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**THE CHURCH UNITY MOVEMENT
IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHINA:
CHENG JINGYI AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA**

BY

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Declaration

I hereby declare that I have composed solely *The Church Unity Movement in Early Twentieth-Century China: Cheng Jingyi and the Church of Christ in China*, that it is my own work and that it has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other degree or professional qualification. I assert the right to be identified as the sole author and bear full responsibility for the content.

XIAOJING WANG

Abstract

The pursuit of church indigeneity and unity was a two-fold theme throughout the history of twentieth-century Chinese Christianity. Modern scholarship has generated a good number of studies regarding church indigeneity, but has neglected the parallel trend towards interdenominational co-operation and church union in China. This thesis endeavours to remedy this deficiency.

The thesis examines the process of the quest of Chinese Protestants for a united indigenous church, focusing on Cheng Jingyi (1881-1939), one of the key figures in the early twentieth-century ecumenical movement. Additionally, it pays particular attention to the Church of Christ in China as a case study. It discusses the feasibility of the ecumenical convictions which were shared by a considerable number of mainline Chinese Protestants, with Cheng Jingyi as a representative, and evaluates the legacy of the church unity movement in early twentieth-century China.

The thesis argues that the church unity movement within the mainline Chinese churches differed from the ecumenical movement in the West, which aimed to realise fraternal co-operation and even union among various denominations. In China the aim was to establish a single national church on a federal pattern, reflecting a Chinese indigenous understanding of ecumenism and ecclesiology. It also reflected a broader vision of the Christian church than that exhibited by the majority of the independent Chinese Protestant groups or by the Chinese church under the control of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement during the 1950s. Based on the conviction of the universal nature of the church in which the Chinese church was an indispensable part, the church unity movement in China surpassed a narrowly nationalistic vision. Nonetheless, the good intentions of the Church of Christ in China were overshadowed by its dependence on foreign subsidies. The church never achieved 'three-self' status: it was self-governing and self-propagating, but never self-supporting. As such its goal of indigeneity was never fully realised.

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations	i
Chapter 1	
Introduction	1
1.1. Context and Questions.....	1
1.2. Aims and Arguments.....	7
1.3. Approaches and Sources.....	11
1.4. A Brief Introduction to Cheng Jingyi.....	18
1.5. Literature Review.....	22
1.6. Outline of Chapters.....	41
Chapter 2	
Cheng Jingyi's Early Life and his Search for A United Indigenous Church in China (before the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, 1910)	43
2.1. Cheng's Early Life Associated with the London Missionary Society.....	43
2.1.1. The LMS in Beijing.....	45
2.1.2. Cheng's Early Education with the LMS.....	47
2.2. Cheng's Experience in Britain.....	56
2.2.1. The Mandarin Union Version New Testament Translation.....	56
2.2.2. The Bible Training Institute, Glasgow.....	65
2.2.3. The Keswick Convention.....	69
2.3. Movements towards Christian Federation and Church Independence in Early Twentieth-Century China.....	74
2.3.1. The Early History of the Federation Movement in China.....	75
2.3.2. The Efforts of Chinese Christians to Church Independence and Unity in the Early Twentieth Century.....	80
2.4. Cheng's Ministry in the East City Church in Beijing.....	83
2.5. Cheng's Article 'What Federation can Accomplish for the Chinese Church'.....	88
2.6. Conclusion.....	92
Chapter 3	
Cheng Jingyi and the China Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference (1910-1922)	95
3.1. The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910.....	96
3.2. Cheng's Ordination and the Independence of the East City Church.....	104

3.3. The Work of the China Continuation Committee and Cheng’s Activities.	115
3.3.1. The National Christian Conference of Shanghai, 1913.....	115
3.3.2. The Work of the China Continuation Committee towards a United Chinese Church and Cheng’s Role.....	119
3.3.3. Two Christian Movements under Cheng’s Leadership.....	127
3.3.3.1. The Chinese Home Mission Movement.....	128
3.3.3.2. The China for Christ Movement.....	137
3.4. Conclusion.....	144

Chapter 4

Cheng Jingyi and the National Christian Council of China – the Church Unity Movement during the Anti-Christian Movement in China (1922-1927).....147

4.1. A Brief Account of the Course of the Anti-Christian Movement in China.....	148
4.2. The National Christian Council and its Role in Building a United Indigenous Church.....	153
4.2.1. The 1922 National Christian Conference and the Establishment of the NCC.....	153
4.2.2. The NCC’s Role in the Development of a United Indigenous Church.....	165
4.2.2.1. Church Indigeneity.....	167
4.2.2.2. The Tension between Christianity and Nationalism.....	180
4.2.3. A ‘National’ Christian Council?.....	194
4.3. Conclusion.....	207

Chapter 5

The Church of Christ in China as a Case Study of the Church Unity Movement (1927-1939).....211

5.1. The Formation and Development of the CCC.....	212
5.1.1. The Origin of the CCC.....	212
5.1.2. The First General Assembly of the CCC, Shanghai, 1927.....	218
5.1.3. Moving towards a Further Union.....	229
5.1.4. Church-Mission Relationships.....	236
5.2. Cheng Jingyi’s Role in the CCC.....	247
5.3. The Legacy of the CCC.....	257
5.4. Conclusion.....	267

