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Cover calligraphy Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿, Tang calligrapher and statesman

Cover illustration Detail from Chinese *Anti-opium poster*, c. 1895. “*Quanshi jieshi dayan wen*” [Essay Urging the World to Give Up Opium]



West Lake from Wang Villa (Wang Zhuang), Lois Conner, 2008

The editor and editorial board of *East Asian History* would like to acknowledge the contribution made to the journal by Professor Geremie Barmé.

Geremie has been editor of *East Asian History* since it began under this title in 1991, and was editor of its predecessor *Papers on Far Eastern History* from 1989. In this period, he has sustained and promoted the importance of the journal as a forum for rigorous and original historical scholarship on China, Korea and Japan. Encouraging and exacting in equal measures, he has been generous to scholars taking their first steps in learned publication. During Geremie's tenure, *East Asian History* has become a major journal in the field, noted for its consistently high standards of scholarship and the care taken in its production. His editorship stands as an example and a challenge to the new editorial team.

Sometimes words flow easily
As soon as he grasps the brush;
Sometimes he sits vacantly,
Nibbling at it.

Lu Ji, from *Literature: A Rhapsody*

Translated by Achilles Fang, "Rhymeprose on Literature: The Wen-Fu of Lu Chi (A.D. 261-303)", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 14, 3/4 (Dec., 1951): 527-66, p.534

或操觚以率爾
或含毫而邈然
陸機文賦

The editor and editorial board of *East Asian History* would like to acknowledge the contribution made to the journal by Marion Weeks.

Marion joined what was then the Department of Far Eastern History in 1977. From that time, she was involved in various capacities with, first, *Papers on Far Eastern History*, and then *East Asian History*, for which she served as business manager from its inception. By the time of her retirement from the Division of Pacific and Asian History in November 2007, Marion had become the heart and soul of the journal.

Over the years she worked with many editors—Andrew Fraser, John Fincher, Sydney Crawcour, Ian McComas Taylor, Jennifer Holmgren, Geremie Barmé, Benjamin Penny—as well as numerous associate editors, copy editors, printers and, of course, countless authors and manuscript readers. All owe her an immense debt of gratitude.

East Asian History would certainly not have been the same without Marion—at times, without her, *East Asian History* may not have been at all.



Imperial Summer Retreat, Chengde, Lois Commer, 2000

WESTERN PROTESTANT MISSIONS AND MODERN CHINESE NATIONALIST DREAMS

史 Lian Xi 連曦

In the emergence of nationalism in China during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the role of Protestant missions was an ambiguous one. From its beginning in 1807, the missionary enterprise was part of a broader “Western invasion”—as John King Fairbank puts it—of the Middle Kingdom.¹ In their eagerness to wage war on native beliefs and values, in lending their hands to the negotiating of unequal treaties, and in their frequent appeal to gunboat diplomacy to settle disputes with local authorities for the sake of the Gospel and of their converts, missionaries found themselves implicated in a Western assault on Qing 清 society, its imperial system, and the Chinese nation itself.² As Griffith John of the London Missionary Society (LMS) reminded the first General Conference of Protestant missionaries in 1877, “We are here to do battle with the power of darkness, to save men from sin, and conquer China for Christ”.³ Likewise, in the early twentieth century, an official missionary survey of Protestant work in the country was published under the title *The Christian Occupation of China*.⁴ At times such bellicosity was not merely religious:

This article grew out of a paper I presented in August 2006 at an Oxford Round Table meeting on China and the West. Research for it as part of a broader project on Christianity in modern China was made possible by Faculty Research Grants from Hanover College. I wish to thank the anonymous readers and editors of *East Asian History* for comments and suggestions that helped me in its expansion and revision. I also appreciate the professionalism and vigilance of the journal's copyeditors, which

/helped me ready this article for the press.

¹ “Introduction,” in John King Fairbank's *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp.2–3. See also Arthur H. Smith, *The Uplift of China* (New York: Laymen's Missionary Movement, 1907), p.186. In that popular book, Smith admitted that toleration of Christianity by the Qing government was included “in a convention dictated at the point of the sword”.

² Condemnations of missionary involvement in Western imperialism dominated scholarship produced in the People's Republic of China on Christian missions until the 1980s. See for instance, Gu Changsheng, *Chuanjiaoshi yu jindai Zhongguo* [Missionaries and Modern China] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1981), pp.60–8. Leading Western scholars have also called attention to such involvements. See Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920–28* (Notre Dame: Cross Cultural Publications, 1988), p.21. Lutz points out, “Following the Opium War of 1839–1842, Karl Gützlaff assisted in negotiating the British treaty, Peter Parker and Elijah Bridgman did the same for the U.S., and J.M. Callery for the French”.

³ Griffith John's statement is from his 1877 article “Salvation from Sin, the Great Need of the Chinese,” quoted in Jessie G. Lutz, ed., *Christian Missions in China: Evangelists of What?* (Boston: Heath & Co. 1965), p.11.

⁴ Milton T. Stauffer, ed., *The Christian Occupation of China: A General Survey of the Numerical Strength and Geographical Distribution of the Christian Forces in China Made by the Special Committee on Survey and Occupation, China Continuation Committee, 1918–1921* (Shanghai: China Continuation Committee, 1922).

⁵ See Edward V. Gulick, *Peter Parker and the Opening of China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp.187–93; Jonathan D. Spence, *To Change China: Western Advisers in China* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 1969), pp.54–5.

⁶ I use the term “nationalism” in a broad sense to refer to a preoccupation with, and a primary commitment to, the survival of the Chinese state and the foundations of its political and social order. See Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p.19–20; Jerome B. Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China: A Narrative History* (New York and London: The Free Press, 1981), p.209; William Kirby, “Foreword,” in *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases*, eds C.X. George Wei and Xiaoyuan Liu (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp.1–2. Kirby refers to the popular view among historians in China that the rise of Chinese nationalism (in the sense of what has been termed “state nationalism” as opposed to “cultural nationalism” or what John King Fairbank has called “culturalism”) can be dated to 1895, in the aftermath of the country’s disastrous defeat in the Sino-Japanese War. See John King Fairbank, *China: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.25, for discussion of traditional Chinese “culturalism”. It should be noted that other scholars, from Ernest Gellner in the 1960s to Prasenjit Duara in recent years, have questioned the very basis of nationalism—which, according to the former, “invents nations where they do not exist” (Gellner, *Thought and Change* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964], p.169, as quoted in John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996], p.39). To Duara, just as “national history secures for the contested and contingent nation the false unity of a self-same, national subject evolving through time” (*Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995], p.4), nationalism, despite its “transnational origins”, “produced” its supposed “historical and contemporary distinctiveness”. See Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield

upon becoming the United States commissioner to China in 1856, the former American Presbyterian medical missionary Peter Parker pressed for a “triple alliance” with Britain and France to force China into further concessions. He also urged his government to occupy the island of Formosa (Taiwan 台灣) to balance British colonial interests in Singapore and Hong Kong—a position so extreme that President Franklin Pierce ordered him recalled.⁵

On the other hand, it is important to recognize that Protestant missions facilitated, and in many instances helped inspire, the growth of Chinese nationalism. In fact, as we shall see, the earliest aspirations for a modern nation-state can be found among those who came under missionary influence, decades before the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 precipitated—as many scholars have noted—a broad patriotic movement among the educated elite.⁶ And it was often in the employ of, or contacts with, missionaries, or as a result of overseas experience made possible by their missionary friends, that young Chinese in the post-Opium War period acquired their first-hand knowledge of the West.⁷ That knowledge shattered the self-contained Chinese universe, and made possible the conception of China as a nation among nations. As Paul A. Cohen points out, the exposure that these Chinese had to the West and the grudging respect they developed toward Western nations separated them from the “pre-nationalistic xenophobes” who knew only resentment. “Cosmopolitan in outlook, nationalists before their time,” the attachment of a new breed of “treaty port Chinese” was “less to Confucian culture than to the Chinese nation”.⁸ Consequently, many of them became reformers or, by the end of the nineteenth century, revolutionaries dedicated to saving their country through Westernization. However, before the collapse of the Qing

/Publishers, 2003), p.4. See also Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.7. Karl argues that in the late Qing period, nationalistic Chinese intellectuals were “trapped in a rhetoric of exclusivity and pure authenticity”. In the present study, I do not address the validity (or lack thereof) of nationalism as an ideology. I have focused instead on the rise of modern Chinese nationalism as a historical phenomenon—on the making of those dreams, not how meaningful or deluded they were.

