

Silent Messengers: Visualizing the Growth of Christianity in China by Chinese Christian Posters,  
1927-1942

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**Abstract**

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Christians in China experienced both the hopefulness and the hopelessness in 1930s China. The re-establishment of the Nanjing government in 1927 partially alleviated the fierce anti-Christian sentiments prevalent in China. Having recognized the daunting circumstance which Christianity in China was in, Christians needed a more practical approach to ensuring the growth of Christianity in China. They might also try to apply Christianity in responding to social changes in China. Based on Chinese Christian posters as central sources and other archives of mission societies in China as supporting sources, this thesis analyzes how Chinese Christian visual materials supported Christians to build the Christian community in China. It argues that Christian posters, unifying strength of foreign missionaries and Chinese converts, brought Christianity to the Chinese and

brought the Chinese to a broader Christian world. The thesis considers Chinese Christian posters the product of collaboration between Chinese converts and foreign missionaries, suggesting the cooperation between Chinese culture and Christian culture. By product, it means that Chinese Christian posters promoted mission work in China and helped cultivate a Christian spirit among the Chinese, and they also introduced Chinese culture to the worldwide Christian community and then increased diversity of Christianity.

But he was not yet to have peace for his work. While he had been living out his zestful days, another storm was rising out of the south, the storm of China's last and greatest revolution... so as the new revolution swept up from the south and knotted itself into central China and expanded again down the Yangtze River, Andrew regarded it without fear and indeed this time with something of indifference.<sup>1</sup>

Pearl Buck, *Fighting Angel* (1936)

Pearl Buck never gave this "last and greatest revolution" a real name in her book. However, she did provide hints for her readers to define this south-originating revolution as the Northern Expedition, a revolution organized by the Nationalist Party and targeting both warlords and western imperialism, within which foreigners became main targets. As she said in her father's biographical narrative, *Fighting Angel*, some missionaries in China did not take the revolution seriously. But Buck, a missionary wife in China with her husband and family, worried about their safety during the Northern Expedition. Soon after its initial success, the Northern Expedition forces attacked and occupied Christian churches. The soldiers mistreated westerners and left them with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Not only were mission schools and hospitals forced to close, but also over five thousand of over eight thousand Protestant missionaries were exiled from China.<sup>2</sup> And for Buck, this revolution changed her view of China from the home where she was born and raised into a strange land. This anti-Christian wave, in a historical sense, caused a massive exodus of missionaries leaving China, "a blow from which the missions never fully recovered."<sup>3</sup>

However risky and fragile mission work in China was after the Northern Expedition, Christianity was never absent from China. Why is that? This research explores the contribution of Chinese Christian posters to enlarging Christianity's presence in Republican China (1912-1949). Why did posters become popular in the 1930s, how did they convey Christian message, and how

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<sup>1</sup> Pearl Buck, *Fighting Angel* (New York: Pocket Books Inc, 1934), 176-177.

<sup>2</sup> Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

did they impact Christian missions in China? This paper argues that Christian posters, unifying strength of both foreign missionaries and Chinese converts, brought Christianity to the Chinese and brought the Chinese to a broader Christian world. The long-continued wars and anti-Christian feelings had destroyed these evangelical achievements. Christians in China considered posters, the silent preachers, reliable replacement of missionaries to attract the Chinese people's attention and to introduce Christianity to the Chinese. Most of the posters were not expensive, kept by using cheaper paper and large production runs.<sup>4</sup> Many denominations participated in printing posters for preaching, including the Anglican Church in China and the China Inland Mission. Several nondenominational pressing houses also joined in the printing work and assisted Christians in conveying teachings in China. Meanwhile, some printers recruited both foreign and Chinese staff to produce Christian materials more suitable to the Chinese context. The Religious Tract Society in China (followingly referred to as the Society), where posters in this paper are from, can be an example of pressing houses without specific denominations. The designs of posters were deeply rooted in Chinese culture in order to incite Chinese people's familiarity to Christianity. In turn, posters transmitted the worldview of a welcoming Christian community to the converts. The popularity of posters also transported Chinese culture to the world and increased the portion of Chinese Christian art among the Christian community.

Researching Chinese Christian posters is a new topic in both the fields of Christian arts and Christianity in China. First, this project can enrich scholars' understanding of Christian arts. Many scholars have noticed that Protestantism holds an ambiguous position to usages of images in religious activities. David Morgan demonstrates a "Protestant anxiety about images" based on arguments of John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli, that "true faith was free from images."<sup>5</sup> But Martin

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<sup>4</sup> "Posters," Chinese Christian Posters, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://ccposters.com/poster/>.

<sup>5</sup> David Morgan, *The Forge of Vision: A Visual History of Modern Christianity* (Oakland: University of California

Luther, as Morgan acknowledges, welcomed images in Protestant propaganda and demonstrated that imagery could be helpful to illustrate and better understand faith.<sup>6</sup> Sandy Brewer also heightens Protestant dependence on images in religious education by arguing that a picture, *the Hope of the World*, aroused British missionaries' attention to local children's education and Sunday schools. The picture also presented an internationalist idea teaching world friendship and respecting various races.<sup>7</sup> However, scholars focus more on European and North American Protestant pictures. Researching Chinese Protestant posters will rouse scholars' attention to East Asian Protestant artwork by evincing that Christians in China advocated using images in mission work. It will broaden scholarly understanding of a Protestant view of religious images, that in addition to Christians in Europe and North America, the Chinese Christian community recognized the indispensability of images in proselytizing and preaching.

Scholars of Chinese Christian arts focus more on Catholic arts and especially Fu Jen artists. By using the Catholic Fu Jen University of Beijing as an example, Mary Lawson argues that Catholic painters in China considered pedagogy the primary role of Catholic paintings and followed Chinese social values in illustrating biblical stories and Christian elements.<sup>8</sup> Jeremy Clark argues that under the Vatican's policy of accommodation, Fu Jen artists expected to use images for expressing Christianity in a Chinese way, that figures in images are in Chinese dress, and flowers and plants are based on the Chinese understanding of nature.<sup>9</sup> Zhao Xiaoyang notes

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Press, 2015), 97-98.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>7</sup> Sandy Brewer, "From Darkest England to the Hope of the World: Protestant Pedagogy and the Visual Culture of the London Missionary Society," *Material Religion* 1, no. 1 (January 2005): 115, <https://www.tandfonline.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/doi/abs/10.2752/174322005778054500>.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Lawson, "A Unique Style in China: Chinese Christian Painting in Beijing," *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995): 474-475, [https://www.jstor.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/40727076?sid=primo&seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/40727076?sid=primo&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents).

<sup>9</sup> Jeremy Clark, *The Virgin Mary and Catholic Identities in Chinese History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University press, 2013), 178-179.

that Protestant missionaries were less fervent in introducing fine arts to China, leading to a shortage of Protestant artwork in China.<sup>10</sup> This statement is partly due to the reality that Protestants do not come to a uniform conclusion regarding how to use images in religious propaganda and how to accommodate Christian culture to local cultures. However, the existence of Chinese Christian posters challenges Zhao's statement of Protestants' lack of interest in fine arts. Besides correcting scholars' ideas that Protestants were not active in creating artwork, a project on Chinese Protestant posters can develop scholars' insufficient analysis on Christians' intention to adapt Christian arts to Chinese culture. For example, the parable of the prodigal son rarely occurs in Chinese Catholic paintings but was first drawn in Chinese Protestant posters in Late Imperial China and re-edited in a more modern style in Republican China, as Figure 1 below indicates.<sup>11</sup> This difference suggests that Protestant artists were different from Catholics in evaluating Chinese values. Catholic painters highlighted the significance of filial piety in Chinese morality, while Protestant painters were more eager to present the preciousness of seeing a person returning to righteousness from immorality.

Second, this research can move scholars' attention to research communities transcending the boundaries of nations between Christians. Previous scholarship in Chinese Christianity has implied a division between studies on Christianity/Christians in China and mission history in China. Lian Xi and Ryan Dunch heighten the significant role of local Christian groups in elevating Christianity's place in Chinese society and flourishing the Gospel in China.<sup>12</sup> Other scholars such as Lawrence Kessler, Wei Shuge, and James Thomson label missionaries as peacemakers pacifying local conflicts and the main foreign force devoting themselves to save and revive China during the

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<sup>10</sup> Zhao Xiaoyang, "Rejuvenation after Encounters between Different Artistic Forms: A Synopsis of Studies of Indigenization of Christian Art in China," *Journal of modern Chinese history* 8, no. 2 (2014): 264, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17535654.2014.960153>.

<sup>11</sup> Lawson, "A Unique Style in China," 475.

<sup>12</sup> Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 12. Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants: The Making of a Modern China, 1857-1927* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), xvii-xviii.

wartime.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, studying Chinese Christian posters designed by both foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians creates an atmosphere of researching a union of foreigners and the Chinese and thus provides a more comprehensive image of Christianity in the Republican era. Joseph Ho discusses that visual materials can even bring Catholics and Protestants together to understand “Christian visual practices in modern China as a broad historical experience in its own right.”<sup>14</sup> Chinese Christian posters have similar importance in offering an inclusive perspective to study the collaboration between foreign missionaries and Chinese converts in evangelizing China. For example, annual reports of the Society recorded that Chai Lien-fu and Joshua Vale had been co-workers in the Society over twenty years.<sup>15</sup> Also, the Society sent some Chinese posters to overseas Christians and so enhanced the appearance of Chinese Christian churches. The international transportation of posters suggested the inclusiveness of the world Christian community welcoming the Chinese. It helped shape a concept of a world community encouraging Chinese Christians to join in. This research shows that Christian posters exemplify an attempt to study Chinese Christianity in an inclusive sense stressing collaboration between foreigners and Chinese people. Based on the fact that both Chinese and foreign artists contributed to designing posters, this paper analyzes how the gathering of Christians inside and outside China served to expand the presence of Christianity in China and presenting China’s voice to the world.

Mission work in China began to grow in the mid-nineteenth century, when the Qing court

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<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Kessler, *The Jiangyin Mission Station: An American Missionary Community in China, 1895–1951* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 65. Wei Shuge, *News Under Fire: China's Propaganda against Japan in the English-Language Press, 1928-1941* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017), 199. James Thomson, *While China Faced West: American Reformers in Nationalist China, 1928-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 77 and 169.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Ho, “Cameras and Conversions: Crossing Boundaries in American Catholic Missionary Experience and Photography in Modern China,” *U.S. Catholic Historians* 34, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 97, <https://muse-jhu-edu.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/article/621043>.

<sup>15</sup> *The 1929-30 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1930), 30.

signed unequal treaties after the Opium War and subsequent wars. These treaties marked the Qing court's official permission for missionaries' presence nationwide. Although under the protection of their home nations, missionaries in China confronted several challenges. In 1900, the Boxer Uprising, which expressed hatred towards the presence of foreigners in China, attacked both missionaries and Chinese converts. This wave of anti-foreign sentiment urged missionaries to cultivate Chinese Christian leaders and transmit the control over churches to the hands of the Chinese. In the 1910s, Christians, inspired by the Social Gospel to "make Christianity relevant to China's modern struggles," infused Christianity into experiments of building a Republican China and so deepened the impact of Christianity in China.<sup>16</sup>

In the late 1910s and 1920s, the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement ushered another wave of fierce anti-Christian sentiment, challenging missionary enterprises in China. Under the enlightenment of new terms like imperialism, Chinese intellectuals accused missionaries of cooperating with imperialism and being part of cultural imperialism.<sup>17</sup> The Christian educational and medical institutions were condemned as tools "to facilitate imperialist economic and political control by making the Chinese people docile."<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, missionaries faced challenges within themselves and required a more effective way to spread the Gospel in China. Hu Shi pointed out that the internal weakness in disciples' bodies were troubling Christian workers in China.<sup>19</sup> Missionaries in the 1920s, unlike their predecessors in the late nineteenth

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<sup>16</sup> Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 121.

<sup>17</sup> 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: Stanford University Press, 1996), 294.

<sup>18</sup> Ryan Dunch, "Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity," *History and Theory* 41, no. 3 (October 2002): 314-315, [https://www-jstor-org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/3590688?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www-jstor-org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/3590688?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents).