Chapter 6

Conclusion.....273

Bibliography.....293

List of Figures

Figure 1: Rev. C. Y. Cheng, D. D., LL. D.	iii
Figure 2: ‘Ordination of Mr. Cheng in Peking, October 1910’	107
Figure 3: Twelve Synods of the CCC in 1927.....	224
Figure 4: The Number of District Associations and Communicants in Each Synod in 1927.....	225
Figure 5: The Number of District Associations, Local Churches, Self-supporting Churches and Communicants in Each Synod in 1936.....	232

Abbreviations

ABCFM	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
ABMU	American Baptist Missionary Union
AME	American Methodist Episcopal Church
APECM	American Protestant Episcopal Church Mission
BFBS	British and Foreign Bible Society
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
BSL	Bible Society's Library, Cambridge University Library
BTI	Bible Training Institute, Glasgow
CCC	Church of Christ in China
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CBMS	Conference of British Missionary Societies
CHMS	Chinese Home Missionary Society
CHSKH	Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui
CIM	China Inland Mission
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CSI	Church of South India
CUL	Cambridge University Library
CWM	Council for World Mission
FMC	Foreign Missions Committee, Presbyterian Church of England

GMD	Guomindang
IBMR	International Bulletin of Missionary Research
ICC	International Christian College, Glasgow
LMS	London Missionary Society
MEFB	Methodist Episcopal Church, Board of Foreign Missions
NBSS	National Bible Society of Scotland
NCC	National Christian Council of China
NCDC	North China District Committee
PCE	Presbyterian Church of England
SIUC	South Indian United Church
SMA	Shanghai Municipal Archives
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
TSPM	Three-Self Patriotic Movement
WSCF	World Student Christian Federation
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

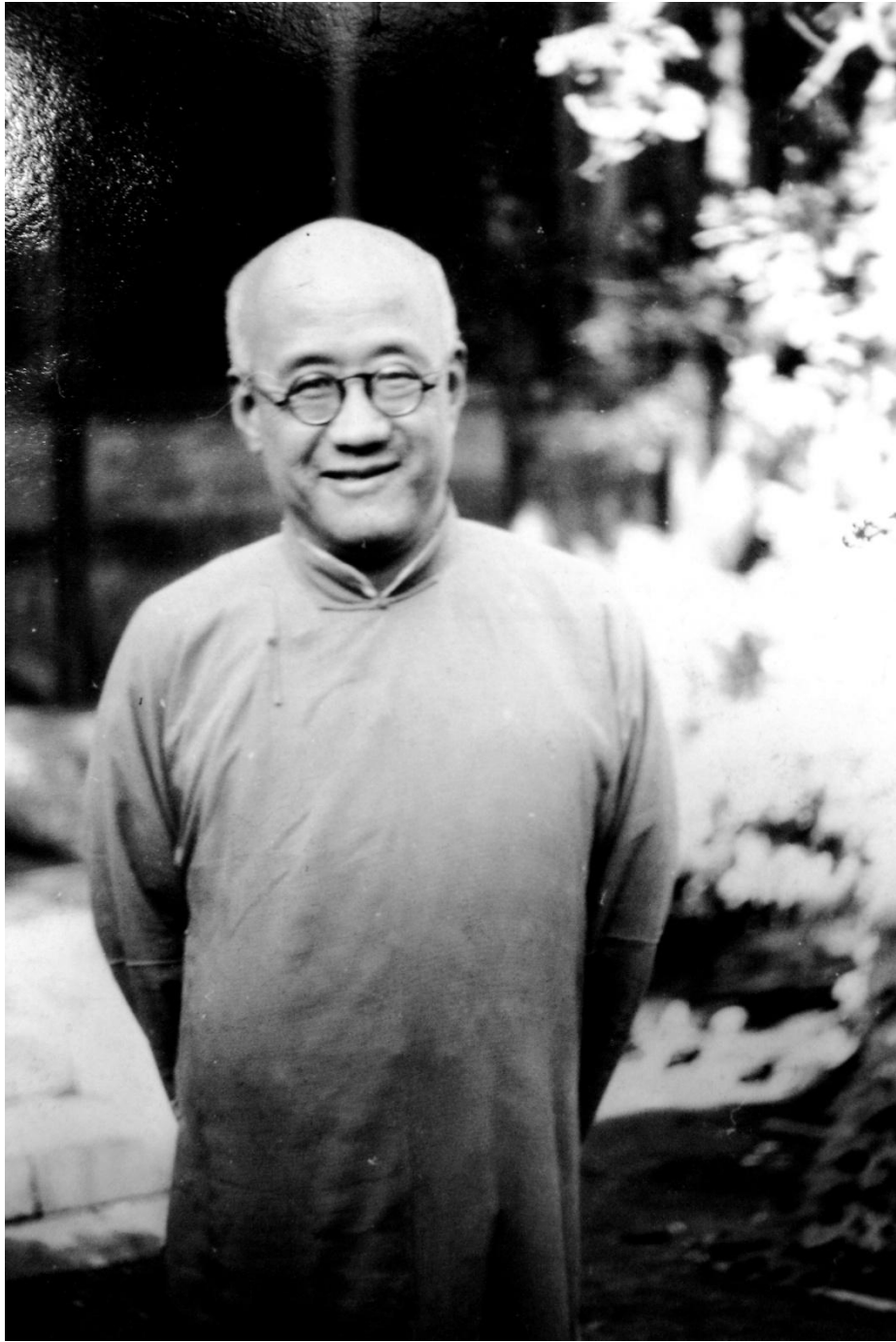


Figure 1: Rev. C. Y. Cheng, D. D., LL. D.
Source from SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, China
Photographs, Box 8, 40-5.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Context and Questions