⁷ It should also be noted that missionary influence extended beyond the Protestant community. See Adrian A. Bennett, *Missionary Journalist in China: Young J. Allen and His Magazines, 1860–1883* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1983), pp.236–37. Bennett points out the Kang Youwei purchased all the

/issues of Young J. Allen’s *Wanguo gongbao* while on a visit to Shanghai in 1883, before he returned to Canton to formulate his proposals for a better society, and that ideas in *Wanguo gongbao* were “echoed in the writings of Chinese in the treaty ports” and “provided the first contact of many Chinese literati with a new intellectual challenge”.

⁸ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang Tao and Reform in Late Ch’ing China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp.62, 75–6. See also Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*, p.26. Lutz points out that “evangelistic work, as it expanded into educational, medical, and social service activities, had necessitated recognition of other civilizations with competing ideologies and values” and therefore helped shape nationalist awareness.

dynasty, the modernizing efforts of Christian nationalists inevitably ran up against the intransigence of traditionally minded rulers and as a result bore few tangible fruits.

In the political chaos following the collapse of the Qing in 1911, major players in Republican-period politics, and some leading intellectuals, found themselves turning to Protestant Christianity, which was touted by Western evangelists and their Chinese counterparts as the “only hope for China”, a faith capable of regenerating the spirit of the nation, and a system of values that could mold a new progressive citizenry. At a time of continuing foreign dominance, it was also opportune for ambitious Chinese power brokers to don Protestant piety in order to court the support of “the Christian West”.⁹ It is this tangled relationship between missions, Protestant Christianity, and Chinese nationalism (not untainted by warlord politics) that I explore here. In the end, as we shall see, Protestant and pro-Christian patriots often came to find their nationalist hopes misplaced, and the Christian formula for saving China irrelevant. Their search moved beyond Christianity as the goal of nation-building remained elusive through the rest of the Republican period.

For the Redemption of China

From the onset of the Chinese encounter with Western Protestant missions, conversion held the promise of more than personal salvation. Liang Fa 梁發 (Liang A-fah, 1789–1855) a printer who had worked for the pioneer missionary Robert Morrison and who was won over to the new faith in 1816 while in the employ of Morrison’s colleague William Milne, found Christianity to be a greater force for reforming Chinese society than native traditions. In that pre-nationalistic age, his *Good Words to Admonish the Age* (Quanshi liangyan 勸世良言), printed in 1832 and widely considered as one of the most complete early Chinese statements of evangelical doctrine, offered Protestant monotheism as a blueprint for the redemption of society.¹⁰ If everyone in the country believed in God, he wrote, “the poor would be peaceful and the rich good and virtuous”. Were those in power to obey God’s decrees, “rulers would also be able to govern and the officials remain loyal. Fathers would be merciful and sons filial There would be the blessing of eternal peace”.¹¹

It was promises like these from Liang’s book that helped kindle the millenarian dreams of Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 (1814–64) in the 1840s, and plunged him by 1850 into a fiery quest to rid his country of “Manchu demons” and establish the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (*Taiping Tianguo* 太平天國) on earth. For Hong, the self-proclaimed younger brother of Jesus, a Chinese society remade through God’s commandments would usher in the age of “Great Peace”. *The Land System of the Heavenly Dynasty* (Tianchao tianmu zhidu 天朝田畝制度), published by the Taiping in

⁹ Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*, p.21. As Lutz points out, “the phrase, the Christian West, was more than common parlance, for England and other nations reckoned on the support of an established church”.

¹⁰ See P. Richard Bohr, “Liang Fa’s Quest for Moral Power,” in *Christianity in China: Early Protestant Missionary Writings*, eds Suzanne Wilson Barnett and John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp.36–41.

¹¹ Liang Fa as quoted in Bohr, “Liang Fa’s Quest for Moral Power,” p.44

¹² “Tianchaotianmu zhidu,” in Franz Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971), Vol.2, pp.313–14.

¹³ See Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), pp.269–70, 274, 277.

Nanjing 南京 in 1854, decreed a Christian utopia that would fulfill the ancient Chinese dream of the “Great Harmony” (*datong* 大同):

There being fields, let all cultivate them; there being food, let all eat; there being clothes, let all be dressed; there being money, let all use it, so that nowhere does inequality exist, and no man is not well fed and clothed ... for the whole empire is the universal family of our Heavenly Father.¹²

In the later years of the movement, Hong Ren’gan 洪仁玕, cousin of Hong Xiuquan and enfeoffed as “Shield King” after he joined the rebels in Nanjing in 1859, proposed reforms that promised the fashioning of a modern nation-state under Taiping rule. Hong Ren’gan had worked and studied with missionaries in Hong Kong in the 1850s, notably James Legge, the great missionary-Sinologue, and was the only Taiping leader who understood the need for Western-style reform to turn the rebellion into an attempt to build a state. He briefed the “Heavenly King” on the main attributes of Western powers and cautioned against the use of “insulting expressions” in diplomatic exchanges. Among the changes he called for was the creation of a system of postal services, banks, five- to ten-year patents, and life and property insurance, as well as a network of news-papers. He also urged an end to slavery and infanticide. As we know, none of those reforms was carried out.¹³ By 1864, the Messianic movement, which had destroyed at least twenty million lives in fourteen years, had come to an end.

Treaty-Port Chinese and Proto-Nationalism

¹⁴ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1999), pp.199–201; W.A.P. Martin, *A Cycle of Cathay, or China, South and North, with Personal Reminiscences* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1896), pp.293–94, 299, 311.

In the 1860s, following China’s defeat in its second war with Britain—often referred to as the “Second Opium War”—the Qing government initiated what became known as “Self-Strengthening” efforts at modernising the country. Under the auspices of the Office of General Management of International Affairs (*Zongli Yamen* 總理衙門), which opened in 1861, the Interpreter’s College (*Tongwen Guan* 同文館), the first imperial institution to teach English and French, was inaugurated in Beijing in 1867. Its director was Xu Jiyu 徐繼畲 (1795–1873), a former governor-general of Fujian 福建 and Zhejiang 浙江 provinces who had learned about the West from American missionaries and who was a great admirer of both George Washington and the republican government of the United States. When Xu retired in 1869, the American Presbyterian missionary W.A.P. Martin succeeded him. Martin had recently earned a doctorate from Indiana University; his translation of Henry Wheaton’s *Elements of International Law* in 1863 helped introduce the new understanding of China as a nation among nations and—after it was polished by the Chinese staff of Prince Gong 恭親王 (1833–98) into a more elegant literary form—became a standard text distributed by the imperial court to provincial governors.¹⁴

Outside the capital, some of the most important early advocates of sweeping reform were educated Protestant converts in coastal provinces who had had significant exposure to Western culture. These included Yung Wing (Rong Hong 容闈, 1828–1912), the first Chinese to graduate from an American university, and Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–97), who pioneered journalism in China. Both of them had personal contact with Hong Rengan in the 1850s and apparently shared the same outlook on effective modernization. After Hong joined the Taiping rebels in 1859, they separately made trips to meet with Taiping leaders in Nanjing and “submitted proposals designed to further the Taiping cause”. Unlike Hong, however, in the end they did not throw in their lots with the Taiping but chose instead to seek modernization under the Manchu rule.