<sup>19</sup> Hu Shi 胡适, "The Present Crisis in Christian Education" in *A Collection of Hu Shi's English Writings*, ed. Zhou Zhiping 周质平 (Taipei: Yuan-Liou Publishing Company, 1995), 435.

century, were less determined in proselytizing the country. Consistent anti-Christian waves and internal challenges weakened the expansion of Christianity in China. By 1949, as less than 1 percent of the Chinese people became Christians, Protestant missionaries' century-long efforts at converting China failed.<sup>20</sup>

This paper has three sections. Following the introduction, the first section analyzes the background of Chinese Christian posters. It examines the dilemma that the Society encountered both outside and inside China, including Nationalist government's regulations, the establishment and development of the Communist Party, and the Great Depression in the U.S. The second section analyzes the posters' role in evangelizing China and designers' endeavors of connecting Chinese culture to Christian values. It explores in what ways posters displayed Christians' awareness of accommodating to Chinese culture. The third section discusses the posters' function of inviting China into the world Christian community. It examines how posters helped bring voice of Chinese Christians to the world and gather up Christians regardless of their nation of origin. Therefore, this paper considers Chinese Christian posters the product of collaboration between Chinese converts and foreign missionaries, suggesting the connections between Chinese culture and Christian culture, and between the Chinese people and peoples of the world. By product, it means that Chinese Christian posters promoted mission work in China and helped cultivate the Christian spirit among the Chinese. Posters also introduced Chinese culture to the worldwide Christian community and then encouraged Chinese Christians to speak to the world through the medium of Christianity.

### ***The Background of Chinese Christian Posters***

The 1930s and 1940s were both troubling and promising for Christian mission work in China. Christians encountered challenges and opportunities in both China and the U.S. The re-

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<sup>20</sup> John Fairbank, "Introduction: Many Faces of Protestant Missions in China and the United States," in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 1.

organization of the Nationalist Party did not affirm a welcoming attitude towards Christianity, but suggested fewer distractions and gave Christians new chances to participate in Chinese society, such as facilitating modern education and rural developments. The proliferation of Communist thoughts also caused missionaries to find an appropriate method to deal with Communist thoughts of religion. Meanwhile, Christian missions confronted challenges in the U.S. The Great Depression during the 1930s resulted in the reduction of financial support for overseas missions. And the development of modern scientific thoughts and Consumerism led to a religious depression and a decreasing number of new missionaries.

This section provides a general background of what problems Christians were confronting during the decade of 1930-1940 and analyzes under what circumstances Christian posters became common in extending evangelical work. It argues that opportunities and troubles that Christians faced in the U.S. and China pushed Chinese converts and foreign missionaries to unite with the other and utilize Christian posters as a practical approach for deepening evangelization in China. Christian posters in particular helped the spread of evangelical work in China.

#### *A Background of the Religious Tract Society in China*

Before digging out in what context Christian posters were produced, a little information about the leading Christian poster printer---the Religious Tract Society in China is shown below. The 1924-25 report tracked the course of the Society in China and reiterated its motto. Christians had realized the significance of applying literature to promoting Christian teachings as early as Jesuits worked in China. Protestant missionaries founded Christian publishing companies soon after they began pouring into China in the 1840s. In 1867 the total Christian literature in Chinese surpassed six hundred books and kept increasing.<sup>21</sup> Although the amount of publications steadily increased,

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<sup>21</sup> *The 1924-25 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1925), 1.

no central organizations focused on book distribution until the first Central China Religious Tract Society was built in Hankou in 1876, supported by the London Religious Tract Society and the American Religious Tract Society. Two years later, the Chinese Religious Tract Society was established in Shanghai. Together with the Hankou Society, the two societies replaced individual publishers that were prevalent decades before to print and distribute Christian literature around China. The annual circulation of the Hankou Society amounted to 340, 475 in 1883, compared with 9,000 in 1876.<sup>22</sup>

Due to high demands of circulation, the Society formed several sub-societies during and after the 1880s, which eventually merged into the Religious Tract Society for China in the 1920s. The newly-united Society had its headquarters and printing office in Hankou and its depot office in Shanghai, with its regional committees in Shenyang and Tianjin. Later in 1931 it was annexed by their parent company in London, changing its name to the Religious Tract Society in China. In 1934, a new union covering Christian literature work in China, India, and Africa was formulated under the United Society for Christian Literature. The association of work foretold the coalition of forces and resources. Eminent editors joined in establishing churches in China and brought more biblical teachings and writings about Christian doctrines.<sup>23</sup> Multiple amalgamations indicated an unstable social context in China, that the economic shortage and difficulties in maintaining separate depots forced the Society to close some local offices and concentrate their personnel.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Christian Missions under the Rule of the Nationalist Party*

The establishment of Chiang's Nanjing regime in 1927 symbolized a new stage in the

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<sup>22</sup> *The 1936-37 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1937), 18.

<sup>23</sup> *The 1934-35 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1935), 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 20. Also see *The 1924-25 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China*, 9.

relationship between the Chinese government and Christianity. Even if anti-Christian sentiment during the Northern Expedition somehow had declined, the debate against Christian activities remained hot during the Nanjing Decade and undermined the presence of Christianity in China. Nationalist officials never had a single unified attitude towards Christianity despite the shared idea that Christianity helped build a modern China. The relatively high percentage of Christian leaders in the Nationalist government were unable to promise political support for Christians in their quest of evangelizing China. The concept that "religion should always be kept apart" influenced many of the Nationalist leaders, including T.V. Soong, whose father was a Methodist missionary, but who denied the possibility for Christianity to maintain an intimate relationship with the government. For T.V. Soong, religious faith was not supposed to be linked to governance.<sup>25</sup> He used Sun Yet-san, the founding father of the Republic of China, to illustrate that even a pious Christian like Sun held an ambiguous attitude towards the political role of Christianity, and so the Nationalist government should keep Christianity away from national governance.

Even with the rejection among officials of offering political support to missionaries, Nedostup acknowledges the existence of officials who were willing to cooperate with Christianity. Chiang Kai-shek converted to Christianity before he married Soong Mayling in 1927. This marriage, "the foundation of the Revolution" for Chiang, aroused missionaries' expectations for a better condition in China "based on mutual fairness and equity."<sup>26</sup> Chiang's conversion expressed his conciliatory attitude towards Christianity, that to a manageable degree of freedom, Christian institutions and believers could be trusted for seeking the aid of western governments against Japan and stabilizing

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<sup>25</sup> Rebecca Nedostup, "*Religion, Superstition, and Governing Society in Nationalist China*" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2001), 62-63.

<sup>26</sup> John Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom: America and China, 1776 to the Present* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2016), 202-203.

his new regime.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Chiang was cautious with Christianity's impact on education, and enacted a policy that Christian educational institutions should register in the government and embrace the "Three People Principles" in their curriculum.<sup>28</sup> The Nationalist Party implemented new religious policies to control and collaborate with Christianity soon after it was re-established in Nanjing. In December 1929, church leaders and the government achieved an agreement that the government would permit church property and confessional education as long as churches were under the government's control. Several Christian organizations, such as the Young Men's Christian Association (the YMCA), were supervised by the government in terms of members' activities in order to prevent the Christian "cultural invasion."<sup>29</sup> Christian missions enjoyed limited freedom from the Nationalist Party. The government supervision and regulation allowed "legal" Christians activities. And the church received protection and justification to continue its evangelical work, develop its educational system, and fulfill the mission to make disciples in China.

Meanwhile, those who loyally supported Christianity and called for the official protection of Christianity were active. In 1928, the Central Political Council (*Zhongyang zhengzhi huiyi*, 中央政治会议), which was the link between the Party and the government and the highest policy-making body, received a proposal of restoring religious freedom from two officials, Niu Yongjian and Zhang Zhijiang.<sup>30</sup> The proposal argued that Christianity in China barely had relations to

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<sup>27</sup> Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye, "Gospel Light or Imperialist Poison: Controversies of the Christian Community in China, 1922-55," in *Routledge Handbook of Revolutionary China*, ed. Alan Baumler (New York: Routledge, 2020), 126.

<sup>28</sup> Nedostup, "*Religion*," 66.

<sup>29</sup> As noted in the Introduction, "Cultural invasion" is a term used to condemn missionaries' tendency to practice imperialism in China. On the ground of Ryan Dunch's observation, the concept of cultural imperialism, however prevalent in China in the 1920s, was ambiguous and not precise. "Cultural Invasion" and "Spiritual Aggression" were used to describe missionaries' religious aggression to Chins in an imperialist sense as well.

<sup>30</sup> Nedostup, "*Religion*," 103. It is hard to tell whether or not Niu and Zhang were Christians. But their proposal did imply a tendency in the Nationalist government to abolish the anti-Christian activities by arguing the revolutionary nature of Christianity to the Chinese society.

imperialism. Instead, Chinese Christianity stood with the lower level of Chinese people, promoting social equality, freedom, and universal love among the Chinese people.<sup>31</sup> Circulating within the Nationalist Party at a specific time when Chiang was considering relaxing restrictions on western influence in China, the proposal implied an official end of anti-Christian sentiment. Based on this, the YMCA received a promise from the government, indicating that the non-Christian Chinese should not attack Christianity when they attacked imperialism.<sup>32</sup> By emphasizing the revolutionary nature of Christianity and its positive impact on Chinese society, this proposal marked a seeming normalization of Christian activities in China and an emerging connection between the government and Christians.

In the New Life Movement particularly, a Nationalist movement for building a modern and unified national spirit, Christian characteristics such as hardship, endurance, and suffering appeared to be what Nationalist officials were in need of and what the Nationalist's spiritual reconstruction sought. Madame Chiang was the central figure advocating that Christianity was able to support the Chinese with a national spirituality and describing Christians as Nationalists' comrades in realizing life improvement in China. The 1938-1939 yearbook published her article introducing the "New Life" in China, in which she praised a harmony between the government of China and the Christians. Christians' participation in the New Life Movement embedded their engagement "in the foundation of reforms upon which will a new, a rich, enlightened, and a powerful China."<sup>33</sup>

### *The Trouble of the Communist ideas*

In addition to the contentious relationship with the Nationalist government, Christians were

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>33</sup> Mayling Soong Chiang 宋美齡, "New Life in China's Resistance," in *The China Christian Year Book, 1938-1939*, ed. Timothy Tingfang Lew, John Barr, and F. R. Millican (Shanghai: Christian Literature Society, 1940), 87.

aware of the threat of Communism as well. Before 1930, the Chinese Communist Party did not refuse the religious belief, which partly facilitated an alliance between Communists and Christians organizing their labor movements. Communists were willing to work with religious adherents as long as Christians were beneficial to them.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, the condition changed in the late 1920s when the First United Front between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party collapsed. The Society first reported the potential threat of Communism in the 1926-27 annual report, that some articles such as “Bolshevik Doctrines and Christians Principles” were found besmirching Christianity.<sup>35</sup> After the separation between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party, Communists imitated the labels of the Society and utilized them as covers for Communist anti-Nanjing propaganda. This incident finally resulted in an official ban on the Society’s literature distribution for two months.<sup>36</sup>

Christian yearbooks published in the 1930s increasingly described the Communist violence in China as an emerging problem for Christian property in China. *The 1930-31 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China* described the communist outbreak in Jiangxi Province, that “the Communist Party's activities in China after its repudiation by the Guomindang have been, as a whole, very successful.”<sup>37</sup> The cruel attacks of Communists against Christianity nonetheless troubled Christians due to the Communist policy of confiscating religious buildings. The redistribution campaigns empowered the Communist Party to take over ancestral temples and Christian churches and redistribute to the landless peasants. Various mission societies in Jiangxi

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<sup>34</sup> Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 140.

<sup>35</sup> *The 1926-27 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1927), 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>37</sup> *The 1930-31 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1931), 4.

were reportedly attacked by Communist “terrorism, brutality, lust, and cruelty,” which were considered by Christians a part of Communists attracting (or forcing) people to join the party.<sup>38</sup> Beyond the challenge of Communism to the church, Christians considered Communism a challenge to the nation, since the vicious Communist movement resulted in chaos and vindictiveness.<sup>39</sup> The violent Communist activities would harm the nation. Therefore, it was Christianity’s responsibility to arouse the national consciousness by using the Christian press to indicate that the sight of God was able to recover the depravity of people’s hearts.

