of dress.



Figure 20: Karl Gützlaff dressed in Chinese garb. Gützlaff was one of the pioneering missionaries who approved of wearing Chinese dress. Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

¹³ Ibid.



Figure 21: Western instruments, Chinese dress. Photo in the *Berliner Missionsberichte*.

While clothing was not a reliable and consistent symbol for authentic Chinese Christian identity, the missionaries tried to control other bodily practices: food, bodily purity, and other forms of behavior. For example, the scholar of Chinese religion Eric Reinders has noted that Christian missionaries throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth century forced Christian converts to eat meat, attacking vegetarianism as a marker of Buddhism. Anti-vegetarianism was only one measure in a broader agenda to test the authenticity of the natives' Christian faith. As Reinders notes, "Missionaries developed a series of instructional courses and examinations to measure the sincerity of converts. There was normally a probationary period before baptism. This distrust was perhaps inevitable given the phenomenon of the 'rice Christian'—the apparent convert who desires only the material benefits from association with the mission: food, employment, legal protection, even books (to sell)."¹⁴ Reinders continues: "the constant doubts about the sincerity of would-be converts generated a whole hermeneutics of suspicion applied to Chinese converts by Western missionaries."¹⁵

This "hermeneutics of suspicion" took on particular urgency and prominence after the Taiping Rebellion, which left Western Protestant missionaries deeply embarrassed.¹⁶ Initially enthusiastic and even fervent for the Taipings, many missionaries in Shanghai had encouraged Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts to accept the Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan's

¹⁴ Eric R. Reinders, "Blessed Are the Meat Eaters: Christian Antivegetarianism and the Missionary Encounter with Chinese Buddhism," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 12, no. 2 (2004), 525.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 524.

¹⁶ For more on the term "hermeneutics of suspicion," see David Stewart, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Journal of Literature and Theology* 3, no. 3 (1989 Nov): 1-12. See also Alison Scott-Baumann, *Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*, vol. Continuum studies in continental philosophy (London: Continuum, 2009). For Paul Ricoeur's original use of the term, see Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

invitation to join the Taiping Rebels in propagating the Gospel.¹⁷ For most missionaries, the Taiping movement contained glimpses of an authentic revolutionary advance of Christianity in China. As the Taiping insurrection grew in size and scope, Roberts and other missionaries soon realized that a “wide gap” stood between the Taiping beliefs and Christianity that the missionaries considered orthodox.¹⁸ In the aftermath of the catastrophe of the Taiping Rebellion, Protestant missionaries came to view native Chinese forms of Christianity much more skeptically.

This chapter explores how the widespread “hermeneutics of suspicion” operated within the Berlin Missionary Society. The BMS, above all, tried to control and monitor their Chinese Christians through their labor. Missionaries defined and categorized Chinese Christians according to the type of work they produced. These categories of labor were then ranked hierarchically. At the top of the chain stood the assistant pastors—whom the missionaries considered as intellectually inclined and theologically astute—who helped the European missionary in his day-to-day tasks of managing the congregation and translating the Bible. School teachers occupied their own category. Then came the physical laborers: the Chinese who carried Bibles from town to town, the street preachers, and the *colporteurs* who transported the Bible. The missionaries kept regular statistics of the number of Chinese Christians in their employ, which they reported to the home board. This attention to labor in the Chinese context found similarities in the African experiences. I draw again on the Comaroffs, who contend that missionaries couched their assessment of native Christian piety in terms of yield and production:

Christian political economy, whether as explicit philosophy or implicit disposition, was more than a clutch of market metaphors, more even than a sacred endorsement of this-worldly enterprise. It was, above all, an optimistic theory of value that put capitalist business to the pursuit of salvation and the construction of God’s kingdom on earth. Pious labor yielded worth, which was vastly amplified if mortals could be induced to maximize their providentially given potential—and to build, through their own rational exertions, a self-regulating, moral society.¹⁹

But returning to our missionary’s original question: what if the Chinese Christians did not carry out their duties because of religious conviction, and instead labored for material compensation alone? Missionary complaints of Chinese laziness was endemic. Chinese Christians were constantly chastised for their inability to work hard.²⁰ Here, once

¹⁷ See Yuan Chung Teng, “Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 23, no. 1 (1963), 60.

¹⁸ Ibid., 64. For more on the religious beliefs of the Taipings, see recent books by Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004). and Robert P. Weller, *Resistance, Chaos, and Control in China: Taiping Rebels, Taiwanese Ghosts, and Tiananmen* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994). The classic book is Rudolf G. Wagner, *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Rebellion* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1982). See also Shi Youzhong, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Sources, Interpretations, and Influences* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967).

¹⁹ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 2*, 8.

²⁰ Heinrich Wahl, “Jahresbericht der Station Tschichin (Chiing für 1925),” 01 January 1926, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin, 136.

again, statistics proved useful: they not only tracked the growth of the congregation, but also served the purpose of assessment. The Berlin Missionaries evaluated their Chinese Christian assistants in terms of yearly yields and production. One Chinese Christian assistant pastor (*Vikar*), devised a method of evaluation. “Every Chinese worker (*Gehilfen*),” he commanded, “should bring ten heathens to Christ annually [. . .]. If in three years, we discover that our numbers have not grown substantially, then that is proof that they have either not been loyal to their duties, or they are simply incompetent.”²¹

The missionary battle to define Christianity, categorize certain Christians as authentic, and evaluate all Christians through numerical measures stemmed from a fundamental distrust of the authenticity of Chinese Christian piety. But we would be wrong to assume that missionary suspicion was applied solely and singularly to the Chinese. The institutional controls were first used and devised not to control the Chinese Christians, but rather to control the European missionaries. The missionary society—forged and founded in the midst of the Napoleonic revolutions—was created in a period of “hermeneutical suspicion” towards European Christian society as well. Pietists conceived of themselves as threatened by the forces of indifference and secularism; and the missionary societies themselves were conceived as a crucial bulwark against this secular advance. The German Protestant leaders thus established a series of controls to check its own staff. Upon entering China, the Berliners duplicated the same institutional controls that they themselves had been subjected to in Europe.

Missionary work was physically and intellectually demanding, and it required Chinese help on matters both sacred and profane: tasks ranged from translating the Bible to the physical labor in book peddling, printing Bibles and tracts, and navigating unfamiliar lands. Missionaries knew that they could not do the work alone. They quickly realized that they needed to adapt their institutional checks to reflect the needs in the field. Reflecting the hierarchies of the missionary society in Europe, the congregations in China were also hierarchically organized, with the European missionaries at the top rung.

By the 1920s, the Germans recognized that they need to move towards a more collaborative model. Financial distress caused by the war—compounded by the theological shift towards indigenization explored in chapter three—pushed German mission leaders to rethink the relationship between the missionary society and the Chinese Church. They now took it for granted that the missionary churches in China would eventually be superseded by a native Chinese *Volkskirche*. Indigenization meant that a highly paternalistic, controlled, and hierarchical church organization had to devolve power. But, as with all matters of vested interests, the process of devolution was contentious.

These debates came to a head with the proposal of a new church constitution (*Kirchenordnung*) for the Berlin mission’s Chinese congregations. At the center of the disputes lay the persistent, still-unanswered question: what defined a Christian, and among the Chinese Christians in the church, whom could they trust? Despite the imperatives to cede control to the Chinese, the Berlin missionaries continued their nineteenth-century critiques of Chinese Christianity, characterizing Chinese Christians as “spiritually immature.” These misgivings persevered well into the 1930s, and the missionaries continued

²¹ Ibid.

to cite Chinese immaturity as the primary reason for their delay in devolving control. The increasingly common rhetoric of indigenization did not substantially change the enduring distrust. The Berlin missionary institutions remained largely within the control of the Germans.

At the same time that the Germans in China attempted to reformulate a new Chinese church constitution, the *Volkskirche* in Germany itself had come under attack from various forces within German Protestantism, and German theologians were redefining the traditional relationship between the German *Volkskirche* and the state. In order to reverse trends of secularization, German church leaders hoped to recover and deploy an authentically German *Volkskirche* to re-Christianize the lost Germans. The discussions over the Chinese *Volkskirche* mirrored those in Germany: what institutional controls could ensure and track authentic Christianity? German missionary suspicion of authentic Christian faith was thus not limited towards the Chinese: they wondered about authentic Christian faith in Germany and China alike. The institutional changes that the missionaries implemented—or more precisely, the slowness of institutional change—must be situated within this backdrop of suspicion towards trends in global Christianity.

This chapter thus details a story of change, but also of resistance to change. Despite the radical transformation in institutional practices and policies on the surface, the BMS leadership nonetheless found reasons to justify their power and control of the Chinese congregations. The resistance reflected their underlying distrust of Chinese Christians, as well as the enduring desire of Berlin Missionaries to identify authentic Christianity. Whereas previous chapters focused on ideas and individuals, this chapter explains how the Berlin Missionary Society, as an institution, crafted its policy towards the Chinese, eventually deciding—and more importantly, putting into practice—to devolve control to Chinese Christian leadership. In order to understand the conflict regarding the Berlin Missionary Society's process of indigenization, I turn first to its institutional history.

History and Structure of the Berlin Missionary Society

The Berlin Missionary Society embodied many of the contradictions and tensions in nineteenth-century German society. When it was founded in 1824, the dramatic changes of the French Revolution and the threat of Napoleonic ideals sweeping through Europe, had been uppermost in many minds. Its founding members all had ties to the Prussian Royal court and came from the upper strata of Prussian society.²² Not surprisingly, these Pietists saw the mission society as an institution that could not only spread Christianity, but also provide a bulwark against the advance of revolutionary ideas.

The Berlin Missionary Society also reflected the massive transformations within the landscape of European religious life. A new type of religious organization developed in the first half of the nineteenth-century: the voluntary religious association. Many voluntary associations directly challenged the traditional institutions of the established state church.

²² Gunther Pakendorf, “A Brief History of the Berlin Mission Society in South Africa,” *History Compass* 9, no. 2 (2011), 107.

Whereas the traditional church parish tied believers to a fixed location, the Pietist vision of the voluntary association—rooted in individual conversion, spirituality, and piety—sought to foster broader regional, and in the case of missionary societies, international networks. No longer was the individual tied to her village or place of birth. These voluntary associations provided spaces for peripatetic individuals to call their own.²³

No longer a recipient of state funding, the mission society searched for other sources, mobilizing groups to support its work.²⁴ The Berlin Mission Society generated an extensive eco-system of supporting institutions (*Hilfsvereine*) that would provide them with financial and spiritual support. By 1866, the Berlin Mission Society boasted 259 *Hilfsvereine*.²⁵ Located in the hinterlands far beyond Berlin, these auxiliary societies organized festivals, church services, and prayer meetings—all for the purpose of raising funds for the Berlin Missionary Society.²⁶ Pastors read aloud the testimonies and first-hand accounts of missionaries in the field. The auxiliary societies also produced pamphlets for broader consumption. For the majority of the faithful, missionary festivals and missionary literature constituted their only encounter with foreign lands. They were thus wildly popular.²⁷ Conservative voluntary associations such as the Berlin Missionary Society thus successfully deployed modern practices of popular mobilization.²⁸

The local auxiliary organizations funneled another crucial resource to Berlin: talent.²⁹ After the middle of the nineteenth century, mobility and dislocation characterized the European landscape. Men and women, pushed by forces of industrialization and urbanization, were on the move, and the missionary society drew heavily upon this pool of labor. The mission society thus both benefited from, and shaped, an urbanizing European religious landscape. The supporting congregations identified young and enthusiastic men for the missionary society and pushed them towards Berlin. The average “Berlin” missionary entered the society before he was twenty. Previously constrained to living a provincial existence, where he might follow the footsteps of craftsmen or agrarian forefathers, a youth with dreams of upward mobility could find education and training with mission societies.³⁰

²³ See Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1959), 595-498. See also Christopher M. Clark, “Religion and Confessional Conflict,” in *Imperial Germany 1871-1918*, ed. James Retallack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 91-92.

²⁴ Pakendorf, “A Brief History of the Berlin Mission Society in South Africa,” 108.

²⁵ Hans Wangemann, *D. Dr. Wangemann, Missionsdirektor: ein Lebensbild dargeboten in dankbarer Erinnerung* (Berlin: Wiegandt & Grieben, 1899), 246. For a detailed history of how the system of auxiliary organizations developed in Brandenburg, see Julius Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft* (Berlin: Verlag der Buchhandlung der Berliner Evang. Missionsges., 1924), 72-87.

²⁶ Pakendorf, “A Brief History of the Berlin Mission Society in South Africa,” 108. Lists of these organizations were publicized, along with the amount of money that each auxiliary organization donated, in the appendices of the yearly reports.

²⁷ See Jeffrey Zalar, “‘Knowledge is Power’: The Borromaeusverein and Catholic Reading Habits in Imperial Germany,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (2000): 20-46.

²⁸ Artur Bogner, “Zur Entwicklung der Berliner Mission als Bürokratisierungsprozess,” in *Weltmission und religiöse Organisationen. Protestantische Missionsgesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Artur Bogner, Bernd Holtwick, and Hartmann Tyrell (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2004), 318.

²⁹ Lydia Gerber, *Von Voskamps ‘heidnischem Treiben’ und Wilhelms ‘höherem China’* (Hamburg: Hamburger Sinologische Gesellschaft e.V., 2002), 32.

³⁰ Pakendorf, “A Brief History of the Berlin Mission Society in South Africa,” 108.

Educational training equipped the men with a potential career as an ordained missionary minister—a position otherwise unattainable.³¹ The BMS was not the only missionary society mobilizing young, ambitious, provincial men. Writing of mission societies more generally, Andrew Walls notes that “the typical missionary long remained, as he had been in the first generation, a man of humble backgrounds and modest attainments.”³²

The missionary society thus represented a space where elite and ordinary populations met. For the BMS, this was unprecedented: the founders and leaders of the organization had blue-blooded Pietist backgrounds. The BMS director, for example, was typically an accomplished Lutheran pastor or theologian who had ties with Prussian nobility. The missionaries, on the other hand, came from the provinces and backwaters. These two groups now had to work together to spread the Gospel to exotic, foreign lands. Jon Miller refers to this mix as “class collaboration for the sake of religion.”³³ In the initial decades of the BMS’s existence, its leaders saw the missionary work as a collaboration. As Artur Bogner has noted, in the first several decades after its founding, the BMS began as a loose organization with very little bureaucratic oversight. The leadership wanted to provide the missionaries with freedom and leeway necessary to perform in the missionary field. Missionaries operated as autonomous units, and the home board did not clearly define its expectations in annual reports.³⁴

The leadership soon came to dislike the missionaries’ independence in the field. Reports of conflicts between the leadership and the missionaries abroad abounded. Surveillance of the missionaries was difficult—once missionaries left for their designated mission grounds, they became uncontrollable. The leadership complained about behavioral problems and its inability to discipline the missionaries abroad. To combat these difficulties, the missionary leadership institutionalized a new set of rules. The process of bureaucratization emerged out of a desire to control, in Jon Miller’s terms, the “religious zeal” of these young missionaries. Centralizing the institution provided the society a systematic way to oversee and manage the information between the missionary leadership on the home front and the missionaries in the field.³⁵

Within the Berlin Missionary Society, attempts to centralize control had begun in 1857, under the directorship of Johann Christian Wallmann (1811-1865), and continued under Hermann Theodor Wangemann (1818-1894), who served as the mission society’s director from 1865 to 1894. Wallmann and Wangemann’s political and social consciousness had both been forged in the wake of the 1848 Revolutions. Like other conservative Pietist organizations, such as the newly formed Inner Mission, led by Johann Hinrich Wichern, these missionaries hoped to create institutions that could prevent such revolutionary sentiment from penetrating into the society. They feared the simmering threat of democratic revolution from below. The changes in the mission society also served a larger

³¹ Jon Miller, *The Social Control of Religious Zeal: A Study of Organizational Contradictions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 50-51.

³² Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 171.

³³ Miller, *The Social Control of Religious Zeal*, 31-32.

³⁴ Bogner, “Zur Entwicklung der Berliner Mission als Bürokratisierungsprozess,” 327-328.

³⁵ Miller, *The Social Control of Religious Zeal*.

conservative project, encapsulated in Julius Stahl's *The Christian State*, which was to place the individual under strong religious and moral discipline. The politics of the individual were not separate from those of the state.³⁶

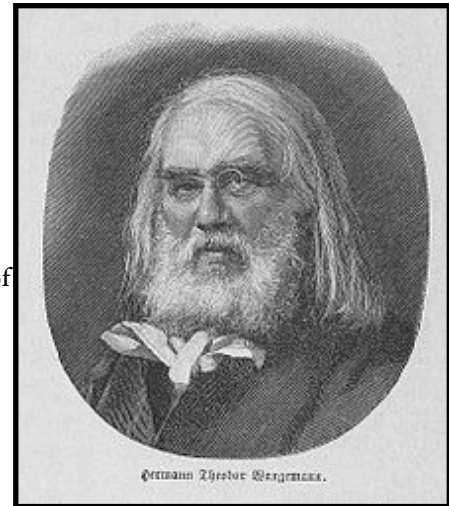


Figure 22: Hermann Theodor Wangemann. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia commons.

The most influential figure in developing the strict rules that governed missionary training was Wangemann, a man whose political and social consciousness was forged by the 1848 Revolutions and who was known for his authoritarian tendencies.³⁷ In a set of missionary regulations implemented in 1866, entitled the “*The Mission Constitution*,” (*Missionsordnung*), Wangemann laid out his vision for the mission society.³⁸ The *Missionsordnung* established a clear chain of command, starting with the director at the top. The regulations designated the Director as the “fatherly and spiritual advisor of the missionaries. He leads and supervises their work,” and played the part of paternal guide to all of his missionary “children.”³⁹ The director, in consultation with the Committee, a board of directors, appointed missions inspectors who oversaw each region.⁴⁰ The *Missionsordnung* also authorized the mission director to make more frequent visits to the mission lands, in order to better examine the progress of each missionary field. Wangemann, for example, visited the Berlin Missionary’s mission stations in Africa twice, in 1866 and 1884.⁴¹

³⁶ Christopher M. Clark, *The Politics of Conversion: Missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia, 1728-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 170-171.

³⁷ Pakendorf, “A Brief History of the Berlin Mission Society in South Africa,” 110.

³⁸ For a hagiographical biography of Wangemann, see Wangemann, *D. Dr. Wangemann, Missionsdirektor*.

³⁹ Hermann Theodor Wangemann, *Missions-Ordnung der Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden zu Berlin* (Berlin: 1882), 54. “ist der väterliche und geistliche Berater der Missionare. Er leitet und beaufichtigt ihre Arbeiten.”

⁴⁰ Gunther Pakendorf has gone so far to call the *Missionsordnung* an act of “violence.” See Gunther Pakendorf, “Mission als Gewalt. Die *Missionsordnung* im 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Mission und Gewalt: Der Umgang christlicher Missionen mit Gewalt und die Ausbreitung des Christentums in Afrika und Asien in der Zeit von 1792 bis 1918/19*, ed. Ulrich Becher van der Heyden, Jürgen (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000).

⁴¹ Wangemann wrote about his first mission trip in a set of memoirs in a series of memoirs and published diaries. See, for example, Hermann Theodor Wangemann, *Maleo und Sekukuhi: Ein Lebensbild aus Südafrika* (Berlin: Missionshaus, 1869). For his first trip to South Africa, see Idem, *Ein Reise-Jahr in Süd-Afrika: Ausfuhrliches Tagebuch über eine i.d. Jahren 1866 und 1867 ausgefuhrte Inspectionsreise durch die Missions-Stationen der*

The *Missionsordnung* was innovative because it established a new system of mission inspectors—middlemen between the missionaries on the ground and the home board.⁴² The regional mission inspectors supervised the missionary work in the field. They read missionary reports, made quarterly inspections of mission stations in the field, and forged lines of communication between the individual missionaries and the home committee. Mission inspectors presided over annual Synods and conferences in the field, where all of the missionaries, along with the local Chinese helpers, gathered to provide accounts of their work. The synods were also spaces where the Chinese and Europeans exchanged ideas and built community. The Synods were also regular occasions when Chinese helpers could lodge complaints against missionaries, while missionaries could seek to discipline insubordinate Chinese assistants. The leadership had conferred authority on the missionary inspectors to mediate and resolve disputes. Most missionaries had little direct contact with the superintendent and other leaders throughout the year; the Synods therefore constituted one of their few regular meetings.⁴³

The missionaries were at the bottom of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Ever since the 1840s, when enthusiasm for joining missionary societies had burgeoned, the societies had become more selective. By the late nineteenth century, acceptance into the seminary was becoming increasingly difficult. After being admitted into the society, missionaries were subjected to strict training. They spent six years in seminary, learning a diverse range of subjects — English, theology, musical training, as well as instruction in industrial labor.⁴⁴ They were trained also in secular subjects: geography, world history, and natural sciences. In their fifth or sixth year, the missionaries took an oral exam, where they were required to preach and provide exegeses of various Biblical texts.⁴⁵

Upon taking their exams, they spent six months as interns in hospitals or universities. Later, in the early 1900s, missionaries assigned to East Asia studied Asian languages at the oriental seminars in Berlin and the Hamburg Colonial Institute.⁴⁶ Once they received their posting, they spent another year and a half studying local dialects and languages. To be officially ordained and authorized to preach in the local areas, they were required to pass yet another exam. In total, Berlin missionaries spent eight years in education before they were officially ordained as a missionary. They were trained as generalists, not as specialists.⁴⁷

Their training hardly prepared them for the risks of the missionary field. Attrition in the early 1840s was especially high. By the early 1900s, the Berlin missionaries had become more aware of health risks. They established health stations, built and expanded missionary compounds in more temperate climates, and held conferences that addressed how to

Berliner Missions-Gesellschaft (Berlin: Missionshaus, 1868). For his second trip, see Idem, *Ein zweites Reisejahr in Süd-Afrika* (Berlin: Missionshaus, 1886).

⁴² Idem, *Missions-Ordnung*, 55.

⁴³ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁴ Gerber, *Voskamps und Wilhelm*, 33.

⁴⁵ For example, see “Wörter des Abschluss von John. Voskamp,” 07 October 1884, BMW 1/ 4326: Voskamps, Personalia.

⁴⁶ Gerber, *Voskamps und Wilhelm*, 33.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

combat health problems ranging from common tropical illness—typhus and dysentery, for instance—to rarer tropical diseases. Nonetheless, many missionaries either died young, or were forced to return to Germany due to health concerns. In the field, the missionary wore multiple hats. His primary function was to preside over church services, administer the church sacraments, and to preach the Gospel, but the *Missionsordnung* also provided a list of other possible occupations that the missionary was expected to master: “explorer, itinerant preacher, linguist, writer, doctor, nurse, arbitrator.”⁴⁸ The missionary also established and taught in schools. Especially after the Shanghai Missionary Conference in 1877, the Berlin Missionaries recognized the need to focus on more educational work, and they built schools connected to the larger missionary stations.⁴⁹

The missionary also became a bureaucrat. He was expected to provide regular accounts of his activities to the leadership. An important aspect of his daily responsibility was keeping a journal, writing reports, and filling out statistical tables. Missionary leaders were fixated upon documenting their “wins” and “losses.”⁵⁰ Missionaries thus produced, and left behind, a huge paper trail. Many missionary reports were published in the Berliner Missionary society’s monthly and annual newsletters. These accounts were then circulated to the local auxiliary societies, providing another layer of accountability. At first the missionaries had resisted these controls, but as a new generation was trained with these expectations in mind, resistance waned.⁵¹

Wangemann's *Missionsordnung* had a lasting impact. The *Missionsordnung* established clear expectations for the missionaries’ training and a strict chain of command. A template for the mission society’s infrastructure until 1955, it laid the foundation for its institutional organization for the next seventy years. Shortly after his second trip in Africa in 1866, Wangemann reflected, “the *Missionsordnung* marked the beginning of a new foundation for our missionary work. We built up six new regional superintendents, new congregational constitutions on the ground, and the brothers worked hard and true.”⁵²

By the time the BMS entered China in 1882, it had evolved into an administratively sophisticated organization, equipped with guidelines for missionary conduct.⁵³ What began as a small Pietist mission seminary providing basic theological training for men with modest educations and even more modest resources had transformed into a regimented organization in the 1880s. A product of the rapid growth of voluntary religious associations in the early 19th century, it continued to don strict responses to drastic, widespread social change.

⁴⁸ Wangemann, *Missions-Ordnung*, 22.

⁴⁹ For a more comprehensive account on the missionary schooling system, see Chun-Shik Kim, *Deutscher Kulturimperialismus in China* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 2004).

⁵⁰ Wangemann, *Missions-Ordnung*, 66-70.

⁵¹ Bogner, “Zur Entwicklung der Berliner Mission als Bürokratisierungsprozess,” 334.

⁵² Wangemann, *Ein zweites Reisejahr in Süd-Afrika*, iii.

⁵³ Bogner, “Zur Entwicklung der Berliner Mission als Bürokratisierungsprozess.”

The Berlin Missionary Society and China

Why were the Berlin missionaries, who had initiated and maintained a successful missionary society in Africa, interested in China? This interest, like that of the general German missionary effort in China, can be traced to the influence of the missionary Karl Gützlaff, who entered the Jänicke seminary in the 1820s and left for China in the 1840s.⁵⁴ Gützlaff published various advertisements and propaganda about his work in China, particularly in the *Calwer Missionsblättern von den Fortschritten des Evangeliums*. His work regarding the rapid increase in conversions among the Chinese raised hopes for China's future conversion.⁵⁵ The organizational structure of his Chinese Union became a model for future missions within China, in particular its heavy use of Chinese workers to carry out the evangelization work.⁵⁶

Spurred by Gützlaff's propaganda, as well as fears of Catholic expansion in China, the BMS expressed enthusiasm for establishing a missionary presence in China in the early 1850s. The missionary leadership convened a conference with the hopes of forming a united front with the Basel and Rhenish Missionary Societies. They also sought to bridge the doctrinal disagreements between Lutheran and Calvinists, especially regarding liturgical and Eucharistic matters.⁵⁷ But the Basel organization refused to participate in a joint venture, proceeding to established independent mission work in China. Fearing over-expansion, and disappointed by the failure to unify the German-speaking mission societies, the leaders of the BMS decided to focus their resources and attention on South Africa.⁵⁸ Yet their interest in China persisted: the BMS sent individual missionaries to China, mainly under the auspices of the Rhenish Missionary Society.

In 1882, an argument between Rhenish missionaries in China and Friedrich Fabri, their mission director, led to the discontinuation of the Rhenish mission society's work in China.⁵⁹ The BMS took over the Rhenish mission's stations, signaling their official entry into the China missions field. Friedrich Hubrig — who was partly a catalyst for the

⁵⁴ For a history of Gützlaff's fascinating career, see Jessie G. Lutz, *Opening China: Karl F.A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2008).

⁵⁵ Gabriel Sauberzweig-Schmidt, *Drei Jahrzehnte deutscher Pioniermissionsarbeit in Süd-China 1852-1882*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1908), 7.

⁵⁶ Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, 504-505. Gützlaff has been one of the most fascinating figures in the early expansion of Protestant missions in China. Yet, despite Gützlaff's intentions, he was not the most efficient organizer or institution builder. His legacy was therefore unclear. From the beginning of its missions work in China, the Berlin missions learned from Gützlaff's example and depended on local Chinese for most of their evangelization work and contact with the natives. Like Faber and many of the early missionaries, the Berlin Missionaries were ill equipped linguistically and culturally to handle the missions in China. But despite their reliance on Chinese workers, they had no institutional desire nor mechanisms by which to integrate the Chinese Christians into the German home field. See Jessie G. Lutz and Rolland Ray Lutz, "Karl Gützlaff's Approach to Indigenization: The Chinese Union," in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). For more detail, see Lutz, *Opening China*.

⁵⁷ Sauberzweig-Schmidt, *Drei Jahrzehnte deutscher Pioniermissionsarbeit*, 8-10.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁹ For Fabri's disagreement between the work, see chapter 1.

disagreement in the Rhenish mission — became the first missions inspector for the Berlin Mission's Southern China missions.⁶⁰

Hubrig presented two possible methods of evangelization to the Berlin Committee. The first followed an Anglo-American model of centralizing the missionary presence in one large missionary compound, located in a more urban area, where multiple missionary families would live. The compound functioned as a central station that housed a school and clinic. Smaller satellite stations, located in rural areas, operated with more independence. The second method proposed decentralizing control, requiring missionaries to live in smaller, more rural stations. In this schema, missionaries came in direct contact with their congregations, and consequently exerted greater influence over the spiritual formation of the congregants.⁶¹

Even though Hubrig preferred the first option—centralization—an amalgamation of both options emerged. Rather than establish a central hub, the leadership created several major stations (*Hauptstation*), each of equal size. Quite intentionally, the mission inspector's compound in the city of Canton did not wield more power than the others. "Outer stations" were manned by Chinese vicars or preachers, essentially independent. The German missionaries visited these stations with varying frequency, in order to provide detailed accounts in quarterly or yearly reports.⁶² Attached to each missionary station was an elementary school, which provided education for rural boys and girls.

Around this time, the leadership in Berlin made a conscious decision to focus the BMS's attention on China. In 1883, the yearly budget for China had been 17,000 Marks; by 1898, the budget had grown to 55,000 Marks. After 1898, the missionary inspector Gabriel Sauberzweig-Schmidt appealed for more funds for China, and within several years, the amount devoted to China soared to 128,000 Marks.⁶³ With the expansion of funds, the number of missionaries multiplied. In 1882, the BMS had employed one missionary, Friedrich Hubrig, who oversaw one missionary station in Canton. In less than two decades, the mission work had expanded to five major stations and 10 missionaries in the province of Guangdong.

After establishing themselves in the city of Canton,⁶⁴ the Berlin Missionaries traveled east along the Pearl River, built three major stations in Guishan County (歸善縣), close to the city of Huizhou in 1885.⁶⁵ They then moved north, settling in the northeastern most corner of Guangdong, in Nanxiong in 1893.⁶⁶ Later, they constructed missionary stations in the central part of the province, which helped to connect the central station of Canton and the other parts of the province. The BMS expansion strategically covered the

⁶⁰ For more detail on the background of the BMS's work in China, see Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, 504-521.

⁶¹ Ibid., 527.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 525-526.

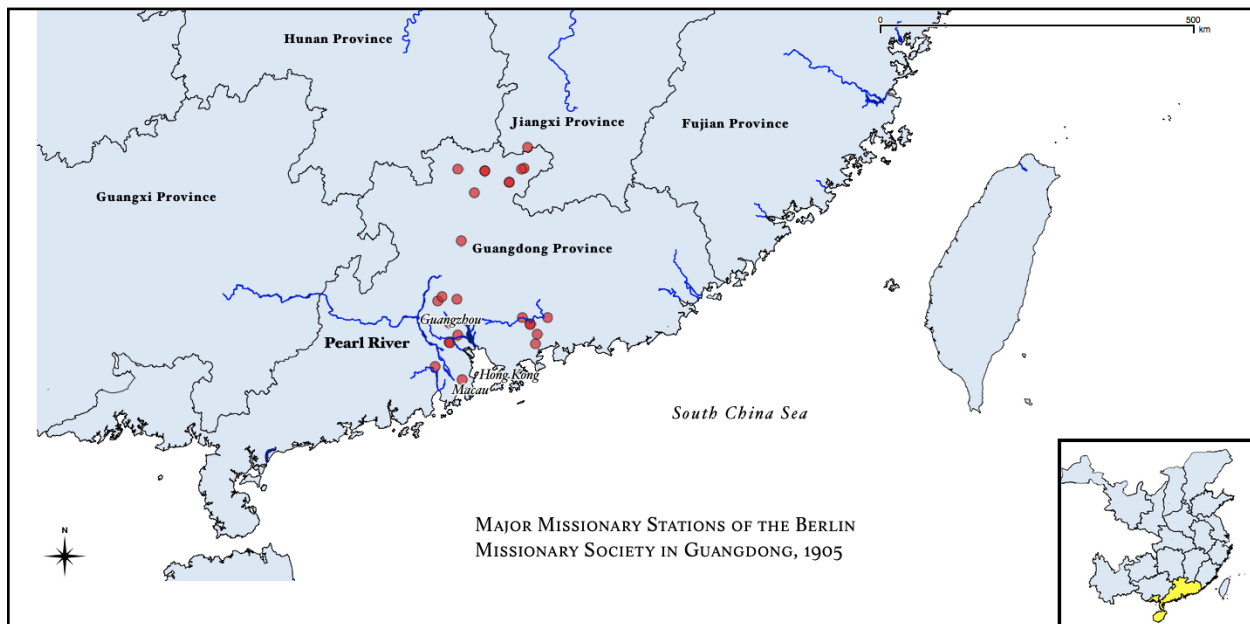
⁶⁴ For more on the history of Guangzhou, see David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

⁶⁵ Guishan the name of the county during the Qing dynasty. It was later incorporated into Huizhou City.

⁶⁶ Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, 528.

eastern and the northern parts of Guangdong, creating a network that utilized both sides of the river. Because the Basel Missionary Society had a longer history of work in Guangdong, the Berlin missionaries targeted the less hospitable, mountainous areas of missionary work not yet covered by their Swiss counterparts.

While the missionary work expanded rapidly, it was not all successful; filled with stories of failure. Missionaries succumbed to the brutalities of the tropical weather. One particularly tragic story involved a missionary, Hempel, who had helped to build the missionary station in Huidong, who died of a fever in 1886, and was buried the same day that his wife arrived in Hong Kong.⁶⁷ Stories of missionaries succumbing to disease were common.



Map 2: BMS Missionary Stations in Guangdong 1905 in relation to the Pearl River. Note how the stations on the southern part of the province are all centered around the Pearl River. The northeast, on the other hand, has less connection to the river. Map data courtesy of “CHGIS, Version 4” Cambridge: Harvard Yenching Institute, January 2007.

Some mission stations failed due to missionary mismanagement, forcing the leadership to abandon or close them. In one particular case, the missionaries had successfully built a station in the northern section of Guishan county. They were attracted to the place for its strategic location. Yet, the missionary stationed there, Lehmann, had bungled relations with his congregations. On the one hand, as Julius Richter reported, “Lehmann did not understand how to win over the trust and the love of the Chinese Christians. On the other hand, some strong personalities within the congregation made life

⁶⁷ Ibid., 529.

difficult for Lehmann.”⁶⁸ As a result, the Berlin missions decided to close the mission station after eight years, in 1890.⁶⁹

The missionaries experienced active resistance from local Chinese administrators and bureaucrats. In the case of Huizhou, for instance, the BMS had originally bought what they thought to be an ideal place from a Chinese merchant. However, the local prefecture vehemently protested the sale, arguing that chapels should not be allowed in such a central position in the city.⁷⁰ After some wrangling, the missionaries eventually established a station farther from the city center, but still within reach. On top of the less advantageous location for evangelization, the missionaries complained that the house was “unimaginably small,” and subject to constant flooding.⁷¹

Other than resistance from the local authorities, the missionaries also had conflicts with local anti-foreign organizations, such as the Triads.⁷² The Triad was a group of bandits, cleaving to a revolutionary, anti-Manchu, proto-nationalist ideology, which actively worked against both the Qing dynasty and foreign powers.⁷³ The BMS chapels and property were frequently raided and attacked by such robbers and bandits. Local officials and bureaucrats often turned a blind eye, if not actively encouraged, anti-Christian and anti-foreign violence.⁷⁴ Throughout their first two decades in China, the missionaries worked to repair and reconstruct missionary stations that were damaged in such attacks.

Despite these difficulties, the Berliners’ work nonetheless flourished. In order to accommodate the expansion, leaders organized the Southern Chinese mission stations officially as a synod in 1898 and assigned a Superintendent, August Kollecker, to oversee the work there. Even with the disruption of the Boxers in 1900, missionary work continued to expand. By 1905, the Berlin Missions boasted twelve major stations, twenty European missionaries, 112 smaller stations, and 8389 baptized Chinese Christians.

⁶⁸. Ibid.

⁶⁹. Ibid.

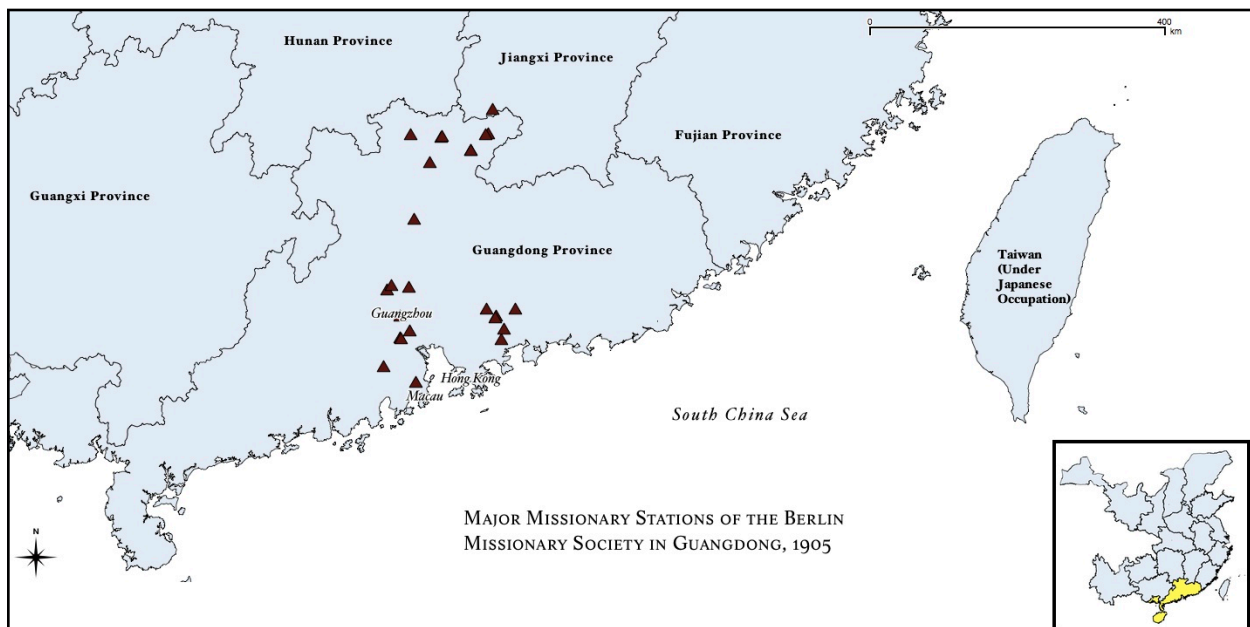
⁷⁰. Ibid., 531.

⁷¹. Ibid.

⁷². Ibid., 532.

⁷³. Ibid., 532-533. For more on the Triads, as well as organized crime in China in general, see Dian H. Murray and Qin Baoqi, *The Origins of the Tiandibui: The Chinese Triads in Legend and History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994). For a comparative perspective, see Liu Cheng-yun, “Kuo-lu: A Sworn Brotherhood Organization in Szechwan,” *Late Imperial China* 6, no. 1 (1985): 56-82.

⁷⁴. For anti-Christian movements among local bureaucrats, see Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).



Map 3: Major Missionary Stations of the Berlin Missionary Society in Guangdong, 1905. Map data courtesy of “CHGIS, Version 4” Cambridge: Harvard Yenching Institute, January 2007.

Among these Chinese Christians, the majority of the converts were men. When missionaries reported the number of conversions in their yearly and quarterly reports, the number of women was a third of the numbers of Chinese males. In 1908, for example, the Berlin Missions reported that there were 1096 baptized women members of its congregations in all of Southern China, compared to 4955 baptized men.⁷⁵ The number of converts in Africa did not have such a discrepancy. In the same year in the Cape Colony, where the Berlin Missions had one of their oldest and largest missionary presences, women converts outnumbered men, 1842 to 1476.⁷⁶ In the British colony of Natal, the number of women converts almost doubled male ones, 1393 to 743.⁷⁷

As Pui-lan Kwok has written, the slow adoption of women among converts was primarily due to social and cultural obstacles: “rich and upper class families would not allow their female family members to join a foreign religion [. . .]. Women had to give up many social customs and folk religious practices in order to adopt the worship and customs of the church. Although Chinese women were not as secluded as upper-class Indian women in their zenanas, decent women were not supposed to appear in public, let alone worship together with men in a church.”⁷⁸ Recognizing the unequal number of conversions between men and women, the German missionaries began to send single women into the mission field. Ever since 1850, the missionary society had maintained loose ties with the Berlin

⁷⁵ *Jahresbericht der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1908* (Berlin: Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1908), 256-257.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 244-245.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 246-247.

⁷⁸ Pui-lan Kwok, *Chinese Women and Christianity, 1860-1927* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), 11. See also Jessie G. Lutz, *Pioneer Chinese Christian Women: Gender, Christianity, and Social Mobility* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2010).

Ladies Association (*Berliner Frauenverein für China*), an independent organization that established the Bethesda Foundling Home in Hong Kong in 1854.⁷⁹ In 1882, the Berlin Missionary Society decided to take over the Ladies Association, changing its name to the Berlin Women's Missionary Society (*Berliner Frauen-Missionsverein für China*). The missionary society was now also responsible for training and educating women missionaries, and soon they sent their first missionary sister, Käthe Schöniger, to China. With a staff now dedicated to educating women and girls, the BMS hoped to balance the gender inequality that they saw in their statistics.⁸⁰

In 1898, the BMS expanded its mission work to Jiaozhou Bay in northern China. Scholars have been right to point out the close relationship between German missionaries and the German state. While most works have focused on the close relationship between the Catholic Steyl Missionaries and the state, the Berlin Missionaries were no less dependent on the German state to protect its operations.⁸¹ A month before the German and Chinese authorities had even signed the official lease treaty (*Pachtvertrag*) that declared Jiaozhou a German protectorate, (*Schutzgebiet*), the Berlin Missionaries were preparing to enter Qingdao.⁸² On February 1st, 1898, the governing committee of the Berlin Missions Society met and decided to send Carl Johannes Voskamp, an experienced missionary who had worked in South China since 1883, and August Kollecker, the superintendent of the South China Synod, to Jiaozhou to inspect the possibility of North China as a missions ground. The mission inspector Gustav Knak, the grandfather of Siegfried Knak, justified the quick entry into the Jiaozhou area in terms of confessional and national competition. Knak argued that North China was too important a “field to leave to the Catholics.” He was also aware of the strong Anglo-American Presbyterian presence in the Shandong area, and hoped to gain a more solid foothold in North China.⁸³

⁷⁹ Lutz and Lutz, “Karl Gützlaff's Approach to Indigenization,” 288.

⁸⁰ For more on the mission Berlin Women's Missionary Society (*Berliner Frauen Missionsverein*), see Vera Boetzinger, “*Den Chinesen ein Chinese werden*”: die deutsche protestantische Frauenmission in China 1842-1952 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004).

⁸¹ For example Klaus Mühlhahn in Klaus Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand in der “Musterkolonie” Kiautschou: Interaktionen zwischen China und Deutschland 1897-1914* (München: Oldenbourg, 2000). focuses exclusively on the Steyler Missionaries, as does Joseph Esherick in *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

⁸² The treaty was signed on March 6th, 1898, and it is reproduced in Mechthild Leutner and Klaus Mühlhahn, eds., *Kolonialkrieg in China. Die Niederschlagung der Boxerbewegung 1900-1901* (Berlin: Links, 2007), 164-168.

⁸³ Gustav Knak to Carl Johannes Voskamp, 04 February 1898, BMW 1 / 6547: Acta betreffend: Konferenz Kreis Nord-China Kiautschou 1898-1903.



Map 4: Major BMS Missionary Stations in North China, 1905. Map data courtesy of “CHGIS, Version 4” Cambridge: Harvard Yenching Institute, January 2007.

Early Attempts at Indigenization

In order to push forward such rapid expansion, the BMS relied on Chinese labor. The mission society employed and paid a large number of Chinese Christians in their service: by 1905, they had 173 Chinese Christians on their payrolls, more than eight times the number of European missionaries on the ground. Collectively, the paid Chinese were referred to as “assistants,” and they were organized into different pay scales, with the *Vikar*, or assistant pastor, at the top of the hierarchy.⁸⁴ In 1905, only seven Chinese Christians had reached this highest paid position.⁸⁵ The rest worked as Bible peddlers and street evangelists. Women also worked for the BMS, primarily employed as teachers, nurses, or Bible women. None of these conferred theological authority. The designation of “assistant” reflected the missionaries’ perception that the primary task of the Chinese workers was to aid the missionary. Even the Chinese *Vikar* was technically an “assistant Pastor,” not an independent Pastor of his own congregation. Thus, by the early 1900s, even though the missionary employed a large number of Chinese Christians, none of the missionary stations or congregations was run independently by Chinese Christians. By comparison, African Christians independently directed African missionary stations much earlier, dating as far back as the 1860s

The missionaries themselves were aware of the slow pace of indigenization. The BMS Committee complained that the rate of China’s indigenization paled in comparison to

⁸⁴ For more on the hierarchical categories that the Chinese Christians were subjected to, see the next chapter.

⁸⁵ Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, 542.

the African missionary work.⁸⁶ In hopes of stimulating a quicker path, the leadership sent the mission inspector Gabriel Sauberzweig-Schmidt to China in 1905. Sauberzweig-Schmidt had had experience in East Africa, where he had supervised a broader movement of African indigenization and witnessed several African churches become independent. He hoped to bring this expertise to China.

Sauberzweig-Schmidt organized two large conferences (*Gehilfenkonferenzen*) during his visit to China. Held separately in northern and southern China, each gathered all Chinese assistants within its respective domains.⁸⁷ Sauberzweig-Schmidt and the leadership he represented had two purposes in organizing the meetings. The first was to take stock for themselves of the Chinese *Gehilfen*. The other was to teach these Chinese assistants “how they must work in the congregations in order to fulfill their holy responsibilities.”⁸⁸

The *Gehilfenkonferenz* in 1905 marked the first serious forum for discussion between a representative from the home front, the German missionaries in China, and the Chinese Christians working for the mission society regarding the creation of independent Chinese congregations.⁸⁹ Yet rather than fostering a free and equal exchange of ideas, the German missionaries instead used the conference as a pedagogical session. In his requests to Chinese preachers to prepare a sermon, he assigned their passages from the Bible himself.⁹⁰ Sauberzweig-Schmidt went so far as to grade these sermons, allotting marks: “good,” “satisfactory,” “mediocre,” “insufficient,” and “completely inadequate.”⁹¹

Other than Bible passages, Sauberzweig-Schmidt also assigned broad topics for the Chinese Christians to prepare for lectures and presentations for the conference.⁹² The topics ranged from discussions of missionary methods, surveys of the major religions and ideas of the Chinese, and the various moral and spiritual challenges that the missionary effort faced in China.⁹³ The panel titles included, for example, “The Origins of the Religious Nature of the Chinese,” and “How to Reach a Broader Social Spectrum among Chinese Women, the Rich, the Educated, and the Poor.”⁹⁴

The most important and widely-discussed questions at the conference centered around common daily issues and problems within the Chinese congregations, and the next

⁸⁶ Ibid., 545-551.

⁸⁷ For the northern China conference, see Martin Schlunk, ed., *Durch Deutsch-Kiautschou. Aus den Aufzeichnungen des Missionsinspektors Sauberzweig-Schmidt über seine Visitation in Nordchina im Jahre 1905. 3. Heft seines literarischen Nachlasses*. (Berlin: Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1909), 73-85. For a more detailed rundown of the southern China conference, see Martin Schlunk, ed., *Durch Chinas Südprovinz. Bericht über die Visitation des Missionsinspektors Sauberzweig Schmidt in Südchina 1904-1906. 2. Heft seines literarischen Nachlasses*. (Berlin: Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1908), 95-101.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 95.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 96-97.

⁹⁰ Matthew 13: 45-46

⁹¹ Schlunk, *Durch Deutsch-Kiautschou*, 73-74. Out of 23 presentations, 10 received the marks of “good,” seven received “satisfactory,” three received “mediocre,” three received “insufficient,” and 3 received “completely inadequate.”

⁹² Schlunk, *Durch Chinas Südprovinz*, 95-98.

⁹³ For a complete list of the themes of missionary lectures, see Schlunk, *Durch Deutsch-Kiautschou*, 75-77.

⁹⁴ Schlunk, *Durch Chinas Südprovinz*, 96.

steps for Chinese assistants to take to help their communities achieve financial independence from the German missionary society. A large percentage of the lectures and presentations evaluated the moral, financial, and spiritual state of Chinese Christian congregations.⁹⁵

The missionaries emerged from the conference convinced that the Chinese churches were not yet “ready” to become independent. The missionary Friedrich Leuschner, for example, concluded that the “spiritual state” of the Chinese Christians was just like that of a “child” and still too “weak” for true independence.⁹⁶ Sauberzweig-Schmidt agreed with Leuschner’s assessment.⁹⁷ China presented a radically different case from the BMS’s experience in Africa. It was “very different converting primitive peoples (*Naturvolk*) in Africa than civilized peoples (*Kulturvolk*) in China.”⁹⁸ Given their cultural resistance to Christianity, “it will take a much longer time to convert a civilized people.”⁹⁹ The “good Chinese education” had “many advantages,” he acknowledged, creating Chinese Christians with “independent minds, abilities to handle money capably, and a strong will to operate and work on their own.”¹⁰⁰ But it was precisely this advanced educational status, he argued, that had prevented the Chinese from developing a “true Christian character.”¹⁰¹ When it came to authentic, true Christian faith, the Chinese Christian helpers, the evangelists, catechists, and vicars, were “weak and immature, sheep-like.”¹⁰²

Sauberzweig-Schmidt contracted dysentery during his trip to China, and his untimely death had a lasting effect, attracting much attention to his last wish to live to see an independent Chinese church. Galvanized to dedicate more resources to indigenization, the missionaries rallied behind Sauberzweig-Schmidt’s agenda as a means to honor their beloved Missions inspector. Sauberzweig-Schmidt’s two *Gebilfenkonferenzen* provided a template for future conferences. Following his visit, the *Gebilfenkonferenzen* became an annual event, adhering to the protocols that Sauberzweig-Schmidt instituted.¹⁰³

Resistance to Indigenization

In the first decade of the 1900s, the missionary society felt pressure on multiple fronts to push a bolder agenda of indigenization. For one thing, the missionary leadership in Germany, fearing diminishing finances, wanted the congregations in China to shoulder more of the financial burdens. Secondly, German missionaries were operating under the strain of unfavorable international competitions and comparisons; the international missionary community now monitored and compared the rate of indigenization in congregations worldwide. When Arthur Brown, the General Secretary of the Presbyterian

⁹⁵ Ibid.; Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, 549-552.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 550. See also Schlunk, *Durch Chinas Südprovinz*, 103.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 104.

⁹⁹ Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, 551.

¹⁰⁰ Schlunk, *Durch Chinas Südprovinz*, 105.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ I will discuss the *Gebilfenkonferenz* in more detail in the next chapter.

Board of Foreign Missions, visited China, Korea, and Japan, he found China lagging, and concluded that missions in China should place indigenization at the top of its priorities. The Berlin Missionary leadership felt Brown's exhortations to be a direct criticism of their work.¹⁰⁴

In spite of these internal and external stresses, the Berliners remained nonetheless wary of rapid indigenization. At heart, they did not trust the Chinese Christians to take full control. They wanted first to see evidence of "healthy" growth among the Chinese congregations before turning over control to the Chinese Christians. But what were the markers of "healthy" church growth?