Born in Xiangshan 香山 county, Guangdong 廣東 province, Yung Wing received an early Christian education from the wife of Prussian missionary Karl Gützlaff before he attended the Morrison Education Society school, first in Macao, then in Hong Kong. In 1847, when Samuel R. Brown, the head teacher of the Morrison school, returned to the US, he took Yung Wing, by then a convert. Yung Wing studied first at Monson Academy in Monson, Massachusetts, before entering Yale.¹⁵ In his search for financial support for his studies at Yale, he was advised by Brown to apply for a contingent fund which stipulated that he would study for the ministry and after graduation return to China as a missionary. (Producing a Western-educated native evangelist would fulfill the dream of any mission.) He refused, explaining that, “I wanted the utmost freedom of action to avail myself of every opportunity to do the greatest good in China In such a vast empire, there can be hardly any limit put upon one’s ambition to do good, if one is possessed of the Christ-spirit” A pledge of that character, he added, would “prevent me from taking advantage of any circumstance or event that might arise in the life of a nation like China, to do her a great service”.¹⁶

Somehow, Yung Wing was able to complete his education and graduated from Yale in 1854. In that same year, he returned to China and served successively as interpreter and assistant to Western mission-aries and as a tea merchant. In 1864, he was sent by Zeng Guofan 曾國藩 (1811–72), a leading architect of the Self-Strengthening movement, to the US to purchase machinery for the future Jiangnan Arsenal (Jiangnan zhizao zongju 江南製造總局) near Shanghai. He subsequently became a notable advocate of reform in the late Qing period and in 1872 led the first Chinese educational mission (including 120 boys aged twelve to fourteen) to study in Hartford, Connecticut. The famous failure of that mission reflected the broader fate of late-Qing reform, in the face of which Yung Wing was powerless. The Christian influence he came under—and his American education made possible by missions—had nourished his nationalist dreams, but the time for their fulfillment had not come. In 1898, Yung Wing made one of his last attempts at modernizing China when he joined the inner circle of

¹⁵ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, pp.245–46; Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), pp.221–22. The Morrison school opened in Macao in 1839 but was later moved to Hong Kong.

¹⁶ Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1909), pp.34–6.

¹⁷ Timothy Richard, *Forty-Five Years in China, Reminiscences* (New York: Frederick Stokes, 1916), pp.263–66. See also Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, pp.245–46.

¹⁸ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, pp.13, 19–21. The Chinese name of the press was Mohai Shuguan.

¹⁹ Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p.500.

²⁰ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, pp.58–61; Girardot, *Victorian Translation of China*, pp.61–3.

²¹ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, p.66.

²² *Ibid.*, p.75. He was assisted in that by He Qi and Wu Tingfang.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.76–8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.29, 232–33. To him, the source of national strength of Western countries was the “unanimity of sentiment prevailing between ruler and ruled” (a belief echoed by Sun Yat-sen in his 1894 proposal to Li Hongzhang). He wrote, “If the system of the Western nations prevailed in China, the entire population would rise up and come to China’s defense”.

the radical reformers led by Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929). Kang had also consulted the British Baptist missionary-scholar Timothy Richard and invited him to be one of the advisors to Emperor Guangxu 光緒 (1871–1908). (Richard in turn recommended that the Chinese government engage Japan’s Ito Hirobumi 伊藤博文 (1841–1909) as an advisor). The debacle of the Hundred Days Reform must have shattered Yung’s dreams. In 1902, already an American citizen, he returned to the US, his adopted country.¹⁷

Wang Tao, a contemporary of Yung Wing, had a traditional education in his childhood and was steeped in the Confucian textual heritage before he, too, was exposed to Western ideas through missionaries. He grew up near Suzhou 蘇州 and, in 1845, at the young age of seventeen, passed the first level of examination to earn a licentiate’s degree (*shengyuan* 生員), but failed in the next level of examination the following year. In 1849, the prospect of becoming a scholar-official having dimmed for him, Wang accepted the invitation of British missionary Walter Henry Medhurst to serve as a Chinese editor at the LMS press in Shanghai. By 1854, Wang was receiving communion and helping his missionary employers distribute Bibles and other Christian literature—apparently doing so without interrupting his routine visits to local brothels.¹⁸

In 1862, Wang Tao left Shanghai for Hong Kong to assist James Legge in his translation of the “entire books of Confucius”. Like Hong Rengan in the previous decade, Wang came under the influence of the Scottish-born LMS missionary even as he worked as “Legge’s classical mentor and colleague”.¹⁹ He remained in Legge’s employ for the better part of a decade and in 1867 traveled to England to join Legge, who had returned home because of poor health. He stayed about two and a half years in Europe while continuing to offer his assistance to Legge. (In 1873 Legge returned to England for good, and went on to become the first Chinese professor at Oxford.)²⁰

By that time, according to Paul A. Cohen, Wang Tao’s uncommon knowledge of the West and the respect he had developed for its modern institutions had already launched him “on the difficult journey from a culturalistic to a nationalistic view of the world”.²¹ He had also discovered an alternative route to fame and success outside officialdom. In 1864, he started his own newspaper, *The Chinese Mail* (Huazi ribao 華字日報), one of the most successful and long-lived of all Chinese-language dailies (it did not cease publication until 1940).²² In 1874, Wang began publication of the *Universal Circulating Herald* (Xunhuan ribao 循環日報), the first successful Chinese daily completely under native auspices, and used his editorials to criticize Qing policies and to advocate reform.²³ He championed a “cosmopolitan, openminded nationalism” and urged that China should undergo “limited ‘Westernization’” if she was to rid herself of Western control.²⁴ He remained a practicing journalist until the end

of his life. In the early 1890s, he contributed regularly to *A Review of the Times* (Wanguo gongbao 萬國公報), the missionary periodical founded by Young J. Allen, which had by that time become an influential stimulus to Chinese reformist thinking.²⁵ Wang remained a church member, although in the judgment of his biographer Henry MacAleavy, “his mind never received the slightest tincture of Christianity.”²⁶

The Christian “Father of the Republic”

In 1894, on his way to present a proposal on reform to Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823–1901), the leading Qing statesman who served as both a grand secretary and governor-general of the capital province, Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 (Sun Yixian, usually known in Mandarin as Sun Zhongshan 孫中山, 1866–1925) made a stop in Shanghai and met with Wang Tao, then a prominent elderly reformer who, like himself, was a baptized Christian. Wang helped Sun polish his writing and also wrote a letter of introduction to a member of Li’s staff.²⁷ In fact, the call in Sun’s proposal for a greater role for the people—particularly those acquainted with Western learning like himself—in the political process bears a close resemblance to Wang’s long-time advocacy of a participatory political system.²⁸ As in the case of Wang Tao, Sun’s embrace of Western-style reform began with his encounter with Protestant missions. However, unlike Wang Tao, Sun’s failure to bring about political reform plunged him into the career of a revolutionary.

Born in 1866 in Xiangshan — the same county where Yung Wing grew up—Sun went to join his elder brother Sun Mei 孫眉 in Hawai‘i in his early teens and was enrolled in an Anglican mission school. In 1882, he moved to Oahu College, run by American Congregationalists. Sun’s plan to “join the church” angered his brother, who in 1883 sent him back to his home village Cuiheng 翠亨. The sixteen year old had been exposed to Western beliefs and now found himself provoked by what he saw as idolatry in the village. Like Hong Xiuquan almost half a century earlier, he “created scandal by attacking the local temple”. With the help of a friend, he “vandalized the wooden statues of the protective deities”. (In fact, Sun’s friends in Hong Kong nicknamed him Hong Xiuquan.) In 1884, Sun was baptized by Dr Charles Hager, an American Congregationalist, and soon started to accompany him on his missionary tours. Hager seems to “have expected Sun to make a brilliant career as a preacher”, and Sun apparently encouraged him in this idea.²⁹ In that same year, he was baptized and, in place of his birth name, Sun Wen 孫文, was given a new name, Yat-sen 逸仙.³⁰

From 1887 to 1892, Sun attended the College of Medicine for Chinese in Hong Kong, which was attached to the Alice Memorial Hospital

²⁵ Ibid., p.80; Bennett, *Missionary Journalist in China*, pp.58–63. Allen’s publication first appeared in 1868 as *Jiaohui xinbao* (Church News), and in 1874 was renamed *Wanguo gongbao* (*Globe Magazine*, later *A Review of the Times*). According to Bennett, both Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, the leaders of the Hundred Days Reform (1898), were familiar with Allen’s newspapers and some of his translations.

²⁶ Henry MacAleavy, *Wang Tao: The Life and Writings of a Displaced Person* (London: The China Society, 1953), p.21, as quoted in Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, p.282, n.38.

²⁷ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, p.3.

