

From Gengzi to Xinhai: The Identity Recognition and Conservative Belief of the Central China Christian and Missionary Alliance in the Late Qing Dynasty (1900-1911)

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Abstract

In the ten years of the late Qing Dynasty, great changes took place in Chinese society, such as the Yihetuan Event (The Boxer Uprising), the reform of the Qing government, successive floods and pestilence in the Yangtze River valley, and the Revolution of 1911, all of which were a social environment for the spread of Christianity. In view of the great social changes in central China, in addition to the mission station-centered mission strategy, the American Christian and Missionary Alliance in central China actively participated in the reconstruction of local order, and established good relations between the people and churches. At the same time, C&MA missionaries showed another way of faith, which transcended the nationalist movements of the era and focused on the practice of faith based on the Gospel. In other words, from Gengzi to Xinhai (1900-1911), the C&MA constructed its missionary methodology in the local regions of central China. The C&MA missionaries not only embedded their religious authority into the daily life of believers, but also held to the C&MA's purpose with the requirements of religious knowledge, faith experience, and behavioral norms, thus clarifying the identity recognition and boundary consciousness of the group. Therefore, this paper focuses on two aspects. The first is the missionary model and faith practice of the Central China Missionary Association; second, the methods of missionaries to cultivate parishioners and their identity recognition. During this period, the Central China Diocese of the Christian and Missionary Alliance did not ignore the social realities, shared with the believers' faith experience in the life of the church, and kept its conservative purpose, which gave the group members a clear identity and sense of belonging.

Keywords: Christian and Missionary Alliance, Central China, Identity recognition, Conservatism

Introduction

In the ten years of the late Qing Dynasty, social structural changes took place, which provided unprecedented opportunities for Christian missionary work. Kenneth S. Latourette, a church historian, pointed out that during this period, there was a comprehensive adjustment of the Christian mission strategy in China, especially within the missionary organizations from the United States. Because most of the Christian medical care, social relief and higher education work were organized by them, this mechanism of the church business took up most of their energy (Latourette 523). But by no means did all missionary organizations and missionaries in the United States use this approach, including the Christian and Missionary Alliance of America, which grew out of the missionary movement, and whose central China Diocesan activities provided a conservative missionary perspective in China. Since the founding of the Central China Diocese in 1892, the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) spread its missions to Hubei, Hunan, and Anhui provinces. The early stage was a stage of exploration and adaptation. Compared with other missionary societies in the United States, the C&MA aimed to promote Christians who were pursuing a spiritual life and to unite churches to participate in the universal evangelical movement. Therefore, in the late Qing Dynasty, missionaries continued the earlier strategy of sending missionaries to enter the inland rural society and focused on working with prospective believers. In addition to direct preaching, in the public sphere, the C&MA was also actively involved in disaster relief and the restoration of social order. It was in the context of society in late Qing dynasty, when they embedded the Christian faith in the lives of local believers, it was also a manifestation of another type of Christianity being incorporated into local society. Within the community of believers, it gradually outlined the faith identity and church position of the C&MA and defined the relationship with social groups, so as to have an identity consciousness that was not hampered by social changes and ideological trends. Therefore, this paper discusses the missionary model of the C&MA, how the missionaries cultivated parishioners, and presents the conservative beliefs and identity recognition of the C&MA.

I. Missionary model under social challenges

The factors that missionaries in China had to face in the late Qing Dynasty were the drastic changes in society, which no one could have predicted. A series of events, including some disastrous circumstances and some regional events, profoundly affected the missionaries in China, and through that the church also got unprecedented opportunities.

Especially after the crackdown of the Reform Movement of 1898, the conservative forces of the Empress Dowager Cixi, dethroned the Emperor Guangxu, and crowned Pu Jun as the king, but the Western powers' interference, created indecision and debate within the court (Li 28-29).

In the year of Gengzi, in order to counter the power of the foreign powers, the conservatives of the Qing court advocated using the rapid expansion of the Boxers in North China. The government and counties commonly tore down railways, burned churches, wantonly killed foreigners and parishioners, and besieged the foreign diplomatic quarters in Beijing (Ming and Qing Archives of the State Archives Bureau 162-163; Editorial Department of the first historical archives of China 712). When the Eight Power Allied Forces occupied the Dagu Estuary in Tianjin, they were still determined to "fight it out", support the Boxers, and drive out the foreigners (Ming and Qing Archives of the State Archives Bureau 163; The first historical archives of China and the History Department of Fujian Normal University Vol.2 907).¹

However, at that time, Li Hongzhang of Guangzhou, Yuan Shikai, governor of Shandong, Liu Kunyi, governor of the two rivers, and Zhang Zhidong, governor of Huguang, and others announced that Cixi's order were difficult to follow. In June, they signed with the consuls of foreign powers in Shanghai, the Sino-foreign Mutual Protection Regulations on Non-aggression and Peace in Southeast China, which stipulated that "the Shanghai Concession shall be under the protection of all countries, and the mainland of the Yangtze River shall be under the protection of governors, and the two shall not interfere with each other, so as to preserve the businesses of the merchants and the people, forbidden rumors, and strictly arrest bandits". After that, Jiangsu, Anhui, Hunan, Hubei and other provinces also joined the mutual guarantee program (China New Historiography Research Association 163; Wang 968-969).

1. Keep preaching in the conflicts

As a matter of fact, the Mutual Protection Regulation did not adequately guarantee the security of the Christian communities in the regions where they were located. Under the influence of the situation in north China, the people in central China were swayed, and the

¹ A missionary of the C&MA in Central China at that time, described this passage: "it seems that the boxers appeared for the first time in the spring of 1899 and declared that they were a patriotic group. Their purpose was to support and defend the dynasty against foreign aggression and to wipe out all foreigners and everything related to them. There seem to be many cases among them that they are really possessed by demons. They claim that they were sent from heaven to eradicate the abominable foreign devils in this land. They can protect their bodies from knife or gunshot wounds. Most people certainly believe these legends, because they showed the most reckless courage in their first battle with foreign troops."(Chapin 1901: 99-101).

anti-Christian activities occurred frequently.² At the same time, the London Missionary Society in Hankou, Hubei Province, was attacked by a mob, and the Central China C&MA decided that all the missionaries should take refuge in the treaty ports protected by foreign warships if necessary (“The Situation in China” 23 June 1900:418). The board of C&MA of the United States allowed the missionaries to withdraw to coastal cities on their own, but did not recommend that they leave China. Considering that the long-term withdrawal from their posts would cause Chinese Christians to suffer severe persecution, they unanimously requested to take refuge briefly and then return to the mission station (“Field Notes” 4 August 1900:72). M.B. Birrel, a missionary at the Wuhu Mission Station of the C&MA at that time, had this judgment of the situation:

The anarchy that prevailed in north China was a mutual distrust of power. In the Yangtze valley, however, they were protected by two governors, who were forced by fear of foreign powers to try to keep the peace in the areas under their jurisdiction, and this was protected by policy, not entirely protected in principle. At the local level, though, officials took action to punish those who opposed the church. But social unrest continues to mount in central China, and Chinese do little to hide anti-foreigner sentiment (Birrell 8 September 1900:142).

After news of the Christians being massacred in northern China (“The Situation in China” 14 July 1900: 25; “From China” 13 October 1900:203; “Our China Missions” 4 May 1901: 241),³ consulates ordered their citizens to leave the hinterland, including missionaries from the C&MA, and to evacuate to Shanghai (Birrell 8 September 1900:142). During this period, the missionary stations of the C&MA were successively attacked to varying degrees. For example, the parishioners in Nanling, Anhui, fled for shelter, while the teachers in the missionary school were arrested and detained by the Qing army, and their personal property and missionary property were looted (Parmenter 1900:327-328; Funk 1901:338).⁴ A parishioner in Qingyang, Anhui province, kept his faith even before he was arrested and was

² For example, from April to July 1900, religious cases occurred one after another in Hengyang, Qingquan and other counties of Hunan Province. Action against the local British Church of London and the Catholic anti-church movement became popular, and the villagers around them became xenophobic, destroyed the church, and robbed most of their property. (The first historical archives of China and the History Department of Fujian Normal University 583-586).

³ Since the C&MA missionaries in the North China Diocese were almost all killed, only a few of them fled. After the news reached the C&MA in the Central China Diocese, they were experiencing the tension of the anti-church movement. The C&MA missionaries in North China mainly came from Sweden (around 30), as well as more than 10 missionary stations and more than 100 local Christians. Most of them suffered severe persecution. At least 18 missionaries and almost the same number of children died in the massacre.

⁴ The persecution in Nanling included the Catholic and Anglican Church, among which three Catholics were beheaded by the Qing army.

beheaded while praying in a church (Funk 1901:338).⁵ In Wanchi, Anhui province, the missionary assistants were repeatedly intimidated and evicted from their churches (Funk 1901:338). Gospel churches and street churches in Changde and Changsha in Hunan province, were vandalized one after another. Zhang Ruzhou, a preacher, and his family fled back to Fuzhou after being tortured.⁶ At the time, when the missionaries learned that the parishioners in Hunan were facing persecution, E.D. Chapin and F.B. Brown organized rescue efforts, taking in the persecuted parishioners in large ships along the Han River (Birrell 8 September 1900:142). In addition, B.H. Alexander of Changsha transferred to Hankou to take care of his parishioners (“Reinforcements” 1902: 374). And the mission committee of the American C&MA headquarter, stated the position of the C&MA in China:

- a. The current uprising in China has seriously disrupted missionary activities, but there is no good reason to be discouraged. Missionary work in China should be resumed as soon as possible and plans should be made for it.
- b. We should not stand on the defensive side of missionary work. We should immediately write letters to churches and believers around the country, reaffirming the sacred authority and mission of missionary work to the current situation of China, and summoning believers of the church to rebuild and expand the scope of missionary work. The letter pointed out the value of the high loyalty of missionaries and Chinese believers who had suffered severe persecution and encouraged them to continue to pray.
- c. It is neither necessary nor expedient to recall missionaries back from China. They should be waiting in China's coastal ports or in Japan, ready to offer advice and comfort to Christians.
- d. Given the current missionary relationship with civil rights, the board unanimously approved a protest to Washington Congress against the proposed withdrawal of the combined armies from Beijing and the restoration of the Empress Dowager, which would be disastrous for the mission. But we have also made it clear publicly that missionary work does not require an army, that the duties of the government are

⁵ There are also some local Christians who are afraid to show their religious identity.