The ideological conflicts between Christianity and Communism caused troubles for Christians as well. The Communist Party propagated Christianity as a devil for Chinese people and reportedly condemned that "the progress of Christianity is due to the support it has given to imperialistic government methods," a prevent teaching that the Communists learned from Russia.<sup>40</sup> From the Christian standpoint, however, these people who accepted the Communist accusation against Christianity of invading China were without historical knowledge.<sup>41</sup> It was essential to advertise the positive image of Christianity among the Chinese and demonstrate that Christians had no reason to challenge the stability of China. Communists not only distributed literature condemning Christianity but also competed with Christianity in attracting China’s youth. Communism provided a solution to China's problems, "commanding the attention and serious study of many students."<sup>42</sup> The Chinese students, including those who had a Christian-educated or a Nationalist background, were full of Communism in their minds and believed that Communism was a good movement for China.<sup>43</sup> Having recognized the Communist Party's

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Thomson, *While China Faced West*, 79.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 83.

attractiveness to students, Christians launched competitions with Communism over winning Chinese students. An article on *The Chinese Recorder* said that the Chinese youth "helped determine China's destiny" and needed leadership to organize their energy and spirit.<sup>44</sup> The loose and unprocessed organization of the Chinese youth would reduce their opportunities to win. It was Christianity that became an inspiring cause enabling "the Chinese youth to realize the meaning of its own life with insuring China's all-round progress towards a higher level of living."<sup>45</sup> Christians acknowledged that they ought to protect their achievements from being destroyed by the Communist Party and seek a method to heighten their appeal to the youth of China and recruit them into the Christian camp.

### *Depressions in America*

From the late 1920s to the early 1930s, the Christian mission also confronted a crisis in the U.S. The religious depression impacted the overseas mission work by reducing donations to foreign missionary programs, partially due to the increasing influence of modernism and scientific teachings. The Great Depression in the 1930s engendered economic deterioration, decreased living quality, and reduced mission funding and missionaries' salaries.

Several scholars have argued that the Great Depression was a significant cause of the religious depression, but Robert Handy is a harbinger dividing spiritual depression and the economic collapse in 1930s America. For Handy, the religious depression had emerged in the 1920s within the Protestant churches, with the phenomenon of severe decline in missionary enthusiasm and convictions.<sup>46</sup> The youth of the U.S. were negatively affected by the disillusion of the Social Gospel generated by scientism. In other words, scientism caused the American youth to forget

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<sup>44</sup> "Chinese Youth Needs a Lead," *The Chinese Recorder* 66 (January 1935): 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Handy, "The American Religious Depression, 1925-1935," *Church History* 29, no. 1 (March 1960): 4, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/3161613?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/3161613?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents).

religious words such as "sin" and "love". A master's thesis in 1929 admitted the decline of donations to missionary societies. From 1917 to 1927, social gifts to missions increased only by 10%, in comparison with the amount in saving banks grew by 300% and with the amount of autos rose by 400%.<sup>47</sup> The reason for this terrifying reduction was that the appeal of the mission declined. It was the increasing criticism on missionary boards and the spread of modern scientific thoughts that reduced the attractiveness of overseas missions in people's minds. Modernism also caused people to lose confidence in the church, so they no longer supported overseas evangelical programs.

The exile of Christians from China and the destruction of Christian churches caused by the Northern Expedition did not recover when the Great Depression started in 1929.<sup>48</sup> Mission conditions worsened in the 1930s. The annual reports of the Society for China from 1929 to 1935 demonstrated how the Great Depression shrunk the churches' grants to China's Christian mission. In the yearbook 1929-1930, the denominations donated \$6949.44 in total. The grant number rose to \$10312 in 1930-1931. Unfortunately, the societies' contribution showed a sharp decrease to \$2628.96 in 1932-1933. In the year of 1933, the contribution declined to \$963.56. The declining financial support from churches challenged the missionaries' situation in China. The mission work, such as publications, educational institutions, and hospitals, all relied on societies' financial support. The decrease of funding compelled Christians to rethink the diverse mission programs that they had in China and stalled evangelical progress.

Furthermore, the Great Depression caused a lack of foreign Christian workers in China. Due to the shortage of financial support, dozens of missionaries who were back in the U.S. for furlough could not make their way back to China.<sup>49</sup> The reduced number of missionaries in China, as the

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<sup>47</sup> Benjamin Pearson, "*The Causes of the Decline in Contributions to the Missionary Enterprise in Certain Protestant Churches*" (Thesis., University of Southern California, 1929), 11.

<sup>48</sup> Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 96.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

Society observed, suggested no reason for Christianity reaching its former strength before the Northern Expedition.<sup>50</sup> In this sense, Christians in China faced domestic problems too. The lack of finance and human resources urged Christians to seek a way to unify existing powers in China, so as to avoid their mission work in China from being influenced by the conditions.

Hence, the Nanjing Decade and the subsiding anti-Christian sentiment in China did not ensure missionaries a field empty of challenges. The debates on anti-Christian activities in the Nationalist Party, the contradictory interests with the Communist Party, and the economic collapse back in the U.S., all distracted Christian work in China. Meanwhile, those Nationalist officials speaking for Christianity and the invitation of Madame Chiang all helped to convince Christians that China would welcome them to help China in constructing modernity. Due to the Great Depression, the shortage of money was another difficulty for Christians. The continued unrest in China and the world alarmed the Society about the necessity of inculcating Christian doctrines to the masses and spreading the usage of Christian publications.<sup>51</sup> Lian Xi has demonstrated that the anti-foreignism not only aroused a spirit of independence among Chinese converts but also alerted foreign missionaries of creating “seemingly Chinese institutions” within “guidance and control” of western missions.<sup>52</sup> This paper displays that rather than dividing foreigner and Chinese converts, events in 1930s China enhanced the connections between foreign Christians and Chinese Christians. The Society, as an example, proclaimed the practice of tying Chinese people and foreigners to devote to maintaining the presence of churches in China. Regardless of nationality, the Society staff unified to print and circulate materials around the country for transporting the

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<sup>50</sup> *The 1927-28 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1928), 4.

<sup>51</sup> *The 1925-26 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1926), 12.

<sup>52</sup> Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 40-41.

Gospel to more Chinese non-Christians.

Driven by the desire of winning the Chinese people and proclaiming Christianity's advantages for the country, the Society staff increasingly recognized how crucial it was to use tracts and posters in religious propaganda for establishing the Kingdom of God in China. Posters answered how to expand Christianity in an unstable China, that replacing Christian individuals by materials of Christian propaganda. Sending posters and other publications to particularly dangerous regions reduced the risks challenging the personnel. Posters, hung on the wall and seen by the masses, could transmit Christian teachings to more people passing them and thus boost China's mission work. The visual Evangelism Committee was jointly formed by the Society and the China Inland Mission in 1927. Grounded on its motto, "through the eye to the heart," the Committee regarded illustrating biblical stories and Christian teachings in a Chinese way as its mission. Posters enabled Christians to either interpret or imagine Christian teachings in a visual approach. Christians among various denominations and nations were "again united in one band in the country for special evangelism."<sup>53</sup> The Christian poster nurtured this unity and led people in finding Christ.

### ***Implanting Christianity in China***

Grounded on its primary objective to assist evangelical work in Chinese lands that had yet to be evangelized, the Society treasured the devotion of Chinese native staff and was aware of responding to upheavals in China. Since its beginning, staff working in the Society was composed of half foreigners and half Chinese and expected to "secure the publications of really valuable books, tracts, and periodicals in the Chinese language."<sup>54</sup> Thanks to this foreign-Chinese collaboration, the Society was able to print literature, attract visitors to churches, and "bring the

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<sup>53</sup> *The 1928-29 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1929), 11.

<sup>54</sup> *The 1937-38 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1938), 7.

Chinese to a saving belief in Christ."<sup>55</sup> For implanting the seed of Christianity in the Chinese soil, the Society considered itself an organization built on the cooperation between foreigners and local converts, inserting Chinese cultural factors into publications and expanding Christian teachings among the Chinese.

The Society's extant posters evinced its attempt of assimilating Chinese cultural factors in the production. Not only are figures in most of the posters in the Chinese custom, but also the usage of color is according to the Chinese perception, red representing fortunate and black representing wariness. The Chinese-style posters fulfilled their mission of attracting the Chinese. Hundreds of people reportedly surrounded posters, which surprised Christians since some Christians had never seen such an impressive array of posters.<sup>56</sup> This section selects several posters and explores how Christian posters reflected Chinese elements in preaching work. It argues that posters, reflecting the unification of foreigners and Chinese people, helped introduce Christianity to the Chinese by illustrating the Bible according to Chinese arts, cooperating Christian doctrines with Chinese social culture, and visualizing the outcomes of converting to the Christian belief for the Chinese.

#### *Illustrating the Bible in the Chinese artist style*

One essential role that posters played in preaching activities was to visualize biblical texts and enable people to imagine scenarios in Scripture. The question for editors was how to design these stories so as to rouse Chinese people's attention and elevate Chinese people's familiarity with Christianity. Christian artists expressed Christianity based on Chinese arts and determined to create Chinese aesthetic visualizations of the Bible. They sought inspiration from Chinese traditional arts and set biblical stories in the Chinese background.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *The 1934-35 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China*, 17.

Figure 1-2 originate from the parable of the lost son in Luke 15:11-32, through which Jesus tells the people around him that a person who has changed from evil ways to righteousness should be celebrated.<sup>57</sup> A return of a lost person is like a dead person coming back to life. The original meaning of the parable is to claim that the conversion to Christianity of a human being is worth more celebration than those who are already and have always been righteous. In order to portray this parable in a traditional Chinese style, Christian artists designed figures in the Chinese appearance which are different from the original biblical version. The story happens in a Chinese backdrop, where the household is decorated in the Chinese fashion, with a red-yellow table cloth and a wooden tea table. Thus, this poster conveyed to Chinese readers a scenario that an old Chinese father expresses thankfulness that his son has returned to become a moral person, and a young Chinese man who is previously prodigal awakens to be righteous.



Figure 1: Prodigal Son 1.

Source: <https://ccposters.com/poster/prodigal-son-1/>



Figure 2: Prodigal Son 2.

Source: <https://ccposters.com/poster/prodigal-son-2/>

As mentioned in the Introduction, Mary Lawson demonstrates Chinese Catholic painters'

<sup>57</sup> See Chinese transcription and English translation of figures in Appendix.

reluctance of illustrating the prodigal son, due to the parable’s inadaptability to Chinese filial piety. Jeremy Clark partially develops Lawson’s argument by stating that one Catholic painter has drawn this parable in a Chinese way since the emphasis of Chinese Catholic paintings was on Catholic teachings rather than Confucian filial piety.<sup>58</sup> But Protestant posters and multiple revisions of this parable indicated that in comparison with the Confucian value, Protestant artists valued more the parable’s pedagogical power upon Chinese non-Christians. Furthermore, a Chinese phrase, that “repentance of a prodigal son is more precious than gold (*Langzi huitou jinbuhuan*, 浪子回头金不换), is a similar narrative of a return of an immoral Chinese son after losing himself in wastefulness. In this sense, the parable is compatible with Chinese culture. It was reasonable for Protestant artists to locate this parable in a Chinese backdrop and arouse Chinese readers’ familiar feelings to the story.

Figure 3 is another powerful example demonstrating the ties of Christian posters to Chinese



traditions. Inspired by Romans 5:8, “but God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us,” this poster explained for the Chinese the mission of Jesus to evince God’s love for humanity that has His son die for the sins of humanity. The original meaning of this phrase is to claim Jesus’s role in this world, that Jesus corrects the sin of human beings caused by Adam and reconciles human beings’ relationship to God. From the biblical perception, artists applied this poster to state the fullness of Jesus’ sacrifice for human beings, which “enacted the divine purpose” and through which

Figure 3: The Substitute

Source: <https://ccposters.com/poster/the-substitute/>

<sup>58</sup> Clark, *The Virgin Mary and Catholic Identities in Chinese History*, 186.

justified humanities (Romans 5:9).<sup>59</sup> Moving beyond the biblical version, the designer linked the phrase to a Chinese story. As displayed on the left side of the poster, the purple robed man is captured by bandits and ready to be cooked up as food. His older brother, the man kneeling on the ground, is begging the bandits, who are holding lances and knives, to release his brother and eat him instead. Touched by the brotherhood and the brother's righteousness, bandits release them both without hurting them. By adding this Chinese story, artists employed a Chinese description of righteousness and brotherhood to deepen readers' understanding of Jesus' death for people. This poster revealed to the Chinese that Jesus is like the brave older brother who is willing to sacrifice Himself for His brothers and to die for His brothers.