²⁸ See Sun Yat-sen, “A Plea to Li Hung-chang,” in *Prescriptions for Saving China: Selected Writings of Sun Yat-sen*, eds Julie Lee Wei, Ramon H. Myers, and Donald G. Gillin, trans Julie Lee Wei et al. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1994), pp.3–18. Sun wrote that the “wealth and power” of the European nations derived not only from “ships and powerful guns”. It was also because “their people can fully employ their talents, their land can be fully utilized, their natural resources can be fully tapped, and their goods can freely flow”. Sun also offered himself as a talent that the Grand Secretary could “nurture and employ”. Wang had written, “The real strength of England lies in the fact that there is a sympathetic understanding between the governing and the governed, a close relationship between the ruler and the people”. Wang as quoted in Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, p.225.

²⁹ Sun Yat-sen, “An Autobiography,” in *Prescriptions for Saving China*, eds Wei, et al pp.20–1; Marie-Claire Bergère, *Sun Yat-sen*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp.25–7, 33. Bergère points out that Sun and his friend Lu “may have regarded their attack on the Cuiheng temple as a sort of continuation of the popular [Taiping] rebellion, after the Taiping leader”.

³⁰ Harold Z. Schiffrin, *Sun Yat-sen and the Origins of the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p.16.

³¹ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, pp.246–47; Bergère, *Sun Yat-sen*, p.31.

³² Bergère, *Sun Yat-sen*, p.57.

³³ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, pp.263–64.

³⁴ Bergère, *Sun Yat-sen*, p.57.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.63–5; Stephen Chen and Robert Payne, *Sun Yat-sen: A Portrait* (New York: The John Day Company, 1946), pp.39–46. Chen and Payne quote the following passage from *Kidnapped in London*, in which Sun wrote of his days in captivity, “My despair was complete, and only by prayers to God could I gain any comfort . . . I should never forget the feeling that seemed to take possession of me as I rose from my knees on the morning of Friday, October 16th—a feeling of calmness, hopefulness, and confidence, that assured me my prayer was heard, and filled me with hope that all would be well”. Following his release, Sun took refuge with the Cantlies. He stayed on in London for eight months, until July 1897.

³⁶ Schiffrin, *Sun Yat-sen and the Origins*, pp.56–7. The pastor was Qu Fengchi of the LMS, who had baptized him. The *Globe* reported after Sun’s release that he would stay in England to help train Chinese medical missionaries.

³⁷ Chen and Payne, *Sun Yat-sen*, p.48. Chen and Payne add that it was probably during that period that Sun met Lenin and other Russian revolutionary exiles.

administered by the LMS. There he developed a lasting friendship with Dr James Cantlie, a Scottish-born medical missionary and director of the College. According to Sun’s biographer, Marie-Claire Bergère, of all the missionaries, Cantlie had the greatest influence on Sun.³¹ In 1894, having failed in his efforts to persuade the Qing court to modernize its political institutions and facilitate the political participation of the people, Sun founded the Revive China Society (*Xingzhong Hui* 興中會) in Hawaii. He was soon back in the Canton–Hong Kong area to organize the revolutionary movement. As it turned out, most of his support came from a solid and well-organized network of Chinese converts to Christianity.³² In staging the unsuccessful Canton Uprising of 1895, Sun used a Christian bookshop (with a Presbyterian chapel in its back room) as his headquarters and an arms cache. In fact, at the turn of the century, most of the leaders of the Hong Kong Revive China Society, the inner circle of the nascent revolutionary movement, were Christians—products of the educational enterprise of Western missions.³³ As Bergère points out, for the humble folk who had been drawn to mission schools, “Christianity represented the religious aspect of their faith in the ideologies, institutions, and methods of government of that Western world”.³⁴

In 1896, while he was on the run from the Qing authorities following the failed Canton uprising, Sun was briefly kidnapped and imprisoned in the Chinese Legation in London. He managed to persuade George Cole, the Legation’s steward, to pass on a message to his friend Dr Cantlie (whose house was nearby). To arouse Cole’s compassion, Sun compared himself to the Christians of Armenia who were then being persecuted by the Turks. (His persuasion was aided by the twenty pounds sterling that he handed Cole.) After a week, news of Sun’s kidnapping finally reached Cantlie (and through him the media).³⁵ Sun’s dramatic release reinforced his sense of being part of a grand design that marked him for the role of saving China. “I owe everything to the great favor of God,” he wrote to a pastor and former tutor. “Through the Way of God I hope to enter into the Political Way.” And he declared later, “I . . . belong . . . to the Christianity of Jesus who was a revolutionary”.³⁶

Meanwhile, he stayed on in London and, in the reading room of the British Museum, encountered the works of Karl Marx and Henry George.³⁷ A relatively obscure American social reformer, Henry George had authored *Progress and Poverty* (1879) in which he proposed the “single tax” remedy for social inequity. According to him, unearned economic rent—the ever greater returns on the land reaped by its owner—should be placed at the disposal of the state and distributed according to public interest. A lifelong Episcopalian, George had secularized his early millenarian hope into a belief in the triumph of justice. Sun later based his own solution to China’s land problem on George, and envisioned a similar policy of “equalization

of landownership”—the “Minsheng Principle” (民生, or People’s Livelihood)—which would direct most of the projected increment in land value to the state. The result would be a “prosperous people” and the “richest nation on earth”. It is likely that George’s Christian and democratic ideas had struck a chord in him.³⁸

When the revolution broke out in 1911, the mainstream of the nationalist movement, both within and outside the Christian community, was already seeking China’s salvation through drastic Westernization—beyond the formulation “Chinese learning for essence; Western learning for function” (*Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong* 中學為體, 西學為用). Many of those who had held prominent positions in the Qing government were also quick to switch to the side of the revolutionaries and favored the introduction of democratic institutions and social reform. The chief representative of the revolutionaries who negotiated the abdication of the last emperor was Wu Tingfang 伍廷芳 (1842–1922), China’s minister to Washington from 1907 to 1909. In his early years, Wu became a convert and entered a missionary college in Hong Kong before going on to study law in London. A prominent advocate of reform under the Manchus, he became a close follower of Sun Yat-sen after the Revolution and held a number of major offices in the new government during the first decade of the Republican period.³⁹

It was a hopeful time, when, for many, Christian ideals and the nationalist spirit were intertwined. Sun himself attributed the “essence” of the revolution to “the teachings of the Church” and added, “it is the Church, not my efforts, that is responsible for the Republic of China”.⁴⁰ In a speech made at a meeting of the Christian Alliance of Canton in May 1912, Sun Yat-sen called on Christians to give full play to their religious faith, “helping to shoulder the national responsibilities so that we can attain perfection in both politics and religion”.⁴¹ Such sentiments were echoed—and often encouraged—by the missionary community. Even as Sun increasingly lost his grip on Chinese politics in the 1910s and as the Republic was about to slide into warlordism, missionaries continued to trumpet Christianity as the beacon for the new nation. In those years, John R. Mott and Sherwood Eddy, American YMCA leaders and world crusaders, made several highly publicized evangelistic tours of China. In the company of C.H. Robertson, a science lecturer from Purdue University who held his audience spellbound with demonstrations of electricity, the gyroscope, radio, and wireless telegraph, Eddy lectured on patriotism and on “Christ as the only hope of China”, the guide for effective nation-building and the panacea for the country’s political and social ills.⁴² The essayist Lin Yutang’s 林語堂 autobiography *From Pagan to Christian* contains the following account: while a student at St. John’s University in Shanghai, Lin attended Eddy’s evangelistic meetings. “We had ... laughed at Sherwood

³⁸ “Henry George,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills (Macmillan Co. & Free Press, 1968), Vol.6, pp.152–53. See also Sun Yat-sen, “The Three People’s Principles and the Future of the Chinese People” (1906), in *Prescriptions for Saving China*, eds Wei et al., pp.41–50; Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I: The Three Principles of the People* (1924), trans. Frank W. Price, abridg. and ed. Commission for the Compilation of the History of the Kuomintang (Taipei: China Publishing Co., 1950), pp.177–78. First formulated in the 1900s, the principle of the “People’s Livelihood” centers on a simplistic solution to the land problem—the “unearned increment” reaped by landowners. Sun proposed that the landowner would fix the price of the land, according to which the government could choose to either tax or buy back the land. As a result of such a policy, Sun believed, the landowner would “strike a mean and report the true market price” and “neither the landowner nor government will suffer”.

³⁹ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, pp.248–49, 265, 320, n.9. The principle “*Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*” was proposed by Zhang Zhidong 張之洞.