During the last thirty years, there has been a paradigm transformation in the historiography of Protestant Christianity in China, that is, from a 'mission-centric' to a 'Chinese church-centric' perspective. The academic approach has shifted from the activities of foreign missions in China, their methods of evangelism and their interaction with Chinese society, to the attitude and reactions of Chinese people towards Christianity and foreign missions, and the development of the Chinese church. With this academic background, studies on Chinese indigenous churches, independent churches and Chinese Christian figures have become popular topics for academic research both within and outside China.

In early twentieth-century China, with the intensification of socio-political turbulence, the growth of national consciousness and nationalistic sentiment among Chinese people in general, and the increasing maturity of the 'selfhood' of Chinese churches and a large number of Chinese Christian individuals, the demand for church independence from foreign missions and church indigeneity in the Chinese context became stronger. Chinese churches and Christians adopted various approaches in the realisation of church indigeneity and independence. The evolution of Christianity in China during this period was complex and varied.

Regarding the issue of church indigeneity and independence, Chinese Protestant churches in the twentieth century can be divided into three categories.¹ The first category refers to churches which attempted to achieve church indigeneity and autonomy by taking over administrative authority from foreign missions, while maintaining a close relationship with missions and receiving their financial subsidies. These churches usually achieved indigeneity through a convergence of efforts between Chinese Christians and missionaries, though in most of the cases, Chinese Christians played a decisive role. This was the case in the Church of Christ in China. These churches are also referred to as mainline churches, or as Daniel H. Bays suggests, the ‘Sino-foreign Protestant establishment.’² The second category refers to churches which, like churches of the first category, were planted by missions, but achieved independence by severing their ties with missions and were entirely self-supporting. ‘Zhongguo Jesujiao Zilihui’ 中國耶穌教自立會 (the Chinese Jesus

¹ Daniel H. Bays divides indigenous churches in the twentieth century into two categories. In the first category of churches, according to Bays, Chinese Christians did not gain much autonomy to govern their own church affairs, however, they did enjoy more participation in church administration. The second category refers to churches which were independent of missions, self-governing, and indigenous in ideas. See Daniel H. Bays, ‘The Growth of Independent Christianity in China, 1900-1937,’ in *Christianity in China: From Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 307-16. Zhang Hua divides the churches into three categories. Churches of the first category are the same as those in Bays’ division. Zhang divides the independent churches, which are in the same category according to Bays’ division, into two. One refers to churches which were founded by missions, but gained independence and severed their ties with missions. However, a large number of churches of this type eventually joined the mainstream churches, such as the Church of Christ in China, or re-united with the missions from which they separated. The third category contains churches which were formed by Chinese Christians on Chinese soil and usually had some Pentecostal features. See Zhang Hua 張化, ‘Zhongguo Yesujiao Zilihui Shuping 中國耶穌教自立會述評 (A Study of the Chinese Jesus Independent Church),’ *Shi Lin 史林 (Historical Review)*, no. 1 (1998): 57-66. As there are differences between the independent churches, those which were founded by missions and those by Chinese, in the inauguration, development and end, this thesis divides them into three categories.

² Bays, ‘Growth of Independent Christianity,’ 308.

Independent Church) in Shanghai founded by Yu Guozhen 俞國楨,³ was a church of this kind. The third category refers to churches which were planted by Chinese Christians in the Chinese soil, for instance the Jesus Family and the Little Flock.⁴ They were indigenous in nature from the outset, and most of them had strong Pentecostal characteristics and anti-foreign sentiments.

Studies of churches in the first category have made much progress during the last three decades. As the historiography of Christianity in China develops, an increasing number of scholars are shifting their attention from churches of the first category to the latter two, and especially to the third, which has been neglected in academia for a long time, and was even ‘invisible’ to the mainline churches in the early twentieth century.⁵ It is a valuable field for the study and understanding of the variety of Christianity in China and of approaches to church indigeneity and independence. As Bays notes, these independent sectors of Chinese Protestantism ‘marked a crucial stage in the maturity of the Chinese church,’⁶ and therefore deserve further detailed examination.

³ Yu Guozhen (1852-1932), was a pastor and the founder of an independent Chinese Christian organisation, the Chinese Jesus Independent Church in Shanghai. Yu became an advocate of the Indigenous Church Movement, thus in 1903 he purchased a piece of land on Haining road near North Shanghai and the following year he formed a self-supporting Presbyterian church and severed all financial ties with the mission churches. On 25 January 1906, Yu established the Chinese Jesus Independent Church. The local congregations of Pingyang in Zhejiang, Tianmen in Hubei, and several others joined his group. By 1910, the General Assembly of the Chinese Jesus Independent Church was formed in Shanghai. ‘Zhongguo Yesujiao Zilihui’ is also translated as the China Christian Independent Church. See Bays, ‘Growth of Independent Christianity,’ 310.