Posters therefore shortened Chinese readers' distance from Christianity and illustrated religious meanings in a familiar sense for the Chinese. Several Chinese reportedly shared with Christians that they were able to understand Christianity more clearly after reading posters.<sup>60</sup> These posters successfully peeled off Christianity's foreign shell. Some Christians in history had noticed that Christian literature in China was "too foreign in its expression, illustration, and method of presentation," but posters demonstrated Christians' endeavors of making the Christian belief more acceptable to the Chinese by placing it in a Chinese setting.<sup>61</sup> Portraying pictures corresponding to the Chinese lifestyle, as Figure 1 suggested above, enabled the Chinese to read the Bible as a story happening near them. So they could better imagine the Christian message expressed in posters. The Chinese background of posters, which reminded Chinese people of similar Chinese phrases, increased Christianity's familiarity with the Chinese and promoted the acceptance of the Christian faith for Chinese people. Tying the Bible directly to similar Chinese

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<sup>59</sup> Warren Carter and Amy-Jill Levine, *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 121-122.

<sup>60</sup> *The 1936-37 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China*, 28.

<sup>61</sup> "Christian Literature: A Symptom," *The Chinese Recorder* 56 (May 1925): 311.

stories, as Figure 3 implied above, explained to the Chinese Jesus's devotion to humanity, and so provoked their interest in Christianity. Rather than reiterating why Adam's fall represents the opening of sin to the world, the poster answered that Jesus's sacrifice for the human being is because of his righteousness and God's love for people. This attempt to interpret Jesus's sacrifice grounded on a Chinese story affected Christian's efforts in communicating the knowledge of God to Chinese culture and adapting to Chinese standards.<sup>62</sup>

Posters also evinced that Chinese readers welcomed those Christian pictures with Chinese

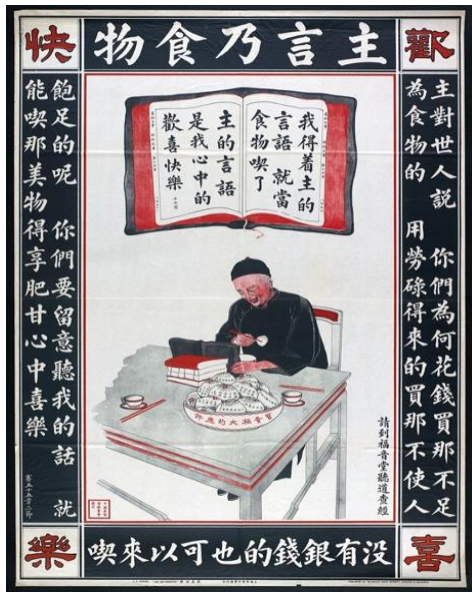


Figure 4: Joy and Rejoicing

Source: <https://ccposters.com/poster/joy-and-rejoicing/>

cultural norms. When "the number of missionaries is much smaller than it was," posters supported Christians to catch non-Christians' eyes and claimed spiritual merits.<sup>63</sup> Many Chinese were attracted by posters, leading to a renewal in the reputation of various churches. *The 1927-28 Annual Report of the Society* recorded such a testimony, that "the new posters have been to outsiders the outward and visual sign of business as usual at the Chapel," which "set forth the claims of Christ with freshness of appeal amid the changing life of the

nation...and (resulted in) a change of feeling in favor of the Church."<sup>64</sup> One evangelical worker reported that many Chinese people told him that they learned Christian life from Figure 4.<sup>65</sup> An old Chinese man is reading the Bible while eating *baozi*, a traditional Chinese food, in the center

<sup>62</sup> Li Zipeng 黎子鹏, *The Anthology of Christian Literature in Late Qing Wanqing jidujiaop xushi wenxue xuancui* 晚清基督教敘事文學選粹 (Sin-pak:: Olive Press, 2012), iii.

<sup>63</sup> "Religious Tract Society," *The Chinese Recorder* 59 (February 1929): 135-136.

<sup>64</sup> *The 1927-28 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China*, 17.

<sup>65</sup> *The 1928-29 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China*, 12.

of the poster. On each *baozi*, “exceeding great and precious promise” is inscribed.<sup>66</sup> The sentences on the margins of the picture were cited from the Bible and proclaimed to the Chinese audience that the Christian faith can be the food nurturing the soul.

Posters provided a visual answer on how Christians facilitated the development of Christianity in China. The vivid posters, inciting the creativeness of both foreigners and the Chinese to illustrate the Bible in the Chinese background, presented Christians’ effort at downplaying how alien Christianity was to many Chinese and functioned as eye-openers to illustrate the knowledge of Christianity to Chinese people and increase Chinese people’s enthusiasm for the religion.

#### *Cooperating Christian Doctrines with Chinese Social Context*

In addition to assisting Chinese people to imagine the Bible in a Chinese way, Christian posters explained evangelical teachings based on a Chinese setting. Rooted in the expectation of reforming the country and the people, Christianity proposed a model of religious citizenship, that a good Christian with the public-mindedness, honesty, and decency was a good Chinese citizen.<sup>67</sup> The Christian idea of citizenship connected Christian values to building a modern nation-state in China. The active presence of Christians in campaigns eradicating “social ills” such as foot-binding and opium convinced the Chinese that reformations in China could benefit from conversion to Christianity. Via a Christian path of transforming China, Christianity emphasized its ability of supporting national revivals in China. And Christian posters had the role of visualizing Christian ideas of changing China for attracting the Chinese.

Figure 5 advertised to the Chinese the progress that individuals can achieve after converting to Christianity for the Chinese. The man on the right side of the poster represents an “old” person

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>67</sup> Goossaert and Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China*, 71.

struck in deceitful desires and backward ways. His black robe is fully covered by terms of “social ills,” like drunkenness, greedy, and following evil ways. In contrast, the man on the left renders a “new” person free from evil and full of righteousness. His bright robe is covered by representative terms of goodness, including kindness, faithfulness, and self-control. The cross between the two men implies that the differences between the two figures are due to their different beliefs. Namely, conversion to Christianity can bring a transformation to a person, leading the individual to transform into a new being. This poster taught about the power of faith in educating a person to be a decent person. It exemplified Christians’ endeavors of expressing the progressiveness of Christianity, that Christian doctrines were able to cultivate Chinese people’s good spirits and enlighten them to become righteous people. Believing in Christianity can be away from filthy wants and to become a progressive person created in the likeness of God. Christianity could liberate the Chinese from corruption and lead them to practice holiness in God’s image.

The doctrine of turning to be a new person was compatible to the context in Republican China---pursuing for national transformations. Starting at the beginning of the twentieth century, China was captivated by the idea of transforming China grounded on transforming Chinese people’s souls. During the 1910s-20s, intellectuals like Lu Xun (鲁迅) devoted to awakening the Chinese masses from weakness by novels and other practical tactics. Lu Xu’s famous work, “The True Story of Ah Q,” depicts a Chinese man overwhelmed in the social illness of “old China.” Through his weapon of literature, Lu Xun pointed out various wrong strains of thought that the Chinese followed during his era, that the Chinese were feeble and dis-inquisitive toward society and the world.<sup>68</sup> They were too powerless to figure out how to change their inferior status. Instead, Chinese people were only interested in rationalizing their loss but made no efforts to better

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<sup>68</sup> Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom*, 155-156.

themselves. Jimmy Yen initiated campaigns to teach the Chinese illiterates to read and to save them from gambling, fighting, and drinking. The spiritual transformation movements in the 1930s grew to be increasingly fervent thanks to the New Life Movement, a nation-building movement aimed at educating Chinese people's souls.

Many scholars have discussed the consequentiality of Christianity in building a modern China. Goossaert and Palmer argue for the reliability of Christian ideas in cultivating Chinese people to be modern citizens. And Thomson utilized the New Life Movement to powerfully explain how Christians engaged in transforming Chinese people's spirituality. On the ground of Christianity's ability to transform the Chinese, Figure 5 visualized the Christian response to support Chinese people in cleansing social ills. It interpreted the spiritual transformation via conversion to Christianity, that to accept the Christian faith was to transform the Chinese into a new people. Christian posters were deeply rooted in the notion of changing the country by changing people's souls. They attempted to transform Chinese people's spirit and propagated a Christian way of cleansing social indecency. Although posters' primary objective was to evangelize the masses,



Figure 5: A New Robe  
Source: <https://ccposters.com/poster/a-new-robe/>



Figure 6: Sin the Enemy of Man  
Source: <https://ccposters.com/poster/sin-the-enemv-of-man/>

Figure 5 increased the likeliness of the Chinese to accept Christianity for applying its power to reforming individuals.

Figure 6 is another example indicating Christianity's reaction to Chinese people's requirement of transforming China. The man groveling on the ground is entangled by various corruptive vices including gambling, whoring, and drinking, which are drawn as figures in the poster. The two men on the left side of the poster holding forks toward the man represent forces enforcing him to get rid of indecency. Combining with two excerpts from the Scripture, Figure 6 stressed the corruptive habits of Chinese people and threatened them with potential dangers of ignoring Christ's teachings. In other words, without Christian teachings, the Chinese people would remain in a corrupt state until their spiritual death. The Christian faith can protect people from the pollution of evil and recover the purity of their moral body. It can save the people from satanic behavior and ensure their success in fighting against evil.

The belief of depending on God's help to be away from evil was compatible to the task of the New Life Movement. As noted earlier, the movement was to cleanse Chinese people's backward behavior and cultivate an idea of modern citizenship in the minds of people. Chiang Kai-Shek's speech on the New Life Movement expressed similar contempt towards Chinese people's indecent lifestyles. Chiang recognized reasons for organizing the entire country to become involved in the movement, that creating a regular life for the Chinese based on the traditional morality was to build a modern nation. The weakness of China was due to the spiritless-ness of the Chinese, which was embraced in the inability of differentiating right from wrong.<sup>69</sup> Chiang classified the elements

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<sup>69</sup> Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石, "The Aim of the New Life Movement Xin" "Shenghuo yundong zhi mudu, 新生活运动之目的," in *The Collection of New Life Movement Xin Shenghuo yundong huibian 新生活运动汇编* (Nanchang: The Promotional Association of the New Life Movement Xin Shenghuo Yundong Cujin Zonghui 新生活运动促进总会, 1934), 4.

representing Chinese people's lack of spirit. For instance, the reason for income inequality was that people were not able to tell right from wrong, and then they would pursue wealth with no abstinence, leading to the reality that the poor were chaotic while the rich was luxurious. In this sense, Figure 6 represented a similar standpoint to Chiang's request of the New Life Movement. It acknowledged improper activities inducing Chinese people and heightens the necessity of shaping Chinese people's modern spirit. Both Christians and Chinese society recognized the backwardness of ordinary people and sought methods to change this situation. Under this background, Christianity applied posters like Figure 6 to alarm the Chinese about their indecent behavior and answered to purify Chinese people's spirit from a Christian perspective.

Therefore, Christian posters tied Christian doctrines to the requirement of realizing social betterment in China. 1930s China was filled with expectations to cultivate the public-minded new citizens for China, and posters stressed that Christian doctrines were compatible to Chinese society in constructing a modern country. One article published in *The Light of Gospel* in 1934 proclaimed how the Christian faith itself exemplified a new life for the Chinese, encouraging the Christians to carry their faith and help promulgate Christianity's reliability in transforming the Chinese to live in a new life with righteousness. The society's endeavor of "being new citizens" was revealed in the Bible by "being new people," that of being a new person in the eyes of Christ.<sup>70</sup> As the Bible says, "therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4), Christians would experience transformations in the death of Jesus Christ and enter a new life. Converting to Christianity, as Figure 5 and 6 hinted, equals to recognizing a person's bad habits

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<sup>70</sup> Peng Shengwen 彭圣文, "Christianity and the New Life Movement," "Jidujiao yu xinshenghuo, 基督教与新生活" *The Light of Gospel* 45 Fuyin guang, 福音光 (1934): 3, <https://www.cnbsy.com/search/detail/7de438603e2a5f4f7157688d789e38a1/7/5eb72c9d84b8491e718235e7>.

and achieving the spiritual renewal. The success of transforming China was determined by the transformation of individual minds. Society should acknowledge Christianity's ability to promote this transformation. Thus, Christian posters addressed Christianity's treat of powerfully facilitating national renewals in China, for shaping new citizenship in China was already presented in the Christian faith of becoming new people.