⁴⁰ Sun Yat-sen, “Using Religious Virtues to Remedy Political Inadequacies” (the substance of a speech made on 5 September, 1912, in response to a welcome by the churches of Peking), in *Prescriptions for Saving China*, eds Wei, et al. pp.88–9.

⁴¹ Sun Yat-sen, “Christians Should Give Full Play to Their Faith and Help Shoulder National Responsibilities,” (extract of a 9 May, 1912, lecture to the Christian Alliance of Canton), in *Prescriptions for Saving China*, eds Wei, et al. p.81.

⁴² Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China, 1857–1927* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp.112–13, 164–70; Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907–1932* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), p.153; Xing Jun, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution: The American Social Gospel and the YMCA in China, 1919–1937* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1996), p.50.

⁴³ Lin Yutang, *From Pagan to Christian* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1959), p.233. Lin was a third-generation convert. His father was a village pastor stationed near Zhangzhou in southern Fujian.

⁴⁴ Mao Zedong, speech at the Seventh Party Congress (1945), quoted in Lee Feigon, *Chen Duxiu: Founder of the Chinese Communist Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p.98.

⁴⁵ Lee Feigon, *Chen Duxiu*, p.129.

⁴⁶ Chen Tu-seu (Chen Duxiu), "Jidujiao yu Zhongguo ren" [Christianity and the Chinese People], trans. Y.Y. Tsu, in *The Chinese Recorder* 51 (July 1920): 454-55. Chen went on to argue that the Chinese should adopt Christian moral education and cultivate the dynamic spirit of Christianity to supply what was lacking in Chinese civilization. See Lee Feigon, *Chen Duxiu*, pp.143-44.

⁴⁷ Lee Feigon, *Chen Duxiu*, pp.143-44.

⁴⁸ Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 1914-1944* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1951), pp.187-88. While in Shanghai, Russell met some "Korean Christians who had been exiled for bomb-throwing".

Eddy's revivalist tactics. One of his tricks was suddenly to pull a Chinese flag (then of five colors) out of his coat pocket and declare that he loved China." He added, "Such melodramatics didn't go with us".⁴³

A Gospel for the Revolutionary and the Warlord?

There were some patriotic intellectuals, however, who took such claims seriously. Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942), who founded *La Jeunesse* (*New Youth*, *Xin qingnian* 新青年) in 1915 and whom Mao Zedong 毛澤東 lauded as the "commander-in-chief" of the May Fourth period, not only called for the introduction of "Mr Science" and "Mr Democracy" (*sai xiansheng* 賽先生, *de xiansheng* 德先生) but also placed hope in Western Christianity.⁴⁴ For a while, he admired particularly Woodrow Wilson, whom he regarded as a new-style Christian gentleman (*junzi* 君子) capable of inspiring change in China and the world.⁴⁵ In 1920, a year before he became a founder and general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), he published an essay entitled "Christianity and the Chinese People" (*Jidujiao yu Zhongguo ren* 基督教與中國人), in which he advocated the adoption of Christianity in China. He wrote:

Our attitude toward Christianity should not merely be one of superficial understanding ... but one of deep-seated appreciation. We should try to cultivate the lofty and majestic character of Jesus and imbue our very blood with his warm sympathetic spirit. In this way, we shall be saved from the pit of chilly indifference, darkness, and filth, into which we have fallen.⁴⁶

By that time, Chen had already embraced communism but believed that Christianity could be turned into a gospel for the oppressed, and therefore wedded to the communist pursuit. As Lee Feigon suggests, an important reason for Chen's warmth toward Christianity was the contemporary examples of Christian socialism in Asia, particularly seen in the Korean Independence Movement, in which radical Protestants often played a prominent role.⁴⁷ (Bertrand Russell observed that when he was visiting China in 1920, in neighboring Korea "a Christian was practically synonymous with a bomb-thrower".⁴⁸) Even if Chen himself had not exactly envisioned Christian bomb-throwers ushering in a new society in his own homeland, he may well have seen a place for Christian nationalism in China's struggles. He decried politicians who "raise such catch-phrases as 'Christianity to save the country' to oppose a neighboring country". (That country was the Soviet Union, where the Bolsheviks had seized power in 1917.) He added,

They have forgotten that Jesus came not to save a country, but to save the entire human race for eternal life. They have forgotten that Jesus teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves. They have forgotten Jesus'

command to love our enemies, and to pray for our persecutors. They attack communism as 'the greatest evil of the future', and 'the doctrine of chaos'. They have forgotten that Christianity is the Good News of the poor, and Jesus is the friend of the poor.⁴⁹

To be sure, Chen himself did not become a Christian. Nor did he hold on to communism for long. He lost his position as the general secretary of the CCP following Chiang Kai-shek's 蔣介石 (1887–1975) violent suppression of communists and labor activists in Shanghai in 1927, and was kicked out of the Party in 1929. In his later years, he became disillusioned with communism and turned again to Anglo-American ideals of democracy.

Throughout the 1910s and early 1920s, there were many who, like Chen Duxiu, sought to extract what was useful in Western Christian civilisation and inject it into Chinese attempts at state-building. One who cherished the dream of unifying the country and perhaps creating a Christian republic was the warlord Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥 (1881–1948).

Feng Yuxiang came from the province of Anhui 安徽. In his childhood years, his family was caught in grinding poverty. Like many displaced North China farmers in the late Qing, he drifted into army life. As he recalled in *My Life* (Wode shenghuo 我的生活), in his early adolescence he resented foreign domination of China and detested Christianity as a Western religion. When he was about twelve (and already a child soldier), he once fired at a church and derived great satisfaction at the sight of its blackened sign.⁵⁰ On the other hand, he was appalled by official corruption under the Qing and dismayed at the political chaos into which China descended after 1911. In 1913, he attended several evangelistic meetings held in the capital by John R. Mott, the founder and leader of the international Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, who was crusading in major cities in China. Feng was deeply moved by Mott's message of—as he put it—"universal love and altruism". He added that Jesus' association with the lower classes such as "the carpenters and the fishermen ... fitted my taste as a little pauper". Furthermore, he was impressed by what he saw as the exemplary morals and lifestyle of church members—their freedom from opium addiction, foot-binding, and slothfulness, as well as their dedication to education. It struck him that "if all the Chinese people are like this, the country will by and by find a way out, and the society will also become better". He joined a Bible class conducted by a Methodist Episcopal minister and, in 1914, was baptized.⁵¹

Following his conversion, Feng began to try to convert his officers and soldiers. By 1918, Feng had become known as the "Christian General". He invited both Chinese chaplains and Western missionaries to conduct protracted evangelistic crusades in his camps, and thousands of Feng's men were converted, even though many of them were illiterate and remained oblivious of the Ten Commandments or the Lord's Prayer.⁵² Feng fused his religious and nationalistic passions. One missionary recalled that at

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.458.

⁵⁰ Feng Yuxiang, *Wode shenghuo* [My Life] (Shanghai: Jiaoyu shudian, 1947), p.30.

⁵¹ See Feng, *Wode shenghuo*, pp.366-68; Marcus Ch'eng (Chen Chonggui), *Marshal Feng—The Man and His Work* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1926), p.9; James E. Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord: The Career of Feng Yuxiang* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), p.53.

⁵² *The China Mission Year Book, 1919* (Shanghai: Christian Literature Society for China, 1919), Vol.10, pp.281-85.

⁵³ Ch'eng, *Marshal Feng*, pp.21–2.

⁵⁴ Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord*, pp.82, 243, 322, n.32. In 1929, Feng's army was 220,000 men strong.

⁵⁵ Feng Yu Hsiang, "Address Delivered by Feng Yu Hsiang (the Christian General) to the North China Union Language School, Peking, China," 27 February, 1923, trans. George L. Davis. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Library collections, Louisville, Kentucky.

⁵⁶ *The Chinese Recorder*, 54 (1923): 335.

⁵⁷ Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord*, pp.129, 135.

⁵⁸ M. Searle Bates, "Gleanings from the Manuscripts of M. Searle Bates: The Protestant Endeavor in Chinese Society, 1890–1950," ed. Cynthia McLean (unpublished manuscript; New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1984), pp.89–90.