⁶ Zhang Ruzhou was a member of the missionary group of C&MA Rev. R.G. Woodberry in ShouZhen Church in Tianjin. Later, he sent his wife to Changsha to preach in 1899. Zhang Ruzhou was led by his classmate Li Shuqing. They were classmates of Beiyang Western Medical School. They successively converted by baptism through the work of R.G. Woodberry. They also served as military medical officers in the Qing government. In 1899, the diversity of the evangelical work of Shouzhen Church in Tianjin and the wide range of their evangelical work focused on Tianjin and Beijing, and sent Chinese evangelists to work nearby. Later, their evangelists expanded to central and south China. Zhang Ruzhou was also inspired. He was sent to preach the gospel in central China by the missionary group of Shouzhen Church in Tianjin. He boarded more than 1000 freighters along the Yangtze River and gave tens of thousands of Gospels to the crews until he was stationed in Changsha, Hunan Province. When they first arrived in Changsha, because of their provincial status, they were strongly discriminated against by the local people. They faced hostility and were severely treated by the government (“Our Foreign Mail Bag” 1912:345; K.C. Woodberry 1900:157).

separate from missionary work, and that the "sword" has not been entrusted to any church organization ("Resolutions Adopted" 1900:268).

It can be seen that in the face of this huge disaster, the American C&MA did not take a hostile stance, but decided that politics and missionary work should be clearly separated, that missionary work did not need military protection, and that missionaries should be allowed to return to the Chinese workshops at any time to make preparations. After the Boxer Uprising subsided, missionaries were given more opportunities to bring their message to the Chinese people. Concerned about the state of the faith of believers in China, the C&MA continued its missionary activities in China. When Rev. B.H. Alexander returned to Changsha, he felt that the attitude of the local officials had changed. In order to prevent the public from interfering with the missionary activities, the government gave strict orders not to harass foreigners. Compared with the previous situation, the anti-Christian situation now was quite different. The missionaries in Changsha recovered quickly. From the public sale of Gospel books and preaching, the number of people in the church increased by dozens, and the preaching effect was significantly improved (Alexander 1909:221). In early 1901, Zhang Ruzhou and his wife returned to Changsha from Fuzhou and set up a church on Shilan Street in the East Gate. Every morning and evening, people attended the church, including the gentry and local officials, which changed the anti-Christian attitude of the past.⁷ Therefore, since the spring of 1901, the missionaries of the Central China C&MA returned to the missionary stations. Although the two churches in Wuhu were reduced in the number of believers, the rest of the missionary stations, such as Wanchi, Nanling, Qingyang, Wuchang, Hubei and Changsha and

⁷ Zhang Ruzhou was one of the few Chinese Western doctors in Changsha at that time, which gave him the opportunity to be invited to the families of officials and gentry to give treatment to the patients, to establish good relations with some officials and gentry, and to preach the Gospel among them. However, it is worth noting that Zhang Ruzhou was not a preacher of the C&MA in central China. As mentioned above, he was a member of the Shouzheng Church (after the Boxer Uprising, the Shouzheng Church in Tianjin was relocated to Sichuan Road, Shanghai). In the early days, the church built by Zhang Ruzhou in Changsha worked independently from the missionary station outside the west gate of B.H. Alexander. Until 1903, after the deliberation of Pastor R.G. Woodberry, Pastor Al Keren and Rev. Birrell of the Central China C&MA took over the Church of Zhang Ruzhou and his wife. The reason why R.G. Woodberry asked Zhang Ruzhou to merge the Changsha missionary station into central China is not known because there is no information to confirm it. Perhaps it is because the missionaries decided that they did not have to work separately in Changsha. After Zhang Ruzhou finished handing over the work of Changsha missionary station, the couple returned to Fuzhou for missionary work. After that, they settled in Shanghai and worked as doctors in Shanghai Renji Hospital. However, he fell seriously ill and died in his thirties. Before he died, he gave custody of his son and three daughters to his eldest sister, Zhang Meizhen. When Zhang Meizhen was studying in the United States, she fell in love with Zhu Youyu, who later became a bishop. However, this love affair ended in nothing. She was deeply hurt and never married. She took good care of the orphans of her elder brother Zhang Ruzhou, one of whom was Zhang Pinhui. However, when Zhang Meizhen heard that Zhang Pinhui, who had just graduated from Nanjing Jinling Women's University, decided to marry a preacher, she strongly objected to it and published *Shenbao* to satirize and attack him. However, Zhang Pinhui finally married the preacher regardless of everything. This preacher was Watchman Nee, the founder of Christian Gathering. Zhang Meizhen had another adopted daughter, Zhang Dui, who married John Song, the sixth younger brother of John Song. The main references of Zhang Ruzhou are as follows ("New Progress in Hostile Hunan" 1902:271; Woodberry 1903:294; Chang 1909: 251; Lo 2014: 356; Wu 2012: 135-142).

Changde in Hunan, were restored as before (“Our Central China Mission” 1901: 316). After the Gengzi case, the C&MA believed that the Christian faith played a positive role in the difficulties of the church, not only testing the parishioners to adhere to the Christian faith, but also driving away the weak or unbelieving people in the church (“Brave Chinese Christians” 1901:111; Funk 1901:339).

A few years after the period, missionaries realized large variation of the social situation, "We have witnessed the progress of the missionary and of hope, which was begun in the early years of trial and suffering, especially in China, Changsha, no cities into strong resistance of the Gospel, may no cities can bear rich fruit in such a short time (Glover 1905:71-72). From this point of view, the change of attitude of local officials and gentry in central China after the Boxer Uprising was closely related to the church's immediate recovery and success. This phenomenon reflected that the local officials and people no longer treated Christianity violently, but protected the missionary activity, which was based on a kind of necessary measures to maintain social order. The government's power and responsibility is act for the nation's benefit and the future; therefore, Christianity had great influence and new development under Qing's rule



Picture 1: A group photo of Changsha C&MA in 1901
(“Research and Reference Material on the History of The North and Central China Mission of the C&MA, Volume One:1888-1934”:101)

2. Faith through means of public disaster relief

At the beginning of the summer of 1901, heavy landslides caused by continuous plum

rains and severe floods caused by the tidal surge of the Yangtze River turned a large area of land in Province County into a country of water: the mountainous areas of Sichuan Province in the west to the vast coastal plain south of Zhenjiang in Jiangsu Province were flooded. The provinces most severely affected were Hunan, Anhui and Jiangsu ("Field Notes" 9 November 1901:264). Eighteen prefectures and counties in Anhui suffered floods, which affected hundreds of thousands of people (Collection of China's first historical archives 1996:188). The victims had no food and made a living by looting ("Hungry people grabbing rice" 27th year of Guangxu). The C&MA missionaries saw that the victims had no food and most of them starved to death or sold their children to survive. There were also hundreds of victims who went to the gate of the Gospel Church in Wuhu for help (Parmenter 1902:130). At that time, the Central China C&MA decided that in order to save lives, reduce social unrest and avoid the recurrence of anti-religious incidents, it was urgent to organize relief work (Christie 1902:172).

At the beginning of the C&MA's charity activities, beggars, mainly women and children, were gathered in the church. They were given clothes. At the same time, missionaries taught psalms and recited scriptures to preach, and finally provided lunch to ease the hunger. However, in the face of the severe disaster, the power of the C&MA was weak and it had limited resources to help the victims in the long term. They appealed to the C&MA in the United States to quickly help the victims by donating to the relief work in central China. Even the local newspaper in Wuhu advertised the Gospel Church as a place to send money and clothes (Woodberry 1902:46). In order to ensure that the missionaries provided disaster relief in an orderly manner, local officials and gentry took part in protecting the public order, made frequent inspections, prevented the victims from looting, and ensured the distribution of supplies to the victims. The local situation was stabilized (Christie 1902:172). Thereafter, the Central China C&MA set up a disaster relief committee to provide more effective relief. In the process of disaster relief, missionaries not only took the initiative to enter the disaster areas to give goods to the poor, but also cooperated with local officials and gentry to build roads and dikes along the river to prevent the flood from occurring again. At the same time, they adopted the method of "work relief" to help the starving people by using them as the local labor force. Hundreds of men, organized by missionaries, dredged waterways, or cleared land, or built roads, and then the missionaries gave them food according to amount of their work. This provided food for nearly 2,000 people a day. Additionally, in the hard-hit Nanling County, the C&MA marked the food stamps to prevent people from receiving repeated

supplies and each person had a record. At the same time, a lady missionary provided the women with two hours of sewing work each day and also preached to them. From the experience of disaster relief, the C&MA was well aware of the reality of China's problems. It not only helped the poor who had no labor force, but also provided jobs to prevent idlers from becoming robbers (Quinn 10 May 1902:269). Missionaries in central China pointed out in the disaster relief:

Although a year ago, the Chinese tried to kill and drive the missionaries from their land; But today some people are beginning to realize that missionaries really were friends. God has opened up for us a very real way in which we can repay good for evil by relieving the suffering of the victims from disaster (Christie 1902:172).

It can be seen that the C&MA took social disasters as a favorable opportunity to spread Christianity, and provided some job opportunities for the victims, thus expanding the evangelical influence of the church in the society ("Reinforcements" 1902:374). Compared with the memories of the Boxer Uprising, if the missionaries might have been worried, the response to the disaster relief in the Yangtze River basin relieved them. The missionary work in disaster relief also improved the relationship between the people and religions.

In 1902, after the flood in central China, cholera broke out on a large scale, especially in the Yangtze River. Cholera which was highly contagious, resulted in vomiting and diarrhea, weakened muscles and a high mortality rate. Local people commonly called it "ghost stealing meat" (Wuhu County Local Records Compilation Committee 1993:11). In Wuhu and Nanling, missionary areas of the C&MA, the plague grew more serious and more serious and caused a large number of deaths (Quinn 27 December 1902:353). When missionaries participated in the relief, they described the social scene at that time:

The air was filled with wailing, accompanied by the sound of gongs and cries for the dead. As the severity of the disease increased, so did idolatry and crying. Almost every door was decorated with red characters, yellow pouches tied around children's necks and yellow ribbons in women's hair to ward off the plague (Quinn 1902:353).