To monitor the spiritual and financial state of the Chinese congregations, the missionaries imported and replicated German models of church membership to their Chinese congregations. In 1906, they proposed a rule requiring all of the members of the congregations to pay annually into a parish fund (*Gemeindekassen*). The collected money from the *Gemeindekassen* had a limited purpose: it paid for repairs and maintenance of the physical infrastructure of each congregation, such as individual chapels and school supplies.¹⁰⁵ It did not pay for personnel costs, such as missionary and *Gehilfen* salaries. By January of 1907, the Committee put the tax in practice, ordering each Chinese congregation that either owned or rented a chapel to create its own congregational coffers. Members of the congregations were expected—and at times, forced—to make a yearly contribution to the *Gemeindekassen*.¹⁰⁶

The annual fee—which essentially amounted to a form of "Church tax" (*Kirchensteuer*)—was purposefully set at a low amount, 0,50 Marks. If the collected funds exceeded what the congregations needed, the money was set aside and administered by either the Western missionaries or Chinese Church elders. The committee stated that the purpose of establishing the congregational funds was to expand financial responsibility and financial independence for the Chinese Churches of the BM.¹⁰⁷ But the missionary leaders really designed the *Gemeindekassen* as a test: they wanted to see if the individual congregations could sustain their own *Gemeindekassen*.

Nearly two years after the rule of requiring contributions was implemented, none of the individual congregations had produced a healthy *Gemeindekassen*. Wilhelm Rhein, a young missionary in Canton, wrote to the Committee that although he agreed with the congregational fund in theory, it was difficult to regulate in practice. The Chinese Christians, Rhein reported, were too poor to contribute the annual rate. Rhein believed that in his own community of poor Hakka Christians, the annual contribution was an undue burden. Especially in comparison to the Basel Missionary Society's congregations, which only had to pay 0,30 Marks a year, 0,50 was too high of a tax. Rhein suggested that they lower the Church tax to 0,15 marks.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ "Auszüge aus dem Visitationsbericht von Arthur Brown," 1909, BMW 1 / 6602: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Wilhelm Glüer, "Die finanzielle organisation der chinesischen Gemeinden," 01 November 1907, BMW 1 / 6602: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 2, 44.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 46.

¹⁰⁸ Wilhelm Rhein, "Grundlinien und Entwurf des Komites zu einer Gemeindekassenordnung in Hinsicht auf

While missionaries such as Rhein recognized the poverty that the majority of their Christian converts had to battle, others blamed the failure of the *Gemeindekassen* on Chinese immature spirituality. The primary problem for these missionaries was not social immiseration, but spiritual inadequacy. In some reports, Berlin missionaries complained that the Chinese Christians still had not developed a “spirit of cheerfulness” in their tithing (*Gebefreudigkeit*). The Chinese Christians, one missionary wrote, had the wherewithal to contribute to the *Gemeindekassen*, but they did not trust the missionaries with their money and were wary of contributing money into a single pot. The missionaries still needed to instill in their congregation a spirit of sacrifice and deeper Christian feeling before they could succeed in founding an independent Church.¹⁰⁹

Responding to their field workers’ concerns that the Chinese Christians were not spiritually ready for independence, the leadership limited the ability for the Chinese assistants to participate in decision-making processes at higher levels. Ever since the missionaries established regional synods, the missionaries debated whether the Chinese Christians should be allowed to attend the annual meetings. Now they restricted Chinese access. A letter from the Committee explicitly instructed the missionary inspector Friedrich Leuschner that he was not to allow a high number of Chinese assistants to attend the meeting; otherwise, the Chinese might gain an “overwhelming majority” and wrestle control in the Synod from Western missionary hands.¹¹⁰ The missionaries in the field also asserted their right to veto any of the congregational decisions that the Chinese wanted, constricting the ultimate power of the Chinese Christians over local church life. Finally, they held an annual conference that only Western missionaries were allowed to attend. At these conferences (*Missionarkonferenzen*), the missionaries discussed and determined the broader direction of their work, without consultation from the Chinese.¹¹¹

The Europeans’ “hermeneutical suspicion” of Chinese spirituality also manifested itself in one more significant way: the Berlin missionaries hampered Chinese Christians’ efforts to contact Christian Chinese from other missionary groups and denominations.¹¹² As early as the 1880s, Chinese Christians had expressed interest in connecting with Christians from other missionary societies, including the Basel missions. Even though the Basellers missionaries were also Pietist in outlook, the Berliners—with their Lutheran commitments—disdained the Reformed theology of the Basel missionaries. But Chinese Christians, the Berliners feared, would not be able to distinguish between these finer denominational differences. By hindering their “own” Christians from forming broader alliances with other Chinese Christians, the BMS hoped to control the theological orientation and the social movement of those that they employed.

This fear of theological impurity continued to characterize the BMS’s approach to indigenization on up to the First World War. Paternalism permeated the society’s dealings

seine Durchführbarkeit, eventuelle zweckentsprechende Gestaltung,” 02 July 1908, BMW 1 / 6602: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 2, 83.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 84.

¹¹⁰ The Committee to Friedrich Leuschner, 19 June 1914, BMW 1 / 890: Gehilfenkonferenzen in China / Oberland.

¹¹¹ The missionaries faithfully recorded the proceedings from the *Missionarkonferenzen*. See Ibid.

¹¹² Gerber, *Voskamps und Wilhelm*, 68-69.

with the Chinese. Before the war, the Chinese remained, in the Berliners' eyes, too spiritually immature, too child-like, to be independent from the home missions board. They continued to assume that Christianity would only grow if there were a greater European missionary presence, not less. In 1914, on the eve of the war, August Kollecker opened the *Gehilfen* Conference by confidently stating that "the countries of the Orient are currently open to the Gospel. Many missionaries are coming and doing God's work. It is God's will—he has opened the gates of the kingdom of heaven."¹¹³ Kollecker reassured the *Gehilfen* that Western missionary support would increase as the opportunities for Chinese conversion grew ever more ripe. Christianity's eventual success, for most BMS missionaries before the First World War, in China depended on Western European missionary presence.

Of course, the missionaries knew that Chinese Christians were crucial for their work to succeed. As external and internal pressures grew, the missionaries did begin to turn over control of the missionary work to Chinese clergy. They established a conference that promoted dialogue between the Chinese Christians and the European missionaries; a church fund separate from the missionary funds; and avenues to incorporate more Chinese voices into their annual synodal meetings. But in each case, the missionaries continued to limit the Chinese Christians' autonomy. Chinese independence remained on German terms.

Most significantly, the Germans sought to import church institutions to China. Rather than encouraging Chinese clergy to create new, hybrid church structures that incorporated local customs, values, and needs, the BMS transplanted its hierarchical, centralized, closely tabulated system—once used to monitor its own missionaries—into China. The Germans expected these church institutions to become independent, but not actually *indigenized*: the Germans did not want these new church institutions to incorporate Chinese practices of financial governance or local forms of collective decision making.¹¹⁴ Instead, they were to be fully "German" institutions, with Chinese participants.

Indigenization and its Discontents

As we saw in previous chapters, the BMS emerged from the First World War a changed organization. At the forefront was its shift in theology: they were now committed to the creation of a Chinese *Volkskirche*. But this change was also financially motivated. The war had devastated the BMS's finances, and the missionary leadership now desperately turned towards a more sustained and systematic policy of ceding control to local Chinese Christians. Much of the BMS's post-World War I push to indigenize was deeply linked with the decisions and personality of Siegfried Knak, the new director of the society. Knak's grandfather, Gustav Knak, had been one of the first China missions inspectors in the 1880s, and as a result Knak felt a special kinship to China. He was an opinionated micromanager, and left his fingerprints on the missionary society.

¹¹³ "Protokoll der Gehilfenkonferenz vom 23.-25. Juli 1914," 29 July 1914, BMW 1 / 890: Gehilfenkonferenzen in China / Oberland.

¹¹⁴ For traditional Chinese forms of almsgiving, see the chapter in Susan Naquin, "Temples and Public Purposes," in *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Knak's first decision was to scale back missionary holdings. He gave up the northern China missions completely. During Knak's visit to China in 1922, he entered into negotiations with the United Lutheran Church of America to discuss their acquisition of the BMS's missionary properties and work in Northern China. The negotiations took several years, as the missionaries haggled over the proper valuation of the properties and the contracts of long-time missionaries such as Carl Johannes Voskamp.¹¹⁵ But in February of 1925, the BMS relinquished its missionary work to the United Lutheran Church of America. Voskamp now had his salary paid by the National Lutheran Council of Baltimore. Knak reiterated his personal commitment to Voskamp, writing in a letter, "you remain a German man, despite being under American leadership. The blood that your beloved son shed for the Fatherland will bind you with our people ever more tightly and strongly."¹¹⁶

Knak's decision to ally with the American Lutherans was part of a broader strategy to forge a united Lutheran front in China. Knak eyed the changes in China's National Church Council, in which Anglo-Americans took the lead, and indeed the whole Anglo-American missionary establishment, with a "hermeneutical suspicion." Knak read and took seriously his own missionaries' complaints that the majority of Chinese Christians encountered mainly American Calvinist congregations.¹¹⁷ For Knak, the Americans—as well as the Chinese Christians whom he viewed as serving Americans—were secularizing wolves donning the clothing of Christian sheep. The Berlin Missions had a responsibility to inculcate true, good Lutheran principles in China. Knak stated, "we Lutheran mission societies need to form much stronger bonds with each other, so that the merits of the Reformation inhabit the Christian Church of China."¹¹⁸

Thus, in the hopes of countering the institutional dominance of the Anglo-American National Church Council, Knak helped create an alliance between Lutheran mission societies. In addition to the American Lutherans, the initial coalition included the Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish Lutheran missionary societies.¹¹⁹ The Rhenish and Switzerland's Basel Mission also decided to join. The Chinese name for the umbrella group was the *Zhonghua Xinyi Hui* (中華信義教會, literally translated as the Church of Faith and Justice in China). The Germans called it the *Glaubensgerechtigkeitskirche*.¹²⁰ Thereafter, even though the BMS remained involved with the National Chinese Church Council, the Society dedicated its primary affiliation in China to the Lutheran Alliance. The *Xinyi* Church in China proved to be a modest success. By 1938, the coalition boasted close to 40,000 communicants, the sixth largest church organization in China.¹²¹ As a result of the alliance, the individual church

¹¹⁵ For the correspondence, see ULCA 19/5/1/2: United Lutheran Church of America. Board of Missions. Secretary of Asia-China. Minutes, Correspondence, Subject Files 1922-1959, especially Reel 1. ELCA Archives Negative Number 104.

¹¹⁶ Siegfried Knak to Carl Johannes Voskamp, 12 February 1925, BMW 1/ 4326: Voskamps, Personalia.

¹¹⁷ "Niederschrift der Missionarskonferenz vom 2. bis 9. Oktober 1927," October 1927, BMW 1/ 6537: Synode Süd China, bd. 15, 92.

¹¹⁸ Hellmut Lehmann, *Zur Zeit und zur Unzeit: Geschichte der Berliner Mission 1918-1972 in Drei Bänden*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Berliner Missionswerk, 1989), 133.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹²⁰ For a version of the Church constitution, see "Kirchenordnung von 1922," 12 January 1929, BMW 1/ 6621: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 2, 18-30.

¹²¹ R. G. Tiedemann, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume 2, 1800 to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2009),

congregations adopted new names, all folded under the name *Baling Xinyihui* (巴陵信義會, translated in German as *Berliner Glaubensgerechtigkeitskirche*).

Besides establishing agreements with other Lutheran organizations, Knak commenced a series of internal reforms. Beginning in 1922, he initiated discussions regarding the creation of a new church constitution (*Kirchenordnung*), which he envisioned as being implemented by individual Chinese congregations. “A new constitution is necessary,” Knak wrote to his fellow missionaries in 1923, “because Germany is now so poor that Chinese Christians must now come to help the mission. We must present this new Church constitution to the Chinese with as much clarity as we can.”¹²² Knak believed that a new church constitution could create a binding and lasting solution to the question of the Chinese church’s independence. The ensuing discussion over the Chinese church constitution revealed nothing less than the BMS’s attempt to define and shape the institutional structures of a Chinese church. What had once existed purely in theory—a Chinese *Volkskirche*—had now entered the realm of reality. This discussion lasted well into the 1930s, occupying much of the BMS’s energy at all major synods and meetings.

Knak and the BMS’s preoccupation with a new church constitution emerged at the same time that German churchmen were themselves re-creating a Church constitution in Germany.¹²³ After 1918, the Prussian constitution officially abolished the linkages between the Prussian church and the state, thereby destroying Prussia as a “Christian state.” Daniel Borg has argued that Germany’s Protestant church leaders for the most part were “dreadfully uncomfortable in a republic created by revolution” and “viewed the new political order as the very nemesis of Evangelical beliefs and traditions.”¹²⁴ In a series of assembly meetings from 1921 to 1922, the Constitution Committee of the old-Prussian Church drafted and ratified a new constitution for the Church.¹²⁵ As Gerhard Besier has carefully demonstrated, the Constitution Committee was dominated by an alliance of so-called “confessionally faithful” (*Bekennnistreuen*) conservatives.¹²⁶ The conservatives conceived of

997-1004. Ranking after the Church of Christ in China (125,498), the Methodists (104,582) China Inland Mission (89,665), Anglicans (Holy Catholic Church of China, 73,535), Southern Baptist Convention (40,784).

¹²² “An alle Missionare und Missionsschwestern der Berliner Mission in Kwangtung,” 04 August 1923, BMW 1/6604: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 3, 4.

¹²³ My understanding of the Old-Prussian constitution draws on the work of Daniel Borg. Also see Eckhard Lessing, *Zwischen Bekenntnis und Volkskirche: der theologische Weg der Evangelischen Kirche der altpreußischen Union (1922 - 1953) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer Synoden, ihrer Gruppen und der theologischen Begründungen* (Bielefeld: Luther-Verl., 1992). See also Hans Goetz Oxenius, *Die Entstehung der Verfassung der evangelischen Kirche der altpreußischen Union von 1922* (Berlin-Dahlem: Ernst-Reuter-Gesellschaft, 1959).

¹²⁴ Daniel R. Borg, “Volkskirche, ‘Christian State’ and the Weimar Republic,” *Church History* 35, no. 2 (July 1966), 187.

¹²⁵ Daniel R. Borg, *The Old Prussian Church and the Weimar Republic: A Study in Political Adjustment, 1917-1927* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1984), 111.

¹²⁶ Gerhard Besier, “Die neue preußische Kirchenverfassung und die Bildung des Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchenbundes,” in *Die Geschichte der Evangelischen Kirche der Union, Bd. 3. Trennung von Staat und Kirche. Kirchlich-politische Krisen. Erneuerung kirchlicher Gemeinschaft (1918-1992)*, ed. Gerhard Besier and Eckhard Lessing (Leipzig: Evang. Verl.-Anst., 1999), 102. Out of 221 Synods, around 145 synods belonged to the conservative alliance. The alliance consisted of “Positive Unionists”, the Confessional Lutherans, and the Pietists. For a more detailed investigation of the different factional differences at the conference, see Lessing, *Zwischen Bekenntnis und Volkskirche*.

their constitution as a bulwark against secular and Socialist attacks on the old-Prussian church. The constitution framed the church as an active and activist player in the moral political landscape; as Borg argues, the constitution “reflected the determination of the United Right to ensure for the church a missionary role that had indirect political implications.”¹²⁷ After much strenuous debate, the constitution was ratified and instituted on October 1, 1924.¹²⁸

The portion of the constitution most vigorously debated was the preamble, which reaffirmed the confessional commitments of the old-Prussian Church. Liberal and moderate churchmen voted against the constitution because they objected to the preamble’s failure to provide protection for religious freedom or religious minorities.¹²⁹ Asserting the Reformed and Lutheran principles of the Church, the preamble reads:

Being true to the inheritance of the church fathers, the Evangelical church of the district of the old-province of Prussia stands on the Gospel given in the Holy Scripture of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who was crucified and resurrected for us, who is the Lord of the Church. We recognize the continuing truth of its confessions: the Apostles' Creed and the other creeds of the Ancient church. We further recognize the Augsburg Confession, its Apology, the Schmalcald Articles and the short and long Catechism of Luther in the Lutheran churches, and the Heidelberg Catechism in the Reformed congregations, where these creeds stand in authority.¹³⁰

The BMS modeled the *Kirchenordnung* in China after the Old-Prussian union’s constitution.¹³¹ Like the Old-Prussian church constitution, the preamble of the BMS *Kirchenordnung* stated its dual confessional (Lutheran and Reformed) allegiances. But in China the missionaries constructed and construed the constitution in a more narrow fashion. Unlike the Old-Prussian constitution, the church constitution in Guangdong proclaimed its Lutheran colors. It left out references to the Heidelberg Catechism of the Reformed churches, clearly stating that the Chinese Church was rooted in the “short catechism of Luther” and the “Augsburg confession.”¹³²

The constitutions, in both Germany and China, were not entirely regressive. The old-Prussian Church, for example, incorporated insights and reforms that resulted from the revolution, including “women’s suffrage and elections by proportional representation for the benefit of minorities.”¹³³ Even though parishioners lacked the ability to directly elect the highest authorities in the church synod, they were given more power to participate in decision-making within the church. German parishioners could now vote for members of

¹²⁷ Borg, *The Old Prussian Church and the Weimar Republic*, 113.

¹²⁸ Besier, “Die neue preußische Kirchenverfassung,” 102.

¹²⁹ Borg, *The Old Prussian Church and the Weimar Republic*, 112-113.

¹³⁰ Translation, with slight amendments, taken from Karl Barth, *The Word of God and Theology*, trans. Amy Marga (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 176. For the full text of the Old-Prussian church constitution, see Dieter Kraus, ed., *Evangelische Kirchenverfassungen in Deutschland: Textsammlung mit einer Einführung* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001), 935-984.

¹³¹ Lehmann, *Zur Zeit und zur Unzeit*, 11.

¹³² “Kirchenordnung von 1922,” 12 January 1929, BMW 1/ 6621: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 2, 18.

¹³³ Borg, *The Old Prussian Church and the Weimar Republic*, 111.

presbyteries, as well as provincial synods, which eventually helped to elect the members of the General Synod¹³⁴ Nonetheless, despite these reforms, as Daniel Borg notes, the constitution was “far from democratic.”¹³⁵ In general, the power and authority of the Church still flowed from the synods downwards.

Similarly, the new Church constitution in China gave Chinese Christians greater power. Chinese Christians were now fully authorized to sit on committees, vote on decisions, and shape the agenda of the Church. The constitution situated the parishes at the center of church life. Parishioners voted for representatives to parish synods. The latter now included a mixture of laity and clergy, as well as of Europeans and Chinese.¹³⁶ Missionaries from the BMS automatically earned a seat on the parish synods.¹³⁷ The parish synods then elected representatives to the General Synod Committee, which provided the overall direction and agenda for the whole church in China.

The constitution also reflected a shift in language and approach to the Chinese Christians in general. When Wangemann and other German missionary leaders wrote the *Missionsordnung* in 1882, Chinese Christians were referred to as “colored,” or “*Farbigen*.” That language was now dropped. In the 1922 *Kirchenordnung*, those who had previously been called “assistants” or “*Gehilfen*” were “ordained Chinese preachers.”¹³⁸ Chinese Christians could now become pastors, whereas previously the highest rank to which they could ascend was a *Vikar*.¹³⁹ But the discursive habits were not easy to break. In a letter from Knak to the missionaries in 1924, he accidentally used the word *Gehilfen* when referring to the Chinese Christians. The missionary Heinrich Wahl admonished him: “[U]sing the word *Gehilfen* is inappropriate nowadays.”¹⁴⁰

Yet the new Constitution did not represent a radical shift on the enduring question of indigenization—how to make the Church institutions Chinese. The Constitution perpetuated the old model of transplanting German church institutions in China. Like the Old-Prussian Church constitution, the ultimate decision-making and authority of the Church flowed downwards, with the missionary society still holding most of the cards. For example, the Church Constitution explicitly imposed limits on the independence that Chinese BMS congregations could actually enjoy. All Chinese who sat on the committees were “vetted” by the German missionaries. They had to have either been educated in BMS schools or gone through BMS training. The BMS controlled the process of ordaining ministers; if Chinese pastors not ordained in the BMS wanted to become ministers of the BMS’s congregations, they were required to undergo a year-long probationary period. Missionaries remained dominant, continuing to oversee all committees and proceedings.

The Constitution also did not push for immediate financial independence for the Chinese congregations. The constitution created three categories of congregations. The first, an “infant congregation,” had less than 20 members and was not financially able to be

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ “Kirchenordnung von 1922,” 12 January 1929, BMW 1/ 6621: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 2, 20.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 25-26.

¹⁴⁰ Heinrich Wahl, “Arbeitsbericht der Station Tschichin III. Quartal 1924,” 30 September 1924, BMW 1/ 6254: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin, bd. 2, 267.

independent. Their members were required to contribute 50 cents to help pay for the salaries of the Chinese preachers.¹⁴¹ The second category, the “Advanced congregation,” was required to pay for the maintenance of chapels and the construction of other buildings, but not the salaries of the preachers. The third category, the “independent congregation,” paid fully for both maintenance and personnel.¹⁴² As before, the missionary and the home board, not the Chinese Christians, determined the “readiness” of the congregations for independence.

Knak believed that implementation the new Church constitution, once implemented, could fulfill the vision of creating a Chinese *Volkskirche*. The Church Constitution created structures and institutions that helped Chinese Christians manage their finances, thus putting the Chinese on a path towards financial independence. Even more importantly, the Constitution stated that a Church congregation could only become independent if it was “spiritually mature,” and it could help the Chinese develop the “strength of their inner life, which they need before true independence can be established.”¹⁴³ Knak argued that the Church Constitution was the outcome of “four decades of experience in the missionary field... there is no better opportunity to renew our work, grounded in the principles of Biblical faith, Christian ethics, and missionary principles.”¹⁴⁴

The missionaries implemented the new constitution almost immediately. By 1924, they had convened their first General Synod, which was based on the rules outlined in the constitution. The elders and preachers who attended the conference had been chosen through the process laid out in the constitution. Whereas previously Chinese Christian assistants could only voice their concerns at the *Gehilfenkonferenzen*, now they sat at the table as presumptive equals to discuss the future of the church. Out of the forty-three representatives at the Synod, only twelve were foreign missionaries. The conference’s proceedings were also held in Chinese.¹⁴⁵ At the Conference, the missionaries and Chinese Christians all concurred that the new Constitution should be approved and ratified. They agreed that the constitution should be translated into Chinese, and they discussed how to put it in practice. Knak also now communicated directly with Chinese pastors.¹⁴⁶ While previously communication between the Chinese Christians and the home board was always mediated through the missionaries at the *Gehilfenkonferenzen*, now Knak and the committee addressed letters to the Chinese Christians directly.

Yet what appeared as harmonious agreement was in reality fraught with tension. At a separate missionary conference—which only the Westerners were invited to attend—a young, newly minted missionary, Heinrich Wahl, observed that the relationship between

¹⁴¹ “Kirchenordnung von 1922,” 12 January 1929, BMW 1/ 6621: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 2, 19.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ “An alle Missionare und Missionsschwestern der Berliner Mission in Kwangtung,” 04 August 1923, BMW 1/ 6604: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 3, 4-5.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁴⁵ Heinrich Wahl, “Protokoll der 1. Ordentlichen Generalsynode,” 20 July 1924, BMW 1/ 6620: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 1, 126.

¹⁴⁶ For more on Chinese pastors, see chapter six.

Chinese pastors and the station missionaries remained “unclear.”¹⁴⁷ “Was the station missionary a superior to the Chinese pastor?”¹⁴⁸ Hugo Krause, agreed, noting that as a young missionary, “there were tremendous difficulties in working with Chinese pastors who had, for a long time, independently run a missionary station.”¹⁴⁹ Krause and Wahl represented a new generation of missionaries who entered China after the war. The new push to indigenize put these new missionaries in an awkward position: they were charged with the task of leading and instituting a new set of reforms, but they had neither the experience nor the institutional authority. Other missionaries dismissed the concerns, saying that “the situation is not so difficult — we are responsible to the Committee (home board), and the Chinese pastors are responsible to us.”¹⁵⁰ Another agreed, saying that “The missionary should be the superior to the Chinese pastor. However, if we emphasize our position of power too much, we could hurt the feelings of Chinese pastors. There must exist in our Church a relationship of trust, and not a relationship of superiority.”¹⁵¹

After reading the transcripts of these discussions, the Missions Inspector Wilhelm Spiecker wrote, “The question of whether the missionary should be a superior to the Chinese pastors cannot be answered in a simple yes or no.”¹⁵² In matters such as writing reports to the home board and managing finances, the missionaries were clearly the “administrative superiors.”¹⁵³ But younger missionaries, Spiecker advised, should enter a congregation with the attitude that they could learn extensively from those who had already spent time in the congregation. The missionary must also acknowledge that “the Chinese pastors would have, in a very short time, complete control and leadership of the Church in their hands.”¹⁵⁴ Thus, the missionary must give Chinese pastors as much freedom as possible: “for a German missionary, used to Prussian discipline, it is often difficult to leave the Chinese to do as they please... The Chinese pastors would also be particularly sensitive to our good, strict Prussian discipline.”¹⁵⁵

Yet feelings of trust between missionary and Chinese pastor were difficult to cultivate. The missionaries blamed the Chinese Christians themselves for the slow rate of indigenization. At the General Synod in 1926, they reflected on how far the Chinese churches remained from the eventual goal of independence. Missionaries complained that the Chinese preachers had not taken the implementation seriously, and had resisted implementing the principles of the Constitution in their congregations.¹⁵⁶ Some Chinese

¹⁴⁷ “Die Generalsynode,” 20 July 1924, BMW 1/ 6620: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 1, 114. Before the General Synod, the Chinese Christians also held their own Chinese synod, in parallel to the missionary conference, which was restricted to the missionaries. See also Heinrich Wahl, “Protokoll der 1. Ordentlichen Generalsynode,” 20 July 1924, BMW 1/ 6620: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 1, 136.

¹⁴⁸ “Die Generalsynode,” 20 July 1924, BMW 1/ 6620: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 1, 114.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Wilhelm Spiecker to All Missionaries in China, 25 October 1924, BMW 1/ 6620: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 1, 152.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ “Generalsynode 1926. Missionarskonferenz,” 05 November 1926, BMW 1/ 6620: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 1, 160.

Christians agreed with the missionary critique: one Chinese Christian pastor, Ling Deyuan went so far as to admit that the “understanding of the Church Constitution among us Chinese Christians is varied. A more gradual implementation of the plans for independence is advisable.”¹⁵⁷

Those Chinese Christians who resisted the Church Constitution attacked it as “un-Chinese” and “outdated.”¹⁵⁸ Some missionaries agreed with the Chinese and attack the constitution itself. One missionary Paul Reissig, argued to his fellow missionaries at the 1926 Synod that the Chinese Christians had not adopted the Church Constitution because it did not “grow out of the congregations.” Reissig believed that had the Chinese themselves formulated, proposed, and advocated the statutes regarding their participation, they would have taken more interest in the Constitution.¹⁵⁹

In the context of the post-war Chinese Christian religious landscape, the Church constitution did seem retrograde. In the wake of the war, Chinese Christians, previously trained and employed by Western missionary societies, were revolting against their former superiors and creating their own Christian groups.¹⁶⁰ Wei Enbo was one of those disaffected Christians. Educated by the London Missionary Society, Wei founded the True Jesus Church, which expressly repudiated the hierarchical structure of the missionary society: “Let there be no autocratic domination of meetings and prayers by any man [. . .]. Let all take turns to preach; let all pray aloud in meetings.”¹⁶¹ As the scholar Lian Xi writes, Wei “called on the mission churches in China to drop their denominational appellations, follow the teachings of the TJC and adopt its name, replace the clergy with lay leadership, reject the teaching of the Trinity (in favor of an undivided God), share material possessions, and not rely on the foreigners' money and power.”¹⁶²

But despite attacks on the Church Constitution from both Chinese and Germans, Knak continued to defend its importance viewing it as the only intellectually viable alternative to the Anglo-American dominance of the Chinese missionary landscape.¹⁶³ He disparaged the “blind followers of an American attempt to create a national Church,” proposing that “the Constitution ensures that we can better serve the true needs of Chinese Christianity.” But even Knak exhorted the Chinese not to follow the constitution literally. In a letter to a Chinese pastor in 1936, Knak wrote “the Church constitution that we devised in 1922 in Canton with one another should not be seen as a law for eternity. Rather,

¹⁵⁷ Lin Tet-en [Ling Deyuan] to Siegfried Knak, 1 February 1924, BMW 1/ 6254: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin, bd. 2, 262.

¹⁵⁸ Siegfried Knak, “Rundbrief an sämtliche Missionare und Schwestern der Berliner Mission in China,” 20 April 1926, BMW 1/ 6604: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 3, 50.

¹⁵⁹ “Generalsynode 1926. Missionarskonferenz,” 05 November 1926, BMW 1/ 6620: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 1, 160.

¹⁶⁰ For an overview of these indigenous church movements, see Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 128-140. and the excellent Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

¹⁶¹ On the True Jesus Church, see chapter two, “The Lighting out of the East: The True Jesus Church,” of *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁶³ Siegfried Knak, “Rundbrief an sämtliche Missionare und Schwestern der Berliner Mission in China,” 20 April 1926, BMW 1/ 6604: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 3, 51-52.

it should be seen as preparation and a transitional stage for the Chinese churches to become fully independent.”¹⁶⁴

Other than the congregation in Shixing, which was virtually independent and self-supporting by the early 1930s, the BMS's continued to be slow and reluctant in their path towards making their Chinese congregations independent.¹⁶⁵ Missionaries continued to complain about the unreadiness of their Chinese congregations.¹⁶⁶ In spite of the new Church Constitution, the “hermeneutical suspicion” that the Germans felt toward the Chinese did not diminish. Rather, with the rise of the National Church Council in China, with attacks on the *Volkskirche* in Germany itself, and with the slow pace of implementing the Church Constitution within the BMS's Chinese congregations, the German missionaries only felt more beleaguered than before.

The Final Blow: The Nazi Divenstelle

While the BMS reluctantly pursued its policy of indigenization before the 1930s, an unexpected stimulus finally pushed the missionary leaders to indigenize. It was financial pressures resulting from the Nazi dictatorship, rather than changes in the missionaries' belief in Chinese readiness for independence, that ultimately convinced the BMS to devolve its authority.¹⁶⁷

At first, Knak and the missionary leaders expressed cautious enthusiasm about Hitler and the Nazis. In a 1931 memorandum addressed to the entire missionary society, Knak noted that Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Party had become a “real force” in German politics.¹⁶⁸ Knak worried that if the Nazis were to gain control of power, Germany could descend into a full-blown civil war. Yet Knak concluded, “if I weigh all of the pros and cons about the National Socialists, I cannot feel anything but joy in my heart that such a nationalist movement has emerged in Germany. Without them, we would become nothing but passive tools in the hands of the French.”¹⁶⁹ In 1932, in his annual report of the situation in Germany to his missionaries in the field, Knak once again mentioned Hitler, but this time in a more alarmed tone. While he commented that Socialism and Social Democracy remained the largest threat to Germany, he noted that “a radical antisemitism and racial hatred underlines the agenda of the National Socialists.”¹⁷⁰ Nonetheless, when Hitler was

¹⁶⁴ Siegfried Knak to Lyn tet-en [Ling Deyuan], 16 October 1936, BMW 1/ 6610: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 5.

¹⁶⁵ Siegfried Knak, “Rundbrief an sämtliche Missionare und Schwestern der Berliner Mission in China,” 20 April 1926, BMW 1/ 6604: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 3, 51-52.

¹⁶⁶ Heinrich Wahl, “Jahresbericht der Station Tschichin (Chihing für 1925),” 01 January 1926, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

¹⁶⁷ Karl Gramatte to Siegfried Knak, 08 February 1932, BMW 1/ 6608: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 4b.

¹⁶⁸ Siegfried Knak, “An Alle unsere Mitarbeiter in Afrika und China,” Advent 1931, BMW 1 / 15: Rundschreiben an alle Superintendenten und Missionare, 1931-1936, 12-17.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 14. “Wenn ich alle Pros und Kontras miteinander abwäge, kann ich doch nicht anders, als von Herzen froh darüber sein, dass so etwas wie diese nationale Bewegung aufgekommen ist. Ohne sie wären wir vollkommen willenloses Werkzeug in der hand Frankreichs.”

¹⁷⁰ Siegfried Knak, “Rundbrief an alle Mitarbeiter auf den Missionsfeldern,” October 1932, BMW 1 / 15: Rundschreiben an alle Superintendenten und Missionare, 46.

appointed chancellor in 1933, Knak circulated a letter to the missionary society proclaiming the development as a “gift from God” (*Gottesgeschenk*).¹⁷¹ In China, BMS missionaries also vigorously defended Hitler from the “abdominable propaganda” and the “lies” that they saw as being propagated in the Anglo-American press.¹⁷²

While Knak remained supportive of the Nazi party, he vocally criticized the “German Christians,” (*Deutsche Christen*) a movement of pro-Nazi Protestant clergy who called for the synthesis of National Socialism and Christianity. As Doris Bergen writes, “For German Christians, race was the fundamental principle of human life [. . .]. German Christians believed that God revealed himself to humanity not only in Scripture and through Jesus but in nature and history.”¹⁷³ The Church, for German Christians, did not encompass the universal fellowship of all believers. Rather, it was an enclosed racial entity, and they yearned for the creation of a purely “Aryan” *Volkskirche*. They were not a fringe group: at its height, the movement had close to six hundred thousand members. The German Christians began their political ascension along with the National Socialists. In July of 1933, representatives of the German Christians won more than two-thirds of the votes cast in Protestant church elections, launching them into influential Church positions throughout Germany.¹⁷⁴

Knak loathed the German Christians. Knak directly refuted their notion that nature and history trumped Scripture as sources of Divine revelation. He wrote, “the German Christians preach that Scripture is not the sole source of God’s revelation. Instead, they teach that we can know God through nature and history. If that is the case, we do not need missionary work. We draw upon the Holy Scriptures to preach that Christ alone is the way to know God the father.”¹⁷⁵ Lamenting the German Christian comparison of Hitler’s appointment as chancellor to Christ’s second-coming, he warned that the German Christians promoted a “dangerous form of syncretism that we must resist.”¹⁷⁶ Knak wrote that even though it was true that the Church needed better leadership, the German Christians erred when they wanted to graft the Nazi “leader principle” (*Führerprinzip*) into the Church.¹⁷⁷ God had already delivered a leader to the church in the form of Jesus, and “the *Führerprinzip* in the Church does not belong to secular powers, but rather a spiritual.”¹⁷⁸

Knak also denounced the German Christians for wanting to exclude non-Aryans and Jewish Christians from the Church community. “An Aryan clause in the Church,” Knak wrote, “is a falsehood.”¹⁷⁹ He argued that if the church allowed for an Aryan clause to stand, “we would also have to debate if Negroes and Chinese can become members, elders, or pastors in German Lutheran churches across the world. These debates are out of the

¹⁷¹. Schmitt to Siegfried Knak, 23 October 1933, BMW 1/ 6538: Synode Süd China, 1921-1951, 35-36.

¹⁷². Siegfried Knak to Missionar Killus, Waichow, 23 August 1934, BMW 1/ 6609: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 4c.

¹⁷³. Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

¹⁷⁴. *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷⁵. Siegfried Knak to Lotti Kohls, 16 March 1935, BMW 1/ 3509: Kohls, Georg.

¹⁷⁶. *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷. *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸. *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹. *Ibid.*

question.”¹⁸⁰ Knak contended that while the German state had every right to pass anti-miscegenation laws that separated races, the Church was a place where all peoples and races were welcome, as long as the individual accepted Christ.¹⁸¹ Knak pointed out that Scripture had shown that first converts to Christianity were Jews, and thus the Church had to be welcoming of the Jews. The goal of Christian missions was to expand Christianity to include all races, rather than to create exclusive walls.

Knak and the BMS’s promotion of racial inclusivity did not go unnoticed. In 1935, the Council of the St. Nikolai Church in Berlin sent a letter in protest to Siegfried Knak, complaining about the “display of a strongly idealized Negro (*einen stark idealisierten rufenden Neger*)” in the BMS’s advertisements for their missions service in Africa.¹⁸² Knak wrote a firm letter defending their position.¹⁸³ But the political damage of the Council’s disapproval was done: previous supporters of foreign mission work retracted their donations, afraid of being on the wrong side of Nazi racial policy. The flourishing ecosystem of financial help that the missionary society could draw upon in the nineteenth-century was now a distant memory. The Committee reported that ever since the beginning of the Nazi rise to power “the mission work is in greater financial need than we have ever experienced.”¹⁸⁴

Even more devastatingly, the Nazi restriction on foreign exchange and currency export limited the amount of financial support that the mission society could send to China.¹⁸⁵ Starting in 1934, the Nazi government extended and intensified the Weimar restrictions on exporting foreign currency abroad.¹⁸⁶ The BMS now could not transfer money from Germany to China, at the risk of paying hefty fines. In 1934, the missionary Paul Reissing talked about the “incredible desperation that the ban on foreign currency exports has wreaked on the mission. Because of the worldwide economic situation, shortage in raw materials, and the threat of a new round of inflation, we may have to limit, or even discontinue, our missionary work.”¹⁸⁷ The BMS leadership warned its missionaries in the field that they should expect “deep and heavy cuts in the amount of European salaries, child support, pensions, and funding for the individual stations.”¹⁸⁸ The first chip to fall was a missionary station in Namon, in Jiangxi. No longer able to support the work, the BMS ceded control to the China Inland Mission. The missionary leadership had to lay off fifty

¹⁸⁰. Ibid.

¹⁸¹. Ibid.

¹⁸². Ev. Gemeindegemeinderat von St. Nikolai to Siegfried Knak, 08 August 1935, BMW 1/ 6609: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 4c.

¹⁸³. Ibid.

¹⁸⁴. The Committee to the German General Consulate in Canton, 19 October 1934, BMW 1/ 6609: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 4c.

¹⁸⁵. For a rosy take on the BMS’s relationship to the Nazis, see Lehmann, *Zur Zeit und zur Unzeit*, 137-149.

¹⁸⁶. For more on the Devisenstellen, see Howard S. Ellis, “German Exchange Control, 1931-1939: From an Emergency Measure to a Totalitarian Institution,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 54, no. 4 (August 1940): 1-158.

¹⁸⁷. “Niederschrift der G. S. A. Sitzung von 15. - 16. Oktober 1934,” 16 October, 1934, BMW 1/ 6609: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 4c.

¹⁸⁸. The Committee to the Gesmat Wirtschafts-Rat, Südafrika, z. Hd. Herrn Superintendenten Wedepohl, Superintendenten bzw. Missionarskonferenz d. Ostafrika-Synoden, Herrn Superintendenten Oelke, Canton, 09 October 1934, BMW 1/ 6609: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 4c.

Chinese workers, including preachers, teachers, and *Bibelfrauen*.¹⁸⁹ The Chinese Christians protested the cuts. The missionary inspector Alfred Oelker reported that the Chinese Christians refused to believe that the money had run out. Instead, they grew intensely bitter that the “Germans were unwilling to help even the poorest among the Chinese Christians.”¹⁹⁰

As a result of Nazi restrictions on foreign currency, the mission inspector Johannes Müller circulated a memorandum, asking missionaries to prepare for the eventual withdrawal of financial support for the Chinese congregations. In the memorandum, the Berlin missionary leaders also sent queries to the Basel Missionary Society, which had begun a much more impressive and proactive path towards indigenization almost ten years earlier.¹⁹¹ Müller argued that the Berlin missionaries should follow the example set by the Presbyterian missionary to Korea, John Nevius. The Nevius model refused payment to indigenous workers and limited missionary presence.¹⁹² Nevius had seen large numbers of converts in the Korean peninsula, and Müller hoped that the Berlin Mission could follow his lead and transition to a less centralized—and less costly—model.

The missionary society agreed, and quickly decided to implement the Nevius model in its congregations. By the end of 1935, only 10 missionaries and 5 missionary sisters remained in the field, their 1898 figure.¹⁹³ The final blow to the mission society’s support of the Chinese congregations came in 1936. The BMS leadership announced that, due to the restrictions on the amount of currency that could be exported, the missionary society would pay only the salaries of Europeans; the indigenous clergy could no longer be compensated.¹⁹⁴ Their Chinese Christians now were fully independent of the missionary society’s control. Financial desperation, then, ultimately pushed the BMS missionaries to make their congregations independent and turn over control to the Chinese Christians.

Conclusion

The story of the BMS’s path is ultimately one of reluctant indigenization, with footdragging at every turn. This footdragging occurred even when the prevailing discourse urged the missions to devolve authority. And yet, the BMS took the calls for indigenization seriously. Its desire to hand over control to the Chinese was not mere lip service: missionaries were sincere, and at times, desperate, to make the congregation independent. They routinely organized conferences and meetings to discuss the future of the Church in China. They watched and observed other missionary societies. They devised new church constitutions and attempted to implement them in the individual church congregations.

¹⁸⁹ Lehmann, *Zur Zeit und zur Unzeit*, 139.

¹⁹⁰ Alfred Oelke to Siegfried Knak, 12 December 1935, BMW 1/ 6609: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 4c. For more on the Chinese response to the cuts in the German mission work, see chapter six.

¹⁹¹ Thoralf Klein has produced the best work on the Basel Mission. See Thoralf Klein, *Die Basler Mission in Guangdong (Südchina) 1859-1931: Akkulturationsprozesse und kulturelle Grenzziehungen zwischen Missionaren, chinesischen Christen und lokaler Gesellschaft* (München: Iudicium, 2002).

¹⁹² Lehmann, *Zur Zeit und zur Unzeit*, 150-151.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁹⁴ Missionar Killus to Siegfried Knak, 19 March 1936, BMW 1/ 6610: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 5.

Ultimately, and ironically, it was the Nazi party, which Berlin Missionary leaders had supported, that sounded the death knell for the mission society.

Certainly, as Daniel Bays and Thoralf Klein have suggested, paternalist attitudes inhibited trust for Chinese Christians. Part of this paternalism was encoded into the BMS's infrastructural and institutional make-up, dating back to its nineteenth century origins as a hierarchical society. Its obsession with control continued well into the the 1930s. Although the new church constitution of 1922 in theory broadened Chinese participation in the church's power structures, in practice the missionaries limited the extent of that participation. The missionaries, ultimately, were confused themselves about how much control to cede to the Chinese and how much to retain. They were improvising solutions at every stage.

The slow path of indigenization was always, in some way, tied up with capital. The BMS had raised and spent a significant amount of money throughout the years to train their missionaries, support their travels, and pay their salaries. So too, with the Chinese Christians on the ground. By the 1930s, the stakes were too high—to give up the missions was to repudiate and abandon the missionary work that in which they had invested for more than forty years. They had already pared down their missions by relinquishing the missionary stations in Northern China; they were unwilling to completely desert the field.

The rapid expansion of the missionary society in the nineteenth century signaled its doom in the twentieth century. Running the missionary society in the old manner became untenable by the 1930s. But fundamental expenses remained the same: chapels needed to be rebuilt and maintained, missionaries had to be trained and sent, Bibles had to be printed. The difference was, by the 1920s the society could no longer raise the revenues it had in the nineteenth century.

Ironically, what had been revolutionary in the nineteenth century proved to be the Protestant mission society's downfall. In a period of missionary fervor, the Pietist vision of decoupling the missionary society from the state was an ingenious move: as long as the missionary society could rely on the popular support of an eco-system of individual auxiliary organizations, the missionary society it enjoyed a booming source of revenue. By the 1920s, however, when financial disasters subjected Germans to a daily struggle, popular support for missionary work dried up. No longer tied to state backing, the missionary society had nowhere to turn for help. The Germans had no real international allies, as they had isolated themselves from the broader Anglo-American missionaries. By the 1930s, an even more devastating—and decisive—opponent appeared: an aggressively antagonistic state, unsympathetic to the missionary cause. With no revenue coming from Germany, the missionaries tried, and failed, to raise money in China. They could no longer financially support the Chinese Christians that they had converted.

Compounding the problem was the unstable political condition of China. Had the Chinese themselves been financially solvent, perhaps the Chinese congregations could have survived. Yet, an enduring anti-Christian movement that allied itself with the Communist party, unending conflicts between rival warlords, and the onset of the Sino-Japanese War in 1933 destroyed any prospects for financial security. Due to this persisting immiseration, mistrust between the missionaries and the Chinese pastors persisted, and conflict continued.

The missionaries' confusion surrounding the developing political situation in China in the 1920s and '30s led them to complain that the Chinese remained spiritually immature, unprepared to run the congregations independent of European supervision. The BMS directed their "hermeneutical suspicion" not only towards the Chinese. In the 1920s, they were thinking and reacting globally: they saw the challenge to create a *Volkskirche* in China as part of the same battle they were fighting against the forces of secularism and anti-clericalism. The missionaries wanted to formulate a united front, in Germany and in China, against the threats of secularization, Communism, and other trends hostile to Christianity.

Thus it is no coincidence that a new *Kirchenordnung* for the BMS Chinese congregations emerged at the same time as the old-Prussian Church union was battling for its constitutional preservation. The *Kirchenordnung* was not a mere importation of German church institutions into China, nor a case of lagged modernity. Rather, it signaled a concurrent German attempt to defend religion against its deniers. Both the *Kirchenordnung* and the old-Prussian Church were attempts to retain a modicum of institutional order in the midst of democratic reform and revolution. The missionaries did not reject reform outright—they did encode the possibility for more participation in the decision-making process by their Chinese Christians. But the constitution nonetheless represented a way to retain a order and security in an increasingly unpredictable and uncontrollable world. The documents included mechanisms to determine who was, and who was not, a Christian.

The missionaries' new *Kirchenordnung* of the 1920s thus did not reflect a radical departure from that of the *Missionsordnung* in the nineteenth century. From the nineteenth century *Missionsordnung* to the *Kirchenordnung* of the 1920s, the mission society remained consistent in its desire to impose "order" (*Ordnung*) on a world that increasingly felt senseless and chaotic. In the nineteenth century, missionary leaders sought to streamline and monitor the religious zeal of provincial young men for missionary work abroad. In the 1920s, they sought to impose limits on the Chinese Christians who were now primed to take over. But the stability of their institutions also doomed the missionaries. They employed the same markers to evaluate the faith of their congregants to which they themselves had once been subjected: church contributions, numbers of congregants, and orthodoxy of confessional belief. Ultimately, the BMS's failure in lay was its inability to recognize that Christianity itself was shifting: a new generation of church movements had emerged that conceived of Christianity in radically democratic, egalitarian, and non-denominational forms. Nineteenth century forms of Christian piety were no longer applicable not only to the Chinese context, but anywhere at all. In a time when new indigenous forms of Christianity were rising and gaining popularity, the BMS instead reasserted their Lutheran confessional loyalties. The missionaries did not realize that those institutions, as one Chinese Christian argued, were "out-dated" and "un-suitable" to the Chinese context of the 1920s.

The problem of marking and tracking Christian piety—methods to ascertain the authenticity of faith—was a question that crossed both denominational and confessional boundaries. Catholic missionaries, like their Protestant counterparts, dealt with the same question of marking and identifying authentic belief. What sort of institutions did the Catholics establish, how did they try to define and understand what constituted correct belief? These are some of the questions that I will address in my next chapter.

Chapter 5.

The SVD and Indigenization

Introduction

In July of 1931, Augustin Henninghaus, the SVD Bishop of Yanzhou (Yenchowfu), received a letter from the Congregation of the Propaganda of the Faith (*Propaganda Fide*) that shocked him. The letter stated that several secular Chinese priests in his diocese had signed a petition requesting the Propaganda to ordain a Chinese bishop in the region of Southern Shandong, which was largely under the SVD's control.¹ Henninghaus was surprised, and angered, that the Chinese priests had met secretly and had bypassed his authority. The Vatican, on the other hand, pounced at the opportunity to use the Chinese protests to pressure Henninghaus, exhorting him to train and ordain more Chinese leaders for the Church. A power struggle, brewing for some time, was out in the open.



Figure 23: Bishop Augustin Henninghaus in 1904. Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The Vatican had long hoped to bring Henninghaus in line with the Church's broader policy of transferring leadership to native Chinese priests. As R. G. Tiedemann has written in his monumental *Handbook of Christianity in China*, both the Holy See and missionary organizations on the ground had acknowledged, ever since the nineteenth century, the need

¹ Cardinal Willem van Rossum to Augustin Henninghaus, 23 December 1931, AG SVD 612 / 1931-1958. Society of the Divine Word Archives, Rome, 4451.

to speed up the ordination of Chinese Christian priests.² But various reasons, ranging from the Vatican's requirement that Chinese priests learn Latin to enduring Eurocentricism, had delayed the process. After the end of the First World War, Benedict XV published his papal encyclical, *Maximum ilud*, which proclaimed that the "Catholic Church is not an intruder in any country; nor is she alien to any people."³ As a result of these new Vatican hopes, the *Propaganda Fide* appointed Celso Costantini, known for his advocacy of indigenization, as the Vatican's Apostolic Delegate to China. Costantini and the *Propaganda Fide* went to work quickly: by 1926, the Vatican ordained its first six Chinese Bishops. Publicly, Henninghaus expressed support for the Vatican program, sending congratulatory letters to all his Chinese colleagues.⁴ Within the private walls of the missionary society, however, Henninghaus expressed ambivalence about the spiritual preparedness of the Chinese. Sharing Henninghaus's reservations, the rest of the SVD leadership did not embrace the Vatican's moves towards indigenization. To the consternation of the Vatican and to Costantini, the SVD continued to delay the ordination and elevation of Chinese Christians to prominent church positions. Now, however, the letter from the Chinese priests equipped Costantini and the *Propaganda Fide* with leverage that could embarrass the SVD leadership into action. The SVD finally relented and, within several years, ordained Thomas Tien as the order's first Chinese bishop in 1939. Tien later became the first Chinese Cardinal in 1946.

Figure 24: Cardinal Thomas Tien 田耕莘 Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



The story of the SVD's ordination of Tien illuminates the ambiguous, protracted path that the SVD took towards indigenization. Of course, the SVD was not the only missionary society resisted ordaining local, native clergy. R. G. Tiedemann writes that despite the attempt by the Holy See to reorient the attitudes of the Catholic missions,

² R. G. Tiedemann, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume 2, 1800 to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 571.

³ *Maximum ilud*, paragraph 16.

⁴ Hubert Krins, "Wie Kardinal Tien Bischof Wurde," *Verbum* 9 (1967), 348.

Eurocentrism pervaded the missionary field in China. In Tiedemann's narrative, a group of outspoken Catholic progressives—led by the Belgian Lazarist Vincent Lebbé—pushed the Vatican to adopt a more aggressive policy of indigenization, working tirelessly against the Eurocentric ideas that had dominated the mission sphere.⁵ Tiedemann characterizes the Catholic missionary landscape as being divided into two opposing camps: those who supported the Vatican program and a French faction who opposed indigenization because of fears of waning French influence in China.⁶

How did the SVD fit within this broader Catholic missionary landscape? The SVD could certainly be characterized as “late-adopters” of the Vatican line. But considering the SVD's own history, the SVD's insistence on holding the anti-indigenization line for so long seems surprising. Founded as an ultramontane society in the midst of Germany's *Kulturkampf*, one might have expected the SVD to have fully supported the Vatican's programs, especially after the dismantling of the German Empire in the First World War. Instead, it refused, until 1931, to support the Vatican's push for indigenization.