⁵⁹ Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord*, pp.175, 130. Feng's school for the wives of officers had already been established before 1924 and had been in the charge of Miss Simpson of the American Church Mission. See *The Chinese Recorder*, 54 (1923): 335.

one meeting, Feng offered a prayer. Before the second sentence, Feng's voice

... quivered with emotion, and soon there was weeping aloud As he went on...the whole hall became a scene of loud weeping When the general went on to pray for his beloved China ... he broke down utterly and wept.⁵³

By the summer of 1920, Feng probably counted as many as 4,000 converts in his forces. A few years later, when Feng's army numbered tens of thousands, it was reported to be about fifty percent Christian.⁵⁴ According to the general, his men

rise in the morning and sing a national air; then when they have come back from drill and are ready for breakfast they always sing a grace. At twelve o'clock noon all work stops and every soldier is asked to stand with uncovered head and pray for his country.⁵⁵

In late 1922, Feng's army moved to Nanyuan 南苑, just outside Beijing. The "Christian General" was now close to the center of China's unpredictable political life. Missionaries in the capital were elated by the presence of an army of Christian soldiers. Even Frank Joseph Rawlinson, a veteran missionary and seasoned editor-in-chief of *The Chinese Recorder*, was swept off his feet when he visited Feng's parade ground outside the capital a week before Easter in 1923 and was told that "13,000 Christian soldiers" were to be in the parade the following Sunday. "What a sight this mass of men would be!" Rawlinson rhapsodized. "To see them would be to realise that in spite of government chaos, financial famine, and military jealousies, the Church in China is marching on and a new China is being born."⁵⁶

Feng was promoted to marshal in late 1923. The following year, in a betrayal of his superior Wu Peifu 吳佩孚 (1874–1939) (a leading militarist in China) that stunned the nation and only deepened the political chaos, Feng seized the capital and had himself appointed commander-in-chief of the newly organized National People's Army of the Republic of China (*Zhonghua Minguo Guominjun* 中華民國國民軍).⁵⁷ A few months later, in spring 1925, Feng called a conference at Kalgan (Zhangjiakou 張家口) for the organization of a "Christian Council" for his army. A plan was drawn up for aggressive evangelism in the army. In a decree that recalled the policy of the Taiping government, there was to be "a chaplain for every 1,000 men and a secretary for every 10,000 who would be responsible to a Christian Council of seven secretaries under a Board of Directors consisting of thirty-five officers and military officials."⁵⁸ Feng's wife, a YWCA secretary in Beijing, helped establish schools for officers' spouses, who were required to attend a three-month course to be instructed in Christianity.⁵⁹ Apparently, the religious program helped instill much loyalty, courage, and discipline into the "Christian army". To Feng's detractors, however, such an embrace of Christianity was nothing but the work of

a devious and calculating man who maneuvered his way into power—a cynical move to “ingratiate himself with foreign imperialists, who held the reins of power in China; and to manipulate his superstitious troops with the help of pseudo-Christian symbolism, after the manner of the Taiping leaders”.⁶⁰

In late 1924, with Feng Yuxiang in control of the capital, Sun Yat-sen, sick from liver cancer, made his final attempt at effecting a unification of the country. He traveled to Beijing to meet with Feng, who had earlier invited him to go there to “preside over the big plan”.⁶¹ By that time, however, Sun was not harboring any dream of a Christian republic. He had already turned to the Soviet Union for help in China’s nationalist struggles. Although Sun had earlier pinned his hopes for the reconstruction of the country on generous political and economic support from the West, “the attitude of the Powers during the next stages of the development, especially in Paris in 1919 and in Washington in 1921–22, soon cured Sun Yat-sen and his followers of their illusions”.⁶² Sun died in Beijing in March 1925. On his deathbed, he wrote, “For forty years I have devoted myself to the cause of the people’s revolution with but one end in view, the elevation of China to a position of freedom and equality among the nations ...”. He acknowledged that “the work of the Revolution is not yet done” and urged his comrades to follow his plans and strive on.⁶³ At the private funeral service officiated by Timothy Tingfang Lew (Liu Tingfang 劉廷芳, 1891–1947), dean of theology at Yenching 燕京 University, the mourners sang a favorite hymn of Sun’s, which captured the dark mood toward the end of his life: “Abide with me, Fast falls the eventide; The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide!”⁶⁴

By the time of Sun’s death, militarists more powerful than Feng Yuxiang had already moved into Beijing. In 1926, following his ouster from the capital as a result of a new coalition between Wu Peifu and Zhang Zuolin 張作霖 (1875–1928), the Manchurian warlord, Feng left for a period in Russia. In the late 1920s, he cooled toward the West and became openly appreciative of the Russians’ renunciation of extraterritoriality and the Boxer indemnity (which came in the Russian treaty of 1925).⁶⁵ In March 1928, an American visitor to Feng’s headquarters in Kaifeng 開封 noted that his soldiers still began the day with song, but to the tune of the doxology were now set nationalist words reminding the troops of their “sacred duty” to serve the country and that “imperialism is the enemy of the nation”. Likewise, patriotic songs were now sung in lieu of grace.⁶⁶ Feng insisted that he was still a Christian, but there were to be no more revivals.⁶⁷ As historian Kenneth S. Latourette observed, “It may have been the failure of Christianity to achieve what he expected of it—constant victory for himself and the early unification of the country—which cooled his ardor”. In the eyes of many missionaries, he had turned “red”, and he earned a new nickname, “the so-called Christian General”.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ See Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord*, p.53.

⁶¹ Feng, *Wode shenghuo*, p.401.

⁶² Wolfgang Franke, *China and the West: The Cultural Encounter, 13th to 20th Centuries*, trans. R.A. Wilson (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), p.132.

⁶³ Sun, *SanMin Chu I*, p.i.

⁶⁴ “Private Funeral Service of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, Peking Union Medical College Chapel, Peking, China, March 19, 1925,” Timothy Tingfang Lew Papers, Union Theological Seminary Library, New York.

⁶⁵ Bates, “Gleanings from the Manuscripts,” pp.89–90.

⁶⁶ Arthur N. Holcombe, *The Spirit of the Chinese Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), pp.73, 81. Feng’s missionary friend Goforth observed in 1929, “Marshal Feng is a true patriot. He loves his country. He keenly feels China’s humiliation and shame”. See Rosalind and Jonathan Goforth, *Miracle Lives of China* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931), p.152; Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord*, pp.186–87.

⁶⁷ Rosalind and Jonathan Goforth, *Miracle Lives of China*, p.155.

⁶⁸ Latourette, *History of Christian Missions in China*, p.778.

Following Jesus “the Leader of a National Revolution”

⁶⁹ Howard L. Boorman, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 319–24. In the early 1920s, Chiang emerged as a new favorite of Sun Yat-sen along with the several Tongmenghui veterans and confidants (and possible heirs) of the “father of the Republic”—Hu Hanmin, Wang Jingwei, and Liao Zhongkai. Chiang’s ascent to the top of the Nationalist hierarchy began in 1926.

⁷⁰ Song Qingling to Edgar Snow, as quoted in Sean Dolan, *Chiang Kai-shek* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), p. 67. Song Qingling was a colleague of Snow’s in the 1930s as an associate editor of the short-lived English-language anti-imperialist publication *Democracy*. See Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, rev. and enl. ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1968, original 1938), p. 420n.

⁷¹ Yu-ming Shaw (Shao Yuming), *An American Missionary in China: John Leighton Stuart and Chinese-American Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 105.