⁴ The Jesus Family was a unique Pentecostal communitarian church established in Shandong Province in 1927. They were located mostly in rural areas and the believers broke away from their old family, entered the new family, the ‘Family of Jesus,’ and lived and worked together, sharing possessions in common. The Jesus Family was strongly millenarian and Pentecostal. The Little Flock, also called the Assembly Hall, was established in the middle of the 1920s and led by Watchman Nee till 1937. Antagonism toward missions and foreign Christians characterised its ministry.

⁵ Bays, ‘Growth of Independent Christianity,’ 310.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 316.

Compared to the degree of indigeneity demonstrated by these independent churches and sects, the mainline churches seem to some modern scholars to be insufficiently indigenous to merit study. Nonetheless, this category of church is still worthy of exploration. Firstly, they are the churches which were most closely associated with the dramatic socio-political changes in modern Chinese society. There is still plenty of scope left for the exploration of the interaction between the mainline churches and the Chinese context, either from cultural and social-scientific perspectives or from ecclesiastical and theological angles. For example, the Church of Christ in China, the largest Protestant church in China at the time and a co-operative of fourteen missions, played an active role in formulating a Christian response to various social and political issues during the 1930s and 1940s. This should not be neglected in recording the history of Chinese Christianity in the twentieth century.

Secondly, in the study of the mainline Chinese churches, there is an absence of examination of the trend towards interdenominational co-operation and church union in early twentieth-century China. The two addresses of Cheng Jingyi, one of the three Chinese delegates and later one of the key Chinese Protestant leaders, at the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in fact revealed what is a two-fold theme throughout the history of Chinese Christianity during the twentieth century, that is, the pursuit of church indigeneity and unity.⁷ Many studies have been done regarding church indigeneity in China, but few on church unity. Perhaps this is because for

⁷ World Missionary Conference, *Report of Commission VIII* (Edinburgh, 1910), 196.

contemporary mainland Chinese Christians and academic scholars, a non-denominational church is a natural fact in this post-denominational era, owing to the dramatic transformation within the Chinese church from the 1950s onwards. Another reason may be the fact that the world ecumenical movement in the twentieth century has proved to be unsuccessful in so far as the denominational nature of world Christianity has not been changed. Additionally, the church unity movement of the mainline Chinese churches seems to have been labelled as mainly a western missionary activity, and its resultant church to be the vision of western missions. Scholars, both within and outside China, may find it insufficiently valuable to be of particular interest. However, it is undeniable that a great deal of effort from both Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries was devoted to the realisation of Christian co-operation and church union of an interdenominational kind in early twentieth-century China. Apart from endorsing the goal of an autonomous church which was independent of western missionary control, a number of mainline Chinese Protestant leaders became increasingly convinced that independence from western denominationalism was an indispensable part of church independence. The study of the church unity movement in China provides an integral picture of the evolution of Chinese Christianity in the twentieth century.

Thirdly, as one of the Chinese Protestant leaders who adopted the conviction of a united indigenous church in China as early as the first decade of the twentieth century, Cheng Jingyi became one of the key figures during this movement. However,

studies of him are rare. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement [TSPM] in China during the 1950s desperately attempted to sever the connection between Chinese churches and foreign missions, and the mainline churches became the chief target of criticism and correction. This overshadowed the study of mainline churches for a long time. Meanwhile, there remains a strong influence of the independent churches and sects in the Chinese church of today, in both theology and religious practice. The independent churches in general had a hostile attitude towards the mainline churches and considered them to be not only insufficiently indigenous, but also theologically liberal. As one of the leading figures of the mainline churches, Cheng Jingyi's name is seldom mentioned in the Chinese church of today. The tendency to neglect the mainline churches has been largely remedied by academic research, with the production of a considerable amount of study on these churches. However, due to the fact that Cheng's writings were less prolific than some other Christian figures, such as Zhao Zichen 趙紫宸 (T. C. Chao) and Wang Mingdao 王明道 (Wang Ming-tao), it is difficult to establish a biographical study of him. Nonetheless, producing Christian literature was not Cheng's main task, for he held a number of key positions in several Christian institutions and a number of Christian movements. Through the examination of his activities and the analysis of his work, it is still feasible to establish a comprehensive study of him, which will enrich the study of the *praxis* of Chinese Christian figures, a field that is far less developed than the study of the *ideas* of Chinese Christians. In addition, studies of Cheng usually focus on the aspect of his

contribution to church indigeneity in China. However, his perspectives and efforts towards an ecumenical future of the Chinese church are equally worthy of discussion.

1.2. Aims and Arguments

With such an academic background, this thesis aims to examine the process of the quest of Chinese Protestants for a united indigenous church, focussing on Cheng Jingyi in particular. It will explore his ecumenical convictions, and his participation and leadership in the promotion of the establishment of a united Chinese church under the turbulent social and historical circumstances of early twentieth-century China. In addition, it pays particular attention to the Church of Christ in China as a case study. Through examining its formation and its development in church union, this thesis aims to discuss the feasibility of the ecumenical convictions which were shared by a considerable number of mainline Chinese Protestants, with Cheng Jingyi as a representative. In doing so, it aims to facilitate an evaluation of the legacy of the church unity movement in early twentieth-century China for the Chinese church of today and the world ecumenical movement.