The SVD's reluctance to indigenize can be explained largely, as R. G. Tiedemann argues, by its distrust of the Chinese Christians that surrounded them.⁷ Like the BMS, the SVD's slow crawl towards indigenization was driven by a “hermeneutical suspicion” of the Chinese Christians around them. Eurocentrism undergirded this suspicion, but other factors also contributed as well, including the SVD's conservative theology and the persistent unrest that the SVD experienced in Northern China. Ever since the late nineteenth century, when the SVD first entered northern China, its mission field was prone to droughts, disaster, and banditry. A late-comer on the missionary scene, the SVD complained about the structural disadvantages of the region it had been assigned. In particular the missionaries lamented that their field did not possess a critical mass of “old-Christians”—Christian communities that had converted in the 17th and 18th centuries—enjoyed by other missionary societies, such as the Dominicans and Franciscans. As a result, the SVD adopted a suspicious attitude towards the Chinese priests and populace of Shandong, and concomitantly, a possessive assertion of control within its own territories.

But the organization *did* change; it ultimately *did* relinquish control of their mission. And when it finally adopted the Vatican's policies, it acted quickly. An investigation of the SVD's history illuminates how this conservative organization was able to change. While chapter 3 examined the changes in the SVD's discourse and conceptions, this chapter is devoted to examining the institutional changes that accompanied those discursive and intellectual shifts. This is the object of my chapter's study: I am as interested in the SVD's resistance to change as the change itself. The SVD, as an organization, emerged from the 1930s and 1940s a transformed society, due to pressure from both the Chinese Christians and the Vatican.

⁵ Tiedemann, *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 2*, 577.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 584.

⁷ See R.G. Tiedemann, “Indigenous Agency, Religious Protectorates, and Chinese Interests: The Expansion of Christianity in Nineteenth-Century China,” in *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914*, ed. Dana L. Robert (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2008).

Thus, local experience played a double role: the SVD experience with China both helped missionaries justify foot-dragging, but it also pushed them to adopt policies of indigenization. Investigating how the SVD came to adopt indigenization sheds light on the interaction between the global and the local. As Henrietta Harrison has argued in an article on missionary medicine, the story of Catholic medical missionary work and Chinese cults “is not the transmission of Western medicine to China but a process through which in both Europe and China the search for healing is shaped in processes that interact not only with local traditions but which also reach across the globe.”⁸ Similarly, the history of indigenization in China, while pursued and pushed forward by some Europeans, was also a dialogic process that required interaction between the global and local actors and processes. Chinese Catholics and German missionaries collectively helped shape the global Catholic Church. Indeed, the Vatican’s own global policies can be better understood when seen through the lens of local Christian communities in China.

Missionaries, Catechists, Virgins, and Priests

The SVD missionaries was late-comers to China. Their entry in 1882 belonged to an expansionary period of Catholic missionary organizations in China. By the middle of the nineteenth century, five Catholic missionary societies operated in China: the Spanish Dominicans, the Paris Foreign Mission Society (*Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris*, or M. E. P.), the Franciscans, the Lazarists, and the Jesuits.⁹ China’s Treaty of Tianjing of 1858 with France allowed for the unfettered expansion of Catholic missions throughout China, and Catholic missionary societies, including missionary nuns, jumped at the opportunity to expand in China.¹⁰ At first the expansion was gradual, as the mission field was divided

⁸ Henrietta Harrison, “Rethinking Missionaries and Medicine in China: The Miracles of Assunta Pallotta, 1905–2005,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 71, no. 01 (2012 Mar), 144.

⁹ Pasquale M. d’Elia, *The Catholic Missions in China: A Short Sketch of the History of the Catholic Church in China from the Earliest Records to Our Own Days* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1934), 56–57. The Spanish Dominicans worked in the southeastern province of Fujian. For an excellent history of the Dominican mission in Fujian, see Eugenio Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins, and Friars: Christianity as a Local Religion in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). The M. E. P. had the largest geographical range in China, but largely cornered the southwest, working in Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Guanxi, Guangdong, and later Manchuria and Tibet. For a history of the M. E. P., in a different context, see J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). The Franciscans worked in Shandong, Shanxi, Shenxi, Hubei, and Hunan. For a history of the Franciscan missionaries in Shandong, see David E. Mungello, *The Spirit and the Flesh in Shandong, 1650–1785* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001). The Lazarists, formally known as the Congregation of the Mission, entered China in 1784 after the suppression of the Jesuits, and worked in Hebei, Jiangxi, Henan, and Zhejiang. They are also known as the Vincentians. For a history of the Lazarists, see Joseph van den Brandt, *Les Lazaristes en Chine, 1697–1935: notes biographiques, recueillies et mises à jour* (Beijing: Imprimerie des Lazaristes, 1936). The Jesuits, the oldest mission in China, and also have the largest bibliography. They were centered primarily around Jiangsu, Anhui, and Hebei. In 1847 they re-established their missions in Shanghai. For the history of early Jesuit missions, see Liam M. Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). See also Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City: Matteo Ricci 1552–1610*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁰ The bibliography on Catholic women in China remains insufficient. For a work on the Maryknoll sisters, see Cindy Yik-yi Chu, *The Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong, 1921–1969: In Love with the Chinese* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Idem, *The Diaries of the Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong, 1921–1966* (New York:

among ten religious congregations. The SVD joined this wave of expansion late, entering China in 1882. After 1900, the number of missionaries entering China exploded.¹¹ By 1907, forty-four new Catholic missionary societies were working in China.¹² In 1900, 886 Catholic priests operated in China. By 1930, that number had almost tripled to 2068.¹³

The first two SVD missionaries sent to China were Johann Baptist von Anzer and Josef Freinademetz.¹⁴ In 1882, they attached themselves to Franciscans in the northern part of Shandong.¹⁵ The northern and northeastern part of Shandong had a history of Catholic missionary activity dating back to the late seventeenth-century, with the arrival of the Franciscans.¹⁶ The Franciscans made headway primarily in the northwest corner of the province, in rural areas centered around the city of Ji'nan (濟南) and Yantai (煙台, also known as Chefoo).¹⁷ The Franciscans had tried but failed to penetrate the southern and central region of Shandong with missionary presence.



Figure 25: Josef Freinademetz. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

¹¹ d'Elia, *The Catholic Missions in China*, 61.

¹² See the statistics in Bertram Wolfertan, *The Catholic Church in China from 1860 to 1907* (London: Sands & Company, 1909), 453.

¹³ d'Elia, *The Catholic Missions in China*, 62.

¹⁴ For a recent biography of the controversial Anzer, see Karl Josef Rivinius, *Im Spannungsfeld von Mission und Politik: Johann Baptist Anzer (1851-1903), Bischof von Süd-Shandong* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2010).

¹⁵ For the history of how the SVD was able to take control of the region and establish its own apostolic vicariate, see Idem, *Weltlicher Schutz und Mission: Das Deutsche Protektorat über die Katholische Mission von Süd-Shandong* (Köln: Böhlau, 1987).

¹⁶ Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 76.

¹⁷ See Mungello, *The Spirit and the Flesh*.

The difference between northern and southern Shandong was a function of both geography and economic development. Shandong had long been one of China's key agricultural regions; the Shandong plains were characterized, on the whole, by "flat land, cereal agriculture, dense population and impoverished villages."¹⁸ The flatness of the plains contributed to its impoverishment, as drainage became a recurring problem.¹⁹ Southern Shandong, in particular, depended on yearly rainfall, and was thus made vulnerable to natural disasters: floods when there was too much rain, drought when there was none.²⁰ The Shandong hills—the geographical boundary between north and south—further immiserated the southern Shandong population. With low crop yields, the hills turned southern Shandong, as Joseph Esherick writes, into a "true regional periphery."²¹ A different view of the region emerges, however, from Kenneth Pomeranz, who argues that southern and central Shandong were not always regional peripheries. Pomeranz writes that the area in central and southern Shandong, especially centered around the city of Jining, had previously been a bustling economic area, due to the trade routes created by the Grand Canal. It was only in the nineteenth century, when the coming of Western imperialism and the transition from a focus on inland trade routes to the coastal treaty-ports, that economic development in southern and central Shandong languished.²² Previous commercial activity dried up. As a result of this transformation of inland Shandong into a periphery, peasants "began to have trouble obtaining stone and wood, which were badly needed for flood control and fuel."²³ As a result of their poverty, the southwestern part of Shandong became prone to seasonal banditry.²⁴

The SVD missionaries were conscious of these contrasts between north and south. In his negotiations with the Franciscans, the SVD Superior General Arnold Janssen had sought to establish their missions in northern Shandong. In his letter to the Franciscan Vicar Apostolic in Jinan, Msgr. Eligio Cosi, Janssen wrote, "the Northern part would be the best. It has major cities and major transportation lines, with easy access to the Grand Canal, the Yellow River and the coasts. The faith in these areas is blooming. While the southern part has access to the same networks and lines, it is much farther from the coast, and only has one shoreline on the Yellow River."²⁵ Cosi, however, was unwilling to part with any major stations in the North and East, citing the amount of gold and labor the Franciscans had invested in the area.²⁶ The Franciscans ultimately agreed to hand over three populous prefectures with little Christian presence: Yanzhou, Caozhou, Yizhou, and Jining (see Map 5).

¹⁸ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 2.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., II.

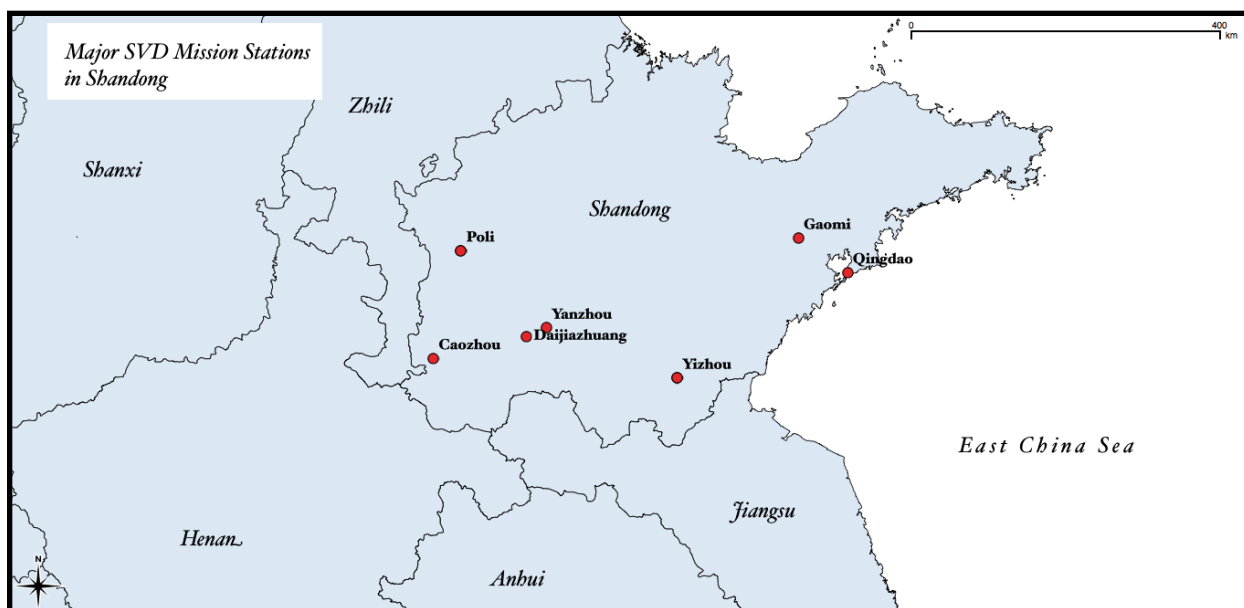
²² Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Making of a Hinterland: State, Society, and Economy in Inland North China, 1853-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

²³ Ibid., 3.

²⁴ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 22.

²⁵ Richard Hartwich, ed., *Steyler Missionare in China. I. Missionarische Erschliessung Südbantungs 1879-1903* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1983), 17.

²⁶ Ibid., 19.



Map 5: Major SVD Mission Stations in Shandong.

The SVD chose the village of Poli as the headquarters for its work. Located in Yanzhou prefecture, Poli had a Catholic population of about two hundred. Anzer, not a man for understatement, trumpeted his evangelistic intentions from the outset. Within three days of arriving in Poli in January of 1882, Anzer organized a two-week festival celebrating the Virgin Mary. The festival mobilized the remaining Christians and attracted the attention of the non-Christian villagers. While Anzer preached in stammering and poor Chinese, the local literati beseeched their fellow villagers to “ignore the European devil! He is only here to deceive us!”²⁷

The SVD backed Anzer’s proselytization with institutional support: within two years, the home board sent eight new European missionaries to central and southern Shandong. The missionaries built 104 new stations throughout the region and reported more than 1900 catechumens.²⁸ Within three years, the *Propaganda Fide* made Southern Shandong its own new apostolic vicariate, installing Anzer as its first Bishop. Their expansion was both fast and strategic. The SVD missionaries wanted to encircle major urban areas: Anzer had his eyes set on the densely populated urban centers of Caozhou, Yanzhou, Yizhou, and Jining. But the SVD’s appearances in urban areas inspired vehement resistance from local officials. Anzer’s attempt to target Yanzhou also ruffled feathers because the French—who were legally responsible for the entire Catholic missionary effort in China—had agreed to refrain from missionary activity in the area out of respect for the Confucian and Mencian temples in Qufu.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., 24.

²⁸ Ibid., 87.

²⁹ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 80.



Figure 26: Johann Baptist von Anzer. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The Treaty of Tianjing in 1858 had established the French Empire as the “protector of the missions” for Catholics in China. The French were thus responsible for overseeing the entire Catholic missionary enterprise. In order to travel inland, Italian, Spanish, German, and Belgian Catholic missionaries who wanted to proselytize in the Chinese interior were required to request the French legate in Beijing for travel passes. Anzer and Freinademetz applied for travel passports in 1882. The experience taught them a lesson: the French used their status as protectors to obstruct and delay the authorization of travel passes.³⁰ Thus, for the first several years of its missions, the SVD missionaries concentrated their energy on establishing a German religious protectorate in 1890. The process involved a protracted negotiation between SVD missionaries, the German Foreign Office, the German Minister in Beijing, and the Vatican’s *Propaganda Fide*. But although French caution did not deter the SVD, whose missionaries looked on the French and their arrangements as impediments to the speed of their own expansion.³¹ Anzer himself felt ambivalent about the goal of diminishing French influence in China, as it excluded Chinese Christians from legal protection.³²

Other missionaries took notice of the SVD’s brash and confrontational missionary methods. Less than a year after it had established its mission in Shandong, Arnold Janssen received a letter from the *Propaganda Fide*, reprimanding the SVD for its aggressive proselytizing. The *Propaganda* presented a list of complaints, including charges that the SVD was over-eager to baptize Catholics, created new stations too quickly, and intervened too aggressively in local legal affairs.³³ Anzer defended himself against the *Propaganda Fide*’s accusations by claiming that his behavior was not aggressive, and that he merely followed the precedent that the French established in China.³⁴ Ever since the mid-1860s, French

³⁰ Hartwich, *Steyle Missionare in China*. I, 25.

³¹ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 80.

³² For a detailed history of this process, see Rivinius, *Weltlicher Schutz und Mission*. See also Idem, *Im Spannungsfeld von Mission und Politik*.

³³ Hartwich, *Steyle Missionare in China*. I, 67-68.

³⁴ Ibid.

Catholics had gained major concessions from the unequal treaties that allowed Catholic missionaries to intervene in local disputes.³⁵ Besides subverting Chinese legal systems, the missionaries had also tried to transform local religious and traditional practice.³⁶ The Chinese government agency dealing with foreign affairs, the *Zongli Yamen*, had protested. As a result of the protests, the French Minister Plenipotentiary, Jules François-Gustave-Berthemy, attempted to control the missionaries. But French missionary aggression continued, and Anzer saw himself as merely following the example that the French had set.³⁷

Anzer's attitude sparked a violent backlash. From the beginning of its missionary work in Shandong, the SVD missionaries confronted resistance from anti-missionary and xenophobic forces. They reported that secret societies hoped to drive out the foreign imperialists.³⁸ In May of 1883, Anzer himself was robbed and almost beaten to death by an angry mob.³⁹ Their missionary property was constantly subject to bandit raids.⁴⁰

More troubling to the missionaries was the danger threatening their Chinese catechumens. The second half of the nineteenth century was characterized by rising anti-Christian movements. Anzer reported that the "anger against Christians knows no bounds. Our catechumens are constantly ridiculed and slandered, threatened with eviction from their homes, their homes are damaged, their religious books torn apart, and their bodies bloodied."⁴¹ Much of the anti-Christian sentiment was due to the proliferation of "missionary cases," (*jiao'an*) and the discontent that local literati felt towards missionary intervention in the local legal system.⁴² Not all of the anti-Christian violence that followed was motivated purely by xenophobia. As Alan Richard Sweeten has argued, the harassment that Christians experienced also reflected age-old feuds, a convenient opportunity for locals to settle old scores.⁴³

Whether or not the hostility and the violence that sometimes accompanied it was from genuinely religious sentiments, Anzer was most enraged by the Chinese literati endorsement of anti-Christian violence.⁴⁴ Anzer excoriated a local Confucian literati in

³⁵ The classic works on the *jiao'an*, and how these interventions fomented xenophobic violence are Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963) and Lü Shiqiang 呂實強, *Zhongguo guansheng fanjiao de yuan ying (1860-1874)* 中國官紳反教的原因 (一八六〇-一八七四) [The Chinese Literati and Anti-Christianity, 1860-1874] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1973). A slight revision is found in Alan R. Sweeten, *Christianity in Rural China: Conflict and Accommodation in Jiangxi Province, 1860-1900* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2001).

³⁶ For the case in Shanxi, and how missionaries tried to eliminate and bypass the traditional opera tax, see Roger R. Thompson, "Twilight of the Gods in the Chinese Countryside: Christians, Confucians, and the Modernizing State, 1861-1911," in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Bays (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

³⁷ Tiedemann, *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 2*, 300-301.

³⁸ Hartwich, *Steyle Missionare in China. I*, 41-42.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴⁰ Missionary accounts of church vandalism can be found *Ibid.*, 71-74.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴² See Cohen, *China and Christianity*.

⁴³ See Sweeten, *Christianity in Rural China*.

⁴⁴ Hartwich, *Steyle Missionare in China. I*, 45.

Caozhou, for example, who published a list of edicts forbidding the Chinese to convert to Catholicism, and further to have any interaction with foreigners at all.⁴⁵ But it was in the areas where mob violence was most endemic that the Catholic missionaries were most successful. Catholic missionaries, R. G. Tiedemann has written, provided “effective protection” for converts who were harassed by bandits; “conversion to Christianity was an attractive survival strategy for a significant minority in violently competitive environments.”⁴⁶

Anzer and the SVD missionaries also felt threatened by Protestant missionaries. They had good reason to worry: starting in the mid-1860s, Protestants flooded into Shandong and the north China mission field, among them Southern Baptists, Episcopalians, English Baptists, French Protestants, American Presbyterians, and Scottish United Presbyterians.⁴⁷ Anzer kept close tabs on the expansion of Protestant missionary work, and expressed wariness and even hatred towards his Protestant competitors. He reported that he had encountered Chinese Protestant converts “who were truly convinced in their Protestantism. With all my heart I wanted to save their souls.”⁴⁸ But after some time with them, “all 20-30 of them now want to become Catholic, ever since we have plowed the field.”⁴⁹

Pressured by Chinese resistance to Christianity, as well as by their Protestant competitors, a sense of beleaguerment pervaded the SVD missionary reports. They responded to these threats by expanding their efforts to dismantle what they saw as the “bulwark of the devil.” Rapid expansion, SVD missionaries knew, hinged upon indigenous Chinese clergy and lay Chinese; without them, the mission society simply lacked the personnel to carry out their daily tasks, much less to stimulate further growth. While the SVD was bold in its confrontation with Chinese authorities, it was cautious in its approach to ordaining Chinese clergy. The SVD leadership knew that training priests, in China as in Europe, required significant investment of both time and resources.

They also faced another problem. The SVD trusted only so-called “old Christians” (*Alt-Christen*) to carry out the responsibility of lay leadership. Who, exactly, were these old Christians? Anzer pined for? As Tiedemann has shown, these “old Christians” were lay leaders whose Catholic forebears had been converted in the 17th and 18th century.⁵⁰ The primary duty of lay leaders was to serve as catechists, or teachers of the faith. Yet, the bulk of their mission field was inhabited by “New Christians”; the only “old Christian” presence under their authority were a paltry two hundred Christians in Yanzhou.⁵¹ In an 1887 letter to Cardinal Paul Melchers of Cologne, Anzer lamented, “Oh, if only we had a piece of Northern Shandong, with some of its old Christian parishes, then our mission work would truly bloom.”⁵² Anzer continued, “We need good catechists and good Chinese priests. Only

⁴⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁴⁶ Tiedemann, *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 2*, 308.

⁴⁷ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 77.

⁴⁸ Hartwich, *Steyle Missionare in China. I*, 46.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ See Tiedemann, “Indigenous Agency, Religious Protectorates, and Chinese Interests.”

⁵¹ Stories of such new Christians abounded in missionary reports. See, for example, Hartwich, *Steyle Missionare in China. I*, 39.

⁵² Anzer, cited in Johannes Bettray, “Arnold Janssen und der chinesische Klerus,” *Verbum* 2 (1960), 98.

good, traditional Catholic families can produce either. But I have absolutely no good old Catholics here in my parishes.”⁵³

Anzer appealed to the Franciscans for assistance, who responded by sending two catechists to help. But Anzer and the SVD complained about the “quality” of these Chinese catechists.⁵⁴ Even the Franciscan provincial De Marchi admitted to Msgr. Cosi that “poor Anzer” had gotten the short end of the deal: these catechists, De Marchi explained, were misfits and rejects from the Franciscan and Jesuit orders. The two catechists had unsavory pasts. One had been suspended, the other had been in training for ten years but was then deemed theologically incompetent and expelled from the order.⁵⁵ Due to these reservations, the missionaries employed few catechists: by the end of 1885, they had 32, who oversaw over 3000 catechumens.

The Catholic missionary enterprise had had a structural problem ever since Matteo Ricci and the first Jesuits sailed to China: China was a vast country, with an enormous population. The missionaries knew that they would never have enough European missionaries to meet the demand. Even though they had trained and ordained Chinese priests as early as 1659, the process of ordination was a long arduous task. After the Rites Controversy and the expulsion of the Catholic missions from China in 1724, the situation became even more dire for Chinese priests, as the Western Church no longer had the resources nor ability to train and ordain more.⁵⁶ The expulsion of Chinese priests from the field thus resulted in a complete disruption of Catholic life: many Chinese Catholics “often went for years without an opportunity for confession or instruction.”⁵⁷

Into this priestly vacuum went Chinese lay leaders, who now became the lynchpin of the Church’s life in China, often performing many of the duties of the priest in the priest’s absence. Even though lay leaders could not administer the sacraments—weddings, masses, hearing confessions, last rites—they nonetheless took charge of religious education and conducted worship services, and generally assumed responsibility for the religious life of the community.⁵⁸ In general, three types of lay leaders existed: catechists, congregational leaders, and Chinese “Virgins”—an order of native Catholic women who took a vow of celibacy and dedicated their lives to the Church and mission work.⁵⁹ By the early part of the nineteenth-century, these “old Christian” lay leaders had essentially lived out their faith independent of the European hierarchy. Thus, when Catholic missionary societies such as the SVD re-entered China with a revitalized fervor in the nineteenth-century, they faced the problem of reintegrating the old-Christian communities into the hierarchical structures

⁵³ Anzer, cited in *Ibid.*, 99.

⁵⁴ Hartwich, *Steyle Missionare in China. I*, 52.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Footnote 5.

⁵⁶ Tiedemann, “Indigenous Agency, Religious Protectorates, and Chinese Interests,” 209.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁵⁹ For more on the Chinese Virgins Robert Entenmann, “Christian Virgins in Eighteenth-Century Sichuan,” in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). For a history of Chinese female chastity, see Janet M. Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters: The Politics of Chastity in Eighteenth-century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

of the Church. Many of the local lay leaders, understandably, wanted to retain their autonomy.⁶⁰

After the Taiping Rebellions, the *Propaganda Fide* in particular sought to tighten its control over these previously autonomous units.⁶¹ The SVD followed the *Propaganda Fide's* lead and attempted to formalize the place of the Chinese catechists in the missionary society. The missionaries knew that they either needed to train new catechists, or enforce stricter standards among catechists that they already employed. In 1886, Freinademetz published a series of "Guidelines for Catechists" (傳教要規) in Chinese.⁶² The "Guidelines" were republished multiple times, with a new edition appearing in 1930.⁶³ As Tiedemann has shown, the SVD published the "Guidelines" to follow the *Propaganda Fide's* call to make missionary societies in China more uniform and formally subordinate indigenous catechists to the Western missionaries.⁶⁴

The opening lines of the "Guidelines" reveal the SVD's preoccupations. Like the BMS, the SVD missionaries feared "rice Christians." Freinademetz quoted from Mark 8:36, asking the catechists, "what good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"⁶⁵ It was "a thousand times more important," Freinademetz wrote, "to save souls rather than the corporal body."⁶⁶ Freinademetz thus exhorted the Chinese not to focus on their worldly, "base" desires. The Europeans, Freinademetz promised, would serve as "Shepherds" to lead and save the lost Chinese. However, Europeans could not "purify" all of China; the "Guidelines" asked for more indigenous helpers to "courageously cooperate" with the Europeans to convert the Chinese.

Like the BMS, the SVD categorized catechists by their labor and their education. They divided catechists into two major categories: those who taught the faith (*Glaubenslehrer*) and those who led prayers (*Gebetslehrer*). They were worked according to different schedules: the *Glaubenslehrer* were employed year-round, while the *Gebetslehrer* worked only during the winter.⁶⁷ They also had different qualifications. The *Glaubenslehrer* had to pass a test administered by a Bishop or Dean, while a *Gebetslehrer* could be questioned and tested by a priest. The "Guidelines" indicated the pay of the catechists, who could earn a raise after ten years of "faithful service without any blemishes."⁶⁸

The "Guidelines" recognized the difficulties that converts faced when dealing with a hostile population. The SVD wanted to prevent escalating tensions with non-Christian Chinese. Freinademetz exhorted the catechists to "not immediately assume the side of the

⁶⁰. Tiedemann, "Indigenous Agency, Religious Protectorates, and Chinese Interests," 215.

⁶¹. Ibid., 218.

⁶². Ibid., 219. For a translation of the "Guidelines," see Fritz Bornemann, ed., *Der selige P. J. Freinademetz 1852-1908. Ein Steyler China-Missionar. Ein Lebensbild nach zeitgenössischen Quellen.* (Bozen: Freinademetz Haus, 1977), 1077-1093.

⁶³. Ibid., 1077.

⁶⁴. Tiedemann, "Indigenous Agency, Religious Protectorates, and Chinese Interests," 218.

⁶⁵. Bornemann, *Der selige P. J. Freinademetz*, 1077.

⁶⁶. Ibid.

⁶⁷. Ibid., 1079.

⁶⁸. Ibid., 1084.

Christian” in conflicts between Christians and non-Christians. Instead, the Catechist should gather all the different facts of the case and then report to the priest or Bishop.⁶⁹ Freinademetz reminded the catechists that when they evangelized they needed to be “friendly,” “patient,” and not to “make light of superstitious belief.”⁷⁰ Yet he also wanted the catechists to object firmly to the “superstitious practices” (*abergläubischen Praktiken*) of the new converts.⁷¹ The “Guidelines” further cautioned the Chinese to avoid preaching arcane doctrine: catechists should begin teaching “the more ordinary and surface-level teachings of the faith, such as there is only one God, the soul exists, there are rewards and punishments after death, or about the ten commandments. You must not begin your preaching with the mysteries of the faith (*Glaubensgeheimnissen*), unless you intend to cause doubt.”⁷² The missionaries acknowledged that the intricacies of the faith caused doubt and suspicion, and they suggested caution when disclosing more complicated Catholic doctrine.

The guidelines paint a portrait of the intimacy between catechists and new converts. The catechists brought new Christians to church, taught the new Christians how to pray, explained the rules of the Church, and clarified doctrine. Catechist cared for every major milestone in the convert’s life, from teaching children the basics of the faith to performing emergency baptisms for the dying.⁷³ The catechists were thus intimately involved with the most private and personal moments of the lives of the new converts. The Western missionaries thus sought to create boundaries between catechist and convert. The “Guidelines” warned catechists against “visiting the houses of Christians” without legitimate reason. The rules also explicitly regulated sexual desire. The catechist was not allowed to “sleep in the same room as young people, nor was he allowed to sleep without clothes on.”⁷⁴ The Guidelines forbade males from “speaking to young women without reason,” and “women are not allowed to enter your chambers.”⁷⁵

Like other missionary societies, the SVD relied on an Institute of Chinese Virgins to help them evangelize. As Tiedemann has noted, the SVD employed around 4000 female lay workers by 1906, most of whom worked in the most impoverished areas of China.⁷⁶ In 1904, Freinademetz published “Guidelines for Chinese Virgins,” which also provided a series of rules for the young Chinese Virgins.⁷⁷

For catechists and the Chinese Virgins alike, the SVD missionaries stressed bodily self-discipline. The missionaries restricted both the clothing and the diet of the Chinese workers. The male catechist was prohibited from “wearing flashy clothes. Instead, he should wear simple, yet clean clothes. His diet should be frugal, not opulent nor extravagant. He

⁶⁹ Ibid., 1082.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1080.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 1081.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1084.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Tiedemann, “Indigenous Agency, Religious Protectorates, and Chinese Interests,” 219.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 219-220. The texts of the rules and regulations for the Chinese virgins are translated in Bornemann, *Der selige P. J. Freinademetz*, 1094-1106.

should only drink spirits in moderation.”⁷⁸ The rules also prescribed the way that catechists should behave in the presence of European missionaries. “If a catechist goes to a priest, he should wear long clothes. If he speaks with the priest, he should never be loud or angry.”⁷⁹ The rules were more restrictive for women: the women evangelists should only wear “demure” colors, either “navy blue or black, and never clothes made of silk, satin, or batiste.”⁸⁰ The regulations continued: “From head to toe, she should dress respectably and modestly. In Church she should conceal her face with a veil.”⁸¹ Chinese men and women ought to both “practice virtue” through constant prayer and purification.

While the rules were restrictive, they were also meant to protect the Chinese lay leaders from possible harassment or abuse. Women evangelists, for example, were required to bring a companion with them when they visited priests. The rules also stipulated that the women were only permitted to meet with priests at church.⁸² Women younger than the age of thirty were required to work in a group. In a society that observed a strict separation of the sexes, the “Guidelines” followed suit: they did not subvert dominant social conventions.⁸³ In certain instances, the rules emancipated the women from their social roles. The missionaries empowered the Chinese Virgins to perform emergency baptisms in the case of serious illness, and allowed the Chinese Virgins to teach and preach the faith in the same capacities as the male catechists.⁸⁴

The SVD also began a process of ordaining and training more Chinese priests. The speed by which they established educational institutions to train Catholic priests was impressive: within less than two years of their arrival in southern Shandong, in 1890, the SVD missionaries established in Poli a minor seminary, which accepted boys over the ages of ten years-old.⁸⁵ By 1893 the SVD established a major seminary in Jining (濟寧), where they sent advanced, older students for further training in philosophy and theology.

The seminary curriculum was based on a classical Western model of theological indoctrination.⁸⁶ The Chinese students learned Latin: all classes were conducted in Latin, and correspondence between students and the superiors in Europe was written exclusively in Latin.⁸⁷ Like the European missionaries, catechists in seminary had a regulated schedule.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1084.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1083.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1099.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Gail Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Idem, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China's Collective Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

⁸⁴ Bornemann, *Der selige P. J. Freinademetz*, 1100.

⁸⁵ Klaus Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand in der “Musterkolonie” Kiautschou: Interaktionen zwischen China und Deutschland 1897-1914* (München: Oldenbourg, 2000), 346-347.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 346.

⁸⁷ Clifford King, *I Remember: Memoirs of Clifford J. King, S. V. D.* (Techny, Illinois: Divine Word Publications, 1968), 71. Clifford King writes about his initial experience in seminary, realizing that his Latin was not up to par with his fellow Chinese students. He remarked, “Later I found out that the habit of our Chinese fellow seminarians was to commit to memory practically every important part of the Latin texts as found in their textbooks — no mean achievement.”

They arose daily at 4:30 in the morning, and headed to morning Mass. After Mass, they recited prayers from the *Moxiang Baojian* (默想寶鑑, literally, *The Treasury of Meditation*) a translated compendium of contemplative prayers.⁸⁸ Breakfast began at 7 AM. Studies began after breakfast and went until noon, with a short break. More hours of study followed lunch and communal prayer, until dinner at seven PM. At the latest, the students slept at 9 PM. They ate simply. One SVD missionary reported,

The students carry out their meals, which are not contained in individual bowls, but in a large pot. The main course is normally unsalted rice porridge. Salted vegetables and sorghum bread is also served. Meat is only served five times a year: at Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Assumption, and Chinese New Year.⁸⁹

Despite missionary complaints about the tribulations they suffered in the southern Shandong region, the work expanded nonetheless. Within seven years of starting its missionary work, the SVD had ordained its first Chinese priests. On the 7th of December, 1889, the SVD ordained Josef Wen-lin Xia and Matthias Yung-yung Chao in Poli.⁹⁰ Conscious of criticism that they were ordaining priests too early, they noted that Xia and Chao hailed from the Franciscan “old Christian parishes” (*Altchristengemeinde*) in northern Shandong.⁹¹ Both Xia and Chao had received training in other seminaries before entering the SVD’s seminary in Poli. Chao had been educated by the Spanish Augustinians, who had tried to establish a missionary foothold in Southern Shandong earlier. Xia, on the other hand, had previously entered a Franciscan seminary, but had to leave the seminary for health reasons.⁹² Xia entered the SVD minor seminary as a catechist and soon became a trusted assistant to Josef Freinademetz. As a seminarian, Xia became Josef Freinademetz’s personal secretary, helping Freinademetz to translate and edit his sermons.⁹³ In 1892, Anzer ordained the SVD’s third Chinese priest, Peter Hou Bei-lu.⁹⁴ By 1900, the SVD had ordained eleven Chinese priests in the missions, working alongside forty three European missionaries.⁹⁵

Following the Boxer Uprising, the mission became more established. The SVD was now willing to ordain “new Christians” who lacked an older Catholic family background. In 1906, for example, the SVD ordained Petrus Chang (張志一), a twenty-six year old son of non-Catholic farmers. Chang had grown up in a poverty. Abandoned as an infant, Chang had been adopted by the SVD’s orphanage. Thoroughly a product of the SVD’s system of

⁸⁸ See *Mo xiang bao jian* 默想寶鑑 [*Treasures of Silent Prayer*] (Beijing: Jiao shi tang, 1894). I was able to locate a copy of the six-volume *Moxiang Baojian* in the Theological Library of Fu Jen Catholic University, Taipei. Its call number is TB 530R 6438

⁸⁹ Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China. I*, 403.

⁹⁰ Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand*, 347; Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China. I*, 158.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Bornemann, *Der selige P. J. Freinademetz*, 200; Bettray, “Arnold Janssen und der chinesische Klerus,” 99.

⁹⁴ Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China. I*, 218.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 400-401.

youth education, Chang was lauded by the SVD priests overseeing his education for his perseverance. The missionaries praised Chang for overcoming not only financial and social obstacles, but also transcended “who knows how many generations of old pagan blood.”⁹⁶ Chang remained an outlier. For the most part, the SVD missionaries discriminated against “new” converts, expressing doubts that the freshly converted could tackle the challenges of priesthood.

But even the old-Christians were not exempt from missionary skepticism. In 1905, for example, Josef Freinademetz traveled to Shanxian, to inspect some of the parishes that he had helped to establish in 1890. He commented on the “immense ignorance” of the Chinese Christians, who did not know “who the crucified was, why we wanted to baptize, and what the purpose of confession was.”⁹⁷ He had “many grievances” even against the old-Christians, who continued to engage in “superstition.”⁹⁸ These complaints about Chinese superstitions, as well as their ignorance of basic Catholic doctrine, persisted well into the first decade of the twentieth century.

As a result of these suspicions, the SVD refused to admit Chinese priests as full-fledged members into the mission society.⁹⁹ Even within the first decade of entering China, the SVD debated whether the Chinese that the SVD had ordained as secular priests should be allowed in as brothers. This question first arose when Josef Xia, a Chinese priest who worked as Josef Freinademetz’s personal secretary, requested entrance into the Order. For Xia, becoming a full-fledged member of the Order would provide him a stable income and a sedentary lifestyle. Xia had tired of the peripatetic nature of missionary work. Freinademetz wrote that Xia “really dislikes moving outside in the mission, and would rather work in a residence for Catechumens and students.”¹⁰⁰ Freinademetz first broached the question of admitting Xia to the brotherhood with Bishop Anzer in 1894. After several letter exchanges with the SVD’s Superior General Arnold Janssen, Janssen denied the request, responding that “the time for admitting Chinese into the mission society is not yet ripe.”¹⁰¹

In 1904, immediately after Anzer’s death, Freinademetz again brought up the issue to Janssen. Xia had hoped to be admitted into the society when Anzer was still alive, and Freinademetz thought that Anzer’s death would be a good opportunity to push the issue again, as a way of honoring the dead bishop’s memory. Freinademetz wrote that he could “guarantee that Xia was a pure and upstanding priest.”¹⁰² Janssen once again denied the request, repeating his belief that the mission society was not yet ready to establish a novitiate for Chinese priests. Janssen was not alone in his opinions. Most of the missionaries in the field recoiled at the thought of admitting Chinese priests in the order. Freinademetz himself lamented, “overall, our men are completely unenthusiastic about the

⁹⁶ Richard Hartwich, ed., *Steyle Missionare in China. II. Bischof A. Henninghaus ruft Steyle Schwestern, 1904 - 1910*. (Nettetal: Steyle Verlag, 1985), 171-173.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 75.

⁹⁹ Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand*, 347; Richard Hartwich, ed., *P. Arnold Janssen und P. Josef Freinademetz, Briefwechsel 1904-1907: Korrespondenz zwischen zwei Seligen* (St. Augustin: Steyle, 1978), 43-44, 70-71.

¹⁰⁰ Bornemann, *Der selige P. J. Freinademetz*, 438.

¹⁰¹ Bettray, “Arnold Janssen und der chinesische Klerus,” 99.

¹⁰² Bornemann, *Der selige P. J. Freinademetz*, 438.

Chinese priests joining the order. Even if relationships with the Chinese improved, I cannot see much of a working relationship. Based on the current situation, there is not much that we can do.”¹⁰³ Receiving news of this second rejection, Xia decided to leave the SVD and joined the Trappists in Beijing.¹⁰⁴ Upon his departure, Freinademetz remarked, “I very much regret losing this Father from our service.”¹⁰⁵

On into the 1920s, then, the SVD refused to allow Chinese priests to join the mission society, and they continued to relegate Chinese priests in Southern Shandong to assistant positions, rarely allowing Chinese priests to man their own mission stations. In annual lists of the positions and hierarchical standings of the various dioceses, Chinese priests continued to be called “assistants.”¹⁰⁶ The SVD justified this relegation of the Chinese priests to assistant positions by pointing to the infancy of the mission society, its lack of resources in the missions, and the absence of “mature” Christians to whom the SVD missionaries could entrust their work. This “hermeneutical suspicion” towards the Chinese Christian was fueled by the difficult terrain and landscape of northern China, as well as the lack of previous missionary work in the area. Yet, not all missionaries shared the mistrust of the Chinese: a diversity of opinion existed within the mission society about whether the Chinese priests were “ready” to take on more responsibilities. Some, like Freinademetz, argued for Chinese inclusion into the Order and more rapid indigenization. But the dominant consensus within the society concluded that Chinese priests were not prepared to take on the larger responsibilities of the mission.

The Vatican Emerges

As we saw in chapter 3, the First World War led to a major shift in the SVD’s institutional make-up. The missionary leadership realized that it needed to become more international to survive. The war also caused a tectonic shift within the whole landscape of Catholic missions. After the First World War, the Vatican began to assert its own ideas and its authority in the China missions field, as well as missions worldwide.

The Vatican’s attempt to assert itself emerged out of a longer dispute with the French over the status of the Catholic protectorate in China. The Vatican had hoped, as early as the 1860s, to become the protector of all Catholics in China. But the plans never materialized, largely due to the Vatican’s fears of creating tension with France and the subsequent Tianjing Treaties that enshrined France as the protector of Catholic missions in China.¹⁰⁷ The Vatican mounted another attempt to establish official relations with China after the Sino-French war in 1884. A growing number of voices in Europe saw the French Empire’s aggressive imperialism as compromising missionary efforts.¹⁰⁸ These critics charged that missionary work was spiritual, not political, and non-French missionaries wanted a

¹⁰³ See *Ibid.*, 727., footnote 79.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 438.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China. II*, 36-37.

¹⁰⁷ See Chen Fangzhong and Jiang Guoxiong, eds., *Zhongfan waijiao guanxi shi* 中梵外交關史 [The History of Sino-Vatican Relations] (Taibei Shi: Taiwan shang wu yin shu guan gu fen you xian gong si, 2003), 93-94.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

politically “neutral” and militarily neutered entity such as the Vatican to supplant the French.

Qing officials such as Li Hongzhang welcomed the establishment of direct diplomatic relations with the Holy See, viewing it as an opportunity to overturn the unequal treaties with France. Secret negotiations, facilitated and aided by the British, were carried out between the Chinese and the Vatican in 1886. Upon hearing of these intentions, the French Third Republic officials threatened to remove its ambassador to the Vatican, annul the treaties signed between France and the Vatican, and cut funding to French churches.¹⁰⁹ The Vatican decided to put its plans to establish foreign relations with China on hold.¹¹⁰

With the coming of anti-clericals to power, French-Vatican diplomatic relations further worsened in the early 20th century. Official French-Vatican diplomatic relations ruptured in 1904. The 1905 French law of the separation of Church and State, which ended state subsidies of Catholic Churches and expelled the religious orders, exacerbated tensions. Qing diplomats monitored the escalating situation closely, hoping that they would be able to leverage a position and earn formal diplomatic relations, but Qing attempts to establish negotiations failed.¹¹¹ In 1914, Benedict XV appointed Pietro Gasparri as Cardinal Secretary of State. An expert in canon law, Gasparri had advocated the end of the French Protectorate, and engaged in several attempts to establish diplomatic relations with the newly formed Chinese government. In 1918, the Vatican and China had seemed to reach a diplomatic agreement. Once again the French intervened, this time with a journalistic campaign accusing the Pope of favoring the Germans. The Chinese government, an ally of France in the war, was faced with a public relations crisis and thus ended negotiations with the Vatican.¹¹²

A groundswell against the French Protectorate grew among missionaries in China. In particular, two Lazarist missionaries, Antoine Cotta and Vincent Lebbé, saw the French Protectorate as the primary reason that the Chinese equated missionary work with imperialism. Cotta, born in Cairo, had served in Madagascar before transferring to China. Along with Lebbé, a Belgian Lazarist working in Tianjin, the two were based in the Vicariate Apostolic of Maritime Zhili.¹¹³ The platform for Lebbé’s critique was the *Yishibao*, the first Catholic daily newspaper that Lebbé himself had started in Tianjin in 1912. In a series of articles in the *Yishibao*, Lebbé called for a reduction in the French colonial state’s influence in the Church in China. The flashpoint for his critique of French imperialism came in October 1916, when riots ensued after the French annexed the Chinese quarter of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 98-99.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 99.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 100.

¹¹² Ibid., 105-106.

¹¹³ Tiedemann, *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 2*, 577. For more on the fascinating Lebbé, see the work of the Belgian scholar Claude Soetens. See Claude Soetens, *Inventaire des archives Vincent Lebbe* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Publications de la Faculté de théologie, 1982); Idem, *Recueil des archives Vincent Lebbe. 1. La Visite apostolique des missions de Chine: 1919-20* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Publications de la Faculté de théologie, 1982); Idem, *Recueil des archives Vincent Lebbe. 2. Un Nonciature à Pékin en 1918?* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Publications de la Faculté de théologie, 1983); Idem, *Recueil des archives Vincent Lebbe. 3. L'Encyclique Maximum ilud* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Publications de la Faculté de théologie, 1983).

Laoxikai in Tianjin.¹¹⁴ For Lebbé and Cotta, the riots were further proof that the French Protectorate cast an unshakeable shadow over the missionary enterprise in China. As long as the French Protectorate existed, Catholicism would always be associated with Western aggression and imperialism.

In order to disassociate itself from imperialism, Lebbé and Cotta argued, the Catholic Church needed to put the Chinese Catholics and Chinese priests on an equal footing with Western missionaries. The Chinese, they argued, had been treated as second-class for too long.¹¹⁵ They argued that the development of an indigenous clergy had a two-pronged benefit for the Holy See: not only would indigenization curtail the imperialist influence of anti-clerical France in China, it also would stem the criticisms of Chinese nationalists, who continued to claim that Christianity was a foreign religion.

Lebbé and Cotta's vocal critique of missionary arrogance and call for a more proactive education of Chinese priests influenced Benedict XV's landmark 1919 mission encyclical, *Maximum ilud*.¹¹⁶ In the encyclical, Benedict laid out his vision for the future of worldwide Catholic missions, arguing that the missionary enterprise needed to disassociate itself from imperialist goals. "We have been deeply saddened," Benedict wrote, "by some recent accounts of missionary life, accounts that displayed more zeal for the profit of some particular nation than for the growth of the kingdom of God."¹¹⁷ The primary goal of the missionary's work, Benedict pronounced, was "the acquisition of citizens for a heavenly-fatherland, and not for an earthly one."¹¹⁸ But by far Benedict's most radical claim was that the native clergy should not be subordinate to European missionaries, but equal to them. Benedict wrote, "For the local clergy is not to be trained merely to perform the humbler duties of the ministry, acting as the assistants of foreign priests. On the contrary, they must take up God's work as equals, so that some day they will be able to enter upon the spiritual leadership of their people."¹¹⁹

The Vatican further signaled its commitment to speeding up the process of indigenization when it appointed six missionary bishops to produce a detailed report of the Catholic Church in China.¹²⁰ To coordinate communication between the bishops, the Vatican appointed Jean-Baptiste Marie Budes de Guébriant, then the Apostolic Vicar of Canton, to become Apostolic Vicar to the entire China missionary field. The Vatican further ordered Guébriant to inspect all missions throughout China.¹²¹ In his report on his meetings with all of the major missionaries throughout the field, de Guébriant agreed with

¹¹⁴ Tiedemann, *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 2*, 518.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 578.

¹¹⁶ For the most comprehensive history of the origins of the *Maximum Ilud* and its subsequent impact, see Andrzej Miotk, *Das Missionsverständnis im historischen Wandel am Beispiel der Enzyklika "Maximum illud"* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1999).

¹¹⁷ Benedict XV. *Maximum Ilud*, Apostolic Letter on the Propagation of the Faith Throughout the World, 30 November 1919, <http://www.svdcuria.org/public/mission/docs/encycl/mi-en.htm>, §20.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., §18.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., §15.

¹²⁰ Gerald H. Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1998), 268. Entry, de Guebriant, Jean Baptiste Budes.

¹²¹ For more on the tour of the Vicar Apostolic, see Soetens, *La Visite apostolique des missions de Chine: 1919-20*.

the direction set in *Maximum ilud*. He called for establishing more seminaries to train native clergy.¹²²

In 1922, Benedict XV died from a bout of pneumonia. His successor, Pius XI communicated his intention to pursue his predecessor's agenda set out in *Maximum Ilud*. Pius XI's initiatives were supported by the two most powerful individuals in the realm of missions, Cardinal Secretary of State Gasparri and the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide*, Willem Marinus van Rossum. Both Gasparri and van Rossum had been appointed by Benedict XV and had played major roles in the formation of the vision laid out in *Maximum ilud*. Within five months of being elected Pope, Pius XI, uncowed by threats and criticism from the French, appointed Celso Costantini as the first Apostolic Delegate to China. When Costantini arrived in China in November 1922, the Vatican realized its dream of establishing direct relations with China.¹²³

Influenced in his youth by Antonio Rosmini's attempt in the 18th century to reconcile faith and reason, Costantini belonged to the liberal wing of the Church. Much of his early career he devoted to exploring how to situate the Church in the modern world. He had a particular interest in the realm of art, and pursued this interest later in articles that explored the harmony between Chinese art and Catholic faith.¹²⁴ After an initial meeting with Pius XI, Gasparri, and Rossum, Costantini was thoroughly convinced of the Vatican and the *Propaganda's* vision for Catholic missions in China, and he pledged to strip the missionary enterprise in China of its imperialist interests. Central to his agenda was ordaining more native clergy in China.¹²⁵ By the time Costantini entered China, the leaders of the Vatican hierarchy in charge of the missionary effort in China were all devoted to the goal of elevating the status of indigenous clergy.

¹²². Tiedemann, *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 2*, 579.

¹²³. Ibid., 581.

¹²⁴. Claude Soetens, *Pour l'Eglise chinoise. 1919-20* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Publications de la Faculté de théologie, 1982), 106.

¹²⁵. Liu Guopeng 劉國鵬, *Ganghengyi yu Zhongguo tianzhujiao de ben di hua* 刚恒毅与中国天主教的本地化 [Celso Costantini and the Indigenization of Catholic Church in China] (Beijing: She hui ke xue wen xian chu ban she, 2011), 104.



Figure 27: Celso Costantini. Painting courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Within several months of his arrival in China, Costantini began executing the new emphasis on indigenization for the Chinese Church. He purposely built the Apostolic Delegate's Residence of the Apostolic Delegate with Chinese ornamentation. One writer described it as "a great and beautiful building, built in a pure, elegant Chinese style [. . .]. The whole Residence is richly adorned with rugs, Chinese paintings, elegant furniture and antique art, some with extremely high artistic value and interest."¹²⁶ In a series of articles published in various Catholic journals, Costantini drew on his background in art and architecture, arguing that Catholic missions in China needed to develop an indigenous artform that merged traditional Chinese artistic forms with European Catholic spirituality.¹²⁷ He also helped to form an entirely indigenous religious order, the *Discipuli Domini*.¹²⁸

Many of the foreign Catholic missionaries in China, however, resisted the Holy See's new stance. *Maximum ilud* "caused great consternation and even indignation" among bishops in China. The Encyclical polarized the mission field roughly into a "Lebbé faction" and a "French faction." Many French bishops interpreted the Vatican's actions as an attempt to undercut their spheres of influence.¹²⁹ But not all dissent was based on the grounds of

¹²⁶ Richard Hartwich, ed., *Steyler Missionare in China. V. Aus Kriegeruinen zu neuen Grenzen, 1920 - 1923*. (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1989), 285-286.

¹²⁷ For more on Costantini's interest in Chinese art, see Mary S. Lawton, "A Unique Style in China: Chinese Christian Painting in Beijing," *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995): 469-489. For Costantini's own writing on art, see Celso Costantini, *L'art chrétien dans les missions: manuel d'art pour les missionnaires*. (Paris: Desclée, de Brouwer, 1949).

¹²⁸ Josef Metzler, ed., *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria rerum: 350 anni a servizio delle missioni, 1622-1972 [350 Years in the Service of the Missions]* (Rom: Herder, 1971), 471.