*Visualizing the Outcomes of Conversion to Christianity*

Another important role that Christian posters had in missions was to illustrate the bright future of conversion for the Chinese masses. The posters were reliable tools for evangelical workers to demonstrate the power of the Christian faith for the Chinese. A Christian reported in the 1929-30 annual report of the Society that (he/she) found the posters helpful “in illustrating the point and in making the message clearer to dull minds,” particularly in preaching to the country people.<sup>71</sup> The posters on the walls of Christian buildings were able to incite people's curiosity towards Christianity. By constructing ties between curious people and Christians, posters enabled Christians to advertise the auspiciousness of accepting the Gospel and so created more



Figure 7: Beware

Source: <https://ccposters.com/poster/beware/>

<sup>71</sup> *The 1929-30 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China*, 22.

opportunities for converts. The annual report in the same year mentioned a Chinese man having little interest in the Gospel but increasing his curiosity after conversations with Christians. The posters, as evangelical workers noticed, provided a starting point for non-Christians to confess to the Savior and expediated their acceptance of the doctrines of cleansing the heart under God's mercy.<sup>72</sup> From the perspective of encouraging people to confess, posters connected non-Christians to God, visualizing the consequence that human beings' spirit could return to purity through confessions to God and conversion to Christianity.

Figure 7 warned the Chinese about the lives of two individuals. The left one presents a man bowing to the Cross and asking for the mercy of the Lord. The right one, however, shows a man ensnared by the devil and falling into hell. The comparison of the two sides indicates the outcome of converting to Christianity. By confessing to God, the human being would be able to escape from evil and saved by God. The red characters on the left half heighten the preciousness of the left man's behavior. The left man's prayer is from Luke 18:13, a parable of the tax collector who acknowledges himself as a sinner and whom God unexpectedly justifies. It articulated a guidance for the readers of the poster, that Christianity exalts people who recognize their faults. Those humbling themselves because of their wrong actions would be forgiven by God. The text on the bottom is noteworthy as well. Cited from Peter 1, this text addressed Jesus's suffering for human beings, so as to empower Christians who also suffered. This material reiterated Jesus's sacrifice for people, that Jesus's death leads human beings to live righteously (1 Peter 2:24).

Through Christian texts and pictures, Figure 7 conveyed information to the Chinese people. On the one hand, it warned people that refusing the Christian message would result in damnation. The unbelievers not confessing to the Lord would be damned to eternal torture with the murderers

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

and other unrighteous individuals. On the other hand, however, it informed people that although everyone is born with the original sin, God is merciful to forgive those repenting their sin and claiming confessions in front of God. By accepting the Christian faith, Chinese people would recognize the mercy of the Lord and receive the forgiveness from Him. In this sense, Figure 7 depicted an encouraging image of believing in Jesus to the Chinese masses. It told its audience about human beings' sins and the dangers of ignoring their sins. Having proclaiming God's mercy of suffering for people via biblical texts on the poster, Figure 7 empowered the Chinese that with confessions to God and conversion to Christianity, their sins would be repented by the Lord, and so they would escape from sin and death. The consequence of converting to Christianity, as Figure 7 displayed above, was a promise of liberating people from sufferings and of eternal salvation.

Figure 8 is another example regarding achievements that Christians would obtain through learning from the Gospel. It encapsulates an ideal model in which family members keep praying during multiple daily tasks. The family prays together for meals and study the Bible during evenings. Members practice their prayers individually in different tasks, including men's prayers for hoeing the field, women's prayers for mending clothes, and children's' prayers for going to school. The texts under each picture provide outstanding thanks that family members should express to God in their prayers. Figure



Figure 8: Family at Prayer.  
Source: <https://ccposters.com/poster/family-at-prayer/>

8 portrays a household full of tranquility based on Christian teachings. Children from this type of household will learn to hold a thankful mind and thank God for everything. Adults from these families will live a peaceful and joyous life. In this sense, posters like Figure 8 offered an

illustration of a harmonious family for its readers. Once converted to Christianity and leading the entire family to learn about Christianity, the Christian faith will be helpful to maintain harmony and cultivate the family's awareness of thanking God for what they will gain from Christian teachings.

The illustration of Figure 8 was rooted in a Chinese concept of family and individuals. Chinese culture values the idea of the family over the idea of the individual, and the existence of Chinese people is confirmed through their social relations to family members and other people. By stressing the function of the Christian faith in shaping a peaceful family, Figure 8 acknowledged Chinese people's serious attention of family and transmitted the power of conversion to its audience in various dimensions through the prayers on sides of pictures. In the first dimension, to convert is to acknowledge God's mercy, as emphasized multiple times in this poster. The Lord uses the power of protection that watches over the Christian family at night from evil, the power of light that enlightens family members on the path to goodness, and the power of grace that constantly blesses Christians. In the second dimension, to convert is to enjoy God's grace, which will strengthen Christians' spirituality and nourish their spiritual growth within a family. The growth of people's virtue is based on spiritual supports from God, that deepens people's understanding of the Scripture, the doctrines, and God's blessings. In the last dimension, to convert is to shorten people's distance from God. In addition to accepting God's mercy and grace, conversion will lead Christians to praise God from the bottom of their hearts and to please Him. Pleasing God through songs and word is crucial to Christians as well. Thus, Figure 8 allowed the Chinese readers to imagine a bright picture of converting to Christianity. Through conversion, the overall family would be built on a peaceful basis and be protected by God. A harmonious household, as Figure 8 has shown, was to flourish in God's grace for establishing Christian families.

The Christian posters exhibited the good news considering conversion to Christianity to the Chinese people. Because of the potential pitfalls, it was imperative to convert to Christianity for non-Christians, so as to purify oneself and build a household based on God's ways. By illustrating the danger of ignoring human beings' sin and the joy of receiving God's forgiveness, Figure 7 led Chinese readers to clearly understand the grace of God and the bright future of proselytizing to Christianity. By depicting a household grounded on Christian teachings, Figure 8 heightened God's omnipotence of protecting believers' family and the responsibility of learning the Scripture and pleasing the Lord. In terms of presenting the Gospel message, posters functioned as eye-openers educating the Chinese about the necessity of believing in God for both the individual and for families. The posters, as Christians described, were lanterns for people walking at night, carrying the light of the Word which awakened them to the sin destroying human beings.<sup>73</sup> Posters thus planted a Christian view in the minds of Chinese people. Christian posters explained messages more clearly for Chinese people and addressed their reasons for conversion. Conversion to Christianity was meaningful not merely in liberating individuals from sin but also in constructing a household based on peace and harmony according to Christian concepts.

The posters remarked Christians' awareness of educating Chinese people about the Christian message from an indigenous perspective. Scholars of Chinese Catholic paintings have pointed out that one crucial function of these works was to "serve as catechetical aids."<sup>74</sup> These paintings were expected to be displayed in churches and chapels as the Holy Scripture for the poor. Beyond the educational function of deepening Christians' understanding of Christianity, Chinese Christian posters were more expected to open non-Christians' eyes to the presence of the Gospel and open

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<sup>73</sup> *The 1933-34 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China* (Hankow: Religious Tract Society Press, 1934), 15.

<sup>74</sup> Clark, *The Virgin Mary and Catholic Identities in Chinese History*, 184.

their ears to Christ's messages. This fundamental role addressed the necessity of interpreting Christian concepts from a Chinese side but downplayed the need of maintaining images' biblical basis. In this sense, posters were essentially imbued in the Chinese setting and responded to Chinese movements, to highlight Chinese people's familiar feeling to Christianity.

Starting from the Visual Evangelism movement in the late 1920s, Christian posters became increasingly popular in preaching campaigns in China. Under the joint contribution of Chinese converts and foreign missionaries, posters represented the assimilation of Chinese culture into Christian values and interpreted the Christian message in a way fitting Chinese people's standards. Some posters illustrated parables from the Bible in a Chinese style. They either drew figures' clothes and houses' ornaments based on Chinese aesthetic tastes or tied Chinese tales to biblical stories. Some posters cooperated Christian doctrines to the current contexts in China. To fit Chinese people's expectations of transforming the country and the people, Christian posters proclaimed Chinese people's unrighteous behavior and highlighted the ability of Christian doctrines to educate modern citizens and the modern nation-building in China. Additionally, some posters supported Chinese people's imagination of a life filled with grace after conversion. The visualization of an ideal Christian life in posters warned people about the sin of humanity and so addressed the imperativeness of praying for God's mercy and asking for God's forgiveness.

The results of utilizing posters in Christian propaganda were proven by both Chinese and foreign Christian workers. Harry Price, the editorial secretary of the Society, recorded a story of a young Chinese man who converted to the Christian Truth thanks to propagating items from believing in Buddha for four years. Price noticed that "these silent messengers (posters and tracts) speak for themselves in places and in hearts that the missionaries may never reach."<sup>75</sup> Chinese

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<sup>75</sup> *The 1934-35 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China*, 12.

Christian active in evangelism also demonstrated the helpfulness of posters in their countryside missions. Posters on the wall attracted crowds jamming around the preaching groups and listening to the teachings.<sup>76</sup> By depicting Christian thoughts grounded on a Chinese style, Christian posters reduced the foreign nature of Christianity for Chinese people and incited the familiarity of the Chinese to the Christian faith. The Chinese converts and foreign missionaries, as annual reports noted, jointly devoted themselves to printing posters and to using posters in missions. The two groups also proved posters' reliability in advertising Christianity to the Chinese people. Therefore, Chinese Christian posters, carrying expectations of foreigners and the Chinese, demonstrated Christian doctrines in the Chinese environment and brought the Christian message to the Chinese.

### ***Introducing China to a World Christian Community***

While Chinese Christian posters were assisting the growth of churches in China, Christian propaganda was also empowering Chinese people to express themselves in the world through Christianity. Advertising Chinese churches to a broader world Christian community not only claimed Christians' achievements in evangelizing China but also strengthened the emotional ties between churches in various nations. The increasing Christian materials with Chinese features drove the attention of Christians from other countries to become aware of what was happening to the Chinese Christian community and the overall Chinese country. For example, the National Child Welfare Association, an institution protecting Chinese children, attracted western Christians by sending them photos of Chinese children. The moved western Christians contributed to sheltering Chinese children during the Christmas holidays.<sup>77</sup> Besides raising donations and clothes, the theme of propagating Christian charity aspired foreign donors to practice philanthropy as a

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<sup>76</sup> *The 1930-31 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society for China*, 30.

<sup>77</sup> Margaret Mih Tillman, *Raising China's Revolutionaries: Modernizing Childhood for Cosmopolitan Nationalists and Liberated Comrades, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 147-151.

Christian notion and reinforced their sympathetic sentiment towards Chinese Christians, and Christian children in particular. In turn, the world Christian community became a crucial channel for Chinese Christians to communicate with Christians from other nations and increase China's voice on the world stage. Especially during the Sino-Japanese war, Christian councils expressed its attitude of standing with Chinese people in sufferings and condemning Japan's invasion.

In representing Christians' efforts in evangelical work in China, Christian publications created a Chinese community interested in Christianity and eager to producing Christian artwork in a Chinese way. For instance, United China Relief, desiring to sell a China grounded on the American example in terms of Christianity and Capitalism, introduced Americans about China by materials regarding Chinese Christianity. During the Christmas season, United China Relief distributed Christmas cards with Christian paintings by Chinese painters. These paintings transformed the original western style by Chinese elements, stating Chinese people's fervors to Christianity.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile, Christian artwork also deepened the concept of universal Christian teachings for the Chinese. In depicting the figures of Jesus and the Virgin Mary, Christian artists chose to present a real background and uncover the Palestinian setting to the Chinese Christians. Based on some posters from the Society, this section argues that Chinese Christian posters helped invite Chinese Christians to join in an inclusive world Christian community by uncovering the Chinese about historical accuracy of early Christianity and by addressing Chinese arts around the world.

#### *Discovering Historical Accuracy of Christianity*

As many Christian artists in China produced artwork targeted to increase curiosity of the Chinese towards Christianity, the Society attempted to uncover the real early church history to Chinese people who were interested in the Gospel message. Because of the high popularity of

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<sup>78</sup> Mission Pamphlet Collection, box 231. Cited from T. Christopher Jespersen, *American Images of China, 1931-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 55.

posters and other pictorial materials in their annual circulations, the 1932-33 annual report of the Society announced an important new tune in their visual publications. Instead of printing pictures of western buildings such as Big Ben in London to bait Chinese people's attention, the Society would accelerate to introduce God the Savior to China and issue totally religious materials respecting historical reality of early churches.<sup>79</sup> Having purchased some paintings from its parent institution, the Religious Tract Society in London (RTS), the Society hoped to utilize new illustrations to present the Chinese "a more accurate representation of scenes in the Holy Land, the place where their (our) Savior lived and dead."<sup>80</sup> In its view, these materials from London served as representations of the real Palestinian environment where Jesus was from. Starting from putting new materials on their new-year calendars, the Society received high requirements asking for pictures from churches around China. Within a decade, the desire of depicting historical accuracy of the early church finally came true with new posters coming out.