There are a number of specific questions which this thesis aims to answer: 1) How did Cheng Jingyi's ecumenical convictions come into being, and how far did his early education and background influence the formation of his vision? 2) How

did Cheng's belief in a united indigenous church develop over time, and how was it applied to the mainline churches? 3) What was Cheng's role in the progress towards the realisation of a united indigenous church in China? 4) What were the main features of these ecumenical convictions and the church unity movement in China? 5) What was the legacy of this ecumenical vision and the resultant church union?

Through answering the above questions, this thesis argues, first of all, that although the ecumenical convictions which Cheng and other mainline Chinese Protestants held echoed the efforts of a number of missions towards interdenominational co-operation and federation in China from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, and were even inspired by the trend of interdenominational evangelicalism in the West, they were reshaped by the Chinese context and developed into an indispensable part of the demand for church indigeneity and independence from western missionary influence. Differing from the ecumenical movement in the West, which chiefly aimed to realise fraternal co-operation and federation among various denominations, the church unity movement in China aimed to establish a single national church on an interdenominational pattern.

Secondly, this thesis argues that in addition to a strong national consciousness for church independence and unity, the church unity movement in China was also driven by theological motivations. Cheng Jingyi and several other Chinese Protestant leaders exhibited a genuine belief in the biblical commandment to Christian unity, in

the universal nature of Christian fellowship and in the importance of expressing Christian union in forms that transcended the boundaries of denominations and nations. This ecumenical conviction, and the subsequent church unity movement within the mainline Chinese churches, reflected a broader vision of the Christian church than those exhibited either by the majority of the independent Chinese Protestant groups or by the Chinese church under the control of the TSPM during the 1950s. Taking church-mission relationships as an example, their ideal of co-operating with western missions and churches was based on their conviction of the universal nature of the church in which the Chinese church was an indispensable part. It surpassed a narrowly nationalistic vision, and therefore differed, both from the independent Chinese Christian groups, among which there was a general anti-foreign attitude, and from the TSPM churches which severed their ties with foreign missions under pressure from the communist authorities. The pre-requisite of this ideal was the ‘church-centric’ principle. Nonetheless, this good intention of the mainline churches towards a wider Christian union was overshadowed by the pragmatic need for co-operation due to their dependence on foreign subsidies. This resulted in a paradox for the mainline churches which intended to achieve ‘three-self (self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating),’⁸ and provided grounds for other churches to accuse them of insufficient indigeneity and too great a dependence

⁸ The ‘three-self’ principle was formulated by Henry Venn, the honorary secretary of the Church Missionary Society, and Rufus Anderson, a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, at roughly the same time in the mid-nineteenth century. It was further developed by John Livingstone Nevius, a missionary of the American Presbyterian Mission to North China and Korea during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.

on the western presence.

Thirdly, this thesis suggests that Cheng Jingyi deserves more credit than has been given to him so far. With the decline of the mainline churches after 1949, Cheng's name has ceased to be prominent in the Chinese church or among Chinese Christians. By contraries, a number of Christian fundamentalists and evangelists, such as Ni Tuosheng 倪柝聲 (Watchman Nee), Wang Mingdao, Song Shangjie 宋尚節 (John Sung) and Chen Chonggui 陳崇桂 (Marcus Cheng), and the chief leader of the TSPM, Ding Guangxun 丁光訓 (K.H. Ting), have remained popular Christian figures for Chinese Christian congregations. Even in academia, Cheng, being treated as a leader of the mainline Chinese Protestant churches, is occasionally presented in an unfavourable light when one discusses the above figures who demonstrated and advocated the 'selfhood' of Chinese Protestantism. This thesis argues that Cheng Jingyi was a capable Chinese mainline church leader who developed his own independent vision of a united Chinese church in China. Additionally, he was an evangelist above all, and consistently emphasised the spiritual life of the church and the evangelisation of China, not only in words, but also in action. The ultimate goal of his initiation of the Chinese Home Missionary Society and the China for Christ Movement, and even the promotion of a united indigenous church, was to evangelise the Chinese nation. Due to Cheng's leadership in several major Christian organisations which were considered to be both theologically liberal and not evangelically oriented, this aspect of Cheng's life is

usually neglected.

Finally, this thesis suggests that more studies are required with regard to the topic of the church unity movement in China. On the one hand, the pursuit of church unity, together with that of church indigeneity, formed a two-fold theme throughout the history of Chinese Christianity during the early twentieth century, and therefore should not be neglected in the study of Christianity in China. On the other, as a Chinese case study in the evolution of Christianity when it encounters the local context of particular mission fields, the church unity movement in China is worthy of further and deeper study from the perspective of Christianity as a world religion.

1.3. Approaches and Sources

This thesis follows a chronological order, centred around Cheng Jingyi's lifetime (1881-1939), including his early life before the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, and his leadership and activities in a number of national Christian organisations after the 1910 Conference, including the China Continuation Committee, the National Christian Council of China and the Church of Christ in China. By doing so, it aims to explore and exhibit a dynamic picture of the formation and evolution of Cheng's ecumenical outlook, and the adoption and practice of this outlook in the mainline Protestant churches and a series of Christian movements in China. Although this thesis is not a biography of Cheng Jingyi, it illustrates the issue

of mainline ecumenism through setting out the pattern of his life. A brief introduction to Cheng's life follows this section in order to help readers to form a general picture of him. A few words are needed to explain the time frame of this thesis. Although the thesis title sets the time frame in the early twentieth century, an examination of Cheng Jingyi's early experience prior to his attendance in the 1910 Conference is crucial to the exploration of the forging of his ecumenical perspectives. The second chapter of the thesis is therefore devoted to Cheng's early life and his search for a united indigenous church, starting from the late nineteenth century. In addition, the fifth chapter focusses on the Church of Christ in China as a case study. Through the examination of the ecumenical scene created by the Church of Christ in China, this thesis aims to explore the feasibility of Cheng's ecumenical convictions which were shared by the mainline churches.