¹²⁹ Tiedemann, *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 2*, 584.

international rivalry. One writer, R. P. Garelli, argued that reason the Church in China did not yet have a Chinese ecclesiastical hierarchy was because the political situation was still too unstable: anti-Christian violence threatened the everyday livelihood of the Chinese, leaving them unable to manage without foreign help.¹³⁰

The SVD in the New Landscape

Where did the SVD fall within this polarized Catholic landscape? At best, the SVD leadership felt ambivalent about the Vatican's new direction. The leadership in China joined the French faction in its criticism of the Belgian Lazarist, Vincent Lebbé. Even though the SVD's Bishop of Yanzhou, Augustin Henninghaus, corresponded intermittently with Lebbé during the war, he had criticized him and his newspaper in private correspondence with his fellow SVD supervisors. Henninghaus found Lebbé a polarizing figure. He lambasted Lebbé's *Yishibao* for "produc[ing] very little value for the Catholic endeavor in China."¹³¹

Despite their criticisms of Lebbé, however, the SVD missionaries nonetheless recognized that *Maximum ilud* signaled a new era. The missionary Georg Weig noted that they needed to grapple with the issue of indigenization. He wrote,

The problem of indigenous clergy is becoming ever more urgent. In our mission society as well, the ratios are shifting constantly in the favor of Chinese priests. The number Chinese aspirants has grown. But the aversion, and above all, the private resistance by European priests (even in our own society!), has intensified the conflicts between the two groups. The admission of Chinese into mission societies such as the Lazarists has so far not resulted in any rapprochement between the Chinese and European priests. We should not also hold any illusions as to how much change these reforms will bring. The Jesuits, for example, have few Aspirants in their seminary in Shanghai at the moment.¹³²

Still, the dramatic changes that the Vatican proposed required the SVD to take action. The SVD Superior General Wilhelm Gier visited the SVD's major missionary holdings to assess the state of the society's worldwide missionary work and evaluate whether they were prepared to fall in line with the Vatican's proposals. Gier wanted to collect data that could help him reassess the society's evangelization strategies. China was only one stop on his itinerary: his travels took him to the SVD's missionary stations in North America, the Philippines, Indonesia, New Guinea, China, and Japan. Gier arrived in Southern Shandong in August of 1922 and stayed until February of 1923.¹³³ The trip marked the first time that an SVD Superior General had ever visited China.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ R. P. Garelli, "Pourquoi la Chine n'a pas encore une hiérarchie ecclésiastique chinoise?" *Les Missions Catholiques* 58 (August 6 1926): 381.

¹³¹ Augustin Henninghaus to Wilhelm Gier, 25 February 1931, AG 606 / 1931-1939, 3290-3291.

¹³² Richard Hartwich, ed., *Steyler Missionare in China. VI. Auf den Wogen des Chinesischen Bürgerkrieges, 1924 - 1926*. (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1991), 14.

¹³³ For excerpts of Gier's reports, see Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China. V*, 176-218.

¹³⁴ For some pictures and detailed descriptions of Gier's trip, see Bruno Hagspiel, *Along the Mission Trail*.

During his visit, Gier marveled at number of missionary stations that the society had been able to erect in Southern Shandong within such a short period of time. He remarked, the network of mission stations throughout the whole region is so dense that it is possible to celebrate Mass throughout the region without even packing luggage. Every seven to ten hours, one can find another Bishop's residence or a Catholic community with churches or several rooms that provide overnight lodging.¹³⁵

The Superior General also praised the system of seminary education for Chinese candidates for the priesthood. The overall curriculum and quality of the education of the Chinese priests "was completely solid." He lamented that the Chinese candidates "studied no Greek," but explained that "Latin and classical Chinese was so difficult for our candidates," that they left them little time to study more languages.¹³⁶

In comparison to the thriving missionary infrastructure and institutions, Gier observed that the spiritual "maturity" of the Chinese Christians remained under-developed. In his report about the Chinese clergy that he encountered, Gier wrote,

certainly, the Chinese have their weaknesses. They care too little for maintaining the cleanliness of their Churches and surroundings; they devote their attention to money-making and transfer their earnings to their relatives; and they are prone to nationalist ideas and thus resist European paternalism and yearn for indigenous bishops (these desires are especially strong and terrible in Lazarist and Franciscan vicariates); and some show very little energy and missionary zeal. An older European Jesuit in Shanghai, Father Gaim, an intimate friend of Josef Freinademtz, told me that in his experience, the primary weakness of Chinese priests lay in the lack of development in the cardinal virtues, especially prudence and fortitude.¹³⁷

Gier added, "One cannot mistake the dislike and contempt of our Europeans brothers for the indigenous priests."¹³⁸

Yet these Chinese priests, Gier allowed, were not all bad. Though lacking in Cardinal virtues, they did possess "theological and moral virtues." In some cases, Gier remarked, they were "equal even to the best European priests."¹³⁹ Chinese priests exhibited many other positive qualities:

In any case, the positive attributes of the Chinese priests outweigh the negative: piety, docility, zeal in pastoral care for the faithful. They adhere to the vows of chastity much better than Filipino clergy; public misconduct and

Volume IV: In China (Techny, IL: Mission Press, S. V. D., 1927).

¹³⁵ Hartwich, *Stepler Missionare in China. V*, 197.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 198.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 208.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

scandals are certainly not more common than in the best dioceses in Germany.¹⁴⁰

Overall, Gier concluded that “the holy Church need not be ashamed of the clergy here in Southern Shandong. God willing that He develops all Christian nations as he has here; Southern Shandong shows how even an area rooted in a younger Christian generation and the weight of paganism can develop into a Christian region.”¹⁴¹ Gier left China feeling optimistic about its Catholic future; he was convinced that Chinese priests had the potential to develop spiritually.

Yet, in spite of Gier’s optimism, he and the SVD leadership continued to view the Chinese priests as unreliable new converts. The secular priests needed more time to mature spiritually before they were ready to take over and independently manage the region. To solve the problem of spiritual sophistication, Gier and Henninghaus discussed the possibility of establishing a novitiate in China. A novitiate, they believed, could serve as an intermediary stage, a stepping stone to prepare the Chinese clergy for managing the region on the own.

For Gier and the rest of the SVD leadership, the creation of an SVD novitiate in China would also demonstrate to the Vatican that the mission society was taking the demands of *Maximum ilud* seriously. A novitiate could prove to the hierarchy that the society was devoting more resources to training native clergy, preparing them to become members of the mission society. The SVD viewed the Chinese novitiate as only one solution to what Gier referred to as a global “race problem” (*Rassenproblem*).¹⁴² Gier argued that the missionary society needed to develop its own policies, taking into consideration a global, comparative framework. The SVD had already taken a step at solving the “race problem” when they founded a seminary to train African-American priests in St. Louis.¹⁴³ Gier’s travels through the Southeast Asia also provided him with comparative insights. The Chinese, he argued, were more prepared to enter a novitiate than the native clergy in the Philippines and in New Guinea.¹⁴⁴

At the same time, the novitiate would allow the SVD leadership to maintain its tight control over the education of the Chinese clergy. Gier wrote that the new institution would place the future Chinese clergy “under the surveillance and guidance of our fellow brothers.”¹⁴⁵ When time came for the SVD to cede responsibility to the local Chinese priests, those priests would be members of the SVD, ensuring the mission society a constant influence within the region. In February of 1924, the SVD established a novitiate for Chinese priests and admitted its first three Chinese members, Petrus Sun (Chin-sheng), Vitus Chang (Tsuo-huan) and Johannes B. Fu. The SVD decided to set up the novitiate

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., 211.

¹⁴³ Ibid. For more on the SVD’s mission to African-Americans, see Ernest Brandewie, *In the Light of the Word: Divine Word Missionaries of North America* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000). See also M. Anthony Scally, *Negro Catholic Writers, 1900-1943: A Bio-Bibliography* (Detroit: W. Romig, 1945).

¹⁴⁴ Hartwich, *Stepler Missionare in China*. V, 210.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 212.

house in Daijia Zhuang (戴家莊), because of the proximity of the novitiate to the major seminary, as well as better facilities for housing the novices.¹⁴⁶ The regional superior Schoppelrey reported that the desire of Chinese priests to enter the novitiate was high; he had already heard that other seminarians and Chinese priests wanted to enter the novitiate. Thomas Tien, “a good Chinese priest who was ordained by us in 1918, wishes very badly to enter the novitiate, but there is an obstacle to his entrance — his sister is afflicted with an incurable disease and is completely dependent upon him.”¹⁴⁷ Soon, the SVD founded another native novitiate in Brazil, admitting four novices and two lay brothers.¹⁴⁸

The new facilities included a small garden, which the novices were expected to tend. The novices were also required to clean their own rooms, wash the dishes and launder their clothes. The novices wore Chinese clothes and ate Chinese food, and the food was somewhat “better than what they will eat later at seminary.”¹⁴⁹ The missionaries designed the first year to introduce the novices to the rhythms and expectations of life in the order, and help ease them into the rigors and discipline of life in a missionary order. The Chinese novitiates received a “strict” and “traditional training,” focused on German and Latin. In a letter from the Superior General Gier to the master of the Novitiate, Theodor Schu, Gier ordered Schu to “conduct the education of the youth in a strict manner and provide rigorous training in the Holy Word, on the writings of the Church Fathers, as well as later writers that form our apostolic work. Our goal is to educate and produce well-trained evangelists.”¹⁵⁰

By the second year, the Chinese novices were expected to embark on a more strenuous and rigorous curriculum of theological training. The curriculum mirrored what novices in Europe and America received, but the missionary leaders allowed that they could slow the pace if the Chinese were unable to keep up with the courses. In addition to Latin and German, other required courses focused on Biblical exegeses, philosophy, Church history, and Mission history.¹⁵¹ The novices followed not only a fairly strict European model of education, but also a regimented daily schedule. Gier commented that the daily schedule “pleased him,” because it ensured that the novices would keep “always busy,” occupied with theological studies or improvement in their Chinese.¹⁵²

The novitiate allowed the Home Board to communicate differently with its Chinese Christians than it had previously. For the first time, Chinese Christians wrote letters directly to the home board. In October of 1925, two of the novices, Chang and Fu, wrote reports directly to the Superior General. Their reports included personal details, such as the tribulations encountered by their families. Chang’s family, for instance, had to flee from floods in their village from the Yellow River.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China*. VI, 42.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 44.

¹⁴⁸ “Zwei neue Noviziat unserer Gesellschaft,” *Steyler Missionsbote* 53, no. 9 (1925): 139.

¹⁴⁹ Idem, *Steyler Missionare in China*. VI, 42-43.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 219.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 218-219.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 220-221.

Another question that the regional superior and the missionaries discussed was whether the most gifted Chinese should be sent to Rome to continue their studies—which was the pinnacle for young European priests who were found to be exceptionally bright. Henninghaus argued that novices should stay in China because they lacked the cosmopolitan outlook to succeed abroad. He was afraid that Chinese members of the order could embarrass the missionary society in Europe; he pointed to a Chinese priest “who was full of jingoism and bad prejudices towards foreigners.”¹⁵⁴ The Regional Superior Schoppelrey shared Henninghaus’s reservations. “While Rome will definitely offer better training,” Schoppelrey wrote,

On the other hand, other missionary societies have had terrible experiences. The candidates will be torn from their native relations, and they find it later much harder to return. Often, they become prideful, and treat their European brothers who have not studied and earned degrees in Rome with obvious disdain [. . .]. These first three Chinese candidates for the SVD seem like really good people, and I am in favor of doing everything to provide them with further training. On the other hand, I would be very sorry if they do not turn out to be simple, hard-working members of the order, and missionaries willing to sacrifice themselves. We should pray about these issues more.¹⁵⁵

Other missionaries, such as Georg Weig, rebutted these fears, arguing that travel could only benefit Chinese priests and rectify their provincialism. Responding to Henninghaus, Weig wrote, “I stand by my belief. Rome is the most suitable place for theological study, also for the Chinese brothers [. . .]. It seems to me a good idea to put all of the young people from different nations in one place together.”¹⁵⁶ The Superior General, Wilhelm Gier, agreed with Weig. He wanted to add to the expanding roster of international students in Rome. Gier reported,

In our international house in Rome, there are now twelve brothers: three North Americans, two Argentinians, two Dutch, and five Germans. The spirit and atmosphere there is excellent, and the communal living is ideal. All of the brothers would be very happy to welcome three more Chinese priests.¹⁵⁷

Within these discussions, it becomes apparent that the SVD leadership were conflicted about introducing their Chinese students to the elite of their generation. They knew that sending them to Rome would provide the most solid theological and educational foundation for their theological studies. But they also saw the inherent danger: an encounter with Europe portended a liberation so complete that the missionary society’s control over their priests would end. Ultimately it would mean relinquishing power to the Chinese Church.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 222.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 223.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 222.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 223.

The 1924 Synod and its Critics

At the same time that the SVD leadership debated the question of the Chinese novitiate, Costantini and the Vatican were making plans to institute a radical change within the entire Catholic missionary landscape in China. Costantini's primary agenda was to unify the diverse and fragmented mission landscape into a coherent global whole. Costantini organized a two-week long national synod in May of 1924, a landmark event in China that gathered all the bishops, all Superior Generals of the missions orders, as well as all the Apostolic Vicars and Prefects. That these disparate groups of people and organizations attended the national synod had symbolic importance. The idea of holding a synod in China had long existed since the 17th century.¹⁵⁸ During this early phase of mission work, the different orders held a series of missionary conferences during the years 1600-1688 to discuss translations of the Bible and debate issues surrounding the Rites controversy. But by the time plans had been laid for a provincial and general synod of the bishops in the 1720s, the moment had passed: the Emperor Kangxi had decided to ban Christianity from China. But it took another eighty years before the possibility of a synod was even raised. In 1803, despite the proscription on Catholicism in China, 210,000 Catholics remained.¹⁵⁹

It was not until 1846 that discussions to organize a council to coordinate missionary policy resurfaced. Antonio Feliciani, the Prefect of Hong Kong and Cardinal Giacomo Filippo Fransoni, the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide*, made plans to create a National Council in China. They hoped to use the council resolve misunderstandings among rival missionary societies. But it never formed. The political scene in China was volatile; rivalries between European nations ran deep; and travel was difficult.¹⁶⁰ Despite the failure to organize a nation-wide synod, regional synods were held after 1879.¹⁶¹ Shortly before the First World War, the influential German SVD missiologist Josef Schmidlin traveled to China, intending to convene several national-level missionary conferences. But French diplomats blocked the meeting, fearing that it would weaken the influence of the French protectorate and further the growth in German influence abroad.¹⁶² During the war, national ill will among the European missionaries further prevented cooperation among rival societies.

Costantini's successful invitation in 1924 to the diverse collection of mission orders in China thus fulfilled a long-time Vatican wish to unify the missionary effort. And it furthered the Vatican's intention to centralize the China mission-field under its own control. The National Synod was set to meet on the 25th of March, 1924. A total of fifty different missionary orders arrived, including forty-four bishops, five apostolic prefects, and

¹⁵⁸. The following discussion about Synods in China is primarily drawn from Josef Metzler, *Die Synoden in China, Japan und Korea, 1570-1931* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1980).

¹⁵⁹. Tiedemann, *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 2*, 115.

¹⁶⁰. Metzler, *Die Synoden in China*, 68-76.

¹⁶¹. Ibid., 100. China was divided into 5 Church regions: 1. Tsely, (North, Southeast, East), Liaodong, which covered Manchuria and Mongolia. 2. Shandong, Shanxi, Honan, Shensi, and Kansu, 3. Hunan, Hubei, Chekiang, Jiangxi, and Jiangnan. 4. Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, and Tibet. , 5. Guangdong, Guangxi, Hong Kong, and Fujian.

¹⁶². Ibid., 188. The last missionary conference that Schmidlin held in North China was able to garner a large majority of the bishops there. Out of 53 bishops in China that Schmidlin invited to the conference, 45 accepted the invitation.

one apostolic administrator. Fifty-eight priests also attended. The Franciscans, with eighteen members represented, had the the largest number of bishops.¹⁶³ On 15 May, the conference began with a solemn High Mass. Costantini's opening homily reflected the new directions that the Vatican intended to take in China. Speaking in Latin, Costantini greeted in particular the first two Chinese ordinaries, the two Apostolic Prefects Tcheng and Souen.¹⁶⁴ In his homily, he proclaimed,

Among you there are *two Chinese Prelates*, recently raised to the Dignity of Prefects Apostolic; these, Venerable Brethren, are the fruit of your past labors, the grain of mustard that will grown into a large tree, and bring forth abundant fruit in the future. We all share the same unity of Faith and discipline and obey the same visible Head on earth, our Holy Father the Pope.¹⁶⁵

Costantini also railed against European and American materialism, which he saw as destroying ancient Chinese values.¹⁶⁶ The opposition between Confucianism and Catholicism, Costantini declared, had now ended. The enemy was now the depravity of Western civilization, not Confucian tradition.

The spirit of *Maximum ilud* was on display. In the synod proceedings published afterwards, *Maximum ilud* was cited twenty-two times.¹⁶⁷ Taking its cue from *Maximum ilud*, the Synod forbade European missionaries from interfering in local Chinese politics; the Council fathers emphasized that all Catholic missionaries must respect Chinese secular authorities.¹⁶⁸ Any ties with Western imperialism, implicit or explicit, would no longer be tolerated. The Synod prohibited missionaries from aiding the colonial politics of any Western state. Missionary congregations were no longer allowed to indicate their country of origin. Instead, missionaries had to mark the entrances of mission stations with Chinese names. Missionaries were also prohibited from forcing Chinese students to learn Western languages.¹⁶⁹ Indigenization was further emphasized in the conference's closing ceremony. The bishops raised a Sinified portrait of the Virgin Mary, proclaiming the Chinese people under her protection. All of the Synod participants were called to bow down and venerate her.

The Synod did not completely overturn the Vatican's previous position, especially regarding the Rites Controversy of the 17th and 18th century. While the Synod cautioned missionaries not to denigrate Confucius and Mencius, it renewed its commitment to the Vatican's ruling on Chinese rites, forbidding Catholic priests and Chinese Christians from

¹⁶³ Georg Weig, "Das erste chinesische Plenarkonzil in Schanghai 15. Mai bis 12. Juni 1924," *Die Katholischen Missionen* 53 (1924), 3.

¹⁶⁴ Metzler, *Die Synoden in China*, 205.

¹⁶⁵ Pasquale M. d' Elia, *Catholic Native Episcopacy in China: Being an Outline of the Formation and Growth of the Chinese Catholic Clergy, 1300-1926* (Shanghai: T' usewei Print Press, 1927), 72.

¹⁶⁶ Metzler, *Die Synoden in China*, 205.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 210. In order to see the actual text of the Synod proceedings, see *Concilium Sinense, ed., Primum Concilium Sinense anno 1924 a die 14 maii ad diem 12 iunii in ecclesia S. Ignatii de Zi-Ka-Wei celebratum: acta, decreta et normaa, vota, etc. (Zi-Ka-Wei: Typographia Missionis Catholicae, 1929).*

¹⁶⁸ Metzler, *Die Synoden in China*, 217.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 211.

attending any traditional Chinese or so-called Confucian rituals. The council regulations insisted that Catholic missionaries should work to abolish all non-Christian funeral rites in China.¹⁷⁰ The Synod denounced Chinese spiritual practices as “superstition,” and warned the missionaries that Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism were evils that they needed to battle.¹⁷¹

The push to indigenize, the Council recognized, created new sources of conflict between European missionaries and the indigenous clergy. Council sessions were devoted to discussions about how to minimize discord. The Council leaders emerged from the discussions convinced that hierarchical authority induced harmony: if the native clergy received an strict orthodox education, they were less likely to dissent from and undermine the authority of the European missionaries.¹⁷² The National Council focused its discussion on schools, institutions of learning, and the orthodox education of the Chinese clergy. The Council prescribed that missionaries encourage promising young Chinese students to study abroad, and in particular at Catholic universities in Europe.¹⁷³

In spite of the Synod’s public commitment to indigenization, some of the Synod’s decisions provoked dissension from the two Chinese prefects in attendance. In particular, the Chinese were displeased with the Council’s allotment of two new apostolic prefectures in Hubei Province. The prefectures encompassed under-developed, rural areas in the province, with a paltry Catholic presence. The Chinese priests interpreted the assignment as further marginalization: the council had consigned them to the “worst” regions, and left the “better,” more well-developed missionary regions to the European missionaries.¹⁷⁴

In April of 1926, Costantini called another meeting, this time to discuss the problem of anti-Christian movements that were spreading throughout China.¹⁷⁵ In response to the rising tide of anti-Christian, nationalist sentiment, the Church wanted to turn a defensive position into an offensive one. On the 28th of October, 1926, the Vatican ordained the first six Chinese bishops.¹⁷⁶ The Catholic Church now boasted that it had shed its colonial and imperialist past: it now *was* Chinese.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, the ordination of the first six Chinese bishops sent shockwaves throughout the non-Western Catholic world. Within the next decade, the ordination of non-Western bishops proceeded at a rapid pace.¹⁷⁸ The Jesuit Pascal M. D’Elia proclaimed that “the whole History of the Catholic Church in China has never witnessed any event more important than that which took place in St. Peter’s Church,

¹⁷⁰. Ibid., 216.

¹⁷¹. Ibid., 217.

¹⁷². Ibid., 216.

¹⁷³. Ibid., 217.

¹⁷⁴. Metzler, *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide*, 467.

¹⁷⁵. Ibid., 469.

¹⁷⁶. For reports and pictures of the ordinations, see “Sacrae des Evêques chinois,” *Les Missions Catholiques* 58 (September 24 1926): 460-461; “Le Sacrae des Evêques chinois,” *Les Missions Catholiques* 58 (November 26 1926): 565-572; “Le Sacrae des Evêques chinois,” *Les Missions Catholiques* 58 (September 3 1926): 425-427; “Le Sacrae des Evêques chinois,” *Les Missions Catholiques* 58 (September 3 1926): 577-579.

¹⁷⁷. Metzler, *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide*, 470.

¹⁷⁸. See Charles Keith, “Annam Uplifted: The First Vietnamese Catholic Bishops and the Birth of a National Church, 1919-1945,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 3, no. 2 (2008): 128-171.

in Rome, on October 28th, 1926. Protestants wondered aloud whether the ordination of the Chinese bishops was a political move of the Holy See in the face of the new circumstances.¹⁷⁹ D'Elia was also conscious of claims that the ordination was a political, rather than a religious, response to the situation in China, and his interpretation of the event followed. Within four years of Costantini's arrival in China, the Vatican had ordained the first six Chinese bishops. What was an agenda held by a minority of the missionary community became, through Vatican intervention, the central policy of the Church.

The SVD missionaries had ambivalent responses to the 1924 Synod. Publicly, the SVD's publications heaped praise on Costantini's initiatives. In the SVD's official journal, the *Steyler Missionsbote*, the SVD's regional director Hermann Schoppelrey reported that the SVD missionaries had been moved by spirit of cooperation at the conference. He was "delighted and surprised" that "allegiance towards national and religious orders took a back seat" at the conference.¹⁸⁰ In particular, Schoppelrey was impressed by the openness at the Synod: "All questions were brought before the General Assembly. Freedom of speech was granted and fully used by the participants. Important points were often more extensively discussed."¹⁸¹

And, indeed, the private correspondence of SVD missionaries reveals the admiration that they felt towards Costantini. Georg Weig found Costantini an impressive visionary for the future of Catholic missions in China. Only a person of Costantini's ambition and capacity, he remarked, could have convened the first synod of Bishops Conference in Shanghai in 1924. "Without him, there would have been no Synod. A whole host of bishops are openly against him; they would rather work alone and continue to muddle in the old model."¹⁸² Costantini, Schoppelrey remarked, was an "extraordinary adroit Master of Ceremonies," and he credited him with the smooth proceedings at the assembly.¹⁸³ Despite the numerous differences in viewpoints, Costantini's temperament provided moderation, "a unity and clarity of purpose ruled in the proceedings. All had the good of China in their eyes."¹⁸⁴ According to Schoppelrey, Costantini himself appeared as a open-minded leader, ready to accept and listen to conflicting opinions and views. Schoppelrey reported that Costantini "enthusiastically praised this pure harmony of different opinions, and this pronounced Catholicity in thought and action."¹⁸⁵

Bishop Augustin Henninghaus, on the other hand, was less enthusiastic. He eyed the ordination of the six Chinese bishops with caution. In a letter to Karl Friedrich, Hennighaus wrote that while he had congratulated each of the bishops individually, he felt that the ordinations "could not work miracles for the evangelization of China. Instead, it is merely a product of the times and reflects the wishes of many Chinese Christians."¹⁸⁶ He felt that it was "not unreasonable" that places that had "been adequately prepared" with "good

¹⁷⁹. d' Elia, *Catholic Native Episcopacy in China*: III.

¹⁸⁰. Georg Weig, "Zum Konzil nach Schanghai (China)," *Steyler Missionsbote* 52, no. 2 (1924): 24-28.

¹⁸¹. Ibid.

¹⁸². Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China*. V, 343.

¹⁸³. Weig, "Zum Konzil nach Schanghai."

¹⁸⁴. Ibid.

¹⁸⁵. Ibid.

¹⁸⁶. Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China*. VI, 439.

old-Christian communities” should have ordained Chinese Christians. But this made him even more convinced that for the SVD, “the time has not yet come when we can entrust our Chinese priests to independently manage our mission. The life of faith has yet to grow deep enough in our Chinese priests and parishes.”¹⁸⁷ Expressing a similar sentiment in a different letter, Henninghaus wrote that the ordinations were “done too quickly, even if one had waited long enough for it.”¹⁸⁸

Despite the private complaints of its leaders, the SVD applied the Synod’s directives almost immediately. Following the directives of the 1924 Synod, the SVD held a Pontifical High Mass for “Our Lady of China” in Christmas of 1924. Sister Ries Bonitas, who worked in Poli, described the mass as one that was “celebrated by summoning all of the glories of the church.”¹⁸⁹ At the mass, the “well-known Christmas songs were sung,” and the sacraments were administered. Towards the end of the ceremony, the SVD missionaries replicated the ceremonial veneration of the Chinese Madonna (*Zhonghua Shengmu*) that they had witnessed at the 1924 Synod:

[T]he Bishop and missionaries brought lit candles to the altar. They then all fell to their knees. A moment of solemn silence ensued, the moment so sacred that even the little babies dared not to make a sound. Then the bishop prayed together with the priests the Latin consecration rite before the Blessed Sacrament and the Chinese image of the Virgin Mary. The congregation joined in as one, saying the prayer of consecration for Mary solemnly as if it were a sacred oath. This was followed by the famous song ‘Mary loves,’ sung in Chinese with devotion and enthusiasm.¹⁹⁰

The SVD also allowed its first three Chinese SVD brothers to take their vows, and in February of 1926, at the cathedral in Daijia Zhuang, the SVD celebrated its first Chinese members.¹⁹¹

Yet, despite these public pronouncements to support a more rapid indigenization, the SVD resisted the *Propaganda* agenda of shifting their missionary holdings to the local secular Chinese priests. Ever since the end of the First World War, the *Propaganda* had its eyes set on Qingdao. The *Propaganda* thought that the SVD’s Qingdao Vicariate exhibited signs of a thriving Catholic presence, and it wanted to designate a portion of the Vicariate as an Apostolic Prefecture to give to the Chinese clergy. From his see in Yanzhou, Henninghaus had long voiced skepticism towards the intentions of the *Propaganda*, fearing that an initial transfer of power could lead quickly to the total disintegration of the SVD’s work in China.¹⁹² After the 1924 Synod, the *Propaganda* had developed a plan to indigenize. It first located thriving Catholic communities, with a healthy number of converts. They designated these areas apostolic vicariates, which effectively functioned as diocese in missionary areas, where a Church hierarchy had not yet been constructed, or where the

¹⁸⁷. Ibid.

¹⁸⁸. Ibid.

¹⁸⁹. Ibid., 24.

¹⁹⁰. Ibid.

¹⁹¹. Ibid., 472.

¹⁹². Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China. V*, 342.

Church was persecuted by civil authorities. The *Propaganda* then carved out apostolic prefects within the vicariates, and assigned the apostolic prefects to secular Chinese clergy. These new assignments offered the Chinese clergy a test-run, an opportunity to administer a smaller area, before it was elevated into an apostolic vicariate, and by extension, creating a new Chinese bishop.

In a meeting with Karl Friedrich, an SVD's official in Rome, Cardinal Wilhelm van Rossum, head of the *Propaganda*, proposed the idea of turning areas of the Qingdao Vicariate into Apostolic Prefectures, since it was an urban area with a healthier Catholic population.¹⁹³ Rossum knew that Henninghaus would resist the *Propaganda's* plans, and he wanted Friedrich to help lobby the case for him. When Friedrich agreed that he would write about the proposal to Henninghaus, Rossum responded that Friedrich should not only write "one time," but rather "a hundred times."¹⁹⁴

The meeting made a deep impression on Friedrich: he communicated to the SVD leadership in Germany that the *Propaganda* saw them as laggards. In order for the SVD to maintain its good standing with the *Propaganda*, the leadership had to "know and understand the directions and future that the *Propaganda* hoped to pursue."¹⁹⁵ Yet Friedrich also admitted that he found Cardinal Rossum's insistent manner discomfiting. Few people in Rome knew the "true state of the Chinese hierarchy," he thought. Nor did Rome "truly understand the views of Bishop Henninghaus." Friedrich felt that the leadership in Rome "made rash decisions, tried to create false hopes, and provoked uncomfortable decisions" among the bishops and leaders in China.¹⁹⁶ He concluded, "If we want to educate men who are strong and dependable in the faith, it seems important to follow the direction of Bishop Henninghaus."¹⁹⁷

Henninghaus had indeed bristled at the suggestion of elevating Chinese priests as apostolic prefects in Qingdao. He wrote, "With regards to the question of whether any Chinese apostolic prefects would be suitable in Southern Shandong, at the moment this suggestion is impossible and out of the question."¹⁹⁸ While he was supportive of the push to consecrate more Chinese priests as apostolic prefects in areas with a longer tradition of Christian conversion, Henninghaus argued that Chinese Christians in southern Shandong were not yet ready to take over the reins, since they were still "new Christians." When he had the opportunity to speak with Cardinal van Rossum, he pledged "to make it clear to the *Propaganda* that the Chinese are not prepared to handle the prefecture."¹⁹⁹

As a result of Henninghaus's resistance, the *Propaganda* decided to appoint the SVD missionary Georg Weig as the new apostolic prefect of Qingdao, not a Chinese secular priest. The news delighted the SVD leaders, and they responded by declaring that a new apostolic prefecture could only benefit the missions, even though they had privately rejected

¹⁹³ Augustin Henninghaus to Wilhelm Gier, 25 February 1931, AG 606 / 1931-1939, 3290-3291.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 2819.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 2820.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China*. VI, 289.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

the possibility of an apostolic prefecture headed by Chinese.²⁰⁰ As the new apostolic prefect, Georg Weig committed himself to the *Propaganda's* agenda: he assigned Chinese priests to more leadership positions in congregations throughout his prefecture.²⁰¹



Figure 28: Georg Weig. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Persistent Unrest

The SVD's public commitment to rapid indigenization was curbed by an enduring private mistrust of Chinese spiritual maturity, and these suspicions intensified with the natural disasters, famines, and political unrest that plagued Northern China. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, a series of famines devastated the entire region; they were so frequent that Western relief workers referred to China as “the Land of Famine.”²⁰² The Yellow

²⁰⁰. Ibid., 292-294.

²⁰¹. Ibid., 309-310.

²⁰². Lillian M. Li, *Fighting Famine in North China: State, Market, and Environmental Decline, 1690s-1990s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 283.

River—which came to be known as “China’s Sorrow”—flooded in 1925, 1933, and 1935.²⁰³ The most devastating river flooding occurred during the Japanese invasion, when Chiang Kai-shek ordered his troops in 1938 to blast the dikes of the Yellow River, in a futile attempt to stop the Japanese from moving south.²⁰⁴ The action flooded forty-four counties, killing 900,000 people and turning 3.9 million Chinese into homeless refugees.²⁰⁵

Compounding the impact of the natural disasters was the lack of government aid to the region. Throughout the 1920s, R. G. Tiedemann writes, “much of northern China was disrupted by frequent warlord struggles, civil war, soldier-banditry, and fierce resistance by local self-defense organisations against all outside predators.”²⁰⁶ In the late 1920s, in an attempt to unify the country, Chiang Kai-shek entered into a brief alliance with warlords such as Feng Yuxiang (the “Christian General” who was so lauded by the Western missionaries) and Yan Xishan during the Northern expedition of 1927. The tentative alliance soon disintegrated, and competing armies tried to conscript rural farmers. To combat the KMT’s military requisitions and the rising tide of regional banditry, rural farmers and villagers established or revived local self-defense groups. A panoply of self-defense troops, generally referred to as “Red Spear associations,” emerged.²⁰⁷ The first Red Spear association developed in southern Shandong from 1919 to 1921 and soon spread into neighboring districts.²⁰⁸ Harkening back to the Boxers, members of the association employed “spells and incantations designed to make the rustic fighters invulnerable to sword cuts and rifle bullets.”²⁰⁹ As Elizabeth Perry has argued, these Red Spear societies did not have broader revolutionary intentions. They were “far from a heterodox sect aiming to topple the state.”²¹⁰ Instead, the Red Spear societies were “essentially a conservative enterprise on the part of local notables struggling to preserve their threatened privileges.”²¹¹ In particular, Red Spear societies were instrumental in leading demonstrations and protests against warlord attempts at tax collection.²¹² They also, however, tended to vandalize and rob missionary structures and church congregations. As Perry notes, the line between a “defensive” and predatory stance among Red Spear associations was often blurred. To missionaries, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between Chinese allies and opponents.

Starting in the mid 1920s, a new threat to the Catholic missionaries appeared: the Chinese Communist Party. Communist leaders such as Li Dazhao saw the Red Spear associations’ resistance to tax and rent collection as a budding class warfare against the local

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 15. Also see Li, *Fighting Famine in North China*.

²⁰⁵ Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries*, 15.

²⁰⁶ R.G. Tiedemann, “Communist Revolution and Peasant Mobilisation in the Hinterland of North China: The Early Years,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 24 (1996), 138.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 137.

²⁰⁸ Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries*, 157.

²⁰⁹ Tiedemann, “Communist Revolution and Peasant Mobilisation,” 137.

²¹⁰ Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries*, ix.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid., 163-167.

landholding elite. Sensing opportunity, they began to reach out to the Red Spear groups as potential allies.²¹³ In 1925, Communists dispatched their members throughout North China in order to arm and train the Red Spear associations for revolutionary action.

The SVD's stations were directly impacted by this broader political unrest. In January of 1928, a group of bandits calling themselves the "Band of Ten-thousand Knives" (萬刀會 *Wandaobui*) occupied the SVD's residence in Poli, holding one priest, two SVD lay brothers, and six sisters hostage. The SVD priest Weiss reported that the band numbered around one hundred men, who were armed with around fifty rifles.²¹⁴ The SVD described the bandits as "outsiders" who came from neighboring villages and had been recruited into the army of the warlord Zhang Zuolin. Yet Zhang had refused to pay the troops, forcing the more wealthy leaders to equip them out of their own pockets.²¹⁵ Unhappy at Zhang's actions, the troops hijacked and robbed the Catholic mission, in hopes of receiving a ransom to pay for their costs.

The SVD's missionaries saw the raid as an act of betrayal; the bandits could not have infiltrated the residence without the help of a Poli native. The report on the affair surmised that the bandits were aided by a "traitor [named] Li in Poli, who led them to the church at 8 PM, the exact time when the normally locked door would be opened."²¹⁶ The rector, Anton Wewel, suggested that the plan to occupy the mission station was a "well-planned" act of revenge, stemming from an inter-village feud involving the husband of a woman who had grown up in the SVD-run orphanage in Poli.²¹⁷

A three-week long standoff ensued, as Henninghaus and other SVD priests desperately tried to convince provincial officials to send troops to resolve the occupation. Some priests such as Weiss advocated negotiating with the bandits, including, if need be, ransom paid by Henninghaus and the mission.²¹⁸ But Wewel adopted an inflexible position, urging Henninghaus not to negotiate with the "devilish bandits, who fully deserve a bloody death. We will not be able to save the hostages unless we deliver swift punishment to these inhuman devils."²¹⁹ A decisive military action, Wewel urged, could benefit the whole region,

²¹³ Ibid., 213-224.

²¹⁴ Weiss to Kretschmer, 20 January 1928, AG 606 / 1925-1930, 3049-3050. The collection of the correspondence between the SVD about the incident begins in AG 606 / 1925-1930, 3046 and ends around page 3080. The relationship between the Communist party and the *Wandaobui* bandits remains unclear. Later Communist historiography has claimed that the incident was the earliest revolutionary insurrection in Shandong province, and the Communists had been organizing peasant associations as well as establishing contact with local Red Spear Associations in Yanggu. But by all accounts, the connection between the Communists and the bandit leaders was tenuous. Not only were the leaders of the bandits reported to be relatively wealthy members of the county who were "well-known to the Yamen"—the supposed class enemies that the Communists wanted to depose—the SVD's reports about the event hardly mentioned the influence of Communist insurrection. See also Tiedemann, "Communist Revolution and Peasant Mobilisation," 143.

²¹⁵ "Bericht über den Überfall und Plünderung der Missionstation Polichuang," 3 February, 1931, AG 606 / 1925-1930, 3051.

²¹⁶ Anton Wewel to Augustin Henninghaus, 23 January 1928, AG 606 / 1925-1930, 3052-3053.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 3053.

“which hates these bandits, as they have caused so much trouble in the area for so long. These evil-doers should be wiped off the face of the earth.”²²⁰

Henninghaus sided with the hard-liners, and spent his energies trying to convince the provincial governor to dispatch troops to Poli. On February 5th, 1928, after a three-week long standoff, provincial military troops entered Poli with the intent of eradicating the bandits. After two days of skirmishes, the bandits retreated into neighboring villages. The hostages were freed, scared, but unharmed.

But the SVD’s missionary work continued to be plagued by banditry. In February of 1931, the SVD’s middle school in Jining burned to the ground. Henninghaus suspected a band of “nefarious, marauding soldiers.”²²¹ The events gained coverage in the popular presses in Germany. Newspapers such as the Catholic *Kölnische Volkszeitung* reported the Poli incident in their dailies. The Superior General Wilhelm Gier confided to Augustin Henninghaus his hunch that this incident and subsequent media exposure would benefit the mission work financially. “We foster a confident hope,” Gier wrote, “that these media reports have won us new benefactors for the mission.”²²²

Besides earning them new patrons, missionaries saw the social dislocation as winning them new converts. In the crowds of refugees who sought shelter in their mission stations, the missionaries envisioned pools of potential converts. In a report from Caozhou (today’s Heze), Karl Weber and Johannes Fahnen described daily scenes of mass suffering. Weber wrote, “Villagers and farmers fled from the countryside to seek protection behind the solid walls of the city. As if rescued from a fire, the clumsy ox-wagons carried people, chicken, and pigs, as well as grain, cooking utensils and fuel.”²²³ Weber and Fahnen continued, “look at how Providence creates good out of evil!”²²⁴ Newly converted Christians brought their still unconverted families with them to the mission stations in search of help, and immediately the SVD saw its numbers in catechism classes grow from twenty students to fifty.²²⁵ “You have really experienced a wonder of God’s mercy,” the missionaries continued, “when after weeks of patient and insistent instruction, as well as fervent prayer, the light of faith is lit in the dark heart of the pagan, and the newly converted astounds you with their proclamation: ‘I see, I believe.’”²²⁶

Yet the missionaries also cautioned against too much optimism, stating that many of the refugees were unmoved by the message of the Gospel: “some remain deaf and their hardened pagan hearts have not melted completely.”²²⁷ Moreover, the social dislocation also caused the SVD missionaries to become increasingly suspicious of the new Christians that they had baptized. The missionaries reported that many Christians had come under

²²⁰. Ibid.

²²¹. Ibid., 3284.

²²². Wilhelm Gier to Augustin Henninghaus, 2 March 1928, AG 606 / 1925-1930, 3078.

²²³. Karl Fahnen Weber, “Kriegsschrecken vor den Toren Tsoachowfu’s”, May 1928, AG 606 / 1925-1930, 3081.

²²⁴. Ibid., 3082.

²²⁵. Ibid.

²²⁶. Ibid.

²²⁷. Ibid.

influence from the “anti-religious attitudes from the South,” causing “many of the new Christians to waver in their faith.”²²⁸

The SVD missionaries thus believed that they had to make “strict selections” from the crowds of Chinese admitted to catechism classes.²²⁹ The missionaries submitted the new catechumens to stringent training: the catechumens had to learn prayers and the catechism every day, and had to pray through the rosary twice a day. They were tested twice a week, and had to demonstrate familiarity with all of the prayers and catechism classes before they were allowed to become baptized.²³⁰ Despite their best efforts, the missionaries admitted, an attrition rate of more than 30% persisted.²³¹ “The Christian faith has been put to severe tests during these hard times, and we are mainly dealing with young men and women who are new to the faith and have no elder Christian sponsors [...]. It often hurts the priest’s heart to let some of these diligent children go, but experience forces us to do so.”²³²

The SVD not only attempted to regiment the new Christians in catechism classes, they also subjected the European missionaries and Chinese novices to more discipline. In June of 1928, the Superior General Wilhelm Gier wrote to Henninghaus, requesting that the missionaries, and especially the Chinese novitiates, join a thirty day long spiritual retreat, led by German Jesuits, where the missionaries would go through the spiritual exercises of Ignatius Loyola. Through the spiritual exercises, Gier commented, “we expect that the brothers will experience an extraordinary renewal of a good spirit.”²³³

The political instability of the 1920s and the rise of anti-Christian violence in Northern Shandong were major factors in preventing the missionaries from relinquishing their authority to an incipient Chinese hierarchy. Bandits and marauding soldiers destroyed the property belonging to the mission, disrupting the financial stability that the SVD wanted to demonstrate. The unstable political situation actually deepened even further the SVD’s obsession with judging the spiritual “maturity” and “immaturity” of the Chinese Christians whom they had trained and baptized.

With a rising number of catechumens among political refugees, it became even more imperative for the missionaries to strengthen the piety among the Chinese Christians whom they already served and prevent them from abandoning Christianity for the allure of nationalist and Communist ideologies. Developing strict requirements for belief allowed missionaries to distinguish between so-called “rice Christians” and the truly devout. Given the widespread social suffering that resulted from devastating famines and war-induced dislocation, the missionaries felt that they needed to have a sound way of “marking” their own. Faced with crowds of displaced, hungry, and desperate refugees, they were not sure whom they could trust. Moreover, in the midst of political and natural disasters, the SVD’s command over its mission stations and surrounding areas grew increasingly tenuous. The missionaries thus tightened their grip in areas that remained under their authority:

²²⁸ Ibid., 3081.

²²⁹ Ibid., 3086.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Wilhelm Gier to Augustin Henninghaus, 6 July 1928, AG 606 / 1925-1930, 3095.

catechism classes and the training of their own missionaries. The social unrest, and the continuing high rate of attrition of existing Chinese Christians, reinforced the notion among the leadership that their mission areas were still unprepared for Chinese administration. Ultimately, the actions of the SVD reflected their desire to maintain a shred of predictability in an increasingly fluid and unstable political situation. Through their education system, they hoped to create Chinese Christians with both orthodox theology and a respect for church hierarchy.

A Chinese Bishop

In 1931, when the annual regional synod in Yanzhou was scheduled to meet, Henninghaus did not invite the Chinese priests in the region to join the meeting. The Chinese priests thus decided to form their own meeting, and resolved to send a letter directly to the *Propaganda Fide*, asking for a Chinese bishop.²³⁴ The Chinese attempt to bypass the SVD missionary leadership and appeal to the *Propaganda Fide* was interpreted by the SVD as a betrayal of the trust that it had tried so hard to cultivate. The separate meeting signaled to the SVD leadership that its control over the Chinese priests was slipping. Moreover, they saw in the demands of the Chinese priests signs of Chinese nationalist, “revolutionary” thinking.

With the Chinese petition in hand, the *Propaganda* pounced. Cardinal van Rossum drew upon the letter and wrote to Henninghaus, “We beseech and pray that you begin to prepare a new indigenous mission.”²³⁵ The *Propaganda* further pressured Henninghaus by placing his own ministry in the limelight. In a savvy manipulation of the media, the *Propaganda* dedicated the front page of *L’Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper, to celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Henninghaus’s career as a missionary. In the article, the *Propaganda* portrayed Henninghaus as a progressive reformer who had worked hard to elevate indigenous clergy to positions of influence. The Vatican also named Henninghaus a Prefect of the Papal Household. Henninghaus had no choice but to comply with these pressures. He lamented, “Since Rome has now said A, we must say B. I cannot say that we are comfortable with the way things are proceeding. This anniversary gift is very unwelcome.”²³⁶

The *Propaganda* decided that a Chinese person in the area of Yanggu was ready to be elevated to an Apostolic Prefecture, but they left the decision of whom to choose to Henninghaus. Henninghaus immediately discerned the split between the Chinese priests. There were the “revolutionaries,” who had undermined his authority by appealing to Rome. But there were also Chinese priests who had not signed the petition. Reluctant to contact the “revolutionaries,” Henninghaus first approached two of his oldest and most trusted Chinese colleagues, Dominicus Chao (張秀文) and Ambrosius Chen, both of whom

²³⁴ The episode is also recounted in Leopold Kade to Josef Grendel, 2 September 1938, AG 612 / 1931-1958, 4569.

²³⁵ Cardinal Willem van Rossum to Augustin Henninghaus, 23 December 1931, AG SVD 612 / 1931-1958. Society of the Divine Word Archives, Rome, 4451.

²³⁶ Krins, “Wie Kardinal Tien Bischof Wurde,” 350.

immediately rejected the offer saying that Chao and Chen believed that they were unsuited and unprepared for the job.²³⁷

Henninghaus then approached Thomas Tien, an SVD brother and one of the first entrants into the novitiate. Tien was working in Yanggu at the time. Tien initially rejected the offer, protesting to Henninghaus that “he should appoint a bishop from among the ‘Revolutionaries.’”²³⁸ Tien knew that he was an unpopular choice among the more progressive-thinking Chinese priests: he had not signed the petition.²³⁹ But after more pressure from the SVD missionary Herbert Krins, Tien agreed to accept—though with two conditions: he wanted to appoint his own staff and bring priests that he trusted to his own prefecture, and he wanted the SVD to reassure him that it would continue to support him personally financially.²⁴⁰

The SVD leadership in Rome agreed to these demands. On the 2nd February of 1934, Yanggu was elevated to an Apostolic Prefecture, and Thomas Tien officially became the Apostolic Prefect of Yanggu.²⁴¹ The SVD had finally elevated its first Chinese priest to a position of ecclesiastical leadership. The more “radical” priests however, were not assuaged by the appointment. Tien himself, as an SVD brother, would remain a subordinate to Henninghaus and the SVD hierarchy.²⁴² Moreover, Tien chose Henninghaus’s most trusted priests, Philippus Wang (王方襄) and Gerardus Shang (尚立身), to join him in the new Prefecture.²⁴³ He ignored the Chinese priests who had signed the petition.

The early years of Tien’s reign as Apostolic Prefect were extremely difficult. The Yellow River flooded three districts in the prefecture, and Tien reported that “over 5000 Christians are starving.”²⁴⁴ Yet, even after Yanggu was established as an Apostolic Prefect, Tien relied on the financial support of the SVD. He thus had to ask the SVD to continue to supply them with material aid. Moreover, Chinese priests received a *stipendia Missarum* from the SVD. Without this financial support, Tien wrote, “We would be in the most gravest distress.”²⁴⁵

The SVD continued to support the work of Chinese priests in Yanggu through mass stipendiums and mass intentions, the only source of income that prevented the local Chinese priests from falling into a state of abject poverty. But the elevation of Yanggu into an Apostolic Prefecture also gave the SVD reasons to curtail its financial support to the

²³⁷ Chao was a child from the congregation in which the missionaries Richard Henle and Francis Nies were murdered in 1897. He was ordained in 1909, and for many years a Deacon in Jining. See Hartwich, *Steyler Missionare in China. II*, 370. Reports of his ordination can be found on Ibid., 401-402. See also Krins, “Wie Kardinal Tien Bischof Wurde,” 351.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Leopold Kade to Josef Grendel, 2 September 1938, AG 612 / 1931-1958, 4569.

²⁴⁰ Krins, “Wie Kardinal Tien Bischof Wurde,” 351.

²⁴¹ For the complete chronology of the ordination, see the series of correspondence in AG 612/ 1931-1958, 4469-4477.

²⁴² The documents are silent about whether Tien was pressured by Henninghaus and the other SVD leadership to reject the more radical Chinese priests.

²⁴³ Leopold Kade to Josef Grendel, 2 September 1938, AG 612 / 1931-1958, 4570.

²⁴⁴ Thomas Tien to Josef Grendel, 9 August 1934, AG 612 / 1931-1958, 4478-4479.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

region. The coming to power of Hitler also presented a significant challenge to the SVD. Like their Protestant counterparts, Catholic missionaries were unable to transfer money abroad, since the National Socialist regime placed restrictions on foreign currency exchange (*Devisenstelle*). Thus when Tien asked the SVD Superior General in 1935 Grendel for financial help in November of 1935, Grendel denied the request, citing the Nazi ban. As a result, Tien turned increasingly to the *Propaganda Fide* for funding in the region.

Yet even after the SVD had begun to withdraw financial support from Tien's prefecture, it continued to influence personnel decisions in the region, especially since it was still sending SVD brothers and members to serve there. In June of 1938, the SVD's Superior General, Josef Grendel, expressed concern over allowing two Chinese SVD priests, Wang and Shang, to continue working in Yanggu without European supervision. Grendel worried that the men would spend too much time with the Chinese secular priests and become "revolutionaries."²⁴⁶

The SVD also did not stop lobbying *Propaganda* on Tien's behalf. Now that its leaders could claim Tien as an Apostolic Prefect, they pushed for the establishment of a more prominent position for Tien: an Apostolic Vicariate. In January 1938, Grendel sent a proposal to the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide*, Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi, requesting that Yanggu be named an Apostolic Vicariate and Tien a Bishop.²⁴⁷ In December of 1938, the *Propaganda* agreed, and the Pope invited Tien to Rome for a personal consecration. In July of 1939, Tien was appointed the Vicar Apostolic of Yanggu and the Titular Bishop of Ruspae. In October of 1939, he traveled to Rome, where he was ordained by Pope Pius XII. Celso Costantini was the co-consecrator. The Vatican finally got what it wanted: a Chinese bishop in Southern Shandong. And the SVD also got what it wanted: an SVD man in the position.

Conclusion

In May of 1958, the SVD leaders in Rome received a frantic, harrowing letter from a fifteen year-old Chinese seminarian, requesting that the SVD stop sending books or other religious materials. Under the Communist regime, he wrote, any foreign material was now viewed as seditious, and, if discovered with the material, he could get into trouble. He also reported an act of treachery: the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association had ordained four new bishops. The Patriotic Church had chosen Karl Li as the new bishop of Caozhou, which encompassed the SVD's old Apostolic Vicariate of Yanzhou.²⁴⁸

Karl Li was a familiar figure to the SVD leadership. Almost thirty years earlier, in 1931, he was one of the ringleaders who had organized the petition to the *Propaganda*. The SVD report lamented that "this same priest Li, who had caused so much sorrow for Henninghaus" was now collaborating with the Communists and leading the Patriotic Church in the region.²⁴⁹ The SVD leaders suggested that Li and the other priests had been

²⁴⁶. Ibid.