Nonetheless, illustrating the life of Jesus grounded on a Palestinian style is a rare phenomenon in Christian missions in China. Most Christian painters in China chose to portray Jesus's story with respect to Chinese culture. The former section has discussed that expressing Christianity from a Chinese perspective has been a common theme among Christian artists in China. Even though it is unfair to classify all Chinese Christian paintings as in the fully Chinese style, their roots in the Chinese environment are mature and firm. As Clark notices, Chinese Catholic painters insisted the Chinese characteristics in their works, which were expressed by Chinese objects and the natural world.<sup>81</sup> For instance, Figure 9 is an outstanding example of Chinese Catholics depicting Jesus's birth in the Chinese style. All persons in the painting are in the Chinese dress, including soft robes

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<sup>79</sup> *The 1932-33 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China* (Hankou: Religious Tract Society Building, 1933), 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>81</sup> Clark, *The Virgin Mary and Catholic Identities in Chinese History*, 176-178.

and cloth waist belts. The views inside the room and outside the window are both obviously rooted in Chinese settings, with the wooden bucket on the ground and trees out of the window. Since its foundation in the late nineteenth century, the Society had concentrated on producing works able to explain Christianity from a Chinese view as well. Their early posters paid more attention on utilizing Chinese figures to teach about Christian teachings or on finding connections between Chinese traditions and the Christian message.



Figure 9: The Nativity of Jesus  
Source: <https://ccposters.com/poster/the-nativity-of-jesus/>



Figure 10: The Nativity  
Source: <https://ccposters.com/poster/nativity/>

Nonetheless, the new posters printed in the years of 1940 and 1941 predicted a break from posters in previous decades. With descriptions of real history, the posters displayed for Chinese people a more precise setting of the Holy Land and Jesus's life. The unfolded Palestinian environment shaped the imagination of universal church worldwide for Chinese Christians. Figure 10 served as an outstanding representation of teaching Chinese people about real history of the Christian belief. It depicts the birth of Jesus rooted in the Palestinian style. The Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus in her arms is dressed in Palestinian clothes with the white scarf on her head. The color of white in the poster is noteworthy. On the one land, the lack of pigment in history

probably caused common usages of white color in clothes in Jesus's time. On the other hand, unlike the Chinese setting using white to describe sadness and death, the Palestinian and western background understand white as purity and holiness, fitting the characteristic of the Virgin Mary. The pink-stripe blanket on which Mary is sitting is in the Palestinian sewing pattern, according to its tassels. The shepherds standing around Mary and Jesus are dressed in Palestinian dressing code as well. In particular, the Tarbush on the head of the shepherd on the left top and the woolen vest on the man on the right top of the picture both symbolize style in the Holy Land.<sup>82</sup>

The comparison between Figure 9 and 10 hints a hotly debated problem within evangelical workers overseas: how to balance historical accuracy and Christianity's inculturation with Chinese culture. The appearance of Chinese Christian works was partially thanks to Christians' endeavors to reduce the foreignness of Christian publications. Some early Chinese Christian painters learned western Christian painting style and copied European Christian paintings. The early Chinese Christian literature was also translation of works by western Christian writers. However, the copies of European publications resulted in an impression among the Chinese that Christian materials were foreign, which incited later generations of Christians to devote themselves to creating Chinese materials with less foreign forms. From later generations' standpoint, western style was unsuited in China's soil.<sup>83</sup> In consequence, the western styles of materials in China would cause the common misunderstanding of Christianity as a foreign religion unsuitable to Chinese contexts,

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<sup>82</sup> Willem Vogelsang, "3. Fez or Tarbush," Welcome to the Textile Research Centre, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://trc-leiden.nl/trc-digital-exhibition/index.php/from-kaftan-to-kippa/item/54-fez-and-tarbush>; Willem Vogelsang, "8. The Samaritans," Welcome to the Textile Research Centre, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://trc-leiden.nl/trc-digital-exhibition/index.php/from-kaftan-to-kippa/item/59-8-the-samaritans>. Cited from Huang Baihua 黄柏华, "The Iconography in Publications of Religious Tract Societies in China (1876-1950) and the Case Studies on the Broad and Narrow Way and Prodigal Son," "Shengjiao shuhui zai hua chuban zhi tuxiang yanjiu (1876-1950) jianlun kuanzhailu tu yu langzi hui tou de yishu biao xian 圣教书会在华出版之图像研究 (1876-1950) 兼论宽窄路图与浪子回头的艺术表现," (Thesis., Tainan National University of the Arts, 2020), 89.

<sup>83</sup> Lawson, "A Unique Style in China: Chinese Christian Painting in Beijing," 472.

leading to burden further evangelical works around the country. It was thus essential, for Christians, to print Christian materials fitting Chinese tastes. In order to have the Gospel message match the Chinese background, Christian publications illustrated the Bible and doctrines more depending on Chinese values. Berthold Laufer elucidated that Protestant art's efforts of painting Christian art from the Chinese perspective. As he noticed, all illustrations in a Chinese Christian literature are in Chinese styles.<sup>84</sup> Similar to Figure 9 representing the Nativity story according to Chinese standards, these Chinese editions of Christian artwork might borrow some factors from the original Scripture or books but depended more on Christians' practice of rooting in Chinese culture.

Despite the aforementioned complaints about Christian publications' foreignness in China, some Christians nevertheless maintained their argument against assimilating local elements to the Christian originals. In particular, these disagreements about adapting Christian culture to indigenous cultures refused to transform depictions of Jesus's life based on local contexts. Albert Gresnigt, a Dutch Benedictine Dom, argued that full reliance on Chinese fantasy to illustrate Christian scenes would be problematic in terms of the disregards of history.<sup>85</sup> More importantly, it would "despiritualize" Jesus due to the loss of an accurate portrait of the Holy Land. Illustrating the story of Jesus should be based on historical accuracy in order to avoid religious hierarchy promoting the primacy of Christianity in the West and to display a more exact historical view. The figures on Christian materials, as Gresnigt proposed, should be considered neither Chinese nor western. Instead, they ought to present historical accuracy and have Palestinian faces. As Figure 10 indicated above, figures occurring in the Bible, like the Virgin Mary and shepherd, are located in Palestinian settings and wearing Palestinian clothes. It suggests that the Society's approach of advocating accurate scenes was able to enhance Christians' efforts of conveying the concept of

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<sup>84</sup> Berthold Laufer, *Christian Art in China* (Peking: Wendiange Shu Zhuang, 1937), 117.

<sup>85</sup> Lawson, "A Unique Style in China: Chinese Christian Painting in Beijing," 473.

“the universal church.” Leading the Chinese to discover Christian historical accuracy was not contradictory with the Society’s awareness of inciting Chinese people’s familiarity with Christianity. Their main task of introducing Christianity in a Chinese way was to illustrate meanings of Christian doctrines. That said, the mission of interpreting Christianity by Chinese art was to teach Chinese people about the omnipotence and mercifulness of God and Christians’ behavior. By posters, Chinese people could hopefully understand why they should believe in God and how God would lead them. In the cases of depicting Jesus, however, the real life of Jesus was the primary task for uncovering historical accuracy. Depictions of Jesus and biblical figures were expected to regard the accurate historical background where Jesus was living and forestall possibilities of drawing Jesus beyond the Palestinian environment. Meanwhile, this was to prevent Christianity from being kidnapped to support imperialism or other evil activities. Situating Jesus in the Palestinian background remained Christianity to be a universal religion welcoming peoples over the world. Posters with a Palestinian Jesus thus confirmed for the Chinese that Christianity was a world religion regardless of nationality. Within the Christian community, the Chinese converts could enjoy equal rights and power as converts from other nations could.

In addition to keeping figures with Palestinian faces, several posters printed by the Society in 1940 and 1941 exercised to depict views according to the Palestinian reality. The 1939-40 Annual Report recognized that the posters for new year of 1941 was inspired by original works of Harold Copping, a famous artist in Britain. His stable collaboration with RTS started since the early twentieth century.<sup>86</sup> In 1904, Copping received funding from RTS to travel to Palestine, so as to create precise scenes of the Holy Land.<sup>87</sup> His paintings of the Holy Land were collected and later

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<sup>86</sup> Brewer, "From Darkest England to the Hope of the World," 111.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 108.

published as *The Bible in Modern Art*, which accurately depict the people and views of the Holy Land in both of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. The Society in London also benefited from their agreement with Copping as “the Copping Bible” was so successful in markets. Copping’s paintings of the Holy Land transmitted a power unifying Christians’ spirits of having Christianity heard by the people of the world as well. Through that, Christians were able to be empowered for further evangelism and spread the Gospel over the world.

For example, Figure 11 evinced how the artists of the Society got inspirations from Copping’s works in their missions in China. It illustrates the parable of the sower in Luke 8:4-15, in which Jesus explains to his disciples that only those who have heard and hold the word of God with an honest heart could harvest a good crop. The seed in the parable refers to the secret of the Kingdom of God, and the soil represents people’s soul and their consciousness of the Lord. Besides the person’s Palestinian clothes, as discussed already, the usage of color of this picture is noteworthy as well. The green-yellow mountains behind the farmer exactly picture mountains in Palestine.

They are similar to Copping’s drawings in *A Journalist in the Holy Land: Glimpses of Egypt and Palestine*, the book written by Arthur Copping who accompanied Harold Copping in his visit to the Holy Land. In this realistic book about the Holy Land, Copping also applied the yellow and green colors to describe mountains. The waving shape of the mountains is similar to Copping’s depictions of mountains, which are continuously waving.<sup>88</sup> Clark has addressed that drawing religious paintings



Figure 11: The Sower  
Source: <https://ccposters.com/poster/the-sower/>

based on the Chinese interpretation of the natural world was a crucial method for Chinese Catholic

<sup>88</sup> Huang, “*The Iconography in Publications of Religious Tract Societies in China*,” 89.

painters to illustrate Christianity.<sup>89</sup> Artists employed living creatures, mountains, and plants to signify the Chinese style of Christian arts. The same as Buddhists and Daoists, Catholics in China regarded the usage of nature a principle of describing the holy.<sup>90</sup> Mountains in Chinese Christian paintings were expected to represent sacred meanings and depicted as magnificent creatures. While the mountains in Figure 11 are obscure with no outstanding meanings. Rather than expressing the numinous, the mountains in Figure 11 have merely the supplementary function of decoration and supports the Palestinian environment. In this sense, posters like Figure 11 transcended the restriction of the Chinese style of mountain portraits and presented an image of the mountain without impressive forms. Rather than emphasizing the sacred magnificence of mountain, Figure 11 displayed more Christian conditions of heightening the meaning of the parable.

Grounded on the similarities and the Society's usage of Palestinian environment, it is conclusive that Chinese Christian posters had moved beyond their initially full dependence on Chinese culture to interpret Christian teachings. Different from existing scholarship on Catholic arts in China which demonstrates Catholic artists' efforts of illustrating Christianity rooted in Chinese settings, posters by the Society proved Protestant artists' enthusiasm for revealing real history of Jesus for the Chinese people and downplaying the western features embedded in Christian works. The Society bought achievements from their parent tract society in the West, hoping to present Chinese people a more accurate picture of Christian history and their faith. The adaptation of Copping's paintings to Chinese Christian posters constructed connections between Chinese Christians and Christians over the world, opening the gate of the world for Chinese converts to imagine being a part of the world Christian community and learning from the

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<sup>89</sup> Clark, *The Virgin Mary and Catholic Identities in Chinese History*, 177-179.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

universality of the Christian belief.

*Opening the World's Door to China*

The 1920s-1930s was a period marked by the rapid growth of Chinese Christian materials, including hymns, literature, and artwork. With posters establishing an idea of Christian communities as a worldwide community, communications between Chinese converts and Christians from other countries appeared as an approach to speaking in China's voice to the world. Via this way, Christian posters brought China to the larger Christian world. Chinese Christian publications evinced that Christians in China were enthusiastic to adjust Christianity according to Chinese contexts. In turn, the like of Chinese churches was accepted by the world community with Chinese Christian works exhibited in other countries. Christianity thus interlocked Christians in China to a greater global Christian community. It enforced the world and China to further open their doors for the other. In the early twentieth century in particular, when the world considered China weak and approaching to extinction, the thrust of the Christian faith encouraged the Chinese to express themselves in the world and inspired the world to hear China's voice through various kinds of Christian literature.