The Chinese people responded to the disasters by begging the gods to "avoid the ghosts of plague diseases" and holding various praying ceremonies and sacrificial activities. The C&MA missionaries in the church and on the street directly pointed out that the disaster came

from God's punishment; therefore, people should repent, and they called on people to abandon the local religion and turn to Christianity. Thus, weekly Gospel classes were held, which, in addition to singing songs and prayer, countered the local rituals with Bible lessons. Although the C&MA resettled the victims and provided them with material relief, to avoid the negative effects of "Rice Christians", the missionaries required the victims to take lessons in the Bible and examined their motives for a long time (Dyck 9 November 1912:88-89).

For years, central China experienced frequent floods along the Yangtze River. By the spring of 1910, famine following floods on the Yangtze River had engulfed millions of people in the provinces of Hunan, Hubei and Anhui. There was even unrest in Hunan, where the people regarded the officials and gentry as not doing anything, resulting in food shortage, looting and destruction everywhere, and the missionary stations of the C&MA in Changde and Changsha were looted and destroyed. Instead of seeking subsidy from the Qing government, the C&MA worked with believers in places such as Changsha, where there were famines, to provide seeds to reestablish farm production and build dams to prevent future flooding ("Central China" 1911:323). Additionally, missionaries in Nanling County, Anhui Province, provided 300 people with steady work through "work-relief" by digging a deep stream near the church to prevent the annual flood from damaging the houses along the stream during the wet season (Glover 27 July 1912:266). Even though there were rumors that Christians were responsible for lice and rice poisoning, in the work of the C&MA, there was a good relationship between the people and the church, and the Gospel was effective (Quinn 1902:357). In particular, the followers of the Nanling Alliance Church actively implemented relief measures to make neighbors and relatives eliminate their hostility to Christianity and turn to the Christian faith.⁸

The Rev. R.A. Glover described it: "The Christian charity of missionaries in central China overcame prejudice and won more people to accept the Gospel." (Glover 1903:331). In fact, in front of frequent floods and famines, the relief provided by the C&MA in Central China has been stretched thin. However, the conversion of the victims reflects a recognition

⁸ Huang Kun pointed out that "although Christianity has contributed to the charity in Anhui, there is also a unique story that the missionaries used the cover of church relief to do some shameless activities to deceive and oppress the people. In the summer and autumn of 1910, the Yangtze River was flooded and the Nanling Dike burst causing disaster. The Chinese Charity Association allocated a batch of relief funds and entrusted the C&MA foreigner Rev. Van Dyck to represent the relief. Fan used this huge sum of money to build church houses and preach to migrant workers under the pretext of "giving relief to work". After being exposed by the masses, Fan was unanimously opposed. Dyck had not yet set up a sermon in front of the street. In collaboration with the local hunting gentry Fan Dezhai, he used threats and other means to force the Lin family's old hotel to move. As a result, the Lin family was full of grievances and had no place to complain." However, the content of his discussion is different from that of the Missionary Association's archives, and the materials he quoted are Anhui literature and history data book (Wuhu volume) published by Fang Zhaoben in 2005, but Fang Zhaoben did not indicate the source of any materials (Huang 2019:80).

of the C&MA's work in local relief. It can be seen that the missionary work of the Central China C&MA in the disaster left an impression on the local people, which not only included evangelical preaching, but also involved in local disaster relief. This reflected the multiple meanings of Christian identity, which not only practiced the rescue concept of faith, but also transcended the conflicts between people and religion or the difference of ethnic identity (Alexander 1909:222).

II. The identity construction of the C&MA group

In local interpersonal interaction, the Central China C&MA participated in social charity with religious methods, which is not only a way for religious groups to obtain a social identity, but also a process by which to deepen their religious identity. Compared with those missionaries affected by sectarian system and concepts, the missionary operations of the C&MA in central China were more flexible and more malleable, so they needed strong internal guidance. In other words, after the Central China C&MA took shape, the missionaries realized that they must construct and shape a clear belief identity through specific actions in the network relationship within a "We Group", so as to maintain believers who obey the daily practice of religious requirements, to show to the outside world. Therefore, the internal meeting of the Central China C&MA was not only a mechanism to construct identity recognition, but also to guide various actions and strategies, thus forming the uniqueness of the church as perceived by the outsider.

1. Clarify the missionary beliefs of the C&MA

Since the end of the 19th century, the significance of the annual conference of the Central China C&MA was to gather missionaries to connect with each other in a networked manner. Through discussion, the common goals and practical plans of the C&MA were determined, and the effect of maintaining the faith identity of the C&MA was also maintained. In December 1903, the Central China C&MA held the most comprehensive and important meeting since the Missionary Mission in Wuhu, Anhui. A total of 31 missionaries attended the meeting in each mission station. Prior to the meeting, Rev. R.A. Glover of the Preparatory Committee visited various missionary stations and invited missionaries from the Central China C&MA to attend. At the beginning of this meeting, which was arranged by the headquarters of the C&MA in the United States, Rev. Glover took over the work of Rev. Wm. Christie, who was about to be transferred to the northwest district of the C&MA, and took

over as the chairman of the executive committee of the Central China C&MA. After that, the meeting mainly consisted of two parts: review and adjustment. The first was a summary of the previous year's work. "In recent years, missionary stations have been established in Wuhu, southern Wuhu, Wanchi, Nanling, Qingyang, Datong, Wuchang, Changsha, Changde and Xiangtan in central China. At present, there were 36 missionaries, 157 people who received Holy Communion, 14 local missionary assistants, and about 350 Sunday school and church school students. In the past year, a total of 53 people were baptized and 168 were the ones wanted to know the gospel" (Woodbetty 1904:232).

Due to the heavy workload, the number of missionaries was too small to open up any more missionary stations. In addition to fulfill the request of the headquarters of the C&MA to provide more missionaries, the missionaries considered the establishment of a training mechanism for missionaries to be the key work during this period. In the past, missionaries trained local missionary assistants to help the church. However, their knowledge and ability were limited. Therefore, Rev. R.A. Glover proposed to set up a Bible school in central China to systematically train missionaries. The campus was to be located in Wuchang. In terms of adjustment, the Central China C&MA moved its headquarters from Wuhu to Wuchang in order to support the western expansion of central China and take into account the missionary work in Hunan, considering that Wuchang was more "central" in geography (Woodbetty 1904:232; "Extracts from Annual Report of President of the C. and M.A" 1904:358).

In addition, Rev. R.A. Glover put forward the theme of "mature spirituality" and "Gospel development", which outlined the concept of "four gospels" of the American C&MA, that is, focusing on the concept of spiritual sanctification of believers (Selections from the Annual Report, C&MA 1905:297-298). After the conference, Rev. R.A. Glover made a tour of various mission stations to effectively understand the situation of the stations, and urged the church to implement the theme of the annual conference. He launched a number of specific instructions, which are as follows:

- a. **ACCESSIONS.** It will be seen that again the number of baptisms which this field has to report is not large, only a little in advance of the previous year. While we long to be able to tell of much larger numbers turning to the Lord and being received into reception of few may really be claimed to be a truer evidence of a solid work than the reception of many. It will seem very paradoxical to some, and yet it is fact that with the increased openness of China to missionary effort the problem of building up a truly spiritual work is becoming harder and harder and harder. Where a few

years ago the missionary and his work were shunned contemptuously, now they are zealously courted by thousands who hope through connection with them to gain influence for private ends, such as law-suits, employment and the like. This state of things make the reception of members exceedingly difficult, inasmuch as the Chinese are adepts at disguising their real motives for an indefinite time, if necessary, under the cloak of honest inquiry into the Gospel. Hence the missionary again and again finds that his efforts have to be directed not toward getting people into the church, but rather keeping them out. And consequently, even sincere inquirers have to be subjected to a prolonged period of probation. Missionaries themselves differ considerably in their policy and practice as to lending their influence and protection to Chinese members and inquirers in certain temporal affairs. Our own mission takes a strongly conservative stand, with the result that its growth numerically is not as rapid as that of some others. It is safe to say that by adopting practices which some regard as legitimate but which we consider as compromising, we could report several times as many accessions, but at the expense of we need to pray for a wave of the Holy Spirit to break in genuine convicting power upon multitudes who already are familiar with the Word of the Gospel!

- b. SPIRITUAL GROWTH. Within the Church there is not a little to cheer and encourage. Some cases there have been, it is true, of sad failure among the members, requiring more or less discipline, and causing the missionary much sorrow of heart. Yet by far the larger number of the Christians have shown signs of spiritual growth, and some, by their consistent walk and testimony, have been a joy to their leaders and a true witness to their heathen neighbors. Some churches have a better record than others, the difference being due in part to the fact that our shortness of workers has deprived several stations of regular pastoral care, and in part to external surroundings. It is far easier to have a pure and earnest church on an interior station than in a port, where, sad to say, many more evil influences have to be combatted. All things considered; we justly claim that our Chinese Christians compare by no means unfavorably with those of the homeland.
- c. OFFERINGS. With the aim of self-support always well in view, the duty and privilege of Christian giving have been faithfully emphasized, and with very gratifying results. The native offerings, all told, amounted to about \$375.00, an increase of 50 per cent, over the previous year, and being in the ratio of nearly \$2 per church member. Concerning many of these contributors it can be said as of the Macedonians that "their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality," and we are much encouraged to feel that these infant churches are pressing onward bravely and in the right spirit toward bearing their own financial burdens.
- d. SCHOOLS. The number of scholars in Sunday schools has advanced from 295 to 364. The drop in the number of day schools is due to a decision of last conference to

raise considerably the standard of these schools. New curriculum and regulations have been drawn up, and the closing of some schools is only a preparatory measure toward reopening them on a better and more self-sustaining basis.

The boys' and girls' boarding schools, in charge of Miss Quinn and Miss Parmenter respectively, are intermediate between the day school and the training schools for native workers. Both have made substantial progress during the year, and no part of our whole work is more encouraging than is this. Nineteen larger and twenty-two girls of bright intellect have been under thorough secular and religious training, and give promise of supplying some efficient teachers, preachers and Bible-Women in the future. Miss Parmenter, in addition, has under her care the training school for women, which is now in a fair way toward meeting the long and sorely felt need of trained female helpers. The twelve women at present under instruction have been sent from the different stations, and we see in them God's gracious answer to many prayers.