As this thesis will devote a considerable part to the examination of the activities of mainline churches on church indigeneity, it is necessary to clarify the usage of the word 'indigeneity,' 'indigenous' or 'indigenisation.' The word 'indigenisation' was the term widely used among Protestant missions during the early twentieth century, when missionaries began to take the variety of cultural forms seriously. It corresponds to the word 'accommodation' in Catholicism. According to David Bosch, the word 'indigenisation' was often confined to 'accidental matters,' such as 'liturgical vestments, non-sacramental rites, art, literature, architecture, and music.'⁹

⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 448.

The discussions on church indigeneity among several Chinese Christian intellectuals and church leaders during the early twentieth century, particularly the 1920s, which the thesis will examine in Chapter 4, were chiefly of this manner. They referred to the cultural and ethnic aspects but not to theology.¹⁰ The way they used the word ‘indigenisation’ therefore differs from the modern understanding of contextualisation, which ‘involves the construction of a variety of “local theologies.”’¹¹ In addition, several Chinese Protestant leaders, including Cheng Jingyi, used the word ‘indigenisation’ to mean administrative autonomy and independence, or in other words, the realisation of a ‘three-self’ church.¹² This thesis uses the word as a historical term as used by those Chinese Protestants during that period.

This thesis will achieve its goals through archival and library research. The primary source material on which this thesis is based falls into two categories: 1) Cheng’s letters, writings and works; and 2) other correspondence, manuscripts and historical documentation related to Cheng Jingyi and several major Christians institutions for which Cheng worked. The concerns behind this classification are as follows. It establishes a closer and subjective understanding of Cheng’s perspectives through the examination of Cheng’s own works in this figure-centric study. At the

¹⁰ For example, Wang Zhixin suggested that to de-Westernise a church would ‘integrate traditional Chinese culture with Christian truth.’ Cheng Jingyi commented that Christianity needed to ‘discover a better way to adapt itself to Chinese psychology.’ Zhao Zichen defined an indigenous church as one which ‘unifies all truth contained in Christianity and in Chinese ancient culture.’ See Wang Zhixin 王治心, ‘Zhongguo Bensejiaohui de Taolun 中國本色教會的討論 (Discussion on the Chinese Indigenous Church),’ *Qingnian Jinbu 青年進步 (Youth Progress)*, no. 79 (1925): 13; D. Willard Lyon, ‘Dr. C. Y. Cheng’s Thoughts on the Indigenization of the Chinese Church,’ *The Chinese Recorder* 56, no. 12 (1925), 820; and T. C. Chao, ‘The Indigenous Church,’ *The Chinese Recorder* 56, no. 8 (1925), 497.

¹¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 427.

¹² Lyon, ‘Cheng’s Thoughts on the Indigenization of the Chinese Church,’ 814-20.

same time, it aims to form an integral and objective judgement of Cheng's deeds and the ecumenical movement in the mainline churches in a broader horizon through the analysis of other related sources.

Referring to the first category of sources, there are a number of letters to and from Cheng in the English language, scattered through the London Missionary Society and the Presbyterian Church of England Mission archives at the School of Oriental and African Studies [SOAS] Library in London and in the Mott Papers at the Yale Divinity School Library Special Collections in the US. Cheng's available works, in both Chinese and English, have been published in various Christian journals and periodicals, as well as in conference digest and minutes of several major Christian institutions. The journals and periodicals include *The Chinese Recorder*, *The International Review of Missions*, *The China Mission Year Book*, *The China Christian Year Book*, *The Chronicle* (LMS) and *Bulletin of the National Christian Council of China*, which were in English; and *Qingnian Jinbu* 青年進步 (*Youth Progress*), *Zhen Guang* 真光 (*True Light*), *Ming Deng* 明燈 (*The Lamp Monthly*), *Fuyin Zhong* 福音鐘 (*The Gospel Bell*), *Xiwang Yuekan* 希望月刊 (*The Christian Hope*), *Zhonghua Gui Zhu* 中華歸主 (*China for Christ*), *Wen She Yuekan* 文社月刊 (*Wenshe Monthly*), *Shenxue Zhi* 神學志 (*Theological Journal*), *Tianjia Banyue Kan* 田家半月刊 (*The Christian Farmer*), *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Nianjian* 中華基督教會年鑒 (*The Church of Christ Year Book*) and *Zonghui Gongbao* 總會公報 (*The General Assembly Record*) in Chinese. Except for one item, 'Some Problems

Confronting the Christian Movement in China: As seen by a Chinese Christian,' in the Bates Papers¹³ at Yale Divinity School Library Special Collections, others are available at SOAS Library and the University of Edinburgh (English), and in the Shanghai Municipal Archives [SMA], Central China Normal University in Wuhan and the National Library in Beijing (Chinese).