²⁴⁷. Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi to Josef Grendel, 11 January 1938, AG 612 / 1931-1958, 4533.

²⁴⁸. Friedrich Fuchs to Johannes Schütte, 19 May 1958, AG 612 / 1931-1958.

²⁴⁹. Ibid.

coerced by the Communists to join the Patriotic Catholic Association. But they also implied that it was unsurprising that Li had betrayed the SVD, due to his earlier involvement with the petition; they believed that Li had never been truly loyal to the SVD.

Whether Li was truly coerced to join the Patriotic Church is part of a different story, one that tracks Chinese Catholicism after 1949. But the SVD reaction to the news suggests its suspicion of Chinese Christian spirituality had never faded. Its institutional memory ran deep: the SVD kept such close tabs on its Chinese priests that the leadership remembered who had supported, and “betrayed,” the SVD nearly thirty years after the fact. This type of suspicion, I argue, was not unwarranted. While the “hermeneutical suspicion” was grounded in the missionary society’s paternalist and hierarchical desire for control, it also drew upon the SVD’s experience with the specific space of Shandong. The contentious relations that European missionaries had experienced with the local populace ever since they entered Shandong in the 1880s, as well as the region’s escalating political unrest, led the SVD to adopt a siege mentality. Paranoid, and constantly assessing who were its allies and enemies, the SVD wanted to determine who was a “good” Christian. Even though the SVD had known from the nineteenth century that it ought to develop more indigenous clergy, it delayed the transfer of power to local Chinese Christians on the grounds that they were not yet spiritually “mature” or “ready” for the responsibilities of independent governance.

But “external” forces ultimately motivated the SVD to transfer control of the missions to the local Chinese. First, the Vatican and the *Propaganda Fide* put pressure on the SVD. Surveying the state of worldwide missions after the First World War, the Vatican recognized that European hegemony was on the decline, and the path towards the future lay in the indigenous clergy. The Vatican leadership thus adopted the more progressive position long advocated by Vincent Lebbé and the Lazarists on the issue of rapid indigenization. The *Propaganda Fide*, in turn, pushed other more conservative members and societies within the missionary landscape to adopt its agenda. In the 1920s, then, the central Vatican hierarchy was much more progressive than some of the missionary societies on the ground. The Chinese clergy in Southern Shandong picked up on these cues, and they succeeded in achieving their goals by pitting the Vatican against the SVD. The SVD could not withstand these assaults.

How does the SVD story of reluctant indigenization, and more broadly, the story of Catholicism in China, compare with other countries grappling with similar issues of local independence from missionary control? Take the example of Vietnam. Just as in China, French Catholic missionaries in Vietnam stalled the process of indigenization. As Charles Keith writes, French colonial rule in Vietnam “created a culture of religious life in which relationships between Vietnamese Catholics and European missionaries were less equal and more fractious than ever before.”²⁵⁰ There, as in China, the Vatican intervened and tried to push for a faster path towards indigenization. As a result of the Vatican’s intervention, the colonial era witnessed “unprecedented ties between Vietnam and the transnational institutions and culture of global Catholicism, as Vatican reforms to create an independent national Church helped Vietnamese Catholics to reimagine and redefine their relationships

²⁵⁰. Charles Keith, *Catholic Vietnam: A Church from Empire to Nation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 3.

to both missionary Catholicism and to colonial rule itself.”²⁵¹ Like China, in Vietnam, Catholic Church emerged out of the Second World War divided and polarized. Vietnamese Catholics, like their Chinese brethren, had to deal with charges and accusations of worshipping an “alien” religion that contradicted the state’s interests.

Despite these similarities, there exist significant differences between the story in China and that of Vietnam. While movements in North Vietnam to create a parallel “patriotic” Catholic Church also existed, Catholics in North Vietnam remained loyal to the Vatican. The global communion between North Vietnamese Catholics and the Vatican remained unbroken. In contrast, a critical mass of priests in China, including the likes of Karl Li, were so disaffected that they were willing to join the Patriotic Church. The protracted history of a fragmented missionary landscape in China partially explains their alienation. China was never a formal colony of any European party, and as a result, the Chinese mission field was always fragmented among various missionary nations. Thus, at the time of their takeover, the Communists could effectively paint the Vatican’s supposed spiritual authority as no different from the aggressive imperialism of France, Germany, Austria, or Italy. Whereas Vietnamese Catholics recalled the history of successful cooperation between the Vietnamese state and Catholicism, Western Christianity and the Chinese state had been at odds ever since the Yuan dynasty. In China, the Catholic Patriotic Association founded in 1957 not only represented the first Catholic hierarchy dominated by Chinese, but also the first time that Catholicism could effectively cooperate with a hostile regime.

Much of the historiography on Catholicism in China has ascribed the failure of Catholicism in China to the Western missionary society’s inflexibility, enduring paternalism, and hostility to change. Yet, the trajectory of the SVD from the 1880s to the 1940s is characterized by change. By the 1930s, the SVD could point to dramatic shifts: it boasted an international membership; it had admitted Chinese brothers as official members to its society; and it had ordained a Chinese bishop, Thomas Tien. These fundamental internal institutional changes impacted the SVD’s mission methods as well. In 1933, the SVD adopted the policy of elite education by deciding to take over the Catholic University of Beijing.²⁵² While slow, the SVD’s missionaries did eventually embrace indigenization.

How does the SVD’s institutional changes compare with the BMS? As with the case of the BMS, institutional changes did not result from internal reflection alone, but from external pressures. For the Berlin missionaries, the Nazi ban on foreign exchange signaled the deathknell of exclusive European control over Chinese Christians. The SVD, on the other hand, while hampered by the Nazi ban on foreign exchange, ultimately could depend on the Vatican and Catholic missionary societies from other countries to support its work.

The force of the Vatican here cannot be understated. The Chinese priests in SVD regions had the power to appeal to a higher authority: they could write to the Vatican and bypass their direct superiors. The Chinese BMS pastors, on the other hand, lacked an external authority to whom they could appeal. The only way that unhappy Protestant Chinese could redress their grievances was through schism: they broke permanently with their Protestant supervisors and chose to found their own churches. Watchman Ni or Wei

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² The SVD’s work in Furen University is the subject of chapter seven.

Engbo stand as prominent examples. But this path was risky, with with slim possibilities of ever finding the ways and means to sustain institutions and clergy. Thus the preferred path was to remain silent, continue service, and patiently hope for internal reform. For some, such as the Priest Karl Li, the Communist Revolution represented a moment when Chinese Christians could take the reforms into their own hands. My next chapter turns towards similar stories in a different organization: Chinese Christians who waited patiently for reforms in the BMS.

Part III.
Chinese Actors

Chapter 6.

Chinese Christians and the Berlin Missionary Society

Introduction

Ling Deyuan (凌德淵) had all the qualifications that the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) wanted in a Chinese pastor. Thoroughly a product of the BMS's various educational institutions, Ling was one of the missionary society's most trusted Chinese assistants. Born in 1883, Ling came from a family of Chinese Christians converted by the BMS. He attended the BMS's elementary and middle school, and entered its seminary in 1903. He graduated from the seminary with high marks at the young age of 23.¹ Eight years after his graduation, he was ordained as an assistant pastor (*Vikar*).² He accompanied Siegfried Knak and Carl Johannes Voskamp to the Shanghai National Christian Conference in Shanghai in 1922. At the conference, Ling displayed his linguistic talents: Ling was one of the few Chinese pastors who could understand both Mandarin and the southern dialects spoken in Guangdong. He was thus called upon to serve as a translator between the northern and southern congregations.³

Soon, the BMS missionaries were touting Ling as a model for independent Chinese Church leadership. In 1927, the missionary leaders agreed to give Ling complete control over the mission station at Shixing (始興), marking him the Berlin Missionary Society's first Chinese pastor to manage a congregation independent of missionary supervision.⁴ The missionaries declared that he had the "same rights and responsibilities as a European missionary," marking the first time that a Chinese pastor was elevated to the same level within the institution as his earlier supervisors.⁵

Ling professed as much devotion to the mission society as the society did to him. In 1947, after having suffered more than a decade of war, poverty, and distress, Ling wrote a

¹ For Ling's exam results, see August Kollecker, "Protokoll über das Examen von 3 Seminaristen am 21. April 1906," 21 April 1906, BMW 1 / 886: Missionsgehilfen, Examen, 288-298.

² Ling's ordination papers can be found in "Komiteebeschluss vom 3. 2. 1914," 03 February 1914, BMW 1 / 888: Examen und Ordination der Gehilfen, 18.

³ Hellmut Lehmann, *Zur Zeit und zur Unzeit: Geschichte der Berliner Mission 1918-1972 in Drei Bänden*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Berliner Missionswerk, 1989), 131.

⁴ See Heinrich Wahl, "Bemerkungen zur Frage der Besetzung Tschichins," 21 June 1926, BMW 1/ 6277: Tschichin.

⁵ "Generalsynode 1926. Missionarskonferenz," 05 November 1926, BMW 1/ 6620: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 1, 163.

letter to the German missionary home board, beseeching them to send more resources and support to China. In the letter, Ling pleaded:

We desperately need more Western missionaries. Currently there are only two Western missionaries and five missionary sisters in the field, our society's territories cover all of the north-eastern and central area of the Pearl River. Many mission stations and chapels have no Western missionaries, and much of our church property has been vandalized or occupied; many of our congregants no longer have spiritual guidance as a result. Please send five more missionaries to come and support the work. Beseech the World Lutheran Federation for our missionary and charitable work to continue.⁶

Three years later, however, Ling publicly retracted his support for his Western missionary friends: Ling was among a group of Christians who signed the "Protestant Manifesto," a document that denounced the foreign missionary enterprise as a "weapon of imperialism" and called for the expulsion of the Western missionary presence from China.⁷ The Protestant Manifesto led to the establishment of the state-sponsored Three Self Patriotic Church. Due to his signature, Communist hagiographers claimed him as one of their own after 1949. They referred to him as a patriot, who had, even during his time as a evangelist and pastor for the church, "always supported the work of the Chinese Communist revolution."⁸

How can we make sense of Ling, and others like him, who joined the Three-Self Patriotic Church? Much of the literature on the establishment of the Three-Self Patriotic Church has been surrounded in invective and polemic. To religious conservatives in the West, characters such as Ling were branded as traitors to the global Christian community. They collaborated with the Communists for politically expedient reasons, not spiritual ones: Christians like Ling Deyuan were pressured by the Communists into submission, and therefore betrayed their previous faith for the sake of survival.⁹ In this narrative, the true heroes—the authentic Christians—in China were figures such as Wang Mingdao and Watchman Nee: they refused to join the Three-Self Patriotic Church, and were persecuted and jailed as a result.¹⁰ Much of the literature on indigenous Christianity in China has

⁶ Ling Deyuan to Siegfried Knak, 02 June 1947, BMW 1/ 6610: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 5.

⁷ Originally published as "Zhongguo jidujiao zai xin zhongguo jianshezhong nuli de tujing 中國基督教在新中國建設中努力的途徑," *Renming Ribao* 人民日報, 23 September, 1923. The document is reprinted in Luo Guanzong 羅冠宗, ed., *Zhongguo Jidujiao san zi ai guo yun dong wen xuan: 1950-1992* 中國基督教三自愛國運動文選: 1950-1992 [Selected Documents from the Chinese Three-Self Patriotic Movement: 1950-1992] (Shanghai: Zhongguo Jidu jiao san zi ai guo yun dong wei yuan hui, 1993).

⁸ Shaoguan shi zhengxie xuexi he wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 韶關市政協學習和文史資料委員會, ed., *Shaoguan wenshi ziliao. Di sanshierji. Shaoguan lisbi mingren zhuan lue* 韶關文史資料. 第三十二集. 韶關歷史名人傳略. (Shaoguan: 2006).

⁹ See Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 200-201. A recent example of this type of condemnation of the Three Self Patriotic Church and the Christians involved with it is Liao Yiwu, *God is Red: The Secret Story of How Christianity Survived and Flourished in Communist China* (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

¹⁰ For more on Wang Mingdao and Watchman Nee see Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire*.

focused on figures such as these, as these figures are seen as the precursors to the underground church movement that has seen a revival in recent years.¹¹

Defenders of the Three-Self Patriotic Church see its theology as a sincere religious attempt to grapple with the complexities and difficulties posed by the Sinicization of Christianity in China.¹² These studies focus primarily on national-level religious leaders, such as Y. T. Wu, K. H. Ting, and T. C. Chao.¹³ By examining the roots of the liberal and progressive theology of national leaders in the Patriotic Church, these studies focus on continuity within the ideas of the liberal Chinese Christians. Rather than seeing cooperation with the Communists as a betrayal of authentic Christian belief, these works argue that collaboration was a sincere attempt by Christian theologians to work out the thorny theological question of how to be simultaneously Christian, Chinese, and Communist.

Ling Deyuan fits into neither of these narratives. He did not join the underground church. Nor did he study abroad and immerse himself in the progressive Social Gospel milieu of the divinity schools in the United States and Britain. If we placed the liberal collaborators on one end of the spectrum of conformity to the state and conservative resisters, Ling belonged to the majority of Chinese Christians living between these poles. He was, after all, only a mid-level operative, a pastor who had local and regional influence. But Ling's story directs us to the stories of other individuals who were responsible for the things that the missionaries left behind when they were expelled from China: he had to deal with problems from church buildings to the care-taking of individual souls in the congregation. What dominated Ling's thinking was not the question of orthodoxy and correct Christian practice, but how to maintain and sustain a church congregation in the face of troubling economic and political circumstances.

Thus, while the narratives of Christianity in China after the Communist Revolution have focused on the important relationship between religion and politics, theology and ideology, Ling's story points us to another dimension: the rise of economic sentiment. The early twentieth century in China saw a rise in economic thinking, or what Wen-hsin Yeh, translating from the Chinese, calls "economic sentiments." As Yeh argues, the Chinese "rearranged their ethics and rationality in accordance with the production of wealth."¹⁴ After the end of more than a decade of disastrous war with the Japanese, middle class and petty-bourgeois urbanites turned to Communism in the hopes of economic protection. The Nationalists had set up economic expectations of an economically paternalistic state during the war, and once those expectations no longer could be met, urbanites turned to the

¹¹ For an overview of this literature, see ch. 7 in Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

¹² See, for example, Philip L. Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China's United Front* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1988).

¹³ For more on Y. T. Wu, see Gao Wangzhi, "Y. T. Wu: A Christian Leader Under Communism," in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). For a biography of K. H. Ting, see Philip L. Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China: K.H. Ting and the Chinese Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007). For more on T. C. Chao, see Winfried Glüer, *Christliche Theologie in China: T. C. Chao, 1918-1956* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1979).

¹⁴ Wen-Hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843-1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 9.

Communist party, which promised a “radical reorganization of the Chinese state so that an invigorated Party-state will embrace and care for social justice and material well-being on behalf of the entire people.”¹⁵

And so it went for poor Chinese Christians: their lives too were dominated by economic thinking. As opposed to Shanghai urbanites, who obsessed over the production and retention of material wealth, the rural poor, however, were simply concerned with survival. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Western missionary societies, both Protestant and Catholic, had offered poor Chinese Christians a way to survive. The missionary society had acted as a state-within-a-state, establishing alternative educational programs, welfare institutions, and work. The Western missionary societies ran smoothly when it had solid financial support from Europe. Once the Western missionary societies themselves lost funding, the edifice crumbled. Chinese Christians turned to a new protector—the Chinese Communist party, whom they believed and hoped could preserve a modicum of religious freedom while also delivering the promises of economic justice. During the Cultural Revolution, Christianity in China took a battering, but it did survive, bruised but intact: today the Three-Self Patriotic Church continues to serve the faithful, and by all accounts, Christianity is expanding in China.¹⁶

Thus, the story of Ling Deyuan is one not only of Christianity’s survival in China, but also of its adaptation. Some have referred to Christian adaptation to local challenges as “syncretism,” an often pejorative term for “the replacement or dilution of the essential truths of the gospel through the incorporation of non-Christian elements.”¹⁷ This chapter sidesteps the discussion about whether the Chinese Christian forms were theologically orthodox or not. Rather, it focuses on the story of Chinese Christians and Christianity adapting and surviving in hostile political, economic, and social circumstances. By focusing on how Ling Deyuan and other Chinese Christians dealt with a series of challenges and authorities, this chapter illuminates the “inventiveness and resiliency” that Chinese Christians deployed in their encounters with both the foreign missionaries and the Communist state.¹⁸ Chinese Christians like Ling Deyuan faced choices much more complex than just “resistance” or “collaboration.” As Ryan Dunch writes about the relationship between Chinese Christianity and the Chinese Communist Party, “the control-and-resistance paradigm is insufficient to convey the complexity of these interactions.”¹⁹ This chapter elucidates the choices that Chinese Christians had to make when they joined the Berlin Missionary Society.

¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶ Statistics about the official number of Christians in China is often disputed. The PRC officially reports 13-15 million Christians. Western missionary groups argue that official PRC statistics ignore the underground churches; they estimate that there are 70 million Chinese Christians. See Daniel H. Bays, “Chinese Protestant Christianity Today,” *The China Quarterly* 174, no. 1 (2003): 488-504.

¹⁷ David F. Lindenfeld and Miles Richardson, eds., *Beyond Conversion and Syncretism: Indigenous Encounters with Missionary Christianity, 1800-2000* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 5.

¹⁸ Ibid., 8.

¹⁹ See Ryan Dunch, “Christianity and “Adaptation to Socialism,”” in *Chinese religiosities : afflictions of modernity and state formation*, ed. Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 156.

This chapter thus joins recent scholarship that has tried to sidestep writing about indigenous Christianity in what David Lindenfeld and Miles Richardson have called “dualistic terms.”²⁰ Moving beyond this binary requires us to acknowledge that in Christianity’s history, the practitioners of the faith have learned how to adapt the religion’s teachings to local conditions through selective decisions about what they accept or reject from the religion. The historian’s task is to understand and contextualize how different expressions of Christianity emerged, and how individual historical actors justified and understood their creative appropriation of the religion. And it is there, with the Chinese context, that I begin Ling Deyuan’s story: in Shixing County, the place of Ling’s birth.

Shixing as a Space

As I mentioned in chapter four, even though the BMS concentrated its work at first in the southern part of Guangdong Province, the missionaries soon traveled northeast. They established a major missionary station in Nanxiong (南雄縣) 1893 and another outpost in Shixing (始興縣) in 1899.

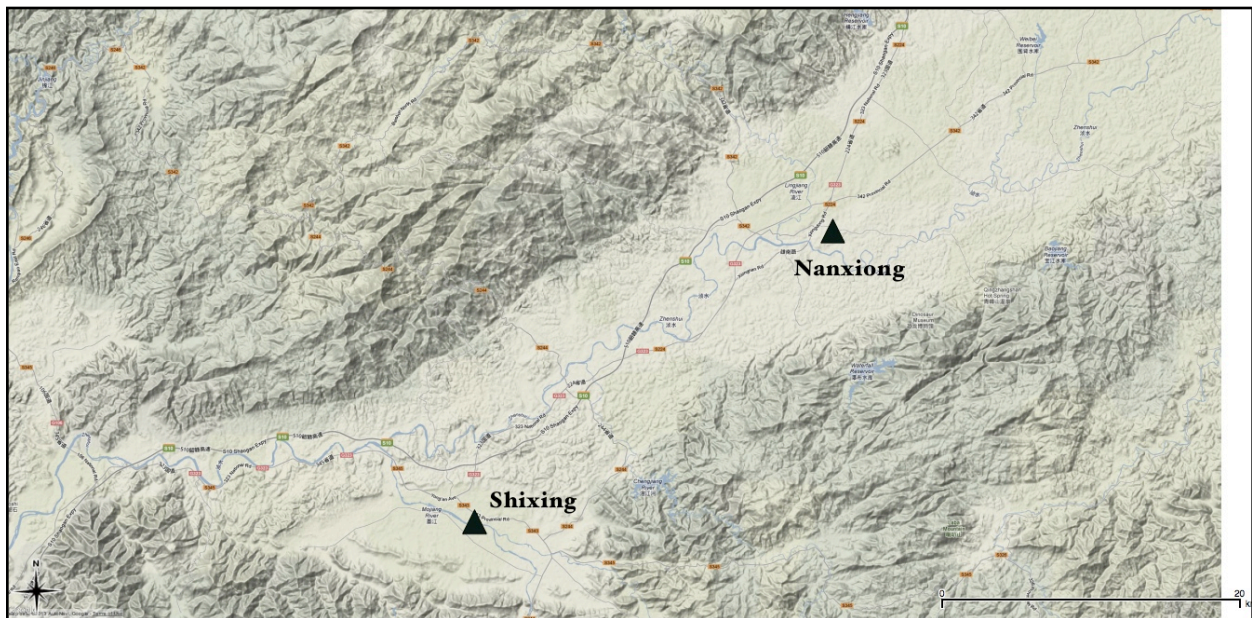
The BMS chose Shixing and Nanxiong for their strategic importance. The counties lie at the foot of a continuous mountain range known as the *Nanling* (南嶺), which marks the boundary between Central China and Southern China. The two counties historically served as a choking point: inland travelers or merchants sojourning from Central China to the south encountered Nanxiong and Shixing as their first station after crossing the mountains.²¹ When economic activity migrated during the Song and Ming dynasties (c. 9th century until the 16th century), Nanxiong and Shixing became major hubs of merchant transport.²² Nanxiong, for example, served as one of the primary depots for the salt trade, connecting the salt merchants of Central China and the merchants on the coasts. Yet, despite these intensifying trade routes, the mountains continued to act as a barrier, and the northeastern region of the province remained more connected with the southern coastal areas than with the Yangzi Valley in the North.²³

²⁰ Lindenfeld and Richardson, *Beyond Conversion and Syncretism*, 2.

²¹ Lin Lifang, *Nanxiong Zhubi fang yan zhi* 南雄珠璣方言志 [Dialects of the Nanxiong Zhuji Region] (Guangzhou: Jinan daxue chuban she [Jinan University Press], 1995), 2.

²² Ibid.

²³ Chen Da, *Emigrant Communities in South China: A Study of Overseas Migration and its Influence on Standards of Living and Social Change* (New York: Secretariat Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940), 16-17.



Map 6: Shixing and Nanxiong. Map data courtesy of Google. Note how the two counties are surrounded by mountain ranges.

Besides trade, Shixing and Nanxiong relied on agricultural production. Due to its moderate climate, high humidity, and clear seasons, the whole region was suited to agricultural production and forestry. Rice was the main product; Shixing, for example, was known as the “rice basket of northern Guangdong.”²⁴ The area also produced tobacco leaf, vegetable oils, jute fiber (for the production of textiles).²⁵ Farmers made up the majority of the population of the two counties.

Proximity to the mountain put any commercial activity in constant danger: the farming populations of Nanxiong and Shixing were constantly threatened by bandits and robbers, who ransacked the salt merchants and agricultural producers, and made a quick retreat to the mountains.²⁶ The mountainous regions were also particularly conducive to illegal, anti-state activity. Throughout the Song Dynasty, illegal salt merchants used Nanxiong as a way-station on a smuggling route from southern Guangdong to the central plains. These salt merchants employed major defensive units of local citizens and mercenaries to protect their wares from the government, and Nanxiong was the site of protracted battles between the state and its resisters.²⁷

Due to its position as a node for immigration and emigration, Shixing and Nanxiong became a hodgepodge of different cultures and dialects. The area contains four major dialect

²⁴ Shixing xian di fang zhi bian zuan wei yuan hui, ed., *Shixing xian zhi* 始興縣誌 [Gazetteer of Shixing County] (Guangzhou: Guangdong ren min chu ban she, 1997), 1.

²⁵ Ibid., 2.

²⁶ These are the mountain people that run throughout Southern China that James Scott writes about in the so-called “Zomia” Region. See James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

²⁷ See Guangdong sheng Nanxiong xian di fang zhi bian zuan wei yuan hui, ed., *Nanxiong xian zhi* 南雄縣誌 [Nanxiong County Gazetteer] (Guangzhou: Guangdong ren min chu ban she, 1991).

groups — Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkienese (a dialect that stems from Fujian), and a local Shixing form of speech.²⁸ In particular, Hakka culture dominated the region. The Hakka settled in northeastern Guangdong as early as the 13th century, during the Song dynasty.²⁹ The persistent Hakka legacy accounts for the support for Hong Xiuquan and the Taiping Rebels that the region's population demonstrated in the mid-1800s. One of the major Taiping rebels, who led an attack on the provincial government, hailed from Shixing.³⁰

This Babel of languages befuddled the missionaries. The Berlin missionary Heinrich Wahl, in 1924, talked about the difficulty of mastering all four languages in the region. In particular, the Shixing dialect was the hardest to understand.³¹ The missionaries thus relied heavily on local interpreters: linguistically talented interlocutors, such as Ling Deyuan, were important commodities.³² Missionaries also encountered a constantly changing local population, populace, as of waves of emigration characterized the region. In search of employment, Shixing and Nanxiong youth migrated first towards Guangzhou, and some continued to find work overseas. In some cases, the missionaries encouraged the Chinese Christians to emigrate to find better living conditions. They stressed to their congregants that exposure to Christianity prepared them for future success overseas.³³

The persistent waves of emigration and banditry stunted the northeastern region's potential for economic development, and the area was further ravaged by the Taiping Rebellion in the 1850s. Unlike Christian converts in Hong Kong, who became middlemen, translators, and upwardly mobile local elites, the Chinese Christians in these areas remained rural and poor.³⁴ Yet these agrarian poor became the objects of desire for multiple groups — the Christian missionaries throughout the 19th century, and the Communists in the 1920s and 1930s.

Becoming a Chinese Pastor

Ling Deyuan came from one of these poor families, from Shishixia village (始兴县狮石下村) in Shixing county. According to his Communist hagiographers, he loved “labor” ever since he was a young child, tending after cows and harvesting crops at the age of six or seven.³⁵ He had received education from Chinese private learning institutes (私塾) when he

²⁸ Lin Lifang, *Nanxiong Zbuji fang yan zhi*, 140.

²⁹ “Hakka Diaspora” in Melvin Ember, Carol R. Ember, and Ian A. Skoggard, eds., *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World* (New York: Springer, 2005), 93.

³⁰ Shixing xian di fang zhi bian zuan wei yuan hui, *Shixing xian zhi*, 2.

³¹ Heinrich Wahl to Siegfried Knak, 1 February 1924a, BMW 1/ 6254: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin, bd. 2.

³² Lehmann, *Zur Zeit und zur Unzeit*, 131.

³³ Julius Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft* (Berlin: Verlag der Buchhandlung der Berliner Evang. Missionsges, 1924), 542.

³⁴ For more on the upwardly mobile elites in Hong Kong, see Carl T. Smith, *Chinese Christians: Élites, Middlemen, and the Church in Hong Kong* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

³⁵ Shaoguan shi zhengxie xuexi he wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 韶關市政協學習和文史資料委員會, *Shaoguan wenshi ziliao*, 115.

was young, but dropped out because of poverty. Learning of the BMS's free elementary school, he enrolled.

The Berlin Missionary Society's schools were often the first encounter that local Chinese had with Europeans. Chinese schools were inaccessible to the children of farmers, and missionary schools offered poor Chinese a free education. The missionary school was also more egalitarian: the schools took both boys and girls.³⁶ Class sizes varied — according to the BMS's yearly report in 1908, the largest elementary school, in Lukeng (鹿坑), served close to 200 students; the smallest elementary school, in Nan'an (南安), enrolled ten.³⁷ Students entered at the ages of five or six, and graduated when they were twelve or thirteen years old.

The school curriculum contained a mixture of Chinese and Western ideas and a hybrid of secular and religious training. The priority of the school, the missionaries argued, “is to raise the youth for the Lord Jesus.”³⁸ The curricula of the schools thus stressed a familiarity with the Bible and Christian themes: the children learned Biblical history, sang church songs, and “shared stories about Heathen conversion.”³⁹ Even though the missionaries emphasized Christian education, however, they employed non-Christian Chinese to teach in their schools; indeed, the BMS missionaries stressed that they hired “heathens and Christians alike.”⁴⁰ Thus religious courses were supplemented with basic courses in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Students learned the classic Chinese texts, supplemented by Western or Christian infused themes. For example, missionaries and their Chinese assistants adapted the classic primer for teaching children how to read Chinese characters, the *Three Character Classic* (三字經 *Sanzijing*), injecting it with Christian ideas. By 1908, the total number of students numbered 931.

For the majority of Chinese students, education ended with the elementary school, but the missionaries selected a small number of Chinese Christian boys whom they found talented and devout to continue their education at the middle school (*Mittelschule*) located in Lukeng (鹿坑). The missionaries were selective: in 1908, only forty-four students enrolled in the middle school, around 5% of the total population of students. The curriculum at the

³⁶ For more on the education of Chinese girls, see the essays in Jessie G. Lutz, *Pioneer Chinese Christian Women: Gender, Christianity, and Social Mobility* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2010). For a good overview, see Idem, “Women’s Education and Social Mobility,” in *Pioneer Chinese Christian Women: Gender, Christianity, and Social Mobility*, ed. Jessie G. Lutz (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2010).

³⁷ *Jahresbericht der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1908* (Berlin: Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1908), 256-257. The discrepancy correlates to the year that the mission station was founded. Nan’an was a relatively new mission society, founded in 1903, while Lukeng was founded earlier in 1897. But numbers were also affected by the local situation in each mission station, as well as the amount of local resistance. Nan’an, for example, had a long history of anti-Christian movements, and the missionaries faced constant threats to their work there. Also see Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, 537.

³⁸ Hermann Theodor Wangemann, *Missions-Ordnung der Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden zu Berlin* (Berlin: 1882), 41.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, 514-515; George Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

middle school continued teaching the students in the subjects that they had started, and the students learned an additional trade or craft, so that they could also bring in some income.⁴¹

After two to three years of training in the middle school, gifted students were encouraged to enter the seminary for evangelists and catechists (*Predigerseminar*). The distinction between catechists and evangelists were of age and theological training. Catechists were boys, like Ling Deyuan, who had entered the BMS's elementary school system when they were young, passed through their middle school, and then entered the *Predigerseminar*. Evangelists, on the other hand, were older congregation members who had converted to Christianity and entered the seminary later in life. Located in Guangzhou, the seminary offered provincial students like Ling Deyuan their first taste of city life. Few seminarians stayed in Guangzhou after finishing their education. Instead, the Chinese seminarians were educated to return to the rural areas from whence they came and eventually establish independent congregations.⁴²

To prepare the Chinese for independent ministry, the seminary offered a diverse range of courses. It naturally emphasized theological training. It required students to take a series of classes in scriptural interpretation, preaching, and biblical history. The primary language of the seminary was Mandarin and the local Guangdong dialects. For example, missionaries and their assistants taught catechism classes in Mandarin, Hakka, and Cantonese. In the late nineteenth century, the Chinese Christians did not receive training in Western languages; very few of the Chinese assistants spoke German. By the early twentieth century, however, missionaries found it urgent to teach secular and Western subjects alongside their religious instruction. In 1904, the Qing dynasty radically restructured its educational system, abolishing the civil service examinations in 1905.⁴³ Elementary education was now compulsory for all boys, and the new schools followed Western and Japanese models, incorporating science, arithmetic, and history into its curricula.⁴⁴ Observing the rise of these competitors, the missionaries expanded the seminary's course offering. They now taught English, German, math, history, geography, and natural sciences such as physics, chemistry, and zoology.⁴⁵

To graduate from seminary, the Chinese Christians had to pass a series of oral and written examinations, administered at the BMS's annual synod in Guangzhou.⁴⁶ Noticeably, seminary candidates were tested only in theology, not in secular subjects: their exams included sections on dogmatics, liturgy, church history, catechism, and homiletics. Ling Deyuan, for example, took the test on April 21st, 1906, when he was twenty-three. In the section on theology, he received questions such as "How did sin come into the world?" Candidates were also asked about missionary method, such as "how should one prepare for a

⁴¹ Wangemann, *Missions-Ordnung*, 42-43.

⁴² The Berlin missionary Wilhelm Hanspach established the first Gehilfenschule in 1867 in the Hakka region of Danshui.

⁴³ Elizabeth R. VanderVen, *A School in Every Village: Educational Reform in a Northeast China County, 1904-31* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁴⁵ G. Vogt, "Kulturexamen der Evangelisten," 22 October 1926, BMW 1/ 6620: Generalsynode in China, Bd. 1, 262-263.

⁴⁶ Wangemann, *Missions-Ordnung*, 61.

sermon?”⁴⁷ The exam culminated in a section on homiletics. Students preached a sermon, on a bible passage chosen by their examiners, in front of the German missionaries gathered at the Synod. When the seminarians finished, the missionaries graded, transcribed, translated, and delivered the exam results back to Germany, where the missionary home board verified the results. Upon approval, the Chinese Christian received his ordination papers, earning him the title of vicar, or assistant pastor (*Vikar*, or 副牧師).⁴⁸ Ordination signaled the final stop on a long and rigorous process. For Chinese Christians, such as Ling Deyuan, who entered the missionary society when they were children, the process took sixteen years and multiple exams, comparable to what a pastor in Germany had to withstand.

Ordination also meant that the Chinese *Vikar* had ascended to the top rung of the institutional hierarchy of the Chinese assistants. As described in chapter three, the Berlin missionaries instituted hierarchical categories for their Chinese assistants (*Gehilfen*). These hierarchical categories determined the salaries of the Chinese *Gehilfen*. Right below the Chinese *Vikar*, in terms of pay, were the catechists and evangelists. Both had received rudimentary theological training from missionaries, and were ready to engage in street evangelism and public preaching.⁴⁹ The lowest paid *Gehilfen* were the Bible peddlers who distributed evangelical literature in the field (*Kolporteurs* and *Bibelfrau*). To incentivize loyal service to the society, the BMS offered the *Vikar* salary increases after the third, seventh, and fifteenth years of service. However, catechists and evangelists did not receive salary increases based on their years of service. On the whole, salaries were paltry. In 1882, after three years of service, a *Vikar* earned 9 Dollars a month. Their pay doubled to 18 dollars by the end of 16 years of service. In comparison, a catechist made 5 dollars, while an evangelist was paid 4 dollars a month.⁵⁰ In spite of a stable monthly income, the BMS’s workers, like their congregants, were still poor.

In response to this widespread social poverty, the missionary Frederick Leuschner argued that the BMS should at least provide for the most basic needs of their Chinese Christian assistants. After he visited all of the congregations in Shixing in December of 1906, Leuschner concluded that the region remained largely “un-Churched” because of the meager financial support that the Chinese evangelists received from the society. Leuschner noted that the Chinese assistants, most of whom had children, could barely feed their families, let alone commit themselves to converting the nation.

Hungry, poorly clothed people have no heart for the congregation...Hungry, poorly clothed people can not proclaim the Word of God with joy and peace. They have too many worries about food, drink, and clothing.⁵¹

⁴⁷ August Kollecker, “Protokoll über das Examen von 3 Seminaristen am 21. April 1906,” 21 April 1906, BMW 1 / 886: Missionsgehilfen, Examen, 288-298.

⁴⁸ Copies of exams can be found in BMW 1/882: Missionsgehilfen in China. Miscellanea; BMW 1/ 885: Gehilfen in China/Oberland; and BMW 1/ 888: Examen und Ordination der Gehilfen.

⁴⁹ For more on the process of examination that would lead to ordination, see the next chapter.

⁵⁰ “Geldangelegenheit,” 27 June 1882, BMW 1 / 882: Missionsgehilfen in China. Miscellanea.

⁵¹ Friedrich Leuschner, “Visitation in Tschichin vom 10ten November bis 11ten Dezember,” December 1906, BMW 1/ 6277: Tschichin, 31-37.

Thus, even though the missionaries feared the “rice Christian,” they also acknowledged that religious work could not be separate from the financial needs of their assistants.

A position with the BMS offered low compensation, but it nonetheless afforded the chance for upward mobility. Education, previously accessible only to local elites, was now an option.⁵² For ethnic and linguistic minorities such as the Hakka, who had been betrayed and abandoned by the Qing state after the Taiping Rebellion, Christianity empowered and legitimated their existence. The church, as an institution, also served as a physical site of protection from marauding bandits.⁵³

Sites of Conflict and Cooperation: The Gehilfen Conference

Protection and stability came with strings attached: the missionaries made demands on their assistants, expecting them to conform to the mission society’s regulations. Missionaries wanted the Christians they employed to become both “competent theologians” and religious and moral paragons.⁵⁴ The missionaries communicated their desires to their workers at the annual *Gehilfen* conferences.⁵⁵ As we saw in chapter four, the missionary society established the *Gehilfen* conference in 1905. The conferences served as a moment for reinforcing orthodoxy: the records of the *Gehilfen* conferences contain numerous instances of missionary concerns over correct belief. In the 1909 *Gehilfen* conference, for example, one Chinese assistant gave a presentation entitled “How far has atheism spread among Gehilfen, students and Christians?”⁵⁶ Shocked by this title, the missionary leadership in Germany responded,

It is horrifying that the question ‘how far has atheism spread among our Chinese assistants, students and congregants?’ is even broached in this conference! We have never even heard anyone talk of ‘atheist Christians,’ not to mention ‘atheist *Gehilfen*.’ If we were to discover that such atheists existed, then they must be driven out of our congregations.⁵⁷

While the missionaries hoped to use the conference to discipline and bring together all of the Chinese Christian helpers, the records of the *Gehilfen* conference reveal numerous instances of dissension and conflict between the missionary supervisors and their

⁵² For a good overview of Chinese education, see VanderVen, *A School in Every Village*. See also Glen Peterson, Ruth Hayhoe, and Yongling Lu, eds., *Education, Culture, and Identity in Twentieth-century China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

⁵³ See Nicole Constable, “Christianity and Hakka Identity,” in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

⁵⁴ “The Committee to Friedrich Leuschner,” 09 February 1910, BMW 1 / 888: Examen und Ordination der Gehilfen, 12.

⁵⁵ For the decision to establish a *Gehilfen* conference, see chapter four. Many of the records of the *Gehilfen* conferences can be found in BMW 1 / 884: Gehilfen in China; BMW 1 / 885: Gehilfen in China / Oberland; and BMW 1 / 890: Gehilfenkonferenzen in China / Oberland.

⁵⁶ Friedrich Leuschner, “Gehilfenkonferenz 1909,” 29 November 1909, BMW 1 / 890: Gehilfenkonferenzen in China / Oberland, 30.

⁵⁷ The Committee to Friedrich Leuschner, 09 February 1910, BMW 1 / 890: Gehilfenkonferenzen in China / Oberland, 34.

subordinates. While missionaries knew that they needed to foster more spiritual maturity, they rarely agreed on the exact ways to encourage such maturation. The conferences also became sites of argument among the Chinese Christians themselves, as they used the opportunity to settle old scores in front of their supervisors.⁵⁸ Rather than encouraging further cooperation, then, the *Gehilfen* conferences often served to drive a wedge within the Chinese Christian communities, and as a result, between the missionary and the Chinese Christian.

The case of the *Vikar* Tschin Jin Hui highlights some of these tensions and conflicts. In October of 1917, Tschin was accused of raping the wife of a member of Tschin's congregation, Phan Jinschin. According to Phan's testimony, one night in January of 1914, "Tschin had came naked in the unlocked room of Mrs. Phan and forced her to engage in sexual intercourse."⁵⁹ Tschin had been accused of sexual misconduct before: he had four charges of sexual affairs pending.⁶⁰ One Chinese *Vikar*, with the last name Jen, attributed Tschin's bad behavior to alcohol: Tschin "loved wine more than was allowed."⁶¹

The missionaries in charge of adjudicating Tschin's case offered a brief biographical sketch: Tschin was born in 1869 and had entered the Berlin missionary school at the age of 13.⁶² He was baptized at the age of sixteen, graduating from the *Predigerseminar* at 21.⁶³ At the age of 30, Tschin was ordained a *Vikar*, and he was assigned to the station of Lukeng and the surrounding outer stations. He later became the principal of an elementary school.⁶⁴ Tschin had spent his whole adult life with the BMS, and he had developed an especially close relationship with the missionary Emil Gramatte, who had arrived in China in 1911.

Gramatte vouched for Tschin's character, arguing that he was well-loved by the congregation and had a good reputation in Lukeng.⁶⁵ Gramatte defended Tschin against Jen's accusations by casting suspicion on Jen's character. "Jen and Tschin had been long-time rivals," and the attacks on Tschin made him a "victim of personal animosities."⁶⁶ Tschin himself agreed with Gramatte's characterization, blaming the charges on personal rivalries.⁶⁷ Gramatte pleaded to the missionary leadership, "We must be extraordinarily careful; we should not rashly expel a man who has had 37 years of service."⁶⁸

Kollecker, however, was unconvinced by Gramatte's pleas, citing Tschin's inability to explain his actions or offer an alibi.⁶⁹ Moreover, Kollecker argued that the trust between

⁵⁸ Friedrich Leuschner, "Gehilfenkonferenz 1909," 29 November 1909, BMW 1/ 890: Gehilfenkonferenzen in China / Oberland, 29.

⁵⁹ "Klage gegen Vikar Tschin Yin Yui," 18 June 1921, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China, 1-3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1.

⁶¹ Emil Gramatte, "Bericht des Missionars E. Gramatte, die Disziplinarverfahren gegen Tschinjinhui, Sungtijin und Wugongjen betreffend," 27 July 1920, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China, 5-12.

⁶² "Uebersetzung des Briefes von Vikar Tschinjinjiu," 01 January 1918, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China, 9-12.

⁶³ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁵ "Abschrift der Akten Fall Vikar Tschin jin jiu," 18 June 1921, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China, 29.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ "Uebersetzung des Briefes von Vikar Tschinjinjiu," 01 January 1918, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China, 11.

⁶⁸ "Abschrift der Akten Fall Vikar Tschin jin jiu," 18 June 1921, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China, 30.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 32.

Tschin and the local community was eroded because of the incident. Kollecker was less concerned with Tschin's innocence, and more concerned about how Tschin's behavior diminished the BMS's prestige among the locals. Ignoring Gramatte's fervent protests, Kollecker expelled Tschin from the missionary society. In a personal letter to Gramatte, Kollecker wrote, "I urge you to abandon your mistrust of my leadership."⁷⁰ Upon hearing of the news, Tschin wrote a letter to the missionary leadership, accepting the BMS's decision, but continuing to protest his innocence: "I write this letter with tears in my eyes [...]. The Holy Spirit is the mother of my life, and he will never leave me. I will put my whole trust and heart in the Holy Trinity, who has redeemed me."⁷¹

Gramatte did not give up on the case. He appealed to the German home board three years later, arguing that a great injustice had been done to "a man who had worked for almost four decades in our midst."⁷² Gramatte requested a less punitive sentence for Tschin. Gramatte's appeals led to a re-opening of the case. After reviewing the case in 1921, the new missions director Siegfried Knak wrote that he and the rest of the Committee members had "strong suspicions about whether the right decision had been made."⁷³ They hoped to reinstate Tschin. But Tschin had emigrated to Borneo immediately after the incident, and the missionaries were unable to contact him.

Tschin's case was not abnormal: personal problems occupied the majority of the conflicts between missionaries and their Chinese Christian assistants. Missionaries dismissed assistants for smoking opium, gambling, or other behavior that the missionary society forbade. The missionaries admitted fallibility. The mission society instituted a system of appeals, and disciplinary actions were sometimes retracted. In 1903, the Chinese assistant Ma Min Than, who worked in Shixing, was dismissed from the ministry because he was found selling opium.⁷⁴ After his expulsion from the society, Ma fell into "the most bitter distress."⁷⁵ He returned to the BMS, "fell on his knees," and begged the missionary leaders to reinstate him.⁷⁶ After the missionaries ascertained that Ma had stopped dealing opium, they allowed him to return to the society.⁷⁷

One hotly debated issue that the missionaries debated concerned the question of Christians who continued to engage in traditional Chinese practices such as polygamy. Missionaries were uncertain about the question of Chinese assistants who converted to Christianity after they had already taken multiple wives. One *Vikar* named Song, for example, was betrothed to a woman when he was a child, but took a second wife as an adult without ending his first marriage. He was a devoted Christian, who tithed regularly

⁷⁰. Ibid.

⁷¹. "Uebersetzung des Briefes von Vikar Tschinjinjiu," 01 January 1918, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China, 12.

⁷². Emil Gramatte, "Bericht des Missionars E. Gramatte, die Diziplinarverfahren gegen Tschinjinhui, Sungtijin und Wugongjen betreffend," 27 July 1920, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China, 5.

⁷³. Siegfried Knak to the Senatspräsident Schmölder and Landgerichtsrat Hornemann, 18 June 1921, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China.

⁷⁴. Karl Zehnel, "Ausserordentlicher nach Antrag betreffend: Wiederaufnahme des Christen Ma min than in die christl. Kirche," 01 August 1905, BMW 1/ 6277: Tschichin, 17-18.

⁷⁵. Ibid., 17.

⁷⁶. Ibid.

⁷⁷. Ibid.

and dedicated his energies to the missionary effort. The missionaries examining the case asked, “Shouldn’t we keep such a man in our service?”⁷⁸ Missionaries also debated whether they should allow Chinese Christians to participate in public ancestral worship or condone poor families selling their children—as the missionaries described, “auctioning their children as slaves to heathens.”⁷⁹

While the records of the *Gehilfen* conferences highlighted moments of conflict between the missionaries and the Chinese Christians, they also revealed instances of cooperation and negotiation. The missionaries took the objections and complaints of their Chinese assistants seriously. Above all, they listened to Chinese Christian complaints about how European missionaries violated Chinese social norms and taboos. In 1910, for example, the missionaries wanted to decorate the altar with crucifixes, candles, and European pictures presenting the “naked” image of Christ.⁸⁰ The missionaries argued that the “presentation of the Crucifix and candles was something especially Lutheran. Other Lutheran churches naturally also have them, and many of our fellow brothers touch the crucifix on their walls as a show of devotion.”⁸¹ During the *Gehilfen* conference, however, the Chinese *Gehilfen* voted to remove the decorations from the altar. Paintings of a half-naked Jesus, they argued, “is an aesthetic taboo among the Chinese.”⁸² The Chinese insisted that the icons created a distance between the congregation and people in the community. The crucifix and portrait also confused non-Christian Chinese, making them think that the BMS was “half-Catholic.”⁸³ After hearing the arguments of the *Gehilfen*, the missionaries deferred to their Chinese assistants and got rid of the devotional objects.

The missionaries also carefully considered the financial requests of their Chinese helpers. At the *Gehilfen* conferences, the Chinese Christians collectively bargained for a pension and higher wages. In 1911, Ling Deyuan proposed the establishment of a pension fund, hoping that the missionary society could provide financial support for older *Gehilfen* who had devoted their lives to the missionary society’s work.⁸⁴ The Superintendent Wilhelm Leuschner and other missionaries concurred that such compensation was necessary. Since the BMS *Gehilfen* earned much less than the Chinese working for American missionary societies, the BMS agreed that a pension fund would help to make up the difference and reward loyalty.⁸⁵ The missionaries helped the Chinese Christians appeal to the leadership in Germany to establish such a fund.

In Germany, some members of the Committee approved the proposal, while others wanted first to survey how other missionary groups handled the same situation. The mission

⁷⁸ “Protokoll der Synode Canton-Unterland von 9. bis 12. August 1910,” 12 August 1910, BMW 1/ 6530: Synode China-Unterland, bd. 8.

⁷⁹ Friedrich Leuschner, “Gehilfenkonferenz 1909,” 29 November 1909, BMW 1/ 890: Gehilfenkonferenzen in China / Oberland, 29.

⁸⁰ “An das Comitee,” 30 September 1910, BMW 1/ 6603: China, Allgemeines, bd. 2.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ “Abschrift aus Protokoll der Gehilfenkonferenz vom 17. - 19. März 1911 in Schaugwan,” 19 March 1911, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China, 1-2.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

inspector Glüer wrote to the directors of the other German-speaking organizations in China, the Rhenish Missionary Society and the Basel Missionary Society, to inquire whether they instituted a pension for their Chinese assistants. Glüer thought that the BMS should follow the model that these older missionary societies had set.⁸⁶ The missionary director of the Rhenish Missionary Society, Eduard Kriele, responded to Glüer, enclosing the statutes of the his society's pension plan. Following Kriele's lead, Glüer and the other BMS leaders then unanimously approved of a pension fund for all Chinese *Gehilfen*, and they copied the Rhenish Society's system. Chinese Christians *Gehilfen* would contribute two percent of their income to the fund.⁸⁷ Assistants who retired with fewer than ten years of service would earn 25% of their previous income in retirement, while those who devoted between 10 and 25 years of service would earn 40% of their previous income. Workers with more than 25 years of service would earn 50% of their income.⁸⁸

Buoyed by their successes, the following year, 1912, the Chinese Christians negotiated for a salary increase. In a petition signed by all of the *Gehilfen* in Guangdong, they explained that they needed higher wages because of uncontrollable inflation.⁸⁹ Years of bad harvests, civil unrest, and rebellions had led to sky-rocketing prices for rice, vegetables, oil, meat. "At the very least," the petitioners wrote, "we need an extra fifteen cents per person daily. Some families have six or seven people. A five-person family needs an extra twenty dollars a year in order to survive."⁹⁰ The missionaries at the conference relayed their requests to the leadership. In May of 1912, the Committee acquiesced in the Chinese demands, offering a monthly raise of two dollars, slightly more than the minimum amount that the Chinese had requested.⁹¹

The Committee committed themselves to these wage increases because they feared losing their Christian assistants to both secular and religious competition. After the Chinese Revolution of 1911, the BMS had seen an exodus of Chinese preachers from its ranks. Instead of staying in the society, *Gehilfen* wanted to become government officials, and many enlisted for the bureaucratic exams.⁹² The pay of a government bureaucrat exceeded that of a worker with the BMS. The BMS also lost assistants to other missionary societies; the Anglo-Americans paid better.⁹³ The BMS also feared competition from Catholic missionary societies. BMS missionaries recognized that the Catholic catechists were paid much less than the Protestants.⁹⁴ But the Catholics nonetheless submitted themselves to a much harsher lifestyle. The missionary inspector Gustav Knak noted that the "Catholics run a

⁸⁶ Glüer to the Basel Missionary Society, 07 June 1911, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China.

⁸⁷ Wilhelm Glüer, "Anlage. Statut für eine Gehilfen-Pensionskasse der Berliner Mission," 04 November 1911, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China, 51-61.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁸⁹ August Kollecker, "Uebersetzung," 23 February 1912, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ The Committee to August Kollecker, 04 May 1912, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China.

⁹² August Kollecker to the Committee, 03 September 1912, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China.