No regular mission funds are appropriated for any of these three schools, which are supported by special voluntary contributions. The scholars are not indulged to laziness by over-support, but are required to do all that is practicable toward meeting their own expenses. A new industrial department in needlework is proving a success in needlework is proving a success in enabling a number of the women and girls to earn their own board while attending school. The Lord has in many marked and beautiful ways supplied the financial needs of these two sisters' special work. Miss Parmenter has stood to Godward in faith for much needed new buildings for step the Lord is enabling her to add the necessary dormitories and classrooms.

The men's training school is not yet begun, but plans are rapidly maturing for it. The Lord recently in a most striking manner brought into our hands a property adjoining the chapel premises at Wuchang, and well suited for this school. Quite a little sum is still needed to erect a proper building, but we pray and believe that the coming year will see the school equipped and everything made ready for its beginning.

- e. **BOOK SALES.** A new feature in our report this year, though not new in our work, is the sale of Gospels and tracts, amounting to several tens of thousands. This serves to give some idea of evangelistic work done on the stations and in the surrounding districts by itinerancies. Everywhere the books have had a ready sale, and thus the Gospel has found its way into thousands of homes which could not be reached by direct contact.
- f. **NEW MISSION CENTER.** Ever since the resolution was passed at last conference in favor of changing the mission headquarters to Hankow and Wuchang, and later was approved by the Home Board, we have prayerfully sought its accomplishment, and rejoice to be able already to report progress. There lines are now being written from the new center at Wuchang, whither the chairman has just removed from Wuhu,

and where, until we are able to secure the necessary property across the river at Hankow, the office and business department for Central and Western China missions will be conducted. Mr. Laraway is temporarily discharging the duties of this post, and we believe that our prayers for a permanent business manager will soon be answered. Meanwhile the receiving home remains at Wuhu, with Miss Morgan in charge, and further changes will be made as the Lord directs and provides.

- g. OUTLOOK. It will be seen from the foregoing that Central China is greatly in need of reinforcements. We doubt whether any other Alliance field abroad, except it be Africa, perhaps, is as short of workers for its already established work. Two of our stations are without any; two number, Mr. and Mrs. Shantz, Miss Quinn, Young and Morgan, have completed full terms on the field and should go on furlough. We pray and hope that the means will soon be provided for at least three of these to go home. And yet the answer to our prayers will mean more vacant posts. We urgently need, then reinforcements from home. We have long and earnestly pleaded with the Lord of the Harvest for them, and we do believe He must soon thrust them forth. It is a mistaken idea that Central China is already a fully occupied mission field. Even in An-Huei, entered so long ago, a recent trip of less than a week on foot out from our present stations took us to three walled cities and three times that many smaller towns and markets without any missionary work whatever. And in Western Hunan, around and beyond Chang-The, stretches a wide area with only the beginnings of work at two or three points. We long to enter and press on, and so we reach out our hands across the sea, and plead for many to come to our help-by your prayers, your gifts, your persons, yea, to the help of the Lord against the mighty (Glover 1905:264-266).

Obviously, Rev. R.A. Glover promoted the specific plans of the local churches, which showed that the missionaries in this period were the decision makers of the key bills of the local churches. They not only had a profound review and adjustment of the church in the past, but also stipulated that the local churches should follow the principle of self-reliance in the future, establish training based on spirituality, continue to engage in preaching activities, and open up missionary areas as their own responsibilities, so as to promote the development of the Chinese Church to identify with the meaning and the role of the C&MA.



Picture 2: The Meeting of C&MA in Central China in 1907
(Report for 1907 Central China Mission Christian and Missionary Alliance:1)

2. Institutionalization of the C&MA's identity

In the late Qing Dynasty, the religious identity of the "Christian" was different from the expression of the religious identity of the common people. For this reason, the C&MA not only formulated the specific vision of the church, but also based on the institutionalization of religious requirements and education, standardized the daily life of believers, which was consistent with the beliefs of the mission, so as to form a "Christian" identity.

1) The change of identity under the church system

From 1905 to 1910, the central China conference of the C&MA continued the previous idea that each missionary station promote the work of reviving the church. What is the meaning of reviving? That is, the church specified that the believers have good characters, that there be spiritual awakening and separation from sin at least once a week in the study of the Bible, and shaped the religious system of observing the discipline of Sunday as a holy day (Birrel 1906:9-10; "Report of the Central China Conference of the Christian and Missionary Alliance for 1905" 256; Dyck 1909:161-162; Stewart 1910:81). In fact, in the view of preachers, it was not easy for the C&MA followers to abandon the traditional social values, folk customs and norms, turn to the Christian way of belief, and comply with the new religious principles of human life. Therefore, the Central China C&MA required the followers to have a steady church life, so that Chinese Christians could stand and grow up in the face of

persecution, taboo, temptation and social pressure through praying which is an important part of church activities (Dyck 1909:162). In addition, the change of religious identity involved the ideological level. Many Christians did not know much about the doctrine, leading to the return to the old religious concepts and behaviors. Therefore, the C&MA strictly checked the moral standards and Christian faith of believers every year before accepting their qualification to receive the Holy Communion.⁹ From this point of view, the revival of the church, which the C&MA valued, was not only the change of the identity of the church people, but also the change of religious thought. It played an important role in the conviction and practice of Christianity by transforming its original religious thought system with a steady way of life of the church people.

Apart from the role of preachers in training followers, the rest of them were trained by local missionary assistants. In view of the central China mission that only those who have passed the examination can become missionary assistants, missionaries in every quarter and in every year's parliament stipulated that the moral standards and biblical knowledge of missionary assistants should be examined before they could enter the C&MA, continue to work and become a paid preacher or volunteer assistant (Alexander 3 December 1910:145-146; "Annual Report of the President of the Christian and Missionary Alliance" 1906:365). In this way, even if preachers assigned Chinese missionary assistants to open up or garrison missionary stations, they also established the training system of the church, so as to avoid the phenomenon of the "Rice Christian" (Quinn 1911:81-82; Alexander 8 October 1910:30). It can be seen that the missionary assistant's responsibility was not only to manage the daily affairs of the church, but also to maintain a moral witness in life ("Annual Report of the President of the Christian and Missionary Alliance" 1906:365).

On the material side, the missionaries required the local missionaries to study the dedication of the missionaries and pay attention to the simple life of poverty and confidence. The C&MA stipulated that the salaries of the missionaries and local missionaries were not to be large.¹⁰ In addition, each church followed the C&MA's money giving system:

⁹ The high rate of suspensions and expulsions from the C&MA shows the strict discipline of the church. For example, according to the statistics of the Central China Conference of the C&MA in 1905, 44 people were baptized, 11 people suspended and 16 people expelled, which shows the high proportion (MacGillivray 1907:365).

¹⁰ Missionaries of the C&MA live frugally and are content to be at the basic level of society, identifying with the laboring masses. Most of the missionary assistants they lead are also trained in this way. As stated in Rev. M.B. Birrel's autobiography, "Each missionary received a monthly allowance of \$25 for living and personal expenses, as well as missionary funds for each delivery. It is not uncommon for all subsidies to be reduced proportionately when funds are insufficient. We go abroad with our faith, work with our faith, and live frugally with our faith. Here's a story: "When I saw Mr. Lu to become full-time ministry person, I am very pleased. He is also like ordinary people really liking beautiful clothes. Once, when he was an assistant, he thought that he should wear a silk waistcoat, like in other churches in

Dr. Xuan Xin was the first person to establish the system of faith commitment guarantee. It helps our people to exercise their confidence in dedication at home and train themselves in the generous grace. Through this system, the C&MA has the highest donation record among all sects. After missionary work in China, this method has also become popular in our Chinese churches (“The Economics of Missions” 13).

Although most of the people in each missionary station were poor people, through preaching in Sunday service and Sunday school, the believers' spirit of tithing was shaped and supported the funding of the church. For example, the missionary station of the C&MA was building church buildings, the rest of the Christians usually provided tithe or labor assistance (Quinn 1905:457; “Annual Report of the President of the Christian and Missionary Alliance” 1906:365). It can be seen that the believers in the C&MA were not all “Rice Christians” as the society imagined.

Furthermore, in 1903, the C&MA emphasized the following of baptism and communion, which became the watershed of believers' faith. That is to say, the church ceremony was a sign of identity, and it was also a distinction between a Christian and secular identity. According to the observation of preachers, for many years, most of the pilgrims came to the church with material motives. The C&MA did not refuse them to come to the church, but the list of the church was divided into two groups: Pilgrims and Baptized (Alexander 3 December 1910:146). Once a pilgrim applies to be baptized into the church, he must go through a year's examination, that is, to give up the traditional customs of idolatry and ancestor worship, to learn the Christian doctrine, and to recognize the Charter of believers' obligations (Ekvall 1904:137). Therefore, for Chinese believers, the baptism ceremony was an important moment in their lives. It was a kind of proof to their relatives and friends that they officially acknowledged their Christian identity. The daughter of Mr. M.B. Birrel priest recalled in Changsha:

"Whenever the Christian baptism ceremony is going to be held, a large group of people, including the common people and the gentry, will gather at the scene. They call the baptism ceremony a foreign act. It was a long liturgy, with admonition, teaching and singing. When the pilgrims were baptized, a new feeling came to their hearts. They were moved and wept. The Christians continued to sing and the pagans made their comments.

Changsha local missionaries to wear the sort of, so to a higher salary. I asked Mr. Lu, 'Is the house I live in the same as the house of other missionaries in Changsha?' 'No,' he admits, 'but the weather is too hot.' I showed him the frayed cuffs on my jacket. 'Other missionaries also wear that dress?' 'No,' he said, 'I understand, I understand. The Lord's use of us is the most important thing for His service, and nothing else is important' "(Birrell 1981:12, 32).

"("Miss Marion Birrel-informant, using unpublished notes of her parents, Taped April 12, 1962":40)

According to the missionary's experience, this change of identity required participation in the Eucharist ceremony to show a change in behavior.