Unlike other well-known Chinese Christian intellectuals or theologians, such as Zhao Zichen, Cheng was a doer rather than a thinker, a church leader rather than a Christian philosopher. His known works are therefore relatively limited. He never published any books or a large amount of scholarly work expressing his ideas. However, all of his articles, even those that were only a few pages, covered a number of central issues of the time and were published in the above major journals for missionary and Chinese Christian movements. This indicates the possible influence of Cheng's ideas on the mainline churches and the Christian movements in China, through the wide readership of the above journals. On the other hand, it also suggests that the study of Cheng requires the examination of his activities in several Christian organisations in order to draw an integral picture.

This approach towards Cheng's activities and the case of the Church of Christ in China becomes more necessary due to the fact that Cheng's diaries, other correspondence, manuscripts and unpublished works, either in English or Chinese, are hard to find. These documents were collected by Xu Baoqian 徐寶謙, a

¹³ Yale Divinity School Library Special Collections, Group 10, *Bates Papers*, Series II, C. Y. Cheng, 'Some Problems: Confronting the Christian Movement in China: As Seen by a Chinese Christian, An Address delivered in Martyrs' Memorial Hall, Shanghai, April 1927'.

contemporary Chinese Christian leader of Cheng Jingyi, who was entrusted by the Church of Christ in China to write a biography of Cheng after his death. Xu, unfortunately, died in a car accident in Sichuan in 1944 and his collection of Cheng's works can no longer be traced. As a result, it is difficult to establish a biographical evaluation of Cheng's life or his thoughts and theology. Nevertheless, this disadvantage will be rectified by utilising sources of the second category, for the nature of this study is to explore the ecumenical movement in China through a deep examination of Cheng's perspectives and practice on certain related issues.

The material in the second category is drawn from two main locations, namely, SOAS Library (English-language sources) and SMA (Chinese-language sources). Referring to Cheng's early life, there are large numbers of letters, manuscripts, records, reports and journals of the London Missionary Society in North China, with which Cheng was closely associated. These documents enable the scholar to form a general picture of Cheng's early education and subsequent pastorate service. Sources, such as correspondence, manuscripts, reports and records, on Cheng's early experience in Britain can be found in the Bible Society's Library in Cambridge University Library [CUL] and the International Christian College [ICC] in Glasgow.

Referring to Cheng's activities as a Christian leader, in addition to the above Christian journals and periodicals which published Cheng's articles, I also analyse sources related to the development of several major Christian organisations in which Cheng served, in order to review Cheng's leadership and contribution to these

organisations, as well as the course of the evolution of ecumenism in China. These sources include the proceedings of the annual meetings of the China Continuation Committee, *The Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia, 1912-1913: a brief account of the conferences together with their findings and lists of members*, *Findings of the National Conference held in Shanghai, March 11th to 14th, 1913, under the presidency of Dr J. R. Mott, Chairman of the Continuation Committee of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference*, the annual and biennial reports of the National Christian Council of China, *The National Christian Council: a five years' review, 1922-1927*, and *The Chinese Church, as revealed in the National Christian Conference: held in Shanghai, Tuesday, May 2, to Thursday, May 11, 1922*.

Considering the fact that most of the above material is official publications, in which inner disputes or divergences failed to be brought up to the surface, I need to deal with them with caution and draw references to other historical records and even secondary sources, which provide different perspectives. All of the above sources, with the exception of those at CUL and ICC, are located at SOAS Library.

The case study of the Church of Christ in China is grounded in a wide range of primary sources in both Chinese and English. Regarding the formation and evolution of the Church of Christ in China, in particular its progress in church union, there are a full series of minutes of its five General Assemblies and a good number of minutes of the General Council meetings at SMA, in both Chinese and English. Additionally, there are a considerable number of articles published in some of the above major

journals and periodicals discussing the activities and progress of the church. Again, the limitation in the utilisation of the official records will be remedied by the analysis of correspondence between the Church and a number of missionary societies, for instance the LMS and the English Presbyterian Mission. This correspondence, located at SOAS, is a valuable source that provides the scholar with different facets from official church records on the evolution of the Church of Christ in China.

Finally, rather than adopting the traditional Wade-Giles romanisation system, this thesis uses Pinyin system to spell the names of Chinese persons, places and church organisations, annotating their Wade-Giles spellings or those being fixed as historical terms in brackets after the Pinyin spellings, if applicable.¹⁴

1.4. A Brief Introduction to Cheng Jingyi

Cheng Jingyi 誠靜怡 (also known as Cheng Ching-yi in the Wade-Giles romanisation system, 1881-1939), Chinese Protestant statesman, dedicated himself to the Christian movements in China and played a key role in shaping church trends in the Chinese Protestant communities.¹⁵ Throughout his lifetime, Cheng indefatigably advocated church indigeneity and church unity in China. He held key positions in

¹⁴ Exceptions include the names of ‘Tsinghua University’ and ‘Yenching University’ which continue to be used as fixed terms, (for example the Harvard-Yenching Institute in the US,) and the name of ‘Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui’ for ‘Zhonghua Shenggonghui’ 中華聖公會 (The Holy Catholic Church of China). This thesis keeps the Wade-Giles spelling of ‘Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui’ for the sake of using its abbreviation CHSKH. Additionally, this thesis keeps the names of Chinese addressees, senders and places that appear in correspondence, and the names of Chinese authors that appear in printed primary sources, in the traditional Wade-Giles romanisation system in the footnotes.