⁹³ Gustav Knak to Herrn Stadtpfarrer Pfisterer, May 1913, BMW 1/ 884: Gehilfen in China.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

much cheaper operation, because they definitely live much less hygienic lives than our missionaries.”⁹⁵

In spite of the BMS’s reluctance about indigenization and its desire to discipline and control Chinese morality before the First World War, its missionaries did listen to Chinese demands and negotiate with them. At the annual *Gebilfen* conferences, missionaries tried to remind their Chinese assistants of correct moral behavior and to inculcate more orthodox ideas. But the Chinese Christians used the conference as a site to voice their own opinions and desires. Even though the missionaries held most of the financial power, the Chinese had leverage: they knew local customs and taboos. More importantly, they provided the scarcest commodity of all: willing labor. The Germans had to hold on to any dependable workers they could find. Therefore even Chinese expelled from the missionary society were given the opportunity to appeal and re-enter. The missionaries caved. When Chinese requested better working wages and pensions, strict as the missionaries were in disciplining their employees, they nonetheless listened to dissent and responded to Chinese criticism of their work.

Chinese Christians and the Push for Independence

As we saw in chapter four, after the First World War the BMS leadership pushed vigorously for the establishment of an independent Chinese Church. In 1926, the Berlin leadership agreed to begin their experiment with church independence in Shixing, and they wanted to appoint Ling as pastor to lead the congregation there. The debate over whether to choose Shixing for independence began in 1922. For some missionaries, Shixing seemed the ideal site to experiment with Chinese self-governance. The risks were lower, since the missionaries had invested less capital in rural Shixing than in urban missionary stations such as Guangzhou. Shixing also had advantages. Even though the station was located in a poor and rural area, with two hundred regular attendees, it boasted one of the BMS’s most well-attended congregations.⁹⁶ The missionaries also felt that they had discovered the perfect person for the job in Ling Deyuan. Ling was a Shixing native, and the missionaries found him a dependable figure. At the Shanghai conference, Ling had been the BMS’s representative to other missionary societies. The missionaries thus charged Ling with the task of building alliances with Chinese employed in other missionary societies.⁹⁷

Ling Deyuan proved to be a willing leader who took the challenge of independence seriously. He traveled throughout Shixing, trying to convince Chinese Christians that they needed to assume more responsibility for local Church affairs. The missionary Karl Zehnel accompanied Ling on his trips to the countryside, and noted how impressed he had been with Ling’s energy and devotion to the cause. Zehnel also reported that the Chinese seemed to accept the push with enthusiasm. Zehnel informed his missionary supervisors that “in all

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ See Heinrich Wahl, “Jahresbericht der Station Tschichin (Chihing für 1925),” 01 January 1926, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

⁹⁷ See Ibid.

markets where we have chapels, people understand the importance of independence.”⁹⁸
“Above all,” he argued,

it seems to me important that the initiatives for self-administration are not coming from the mouths of the Europeans [...]. It must become clear to the Chinese Christians that we must either follow this path of independence or abandon the mission altogether. We no longer have any alternatives.⁹⁹

Sensing the groundswell of support for Chinese Church independence, Ling pushed local leaders to act immediately. The parishes formed congregational committees, each consisting of two people who collected tithes for individual congregations. Ling was cautiously optimistic about the new funds ability to bring in the amount of revenue that they needed.¹⁰⁰

Not all BMS missionaries shared Ling’s optimism. Heinrich Wahl contradicted Ling and Zehnel’s rosy view of Chinese interest in independence. “It pains me to say,” Wahl wrote, “but none of our Chinese Christians have demonstrated any interest in implementing the new Church constitution and taking steps towards church independence.”¹⁰¹ Instead, Wahl witnessed half-hearted and haphazard attempts among Chinese church leaders. Wahl informed missionary leaders in Germany,

If the assistants and Chinese Christians felt urged to become independent from the foreigners, then they would have employed every possible means to support and strive for this goal... Unfortunately, the desire for independence and freedom is not proceeding on the right track.¹⁰²

Wahl also criticized the leadership for turning over leadership of Shixing station to Ling: he doubted Ling’s abilities. Wahl wrote that the congregation needed a European missionary to help develop the faith of the newly converted; Chinese Christians were not yet ready to assume the responsibility for managing the station without European supervision: “a Chinese pastor does not have the necessary energy to maintain the work.”¹⁰³ The missionary station’s location in the mountains exposed it to constant raids, causing many of the older Christians to stay away from the Church. Even though the Shixing church had healthy attendance, church-goers were primarily younger, new Christians. Wahl expressed doubts of that the churches in Shixing could free themselves of missionary oversight within the near future.

⁹⁸ Ling Deyuan, “Tagebuch Tschichin pro Quartal 1923,” 30 March 1923, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin, 240.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Heinrich Wahl to Siegfried Knak, 1 February 1924b, BMW 1/ 6254: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin, bd. 2, 261.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Heinrich Wahl, “Bemerkungen zur Frage der Besetzung Tschichins,” 21 June 1926, BMW 1/ 6277: Tschichin.

Indigenization and its Discontents: Financial Difficulties

Wahl's words proved prophetic. Within less than a year, Ling's optimism for Chinese Church independence had faded. When Ling presented a report at the annual Synodal meeting in 1927, he complained about the slow rate of indigenization in the congregations. The Chinese congregants, Ling explained, denigrated the Chinese preachers as leaches: "all the Chinese preachers do is sit at home and eat rice that the congregation has so diligently offered to them."¹⁰⁴ Ling argued that it was disgraceful that these attitudes existed, especially if the accusations about BMS preachers were untrue. In his remarks, Ling reminded the Chinese pastors that the missionary supervisors in Germany planned to decrease their funding to China, and the Chinese needed to shoulder more of the responsibility.¹⁰⁵

The previously optimistic Karl Zehnel agreed with Ling's assessment. In a 1927 letter to the Committee in Germany, Zehnel noted that he felt a "palpable mistrust" of the new Church constitution among the Chinese assistants.¹⁰⁶ Zehnel reported that the Chinese preachers feared European abandonment of the missionary work once the Chinese demonstrated signs of congregational independence. And many Chinese preachers, Zehnel charged, refused to follow the ideas outlined in the new constitution because they feared the withdrawal of European financial support. The Chinese congregants proffered that the annual tithe of 75 cents was too onerous for their rural population, but Zehnel believed that the Chinese were uninterested in pursuing the implementation of the new constitution.¹⁰⁷

In addition to than blaming the Chinese pastors, Ling attributed the slow adoption of indigenization to the Chinese congregants themselves. The amount of money they collected barely covered the wages of the local Chinese staff, and the majority of Chinese Christians resisted the calls to tithe. The missionary society continued to subsidize more costly daily items, such as chapel repairs, replenishing Church supplies, and printing more Christian tracts. The missionaries hoped to encourage more tithing by accepting non-monetary donations. Thus they allowed the Chinese to donate "natural goods, such as rice, timber, eggs, if a sow has a lot of piglets, pounds of mushrooms or half or a quarter load of paper: all of the goods that the people in the congregation sell or buy."¹⁰⁸

For Ling and other missionary leaders, the poverty that plagued the Shixing church reflected a "lack of spiritual faith" and distrust of Chinese Church leadership. Hermeneutical suspicion operated among the Chinese congregants, as well as within the missionary leadership. Just as the missionaries and Chinese leaders feared the infiltration of "rice Christians" into the mission society, so too did the individual Chinese Church

¹⁰⁴ Karl Zehnel, "Nachtrag zum Bericht Tschichin," 04 November 1927, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Karl Zehnel, "1. Vierteljahr 1927. Namyung," 31 March 1927, BMW 1 / 6238: Berichte der Missionsstation Namchiung, Bd. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Karl Zehnel, "Bericht Namyung für das Vierteljahr Juli-Okt. 1927," 12 November 1927, BMW 1 / 6238: Berichte der Missionsstation Namchiung, Bd. 2.

congregants fear corruption in the Church. The Chinese suspected the Chinese Church leaders used the money that they collected inappropriately. One missionary commented: “The Chinese church members see the financial responsibility laid out in the Church constitution as a tax, similar to the ones levied by the state. All of the enlightened talk of indigenization has been thrown into the wind.”¹⁰⁹ Moreover, Chinese Christians expected the BMS to offer them the same amount of legal local protection that it had offered in the past. One Chinese Christian in Nanxiong county approached his Karl Zehnel, accusing the Germans of abandoning him in a local dispute that he had with a fellow villager. Zehnel asked how often he had attended church services and whether he tithed regularly. A fellow Chinese Christian laughed: “he never comes and never contributes!” The missionary replied: “Then you are absolutely not a Christian, and your affairs should be handled according to the Nanxiong government: our pastors should not and cannot help you there.”¹¹⁰

The missionaries reported that reluctance to tithe existed not only among the rural poor, but among the richer members of the congregation as well. Zehnel wrote about one of the three richest families the Nanxiong area, who had made their fortunes through rice and tobacco farming. One of the family members joined the BMS congregation there. In spite of the family’s wealth, he was notoriously cheap, and tithed a paltry sum to the church. Zehnel remarked bitterly that the family had never invited the missionaries to a cup of tea. The family refused to spend money on medicine, even though one of their family members was suffering from a painful liver disease. Zehnel concluded, “How difficult it will be for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven!”¹¹¹

By 1929, Ling was lamenting that in spite of four years of arduous work, he had failed to solidify the church’s financial standing; the coffers of the churches remained empty and “spiritual immaturity” reigned. Nonetheless, a consensus existed within the congregations: the Chinese Christians agreed that they should “work much harder” for the Church, and work together to help make the congregations “stronger and more independent.”¹¹² Ling also noted slivers of optimism. Despite only slow growth in financial independence, the church itself continued to grow: the main parish in Shixing county now counted one hundred congregants.¹¹³

External Threats

Compounding the internal problems of the congregation were external threats: throughout the 1920s, a rising tide of anti-Christian activity spread throughout the region, and the country. Anti-Christian crusaders waged their battle in the name of anti-

¹⁰⁹ Heinrich Wahl, “Arbeitsbericht der Station Tsichin (Chihing vom I. I. - 30. VI. 1925),” 30 June 1925, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

¹¹⁰ Karl Zehnel, “1. Vierteljahr 1927. Namyung,” 31 March 1927, BMW 1 / 6238: Berichte der Missionsstation Namchiung, Bd. 2.

¹¹¹ Idem, “Tagebuch. Pro IV. Quartal 1921,” December 1922, BMW 1 / 6237: Berichte der Missionsstation Namchiung, Bd. 1, 154.

¹¹² Ling Deyuan, “Bericht Tschichin des. P. Lin det en über die 3. u. 4. Quartal,” 15 January 1929, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

¹¹³ Ibid.

imperialism, hoping to drive the foreign religion out of China.¹¹⁴ The movement spread throughout rural regions at a rapid pace. Ling had noticed the influence of anti-Christian rhetoric in 1926, the year that he began to assumed leadership of Shixing. “The anti-imperialist movement has spread throughout the countryside in the form of newspaper reports and articles, as well as pamphlets and speeches,” Ling reported.¹¹⁵ The leaders of the anti-Christian movement had received their education almost exclusively from either “government schools or the military,” and posed a true threat to the missionary society’s educational programs. Ling worried about the younger Christians, who were still “weak in the faith” and wondered if they were swayed by the anti-Christian campaign.¹¹⁶ The sentiment was soon transformed into altercations as opponents of “imperialism” directly impeded on Ling’s work. During a 1929 meeting for all Chinese evangelists in his congregation, two anti-Christian officers stood at the door of the chapel, obstructing entrance. They shouted at the Chinese evangelists: “inside these doors are the imperialists, who try to harm and injure our people! Down with the imperialists! Abandon the chapel!”¹¹⁷

And by the mid-1920s, the Chinese Christians were noting an even larger threat looming on the horizon: Communism. The Chinese Communist Party drew upon the anti-imperialist movement sweeping throughout of China, making inroads particularly into rural and urban southern China.¹¹⁸ At first, Chinese Christians expressed ambivalence about the threat that the Communist Party actually posed. At the BMS’s Synod in 1927, one Chinese catechist—Ma Dajing (馬達經)—gave a presentation on Chinese Communism. He compared the Chinese Communist party to the early Christian Church, pointing out the common ideals that Communists shared with the early Christian community. Both the Communists and the early Christians shared a concern for the poor and wanted to eradicate inequality. But unlike the early Church fathers,

Communists spread their ideals through brute force and greed [...]. While the Apostles felt a conscious responsibility to their people and helped create a prosperous, thriving and good community, the Communists have formed communities filled with irresponsibility, meanness, misdeeds, and laziness.¹¹⁹

Ma’s report sparked a vigorous debate. Ling Deyuan defended the Communists, arguing that it was still too early to make a judgment on the nature and character of the Communists. He stated, “No books exist that one can study in order to get a clearer picture of the Chinese Communist party.” Other missionaries argued that while the Communists had some good ideas, they were impractical and could never work in the real world. The

¹¹⁴ Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-28* (Notre Dame, IN: Cross Cultural Publications, Cross Roads Books, 1988).

¹¹⁵ Ling Deyuan, “Bericht des Pastor Lin Det En, 2. Quartal 1926. Namjung,” 08 July 1926, BMW 1 / 6238: Berichte der Missionsstation Namchiung, Bd. 2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ling Deyuan, “Vierteljahrsbericht Tschichin, 1. Januar - 31. März 1929,” 01 May 1929, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

¹¹⁸ For a history of the Communist party’s early history in southern China, see Hans Van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920-1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

¹¹⁹ Karl Zehnel, “Bericht Namjung. 2. Vierteljahr 1927,” 04 July 1927, BMW 1 / 6238: Berichte der Missionsstation Namchiung, Bd. 2.

discussion concluded with Ling stating, “Communism can only work when sin is destroyed and no longer rules the world.”¹²⁰

Any ambivalence towards the Communists soon faded away. After 1927, descriptions of “Communist robbers” disrupting the mission society’s work pervaded the reports to the home board. In some reports, the Chinese leaders described their congregations as having come under increasing attack from Communists, who almost daily harassed the missionaries by shouting slogans such as “destroy imperialism, down with Christianity.”¹²¹ The surge of these reports was not coincidental — after 1927, the Communists intensified their organization building along Marxist-Leninist lines in Guangdong.¹²² In 1929, the Chinese Communist Party established an office in Shixing, which had an immediate impact on the society’s work. Ling reported that he could barely conduct any of his normal pastoral work, due to disruptive Communists who vandalized and destroyed chapels. His congregation was now afraid to attend church services.¹²³

The BMS missionaries saw the Communists not only as disruptions but as competitors. They recognized that Communists were mounting a potent ideological attraction to the poor and dispossessed farmers. In 1931, Karl Zehnel reported to his supervisors,

There is a general consensus here that it is foolish to think that Communism poses no danger to China. Eighty percent of the Chinese live outside cities; they live in rural areas and work in agriculture. And Communism has made its inroads in China mainly among the poor and rural population. It is hard to understand this situation from a German perspective, since even though we have a large percentage of the agricultural population in Germany who are leftist, they are in no way a decisive population. The majority of our farmers are permanently content in their place. In China, however, the relationship is somewhat different.¹²⁴

Zehnel argued that it was imperative for the missionaries to engage the Communist threat directly, not shy away from it. Chinese preachers should be exposed to the basic ideas of Communism in the BMS’s seminary, and be prepared for debate and dialogue with the Communists.¹²⁵ Just as missionaries had helped Chinese converts dismantle the basic ideas of Confucianism in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, missionaries now needed to train the Chinese Christians to refute the basic claims of Communism.

Yet the Communists were not the only threat to the Chinese Christians. The Nationalist Government posed an equal challenge to missionary work. Zehnel noted that

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ling Deyuan, “Bericht Tschichin vom 3. Vierteljahr 1927,” 14 January 1928, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

¹²² Van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade*.

¹²³ Ling Deyuan, “Bericht-Tschichin vom 2. Vierteljahr 1929,” 29 July 1929, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

¹²⁴ Karl Zehnel, “Vortrag: Kommunismus und Mission in China,” February 1931, BMW 1/ 6608: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 4b.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

the Communists and Nationalists, despite all their differences, were united on one front: “they reject and resist the public propagation of religion, in any form.”¹²⁶ Zehnel’s assessment reflected broader national trends. As Rebecca Nedostup has shown, starting in 1927, the Nationalist government engaged in an extensive campaign to rid the country of what they labeled as “superstition.”¹²⁷ Even though the Nationalist government did not designate Christianity as a superstitious religion, many of the pro-Nationalist intellectuals espoused anti-Christian ideas.

More destructive than the ideological assault of Nationalist and Communist ideas, however, was the intensifying civil war between Nationalist and Communist troops in Southern China. In July 1931, Chiang Kai-shek began the first of his various encirclement campaigns against the Jiangxi Soviet, in hopes of crushing the Communist Party.¹²⁸ The Jiangxi Soviet stood not too far from Shixing and Nanxiong, and the encirclement campaign directly impacted the missionary work of the BMS. In 1932, the Nationalist Government used BMS chapels to quarter its troops. Its soldiers forced Chinese preachers to live with their families in the “smallest corner rooms” of their building complexes.¹²⁹ Unable to travel freely to rural congregations, Chinese evangelists could barely sustain their pastoral work.¹³⁰ The Nationalist government also conscripted all men and women from the ages of 18-55 to build public roads. Even though the Nationalist government had not publicly persecuted Christianity, Chinese Christians were “afraid to show their faith openly,” and many had decided to stop coming to Church out of fear of governmental repression in the future.¹³¹

By 1933, Ling reported that the situation had grown dire in Shixing and Nanxiong. The optimism in 1926 of financial independence and indigenization was a distant memory. Ling lamented that the Chinese Christians were “too spiritually weak” to face the threat of Communism; they needed continued material support from the German missionaries.¹³² Communists had swarmed into Nanxiong and Shixing and ruined BMS property: “all of the chapels in the region are in a terrible condition. The walls and doors are dirtied, the inventory plundered. The Chinese Christians are constantly hoping and waiting for funds that they can use to repair church property.”¹³³ The political instability also contributed to sky-rocketing food prices. Ling wrote that his Chinese congregants could barely find employment and survive, let alone contribute and tithe to the Church.¹³⁴

¹²⁶. Ibid.

¹²⁷. See Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹²⁸. Frederick Litten, “The Myth of the ‘Turning-Point’—Towards a New Understanding of the Long March,” *Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung* 25 (2001), 7.

¹²⁹. Ling Deyuan, “Jahresbericht 1931. Tschichin,” 28 January 1932, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

¹³⁰. Ibid.

¹³¹. Ibid.

¹³². Ling Deyuan, “Bericht Tschichin des. P. Lin det en über die 3. u. 4. Quartal,” 15 January 1929, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

¹³³. Friedrich Richter, “Bericht über das IV. Quartal 1932,” 07 January 1933, BMW 1 / 6255: Berichte der Missionsstation Tschichin.

¹³⁴. Ibid.

Exacerbating the church's dire finances was declining church attendance. The missionary society reported poor retention rates for among their communities: either they left for a government position or joined the Communist Party. Political violence further intimidated Chinese Christians from staying in the society.¹³⁵ Karl Zehnel reported that one Chinese Christian, who had worked for close to two years as a pastor for the Berlin Missionary Society, was shot and killed by Communists.

The Second Sino-Japanese War World War and its Aftermath

Starting in the early 1930s, yet another external threat appeared on the scene: the Japanese.¹³⁶ Desperation intensified with the onset of the Japanese invasion. Communication between the Chinese Christians and the German missionary leadership became more infrequent as the war escalated. When they did write, Chinese pastors and Western missionaries alike reported how their Christians suffered through intense periods of "deprivation" and "desperation." Japanese aerial bombings deeply affected the area, and the Chinese pastors reported a rising population of "dead and wounded."¹³⁷

The war interrupted any progress that the Chinese Christian communities had made towards independence. Georg Kohls reported that even though the Berlin Missionary Society's Christian community "has been partly self-supporting since the beginning of 1935, owing to the war in China, even these self-supporting communities are no longer able to meet their obligations and we have to come to their assistance now."¹³⁸ The missionaries beseeched the German leadership, as well as the international missionary community, for more financial support. In 1940, in spite of their theological reservations towards the National Christian Council in Shanghai, the missionaries asked them for financial support. The BMS received a donation of almost 4000 U. S. dollars. Kohls wrote a letter thanking them:

Your contributions gave me a chance to meet the request of our Chinese co-workers, who are in such a desperate condition, because the cost of living is rising daily. The ordinary salaries, which we paid before, are now quite inadequate to keep up the simplest style of living. Although we German missionaries also suffer from insufficient income, I still think it proper first of all to provide our Chinese co-workers with the most necessary means to keep up their living and the evangelistic work. It would be selfish to neglect their need and besides, our work will be handicapped to a considerable degree, if we fail to keep our pastors and preachers at their regular work.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Karl Zehnel, "Bericht -- Namyung. über das dritte Vierteljahr 1929," 04 October 1929, BMW 1 / 6238: Berichte der Missionsstation Namchiung, Bd. 2.

¹³⁶ For a good overview of the Second Sino-Japanese War, see James C. Hsiung and Steven I. Levine, *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937-1945* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1992).

¹³⁷ For an example of this type of report, see Ma Dajing, "Bericht ueber das 1. Quartal 1938," 27 July 1938, BMW 1 / 6239: Namyung, Bd. 3.

¹³⁸ Georg Kohls to Charles Luther Boynton, 22 May 1940, BMW 1 / 6611: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 6.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Eventually the war stopped correspondence between the missionary lands and the “home” front. Conditions in the churches fell into a state of chaos. The mission station at Guangzhou became a refugee station. Ling himself abandoned pastoral work in Nanxiong and Shixing, relocating to the Nationalist safehold Chongqing, because he found it “too embarrassing to live under Japanese control.” In Chongqing, he went into business and military service until the surrender of the Japanese forces.¹⁴⁰ He returned to Guangdong and re-joined the Berlin Mission Society after the war.

Yet by the end of the Sino-Japanese War, the Berlin Mission Society’s work in Southern China was a shadow of its former self. Dr. Daniel Nelson, the China Director of the Lutheran World Federation, traveled throughout the BMS’s districts to investigate the holdings.¹⁴¹ The war had decimated the Society’s staff: they now employed only five full-time ordained Chinese pastors and two part-time pastors. Only a fourth of the normal staff of evangelists and Bible women remained in their service; the rest had been dismissed.¹⁴² The number of native staff working in rural regions especially declined, many of the individual churches had shut down, and church membership had collapsed. The churches now counted less than a quarter of their pre-war population.¹⁴³ The main congregation in Shixing had boasted close to 376 congregants in 1927, but by 1946, only 168 members.¹⁴⁴ Some districts and areas of Guangdong were in better shape. Nanxiong district, for example, had retained most of its 170 members.¹⁴⁵ As a result, Nelson believed that Nanxiong had future potential and designated it as a “strategic center.”¹⁴⁶

Chinese Christians appealed for foreign help to re-establish their former work. Chinese pastors sent letters to the missionary director Siegfried Knak, begging him to consider sending more men and funds to China. Ling, for example sent a letter in May of 1947 with this request.¹⁴⁷ But the Germans were no longer able, nor willing, to provide the funding that the Chinese needed. Knak and the missionary society decided to turn over more of its assets to the World Lutheran Federation. Instead of sending a German to help continue and expand the work, the World Lutheran Federation decided to send a Norwegian, Thorwald Gogstad, instead. Gogstad became the new superintendent, overseeing all of the BMS’s holdings. Gogstad’s appointment created a considerable amount of dissension in the mission society, not least with Georg Kohls, who had expected to become the next superintendent.¹⁴⁸

The Chinese pastors also felt a deep sense of betrayal at the appointment of Gogstad. In a letter to Knak, Pastor Lan Ti’en (藍體恩) questioned the wisdom of

¹⁴⁰. “Abschrift Prediger Wun Fai-sin to Knak,” 19 April 1947, BMW 1 / 6612: China, Allgemeines bd. 7.

¹⁴¹. Daniel Nelson, “A Detailed Survey of the Berlin Mission in South China,” 1946, BMW 1 / 6612: China, Allgemeines bd. 7. Nelson died in a plane crash, along with his entire family, in 1948. See BMW 1/6612.

¹⁴². Ibid., 2.

¹⁴³. Ibid.

¹⁴⁴. Ibid., 27.

¹⁴⁵. Ibid., 29.

¹⁴⁶. Ibid., 30.

¹⁴⁷. “Ling Deyuan to Siegfried Knak,” 23 May 1947, BMW 1 / 6612: China, Allgemeines bd. 7, 49-53.

¹⁴⁸. For details of the conflict, see letters such as Lan Ti’en to Knak, 01 June 1947, BMW 1 / 6612: China, Allgemeines bd. 7, 100-102. Correspondence continues in BMW 1 / 6612.

appointing a Norwegian to head the society. Lan wrote that the decision marked a decisive break with the German missionary society, ending an 80 year relationship. "The pain," Lan wrote, "is similar to the pain that a son feels, when a merciful mother abandons him."¹⁴⁹ Lan doubted Gogstad's abilities to continue the work that the Berlin Missionary Society had started. He painted Gogstad as an outsider: "he speaks a different language, he does not understand local conditions, nor the people of the church; it is inevitable that there will be some difficulties between him and the Chinese congregations."¹⁵⁰ Before the war, Lan argued, the BMS had already put the Chinese congregations on a solid path towards self reliance and self-support, and it only needed a brief period of assistance, with the same policies, in order for the mission society to remain successful. Kohls should be appointed superintendent, Lan argued, since he understood the situation, and stood in the tradition of the Berlin Missionary Society's work. Lan and Ling's appeals fell on deaf ears. The Berlin Missionary Society was itself financially devastated and Germany was effectively partitioned. It could no longer send the financial and personnel support that the Chinese requested.

Conclusion

After the Communist victory in 1949, the immediate crackdown on religion that the Christians expected did not come.¹⁵¹ The foreign missionary establishment was relieved, and exuded a sense of hope for future cooperation with the Chinese Communist Party. One missionary commented that though the Communist Party was at heart xenophobic, it was not anti-religious. The Communists demanded that control of the churches be transferred to Chinese hands, not the complete eradication of Chinese Christianity.¹⁵² Rowland Cross, the Secretary of the China Committee of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, circulated a confidential newsletter, speculating about the future of Christianity in this new China. Cross noted that "rural Church members, instead of being deprived of religious freedom, as many expected, are actually being pulled into participation in local political set-ups."¹⁵³ Rural Chinese Christians "not only belong to the right class, but are also able to read and write, are recognized as honest and trustworthy in character, and even have the ability to chair a meeting; they are accordingly regarded as persons qualified to hold local political and social responsibilities."¹⁵⁴ Chinese Christians, Cross hoped, could thus shape the direction of the regime from the inside.

Cross was much more pessimistic about the future for foreign missionaries in China. The Premier Zhou Enlai decreed, he reported, that missionaries be permitted to stay until their visas expired. But the possibility of renewal was small, and after expiration, the missionaries had to leave China. Cross concluded, "in other words, the foreign missionary presence is at present tolerated in the belief and intention that time will before long remove

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Rowland M. Cross, "Overseas Newsletter V," 13 June 1950, BMW 1 / 6613: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 8, 243.

¹⁵² Pastor Wedel to Oelke, 01 March 1950, BMW 1 / 6613: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 8, 214b.

¹⁵³ Rowland M. Cross, "Overseas Newsletter V," 13 June 1950, BMW 1 / 6613: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 8, 243.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

their unwanted presence.”¹⁵⁵ Cross’s words proved prophetic: using the pretense of escalating tension from the Korean War, the Chinese Communist Party expelled the foreign missionaries in 1951.

Chinese Christians leaders had prepared for the expulsion of foreign missionaries a year earlier. The September 1950 Manifesto, which called Protestants to cooperate with the Communists and was advanced by major figures within the Chinese Protestant establishment, such as T. C. Chao and Y. T. Wu, paved the way for the Chinese Communist Party’s control over mainstream Chinese Christianity. Zhou Enlai represented the Chinese Communist Party in the negotiations with the Protestants over the contents of the Manifesto. Chinese Protestants could continue their worship, as long as they joined a state-sanctioned church, led by the Chinese and stripped of foreign leadership.¹⁵⁶ The individual Chinese Protestant thus had a clear choice to make: either declare loyalty to the state sanctioned Church, or be branded as a collaborator with the “foreign imperialists.” Unable to turn to the German missions for aid, the decision for the Berlin Missionary Chinese Christians seemed clear—Ling Deyuan signed the Manifesto.

Cross was also prophetic in his pronouncements on the position of Chinese Christians in the Communist regime: the Communists incorporated Ling, as well as other Christians, into local politics. In one of the many ironies of history, the foreign missionary society supplied the Communist Party with its local leaders in Guangdong. Ling, for example, was an educated man, with strong organizational skills, and the Chinese Communists needed his talent. He was elected as a representative to one of the local, provincial committees. He worked closely with the Communist Party’s provincial secretary (書記), as well as the Provincial Governor (縣長), who stood next to Ling in a photograph as a sign of respect.¹⁵⁷ Ling had joined the Communist Party, but his standing in the community remained undiminished: local Communist accounts celebrated his family as “progressive revolutionaries” who had heroically fought in the Sino-Japanese war and had resisted the Nationalists.¹⁵⁸ The Chinese Communist Party also used the example of patriotic Christians like Ling to bolster its credentials among the Chinese Christian faithful. The Communists could claim that they had accomplished what the foreign missionaries had failed to deliver: they had created an indigenous Chinese Church, devoid of foreign influence. With the help of progressive liberal Christians, the Communist Party co-opted the rhetoric of indigenization that had prevailed within Christian circles in the 1920s. The term “indigenization” was thus a malleable claim. It was used by various parties—Chinese Christians, foreign missionaries, and ultimately, the Communist Party—to pursue their particular political agendas.

But “indigenization” was also not just a discursive phrase: it possessed tangible meanings in the individual congregations. For Chinese Christians and Western European missionaries alike, Christianity was not just an abstract idea, it depended on a set of institutions, communities, and material relationships to flourish: Chinese evangelists had to

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 249.

¹⁵⁶ Oi Ki Ling, *The Changing Role of the British Protestant missionaries in China, 1945 - 1952* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1999).

¹⁵⁷ Shixing xian di fang zhi bian zuan wei yuan hui, *Shixing xian zhi*, 964.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

eat, books needed to be printed, transportation and fuel costs paid. For European missionaries, while theologically they supported the efforts to indigenize, practically indigenization meant the end of their command over all the capital, of time and money, they had invested in China since the nineteenth century.

On the other hand, for the Chinese Christians, the establishment of an indigenous Christian Church meant the loss of financial and political protections that they had enjoyed with foreign missionary presence. Ever since the nineteenth century, Christianity had represented for Chinese Christians not only the hope of life beyond this mortal coil, but protection against the vagaries and brutalities of rural life in China. Chinese Christians saw the foreign missionaries as their protectors, and it is thus unsurprising that they were reluctant to part with their financial backers and supervisors. What is surprising is that Christianity survived at all during those turbulent decades: Christians like Ling Deyuan endured more than three decades of constant war, devastation, and destruction. Focusing on Christianity's survival draws our attention to the incredible courage, flexibility, and resourcefulness that Chinese Christians like Ling Deyuan possessed and displayed.

Many Chinese Christians—and foreign missionaries—believed that the Chinese Communist Party could put an end to the decades' long strife and turmoil that wracked China in the first-half of the twentieth-century. They hoped that the Communist Party's adoption of the language of indigenization could usher in a new era of religious freedom, when a Chinese Church could finally flourish. Ling Deyuan was among these hopeful. He died in 1951 of a heart attack, spared of having to witness the devastation of the religious security that he had yearned for. Countless others were not so lucky.

Chapter 7.

Chen Yuan, Furen University, and the Search for a Chinese Catholicism

Introduction

“As president of Furen University, I was a puppet of the imperialists for thirty years,” the Chinese historian Chen Yuan declared in his “self-criticism,” published in the *Guangming Daily Newspaper* (光明日報) in March of 1952.¹ Chen had been President of Furen, the Catholic University in Beijing, since 1929. He was also a prominent scholar: elected in 1948 as an Academician to Academia Sinica, Chen was revered for his pioneering work in the history of Chinese religions. Before he became an academic in the early 1920s, Chen had been an elected representative of the National Alliance in the early years of the Republic, but many of his political hopes of reform were dashed when he saw Yuan Shikai declare himself emperor in 1915 and the country disintegrate into warlordism soon thereafter. Reflecting on his early career, he explained that he entered academia because he was tired of politics. Yet, in his time as president, in order to “wash his hands of politics,” he had stayed mostly out of the university’s affairs, leaving them to the foreign missionaries. Instead, he devoted much of his time in Furen to research and publishing.²

But now Chen repudiated even the more than thirty years of scholarly work that he had produced: “My observations, my opinions, and my methodologies had all been wrong.”³ Because he had wanted to retreat from politics, Chen explained, he hid in the study of the ancient past, refusing to study the history of modern China. This refusal prevented him from being able to “see clearly the international changes of the past century.” He was therefore “unable to understand the characteristics of Chinese society, as well as the nature of the foreign imperialist powers.”⁴

¹ Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Ziwo jiantao 自我檢討 [A Self-Reflection] (1952),” in *Chen Yuan QuANJI: Di ershi er ce*. 陳垣全集: 第二十二冊, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009), 613.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 614.

⁴ Ibid.

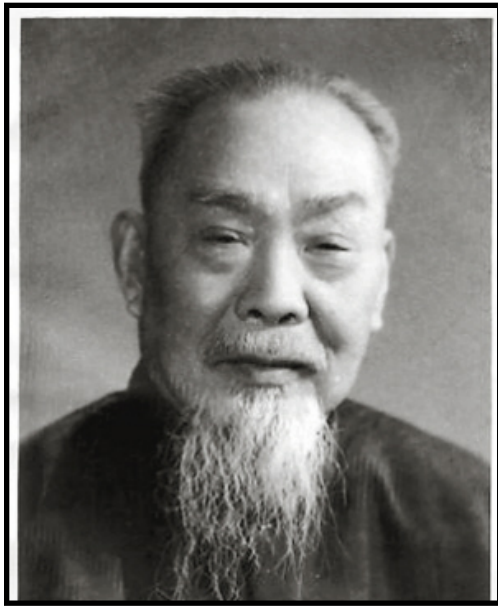


Figure 29: Chen Yuan. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The Communist liberation of Beijing had changed his ideas about the intersection of religion, politics, and academia. The revolution helped him to recognize that the missionaries running Furen had used the university to cloak their ambitions to “educate slaves loyal and in the service to the foreign powers.”⁵ In his public self-criticism, Chen admitted that he had been one of these slaves. Communism had enlightened him, and he now recognized that the “errors and selfishness” in his thinking “had seriously affected the thinking of our students, delayed the anti-imperialist struggle, and retarded the progress of the university.”⁶ Now Chen was a man converted to the Communist cause. In September of 1950, Chen wrote public letters supporting the Communist takeover of the university, which would result in the expulsion of missionaries from China.

In addition to attacking his missionary colleagues, Chen criticized his academic friends who were unsympathetic to the Communist cause. He published an open letter to the prominent scholar Hu Shih in the *People’s Daily* (*Renming Ribao*) in May of 1949. Hu was a personal friend, but Chen’s letter attacked Hu’s position on Communism, arguing that the Communist liberation could deliver China from its bonds of servitude to Western forces. He also praised Mao Zedong’s thinking, and criticized the “outdated models that we intellectuals advance.”⁷ Hu Shih, in a public response, argued that he could not accept this dramatic conversion as a genuine one, and in his retort suggested that Chen Yuan’s open letter supporting Communism was a forgery.⁸ Hu Shih warned that if Chen’s conversion to Communism were “genuine,” then “Chen’s letter to me is a perfect proof that there will be no academic freedom under Communist rule.”⁹

⁵ Ibid., 615.

⁶ Ibid., 626.

⁷ Chen Yuan 陳垣, *Chen Yuan lai wang shu xin ji (Zeng ding ben)* (北京: 生活·读书·新知三联书店, 2010), 223.

⁸ Liu Naihe 劉乃和, ed., *Chen Yuan nianpu peitu changbian* 陳垣年譜配圖長編 [Chronology of Chen Yuan’s Life with Pictures] (Shenyang Shi: Liao hai chu ban she, 2000), 537.

⁹ Hu Shi 胡適, “Gongchandang tongzhi xia jue meiyou ziyou — ba suowei ‘Chen Yuan gei Hu Shi de yifeng

Unsurprisingly, Chen's missionary colleagues in the university saw his public approval of Communism as a betrayal. The rector of the university, a priest of the German missionary society, the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) Harold Rigney, informed his superiors,

Our Chinese friends who read it were not only surprised that the man of Chen's age should write such a letter, but were also indignant that anyone in the position who has been president of this university for some 20 years, or more, a man who has been knighted by the pope, although he was a polygamist and a pagan, a man who has received many favors from us, such as aid for his daughter studying in America, and help for his grandchildren here at Fu[r]en, should be so unmindful of his obligations towards the church as to stoop to such scurrility.¹⁰

Surviving documents do not give us a clear indication of whether Chen Yuan's public comments on Communism were produced through coercion. There is, certainly, proof of genuine conversion. In a private letter to his son immediately after the Communists entered Beijing in 1949, Chen wrote,

I have experienced a radical change in my thinking, and I have this overwhelming feeling that all of my former scholarship has been a waste. After seeing all of the new reports on the political situation, I came to the sudden realization that I was fooled and lied to all along.¹¹

But regardless whether the "conversion" was genuine or not, these public statements signaled the final break between the missionary leadership and Chen Yuan in a relationship that had often been marred with tension and conflict. Ever since the SVD decided to take over administration of Furen University from the American Benedictines in 1933, the Chinese faculty, led by Chen Yuan, had clashed with the missionaries over a range of issues. These disputes ranged from the discipline of student behavior and hygiene to larger theoretical controversies over curricular decisions. In each case, the disagreements were driven by different ideological and theological assumptions about how Catholicism, as a foreign religion, should function in a university in China. For Chen Yuan, and the Chinese faculty, Catholicism needed to respect Chinese traditions and Chinese values. The purpose of a university was to educate classically trained, informed and politically engaged "Chinese" citizens. The Western missionary leadership, on the other hand, hoped to create morally upright and disciplined Catholics, trained in the fundamental ideas of Catholic moral theology.

It would be wrong to overstate the rigidity of these ideological boundaries; the lines were fluid, constantly shifting. While these clashes were real and the university was a place where the future of the Chinese youth was hotly contested, the university also became a place of true collaboration, where the two sides made committed efforts to blend Christian

gongkai xin," 自由中國, *Free China* 2 (3), no. 3 (9 January 1950).

¹⁰ Harold Rigney to Alois Große Kappenberg, 15 September 1950, AG 641 / 1950-1951, 9441.

¹¹ Chen Yuan 陳垣, *Chen Yuan lai wang shu xin ji*, 1078.

and Chinese thought, to make the different traditions talk to each other. Nowhere was this search for an indigenous Chinese Christianity more evident than in Chen Yuan's scholarship. While Chen Yuan was first and foremost a Chinese nationalist, he also believed that Christianity should play a crucial part in the country's future. His scholarship was primarily concerned with the integration of Christianity into a broader Sino-centric framework. In his own way, Chen Yuan was concerned with the central problems of indigenization: how to make Christianity irrevocably "Chinese." For Chen Yuan, the Chinese faculty, and Western missionaries alike, differences existed between Chinese and Western culture, but they were not fundamentally and irrevocably unreconcilable.

What ultimately doomed this collaboration, then, was not the incompatibility of two monolithic ideologies, but an increasingly unstable political situation. Eight years of war with the Japanese and a civil war fundamentally altered the political options of the missionaries and Chinese faculty in the university. As opposed to the 1920s and early 1930s, where allegiances were more fluid and the possibilities for the future of China were by no means circumscribed, the destabilizing of the political situation in the 1930s and 1940s radicalized the Chinese. Political allegiances became paramount. By the 1940s, one had to choose sides at the same time as choices were narrowing.

In addition to studying the ideological assumptions of Chen Yuan, this chapter tries to examine the intellectual and political choices that he had to make as an academic, administrator, and ultimately a "public" intellectual. My analysis is heavily indebted to Andrew Barshay's formulation of the "insider" and "outsider" in Japanese politics.¹² Chen, like Nanbara Shigeru in Barshay's study, was a quintessential "insider" — he was a prominent university administrator and public servant. But his insider status was complicated by his position as president of a missionary school, and furthermore, as a Catholic missionary school. Even though Chen was widely respected as a scholar, his relationship to the school always put him in a position of being accused and suspected of collaboration with foreign imperialists. Such suspicions and accusations gained plausibility from the fact that Chen was under pressure from his foreign superiors who controlled the purse-strings of the university. Thus, even though Chen enjoyed many of the privileges of being an "insider" to the educational system, he was also very much an "outsider" within the other intellectual and political circles in which he ran. When the nature of the state that was in power fundamentally changed in 1949, Chen had to make an intellectual and political choice that was previously unimaginable.

By looking at Chen, we thus see the difficult juggling act that Chinese intellectuals faced in the first half of the twentieth century. Throughout his career as president of Furen, Chen Yuan mediated among the various contradictions—his own allegiances and desires to reform China, the demands laid on him by the organizations employing him, and the larger shifts in China's larger political and social context. Chen Yuan's career illuminates the dilemmas and constraints that Chinese intellectuals confronted from the 1920s to the 1950s. Chen's career also provides insight into the expulsion of Christianity from China. The tragedy of the history of Christianity in China occurred when former allies and beneficiaries

¹² Andrew Barshay, *State and Intellectual in Imperial Japan: The Public Man in Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

of the Western missionary enterprise, such as Chen, had no political choice but to publicly repudiate their Western missionary colleagues.

Chen's Early Biography

Chen Yuan was born in 1880 in Guangdong, into a family that sold traditional Chinese medicine. Up until the age of seventeen, Chen was educated in traditional classical Chinese learning. At seventeen, he went to Beijing to take the civil service examination (順天鄉試), but was unable to procure a position. Like many of his reform-minded contemporaries, he came of age just as the traditional examination system was coming under attack and the number of positions in the government was shrinking. Chen took the exam several times, but failed each time to gain a position in the bureaucracy. By 1905, the Qing dynasty had eliminated the traditional exam system.

Frustrated by his inability to gain a foothold through the traditional path, Chen turned his attention to political activism. He started by organizing and spreading anti-Qing ideas among farmers in Guangzhou. In 1905, Chen, along with a group local Guangzhou intellectuals, including Pan Dawei, Gao Jianfu and Chen Shuren, started a patriotic illustrated weekly newspaper, the *Shishi Huabao* (*The Illustrated Times* 時事畫報). Chen later boasted, “at the time, the coastal cities leaned much more towards nationalist ideas, and freedom of speech was restricted in the inland areas. The *Shishi Huabao* of Guangzhou was the only revolutionary paper that circulated inland.”¹³ Chen Yuan was an editor of the paper, and contributed regular opinion pieces.

The *Shishi Huabao* was founded in the aftermath of the *Subao* incident, when Qing officials arrested the anti-Manchu nationalists Zhang Bingling (Taiyan) and Zou Rong. The incident and subsequent trial fanned the flames of anti-government opinion. More conservative Chinese literati, who were trained in the classics and previously would have supported the Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao line of gradual political reform rather than revolution, now “gave increasing support to armed rebellion.”¹⁴ Chen's early writings reflect this vehement anti-Manchu sentiment. His opinion pieces covered a gamut of topics that focused on Han and Manchu relations under the Qing Empire, and he used his platform to illustrate the various injustices that the Qing government had imposed on Han officials. “In so many cases,” Chen wrote in 1907, “the Manchu have oppressed the Han Chinese[...]. Had Manchu and Han not met, all would have been well, but since we have made contact, conflict and dispute has arisen.”¹⁵

Even in these early articles, Chen displayed a deep-abiding concern for the use of history in explaining and interpreting current events. Almost all of his editorials were peppered with historical references. Employing his classical training and familiarity with the

¹³ Chen Zhichao 陳智超, ed., *Chen Yuan laiwang shuxinji* 陳垣來往書信集 [Collected Correspondence of Chen Yuan] (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 1990), 806.

¹⁴ Peter G. Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 24.

¹⁵ Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Shuo manhan zhijie 說滿漢之界 [On the Boundaries Between Manchus and Han] (1907),” in *Chen Yuan Quanj: Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009), 31.

Siku Quanshu, he turned to history to ponder cultural assimilation and illuminate the boundaries between Manchu and Han. Chen accused the Manchu rulers of only paying lip-service to the idea of being assimilated into the greater Han Chinese culture; the Manchu leaders were ultimately afraid that they would lose their “ethnic culture.”¹⁶ In an editorial “On the boundaries of races,” Chen wrote that the Qing dynasty emperors “did not want Han Chinese to assimilate Manchu culture, nor did Qing rulers desire Manchus to be assimilated into Han culture, and thus even though we have lived together for several hundred years, we have still not combined into one race.”¹⁷

Chen thus used history as political polemic. He believed that the Han Chinese had forgotten their past history, which led to an ignorant and ridiculous outpouring of Han ethnic nationalism. In an article, “On Bronze Water Clocks,” Chen ridiculed Chinese nationalists for prizing traditional bronze water clocks over Western style watches. “The Chinese need to be commended for their patriotism. But it is a pity that the Chinese have a patriotic heart, but no historical consciousness.”¹⁸ Chen looked at the historical records and argued that water clocks dated from the Yuan Dynasty, and were a creation of the Mongols, not the Han. Thus the “Cantonese are well intentioned but ignorant, if they can only use water clocks as an example of the superiority of the Chinese tradition.”¹⁹

Chen relied on a similar argument to criticize nationalists who favored celebrating the birthday of Confucius. Chen pointed out that “three years ago, nobody paid attention to Confucius’s birthday.”²⁰ Confucius, for Chen, had become a “puppet of history.”²¹ “Authoritarian rulers use Confucius to control and oppress their subjects,” Chen lamented, and foreign powers who enter China use Confucius to extend their powers, so that Confucius’s teachings have been distorted to become unrecognizable [...]. Are not those people who wish to celebrate Confucius’s birth, those who hope to make Confucius once more a puppet—for themselves?”²² This latest attempt to reinsert the image of Confucius into public consciousness, Chen asserted, was the Qing government’s attempt to legitimize itself as its empire waned. “The elevation and celebrations of Confucius signal the death and decline of China.”²³

Chen thus did not embrace all forms of nationalism that pervaded the political plane. Nonetheless, he used his platform as editor of the *Shishi Huabao* to develop a consistent anti-Qing voice, and he used his historical expertise to argue that Manchu and Han relations had reached an irreparable impasse. In Chen’s mind, the minority Manchu, who had ruled

¹⁶ Ibid., 37.

¹⁷ Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Zhongzu zhi jie shuo 種族之界說 [The Boundaries of Ethnicity] (1907),” in *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009), 105.

¹⁸ Idem, “Shuo tonghu dilou 說銅壺滴漏 [On Dripping in Bronze Vessels] (1907),” in *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009), 70.

¹⁹ Ibid., 71.

²⁰ Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Kongzi dan ganyan 孔子誕感言 [Thoughts on the Birth of Confucius] (1907),” in *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009), 49.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 49-50.

²³ Ibid., 50.

China for several hundred years, would never willingly forsake their ancestry, while the Han, as the majority culture, would never be able to accept Manchu customs as their own. For Chen, the inevitable outcome of this historical cultural incompatibility was anti-Manchu revolutionary action; any Han Chinese with the correct form of historical consciousness would recognize that the Qing dynasty must be overthrown, that constitutional reform under a Manchu was a futile proposition, and support of a revolutionary platform was the only viable political option.

In 1906, Chen's father was stricken with bladder stones, and the local traditional Chinese medicine could not help his symptoms. Western doctors performed surgery and cured the problem. This incident convinced Chen of the effectiveness of Western medicine. Having witnessed the bubonic plague that hit Guangzhou and the southern coast of China in the 1890s, Chen was convinced that China needed to improve its sanitary and medical knowledge.²⁴ He thus enrolled in the Boji Medical School (The Canton Hospital) in Guangdong in 1907. Founded by American Presbyterians in 1866, the Boji Medical School was the most famous and oldest school of Western medicine in China.²⁵

But Chen soon grew disillusioned with the school, as he was angered by the "arrogance" of the foreign staff and teachers, who "held dismissive and derogatory attitudes towards the Chinese students."²⁶ Chen dropped out of the Boji Medical School and enthusiastically participated in a new venture created by several prominent local nationalists: the Guanghua Hospital. This school was completely run by local doctors, and left in the control of Chinese. Chen entered Guanghua Hospital in 1908, and graduated in 1910 in its first class of graduates. After graduation, he stayed to teach courses in anatomy and bacteriology.²⁷

During his affiliation with the Guanghua Hospital, Chen turned to writing about public health and medicine in medical newspapers such as the *Yixue Weisheng Bao* (*Journal for Medicine and Hygiene*) and he was one of the founding editors of the newspaper of the Guanghua Hospital, *Guanghua Yishi Weishengbao*. In his pieces, Chen hoped to raise public awareness about basic principles of sanitation and health. He wrote articles that taught, for example, how the immune system worked, how to perform a basic health exam of one's own body, as well as tips for healthier diets and lifestyles.²⁸

²⁴ For more on the spread of the bubonic plague in the 1890s, which originated in Yunnan, see Carol Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

²⁵ The Boji Medical School boasts Sun Yatsen as its most famous graduate. The Boji Hospital has an even longer history than the medical school. Its traces its roots to the Ophthalmic Hospital in Canton, founded by the medical missionary Peter Parker in 1835. In 1854 John Glasgow Kerr took over administration of the Hospital and changed its name to Boji. See Edward Vose Gulick, *Peter Parker and the Opening of China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

²⁶ Liu Naihe 劉乃和, ed., *Li yun cheng xue lu* 勵耘承學錄 [Records of Learning and Meditation] (Beijing 北京市: Beijing shi fan da xue chu ban she 北京師範大學, 1992), 27.

²⁷ Liu Naihe 劉乃和, *Chen Yuan nianpu*, 49.

²⁸ Chen Yuan's early work on medicine is collected in Chen Yuan 陳垣, *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Diyice, Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文 [The Complete Works of Chen Yuan: Volume 1, Early Works] (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009). See, for example, Idem, "Ji putong zhengbing shengti jiancha fa 記普通征兵身體檢查法 [Physical Checkups for Troops] (1909)," in *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009), 238-242; Idem, "Lun renqiao mianyi zhili 論人巧免疫之理 [On the

Even in his medical writings, Chen referred to history constantly as a point of reference, and as a way of comparing Western and Chinese medical practices. Chen interpreted passages from the classics with his knowledge of modern medicine. Even though there were no vaccines against smallpox during Confucius's time, he wrote, the classics showed that "Confucius had a deep knowledge of hygiene."²⁹ Chen wrote that Confucius's advice for a healthier diet—including curing and cutting meat properly, drinking less alcohol, and limiting overeating—all stood the test of time and rivaled modern ideas about hygiene and sanitation.³⁰

Chen thus argued that while Manchu and Han cultural identities were culturally incompatible, Chinese and Western medicine were not at odds with each other; China's long tradition of medicine and science could be integrated with Western ideas of sanitation and hygiene. What China lacked, however, were proper institutions and public education. The West, and Japan, had succeeded because they had a comprehensive system of public and private institutions, including medical colleges, schools of higher learning, and public and private hospitals.³¹ Furthermore, the state highly regulated medical practices and kept doctors accountable. In ancient China, on the other hand, doctors were "lone wolves, who lived and died by themselves," often inflicting harm on the uneducated and ignorant.³² The Chinese psyche harbored deep mistrust towards popular medicine, and the medical profession had been viewed with disdain. Starting from the Yuan dynasty, the state had begun to regulate and test doctors, but the education and accreditation system was unsystematic, and the institutions supporting this training continued to be weak. The antidote to these problems, Chen believed, was the "expansion of medical education," coupled with rigorous testing of the doctors' knowledge and expertise.