The C&MA stipulated that after baptism, believers must observe the communion ceremony. Each church decided the time of communion. It could be held every Sunday or every month. The C&MA's communion ceremony was solemn, with the main purpose of self-reflection, repentance, holiness and the hope of Christ's return (Stewart 1910:81). Therefore, the Eucharist ceremony was a symbol of faith which distinguished between Christians and non-Christians, that is, the recipients of the Eucharist were requested to accept the Christian faith embedded in their secular life, and are supervised and regulated by the church in the choice of work and marriage. According to the missionaries of the C&MA, the recipients of the Eucharist represented a high level of spirituality and were the backbone of the church ("Annual Report of the President of the Christian and Missionary Alliance" 1906:365).

The church group's Sunday gathering included all the believers: baptized, children and pilgrims. However, only the baptized participated in the Holy Communion and they asked the followers who violated the religious rules to repent and be accepted by the presider of the Holy Communion. For example, when the Rev. M.B. Birrell of the Changsha missionary station presided over a holy communion, a believer came to him crying and confessed that he was not allowed to receive the Holy Communion. There were three reasons: he didn't fulfill his duty of tithe, neglected daily prayer, and didn't faithfully testify of faith in Christ. When he confessed his sin, he was restored to take the sacrament and asked many believers to learn from the example (Birrell 1908:89). Because of this strict discipline, missionaries described that the believers of the church not only had to go through the repentance of "crying and tears", but it also had the effect of gradual revival of "humility" ("Report of the Central China Conference of the Christian and Missionary Alliance for 1905":256-257). Although the sacrament of the C&MA is relatively simple, its significance lies in maintaining the religious identity of the C&MA and their secular life style.

2) Identity reconstruction under the educational mechanism

The preaching model of Central China C&MA was daily sermons and church meetings. In

terms of educational mechanism, missionary schools had a great influence on the morality and spirituality of parishioners. Despite the educational reforms of the New Deal, Western-style education was widely welcomed in places such as Wuchang in central China (China Continuation Committee, Special Committee on Survey and Occupation 1985:241). However, the Central China C&MA had always been conservative in its philosophy of running a school.

The topic of school often appears in our discussions. Although we are essentially evangelical missionaries, we still need to do some educational work. First of all, at the request of most Christians, we need to educate the children of our church members. Second, we need to provide equipment for local workers, which is urgently needed by C&MA in Central China. We must do so, which means that more missionaries are needed for education and evangelical work (Dyck 1909:162).

Obviously, the C&MA's schools in central China were mainly for the purpose of educating believers and as a supplementary method of missionary work. They also recruited non-Christians and led them to believe in religion (Alexander 3 December 1910:145). It is undeniable that missionaries emphasized the work of missions and education, and the difference lay only in the different ways of spreading Christian faith (Dyck 1909:162). During the New Deal period, missionary schools of the C&MA were divided into day schools and boarding schools. There are two types of day schools, the difference between which was not only whether students lived in school or not, but also the level of school education. Day schools were mainly primary enlightenment education. The central China Mission Society had set up five missionary schools, including Nanling men's junior school, Wuchang junior school, Wanchi junior school, Datong junior school and Wuhu women's junior school ("Central China, Annual Report" 12 September 1908:392-393). In day schools, missionaries and several Chinese teachers were generally responsible for the daily teaching courses. Besides the Chinese teachers' teaching of *The Thousand Characters Classic* and elementary Confucian classics, missionaries mainly taught reading the Bible and C&MA questions and answers course (Dyck 13 January 1912:233; Ekvall 1939:156). The missionary pointed out the educational effect of the day school: "with good discipline and evangelical education, their parents did not raise any objection. On the last night of the semester of Wuchang junior school, six older boys stood up to express their thirst for the Savior." (Glover 1904:136).

The purpose of the C&MA was to train teachers and missionary assistants of Western missionaries in junior schools. After 1902, the C&MA successively established Clara Comey Memorial School and boys' school in Wuchang (Stewart 1910:81; Alexander 8 October

1910:30; Local Chorography Compiling Committee of Hubei Province 1997:356-360). Its educational system was relatively standardized, including mathematics, geography and science, Bible courses, and preaching skills, so boarding schools had a more distinctive tone of religious education (Alexander 8 October 1910:30). They were very satisfied with the high school education that the missionaries had devoted themselves to: "the six students of the first batch of graduates of Wuchang men's middle school are now teaching in our missionary station day school. They are the real sons of C&MA in terms of work, doctrine and spirit." (Dyck 13 January 1912:233). Therefore, as far as church education was concerned, it not only preached the gospel of Christ to the local youth, but also cultivated the second generation of Christian children gradually shaping their thoughts and personalities. In the long-term teaching practice, it enabled students to participate in religious activities and preach in the field, so as to have a solid foundation of faith (Report for 1907 Central China Mission Christian and Missionary Alliance 21; Alexander 3 December, 1910:145). It is worth noting that Rev. R.A. Glover was extremely strict in designing the missionary school curriculum of the C&MA, and was firmly opposed the teaching of English curriculum. This became the education policy of the missionary schools of the Central China C&MA (W. G. Davis transcription of oral history 1962:24). The original intention of missionaries not to teach English was due to the worry that students would be easily attracted by various high-income industries when they read English, when the purpose of missionary schools was to train Christians and missionary assistants. Moreover, in the view of the missionaries, English skills were not suitable for missionary workshops in China.¹¹ Therefore, the C&MA schools did not offer English courses, which was a kind of special training for the successors of missionaries, not for the secondary school students. It was precisely because the C&MA in central China had a conservative orientation in school education, that the vast majority of its missionaries' assistants were not highly educated.¹²

The C&MA in central China also provided primary and secondary education and provided a training mechanism for local missionary assistants. Although there was a training system for local missionary assistants, the early apprenticeship method could not carry a lot of

¹¹ During the educational reform of the New Deal, people in important cities such as Wuchang had a strong desire for English, which also influenced many students to drop out of missionary schools of the missionary church because they were not as good as those of the Anglican Church to offer English courses (*Report for 1907 Central China Mission Christian and Missionary Alliance* 24-25).

¹² The C&MA's Yangzheng Middle School later became a representative of the conservative fundamentalists in Wuchang, receiving students from similar denominations such as the Baptists and Quakers. The school also transferred students to Bible school after graduation. In 1929, however, the C&MA in Central China decided to close the Yangzheng Middle School and devote all its efforts to improving theological training (W. G. Davis transcription of oral history 1962:25).

educational work, so the training work was extremely urgent, and it was necessary to set up a school system of Bible education. First, missionaries pursued women's ministry for women advocating for local women believers to take up missionary work; therefore, the training of female missionaries was very important. The early female missionary assistants were selected and trained as Bible-Women. However, they were poorly educated and largely illiterate. In order to make them literate, missionaries assigned special personnel to take charge of this work. In Nanling, in 1904, a "Zhengguang women's training school" was set up by a lady missionary, Mary ("Central China, Annual Report" 1908:392). The school had a literacy course and had the students practice rural preaching, so as to evaluate the students' preaching ability and employ excellent preachers to become paid preachers ("The Alliance work at Nanling Hsien" 1912:72-73). Compared with male missionaries, Bible-Women played an auxiliary role, rarely participated in the pioneering church and the established church, but most of them took part in the clerical work on a voluntary basis. However, Bible-Women played an important role in the internal work of the church. The missionary said, "once the Bible-Women get sick, the work will be greatly restricted, especially in visiting families." ("Report for Central China (Cont.)" 1912:376). In addition, after the missionary training, Bible-Women were responsible for many women's ministries, such as Bible study class and Sunday school (Alexander 8 October, 1910:18).

After five years of Rev. R.A. Glover's preparation and planning, the Bible School of the Central China C&MA received funding from W.E. Blackstone. In January 1909, the Wuchang Blackstone Bible Institute was officially opened ("Central China, Annual Report" 1908:392; Davis 1909:275).¹³ The mission of the school was to train local missionaries and solved the shortage of missionaries in more than ten missionary stations in Central China, and provided a wide range of missionary work in rural areas ("Annual Report of the President and General Superintendent of the Christian and Missionary Alliance for the Year 1907-1908" 1908:192; Hilty 1908:339).¹⁴ At the beginning of the school, nine students were recommended by the C&MA from the three provinces. They were once cooks, paper factory leaders, soldiers, sons of local officials and sellers of holy books. The school offered two-year courses, mainly

¹³ Blackstone was a well-known representative of pre-millennialism in the United States, and wrote *Jesus Is Coming*. His running of the Stuart Foundation for Evangelism (which helped with worker training), funding of Bible training schools, and publication of evangelical texts, is fundamentalist in theological terms. By 1922, more than sixty organizations were working with him (Yao 2008:49-50).

¹⁴ Missionaries pointed out that the loss of many indigenous evangelists in the past year or two, in addition to death and the departure of missionary assistants, has greatly weakened the work of local churches. In 1908, the Parliament took special action to arrange the opening of a Bible school for men in Wuchang after the Spring Festival in January 1909, with more professional training.

teaching Bible, basic theology and preaching (Simpson 1910:146). On weekends or holidays, the school sent them out to preach, and every summer, they practiced preaching at various missionary stations in Hunan and Anhui to assist missionaries in their work. In addition, they also had independent internships to open up new churches and helped their followers to practice their Christian identity in their work (Stewart 1910:81; “Report for Central China (Cont.)”1912:378). It can be seen from the above that one of the most important features of providing a church education mechanism for the Central China C&MA was that missionaries always worked to promote the educational affairs of evangelization. After the institutionalization of church schools and Bible schools, it was to cultivate believers and missionary assistants to become the backbone of their ideology of conservative belief. In the words of missionaries themselves, "Our mission is to preach. We should always put education in a secondary position, or as the nurturer for evangelical work"(Alexander 3 December 1910:146). Therefore, the education system of the C&MA in central China was a decisive factor in shaping believers' identification with conservative beliefs and evangelical cause.



Picture 3: Blackstone Bible Institute, built in early 1909
("Blackstone Bible Institute" 1909:96)

III. Identify with the manifestation of the mission's identity

In order to help the followers of the C&MA have unity in the Chinese society, the missionaries tried on one hand to show the uniqueness of their faith, and on the other hand, they tried to enlarge the area where their faith was practiced through church growth. There was also a basic connotation that their religion was of higher priority than the interests and non-religious factors of the nation. Therefore, the spiritual gene of the conservatism of the

C&MA in social activities was the uniqueness of group identity.