In the 1930s, Feng Yuxiang gradually faded from the political scene. Following the success of the Northern Expedition of 1926–27 against the warlords, Chiang Kai-shek, commander-in-chief of the National Revolutionary Army and self-appointed political heir of Sun Yat-sen, had formed the Nanjing government in 1928 and nominally unified China. Chiang himself became Chairman of the National Government. Born to a salt merchant family in 1887 near the treaty port city of Ningbo 寧波, Chiang had, like many young patriots of the day, gone to Japan to study at a military academy in 1908. There he joined the Revolutionary Alliance and was introduced to Sun Yat-sen in 1910.⁶⁹

In his early life, Chiang studied Confucian texts and worshiped traditional heroes, and was no admirer of the religion brought by Western missionaries until late 1927, when he married Soong Mayling (Song Meiling 宋美齡, 1897–2003), a Wellesley College graduate and YWCA activist in Shanghai 上海. Soong was from a powerful Methodist family. Her two elder sisters were respectively Sun Yat-sen’s widow (Song Qingling 宋慶齡, 1893–1981) and the wife of the financier Kong Xiangxi 孔祥熙 (Song Ailing 宋靄齡, 1889–1973). According to Qingling, the marriage resulted from “opportunism on both sides, with no love involved”.⁷⁰ That harsh judgment may have resulted in part from the recent ideological break of Sun’s widow from Chiang over his bloody betrayal of the communists in the spring of 1927. It is certainly true that as the fragile Nanjing government was coming into being, Chiang needed all the international help he could get. Under the circumstances, it did not hurt if he could win the goodwill and trust of Western Christian powers. In exchange for the consent of Soong’s mother to the marriage, Chiang promised to “study Christianity” and, in 1930, was baptized (after crushing a coalition of warlords that included Feng Yuxiang in the massive Battle of the Central Plains [*Zhongyuan Dazhan* 中原大戰]). Now those in the West who had dreamed of a Christian republic in China found their hope rekindled by Chiang’s conversion.

Clearly, Chiang’s marriage to Soong brought Christian influence to the Guomindang 國民黨. John Leighton Stuart, a prominent American Presbyterian missionary who was to become the US ambassador to China in 1946, wrote glowingly of the influence of the “teaching and example of Jesus” on Chiang. Stuart also credited Chiang’s “saintly” mother-in-law and wife for deepening the generalissimo’s spirituality, which helped mold him into a noble patriot.⁷¹ Chiang’s biographer Robert Payne notes:

A certain Puritanism, derived from the Methodists and from the Young Men’s Christian Association, was henceforth to color the Three Principles of the People; Christian missionaries were to receive favored positions; the dynamics of Christianity were to be harnessed once more, as in the time of the Taipings, to the revolution. With the ardor of a convert Chiang

Kai-shek diligently read the Bible and sought in it revelations of God's purpose toward himself and toward China.⁷²

In the early 1930s, as Chiang launched successive "bandit suppression" campaigns against the CCP bases in rural China, most notably the Jiangxi Soviet, the idea of a parallel ideological campaign "became crystallized" in his mind. It would counter the communist struggle for social justice with a program of "social and economic reconstruction" of his own, one that would arouse the "national consciousness" and "enable China to resume her position as a great nation".⁷³ At the heart of the scheme, however, were the clichéd Confucian virtues of propriety, righteousness, incorruptibility, and a sense of shame (*li yi lian chi* 禮義廉恥). Trumpeted as the New Life Movement, it was launched in Nanchang 南昌, the provincial capital of Jiangxi 江西, in February 1934. The shallowness of the campaign—and its irrelevance to the woes in the Chinese society—were reflected in the fanfare itself. There was a "torchlight procession through the streets of Nanchang, with banners inscribed with the slogans of the new movement: 'Don't spit', 'Avoid wine, women and gambling', 'Kill flies and rats'".⁷⁴

According to Madame Chiang, the New Life Movement was "like the movement of Christ [which] is concerned with the poor, the oppressed, the sick, and the little children". In major centers of the national campaign, missionary bodies were assembled and addressed by the generalissimo and his wife. Typically, they pledged to work with the government and to form joint committees to establish opium refuges and to combat foot-binding, tuberculosis, trachoma, and various local evils.⁷⁵ As Payne observes:

The source of the New Life Movement [lies] ... in the doctrines of the Methodist church with its belief in original sin, general redemption, repentance, justification by faith, the witness of the Holy Spirit, and Christian perfection. Among these heterogeneous doctrinal foundations there may be detected a considerable element of Calvinism That [Methodism] ... should have so influenced the leader of the Chinese nation on the eve of a great war that he should yearn to see all China embracing the religion, or at least those elements of it which could be translated into Chinese, would seem at first sight unimaginable.⁷⁶

In any event, the New Life Movement soon trickled away into trivialities, but Chiang remained convinced of the rightness of his remedy for social ills in China and was determined to remove the communist "cancer" before confronting the growing threat from Japan. Calls for an end to civil war and for a Nationalist alliance with the CCP against the Japanese—even those from many of his own generals—were ignored. In a desperate move, General Zhang Xueliang 張學良 (1901–2001) staged a mutiny in Xi'an 西安 in December 1936 and captured Chiang in an effort to force him into reconciliation with the CCP. During the crisis in Xi'an, Chiang claimed to have steeled himself and to have rejected any concession to his captors by evoking the example of Jesus. In fact he presented a Christ-like image of himself in his diary:

⁷² Robert Payne, *Chiang Kai-shek* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1969), pp.136–37. See also Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, p.364. Chiang's missionary friends included William Johnson, a Methodist from Illinois, whose summer house in Guling (on Lushan Mountain) was used by the Chiangs. The generalissimo also included many American missionaries among his advisors, including the Presbyterian John Leighton Stuart and the Congregationalist George Shepherd, who was called "the one trusted American" in Chiang's "innermost circle".

⁷³ Madame Chiang Kai-shek (Song Meiling), *General Chiang Kai-shek and the Communist Crisis* (Shanghai: China Weekly Review Press, 1935), pp.55–73, as quoted in Pei-kai Cheng and Michael Lestz with Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), pp.295–66.

⁷⁴ Payne, *Chiang Kai-shek*, p.164.

⁷⁵ Madame Chiang, *General Chiang Kai-shek*, p.73.

⁷⁶ Payne, *Chiang Kai-shek*, p.160.

⁷⁷ General and Madame Chiang Kai-shek, *General Chiang Kai-shek: The Account of the Fortnight in Sian When the Fate of China Hung in the Balance* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1937), pp.143–44, 169. Like Sun Yat-sen four decades earlier, Chiang, in his moment of grave danger also found divine assurances of his ultimate deliverance. When he read the Old Testament on the morning of 22 December, he came across the passage: “Jehovah will now do a new thing, and that is, He will make a woman protect a man”. That afternoon, Soong Mayling arrived in Xi’an. Three days later, Chiang was released. Although Chiang refused to promise any concession to his captors in writing, he did appear to have given oral consent to end his military campaigns against the communists and form a united front to resist Japanese encroachments. See Snow, *Red Star Over China*, pp.388–90.

⁷⁸ Chiang Kai-shek. “Wei shenmo yao xinyang Yesu” [Why I Believe in Jesus], radio broadcast, 16 April 1938, in *Jidujiao yu xin Zhongguo* [Christianity and New China], ed. Wu Yaorong (Y.T. Wu) (Shanghai: The Association Press of China, 1940), pp.107–10. The English version here is taken from *The China Reader: Republican China—Nationalism, War, and the Rise of Communism, 1911–1949*, eds Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), pp.154–57.

⁷⁹ Payne, *Chiang Kai-shek*, pp.136–37. Payne adds unsympathetically, “He was to enter the most fateful years of his career armed with a Bible and with a wife who had spent the greater part of her life in America and within the foreign concession in Shanghai”.