Chen did not just heap criticism on the Chinese medical system; he found much to admire about it. In a long article published in 1911 on the history of the bubonic plague in China, Chen wrote: "many speak of how Chinese scholars cannot compete with foreign scholars. But that is not the case now [...]. In the field of tropical diseases, there are no countries in East Asia that can compete with China. This year, the second annual conference on tropical diseases will be held in China."³³

Within Chen's early writings, one can already see the intellectual concerns and themes that endured for the rest of his career. The question of cultural assimilation and the relationship between Han culture and other "foreign" cultures was his constant refrain.

Human Immune System] (1909)," in *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009).

²⁹ Chen Yuan 陳垣, "Kongzi zhi weisheng xue 孔子之衛生學 [Confucius's Theory of Hygiene] (1908)," in *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009), 154.

³⁰ Ibid., 156-157.

³¹ Chen Yuan 陳垣, "Lun Jiangdu kaoshi yisheng 論江督考試醫生 [Medical Exams in the Jiangdu Area] (1909)," in *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009), 166.

³² Ibid.

³³ Chen Yuan 陳垣, "Fengtian wanguo shuyi yanjiuhui shimo 奉天萬國鼠疫研究會始末 [Research on the Bubonic Plague in China] (1911)," in *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009), 355-356.

Above all, he wanted to define what was characteristically “Chinese,” and how the government and the people could preserve their Chinese identity after they came in contact with other cultures and nations. Chen drew on history to explicate and define what being “Chinese” meant. Both in his stint as a nationalist polemicist and a public health promoter, Chen used history and historical knowledge as justification for reform and change. He was also deeply concerned with the lack of historical consciousness, and wanted to present revisionist correctives to people who misread and misused history. His earlier writings also show hints of Han-centric chauvinism, although Chen believed that the Chinese tradition and its teachings were large enough to encompass and incorporate “foreign” elements. In order for anything to succeed in China, all those traditions needed to be Sinified and incorporated into the tradition of Chinese learning.

Theorists of Pre-Republican Catholicism: Ma Xiangbo and Ying Lianzhi

In early 1911, Chen joined the editorial board of another newspaper sympathetic to the revolutionary cause, the *Zhengdan Ribao*. The *Zhengdan Ribao* was run by the Catholic church in Guangzhou, and the main editor Wei Changmao was a close friend of Chen’s. Thus began Chen’s long-standing relationship with nationalist Catholic organizations in China. Not much writing remains from this period of Chen Yuan’s life, but it was through his connections with Wei that Chen Yuan came to know other prominent Catholic intellectuals, such as Ma Xiangbo and Ying Lianzhi.

In one respect Catholic Chinese intellectuals such as Ma Xiangbo (1840-1939) and Ying Lianzhi (1867-1926) were no different from their counterparts of other or no religions, nor from the foreign missionaries who hoped to transform China: they believed that China’s geo-political woes resulted fundamentally from a crisis of culture. Catholic intellectuals agreed with the traditional missionary antidote to the problem — the root cause of the national crisis was spiritual, and Catholicism could solve China’s problems.

Yet they resisted a full embrace of Western missionary methods, which they saw as imperialistic, paternalistic, and dismissive of Chinese culture. Many of these negative attitudes towards Western missionaries came from personal encounters. Ma Xiangbo, for example, was ordained by the Jesuits as a priest in 1870, when he was thirty, and studied in France. But he left the priesthood six years later due to arguments with his Jesuit superiors. He felt that that European Jesuits belittled the Chinese priests.



Figure 30: Ma Xiangbo.

Photos courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 31: Ying Lianzhi

Chinese Catholic intellectuals thus sought to find ways in which Catholicism could be merged with traditional Chinese culture. Ma and Ying dedicated their lives to creating Chinese Catholic institutions that they believed could transform Chinese morality and spiritual values. Ying founded the Catholic newspaper in Tianjin, the *Da Gongbao* (大公報, also published under the name *L'impartial*). Tianjin was one of the cities most heavily destroyed by the Boxer Uprising, and also experienced intense intervention by the Western powers after the Boxer Uprising to reconstruct the city.³⁴ According to Yan Fu, Ying was simultaneously angered by “seeing how the Tiantan (a special sacred religious space in Tianjin) was desecrated and taken over by foreign forces,” as well as by the “moral decay and stupidity of the Chinese populace.”³⁵ Like Liang Qichao and other reformers, Ying believed fervently in the printed word’s ability to transform society. For Ying, China was in a state of moral and intellectual decay, and he believed that newspapers could be used to “enlighten the people.”³⁶

In a *Da Gongbao* editorial entitled “Using Religion to Save China,” Ying asserted that China was a country that had “lost its soul,” and its citizens exhibited “no patriotism or

³⁴ The best book on Tianjin after the Boxer Uprising is Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

³⁵ Ying Lianzhi 英斂之, *Yesbi ji* 也是集 (Tianjin 天津: Da Gongbao guankan 大公報館刊, 1933), 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

civilizational enlightenment.”³⁷ Appropriating the missionary critique of Chinese society, Ying argued that the Chinese had a “very weak ability to self-govern” and China “was unable to reflect on its own moral decrepitude and weakness.”³⁸ Ying wrote that the introduction and imposition of religion would help to “enlighten” the Chinese and bring a culture of civilization to China. Religion “provides the individual with internal moral guidelines and rules,”³⁹ and this would, in turn, form a foundation for China’s future “freedom, equality, and reform.”⁴⁰ “Those who fight for freedom and equality know the benefits of religion to the nation,” concluding that this “civilizational enlightenment that religion brings would eliminate the moral decay of the people and the bonds of devil worship that entrap the Chinese soul.”⁴¹

Besides the medium of print, Ma and Ying also hoped to establish schools of higher education as a means to transform Chinese spiritual and moral values. In 1903, with the funding and partnership of French Jesuits, Ma established Aurora University (*Zhendān Daxue* 震旦大學) in Shanghai. In part, Ma was motivated by the dominance of Protestants he saw in Chinese higher education, and he wanted to create a Catholic university to compete with these Protestant counterparts. Ma also hoped to develop a curriculum that would introduce the best of the Jesuit humanist tradition into China and combine that tradition with a rigorous training in the Chinese classics.⁴² The French Jesuits developed a curriculum that emphasized training in the Western classical tradition: Latin was at the center of the curriculum, and students were required to learn the classical Western canon of Plato, Socrates, Cicero, and Augustine.⁴³ In 1905, students protested, requesting the French to offer more English classes, which they argued was a necessary part of a modern curriculum. THEY also protested what they saw as the French Jesuits’ draconian control of the school administration, and demanded that the school become more open and “democratic.”⁴⁴ The Jesuits in charge of the university refused; instead they changed the curriculum to emphasize French culture, and threatened to withdraw their funding and personnel if the protests continued.⁴⁵ Ma sided with the students, and he led them to found a separate, independent, secular Chinese university. The new university, called Fudan, was funded and backed by local merchants and prominent intellectuals in Shanghai. Aurora University remained in the hands of the French Jesuits until 1952.

The political agenda of Ma and Ying, from the early 1900s on, was to establish a constitutional monarchy that respected religious freedoms. Ma’s preface to Ying’s

³⁷ Ying Lianzhi 英斂之. “Yi zongjiao jiu zhongguo shuo 以宗教救中國說（無文明教化） [Using Religion to Save China].” *Da Gongbao* 大公報, 17 March, 1903.

³⁸ Idem. “(Xu) Yi zongjiao jiu zhongguo shuo (續) 以宗教救中國說（無文明教化） [Using Religion to Save China, Continued].” *Da Gongbao* 大公報, 18 March, 1903.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ying Lianzhi 英斂之. “(Wan) Yi zongjiao jiu zhongguo shuo (完) 以宗教救中國說（無文明教化） [Using Religion to Save China, Conclusion].” *Da Gongbao* 大公報, 19 March, 1903.

⁴² Peter Tze-Ming 吳梓明 Ng, ed., *Jidujiao daxue Huaren xiaozhang yanjiu* 基督教大學華人校長研究 [Research on Chinese Christian University Presidents] (Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe 福建教育出版社, 2001), 109-113.

⁴³ Ibid., 115.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 106.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 107.

collection of writings from the *Da Gongbao* surveyed all of the “strong” and “weak” countries of the world.⁴⁶ The common thread among all strong countries, Ma argued, was that they all had a constitutional monarchy. A constitution delineated the “responsibilities of the ruler and the rights of the people.”⁴⁷ The most important responsibility of the Chinese citizen, and especially, the Chinese Catholic was to push for the formation of a Chinese constitution. Ma and Ying published widely, in journals such as the Sino-Western collaboration, the *Revue Catholique* (*Shengjiao Zazhi* 聖教雜誌), to air their positions and argue for a constitutional monarchy. They believed that Chinese Catholic intellectuals had to have their voices included in the debate. Ma and Ying’s political advocacy set a model for Chinese Catholic intellectuals: for Chinese Catholics the task of “saving the nation” (*zhiguoguo* 治國) was not in conflict with their religious faith. Moreover, national political activism was a duty of the good Catholic.

Early twentieth-century Catholic Chinese intellectuals, whether they were born into existing Chinese Catholic families, or the “products” of German and even French missionaries, thus shared a common obsession with their secular counterparts — China was weak, had been humiliated throughout the 19th century. How could the intellectual strengthen the nation? The answer for Ma and Ying lay in a hybridized form of civic religion, rooted in both the traditions of Catholicism and of traditional Chinese learning. To Catholic intellectuals, Catholicism was a force for progressive enlightenment that could elevate the people from their centuries-long moral and spiritual crisis. But this religion would only gain acceptance in China if it respected and understood the ideas and culture of traditional China.

Chen in the Early Republic

In October of 1911, the Wuchang uprising began, and revolution soon spread throughout China. By January 1st, Sun Yatsen announced the formation of the Republic of China in Nanjing, and headed a provisional national government until April of 1912. On February 12th, 1912 the Emperor Puyi resigned, ending the Qing dynasty. In March, Sun Yatsen’s revolutionary party, the *Zhongguo Tongmenghui*, became an open political party, the Guomingdang (or Kuomintang, KMT). Chen joined the KMT in May of 1912, and he was soon elected a local representative in Guangdong.⁴⁸

During the hectic early days of the uprisings and the subsequent jostling among political factions, Chen continued to write short editorial pieces and commentary on current affairs. Throughout this period, Chen evinced a tone of guarded optimism. He “pitied the important bureaucrats and court officials of yesterday, who have become useless

⁴⁶ Fang Hao 方豪, ed., *Ma Xiangbo xiansheng wenji* 馬相伯先生文集 [Collected Works of Ma Xiangbo] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990), 14.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Liu Naihe 劉乃和, *Chen Yuan nianpu*, 57.

in a day, as well as the rich merchants and landowners, who have become peasants overnight.”⁴⁹ He lamented the “unpredictability of change in all current affairs.”⁵⁰

Chen also wrote prescient analyses about the challenges that the revolutionary parties would face in the near future. In “Concerns About the Current Situation,” written in December of 1911, Chen wrote that the legitimacy of the Republic was undermined by three forces: rival political factions, “corrupt local gentry,” and “deceptive Qing army officials” who wanted to retain their power.⁵¹ Chen’s analysis proved correct. Local gentry and military strongmen such as Yuan Shikai came to don increasingly important roles in the government, fracturing the stability of the Republic.⁵²

In October of 1912, Chen campaigned as a “revolutionary journalist” in the Republic’s first parliamentary elections. He entered politics during an outpouring of enthusiastic political energy for the KMT. The KMT became the largest party in the parliament, winning 269 out of 596 seats in the House of Representatives, and 123 of 274 seats in the senate. Song Jiaoren, who along with Sun Yatsen had co-founded the KMT, was slated as the first prime minister. But Song was assassinated in March of 1913, upon orders from Yuan Shikai.⁵³ Soon, Yuan continued his assault on the KMT by dismissing all of the Nationalist provincial governors in May 1913. In the summer of 1913, Nationalist revolutionaries in the south tried to overthrow Yuan in a “second revolution,” but Yuan easily quelled the revolt.⁵⁴ Soon it became clear that Yuan wanted to found a new dynasty, with himself as emperor. In 1914, he dissolved the parliament. In 1915, he proclaimed himself the Emperor of the Chinese Empire.

These turbulent years witnessed rival intellectual and political voices by presenting their alternate visions for the moral foundations that would lead to the construction of a modern China. Western missionaries believed that the Revolution of 1911 signaled new opportunities for Christianity to make inroads into the new Chinese state, while Confucianists hoped to ground the new China on traditional teaching. All of these intellectuals believed that China lay in a period of intellectual and spiritual crisis, and they had the correct antidote for China’s salvation.

Yuan Shikai chose Confucianism, and he revitalized traditional Confucian rites to legitimize his rule. In June of 1913, he issued orders to restore the national worship of Confucius. In August, members of the Confucian Religion Association (*Kongjiao Hui* 孔教

⁴⁹ Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Xin zhengfu heduo jiuzheng ye 新政府何多舊政也 [The Similarities Between the Old and New Governments] (1911),” in *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009), 434. Idem, *Chen Yuan Quanjì*, 434. **

⁵⁰ Idem, “Xin zhengfu heduo jiuzheng ye,” 434. Idem, *Chen Yuan Quanjì*, 433. **

⁵¹ Idem, “Shijü zhi kelü 時局之可慮 [Concerns about our Current Situation] (1911),” in *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Zaonian wen* 陳垣全集: 早年文, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2009), 437.

⁵² For the best work on political factions immediately after the 1911 revolution, see Ernest P. Young, “Politics in the Aftermath of Revolution: The Era of Yuan Shih-k’ai, 1912-1916,” in *Cambridge History of China, Volume 12: Republican China 1912-1949, Part I*, ed. Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). See also Idem, *Politics in the Aftermath of Revolution: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977).

⁵³ Peter G. Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949* (London: Routledge, 2005), 78.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

會), headed by the prominent reformer Kang Youwei, proposed to write clauses in the constitution that would make Confucianism the “national religion” of the Republic of China.⁵⁵ Yuan Shikai put his support behind these proposals, and started to rededicate old imperial temples in Confucian rituals. Eventually, he hoped to outlaw non-Confucian religions.

Yuan’s attacks on religious freedom made a deep imprint on Chen Yuan. As a member of the KMT, Chen had opposed Yuan’s *coup d’etat* and his subsequent political maneuvers. Above all, Chen rejected Yuan’s proposals to transform Confucianism into a state religion. He advanced the position that the new China needed to establish protections for the freedom of religions. The preoccupation with religious freedom became consistent theme throughout the rest of his intellectual trajectory. Perhaps more importantly, Chen’s political career brought him in contact with Ma Xiangbo and Ying Lianzhi. Ma and Ying were prominent critics of Yuan Shikai’s attempts to establish state Confucianism, and they welcomed Chen into a reading club that they had formed, called the Furen Society (輔仁社). The Society formed the basis of the later Chinese Catholic University in Beijing. The connection to Ma and Ying was a turning point in Chen’s career.



Figure 32: Chen Yuan as an Assemblyman. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Chen Yuan and the Yuan Yelikewen Kao

Yuan Shikai died in 1916, failing to found a new dynasty. After his death, China disintegrated into a state of competing warlords. Disillusioned, radical and liberal intellectuals of the “New Culture Movement” grew skeptical of the ability of politics to change China, retreating from politics and pinning their hopes on long-term, gradual

⁵⁵ See Chen Hsi-yuan, “Confucianism Encounters Religion: The Formation of Religious Discourse and the Confucian movement in Modern China” (Dissertation, Harvard University, 1999).

cultural change.⁵⁶ The influence of the New Culture Movement ideas became apparent on May 4th, 1919, when almost 3000 students gathered at Beijing University to protest the clauses in the Versailles Treaty that granted Shandong to the Japanese. While ostensibly a protest against specific grievances set out in the Paris Treaties, the May 4th Movement signaled the transformation of the New Cultural Movement into a moment of political action and activism.⁵⁷

Adopting much of the missionary rhetoric that was popular in the late 19th and early 20th century, radical intellectuals associated with the New Culture Movement also targeted Confucianism as the primary obstacle to China's modernization and the main reason why the reforms of the early Republic had failed. But what could replace Confucianism as the foundation of the nation's moral order? Radicals such as Chen Duxiu argued in the influential journal *New Youth* (also known as *La Jeunesse*, *Xin Qingnian* 新青年) that China needed to replace Confucianism with the progressive, secular, values of the West, such as science and democracy, and Communism. Liberals such as Hu Shi brought the pragmatism of John Dewey to China, hoping to reinvigorate Chinese civilization through the recreation of a vernacular written language. According to Peter Zarrow, Hu "preferred civilization-building to state- or nation building."⁵⁸

But whether radical or liberal, the New Culture Movement was spearheaded by intellectuals who generally espoused an anti-religious, pro-secularization view. In 1915, Chen Duxiu called for the Chinese to "replace religion with science." The West was superior to China because it valued scientific reasoning, as opposed to "fictional imaginations."⁵⁹ Even though New Culture Movement intellectuals claimed to respect the right to religious freedom, they denigrated religion as a force that deceived the people. China needed to overcome its religious and superstitious past to become truly modern.

Chen Yuan belonged to a generation of scholars who stood at a distance from the May 4th movement. Born a decade after the generation of the early trail-blazing reformers like Liang Qichao, but also a decade before the May 4th generation radicals Hu Shi and Fu Sinian, this generation "was transitional, and knew itself to be so."⁶⁰ Because they had been involved in the failed revolutions of 1911, intellectuals such as Chen Yuan had abandoned

⁵⁶ The literature on the New Culture Movement is vast. For a good historical overview, see Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution*, 133.

⁵⁷ There is a large literature on the history of the May 4th movement. For the literature in English, the best place to begin is Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). In Chinese, there's no better place to start than Yu Yingshi 余英史, *Cong wusi dao xin wusi 從五四到新五四* [From the May Fourth Movement to the New May Fourth Movement] (Taipei: Shi bao, 1989).

⁵⁸ Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution*, 137.

⁵⁹ Cited in Lü Shiqiang 呂實強, *Zhongguo guansheng fanjiao de yuan ying (1860-1874)* 中國官紳反教的原因 (一八六〇-一八七四) [The Chinese Literati and Anti-Christianity, 1860-1874] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1973), 128. But Chen's initial ideas about the relation between religion and science were much more nuanced, and encouraged the growth of Christianity in China, because he believed the missionary narrative of the cultural strength of the West being rooted in Christianity. See also Lionel Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 234.

⁶⁰ Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*, 28.

politics and turned to the realm of academia and public education to fulfill their aspirations of “saving the nation.” Unlike younger radicals, such as Lu Xun, who jettisoned a career studying ancient stone rubbings and started writing fiction, Chen Yuan continued to study ancient texts and manuscripts.

Stimulated by the political and intellectual energies swirling around him, Chen Yuan produced his most important, imaginative, and fertile intellectual work from the period of 1917 until 1924. These works laid the foundation for the academic study of Chinese religions. Chen joined in debates provoked by May 4th intellectuals regarding the relationship between Church and State and the place of religion in public life. Chen’s works were broadly published in important periodicals and journals of the time, such as the *Eastern Miscellany* (*Dongfang Zazhi* 東方雜誌), and Christian youth publications, such as *Progress and Improvement of the Youth* (青年進步). It was during this period as well that Chen Yuan became involved with the Protestant church in Beijing headed by the missionary, and later U. S. ambassador to China, John Leighton Stuart. Stuart’s church was renowned for its progressive attitudes towards ordaining Chinese pastors, and it was here that Chen was baptized.⁶¹

The work that established his academic reputation, *An Investigation of the Yelikewen Religion* (*Yuan Yelikewen Kao* 元也里可溫考), was serialized in the *Eastern Miscellany* in 1917. The *Yuan Yelikewen Kao* is often considered the foundational work of Chinese comparative religion, and for good reason. The work originated as an assignment from Ma Xiangbo and Ying Lianzhi, in the Furen Society. It begins with a puzzle posed by historians of the Yuan dynasty: scholars had long known about a religion called the “*Yelikewen*,” but no one knew for sure what the four characters meant, or the type of religion to which the characters referred.⁶² Drawing on the methods of the new historicism and the rigorous methods of traditional Chinese philology in which he was trained, Chen claimed that the *yelikewen* of the Yuan dynasty was Roman Catholicism, not a tribe or ethnicity. Chen argued that the Mongol conquests of Central Asia and Europe during the Yuan Dynasty had brought Catholicism to China. The Mongol invasions led to the capture and captivity of “countless Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians.”⁶³ These prisoners of war were then resettled in “the tens of thousands of miles north of the Great Wall and West of the Jiagu Guan were filled with Christians.”⁶⁴ But Chen argued that the Christians did not retain their status as prisoners for long: many enjoyed a fairly prestigious position within the Yuan bureaucracy,

⁶¹ There is significant academic debate over the question of Chen Yuan’s personal faith. In his later life, Chen Yuan noted that he was not a serious Christian. Most research has concluded, however, that Chen was baptized. See Liu Xian, “On Chen Yuan’s Study of Religions” (Dissertation, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2005).

⁶² Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Yuan yelikenwen kao 元也里可溫教考 [An Investigation of the Yelikewen Religion] (1917),” in *Chen Yuan Quanjì: Di er ce*. 陳垣全集: 第二冊, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (合肥市: 安徽大學出版社, 2009), 8.

⁶³ Ibid., 57.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

as they did not have to pay taxes and were exempt from compulsory military service.⁶⁵ The Mongols “respected and praised” Catholicism, Chen argued.⁶⁶

Given how prominent Christians were under the Yuan dynasty, Chen asked, “how did it come to pass that the *Yelikewen* declined and disappeared after the Yuan?”⁶⁷ Chen answered that after at the end of the Yuan dynasty and the beginning of the Ming, Europeans were expelled from China. Early Ming emperors persecuted Christianity.⁶⁸ During the reign of Renzhong (1378-1425) in particular, the emperor ordered the destruction of Christian churches because of his Buddhist faith. Churches were ransacked and converted into Buddhist temples.⁶⁹ Yet traces of Yuan Christianity remained in archaeological steles and records in local gazeteers, which Chen drew on to create his historical work.

Chen’s scholarship was pathbreaking on many fronts. In an article assessing Chen’s impact, the scholar Hsiao Chi-Ching has noted that Chen forged a new approach to the study of Chinese history. Traditional Chinese scholarship after the Song Dynasty tended to neglect and denigrate the study of religion.⁷⁰ Chen thus broke new ground by focusing on religion, making the relationship between religion and the state an area worthy of study. With its focus on cultural history, Chen’s work belonged to the broader trend within the New Culture Movement’s to reject political history.

Chen’s historical work can also be situated in the “new historiography” that the intellectual Liang Qichao advocated in 1902. According to Axel Schneider, Liang Qichao prompted an “historiography which no longer served the interests of the ruling dynasty and a few mighty individuals.”⁷¹ Scholars following Liang Qichao’s lead wanted to modernize the traditional methods of evidential scholarship (*kaozheng*) that dated back to the Qianjia period (1736-1821) by looking for materials and subjects that lay outside of the traditional historical canon.⁷² Along with Gu Jiegang, Fu Sinian, and Qianmu,⁷³ Chen belonged to a generation of historians who attempted to modernize the older *kaozheng* methods.⁷⁴ Scholars like Hu Shi and Fu Sinian, who had studied in Europe and America, wanted to merge the academic theories and ideas of the West (Hu Shi was a John Dewey acolyte, Fu Sinian

⁶⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 38.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁷⁰ Hsiao Chi-Ching 蕭啟慶, “Tui chen chuxin de shixuejia Chen Yuan,” *Xin Shixue* 新史學 16 (3), no. 3 (September 2005), 113.

⁷¹ Axel Schneider, “Between Dao and History: Two Chinese Historians in Search of a Modern Identity for China,” *History and Theory* 35, no. 4 (1996), 57.

⁷² For scholarship on the Kaozheng, Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 2001); Idem, *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch’ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁷³ Schneider, “Between Dao and History,” 58.

⁷⁴ Hsiao Chi-Ching 蕭啟慶, “Tui chen chuxin de shixuejia Chen Yuan,” 108.

translated Hegel) with the traditional evidential scholarship of China. Chen, on the other hand, had not traveled to abroad, and he identified himself as a traditional scholar.

Despite the apolitical challenge of the New Culture Movement to create works of scientific and academic objectivity, Chen Yuan's works were thoroughly political, informed by broader political currents. Read in light of the debates around religion and its place in the public sphere in the early Republic, Chen Yuan's *Yelikewen kao* was a measured, yet pointed argument for the virtues of religious freedom. Chen identified the wide-ranging diversity and plurality of religion within the Yuan dynasty, where Buddhism and Christianity were able to coexist next to each other, with the dynasty's productivity. However, by the late Yuan dynasty, this pluralism was restricted, and the religious freedom that Christians enjoyed during the earlier period of the dynasty disappeared. For Chen, the crumbling of the apparatus of religious freedom also signaled the end of the Yuan dynasty: Chen argued that the basis of a strong empire was its toleration of foreign, disparate elements.

Chen not only wrote about Christianity: after writing *Yuan Yelikewen kao*, Chen turned to the study of comparative religions. From the years 1919 to 1923, he published prolifically on the histories of religion, and focused on the various “minority” and “marginalized” religions in China, publishing on the histories of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Manicheism in China.⁷⁵ In all of these works, Chen's concern for religious pluralism and the importance of religious freedom remained a consistent thread.

A central question occupied Chen Yuan's comparisons of these religions: why did some religions successfully become “Chinese” while others continued to be labeled as foreign? In a series of articles written from 1919 to 1923. Chen explored the boundaries between “foreign” and “Chinese” and the process by which these religions originating outside were sinified. In his 1919 preface to Zhang Zi Zhong's book, *Life of Jesus*, Chen called for more explicit comparisons between the histories of two foreign religions in China: Christianity and Buddhism.⁷⁶ When Buddhism first entered China, Chen noted, the Chinese intelligentsia attacked and defamed it “much more aggressively than attacks on Christianity today.”⁷⁷ Buddhist sutras and sculptures were burned and outlawed, in the same way that Christianity was persecuted during the Ming and Qing dynasties.⁷⁸ But the persecution did not diminish Buddhism's appeal; instead it became even more popular and prosperous. Chen Yuan argued that Buddhists and Christians, as “friends in persecution,” had much to learn from one another, and an increased dialogue between intellectuals of both religions “would lead to an ultimate revelation.”⁷⁹

In 1923, Chen published his *summa*, the *Yuan Xiyuren Huabua Kao* (元西域人華化考), translated into English as *Western and Central Asians in China Under the Mongols. Their*

⁷⁵ For a quick overview Chen Yuan's complete publication history, see the appendix in Liu Naihe 劉乃和, *Chen Yuan nianpu*, 861-919.

⁷⁶ Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Yesu jidu renzi shiyi xu 耶穌基督人子釋義序 [Preface to the Life of Jesus] (1919),” in *Chen Yuan Quanji: Di er ce*. 陳垣全集: 第二冊, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (合肥市: 安徽大學出版社, 2009), 406-407.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 406.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Transformation into Chinese, which synthesized all of his previous thinking on the relationship between foreign and “Chinese.”⁸⁰ In the *Yuan Xiyu Huabua kao*, Chen looked at the Western Regions (*Xiyu*) in the Yuan Dynasty, which includes a large part of Central Asia, encompassing a diverse mix of Central Asian peoples and religions. The fundamental question in the book is how unity arose out of such diversity: how these different peoples were “sinified” and became “Chinese.” Chen writes, “A peculiar moment came to pass in the Yuan dynasty, when Turks, Persians, who all had their own languages, all adopted Chinese customs and Chinese culture when they entered Chinese lands.”⁸¹

And in *Yuan Xiyuren Huabua Kao*, Chen more explicitly clarified his concept of “Sinification” (華化). For Chen, one could become Chinese. First, foreigners had to embrace the Confucian tradition (*Ruxue* 儒學). “A cultural tradition specific to China,” Confucianism was “the most important facet to consider when talking about Sinification.”⁸² One became “Chinese” by learning how to create Chinese art, write Chinese poetry, and read the Confucian classics. In the *Yuan Xiyuren Huabua kao*, he catalogued and profiled a series of foreign scholars, painters, and writers from the Western regions, who had either become experts in the Confucian canon or produced art and literature according to the Confucian tradition. These “foreigners” belonged to different religions—they were Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Manicheans—yet they all accepted the primacy of Chinese culture. Chen’s basic argument, then, was that it was incumbent upon foreign cultures and minorities in China to adopt the values and ideas of Chinese civilization. Chen argued that the Chinese tradition was expansive and tolerant; Confucianism could function as a broader social and political framework to absorb different religions and ethnicities.

Chen applied his understanding of Chinese tolerance to his study of the history of Christianity in China. Chen portrayed Matteo Ricci and the early Jesuit missions as heroes. Ricci, Chen wrote, “was a devoted student of Chinese culture. Ricci loved the Chinese language, and he truly understood Chinese culture.”⁸³ Ricci admired Confucian scholars, and his enthusiasm for Chinese culture helped ingratiate him with powerful Chinese intellectuals. The Chinese were attracted to his knowledge of European mathematics and science.⁸⁴ After the reign of Kangxi, however, due to the Rites controversy and the impact of religious orders like the Dominicans who “attacked the Jesuit method of evangelization and did not understand or respect Chinese culture,” the Qing imperial court banned Christianity in China.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ The book was translated into English, see Chen Yuan 陳垣, *Western and Central Asians in China Under the Mongols. Their Transformation into Chinese*, trans. Ch’ien Hsing-hai and L. Carrington Goodrich (Los Angeles: Monumenta Serica, 1966).

⁸¹ Idem, “Yuan xiyu ren huahua kao 元西域人華化考 [A Study of the Sinification of the Western Regions] (1934),” in *Chen Yuan Quanji: Di er ce*. 陳垣全集: 第二冊, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (合肥市: 安徽大學出版社, 2009), 212.

⁸² Ibid., 221.

⁸³ Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Jidujiao ruhua shi 基督教入華史 [The History of Christianity’s Entrance into China] (1927),” in *Chen Yuan Quanji: Di er ce*. 陳垣全集: 第二冊, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (合肥市: 安徽大學出版社, 2009), 477.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Jidujiao ruhua shilue 基督教入華史略 [A Chronicle of Christianity’s Entrance into China] (1924),” in *Chen Yuan Quanji: Di er ce*. 陳垣全集: 第二冊, ed. Chen Zhichao 陳智超 (合肥市: 安徽大學出版社, 2009), 477.

While Protestantism in China experienced a more rapid expansion in the nineteenth century than it had in previous centuries, Chen argued, “I still believe that Protestant culture has not yet been able to be assimilated into Chinese culture.”⁸⁶ Culturally and artistically, Protestants had not become part of the Chinese cultural lexicon: Chinese poets, for example, did not compose poems that referred to “churches and pastors.” In contrast, within a hundred years of Buddhism’s entry into China, Chinese scholars and poets incorporated Buddhist imagery and iconography into their art.⁸⁷ Similarly, for Chen, Chinese artists and poets painted Catholic cathedrals and wrote about Catholicism.⁸⁸ Ultimately, Chen attributed the widespread rejection of Christianity to the hubris of Western missionaries after Matteo Ricci. Ricci’s successors did not respect the value of Chinese civilization. Chen linked the decline of Western interest in Chinese civilization to China’s deteriorating geo-political position: “because of China’s weakening national position and power, it has become difficult to attract Westerners to study Chinese culture.”⁸⁹

Chen’s approach to comparative religion reflects multiple strands of his early biography. It was deeply rooted in his early training in the traditional Chinese classics, and throughout his works he exhibited a profound respect for the Confucian tradition. He also employed the traditional methods of historical scholarship that he learned in his youth to his analyses. His interest in the relationship between minority cultures and the Han Chinese stemmed from the anti-Manchu activist writings of his pre-Republican years. Deeply formative also was his time in the National Parliament, whose controversies informed his arguments about the importance of religious freedom and tolerance. Finally, Chen was influenced by the agenda of the Catholic intellectuals of Ma Xiangbo and Ying Lianzhi, who, as we have seen, hoped to create a Chinese Catholicism that could transform China in the midst of its spiritual and moral crisis.

How should we categorize Chen in the intellectual landscape of the 1920s? Chen, like other Chinese Christians, occupied a tenuous middle ground, neither truly conservative nor radical. While Chen took pride in Confucianism and the tolerant strands of Chinese civilization, he diverged from his more conservative chauvinist Sinocentric counterparts, who hoped to elevate Confucianism into a state religion. He saw in the conservatives of his time hints of xenophobia that threatened a potentially vibrant and religiously diverse Chinese state. As a Chinese Christian, Chen believed that Christianity could help to strengthen the Chinese nation and could be subsumed, without conflict, under a tolerant and inclusive Chinese culture. Yet Chen’s pro-Christian stance came into conflict with secular intellectuals on the left, who hoped to eradicate all religions from the Chinese intellectual landscape. This anti-Christian tone grew more militant in the early 1920s, and became a constant problem for Chen once he became the President of the Catholic University in Beijing.

版社, 2009), 462.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 463.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 464.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 465.

Chen Yuan, Furen University, and the SVD

In 1924, Chinese Catholics pinned their hopes on a new institution that could transform Catholicism in China: the first Pontifical University in China, established by the Vatican and the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Propaganda Fide*). The idea for a pontifical university in Beijing dated back to 1912, when Ying Lianzhi and Ma Xiangbo petitioned Pope Pius X, asking him to establish a Catholic university in Beijing. In their letter, Ying and Ma argued that China desperately needed talented Catholic educators in order for Catholicism to spread. A Catholic institute of higher education could fill that gap.⁹⁰ As Ying and Ma waited for a response from the Vatican, they founded a society that offered a model of what Catholic higher education could resemble. They called it the Furen Society (輔仁社). Literally translated as the Society for Cultivating Virtue, the Society offered Chinese Catholics a rigorous training in classical Chinese. The first incarnation of Furen consisted of a small coterie of intellectuals and pupils in the personal circles of Ying and Ma. Due to the reputations of Ying and Ma, the Furen Society grew, attracting bright non-Catholics, including Chen Yuan. Chen Yuan wrote the *Yuan yelikewen kao* after he joined this intellectual community.

It took another thirteen years before a Catholic University was established in Beijing.⁹¹ Under the aggressive initiatives of Barry O'Toole, a seminary professor and Oblate of the Archabbey of St. Vincent, the American Benedictines led the charge to establish the Catholic University in Beijing. From its inception, the university was conceived as a Sino-Western joint venture: the University employed both Western and Chinese academics. The university's administrative divisions reveal how the missionaries envisioned the division of labor. The American missionary society provided the funding; it also controlled personnel and curricular decisions. An American missionary served as dean, overseeing the dormitories and student behavior. Western missionaries were thus in charge of the "moral education" and discipline of the students. On the other hand, the University president was Chinese; he was responsible for the intellectual and academic life of the university. Ying initially served as president, but health problems soon forced him to choose a successor. Even though Chen Yuan was not Catholic, Ma and Ying appointed Chen because of his rising academic stature, charging him with the duty of attracting other Chinese intellectuals to join the faculty.

In the eight years that they directed the university, the Benedictines developed both the curriculum and school infrastructure. Due to Furen's previous roots as an institution of classical learning and Chen Yuan's own intellectual priorities, the university quickly boasted a strong faculty in classical Chinese literature and history. The Benedictines expanded the number of course offerings, offering students training in both Western and Chinese classical

⁹⁰ The best book in English on Ma Xiangbo is Ruth Hayhoe and Yungling Lu, eds., *Ma Xiangbo and the Mind of Modern China, 1840-1939* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

⁹¹ For a fuller account of the various decisions and arguments that stymied the development of the University, see John Shujie Chen, *The Rise and Fall of Fu Ren University, Beijing: Catholic Higher Education in China* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2004).

learning. They also built new dormitories and facilities to accommodate more students. These efforts were largely successful, and the university grew from an institution that had 23 students in its first year of operation to more than 600 by the time the SVD took over in 1933.⁹² Partly due to too rapid over-expansion, coupled with the financial devastation wreaked by the Great Depression in America, the Benedictines faced financial insolvency. After a short search for a new missionary society to whom they could entrust the work, the *Propaganda Fide* turned to the SVD.

The Chinese professors immediately voiced skepticism of the SVD takeover. Primarily, they were afraid that the university would lose its “American” character and decrease the amount of English instruction. The new dean, the SVD’s Father Joseph Murphy, an American, reported to the SVD leadership that “the call for American Fathers is very persistent[. . .]. The Chinese wasted no time in making it known to him that they thought that the number of American Fathers here was too small.”⁹³ Murphy continued to report, “the Chinese are afraid of the ‘German discipline’ and are anxiously hoping that there will be some Americans among those who arrive this summer.”⁹⁴ The Chinese faculty requested that the SVD send priests from their American branch to teach English classes. They raised further questions about the Nazi rise to power in Germany. Murphy noted that the faculty and administration “suspect that the situation in Germany is becoming darker all the time, for the reports that reach us from Swiss newspapers or from travellers are anything but encouraging.”⁹⁵

The SVD Superior General tried his best to still these concerns. He wrote to Murphy to assure the Chinese faculty: “We are and remain a Catholic university, where Americans and Germans work and try to bring honor to their Fatherlands. If one or the other country wants to support our work, they are of course more than welcome. But if they also seek certain commitments or obligations from us, or if they make demands, we must refuse them with politeness and with complete determination.”⁹⁶ Grendel had appointed Murphy, a priest trained in the SVD’s seminary in Techny, Illinois, largely to mollify Chinese concerns.

Grendel had to contend with skeptical voices other than the Chinese: internal criticism appeared within the SVD as well. Several members of the SVD leadership took exception to the “American character” of the university, and suspected that they could not fundamentally change their character and culture of the university.⁹⁷ Moreover, the decision to oversee Furen University was a sign of a radical shift in the missionary society’s tactics and outlook. In the 19th century, the SVD had embraced the Dominican position in the Rites Controversy of “direct” evangelization — where the primary missionary method came through church building and street preaching in poorer and rural areas — as opposed to the

⁹² Ibid., 113. By 1947, the university had more than 2300 students, and was the second largest university in Beijing, after Beijing University

⁹³ Joseph Murphy to Josef Grendel, 18 May 1934, AG 641 / 1934-1935, 7217.

⁹⁴ Joseph Murphy to Josef Grendel, 15 February 1935, AG 641 / 1934-1935.

⁹⁵ Joseph Murphy to Josef Grendel, 17 March 1935, AG 641 / 1934-1935.

⁹⁶ Josef Grendel to Joseph Murphy, 8 April 1935, AG 641 / 1934-1935.

⁹⁷ Josef Grendel, “Kurze Zusammenstellung der Verhandlungen betr. Die Uebernahme der Kath. Universität in Peking durch die SVD,” 6 May 1933, AG 641 / 1933-1934, 7021.

Jesuit method of “indirect” missionary methods — engagement with the local literati and more educated, gentry classes.⁹⁸ After the First World War, due to the influence of the Vatican and the Sacred Congregation of the Faith, the SVD increasingly adopted a Jesuit accommodationist line. Furen represented the SVD’s further embrace of the Jesuit view. Some missionaries, however, worried that the transition to university administration would detract from their true calling of direct missionary work. Murphy warned the SVD leadership that missionaries in Henan were

sending reports back to the seminarians continually in Techny that the university work is not as important as the mission work, that it is interfering with their work, etc. etc. From what I hear it is causing uneasiness among the seminarians in Techny. Personally I know they are quite justified in expressing their own likings and following their inclinations, but where this is done to injure another work enjoying the same approval of the Church and the recommendation of the Holy Father, that seems to go beyond the proper bounds.⁹⁹

Accommodation and Collaboration at Furen

Even as they were faced with these tensions, on the surface the Chinese faculty and the SVD missionaries attempted to reconcile their differences during the first several years of the SVD’s administration. The missionaries were eager to demonstrate their willingness to cede control to Chen Yuan and the Chinese faculty. SVD leaders assured Chen that they were committed to making Furen University “wholly a Chinese university,” and the administration was prepared to transfer control completely to “the hands of learned Catholic Chinese.”¹⁰⁰ Despite tensions over curricular reform and personnel decisions, the missionaries and the faculty worked together in an uneasy alliance.

In the first several years of the SVD’s administration of the university, these attempts worked. Several missionaries in Germany advocated that the university associate itself with the Vatican, and change the name of the university from Furen to “The Pontifical University of Peking” (*Päpstlich Pekinger Universität*).¹⁰¹ The Superior General Josef Grendel rejected the idea, arguing that the mission society needed to be extremely “careful” when using the word “Pontifical” in China, due to the political nature that this name change and association would bring.¹⁰² He argued that appearing too ultra-montane could ruffle feathers in both China and Germany. As new-comers into the realm of higher education, he wanted

⁹⁸ The Rites Controversy has an extensive and long bibliography, for some of the best overviews, see George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: From its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985); David E. Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994); Idem, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).

⁹⁹ Joseph Murphy to Josef Grendel, 17 March 1935, AG 64I / 1934-1935.

¹⁰⁰ Josef Grendel to Chen Yuan, 20 May 1933, AG 64I / 1933-1934, 7087-7088.

¹⁰¹ Anton Hilger to Josef Grendel, 16 March 1935, AG 64I / 1934-1935.

¹⁰² Josef Grendel to Anton Hilger, 23 March 1935, AG 64I / 1934-1935.

to be “more firmly in the saddle” before making any symbolic, overt signs of allegiance that might be taken politically.¹⁰³

Besides taking a more cautious path politically, the SVD leadership also did not make major changes in the curriculum. Advisors from the *Propaganda Fide* and the Vatican pushed the leadership to diminish Furen’s curricular emphasis on the Chinese classics and to expand the faculty of Western theology. Wilhelm Schmidt, an SVD missionary and advisor to the Vatican, argued that the university should establish a Pontifical Faculty of Theology and integrate theology more tightly into its curricular emphasis.¹⁰⁴ Despite these pressures, the SVD did not expand the theological faculty, and it retained its emphasis on a classical Chinese education.

The SVD’s commitment to advancing dialogue between Western and Chinese scholarship was exemplified in the university’s journal, the *Monumenta Serica*. The SVD missionary and sinologist trained in Paris, Franz Xaver Biallas, served as the chief editor, but of the eight members on the editorial board, four were Chinese scholars.¹⁰⁵ Chen Yuan’s influence permeated the journal. He was an editor and several of his articles were translated into English and published for a wider audience in the issues in the first year.¹⁰⁶ Chen also gave the journal its Chinese name. He called the journal *Huayi xuezhì*, reflecting his interest in the broader Sinophone world, and not just China itself. The initial issue of the journal showcased the international nature of its contributors, containing articles from French, German, Chinese, and English scholars. The areas of study of the journal were wide-ranging, covering subjects from literature to ancient archaeology. The journal soon became one of the most influential sinological academic journals, as it introduced and translated the work of influential Chinese scholars into Western languages.

¹⁰³ Josef Grendel to Anton Hilger, 13 April 1935, AG 64I / 1934-1935.

¹⁰⁴ Wilhelm Schmidt, “Denkschrift zur Ausgestaltung der katholischen Fu-Yen-Universität in Peking,” 1 October 1935, AG 64I / 1935-1937, 7382-7383.

¹⁰⁵ For a history and biography of Biallas, see Miroslav Kollář, *Ein Leben im Konflikt: P. Franz Xaver Biallas SVD (1878-1936) Chinamissionar und Sinologe im Licht seiner Korrespondenz* (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ His ground-breaking work on the Chinese Jesuit painter Wu Yushan (吳漁山), for example, was translated into English and published for a wider Western audience. See Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Wu Yü-shan 吳漁山: In Commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of his Ordination to the Priesthood in the Society of Jesus,” *Monumenta Serica* 3 (1938): 130-170b.

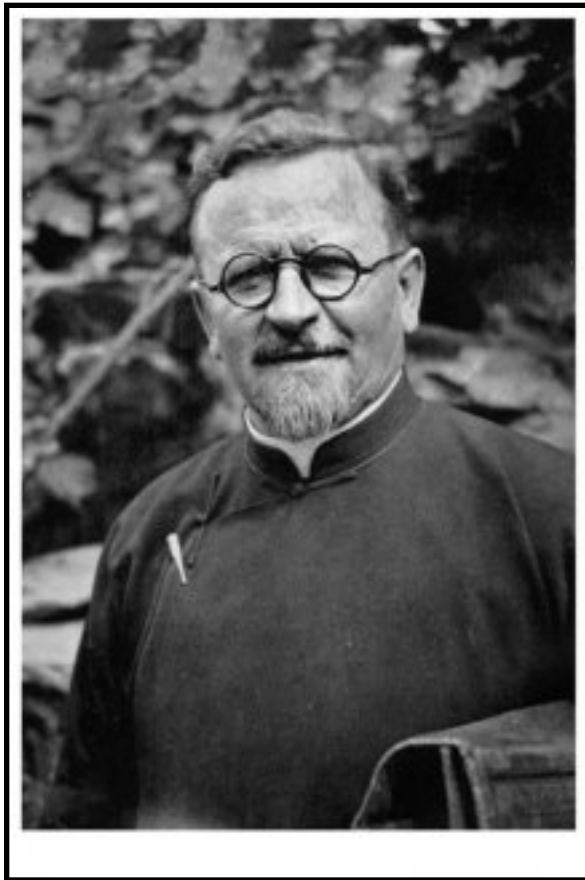


Figure 33: Franz Xaver Biallas. Photo courtesy of http://www.steyler.eu/svd/aktuelles/news/de/2011/PM_66_Pionier.php

Other than the journal, the SVD demonstrated a commitment to other avenues and evidence for further Sino-Western cooperation and collaboration. In 1936, Biallas proposed to establish an “Institute of Oriental Studies of the Catholic University of Peking.”¹⁰⁷ The Institute would provide training for Western missionaries, under the assumption that “non-Chinese missionaries need a humanistic training in a country with such an old and particular culture, which is only available and valuable through training from educated Chinese.”¹⁰⁸ Chen Yuan’s fingerprints again are evident throughout the whole conception of the Institute—from the basic idea that missionaries needed more training in the Chinese classics to the curricular specifics that the Institute required. Chen himself was scheduled to teach a course on reading and interpreting Chinese historical documents.¹⁰⁹ However, even though the missionaries on the home front enthusiastically supported the idea, the Institute never was established because of a lack of funding.¹¹⁰

Nonetheless, the spirit of Sino-Western cooperation filled the University. Furen’s Art Department, for example, became one of the central institutions that produced Christian art in a Chinese style. The University put on an annual exhibition of “Chinese Christian Art.” Chinese artists would produce scenes from the Bible, such as the nativity,

¹⁰⁷ Kollař, *Ein Leben im Konflikt*, 128-133.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 366.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 373.

¹¹⁰ An institute of Oriental Studies was eventually created in 1961, when Furen was re-established in Taiwan.

the assumption, and Pentecost, in a Chinese artistic style.¹¹¹ The best exhibition paintings were collected in books and published, as well as miniaturized and distributed as calendars. The paintings were also included in a broader project to translate the Catholic Catechism into Chinese and make it more readable and understandable to a Chinese readership.¹¹²

While conversion rates among the Chinese students remained low, the students, for the most part, openly embraced Westernization. In 1939, for example, the university held its first “homecoming event.” Furen students competed with Yenching University students in various athletic events, including track and field and soccer.¹¹³ A string quartet and orchestra, made up of Chinese students, played at the opening ceremony. Chen Yuan kicked off the festivities, and the missionary Heinrich Kroes commented that “the President delivered a witty speech, often interrupted by rounds of applause.”¹¹⁴ At the end of the day, the organizers screened a film showing the major events that happened in the University in the previous year. Kroes remarked that even though the film “was really poorly done, it nonetheless induced a spirit of jocularly and cheer.”¹¹⁵

Rising Nationalism

Yet, the harmonious and jocular relationship between the students and the administrators proved fragile, especially as the Sino-Japanese War escalated. The missionary leadership and the Chinese faculty alike had to contend with challenges from both a rising sense of Chinese nationalism and Japanese imperialist encroachments. After the Mukden incident of 1937, Japanese troops occupied Beijing and established their Chinese Provisional Government. The occupation posed a difficult problem for Christian universities. Faced with the unpalatable options of accepting Japanese rule, closing their doors, or moving away from Japanese occupied eastern areas of China, Chinese colleges, for the most part, chose to migrate to the interior.¹¹⁶ Christian colleges, on the other hand, had more options. They wanted to use their frozen status to obtain immunity from Japanese authority, and thus retain some independence.¹¹⁷ The SVD leadership decided to keep the university running; Furen, along with the American-run Yenching University, were the only universities in Northeast China that remained free of Japanese control.¹¹⁸ Furen expanded its enrollment to

¹¹¹ Flyers for these exhibitions were distributed widely and mailed to invite different eminent professors to attend. See “The Fourth Exhibition of Chinese Christian Art at the Catholic University of Peking. May 27th to 29th. 1939,” 19 May 1939, AG 641 / 1938-1939, 7858-7860.

¹¹² Look up GTU book about these depictions of Jesus, see W. B. Pettus, ed., *Christian Sacred Pictures* (基督教聖蹟圖) (Beijing: California College in China, 1937).

¹¹³ Heinrich Kroes, “Der erste Heimkehrtag der Katholischen Universität in Peking,” n. d., AG 641 / 1938-1939, 7852.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Jessie G. Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 363.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 366.

female students, and became a space where professors who could not move south might teach.¹¹⁹

To continue its operations, the SVD had to appease and cooperate with the occupiers. On May 21, 1938, the Japanese Provisional Government organized a parade to celebrate their victory at Xuzhou, the site of a desperate battle between Chinese and Japanese forces that had resulted in more than 130,000 casualties on both sides.¹²⁰ The Furen University's middle school had not sent any of its students to attend a parade on the May 21, 1938, angering the Japanese Provisional Government.¹²¹ The Japanese threatened to close down the school. The SVD rector, Rudolf Rahmann, appealed to Germany's ambassador to China, Oskar Trautmann, asking Trautmann to intervene on Furen's behalf. He wanted the embassy to organize a meeting with General Kita Seiichi, to explain the "misunderstanding."¹²² The embassy agreed, describing the university as a central site of "German interests," as it offered German classes and its faculty consisted of Germans.¹²³ The embassy brokered a meeting between Rahmann and Kita, and the crisis was averted.

The SVD needed more legal protection from the Japanese, and in 1938, Rahmann signed an agreement with the Japanese embassy, promising to outlaw anti-Japanese student movements in the university, as well as those against the Japanese-sponsored Chinese Provisional Government. The agreement pledged to accept Japanese students, and promised that they would be "equally treated." Eventually the university would expand its faculty to include Japanese scholars.¹²⁴ The missionaries also agreed to allow the Hsin-min Hui, a puppet group established by General Kita to mobilize propaganda for the Japanese, to establish a presence on campus.¹²⁵ The rector Rudolf Rahmann invited Japanese government officials to dinner on multiple occasions.¹²⁶ At the time, the missionaries justified their relations with the Japanese government as in the best interest of the

¹¹⁹ Liu Naihe 劉乃和, *Li yun cheng xue lu*, 64.