1. Refusing to interfere with the boundaries of litigation

During the New Deal period of the late Qing Dynasty, the rural people in central China gradually turned from aversion to opening up towards to the C&MA's preaching. However, missionaries of the C&MA soon found that the identity of foreigners had a symbolic meaning of special rights and economic strength in China, especially attracting marginal people in the village community structure. As a result, believers were sometimes ridiculed as "Rice Christian", which was a greedy person making a living or making profits in the name of religious belief ("The missionary and His Mission, Another Testimony" 1901:180). What was most controversial was that missionaries were sometimes accused of transgression, interference in litigation, and reckless religious behavior, which infuriated local officials and gentry and stimulated people's anti-religious activities (Lu 1966:5-7). For this reason, in order to avoid the conflict between the church and the people, the C&MA made a public statement in 1901. In principle, the C&MA did not intervene in local litigation, and refused to provide help in civil disputes. Even if the local government was unfair and biased, it could not intervene in litigation for this reason, they further stressed:

To the charge that missionaries have excited hostility by interfering in native litigation in the interests of their converts in courts of justice, we need only say that even by the Chinese officials themselves this charge is rarely preferred against the Protestant section of the missionary body. In flagrant cases of persecution, missionaries have felt it their duty to support members of their churches, and it cannot be denied that occasionally natives have secured the influence of the foreigner in an unworthy cause. But interference in native litigation as such, receives no support from the principles and practice of the general body ("Statement by the Protestant Missionaries in China on the Present Crisis" 1901:114).

Moreover, the C&MA's principle of non-interference in litigation was to establish a different position from Catholicism. Since 1898, Catholic missionaries had taken a missionary strategy of defending the people, or to fighting for the people in order to get the people to trust them. Once the civil litigation was successful, more and more believers would get protection, but the conflict would also become more and more fierce. In the view of the C&MA, this kind of the strategy of evangelism was controversial. The Boxer Uprising incident was caused by the abuse of power and arrogance of Catholic missionaries ("Field

Notes” 2 November 1901:250; Birrell 1906:401). Therefore, the C&MA in central China believed that adopting the same measures would inevitably confuse the differences between Catholicism and Christianity, and they would be regarded as birds of a feather by the Chinese people. The missionaries believed that if they did not intervene in the litigation, the relationship between the people and the church would be peaceful (“Field Notes” 2 November 1901:250). In addition to the internal resolution, the C&MA in central China also responded to the call of Griffith John of the London mission to establish a Protestant union in central China. The main purpose was to "unite with Christianity to realize the mission of common missionary in China, and to resist a strong and stubborn Catholic enemy, especially by refusing to intervene in litigation, so as to draw a clear line between believers and Catholicism."("Union Work in China"1900:78). In early 1902, Miss Annie M. Young of Wanchi C&MA missionary station was invited to a believers' homes for the Spring Festival. A woman in the church encountered an economic dispute among the villagers and asked Annie M. Young for help. Annie M. Young refused her, so she turned to the local Catholic Church. Because of this woman's great influence among rural women, she had led many women to the C&MA. When she openly turned to the Catholic Church, the believers of the C&MA were put to the test. Annie M. Young publicly stated in the church, "we do not allow anyone to do anything wrong, and the weakness of Catholicism will allow things against justice, just to protect the people and all kinds of evil things."(Young 1902:226).

In December 1902, the Central China C&MA held the first meeting of local missionaries and leaders to discuss this issue. In the keynote report of "missionary's duties, secular pursuit and litigation relationship", Rev. Wm. Christie, the chairman of the C&MA executive committee, severely condemned the missionaries with "sacred duties" for being involved in lawsuits, and stipulated that those with secular interests should not stay in church work. When the Chinese converted to Christianity, they were still Chinese nationals and must follow the legal procedures of the country (Quinn 1903:111). In view of this, the missionaries made it clear that the missionaries' principle of non-interference in litigation was that the treaties of western countries in China were only applicable to foreigners. For example, Principal She of Nanling women's School of the C&MA was removed by the central China mission society when she was involved in civil litigation (Dyck 13 January 1912:233). Mrs. Z.C. Beals, a missionary of Wuhu C&MA, sometimes told her daughter that she would refuse any women who just came to the church to give gifts. One day a woman arrived at the church and gave her a hen. In order to prevent the church from getting involved in any disputes of interest, the

missionary paid her much more than the price of the hen, but she never saw the woman come to the church again. It turned out that the woman wanted to get a business card from the missionaries, so that she could give it to the government hearing her family case as proof of the protection of "foreign privilege" (Cassidy 1962:18). From this point of view, the missionaries attached great importance in examining the believers' religious motives and consciously took the responsibility of safeguarding the rights and interests of the church.

In June 1903, the missionary organizations in Hunan realized the necessity of mutual support and cooperation, and held the first Missionary Conference in Hunan, which also included the participation of missionary representatives of the C&MA. The conference reached an important consensus, that is, the Christian Church of China should make every effort to avoid any form of interference in China's litigation and should restrict missionaries from involvement in the political and diplomatic fields of activities. In the past, the Chinese who joined the church because of intervention in litigation were often lawless elements among the residents. Even if they came to the church, the missionaries had to pay special attention to their behavior, so as not to disrupt the religious function of the church and were used by them.¹⁵ In the view of the missionaries, the changes of Hunan itself brought opportunities for missionaries. However, the missionaries had to avoid creating "Rice Christian", which became a pastoral work rather than evangelism.

In view of the complexity of the Chinese believer's interpersonal relations and civil disputes, when they were bullied and oppressed by the local party and neighbors because of becoming Christians, the missionaries consciously had to bear the responsibility of defending them, rather than taking the method of litigation. In their view, since the rule of man and justice were unfair, they should follow the way of Christ to resolve the conflict (Dyck 1909:162). Miss M. J. Quinn said: In order to prevent them from being forced to give up their faith, the church should offer prayers and comfort to the persecuted Chinese believers, so that they can identify with the Christian faith held by the missionary (Quinn 1903:111). Therefore, the C&MA in central China believed that non-intervention in litigation was not only to avoid interfering in the real interests of the church people, but also the conservative position of the church in dealing with personal disputes. From this perspective, refusing to intervene in

¹⁵ The meeting was attended by the C&MA, the China Inland Mission, The Cambalon Presbyterian Church, The London Mission, The Presbyterian church of America, The Reformed Church of America, The United Evangelical Church Mission, The Methodist Protestant Church, The Methodist Church of Great Britain, The Finland Missionary Society, The Norwegian Lutheran China Mission, The Church Mission Society and the American Methodist Episcopal Mission (Gelwicks 1903:472-474).

litigation not only showed the conservative position of the C&MA, but also was a principle of its own, showing people a purely religious group.

2. The religious experience of Divine Healing

In light of the ministerial ideals of the Central China C&MA, what did it really mean to be a Christian? It was not only a theoretical problem, but also a practical religious requirement. Missionaries' beliefs basically followed the American C&MA's beliefs, especially when they sent new missionaries from the American C&MA to central China. They paid attention to the Four-fold gospel "When we come into contact with these new preachers, they will urge us to witness the quadruple Gospel with excellence, perseverance, pragmatism and piety." (Kuykendal 1905:713). The Four-fold Gospel is the concept advocated by the A.B. Simpson, that, "Christ is the Savior, the sanctifier, the healer and the coming king" (Simpson 1890). In 1904, at the annual meeting of the Central China C&MA, it was put forward that "deepening spiritual life is to turn on the" searchlight ", starting with missionaries and then local believers" (Woodbetty 1904:232). This left a deep impression on the audience. In later discussion on the theme of "God our healer", the missionaries believed that the goal of the Central China C&MA was to inherit American C&MA as their spiritual authority (Woodbetty 1904:232).

First of all, missionaries inherited the belief of "Divine Healing" in the Four-fold Gospel, that is, God is the healer, and there is an inevitable relationship between the source of human disease and sin (Simpson 1903). In their work in China, they often cared for the sick, or gathered together on Sunday, visited their families to pray for God's forgiveness of sins in order to get the necessary medical treatment (Woodbetty 1904:232). Secondly, missionaries believed that the followers of the C&MA must have "spiritual gifts" to do their spiritual work. "Spiritual gifts" refer to daily religious responsibilities such as praying, learning the Bible and preaching the Gospel, as well as attending the annual revival (Birrell 9 March 1907:118; "Central China, Annual Report" 1908:373), where they invited famous enterprising family leaders such as Jonathan Goforth and Li Shuqing to lead the gathering. Their sermons focused on the themes of confession, holiness, the coming of the Lord, and divine healing (Drane 1906:313; Birrell 1909 157; Young 1909:325). In September 1905, in the annual meeting in Central China, the missionaries led the theme gathering of "Divine Healing". Eight believers accepted the missionary's "laying-on of hands" when praying, and declared that only

Jesus was their doctor, which left a deep impression on many believers present (Gunten 1906:9). At that time, missionaries were more active in practicing the belief of miraculous healing, and sometimes "miracles for patients" occurred in church groups (Birrell 1905:394). During the gathering, missionaries and believers told stories about the experience of miraculous healing one after another, believing that "Jesus is the greatest doctor" and encouraging people suffering from diseases to come to the gathering for medical treatment (Young 1905:456). It was also recorded that an opium addict in Hunan who was cured through collective prayer, and some pilgrims from Anhui were cured through the prayer of believers. Such stories were common in missionary work reports ("Central China, Annual Report" 1908:392-393). At this stage, the "Divine Healing" of the C&MA in Central China became a common phenomenon:

Every missionary station has witness of God's healing ability in Chinese and foreigners. At that time, some of us needed physical help and were anointed. In this way, they entrusted their bodies to God again, and he has shown his healing ability and faithfulness (Davis 1909:274).