The increasing appearance of Chinese Christian works heightened Chinese Christians' zeal of praising God from a Chinese view and their excitement of expressing their interpretation of the Christian faith. The Society reported the increase of Chinese hymns in its 1932-33 yearly report, that Chinese Christians started to produce hymns and Christian music in Chinese. Compared with teaching Chinese converts the western hymns, Chinese hymns were more powerfully able to embody Chinese styles due to the differences between western languages and Chinese languages. The Chinese melodies, as the report noted, were "beloved and sung with great fervor and

sometimes with an approach to correct time and harmony.”<sup>91</sup> The Chinese hymns merged Chinese culture to Christian views and portrayed a Chinese version of Christian peace.<sup>92</sup> For instance, Zhao Zichen wrote a song named “Tian’en ge (天恩歌)” describing the relationship of humanity to God as the grass and the spring wind. On the one hand, this metaphor highlighted human beings’ obedience towards God, that people should obey the Lord as grass bows its body according to the direction of the wind. The description of “spring wind” also emphasized the mercy of God. On the other hand, this metaphor pictured an inclusive image of the Christian community. With God as the spring wind spread worldwide, peoples of the world all can listen to God’s word and feel Him. In this sense, this hymn built a mighty coverage of the world, that Christians around the world belonged to the same home.<sup>93</sup>

Chinese Christian art experienced a boom in the same decade. Some scholars have discussed the appearance of Christian paintings by Chinese artists. The well-known school of Christian Art of the Catholic University, Fu Jen University, was a center for these artists contributing to producing Christian paintings in a Chinese form. As Lian Xi summarizes, about 150 Chinese Christian paintings were selected to participate in exhibit of indigenous Christian art in Rome in 1940.<sup>94</sup> And some of them were collected in a collective work *The Life of Christ by Chinese Artists*. Lian notices an outstanding picture drawing a young Jesus standing near the temple and preaching to some seemly Confucian intellectuals. Obviously, this picture served as a Chinese transformation of Jesus’s preaching to the Jews in the New Testament. Portraying this scenario based on a Chinese Confucian background shaped their views of the leading relationship of Christianity to traditional

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<sup>91</sup> *The 1932-33 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China*, 5.

<sup>92</sup> Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 125.

<sup>93</sup> Zhao Zichen 赵紫宸, “The Song of Grace,” “Tian’en ge 天恩歌,” accessed January 29, 2021, <http://www.ed365.cn/szxcg/7086.html>

<sup>94</sup> Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 124.

Confucian values. The publicity of Chinese Christian artwork was recorded in worldwide Christian journals as well. Marie Adams acclaimed the appearance of Chinese Christian paintings as “a new school of Christian art,” which narrated the life of Jesus based on Chinese standards and applying Chinese methods to portraying pictures.<sup>95</sup>

During the same era, the Society witnessed the expanding impact of the posters on Christians around the world, as Christians overseas received their Chinese Christian posters. The international transportation of posters not only assisted overseas Christians mastering Chinese to learn the Bible but also attracted the attention of Christians from other nations, and so highlighted the status of Christians in China. For instance, the 1939-40 annual report posted feedback from Christians living in Holland and the U.S. Chinese Christians in Holland thanked the Society for sending them Chinese-language posters and requested more. The posters, for them, were beautiful and sufficient with work and brought them happiness.<sup>96</sup> Chinese posters were welcomed by the Chinese groups in Mongolia and Nicaragua as well. Some posters produced in China were even translated into Mongolian for teaching Mongolians about the Christian message. In Nicaragua, the posters comforted the minds of Chinese people having difficulty in speaking English and Spanish. The arrival of Chinese Christian posters warmed their hearts with the confirmation that the Christian message had concerns for them.<sup>97</sup> Thanks to the wide transportation of Chinese Christian posters to the world, more Chinese people around the globe learned Christian teachings and felt the mercy of God. The case of translating Chinese posters into the Mongolian language proved the leading status of Chinese Christian printings. In this sense, Chinese Christian posters travelled around the

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<sup>95</sup> Marie Adams, “A New School of Christian Art,” *The Chinese Recorder* 69 (1938).

<sup>96</sup> *The 1939-40 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1940), 14.

<sup>97</sup> *The 1938-39 Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society in China* (Hankou: The Religious Tract Society Press, 1939), 14.

world in place of individuals and introduced to the world about Christian ideas in the Chinese language. When Christian illustrations were going to other nations, the living conditions of Chinese Christians were heard by Christians in other countries at the same time. And in turn, other Christians were sending their greetings to Chinese people as well.

Beyond leading the world to observe Christianity in China, the global touch of Chinese Christian works also opened up new opportunities for Chinese Christians to speak to the world about China's dilemma over how to become an independent modern nation. On the one hand, the period of the 1930s was remarked on not only the many events in China but also wars around the world. With the awareness of a chaotic world, several Christian organizations discussed leading the world back to an order based on Christian teachings. In particular, some Christian councils considered their support for China their responsibility as Christians and so expressed their attitude of being with Chinese Christians and the whole country. For instance, *The Truth of Light* published a greeting to Chinese people from the World Christian Council, conveying worldwide Christians' concerns about Chinese people's suffering. It was Japan's imperialist pride that caused the Japanese invasion of China, and as a Christian organization, the Council would take it their duty to understand and assist China's independent movements.<sup>98</sup> Christians were not only responsible for calling for love around the world but also for eradicating hatred and opposing sentiment between Chinese Christians and Japanese Christians. Another Christian magazine *China Coming to God* expressed the world's sympathy towards the Chinese. As it said, the world Christian community cared deeply about Chinese people's endeavors of fighting for independence and stood with China in obtaining an equal position with other nations in international affairs.<sup>99</sup> This

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<sup>98</sup> "The World Christian Council was Sympathetic to China" "Shijie jidujiao tongmeng tongqing zhongguo 世界基督教同盟同情中国," *The Truth of Light* Zhenli zhiguang 真理之光: 61, <http://www.cnbksy.cn/search/detail/96ed180e26e8f7d59bf96a40270061b2/7/600b379323b0994fcb99d450>

<sup>99</sup> "The Announcement of the World Christian Council to Chinese People" "Shijie jidujiao tongmeng dui zhongguo

announcement was targeted to both Chinese Christians and non-Christians, because the Christian faith represents the Christians' spirit and hope for equality. Christianity, as the world's encouragement to China indicated, is a religion shaped by unifications between diverse countries and ethnicities. Christianity acknowledged the same value of human beings and sought love in people's hearts in building the world. In this sense, as a religion advocating peace and justice, the Christian message should be heard by all Chinese people who suffered, so that the Chinese people would be empowered since God cared about them.

With Chinese Christian posters travelling to other countries, the position of Christians in China was elevated. The appearance of Chinese Christian hymns and artwork reinforced Chinese Christians' dependence on God and convinced them that Christians in China were able to produce publications and express their understanding of Christianity to the world. Also, as China became a place where Christian publications to other countries were from, Christians in China found ways to teach the Christian faith to their Chinese fellows in other parts of the world and even to local people. In this sense, the wide transportation of Christian publications with Chinese factors enabled Chinese Christians to function as preachers not only to their neighbors and friends but also to people in other cultures. Meanwhile, when posters were deepening dialogues between Chinese Christians and the world, Christian councils over the world sent their sympathy and support to Chinese people as well. Their aids enhanced the spirituality of Chinese people, and more importantly expressed a welcoming attitude to Christians in China. Chinese Christian posters, based on their wide circulations, connected China to the world more strongly.

Generally speaking, as Chinese Christian posters were teaching about Christian message to

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jidutu xuanyan, 世界基督教同盟对中国基督徒宣言," *China Coming to God* Zhonghua guizhu 中华归主: 3-4, <http://www.cnbkisy.cn/search/detail/86b5e792dbd82f085a02c1f5937ba5be/7/600b39b523b0994fcb99d4fe>

the Chinese masses, they were also delegating China to speak to the world. In other words, Chinese Christian posters, along with other Christian media in China, opened the world's door to the Chinese and helped shape an inclusive worldview gathering up Christians across national boundaries for Chinese people. On the one hand, shifting to depict the Holy Land's environment based on reality uncovered the real history of places where Jesus was born and lived. Avoiding putting on Chinese clothes on Jesus in the posters not only taught the Chinese Christians about accuracy of church history but also corrected their pre-understanding of Christianity as a western religion masked by imperialism. Thus, depictions of Jesus according to historical reality shaped the Chinese the view that Christianity was a world religion concerning about peoples of the world. Through this way, the world Christian community opened its door welcoming Christians in China grounded on the same Christian faith.

On the other hand, the Christian approach to the world served as a gate for Christians in China to express themselves and refresh the world's image of China. The posters sent from China to Christians in other countries emphasized the significance of Chinese Christians around the world. Christian groups in China were able to translate Christian message to other languages and spread the Christian faith to the Chinese immigrants to other regions. The connections between Christians in other countries and Chinese Christians were thus strengthened thanks to the elevated place of Chinese Christians in the world. When Chinese Christians impressed the world by Chinese Christian materials, worldwide Christian organizations were more likely to hear from China. As a consequence, these organizations were sympathetic to and supported Christians in China, and so further strengthened the ties between Chinese Christian communities and the world.

Therefore, applying posters in missions in China enabled Christians to cultivate an inclusive worldview for the Chinese people, in which the Chinese masses were able to imagine a world free

from national boundaries and welcoming every country. The construction of this type of worldview was on the basis of a rudimentary understanding of Christian historical accuracy that valued the reality of the Holy Land over the indigenous culture.

### ***Conclusion***

To conclude, Chinese Christian posters in the 1930s-40s illustrated a power to unify Chinese people and the world through the Christian faith. In addition to tying Christian culture to Chinese culture and teaching Chinese people about Christian ideas, the posters also represented the image of China to people of other countries and enhanced emotional links among Christians of the world. 1930s China was remarked as an eventful era. The unceasing social upheavals impeded the spread of Christian missions in China by personnel. The destruction of public transportation increased difficulty in travelling for Christian individuals, and also, the continuing wars and anti-Christian movements threatened the safety of Christians in China. The prevalent usages of Chinese Christian posters in missions came from such a chaotic time, when Christians confronted both the hopefulness and the hopelessness in China. The promotion of applying posters in missions benefitted from Chiang Kai-shek's and Madame Chiang's plans of reinforcing relations with western countries by treating Christianity better. The success of tying the New Life Movement to Christian values proved the possibility of adjusting Christian message to building a modern China. Meanwhile, the prevalence of Christian posters in China was because of international challenges as well. The Great Depression and religious depressions in the U.S. caused decreases in recruiting new missionaries to work overseas. The financial collapse resulted in a sharp reduction for mission churches to receive funding, leading to the lack of financial support for missionaries travelling to China. Under the international and domestic crisis, Christians in China considered posters a new approach of preaching requesting fewer evangelical workers and less money. And that was when

the Society and the China Inland Mission fastened to form the Visual Evangelism Committee to concentratedly produce evangelical posters.

There appeared a distance of Chinese converts to foreign missionaries, that the two group varied in duties for China. In *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*, Lian Xi defines the challenges inside and outside China as opportunities to pursue for independent churches for Chinese Christians. Under the desire to be indigenous against western-dominated enterprises, it was the community of Chinese converts that took in charge of nationwide Christian organizations. Several Chinese converts constructed indigenous churches representing the Chinese value of peacefulness—"the Great Harmony."<sup>100</sup> But the foreign Christians, as Wei Shuge observes, maintained a closed connection with the government and contributed in propagating China to the world. Nonetheless, this research has analyzed that 1930s China also witnessed the enhanced cooperation between Chinese converts and foreign missionaries. That said, the long-continued complications to Christians did not thoroughly separate Chinese Christians from their foreign colleagues. Rather, their relationship to the other was somehow reinforced, and the two groups collaborated in evangelizing China, as this paper has discussed above. Both Chinese converts and foreign missionaries devoted to printing Chinese evangelical posters. Collaborative relations between foreigners and Chinese people evinced that the different nationalities were not the reason for dividing the Christian community in China. Instead, these Christians working in China, including foreigners and the Chinese, transcended their national or ethnical differences and united under the belief of the Christ to design posters aimed at evangelism but fitting Chinese values.

The illustrations of the biblical parables corresponded to similar Chinese phrases and stories.

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<sup>100</sup> Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 84.