¹²⁰ See Long-hsuen Hsu and Mingkai Zhang, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)* (Taipei, Taiwan: Chung Wu Pub. Co., 1971), 221-230. For eyewitness accounts of the battle, see Zhongguo ren min zheng zhi xie shang hui yi. Quan guo wei yuan hui 中國人民政治協商會議全國委員會文史資料研究委員會, ed., *Xuzhou huizhan* 徐州會戰 [The Battle of Xuzhou] (Beijing: Zhongguo wen shi chu ban she 中國文史出版社, 1985).

¹²¹ For the whole incident, see Oskar Trautmann, "Schließung der Mittelschule der Katholischen Universität in Peking," 17 June, 1938, Peking II. R 9208/3499: Deutsche Botschaft China. Katholische Universität in Peking. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, 33-35.

¹²² "Anlage zum Bericht Nr. 439 der Botschaft in Hankow vom 17. June d. J.," 13 June, 1938, Peking II. R 9208/3499: Deutsche Botschaft China. Katholische Universität in Peking. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, 34.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ "Understanding between Dr. Rudolph Rahmann of the Catholic University and Rokuzo Yaguchi of the Japanese Embassy," 12 July 1938, AG 641 / 1938-1939, 7800. The same document was also forwarded to the German Embassy in China. The document can be found in "Understanding between Dr. Rudolph Rahmann of the Catholic University and Rokuzo Yaguchi of the Japanese Embassy," 12 July, 1938, Peking II. R 9208/3499: Deutsche Botschaft China. Katholische Universität in Peking. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, 36.

¹²⁵ For more on the Hsin-min Hui, see John H. Boyle, *China and Japan at War, 1937-1945: The Politics of Collaboration* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972), 92-95.

¹²⁶ For Rahmann's description of the diplomatic crises, see Rudolf Rahmann to Josef Grendel, 23 July 1938, AG 641 / 1938-1939, 7810-7814. For a complete list of the events that the missionary leaders invited the Japanese to, see "Chronik der Katholischen Universität Peking," n. d., AG 641 / 1938-1939.

university. Even Chen Yuan, reminiscing about the time after 1949, wrote proudly that Furen was one of the only institutions of higher education that continued to operate during wartime.¹²⁷

The decision to cooperate with the Japanese was a fatal miscalculation. By deciding to stay open during wartime and appeasing the Japanese authorities, the university, and the foreign missionaries who ran the university, were tainted with the stain of “collaboration” after the Japanese defeat.¹²⁸ By war's end, Chinese nationalists had launched an assault on the university for its wartime behavior. The first group that attacked Furen was the KMT government. In 1946, the Ministry of Education and other local courts initiated an investigation, accusing a number of faculty and students at Furen of collaborating with the Japanese during the war, aiding the Japanese and harboring “Japanese spies.”¹²⁹ Chen and the SVD missionary leadership offered a united front against this external threat, issuing statements and providing documentation that tried to prove that Furen had “valiantly resisted the Japanese during the eight years of war.”¹³⁰ Chen Yuan and the university administration had to sign statements guaranteeing that these accused were not “traitors to the Han Chinese (漢奸).”

Student Unrest

The more serious challenge, however, came from rising student unrest, and the increasing sympathy of the student population towards leftist politics. The united front of Western missionaries and the Chinese administrators against charges of collaboration broke down when it came to the internal school matters of disciplining the student body, especially when the students were suspected of having Communist sympathies.

Tension over the kinds of discipline to which their students should be subjected had long been a source of tension between the Chinese faculty and Western missionaries. Often, the tension would be over such minor issues as personal hygiene and sanitation. In 1946, the new rector, Harold Rigney, chastised the students for their dirtiness, noting, “nowhere on the five continents I had visited have I seen such a dirty dormitory, where university students not only totally disregard cleanliness but spit on the wall and in some instances urinate in the cuspidors and against the wall in the corridors. I told the president that such offenses should not be tolerated, but rather be punished by dismissal.”¹³¹ For

¹²⁷. One example is Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Ziwo jiantao,” 616. To compare the SVD's wartime behavior to how John Leighton Stuart and Yenching University handled similar dilemmas, see Yu-ming Shaw, *An American Missionary in China: John Leighton Stuart and Chinese-American Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 109-142.

¹²⁸. On Chinese “collaboration” with Japanese authorities, Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

¹²⁹. A number of such cases are collected in 卷名: 政治類 [Politics Files], 卷號: 657 in 北平輔仁大學檔案資料 (1925-1952) [Beijing Furen University Archives, 1925-1952] Fu-jen University History Office (FUHO), 輔仁大學校史室. Hereafter cited as FUHO. See, for example, “輔大張心沛, 高鐵候等人有關漢奸特務問題給法院的證明 [Letter to the Higher Court of Hopei Stating that Kao T'ieh Hou is suspected to be a spy of the Japanese yet no witness could be found],” 20 July 1946, FUHO: Political Files 657.

¹³⁰. See, for example Chen Yuan to the Higher Court of Hebei, 8 August 1946, FUHO: Political Files 657.

¹³¹. Harold Rigney, “Monthly Report for August 1946: Diary,” 1 October, 1946, AG 641 / 1943-1947, 8141.

Rigney and the SVD missionaries, such behavior symbolized a lack of moral discipline, and the increasingly loose hold that the SVD leaders had on the student body. Rigney lamented, “the SVD has lost a great deal of control over the university, especially during the last years. As a result, much inefficiency has crept in, and a lack of Catholic spirit prevails.”¹³²

Chen defended the students, arguing that the rector and his priests were “being too harsh and dictatorial.”¹³³ In various instances, then, Chen was pushed to mediate between the Chinese students and the Catholic missionaries who were in charge of the campus dormitories. He felt that the missionaries did not have a complete grasp on the rapidly changing Chinese political and cultural landscape. Chen criticized the missionaries for acting in too draconian a manner, which in turn offended Rigney and the other missionaries.¹³⁴

More troubling to the Western missionaries, however, was the growing radicalism on campus. During the four years between the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1945 and the subsequent Communist takeover of Furen in 1949, China witnessed an intense politicization of the student population. Student demonstrations and strikes were frequent throughout the nation, but especially in Beijing and Shanghai, as students increasingly lost faith in the Nationalist government’s ability to govern effectively.¹³⁵ Furen was not immune to the rising tide of student unrest. A series of student protests appeared, criticizing Furen as a “poisonous environment that mixes classical fascism and feudalism.”¹³⁶

On the 19th of August, 1948, KMT police surrounded the university and the student dormitories to arrest ten “professional Communist agitators” and fourteen other students who harbored them. The arrest was part of a larger action by the KMT government aimed at arresting suspected Communists throughout China.¹³⁷ The crackdown forced hundreds of students from multiple universities to flee Shanghai and Beijing.

The different responses from Chinese faculty and Western missionaries respectively is telling. Chen and other Chinese members of the staff were furious about the police raid; they vocally “objected to the police entering the dormitories in order to arrest the students.”¹³⁸ As a result of the police action, Chen found himself with an increasing amount of sympathy for Communist and leftist students.¹³⁹ On the other hand, the dean Harold Rigney, along with other SVD missionaries, encouraged the Nationalist authorities to enter the university. He wrote that the schools were “cursed by such students,” and argued that to ban the GMD authorities from entering the dormitories was akin to foreign missionaries

¹³² Ibid., 8138.

¹³³ Ibid., 8141.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950*. See especially chapter eleven, “Civil Conflict and the Politicizing of College Youth.”

¹³⁶ Liu Naihe 劉乃和, *Chen Yuan nianpu*, 517.

¹³⁷ Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-1949* (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 76-77.

¹³⁸ Harold Rigney to Aloysius Kappenberg, 30 August 1948, AG 641 / 1948, 8422.

¹³⁹ Liu Naihe 劉乃和, *Li yun cheng xue lu*, 64.

claiming extraterritorial powers; all territories on the school should be subject to state inspection.¹⁴⁰

It was precisely the over-reach by the GMD government that so incensed the Chinese faculty, and snapped the fragile alliance between Chen and the missionaries. For the SVD, the threat of Communist revolution was a real and serious concern. Chen Yuan and the Chinese faculty, on the other hand, were more interested in the formation of a pluralistic, tolerant Chinese state. To Chen, the Nationalist government, immediately after the war, with its heavy-handed intervention into student life, did not provide the type of leadership he admired.

Communist Victory, Historical Revisionism

Ultimately, the Communist political victory destroyed any hopes at a continued alliance between the missionaries and the Chinese faculty. In January of 1949, Chen, recognizing that the Communists had won, refused to evacuate with the Nationalist intellectuals. When his friend Hu Shi tried to convince him to board a plane headed to Nanjing, Chen refused. Instead, he sided with the student protestors and welcomed the PLA liberation of Beijing in February of 1949.¹⁴¹ In his public “self-criticism,” published in the *Guangming Daily Newspaper* (光明日報) Chen disassociated himself with the SVD missionary leadership, calling them “foreign imperialists” who “told me nothing; I was only a president in name.”¹⁴² Chen’s claim of administrative ignorance was historically revisionist. While it is true that Chen maintained a prolific scholarly output, Chen was also deeply involved in university politics, both in discipline cases and deciding to allow foreign authorities onto campus, as well as direct interventions into university policy.

Another bit of historical revisionism was Chen’s statement in 1950 that he “did not know that the imperialists were using the cloak of religion to engage in cultural imperialism.”¹⁴³ From the very beginning of his term as president of Furen, Chen was accused of being a “puppet of cultural imperialism,” and even an agent of cultural imperialism. In April of 1929, a group of students who wanted to attend a popular anti-imperialist demonstration at the Yihe Gardens, applied to the university for a leave of absence. Chen Yuan and the university denied the request. In response, the students called Chen a person of “despicable character,” “puppet President,” and a “traitor to the Chinese people.”¹⁴⁴ Chen’s actions had “exposed the ugly truth of imperialists encroaching on China,” and the students nonetheless organized a rally at the Yihe Gardens.

In response to the students’ insubordination, the disciplinarian of the university, Yang Fenggang, suggested that the university expel the leader of the movement, Xu Shilun,

¹⁴⁰ Harold Rigney to Aloysius Kappenberg, 30 August 1948, AG 641 / 1948, 8422.

¹⁴¹ Liu Naihe 劉乃和, *Chen Yuan nianpu*, 534-535.

¹⁴² Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Ziwo jiantao,” 613.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ “二二全體旅行頤和園的事情 [The February 2nd Incident at the Yihe Gardens],” April 1929, FUHO: Political Files 649.

for “violating school rules and inciting rebellion among the students.”¹⁴⁵ Chen Yuan agreed with the suggestion, and signed the memorandum calling for the student’s expulsion. The university administration then sent a letter to the parents of the students, warning them that “Communist activities and propaganda” had increased in the city, asking them to “take extra caution and be mindful that their children not stray into the wrong path.”¹⁴⁶

The students did not back down, and the next day formed a “Committee to Combat Cultural Imperialism,” which presented twelve demands to the university.¹⁴⁷ Among them were calls for Chen Yuan to resign, for the “unconditional” readmission of the student Xu Shilun to the university, and the establishment of “absolute freedom of speech” for students. The university responded to each of the students’ demands. The dean, the Benedictine Priest George Barry O’Toole, wrote, “Chen is a man of impeccable moral character and scholarship, and it would be unreasonable and impossible to ask him to leave the university over such a small matter.”¹⁴⁸ The university also denied Xu Shilun’s reinstatement. Furthermore, the university issued a declaration that “students must understand and recognize that the university is not an agent of imperialism. Our school is well-known for its emphasis on the Chinese traditions and classics, and it would be nonsense to claim that we are cultural imperialists.”¹⁴⁹ Within a week, the student protesters had been punished and classes returned to normal. The school administration announced that the majority of the students were solely interested in studying and reading books, while only a few students had led the charge in trying to disrupt normal school affairs.¹⁵⁰

For a person who was highly self-conscious about his image in the media, Chen Yuan must have been aware that leftist students were accusing him and Furen University of advancing the aims of cultural imperialism.¹⁵¹ Moreover, Chen himself had made a concerted effort to promote Furen’s public image as that of a patriotic, nationalist organization. After the end of the war, the Ministry of Education initiated a campaign to investigate whether universities aided the Japanese and harbored “Japanese spies.” The Ministry of Education questioned Furen, because they had failed to provide ample documentation to the ministry during the war, and were suspected of tolerating and allowing Japanese collaborators to work on campus. Chen issued statements and provided documentation to prove that Furen

¹⁴⁵ “佈告學生徐世綸破壞校規鼓動風潮業已令其退學由 [Announcement Regarding the Student Xu Shilun, who has been expelled on the grounds of violating school regulations and inciting unrest],” 8 April 1929, FUHO: Political Files 649, 1.

¹⁴⁶ “函本校學生家長希注意學生行為 [Letter to Parents, Requesting them to Pay Attention to Student Behavior],” 8 April 1929, FUHO: Political Files 649, 3.

¹⁴⁷ “反帝國主義文化侵略會致校長函提出條件限期答復 [The Council of Anti-Imperialism’s Demands to the President],” 11 April 1929, FUHO: Political Files 649, 9-10.

¹⁴⁸ “復反帝國主義文化侵略會函復就所列各條詳為解釋還須及時猛省回校上課 [A Response to the Committee on Anti-Imperialism’s Request and a Demand to Return to Class],” 11 April 1929, FUHO: Political Files 649, 7.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ “輔仁大學護校大會啓事 [Reports from the Meeting to Protect Furen University],” 30 September 1929, FUHO: Political Files 649, 11.

¹⁵¹ On Chen’s obsession with media and his image emerges from letters between Chen and his family members. Chen constantly asked them to update him on what the newspapers wrote about him in his home town. See especially, for example, Chen Yuan’s correspondence letter to his son Chen Yue on 4 November 1951, in Chen Yuan 陳垣, *Chen Yuan lai wang shu xin ji*, 1083.

had “valiantly resisted the Japanese during the eight years of war.”¹⁵² Numerous Furen students and professors were also accused of collaborating with the Japanese, and in many of these cases, Chen Yuan and the university administration had to guarantee on their behalf that they had not aided the Japanese government.¹⁵³

Conclusion

From the beginning of his tenure as university president in 1929 until 1949, Chen Yuan constantly had to answer accusations that Furen had either engaged in cultural imperialism or harbored imperialists. He was active in defending himself against these charges. He was, however, far from the powerless bystander that he claimed. Chen Yuan’s career illustrates the various difficulties and challenges of being a Christian intellectual in a rapidly changing China. In many ways, Chen held a consistent position: he remained a staunch Chinese nationalist from the beginning of career to the very end. Ever since his earliest anti-Manchu writings, Chen argued for the primacy of Han culture, and the necessity for foreign cultures, religions, and ideas to adapt to the more tolerant, enlightened, and benevolent structure of Chinese civilization. Throughout four different regime changes, Chen’s primary loyalty remained to a Han-led version of the Chinese nation. When the Communists adopted the mantle of advancing this vision, Chen followed their lead. Chen Yuan’s career illuminates the dilemma that Chinese Christian intellectuals faced, and the narrowing set of intellectual choices that they could make as they tried to survive in a political climate increasingly hostile to Christianity.

Chen Yuan’s career at Furen University alerts us to the brief period of flourishing Sino-Western collaboration in China in the 1920s and 1930s. Western missionaries and Chinese faculty were able to come together and form a successful joint Sino-Western venture. This collaboration lives on today, as the *Monumentica Serica* continues to be an important journal of Sinology, with an emphasis on the history of Christianity in China. The *Monumentica Serica* Institute also continues to play a major part in shaping Sino-Western dialogue.

What doomed this collaboration were the rising political threats that both the intellectuals and the foreign missionaries had to face. The records of Furen under Chen Yuan’s administration shows an institution under constant siege. He faced pressures from three formidable entities: a radicalized and politically active student body; a foreign missionary establishment that controlled university finances; and a nationalist government suspicious of the university’s activity. Chen managed successfully to navigate these conflicting agendas and pacify each of the parties. The documents show Chen to have been a masterful mediator, attentive to the needs and desires of each faction. He knew what each party wanted to hear, and he tried to accommodate and negotiate with the needs of each.

His “self-criticism” of 1952 can be read as his choice to continue a policy of appeasement. Chen co-opted much of the language that had been used to criticize him in the late 1920s, when leftist students accused him of being a “puppet of imperialism.” In the

¹⁵² Chen Yuan to the Beijing City Ministry of Education, 26 July 1946, FUHO: Political Files 652.

¹⁵³ For more examples of these cases, see FUHO: Political Files, 657.

1950s, he employed that exact same language to absolve himself from further critique. He knew exactly what the template for a Communist conversion narrative required, and conformed his self-criticism to that model.

But was this mere political opportunism, motivated by Chen Yuan's desire to rescue his own reputation? In all of his decisions as administrator, a certain consistency emerges. Chen ultimately wanted to maintain an active and open environment for the university, so that the university could return to normal operations. He negotiated with the students in order to quell the strike, so that classes would return to normal as soon as possible. He tried to appease the external authorities, so that the ministry of education would not increase their authority into university matters. And he had to mollify and re-assure the foreign missionaries, who controlled the purse strings and the finances of the university. As any good president would, Chen saw that he needed to mediate and negotiate between the various parties in order to keep the university open for business.

And how are we to understand Chen's historical revision of his own career? As a careful scholar of history, it must have dawned on him that he was erasing much of the positive and difficult accomplishments of his tenure as a president and scholar. The tragedy of Chen's career, and that of Chinese history, is that he was forced to deny his achievements as president and repudiate his almost thirty year long career as a mistake. Among the accomplishments that he repudiated was the brief period of flourishing Sino-Western cooperation and collaboration that Furen helped to promote. With that repudiation, the pluralistic and religiously tolerant nation that Chen Yuan once dreamed of living disappeared into oblivion, transforming into a fleeting illusion.

Conclusion.

Failure and Success?

On September 23, 1950, the “Christian Manifesto” was published with 1500 signatures of prominent national and local Protestant leaders on the front page of the Chinese *Renming Ribao* (People’s Daily).¹ The Manifesto charged that, although Christianity had made significant contributions to China’s modernization, it continued to operate as a tool of Western imperialism. Trumpeting the success of the Chinese Communist Revolution, the Manifesto called upon all Chinese Christians to “cultivate a patriotic and democratic spirit,” and to dispossess themselves of foreign and “imperialist” influence. The Manifesto marked a major turning point for Protestant Churches in China, which had until then refused to align itself with any explicit political commitments.² For many Christians sympathetic to progressive and communist politics, the “Christian Manifesto” stood for the beginning of an independent Chinese Christianity, unencumbered by foreign influence. The Christian Manifesto eventually led to the establishment of the Three-Self Patriotic Church in China, the only state-sanctioned Protestant church in the People’s Republic of China. Its Catholic counterpart, the schismatic Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, was established in 1957, driving the Roman Catholic Church underground, severing any possibility of diplomatic reconciliation between the Vatican and the People’s Republic of China.

Western missionaries were crushed by the Manifesto. The prominent British Missionary Leslie Lyall called the Manifesto a “betrayal.”³ In 1952, the missionary David Paton described the result of the missionary enterprise as a “debacle.” Paton wrote, “considering the vast amount of money, personnel, thought, and devotion that has gone into the Christian schools and colleges in China, our intellectual failure is remarkable.”⁴ Paton laid most of the blame for the failure of Christianity in China on the missionaries themselves. For Paton, Christianity was never able to present a “united front” in China. Paton charged the missionaries for replicating European and American confessional conflicts overseas. Paton depicted a world in which Catholics and Protestants operated separately, barely interacting with each another. Protestantism was split either into a “somewhat extreme liberal Protestant or a somewhat extreme conservative Protestant version.” The liberals had encouraged a “Confucianism in Christian dress” and abandoned Christian theology altogether. The “fundamentalists,” on the other hand, encouraged Chinese popular superstition and taught Chinese Christians how to memorize the

¹ Oi Ki Ling, *The Changing Role of the British Protestant missionaries in China, 1945 - 1952* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1999), 150.

² Ibid.

³ Gao Wangzhi, “Y. T. Wu: A Christian Leader Under Communism,” in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 344.

⁴ David Paton, “First Thoughts on the Debacle of Christian Missions in China,” *African Affairs* 51, no. 202 (1952), 33.

confessional doctrines, without inculcating solid faith.⁵ Paton went on to list the various ways in which mission work had failed in adapting to local Chinese needs, unable to recognize its “unconscious arrogance.”⁶

Paton’s analysis of the missionary enterprise in China has long been the dominant interpretation — Western missionaries failed spectacularly to engage China, and it was precisely these failures that had led to the rise of Communism. More than sixty years later, what are we to make of Paton’s charge? How should we assess the failure and success of Christianity in China? How might the story of German missionaries help to revise Paton’s narrative? And what do the stories of Germans abroad tell us about the history of Germany? Finally, how does the German missionary experience fit into the broad narratives of Christianity’s globalization?

The German missionary enterprise has been long singled out as having experienced the most spectacular of disasters, due to its devastated financial condition after the First World War. While Paton’s broader assessment of Christianity in China was true—the Chinese, for the most part, did reject Christianity—my dissertation reveals a much more complex story than that of defeat and failure. As for the German missionary enterprise, it certainly did display some of the cleavages that Paton bemoaned — liberal and conservative, Catholic and Protestant. Yet while liberal and conservative theologies may have demarcated the missionary societies in the nineteenth century, individual missionaries such as Ernst Faber often crossed these lines: the boundaries were, at their best, surprisingly porous. Liberal and conservative missionaries even in the nineteenth-century worked together: they cooperated in efforts to translate the Bible into Chinese, they debated the merits and deficiencies of Confucianism (ultimately agreeing that Confucianism was lacking), and they jointly attended international conferences to discuss the future of Christianity in China. German Catholic and Protestant missionaries did not live in separate “worlds,” as Paton has charged. In German Qingdao, the missionaries from both churches interacted, working together and debating German educational policy. They also influenced one another. Catholic missiologists like Josef Schmidlin read the works of Protestant missiologists like Gustav Warneck. Competition bred engagement, and so Catholic and Protestant missionaries monitored each other’s work and thought: these were not worlds in different universes.

And what of Paton’s accusation of “unconscious arrogance,” and the West’s failure to engage China? In the early 20th century, German missionaries were blamed by Socialists in the Reichstag for causing the Boxer Uprising. In the decade following the Boxer Uprising — acutely conscious of charges of arrogance and imperialism — Protestants and Catholics embarked on a more extensive program of indigenization and also sought to pay their Chinese assistants better. However, despite their earnest desires to make Chinese Christianity more independent, missionaries nonetheless wanted to control the process of indigenization—they had invested too much into the enterprise, and they were still unwilling to completely trust the Chinese Christians who they had trained. Perhaps this mistrust of the Chinese could be called an “unconscious arrogance,” but the missionaries

⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁶ Ibid., 38.

were certainly aware of criticisms of missionary arrogance, and they altered their tactics and behavior in response.

After the First World War, missionaries from all of the major Western missionary countries advocated the development of an indigenous Chinese Christianity. Here, however, the Catholic and Protestant stories diverged. German Catholics became more international as they adopted the Vatican line for missionary work, and the SVD sent missionaries from their American seminary. German Protestants, on the other hand, became increasingly national. They argued that their form of indigenization was distinct from that of the Anglo-American missionary establishment. Even though they continued to attend international conferences, they resented American dominance in the mission field, especially Social Gospel ideas that they saw as advancing democracy and the American way of life more than Christianity itself.

The nationalist resentment that accompanied German Protestant missionary work did not go unnoted by contemporary theologians. After the Second World War, in 1948, the Dutch missiologist Johannes Christian Hoekendijk published his dissertation *Kerk en volk in de Duitse zendingswetenschap (Church and Volk in German Missiology)*. Hoekendijk blamed the narrow confessional and ecclesiastical outlook of the German missionary enterprise on the enduring impact of Pietism. Drawing a direct line from the early Pietism of Zinzendorf to Gustav Warneck and then to Siegfried Knak, Hoekendijk argued that the German missionary enterprise's idea of a *Volkskirche* was outdated and partly responsible for the racist and aggressive missionary intervention that German missionaries exhibited both in China and in Africa.⁷ Hoekendijk hoped that the German missionary enterprise could provide a lesson to the future of the global Christianity. In order to construct a global Christianity that was devoid of its nineteenth-century hubris and racism, Christians needed to disassociate themselves from the previous practices of their forefathers and devote themselves to the construction of an ecumenical, rather than a nationalist Christian communion. This reading of the Germans not surprisingly ruffled feathers, and Siegfried Knak offered a lengthy reply, trying to rebut Hoekendijk's view that the German missionary enterprise was particularly nationalist, or that the idea of the *Volkskirche* was completely without merit and outdated.⁸

Yet, in spite of defensive measures such as Knak's, the view of German missionaries, and in particular, German Protestant missionaries, as nationalist, racist, and exceptionally aggressive has dominated the historiography of German missionaries both in China and worldwide. Furthermore, in the 1950s and 1960s, Hoekendijk made a lasting impact on the understanding of how to construct ecumenical unity across the world. For example, Kenneth Scott Latourette drew on Hoekendijk's radical vision of Christian unity in works such as *The Emergence of a World Christian Community*.

My dissertation has shown that while Hoekendijk's accusation of the German missionary enterprise's conception the *Volkskirche* was rooted in Pietist, *Völkisch* thinking is

⁷ Johannes Christian Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk in der deutschen Missionswissenschaft*, trans. Erich-Walter Pollman (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1967).

⁸ See Siegfried Knak, *Zur Bedeutung des Volkstum für die Missionarische Aufgabe* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag Berlin, 1955).

correct, it is a mistake to assume that the missionary enterprise by extension embraced all the aims of both Imperial Germany and the Third Reich. German Protestant and Catholic missionaries took the challenge of encouraging racial equality seriously. By the 1930s, both the SVD and the BMS had congregations that were run solely by Chinese Christians whom they themselves had trained. By 1939, the SVD could boast that they had a Chinese bishop; in 1946, the first Chinese Cardinal was an SVD man. They also ran a university that was a truly Sino-Western joint venture, dedicated to the cause of producing Chinese Christian scholarship and art. Similarly, by 1935, the BMS had independent Chinese congregations, run by an energetic Chinese pastor.

To consider these efforts imperialism in sheep's clothing, as later Communist critics suggested, is a mistake: the broader humanitarian and social impact of these ventures is undeniable. Throughout the nineteenth-century and well into the 1930s and 1940s, churches and missionaries served local communities as centers of humanitarian assistance and collective social action in China. Missionaries led efforts that fed the hungry and the sick, targeting groups that were devastated by wars between the Communists, the KMT, and the Japanese. Missionaries educated generations of Chinese pastors and clergymen, all of whom became leaders locally, nationally and internationally, retaining their influence even after the success of the Chinese Communist Revolution.

Their behavior in China reveal German missionaries as far from the racist and narrowly confessional actors depicted by Hoekendijk. German missionaries, Catholic and Protestant alike, changed the way that China was understood and received in Germany. While previously anti-Confucian and critical of traditional Chinese customs, as were many—most—Western visitors, they now sought to synthesize the best of Chinese culture with Christianity. German missionaries translated traditional Chinese texts, such as the *I-Ching*, into German, influencing popular views of China in Germany. They also made an imprint on German politics. Even though some missionaries initially supported the Nationalist Socialist Party, German Protestant missionaries such as Siegfried Knak became leaders in the *Bekennende Kirche* movement when they realized that the Nazis were much less supportive of German missions than they thought. Far from a debacle, then, the impact of German missionaries on the religious landscape in China and Germany was significant.

But Paton's challenge still remains. Why did Christianity not gain wider acceptance and more widespread rates of conversion in China? Paton and Latourette both blamed the divided front that the Western missionaries posed to the Chinese Christians as one of the central causes of Christianity's failure in China. They saw national squabbles as enervating a potentially strong alliance. Paton and Latourette thus offered a counter-factual: had the Western missionaries been united, China would have converted to Christianity. The German missionary enterprise surely exemplifies how national resentments fractured the international missionary community. The Germans held a definite, undisguised contempt for their Anglo-American competitors. The nineteenth-century view of China as a battleground, a site for conflict and competition between different missionary lands and countries persisted well into the 1920s and 1930s. My dissertation confirms Paton and Latourette's charges that Christianity, despite efforts by all parties involved, Chinese and Western missionary alike, remained a divided religion in China.

But a study of the Chinese Christians who were involved in these missionary congregations blunts Paton and Latourette's charges. For Chinese Christians like Ling

Deyuan and Chen Yuan, patriotism formed the core of their Christian faith. While missionaries often argued that a commitment to Chinese nationalist aims deterred the possibility of creating an international Christian community, for the Chinese Christians, nationalism and Christianity were linked. These Chinese Christians argued that the missionaries needed to respect Chinese culture. In other words, Christianity in China could not be decoupled from the goals of Chinese national revitalization. The dichotomy that Latourette and Paton drew in the 1950s between an ecumenical world church and national churches was a claim that was rooted in the context of the aftermath of the ashes of the Second World War. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, Western missionaries had no choice but to adopt the rhetoric of national salvation in order for Christianity to gain traction. Thus for Chinese Christians immersed in the rhetoric of the connection between Christianity and nationalism, the Communist promise to seek an alliance between religion and a competent central state did not appear as an alien claim.

But perhaps Paton and Latourette's framework of evaluating Christianity with the lens of success and failure in China is itself outdated, a product of the Cold War fear of Communism. Ever since the post-Deng reforms of the late 1970s, the non-state sponsored, underground Catholic and Protestant congregations have witnessed a surge in numbers. China is currently in the midst of a religious revival, and the number of Chinese converts is rising at a rapid pace. While it would be overly simplistic to draw a straight line from the missionary communities that the Germans established to the enthusiasm for Christianity in China today, the vision of Christianity that German Protestant and Catholic missionaries brought to China is remarkably similar to the forms that are now witnessing a revival. The underground Protestant "house churches" are, for the most part, rural rather than urban. They focus on individual conversion, rather than broad-based social and political change. This was precisely the vision that the Pietist Berlin Mission Society hoped for China. The Catholic revival, similarly, has been mostly rural in nature, and is dominated by a pre-Vatican II, "counter-reformation" vision of Catholicism. In spite of the SVD's own reforms to adopt more of a liberal Jesuit approach to missionary work after the First World War, the SVD retained this vision of Catholic missionary conversion. Both the SVD and the BMS of the 1920s, then, would not find the Christian conversion that we witness in China today a fundamentally alien vision.

While the BMS and the SVD missionaries of the 1920s would be pleasantly surprised by the state of Christianity in China, they would be mortified by how dramatically Christianity had weakened in Europe. The Second World War dealt a mortal blow to the Protestant and Catholic conservative visions of missionary work. European Protestant and Catholic alike abandoned their allegiance to the idea of individual conversion. After the Second World War, Protestant and Catholic missionaries returned home and brought what they learned in China with them. Within 20 years, by 1965, both the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church had renounced proselytization as a "corruption of Christian witness" and an impediment to religious freedom across the world.⁹ The main body of churches for both Protestants and Catholics effectively retracted the missionary impulse that had so dominated the Christian landscape of the nineteenth century.

⁹ The World Council of Churches issued their statement first, in 1961. See Lawrence A. Uzzell, "Don't Call it Proselytism," <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/donrsquot-call-it-proselytism-16>

The renunciation of missionary work within the broader Christian community found resonance within the missionary societies themselves. After the second world, the German pietists abandoned their allegiance to Warneck's idea of individual conversion. Germany's Protestant Missionary Council dissolved in 1976, and became the *Evangelisches Missionswerk*, an organization that is now openly dedicated to "open, careful, and respectful" engagement with "people who are different from us."¹⁰ Similarly, the Berlin Mission Society has now changed its name to the *Berliner Missionswerk*. Their mission statement contains no mention of the hope for individual conversion. Instead of sending missionaries to establish individual congregations throughout rural areas, it now partners with local churches. Resembling a non-governmental organization, the BMS provides services, rather than individual conversion.

Changes in fundamental doctrines occurred at the same time: Protestants and Catholics alike decided to set aside their previous confessional animosities. Missionaries participated in the European ecumenical movement after the Second World War, which sought to bridge the differences between the Protestants and Catholics. The impulse toward "reconciliation" also extended beyond Christianity, to other religions. During the Second Vatican Council, Catholics revised their claims that there is no salvation outside the Church. The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) accepted the radical possibility that non-Christians, such as Muslims, and even atheists could find salvation beyond "the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church."¹¹

The exact details of this dramatic transformation—the rise of the ecumenical impulse and its broader impact on Europe's religious landscape—belong to a different story, a different book. Yet this dissertation suggests that one can see the seeds of ecumenicism and cross-religious dialogue within the missionary enterprise of the 1920s and 1930s. The attempt to find common ground with other religions certainly accelerates after the Second World War, but many of these ideas were in place decades before then.

The missionary experience in China, starting in the nineteenth century, pushed German missionaries and theologians to re-think, and in some cases, renounce, the religious convictions that they once held. Altering their views about the unchallenged supremacy of Christianity, missionaries gave up the religious control and authority that they once wielded. The insights that missionaries gleaned from their work strengthened Christianity's presence worldwide, but it simultaneously weakened the theological and religious supremacy of Christianity in Europe.¹² My dissertation suggests that the reassessment of Christianity's relationship to the rest of the world had implications for the European Christian landscape: it helped to usher in a new secular age.

The question of Europe's secularization, of course, has sparked endless amount of debate and disagreement. While, "many historians," as Hugh Mcleod writes, "have agreed in

¹⁰ For the mission statement of the Berliner Missionswerk, see <http://www.berliner-missionswerk.de/ueberuns.html>

¹¹ Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making: Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 72.

¹² Elmer Miller argued in 1970 that missionaries were agents of secularization in the lands that they encountered, I am arguing that missionary work secularized Europe. See Elmer S. Miller, "The Christian Missionary, Agent of Secularization," *Anthropological Quarterly* (1970): 14-22.

identifying secularization as the central theme of Western Europe's modern religious history," few agree upon the terms or the parameters of the debate.¹³ The "traditional" wisdom, espoused by nineteenth-century intellectuals like Auguste Comte, claimed that religion was doomed because of the rise of a new scientific age. Marx, Weber, and Durkheim articulated these positions further, arguing that the arc of modern society bends towards the secular.¹⁴ These positions were further refined by neo-Weberian sociologists of religion in the 1960s, arguing that European secularization accompanied social modernization and urbanization.¹⁵ Ever since the 1980s, however, scholars have challenged the view of natural alliance between secularization and modernization. Witnessing the rise of evangelical Christianity in the United States, and the rapid religious revival in non-European countries, some sociologists, like Rodney Stark, have declared secularization a failed concept that should be consigned to the "graveyard of failed theories."¹⁶ But other sociologists, like Steve Bruce, continue to defend the usefulness of secularization as a category of analysis.¹⁷

The explosion of scholarly literature on secularization is largely fueled by debates over definition. Some define secularization the decline of church attendance, others pinpoint its meaning in the differentiation between Church and State, while some parties argue that it is the decline of subjective, personal faith.¹⁸ Here, I use the term following Jeffrey Cox: "secularization is best understood less as an empirical theory subject to confirmation or refutation than as a master narrative, a large organizing story, rooted in centuries of rhetorical engagement about the direction of modern history."¹⁹ For Cox, the "master narrative" that secularization encapsulates is one of religious change.

The narrative of religious change that I have examined in my dissertation is two-fold. The first is a story of the Christian encounter with religious pluralism: Christian missionaries altered their beliefs when they encountered religious and civilizational alternatives. In the nineteenth-century, they preached the superiority of Christianity to other religions. By the 1930s and 1940s, they renounced their former triumphalist tones. By

¹³ Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848-1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 4. The literature on secularization is its own cottage industry. For a good, balanced overview, see David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005). See also Peter L. Berger, Grace Davie, and Effie Fokas, eds., *Religious America, Secular Europe?: A Theme and Variation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008). Callum G. Brown, M. F. Snape, and Hugh McLeod, eds., *Secularisation in the Christian World: Essays in Honour of Hugh McLeod* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010).

¹⁴ McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, 2.

¹⁵ Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (München: Beck, 2009), 1248. For examples of neo-Weberian studies, see Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967). The classic neo-Weberian works are Bryan Wilson, Peter Berger, and Thomas Luckmann.

¹⁶ Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R. I. P.," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999), 270.

¹⁷ See Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2002); Idem, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁸ W. H. Swatos and K. J. Christiano, "Introduction—Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept," *Sociology of religion* 60, no. 3 (1999): 209-228.

¹⁹ Jeffrey Cox, "Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularisation: A Progress Report," in *Secularisation in the Christian world: Essays in Honour of Hugh McLeod*, ed. Callum G. Brown, M. F. Snape, and Hugh McLeod (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 17.

then, even the European missionary—the most fervent of Christians—accepted the possibility that Christianity needed to be tempered by different religions to ensure its future survival. As a result, the missionaries exposed their European audience to civilizational and religious alternatives to Christianity. European missionaries thus contributed to, in Charles Taylor’s words, a change that “takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others.”²⁰ The missionary encounter with other civilizations and religions, and especially their perception that their missionary work was a failure, led them to engage in a period of self-criticism.

Self-criticism led a second broad change: the decline of religious authority. As a result of their reflection with different religions, cultures, and social norms, the European missionaries relinquished their own claims to authority. As the sociologist Mark Chaves has argued, “Secularization is best understood not as the decline of religion, but as the declining scope of religious authority.”²¹ The story of the German missionary enterprise from the nineteenth to the twentieth century is one of devolving institutional power. Once-hierarchical, patriarchal institutions unwilling to accommodate other religious institutions began to give up their own sense of mission and elevated sense of rhetoric. They did so, at times willingly, at other times unwillingly. But in all cases, they unintentionally contributed to their own secularization. This dissertation thus details a narrative of unintended consequences: Christian missionaries laid the foundation for the decline of their own religious authority. Just as Marcel Gauchet and Peter Berger have shown in their work, I suggest that secularization was fueled not only by non-religious challenges to Christianity, but by the re-thinking within Christianity itself, and more importantly among conservative Christians.²²

The career of the SVD Father Arnold Sprenger illuminates how the institutional and theological changes in the 1920s left their imprint on the SVD’s post-World War II landscape. Born in the Rhine region of Germany in 1929, Sprenger’s original wish, after ordination in 1958, was to move to Indonesia to preach the Gospel and engage in parish work, carrying on the work of his predecessors in the field. But the Superior General had different plans for him, requesting Sprenger to continue post-formation studies in the U. S. The SVD had decided to resurrect Furen University in Taiwan in 1960, in the hope of one day returning to reclaim their university in China. The university needed language instructors, and Sprenger thus earned a Ph. D in linguistics at Georgetown University. He moved to Taiwan after his training, and joined the faculty of one of the first foreign language programs in the country at Furen University. He served as the departmental chair from 1967 to 1983, and helped to found the department’s Graduate School of German Language and Literature. Furen is now one of the premier institutions in Taiwan for the study of German, and many of the current Taiwanese students who study abroad in Germany have personal connections to Sprenger.

²⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3.

²¹ Mark Chaves, “Secularization as Declining Religious Authority,” *Social Forces* 72, no. 3 (1994), 750.

²² Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*.

Since 1987, Sprenger has moved between Taiwan and mainland China. Even though technically retired and living in Taiwan, he is still an active and lively presence, acting as a bridge between China, Taiwan, and the European home missions. He understands missionary work as one that is lived through action rather than preaching. For Sprenger, the heart of missionary work is living in community with non-believers, providing moral directions and guidance for students. But Sprenger does not see these moral values as lying solely within the Christian tradition. For Sprenger, “it is of the utmost importance that Confucian and Christian philosophical and religious values be investigated on a level of reflection and experience where they challenge and support each other at the same time.”²³ Sprenger’s beliefs do not appear out of a vacuum: they reflect the Catholic Church’s global attempt to engage with different religions and culture, as well as a century-long dialogue between Christianity and Confucianism internal to the SVD.

In addition to reflecting the Catholic church’s broader theological shifts, the SVD’s post-World War II incarnation provides insight into another major change within the Church: its dramatic transformation into a global religion. This demographic revolution is striking in the SVD. More than 60% of the priests in the order now come from Southeast Asia. Father Antonio Pernia of the Philippines was appointed the first non-European Superior General in 2000, and served from 2000 until 2012. The Generalate itself is a multi-cultural group, as it consists of members from Poland, Brazil, Argentina, the United States, Angola, and India. In the SVD missionary headquarters in Rome, even though the official language of the house is Italian—masses, the liturgy of the hours, and daily announcements are said in Italian—a smattering of Tagalog, Indonesian, Chinese, Vietnamese, English, German, French, and Spanish can be heard throughout the halls. Missionaries who are comfortable conversing in five languages is common. Other than the surge in members from outside of Europe, the leaders of the mission society also recognize the declining numbers of the faithful within Europe. In 1990, the Society declared Western Europe as a secularized zone in need of missionary presence. Thus, for the first time, Europe was a field that received missionaries, rather than merely training and sending missionaries.

Many studies that focus on the recent globalization of Christianity have drawn attention to the widening gulf that now exists between an increasingly liberal northern Europe and a conservative global South.²⁴ Lamin Sanneh recounts a central conflict in the current global Church in *The Changing Face of Christianity*. At the 2003 Lambeth Conference,

some senior church people [from the West] there accused Third World Christianity of being bankrolled by conservative groups in the United States. Third World Christianity was set up to promote a reactionary cultural agenda, they charged. Implicated in the uncontrolled fallout of national political breakdown, this new Christianity, critics claimed, would hatch witch hunts of enemies and opponents as happened in the pre-Enlightenment West. World Christianity, accordingly, they believe, constitutes a threat to

²³ Sprenger, “Higher Moral Education in Taiwan.” http://www.crvp.org/book/Series03/III-2/chapter_viii.htm

²⁴ This widening gulf is most clearly discussed in Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

the West's hard-earned liberal achievements. All of that seems like a prescription for a major cultural schism.

The schism between a liberal European Christianity and a conservative Global South was not, as some liberal European churchmen would like to believe, a recent phenomenon, “bankrolled by conservative groups in the United States.” The fundamental divergence between liberal and conservative strands of Christianity were rooted within the missionary movements within the nineteenth century. A battle between these different versions of Christianity has been long afoot.

In the case of the German missionary enterprise in China, it is certainly true that the turn towards a more liberal, inclusive view of Christian missions was a “hard-earned” achievement that required the two catastrophic World Wars, and even more individual and personal heart-ache. Yet many of the liberal churchmen in the West who are eager to excoriate “Third World Christianity” today tend to forget the genealogy of their own liberalism. It was precisely the encounter with other global religions and cultures, as well as an encounter with new indigenous forms of Christianity that pushed Western missionary leaders to embrace the liberalism that they now espouse. In the case of the German missionary enterprise, it was not the Europeans themselves who first embraced liberalism. Rather, it was the Chinese Christians in the 1920s who were pushing German missionaries to *become* more liberal. The Germans, on the other hand, had bristled at the apparent liberalism of the Chinese Christian leadership, who had been trained, for the most part, in an American-inflected liberal, Social Gospel theology. The ultimate shift in both the BMS and the SVD to adopt more liberal positions was provoked external stimuli. These “hard-earned liberal achievements” cannot be attributed to the efforts of the West, or to liberalism, alone.

The claim of the divergences between the northern liberals and conservative southerners are also not as big as we think. Examining the SVD in its current incarnation, it is difficult to pinpoint its place on any theological spectrum. Like any large, international organization, the theological outlooks and perspectives of its members are diverse. The SVD has produced vocal exponents of both conservative and liberal theological positions. The late American SVD missionary, Father Anthony Zimmerman, for example, was an outspoken member of the pro-life movement in America, and took conservative, orthodox positions on most issues related to the Church. On the other end of the theological spectrum, the current President of Paraguay, Fernando Lugo, was also a member of the SVD, and a committed adherent to liberation theology. Here, the tables are turned—members of the global south being much more liberal than the northern Europeans and Americans.

Moreover, as Christianity gains more adherents in the global south, organizations like the SVD will become increasingly important as intermediaries between the North and South. If the current SVD is any indication, a certain section of the Church is already working to bridge that divide. Priests like those of the SVD, along with the Jesuits, Franciscans, and other major missionary organizations, are administering the institutions of education and social work in the Global South; they are educating the next generation of Catholic believers. These missionaries are open to dialogue regarding what it means to

interpret the Gospel in an increasingly multi-cultural fashion. The gulf between the North and the South may not become as wide as scholars predict.

Yet the calling of the historian is not prognostication. An examination of the German missionary enterprise from 1860 to 1950 reminds us how radically different their world was from ours, how brief and fleeting the German missionary enterprise: little remains from that previous world but a “shadow-filled edifice.”²⁵ This history is made of intellectual and theological shifts in the midst of intense political change: within the span of a generation, German missionaries dramatically changed their views about China, altering their intellectual targets and antagonisms. It is a story of institutional about-faces as well, with new members incorporated into the missionary society. These stories demonstrate also the malleability and flexibility of Christianity, composed of constantly shifting individuals, institutions, and ideas. My dissertation shows how seemingly conservative, immovable institutions are not immune from the forces of global social, political, and cultural change.

Finally, how does the story of the missionaries intersect with the broader narratives of German history? As my dissertation has shown, the German missionary embrace of Confucianism and other cultures in the 1920s and 1930s occurred at the same time that Germany itself was experiencing an upswing of racism and xenophobia as the National Socialists rose to power. An examination of the German missionary enterprise provides one corrective to the hegemony of that overarching narrative: it offers us stories of German individuals, institutions, and ideas that lived out alternatives to the racial hatred of interwar Germany. A study of the German missionary enterprise in its global context shows the conflicted relationship that Germans had to the Nazi party. In certain cases, there was collaboration, while in others, there were acts of resistance.

Perhaps a final anecdote can illustrate what I mean. The Berlin Missionary Society's Georg Kohls, one of the last of the Berliners to leave China, was born in 1885 in the Prussian city of Graudenz (now the Polish city of Grudziądz). He had the typical profile of the late-nineteenth century missionary. Like his predecessor Ernst Faber, born close to half a century earlier, Kohls came from a lower-class background: his father was a barely literate shoemaker with nine children. Kohls apprenticed as a tailor, and by nineteen, had finished his three and a half year's. In the same year, Kohls experienced a deeply spiritual experience, whereby he “was confronted by his own sin for the first time.”²⁶ Like Faber, Kohls joined a youth group, and his pastor, Herr Pfarrer Jakob, found him an impressive, enterprising young man, and sent him to Berlin. In Berlin, Kohls, joined a youth group, the *Ostdeutschen Jünglingsbund*. It was during these classes that Kohls found the liberation that he sought: “Especially in the youth group I recognized myself as a poor miserable sinner, but that the Lord Jesus could free me.”²⁷ This encounter with Christ inspired him to want to become a missionary, and he sought entrance into the Berlin Missionary Society.

In 1905, he was admitted to the Berlin Missionary Society's Seminary, and by 1911, he was on a boat to China. His early years in China were difficult: his wife, Anna Braune, traveled to China in 1920, but died from typhus within a year of her arrival in China,

²⁵ See W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1998), 19.

²⁶ Georg Kohls, “Lebenslauf von Kohls,” 24 June 1905, BMW 1 / 3506: Kohls, Georg [Missionar], Bd. 1, 7.

²⁷ Ibid.

fourteen days after she delivered a daughter. Much of the correspondence between Kohls and the missionary director in Germany concerned the placement of his daughter in a school in Germany: for many German missionaries, the missionary work often meant a separation from their children. Kohls remarried in 1923, and would spend the next thirty-eight years in China, with a brief stint from 1931-1933 in China. Like so many missionaries before him, Kohls's career as a missionary provided him with the opportunity to live a cosmopolitan life that he would not have been able to imagine as a tailor. After the First World War, he traveled with his second wife, Lotti Kohls, to America, traveling through Philadelphia, New York, San Francisco, and Honolulu.²⁸

As I was rifling through Kohls's papers in the archives, nothing seemed out of the ordinary: his career mapped perfectly onto the typical trajectory of a young missionary in China. Yet what brought Kohls to my attention was a series of letters detailing a conflict between Kohls and his Supervisor in China, Alfred Oelke that he wrote in 1938 to Johannes Müller, then Superintendent over the entire mission. Müller was a close confidant, and they were also related by marriage (Lotti Kohls was Müller's niece). Kohls complained that Oelke's wife was spreading rumors about him, whispering to other Germans that Kohls was "envious of Oelke's position as supervisor," and warning other members of the congregation to "keep their distance from Kohls."²⁹ The conflict stemmed from Oelke's support of the Nazi Party. At a German service in Guangdong in May of 1938, Kohls had led an offering prayer, without mentioning the *Führer*. This omission led to much bickering among the other missionaries. Alfred Oelke was a fervent Nazi supporter, who expressed in multiple letters to Siegfried Knak his devotion to the Nazi cause. In 1936, Oelke had written, "There are only two paths for the future of Germany. We stand or we fall with National Socialism."³⁰ Oelke's wife remarked that it was "people like Herr Kohls, who not even once prayed for the Führer, and surely never prayed for him," who helped contribute to the fragmented political situation in Germany.³¹

After the Berlin missionaries were expelled from China in 1951, the Kohls never returned to Germany. Despite pleas by Siegfried Knak asking him to return to Germany and retire there, Kohls refused. Instead, he and his wife were reunited with his two sons in California. They settled in Berkeley, and Lotti worked for the University ministry, becoming the first minister to Chinese students in Berkeley. Kohls became an assistant pastor at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Oakland. Kohls relocated to San Diego in 1958, becoming a pastor for the Lutheran Church in San Diego there and establishing a German service. His wife continued to perform outreach to the Chinese in the United States. He lived until 1986, just past his one hundredth birthday.

Compare the life of Georg Kohls with that of Ernst Faber, whom we met in the first chapter. Both were raised in provincial backgrounds. Both were thrust into a cosmopolitan world—a world previously unimaginable, and inaccessible, to them—through their missionary work. But consider the differences. Faber, to the end of his life, remained

²⁸ Lotti Kohls produced a travelogue detailing their trip. See Kleinbild

²⁹ Georg Kohls to Johannes Müller, 29 August 1938, BMW 1 / 3509: Kohls, Georg [Missionar], Bd. 4.

³⁰ Alfred Oelke to Siegfried Knak, 24 April 1936, BMW 1 / 6610: China, Allgemeines, Bd. 5.

³¹ Georg Kohls to Johannes Müller, 29 August 1938, BMW 1 / 3509: Kohls, Georg [Missionar], Bd. 4.

ethnocentric, convinced of Europe's historical world mission, committed to discrediting and undermining the Confucian legacy. He remained, despite his cosmopolitan experiences, through and through a German nationalist. Faber died of dysentery in China, yearning to return home one day. Georg Kohls, on the other hand, confronted his disappointment with his native land of Germany, and created a new home in America. To their dying day, Lotti and Georg yearned to return to China, reminiscing about how they had once expected to die in China and how they hoped to see China again one day. If Faber's life offers an example of the limits of personal transformation as a result of cosmopolitan encounters, then Kohl's life suggests its possibilities. What a difference a generation makes: Kohls had witnessed the destruction and destructive power of the German nation that he left, while Faber died with the optimism of nineteenth-century Europe—and Germany's power and intellectual prestige—at its zenith. The tragedy of Kohls's life was that politics rendered him homeless: he could neither return to Germany nor stay in China.

The history of the German missionary enterprise in China thus illuminates the transnational encounter, shedding lights on both its limits and possibilities. It shows us both the fragility and the unending elasticity of our personal, institutional, and ideological constructions. It is a story of both missed opportunities and real moments of cultural engagement. This history, like so many other histories of its kind, is one filled with stories of both tragedy and hope.

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