Therefore, the C&MA's basic belief was that "Jesus Christ is the greatest doctor of human diseases". The mission never advocated starting any medical undertakings (Wuhan Local Chronicles Compiling Committee 1997:310). In the view of missionaries, the religious experience of divine healing was also helpful in spreading the Gospel ("Central China, Annual Report" 1908:392-393). During the visit, the missionaries saw that most of the families had experienced diseases, and most of them had been baptized after praying and experiencing divine healing ("Report for Central China (Cont.)" 1912:377). "In Jiuhua Mountain, idolatry has decreased. It inspires our confidence and draws our attention to God's healing power. They are saved from simple and serious diseases." (Dyck 13 January 1912:233). In the Chinese religious market, the value of the spiritual experience is widely recognized. When people heard of miraculous healing, stories were spread widely. In this case, the religious experience of the C&MA was also a kind of sermon, a testimony to God.¹⁶

According to the missionary's religious understanding, the religious experience of the

¹⁶ In addition, Rev. Shao Jingchuan of the Hunan C&MA said openings such as health care work is not always a missionary strategy: "a sermon about the country is with a special focus on the association, as for the tools, in addition to the bible, almost no social undertakings, or other method, can be called a tool for preaching. This is due to our purpose . . . our association specially focus on rural sermons and land clearing. The so-called hospital authority, is not important." (Shao 1925:75-78).

divine healing had the significant meaning of pastoral practice and deepening the spiritual life. It took one year for some believers to get treatment from illness. "God freed the family from illness. Between abandoning their idols and trusting a god that they could not see, it seems that they are quite easy to turn to the great doctor." (Birrell 1905:394). However, the missionaries of the Central China C&MA, with an open and balanced attitude, encouraged people to be open to divine healing, but did not think that everyone could experience divine healing. If someone was "[w]ithout God's confidence in healing, then he should go to the Christian doctor for help."¹⁷ Basically, the belief of divine healing was advocated by the C&MA and was also an expression in line with their ministry. For example, in the uncertainties and disasters of life, people might have a hard time in finding a good doctor for that problem, but the believers could get psychological relief in the process of seeking divine healing. Whether the religious practices were effective or not was not important. What was important in the life of the church was to meet God with faith and to gain spiritual experience. In other words, regarding miraculous healings, the C&MA did not lay particular stress on the treatment of external physical condition; they were concerned about the relationship between human disease and sin. They put people in the situation of a holy God responding to evil and pursued the possibility of sanctification of the spiritual life. Miracles were only incidental concrete results, not the major aim. In this way, in the process of missionary work, the C&MA never vigorously advocated the miraculous healings to promote the people's utilitarian mentality, but valued the miraculous healings as a witness to experience God and as a means by which people were released from sin and physical diseases. For the C&MA in central China, the religious experience of the divine healing was different from the general medical system. Instead, it was based on the concept of God's salvation and formed a practical model of evangelism and ministry. This gave the converted not only a profound religious experience, but also in their later life, a testimony about divine healing with which to spread the Christian faith.

3. The competition between Christianity and paganism

The early missionaries entered the local society of central China and naturally had daily religious contact with the people. In the eyes of missionaries, China was a place full of gods

¹⁷ Throughout his life, A.B. Simpson preached about healing, saying in his letter, "God's healing is for God's children, so that they may learn to trust God; but the medical mission is for the Gentiles, who know nothing about God, who must first be brought to hear the truth and learn to trust the Redeemer themselves." Instead of insisting that everyone should have the experience of a miraculous healing, he advised others to go to a doctor if they did not have faith ("Rev. A. J. Hansen Interview taped, unpublished notes, May 29, 1962":36).

and idols. No matter what they preached or taught local believers, they did not identify with Chinese religion and regarded it as a heresy full of idols (Lelacheur 1901:120; Shantz 1907:102). Because "idolatry" was part of Chinese people's daily life, the work of missionaries and missionary assistants often involved conversion from Chinese religion. Li Shensen was one of the earliest followers of the C&MA in Nanling County, Anhui Province. Under mentoring by missionaries, he became a missionary assistant. In his missionary life, there were many examples of praying, curing diseases, and driving out ghosts. One day in the spring of 1904, Li met a young man possessed by a "ghost". A few years ago, this young man begged for a son from the god in the God Temple in Nanling County. Soon after, he had two children in succession. So, he remembered his vows and decided to take his family with him to make a vow to the gods. Because it was a long journey, his wife didn't want the children to bear the hardships of travel. So, he took some of the children's clothes and presented them in front of the idol. When he came to the temple, his clothes were stolen while he was worshipping. He regarded this as a sign of displeasure from the god, because he did not bring his children with him, and was afraid that a terrible disaster would come to them. He took to fasting to beg for forgiveness, knelt down for three days, and asked the god to return his clothes. As a result, he had an abnormal reaction, foaming at the mouth, rolling on the ground, and his terrified wife did not know what to do. When Li Shensen heard about it, he went to the temple to find him and told his family how stupid it was to pray to the dumb idol. Only God can hear and can answer prayers. So, they went back to the church with Li, followed by a group of people. Li ordered the "dirty ghost" to leave in the name of Jesus, and there was an immediate change. The man was quiet and conscious. He cried the Lord for salvation and burned the things related to the gods. Then he got rid of the terrible delusion and fear and went home with a calm heart. After that, he decided to believe in Jesus and convert to Christianity (Jones 1905:712).

Although Li Shensen's exorcism was an inconceivable, supernatural phenomenon, it was still a ceremony witnessed by many. It was radical to demolish the idols, to oppose idolatry, and to turn to the true God. From then on, the story was transformed into prayer and testimony in church, marking a new form of religious practice. So according to the C&MA rules, strongly rejecting the idolatry of Chinese religions and abandoning these local religions was only the first step in the long process of conversion. They also hoped that the Chinese people would change their religious identity by learning doctrine and attending church meetings regularly. It was also seen that destroying the idols was not only a prerequisite for

converting to faith, but also a means of forming a competitive relationship with local religions. The C&MA had a strong stance against local religions other than Christianity. Both the pilgrims and the baptized had to follow strict church rules which prohibited worshipping other gods or ancestral tablets. In this way, the believers were required to show their identification with the Christian faith of the only true God. It could also be said that they refused to follow the traditional ways (Brow 1904:104; Birrell 12 October 1907:28).

As a matter of fact, at that time, there was no opposition to the conversion. First of all, the missionaries visited the pilgrims who had returned to their hometown, and set up missionary stations in places where there were many believers. One of them opened a church in Jiuhua Mountain, Qingyang County, Anhui Province, because hundreds of thousands of people went to the Buddhist temple on Jiuhua Mountain every September (Quinn 1910:289-290). For this reason, the missionaries described in detail the Buddhist culture of more than 150 temples in Jiuhua Mountain, and pointed out that "this holy mountain represents the essence of all superstitions and fears that hinder the Chinese people from accepting the gospel." (Dyck 1910:307). Every September, missionaries carried out their sermons in a planned way. They climbed mountains together with their missionary assistants, talked with pilgrims and monks along the way, and saw them practicing fervently in the temples, burning incense, praying for blessings, and doing a lot of fortune telling. In order to save those who "fall into darkness", the C&MA missionaries would pray in temples twice a day and sold books of the Gospels to people during their stay in the mountains (Dyck 1910:307-308). Even if the contact with the Chinese people was short and even if they didn't truly convert to Christianity, the C&MA missionaries did not stop their activities in the Jiuhua mountains. They believed that God had made changes there and the number of pilgrims decreased year by year, which was the proof of the effectiveness of the Gospel (Dyck 1910:309). A torrential rain in the summer of 1910 created a mountain torrent which destroyed the towering "Body Hall" of Jiuhua Mountain. A saying was widely spread in the local community that it was because of the impact brought by the spread of foreign god (Carte 1911:323). At the same time, the missionaries also said with deep conviction: "It is encouraging that the worship of idols in Mount Jiuhua, the holy land of Buddhism, has decreased significantly. As the Buddhist monks said, this is because we spread the gospel." (Dyck 13 January, 1912:233).

This reflected the concept of "God competition" in a real sense. In a competition, the religion with more power and which eliminated people's psychological fear naturally won

more believers. This concept of religious competition, instead of arousing anti-religious activity, actually brought about a good relationship between people and Christianity. For example, up until 1910, the number of pilgrims in Jiuhua Mountain had increased. But after the sharp reduction of pilgrims, the temple funds were insufficient, and monks rented out the wing rooms of the temple to missionaries for missionary activities (Quinn 1911:81; "Report for Central China" 1912:345). For Buddhist monks, after years of contact with missionaries, their psychological barriers were removed and they treated foreign religions peacefully:

As for the monks, many seemed not to know or care that our doctrine directly opposed theirs. Some openly or secretly hindered the work. Others scoffed, but by far the most of them were friendly, themselves purchasing and even urging the pilgrims to buy "these good books." An interesting case was met in one of the temples on the approach. Two of the brethren coming up the hill asked a man why he had become a monk. He explained that grief over the death of his wife who had been a good vegetarian, had made him take the vows in hope of perfecting himself to join her in the western heaven, the Buddhist paradise. When the evangelists explained the falsity of his hopes and the true way of salvation, they also told him that he ought to pray to the true God. With many tears he knelt down in his own idol temple and followed as they led him in prayer (Dyck 1910:309).

Although the people at that time thought the activities of Christian religion were curious and strange, through the preaching of missionaries, they began to understand the foreign religious belief. When people wanted to convert to belief in the only God, they had to give up other religious beliefs and practices, which was inevitably a long process. Therefore, the C&MA missionaries engaged in religion and values transmission showing that the believers could break away from idols and all "pagan acts" at the level of thought and practice, and refuse any gods other than God who can guide people's destiny.¹⁸ That is to say, this basic idea and world outlook that "Jesus Christ is the true God" was uncompromising and competed

¹⁸ A batch of "conservative" missionaries in late Qing dynasty showed great anger to missionaries Young J. Allen and Timothy Richard, because they respond to bad effect of direct sermon at the time, and then adjust its strategy through education and newspapers to further help the Chinese reform, eliminate the pagan and believe that in the long run there will be great help for missionary work. No doubt, conservative missionaries also provided education and other services, but for them all education and health care were only means, not an end. This is obviously different from the missionaries such as Timothy Richard who emphasized the purpose and function of education itself. Therefore, the differences of missionary lines caused a lot of disputes among missionaries in China (Ying 1995:33).

with paganism. As a result, local believers gradually internalized their beliefs, emphasizing the mistake of idolatry and superstition. More importantly, though the missionary preached that Jesus Christ is the true God, the effect of a denial of any gods other than the true God was not necessarily immediate. However, the local believers took the Christian faith and moral norms as a way of life and showed a change of life. This made the local people understand the religious identity of the C&MA and provided a more specific Gospel witness.