Jesus Christ was tempted by Satan and withstood him for forty days. He fought against evil influences more strongly than I do today ... I must maintain the same spirit which led Jesus Christ to the Cross, and I must be ready to meet any death which the mutineers may bring upon me ... ⁷⁷

Chiang was released on Christmas Day, 1936, and emerged from the crisis a hero. It appears that—like Sun Yat-sen following his abduction in London in 1896—the experience deepened Chiang’s sense of being at the center of a divine scheme for China. In July 1937, just months after the Xi’an Incident, the Japanese launched their full-scale invasion of China. In April 1938, Chiang made an Easter radio speech to Chinese Christians nationwide entitled “Why I believe in Jesus”, in which he articulated a “firm faith in the ultimate triumph of right”. Chiang found a new meaning for Christianity in the country’s fight for survival. He called Jesus “the leader of a national revolution”. Just as the conquered Jews were losing their will to resist the aggression of the Romans, he said, Jesus “roused the nation, led the masses, and prepared the way for a people’s revolution”. Chiang also called Jesus “the leader of a social revolution” dedicated to “ridding society of its darkness and corruption” and “build[ing] the foundation of a new society”. As he looked toward the future of the Chinese Revolution, he was “convinced that we cannot truly regenerate our nation unless we have the spirit—the revolutionary spirit—of struggle and sacrifice such as we find in Jesus”.⁷⁸

It was an inspiring faith and a revealing statement. To him, the fundamental relevance of Christianity was that it could be made part of a nationalist ideology to sustain the Chinese struggles. Yet Chiang failed to embrace a genuine social revolution and was unable to tackle the injustices, the inequalities, and the rampant official corruption under the Guomindang. As China’s crisis deepened through the 1930s and 1940s, he seemed to be “removing himself further and further from an understanding of the real forces that moved the Chinese people”.⁷⁹ And in spite of his profession of personal Christian faith, he grew increasingly intolerant of Western ideologies in both their democratic and communist forms. Perhaps dictatorship and the example of totalitarian states provided a new inspiration, which harked back to traditional autocratic Chinese rule. In fact, authoritarian predilections in him had never given way to Methodist piety. They seemed to have coexisted in the 1930s. By 1943, as he contemplated China’s place in an unpredictable postwar world, Chiang was no longer seeing himself as a Christian revolutionary. Instead, he championed a return to traditional Chinese values. In that year he published *China’s Destiny* (*Zhongguo zhi mingyun* 中國之命運), his most significant political treatise. In it he rejected both Western liberalism and communism as “nothing more than a dispute concerning Anglo-American and Soviet ideologies in their imitated and distorted form”. As such they “not only could not meet the needs of China’s national life, but they were

also inconsistent with the inherent spirit of China's culture". His formula for saving China was a neo-Confucian "moral reconstruction" and a return to traditional ethical principles. In short, the spirit of the nationalist revolution was to be reduced, once again, to "our people's sense of propriety, righteousness, integrity and honor".⁸⁰ Like Sun Yat-sen, Chiang would retain his personal Christian faith through the rest of his life, a belief unshaken by his loss to the communists in the Civil War that ended in 1949. But also like Sun, the marriage of Christian and nationalist pursuits did not last.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Western missions and the Protestant faith they introduced into China played a prominent if uncertain role in the modern nationalist strivings of its people. They also inspired a dream—one that was quite separate from that of the Western evangelists who had dedicated themselves to conquering China for Christ.⁸¹ But the Chinese dream of transforming Christianity into a vital force for nation-building was no closer to reality than that of the missionaries. In the first half of the twentieth century, those visionaries who had turned to the Protestant religion in search of political dynamism as well as Western support for China's nationalist efforts invariably found their hopes punctured. Some like Chiang Kai-shek turned back to traditional Confucian morals for guidance in the country's modern struggles, while many others looked beyond Christianity to the gospel of socialism and communism.

The outcome of the encounter between Protestant missions and the nationalist pursuits of Chinese modernizers included in this study highlights the incidental nature of that historical relationship, a theme that—in the broader context of the involvement of Western advisors in Chinese efforts since the 1600s—is discernible in Jonathan Spence's classic historical narrative *To Change China*. In the end, Chinese dreamers of a modern nation-state often "shrugged aside" (to borrow Spence's phrase) the religion that the Western missionary enterprise had packaged into its offering for China as they continued their search for an earthly paradise.⁸² To varying degrees, misplaced hopes and opportunism on both sides arose out of unusual historical circumstances, which placed Protestant missionaries and some of their prominent Westernized converts close to the center of the political and social life in modern China. They were also fed by frustrations—on the part of missionaries in the early twentieth century, the frequently lukewarm Chinese response to the Protestant message of individual salvation and, on the part of patriots under Christian influence, the constantly thwarted search for a formula or a material force that would aid China's self-strengthening and modernization.

In the post-Mao era, particularly in the aftermath of the government's violent crackdown on the June Fourth student movement of 1989,

⁸⁰ Chiang Kai-shek, *China's Destiny*, trans. Wang Chung-hui (New York: Macmillan, 1947), pp.83, 156.

⁸¹ Ironically, the nationalist awakening that missionaries helped bring about also spelled the inevitable end of foreign missions. See Fairbank, *The Missionary Enterprise*, p.17.

⁸² Spence, *To Change China*, p.33. It is to be granted that many Protestant modernizers and nation-builders retained Christian faith in their personal lives. The story of Chinese graduates and faculty of mission schools and colleges (such as Yenching University) leaving behind the religion that inspired those institutions as they journeyed into the Nationalist cause or the Communist revolution is a familiar one. See Philip West, *Yenching University and Sino-Western Relations, 1916-1952* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp.145-72; Snow, *Red Star Over China*, pp.46-7, 50-1. According to Snow, Wang Huaren, educated in a mission school in Shanghai, a pastor and a "prominent" member of the Christian community, "deserted his congregation" (possibly in the early 1930s) to join the "Reds". (He managed to fly to Yan'an in Marshal Zhang Xueliang's private airplane.) Known as "Wang the Pastor" among the communists, he was the secret contact in Xi'an who brought Snow to Yan'an in 1936. Also in this connection, the story of Wu Yaozong (Y.T. Wu), the national YMCA secretary who sought to harness Christianity to the drive toward a "new China" and who eventually embraced communism, is instructive. See Wu Yaozong (Y.T. Wu), "The Reformation of Christianity: On the Awakening of Christians," in *Documents of the Three-Self Movement: Source Materials for the Study of the Protestant Church in Communist China*, ed. Francis P. Jones, (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, 1963), pp.12-14.

⁸³ See Tony Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* (Wheaton: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1994), pp.234–35. See also David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and the Global Balance of Power* (Washington: Regnery Pub., 2003), pp.286–87. Aikman envisions a “Christianization” of China, which would channel a “benevolent” flow of its patriotism into something akin to the global imperial role that the US has assumed since World War II. According to him, a “Christianized China” would share “a common worldview” and “[cooperate] closely” with the US on many thorny global issues. See also, *ibid.*, p.17 and Yuan Zhiming, writer and ed. *Shiziji—Yesu zai Zhongguo* [The Cross—Jesus in China], film, (Petaluma: China Soul for Christ Foundation, 2003), for an overtly optimistic estimate of the influence of the “cultural Christians” since the 1990s.

⁸⁴ Ron MacMillan, “House Church Struggles with New Converts,” in *Christianity Today*, 20 August 1990. In fact, the Protestant church has never been in a position to organize support for political dissent since 1949. For a sober overview of Christianity in contemporary China, see Daniel H. Bays, “Chinese Protestant Christianity Today,” in *Religion in China Today*, ed. Daniel L. Overmyer (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁸⁵ John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China*, p.25; Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, pp.4–5.

there were rekindled hopes that Protestant Christianity would again be the beacon of democracy and civil society in China. Amidst a surge of interest in Christianity among students and other youths—spiritual heirs to the May Fourth-era patriots—some Western evangelists once again rhapsodized that Christianity offers a “leading option” in a religious solution to the problem of China.⁸³ However, the surge was soon over, as those who turned to the church for inspiration were quickly disappointed by its shunning of political activism.⁸⁴ While Protestant missions in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century China had in many ways acted as a midwife of nationalist and modernizing schemes, the opportunity for that historical role has passed. Meanwhile, Chinese nationalism—whether ebullient, distressed, confident, or petulant—has come of age. In fact, however problematic its claims to nationhood and however unsettled it remains in its “hybrid form” (as Prasenjit Duara and John Fitzgerald have reminded us),⁸⁵ for the country’s ruling party, “nationalism may be the only belief that can maintain China’s unity and stability in a time of tumultuous change”.⁸⁶ In the foreseeable future, as China’s quest for power, prestige, and progress depends on an increasingly broad and resourceful—and decidedly secular—engagement with the outside world, there is little chance that Western Christianity will ever enter the dreams of architects of a future China again.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Lin Zhibo, deputy director of the commentary department at the *People’s Daily*, as quoted in “China Commentator Urges Tougher Line Against Japan,” Reuters, 3 January 2006, in *China Defense Forum* <<http://www.sinodefenceforum.com/military-history/china-commentator-urges-tougher-line-against-japan-1145.html>>

/viewed 25 March 2008.

⁸⁷ Whether or not a Christianity of the masses—as opposed to that of the elites—can inspire violent political and social changes in the tradition of the Taiping Rebellion is a question which lies beyond the scope of this article and which awaits a different study.

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