The visualization of converting to Christianity taught the Chinese people about an omnipotent Savior merciful enough to redeem human beings' falls and purify their souls. The posters portrayed Christianity as a religion that sought order and harmony, based on which converts could build a peaceful household organization. Additionally, posters responded to social issues in China. The emphasis on the backwardness of Chinese people was similar to the argument of strengthening the country by strengthening Chinese people's spirit. Christian doctrines were described as powerful tools leading Chinese people to get rid of indecency and gain modern spirit. From the perspective of depicting Christianity according to Chinese settings, the posters reflected Christians' awareness of implanting the faith in God in China's soil. The Chinese factors, as displayed in the posters, proved Christian artists' respect to the Chinese environment. Under the Society's guidance of cultivating local Christian leaders, posters served to reduce the western elements of Christianity and heightening Christianity's compatibility with the Chinese context.

Furthermore, Christian artists in China were also aware of presenting Chinese Christians more accurate history of Christianity. Studies of Chinese Catholic arts have indicated Catholic painters' efforts to interpret Christianity from a Chinese standpoint. Catholics were enthusiastic to depict the biblical stories in a Chinese background. Even if some paintings may illustrate figures with Palestinian appearances, the natural world and animate creatures are following Chinese style of artwork. However, this research has explored that the posters designers were inconsistent with the Catholics. Rather than setting the Palestinian figures in a Chinese setting, some posters displayed the fully Palestinian environment as for respecting historical accuracy. These posters were based on a general understanding of Christian historical accuracy and uncover the real Palestinian context where Jesus lived. This attempt also helped peel back the western skin of Christianity and thus enabled Chinese converts to find an accurate place where Christianity was from. It was also able

to construct an idea of a world Christian community in Chinese Christians' minds, that the Christian belief did not belong to westerners solely. Instead, Christianity belonged to the peoples of the world, and everyone was able to receive God's grace. In this sense, Christianity shortened its distance to the Chinese people and addressed its omnipresence. By addressing the universal feature of Christianity, Christian posters assisted to increase Chinese people's confidence in speaking for themselves in the world. Worldwide Christian organizations became tools for Chinese people to dialogue with the world and introduce China to the world. In turn, Christians around the world transmitted their sympathetic emotion back to Chinese people via interactions between Christians as well. The Chinese Christian posters, under the collaborative work of Chinese converts and foreign missionaries, thus impressed the world by an active China.

Therefore, Chinese Christian posters bridged the world and Chinese people. On the one hand, they were products of the cooperation between both Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries, as the two groups collaborated in designing posters. Both of them were aware of interpreting Christianity from a Chinese perspective and applying Christianity to reacting to Chinese social movements. On the other hand, posters were the intermediary between the universal Christian faith and the transformed Chinese Christian faith. They illustrated the Palestinian reality for Chinese Christians and encouraged Chinese Christians to express themselves in global conferences. The greetings from the world were sent by Christian councils as well. Hence, under the collaboration between Chinese converts and foreign missionaries, the Chinese Christian posters introduced Christianity to China and introduced China to the world.

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Appendix

Figure 1: Prodigal Son 1 (Luke 15:11-32)

Picture	Chinese Transcription	English Translation
Picture 1 (Top Right)	耶稣又说，一个人有两个儿子。小儿子对父亲说，父亲，请你把我应得的家业分给我。他父亲就把家业分给他们。过了不多几日，小儿子就把他一切所有的都收拾起来往远方去了。在	“Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country,
Picture 2 (Bottom Right)	那里任意放荡、浪费资财。既耗尽了一切所有的、又遇着那地方大遭饥荒、就穷苦起来。于是去投靠那地方的一个人。那人打发他到田里去放猪。他恨不得拿猪所吃的豆荚充饥，也没	“and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with[c] the pods that the pigs were eating;
Picture 3 (Top Left)	有人给他。他醒悟过来就说，我父亲有多少的雇工，口粮有余，我倒在这里饿死么。我要起来，到我父亲那里去，向他说，父亲，我得罪了天父，得罪了你。从今以后，我不配称为你的儿子，把	“and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son;
Picture 4 (Bottom Left)	我当作一个雇工吧。于是起来往他父亲那里去。相离还远，他父亲看见，就动了慈心，跑去抱着他的头顶，连连与他亲嘴。儿子说，父亲、我得罪了天父、又得罪了你。从今以后我不配称为你。	“treat me like one of your hired hands.”” So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

Figure 2: Prodigal Son 2 (Luke 15:11-32)

Picture	Chinese Transcription	English Translation
Picture 5 (Top Right)	的儿子。父亲却吩咐仆人说，把那上好的袍子快拿出来给他穿。把戒指戴在他指头上。把鞋穿在他脚上。把那肥牛犊钱来宰了，我们可以吃喝快乐。因为我这个儿子是死而复活、失而	“But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’
Picture 6 (Bottom Right)	又得的。他们就快乐起来。那是，大儿子正在田里。他回来离家不远，听见作乐跳舞的声音。便叫过一个仆人来，问是什么事。仆人说，你兄弟来了。你父	““Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf,

	亲因为得他无灾无病的回来，把肥	because he has got him back safe and sound.’
Picture 7 (Top Left)	牛犊宰了。大儿子却生气，不肯进去。他父亲就出来劝他。他对父亲说，我服事你这多年，从来没有违背过你的命。你并没有给我一只山羊羔，叫我和朋友一同快乐。但你这个儿子和娼	“Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends.
Picture 8 (Bottom Left)	妓吞尽了你的产业，他一来了，你倒为他宰了肥牛犊。父亲对他说，儿啊，你常和我同在，我一切所有的都是你的。只是你这个兄弟是死而复活，失而又得的，所以我们理当欢喜快乐。	“But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father[e] said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

Figure 3: The Substitute

Position	Chinese Transcription	English Translation
Bottom	惟有基督在我们还作罪人的时候为我们死，上帝的爱就在此向我们显明了。罗马书五章八节	“But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)
Left	后汉时，赵礼被匪掳去，想将他的身体作为食品充饥。他的哥哥孝听见这话就忙跑到匪营，哀求道：“我弟瘦弱不及我肥壮，请将他释放，我愿替一死！”匪首见孝很有义气，当时大受感动，放他兄弟二人回家。并把匪党都带往别处去了因此赵氏全村得免匪患	In late Han, a group of bandits kidnapped Zhao Li for food. Li’s brother, Xiao, ran to the bandits and begged them, saying that my brother was thinner than me. Please let him go and eat me. The bandits were moved by Xiao’s bravery and released both of them. The entire village was free from dangers because bandits moved to other places.

Figure 4: Joy and Rejoicing

Positions	Chinese Transcription	English Translation
Top	主言乃食物	God’s Word is Food
Bottom	没有银钱的也可以来吃	Those who have no money can come and eat as well
Right to Left	主对世人说：“你们为何花钱买那不足为食物的，用劳碌得来的买那不使人饱足的呢？你们要留意听我的话，就能吃那美物得享肥甘心中喜乐。”以赛亚书五十五章二节	Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. (Isaiah 55:2)
On the Bible	我得着主的言语，就当食物吃了，主的言语是我心中的欢喜快乐。耶利米书第十五章十六节	Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart. (Jeremiah 15:16)

Figure 5: A New Robe

Position	Chinese Transcription	English Translation
Left	穿上新人，这新人是照着上帝的形象造的有真理的仁义和圣洁。 以弗所书 4:24	And to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:24)
Right	要脱去你们从前行为上的旧人，这旧人是因私欲的迷惑渐渐变坏的。 以弗所书 4:22	You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts. (Ephesians 4:22)

Figure 6: Sin the Enemy of Man

Position	Chinese Transcription	English Translation
Top	因为罪的工价乃是死，所以不要容罪在你们必死的身上作王，使你们顺从身子的私欲。 罗马书六章廿三又十二节	For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23) Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. (Romans 6:12)
Bottom	将肢体作义的器具献给上帝，罪必不能作你的主。 罗马书六章十三节	Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instrument of righteousness. (Romans 6:13)

Figure 7: Beware

Position	Chinese Transcription	English Translation
Right Top	祸哉 我灭亡了。 以赛亚书六章五节	And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost." (Isaiah 6:5)
Right Bottom	唯有胆怯的不信的可憎的杀人的淫乱的行邪术的拜偶像的和一切说谎话的他们的分就在烧着硫磺的火湖里这是第二次的死。 启示录廿一章八节	But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)
Left Top	上帝阿 开恩可怜我这个罪人。 路加福音十八章十三节	God, be merciful to me, a sinner! (Luke 18:13)
Left Bottom	他被挂在木头上亲身担当了我们的罪使我们既然在罪上死就得以在义上活。 彼得前书二章廿四节	He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

Figure 8: Family at Prayer<sup>101</sup>

Position	Chinese Transcription	English Translation
Right Top	吃饭祈祷图 – 敬谢天父赏赐食物养活肉身恩典常存更求天粮养我灵魂教我们德行日盛道理日深所求所谢惟靠耶稣。	Prayers for meals- Thank you, Father, for giving us food for our body through your sustaining grace. May you also give us spiritual food to nourish our souls so our virtues grow and our understanding of you deepens day by day. We ask and thank you depending entirely on Jesus.
Right Bottom	清晨将起祈祷图 – 谢谢主保护我们一夜平安求主在今天引导我们行走在你的义路作事说话都能讨主的喜欢。	Prayer for getting up in the morning – Lord, thank you for your protection during the night. Please guide us on your way of righteousness. May our words and actions be pleasing to you.
Center	礼拜祈祷 – 平安又到圣日 感谢上主大爱惜 恳求上主发洪恩 今日赐福天下人 谢谢大慈悲的主保佑我们一个礼拜平安 又使我们得安息听教训蒙福乐受感动如此大恩感谢不尽。	Prayer for Sunday worship – On this, another Sunday, we thank you Lord for your great love. May you have mercy and bless the world. Merciful Lord, thank you for your protection during the week and give us rest. You teach us, bless us, and move us. We are ever grateful for such grace.
Left Top	锄地祷告 – 求主锄去我心中的荆棘使真理在我心中发生终至结实百倍。 补衣祈祷 – 求主补足我的缺使我作完全人为主彰显荣耀。 上学祈祷 – 求主引导我们一步不要走错一直行入天堂得享永福。	Prayer for hoeing the field – Lord, please hoe off the thorns in my heart. May the truth take root in my heart and produce crops a hundred times. Prayer for mending clothes – Lord, please mend what I am missing and make me perfect so you will be gloried. Prayer for going to school – Lord, please guide us not to take any wrong steps so we may go straight to heaven for the eternal blessing.
Left Bottom	每晚查经祈祷 – 谢谢主的恩典保佑我们一日平安又使我们得机会查经歌诗得着教训平平安安睡卧在主的怀里。	Prayer for Bible study in the evening – Lord, thank you for your grace and protection during the day, and for the opportunity to learn through studying scriptures and singing praises to you. May we sleep in your arms in peace.

Figure 10: The Nativity

Position	Chinese Transcription	English Translation
Left	你们要看见一个婴孩，包着布，卧在马槽里，那就是记号。	This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:12)
Bottom	时候满足，上帝就差遣他的儿子，为女子所生。	But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman. (Galatians 4:4)
Right	天使对牧羊的人说今天为你们生了救主，就是主基督。	to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. (Luke 2:11)

<sup>101</sup> The English Translation for Figure 8 is cited from Chinese Christian Posters Website. “Family at Prayer,” Chinese Christian Posters, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://ccposters.com/poster/family-at-prayer/>

Figure 11: The Sower

Chinese Transcription	English Translation
<p>耶稣用比喻说：“有一个撒种的出去撒种撒的时候，有落在路旁的，被人践踏，天上的飞鸟又来吃尽了；有落在磐石上的，一出来枯干了，因为得不着滋润；有落在荆棘里的，荆棘一同生长把他挤住了；又有落在好土里的，生长起来结实百倍。这比喻乃是这样：种子就是上帝的道，那些在路旁的，就是人听了道随后魔鬼来从他们心里把道夺去，恐怕他们信了得救；那些在磐石上的，就是人听道欢喜领受，但心中没有根不过暂时相信，及至遇见试炼就退后了；那落在荆棘里的，就是人听了道走开，以后被今生的思虑钱财宴乐挤住了便结不出成熟的子粒来；那落在好土里的，就是人听了道持守在诚实善良的心里并且忍耐着结实。”</p> <p>路加福音第八章四至八节十一至十五节</p>	<p>he said in a parable: “A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.” As he said this, he called out, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!” Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets[b] of the kingdom of God; but to others I speak in parables, so that ‘looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand.’ “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance. Luke 8:4-15</p>