4. Belief position in revolution

By 1909 the atmosphere of the New Deal reforms had changed all parts of China, showing a trend of "mountains and rain are about to come, wind is full of buildings"(Jaffray 1909:391). The Central China C&MA generally had confidence in the reforms of the Qing government, hoping that China's progress would be "the miracle of this era", and that the Christian Church was developing in a good direction (Selections from the Annual Report, C.& M. A 1905:297; "Annual Report of the President and General Superintendent of the Christian and Missionary Alliance for the Year 1907-1908,"1908:192; Lambuth 1909:370). For this reason, the missionaries did not agree with the political revolutionary speech spreading in society, and tended to want to stabilize the current social environment: "the significance of evangelism in the New Deal period will exceed the previous work." ("Gleanings from Nyack. China" 1911:380). "Even if China is awaking and changing, if revolution is inevitable in China, we still hope that peaceful reform is the most important thing, and we do not approve of violent and bloody revolution." ("Introduction" 1911:82).

As a matter of fact, as early as two years ago, missionary Miss M.J. Quinn in the letters called on the American church to pray for the young people in the Qing Dynasty society: "because there are thousands of people receiving education without gospel in schools, revolutionary ideas are boiling everywhere, and even other church schools are full of teaching principles against the Qing Dynasty." At that time, Miss M.J. Quinn was in charge of two Wuchang schools of the C&MA, and clearly did not agree with the Anglican Church and other church schools' educational philosophy. She opposed the students from missionary schools which were widely involved in political movements in central China (Quinn 1907:89). The Central China C&MA not only made it clear that missionary schools could not participate in political activities, but also prohibited Chinese missionary assistants from discussing political issues. Moreover, they did not agree with the form of revolution or political confrontation to deal with the problem of the rule of the Qing government. "In this way,

missionaries should not be involved in the right and wrong of the revolutionary struggle, and they must maintain a neutral position, and check the track of the graduates of missionary schools, mainly to preach the gospel and to establish the church” (Alexander 1910:30). Even in Wuchang, where the revolutionary trend had sprung up, there were no missionaries of the C&MA in the political movement.¹⁹

After the first uprising of Wuchang in 1911, revolution spread rapidly all over the country. The missionaries of the C&MA took a conservative and cautious attitude in the face of the impact of the revolution. For example, the missionaries in Wuchang realized that the revolution had led to social disorder and evacuated to Shanghai. The missionary school was temporarily disbanded and the local missionary assistants returned home (“Our Foreign Mail Bag” 1911:202). All over Qingyang County, Anhui Province, there were white flags hanging all over the place in support of the Revolutionary Army, and in the whole city only the Church of the C&MA had no white flag. Seeing this, a young missionary assistant asked to hang a flag, not only for the safety of missionaries, but also to support the revolutionary position. The missionaries said that they would not approach any politics:

The town was decorated with white flags, either of cloth or paper, being hung up at every door except ours! Our young evangelist came to inquire rather anxiously if we should not hang up one, but we suggested the advisability of remaining neutral, and we made no display, although I fear every heart was stirred with patriotic joy. Our Bible-woman said, "This must be of the Lord, for this unity of the heart comes of itself!" Many were the grim stories that were recalled from history of the awful sins of the Manchus and we could not wonder at the enthusiasm. Somehow we had not fully realized before that the Chinese were a people under the yoke (Quinn 1912:169).

¹⁹ At the end of Qing Dynasty, the growing enthusiasm of nationalism and revolutionary movement in Wuchang area of central China was mainly among the Anglican Christians, among which Liu Jingan was the most conspicuous representative figure. Liu Jingan before the Revolution of 1911, was the main backbone of the Rizhihui, actively engaged in the organization to propagate the revolutionary purpose. After December 1906, he was arrested by the Qing Government in prison, and died of illness in May 1911 prison. For a long time, he was well known as a member of the Episcopal Church. On one hand, in thought and action, he showed the color of "revolutionary Christianity". On the other hand, it was the Episcopal Church that played an important role in shielding Rizhihui, enabling it to have space for development, and playing an important diplomatic force between China and the West in rescuing Liu Jingan. In fact, Cao Yabo, who was also a member of the Rizhihui, recorded in the book "True History of the Wuchang Revolution" that Liu Jingan went to Wuchang, Hubei Province in 1903 and served as Li Yuanhong's secretary. During his stay in Wuchang, he first attended the C&MA Missionary Church and then transferred to the Anglican Church of the Savior. The reasons for Liu Jingan's transfer were as follows: firstly, the Anglican Church was open to the outside world, and most of the Western priests and Chinese pastors sympathized with the revolution, and even agreed with the national sentiment of Chinese believers; Secondly, the C&MA held a politically neutral position, which made it difficult for him to find like-minded people. Under these circumstances, he joined the Anglican Church of the Savior and was baptized. He combined the Christian faith with the revolutionary principles and practiced the revolutionary ideals with the Christian revolutionaries (Leung 2007:324-345; Chin 2015:229-251; Cao 1930:154).

Obviously, the fact that the missionaries remained neutral reflected that they did not support either the Qing Government or the Revolutionary Army. On the contrary, they were worried that they would tend toward the revolutionary position and put the local believers into the national tide of revolutionary sentiment. After that, the C&MA's attitude was very clear: "At a time when China is facing crisis, do we stand on the position of "praying to God "and increase our prayers for China?"("Introduction" 1912:274). From this point of view, the missionaries of the C&MA ruled out the possibility of participating in political activities. They took the Christian faith as their first priority, prayed for God to bring people well-being, and lived out Christian faith to solve social problems (Quinn 1912:169).

During the revolution, B.H. Alexander returned to the missionary station to visit the believers and preach in the countryside. However, he was surprised to find that: "in such an era, that is, the era of revolution, so many people are willing to listen to the Gospel . . . China is so big that the country is in the throes of revolution, but in some parts of China, they are untouched by the immense unrest and excitement that swirl around them (Alexander 30 March, 1912:408). It can be seen from a close observation of the central China society during the revolutionary period that not everyone was baptized by the Revolution in order to save the nation and uphold the revolutionary ideas. In particular, most C&MA churches did not stop gathering because of the influence of the Revolution. When the missionaries were not present, the local missionary assistants independently took on the responsibilities of the church and led the believers to meet as usual (Alexander 13 April 1912:25).

Although the Revolution of 1911 brought great changes to China, the C&MA in central China did not care about politics. It was not so much that the C&MA's church was small, but that the missionaries were committed to the development of religion and did not agree with the revolutionary position. Their religious identity was a spiritual group of political marginalities (Glover 26 October 1912:57). For example, Rev. R.A. Glover pointed out the significance of this political marginal identity:

"Our most important work in China is not to maintain the relationship with power, not for the reconstruction of the country and society. We faithfully adhere to our unique and spiritual goal, that is, to preach the gospel and let everyone know that Jesus Christ is the only savior." (Glover 1911:290).

It can be seen that the conservative position of the Central China C&MA is that the

Christian faith has priority over national salvation. The reason why the church didn't care about politics was the missionary's conviction that focus on the Gospel was what would save the Chinese people, which showed the orientation of concern for local believers in their life based on religious belief ("Report for Central China"1912:344-345; "The Alliance work at Nanling Hsien"1912:73).

Conclusions

The ten years of the late Qing Dynasty can be said to have been a good opportunity for the development of Christianity since it entered China. On the one hand, the environment of the church and the number of believers made great progress. On the other hand, the missionary movement adjusted to the new situation to a great extent, and missionary undertakings rapidly expanded in areas such as education, medical care, relief and social reform (Ying 1995:56). However, many missionaries and missionary associations still regarded evangelism as the main means of their work. However, church historian Frederick Rydley pointed out that the extensive establishment of church buildings, schools and hospitals made it impossible for local believers to raise funds for many years, and a problem became very obvious. The most important thing was that the self-reliance of the church was delayed, and it took a long time to have competent Chinese leaders to grow up and the church may have fallen into the mire of the mechanism. The experience of missionaries and local believers was exhaustion in the operation of the mechanism. The church forgot that its primary function was as the carrier of religious and spiritual information. After social changes, more and more missionaries took the task of recasting the new culture. By 1911, less than half of the missionaries were still carrying out evangelical work. If it had not been that the mainland China Association, the C&MA and other similar organizations insisted on the importance of the gospel, the proportion would be smaller (Latourette 2009:522-523; "A Crucial Transition Period,1900-1914":163). Although the C&MA invested in education and disaster relief at this stage, it was relatively small in scale. They maintained a clear position of the missionary model, and the mission of the gospel was always the first responsibility of the church.

On the one hand, the C&MA in this period was not divorced from the past, and various church activities continued to be carried out around the missionary stations. On the other hand, in order to achieve this goal, they formulated some plans, established a church system, and trained believers to pay attention to the pursuit of deeper spiritual life. "The Four-fold Gospel"

was like the common spiritual gene of the Central China C&MA, and continued the early missionary model of the C&MA, becoming the common belief of all missionary members. It was particularly noteworthy that within the group of believers, missionaries shaped their belief identity; implemented specific church system, religious life and belief position; and gradually clarified the boundary consciousness of missionary society. At the same time, the purpose of missionary model was towards the goal of church independence. Thus, there was no possibility of doing everything. There is no evangelical significance of "all things are right" and to have the identity significance of knowing who you are and what you should do. It can be said that the conservative missionary belief of the C&MA was one of the factors why the C&MA was a small group.

In terms forming an expression of Christian faith, this missionary model, which promoted the local church, did not focus on the issues of political and religious relations, Christian faith and culture, but clearly identified with the mission of the gospel, and took the self-sufficiency of the Chinese Church as its direct goal. In this way, the C&MA was not constrained by a huge mechanism, and did not allow Christ's salvation to play some functional religious role in accordance with social issues. On the contrary, it maintained the uniqueness and eschatology of the church. As a result, the church life and believers' belief experience of the Central China C&MA during this period provided a way of responding to reality. They did not hold with escapism, and their concept of conservative belief gave the members of the group a clear sense of identity and belonging. It can be said that the missionary model and conservative spiritual beliefs of the C&MA in the late Qing Dynasty were important stages of the church's growth, which laid a leading role for the independent growth and the foundation for missionary sects of the Missionary Association in the Republic of China.

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