¹⁵ Howard L. Boorman and Richard C. Howard, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, Vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 284.

several mainline Chinese national Christian organisations, including the National Christian Council of China and the Church of Christ in China, and launched various nationwide Christian movements.

Cheng Jingyi was born into a Christian family of Manchu origin in Beijing in 1881. His father was a preacher associated with the London Missionary Society [LMS]. Cheng studied at the LMS Boys' Boarding School in the West city of Beijing from 1894 to 1896. In 1900 he graduated from the LMS Theological Institute in Tianjin, only two weeks before the outbreak of the Boxer Uprising in North China. While his family found refuge in the British legation, Cheng served as interpreter and stretcher bearer, accompanying the International Alliance Troops entering Beijing, and later participated in the supervision of civilian relief.

In 1903 Cheng was invited to go to England to assist the Rev. George Owen of the LMS in the translation of the Mandarin Union Version New Testament. He stayed in Britain for the next five years. After the completion of the New Testament revision, Cheng was enrolled in a two-year theological course at the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow in September 1906. After graduation in 1908, he returned to China and served as an assistant pastor in the church of his childhood in Beijing, the East city church, a church which was progressing towards independence from the jurisdiction of the LMS.

Cheng Jingyi became world-renowned through his selection as one of three Chinese delegates to attend the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference. He

made a strong impression on the audience of the conference through his two addresses, the first of which was during the debate of Commission II on 'The Church in the Mission Field' on 16 June.¹⁶ The second, and most impressive, was during the debate of Commission VIII on 'Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity' on 21 June, in which Cheng declared the desire of Chinese Christians towards a single Chinese church 'without any denominational distinctions.'¹⁷ At the end of the conference Cheng was chosen as the sole Chinese representative among the thirty-five members of the Continuation Committee to carry on the work of the conference in China.

Immediately after the conference, Cheng was ordained as the first Chinese pastor of the East city church in the autumn of 1910. He continued the pastorate until 1913, when he was appointed as the first joint secretary of the China Continuation Committee, a branch of the Edinburgh Continuation Committee which was founded during John Mott's visit to China.¹⁸ Due to this position, Cheng travelled to Britain, the United States and all over China, and contributed to church indigeneity and ecumenism in China through various conference appearances and the initiation of two national evangelistic movements, namely, the Chinese Home Mission Movement (1918) and the China for Christ Movement (1919).

In 1922 the National Christian Council of China was founded in Shanghai.

¹⁶ World Missionary Conference, *Report of Commission II* (Edinburgh, 1910), 352-353.

¹⁷ World Missionary Conference, *Report of Commission VIII*, 196-197.

¹⁸ John R. Mott (1865-1955), was a long-serving leader of the YMCA and the World Student Christian Federation. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946 for his work in establishing and strengthening international Protestant Christian student organisations that worked to promote peace. In 1910, Mott presided at the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference. He was intimately involved in the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948 and was elected as a life-long honorary President.

Cheng served as its general secretary until 1933. During this period Cheng tirelessly advocated church indigeneity and interdenominational co-operation and union in China, in the face of strong nationwide anti-Christian and anti-imperialist sentiments. In 1927 the Church of Christ in China was established, co-operating with fourteen denominations and missionary societies. Cheng was elected as the first moderator. In addition to his work with the National Christian Council of China and the Church of Christ in China, he also served in a number of Christian institutions, such as Zhonghua Jidujiao Wenshe 中華基督教文社 (The National Christian Literature Association). In 1934 Cheng accepted the invitation of the Church of Christ in China to be its general secretary. However, he had been suffering from high blood pressure and heart trouble for a long time due to overwork. After his visit to West China to inspect the mission work he had launched, Cheng's health soon failed and he died at the Lester Chinese Hospital in Shanghai in late 1939.

Cheng Jingyi was a capable Chinese Protestant leader with far-reaching vision. He was granted an honorary D.D. degree by Knox College in Toronto in 1916, an honorary LL. D. degree from the College of Wooster in Ohio in 1923, and a D.D. degree from St. John's University in Shanghai in 1929. He was the only Chinese who attended the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, the 1928 Jerusalem Conference of the International Missionary Council and the 1938 Madras Conference, and became one of the major figures in the early twentieth-century ecumenical

movement.¹⁹ He is the central figure of this thesis.

1.5. Literature Review

As noted previously, the prevalent academic interest towards the study of Chinese churches and Chinese Christian figures owes much to a paradigm shift in the historiography of Christianity in China which occurred around thirty years ago. The focus of academic study has switched from ‘mission-centric’ to ‘Chinese church-centric’ both within and outside China.

Regarding Protestant history in China, the shift of paradigm began in the 1980s in the West. Many works on Christianity in China before this period focussed on the activities of missions, for example those of Kenneth Scott Latourette,²⁰ J. K. Fairbank,²¹ Sidney A. Forsythe,²² Edward Gulick,²³ Irwin T. Hyatt²⁴ and Shirley S. Garrett.²⁵ These works either adapted a missiological approach or were primarily interested in cultural or Sino-Western interaction. During the 1980s, Paul Cohen introduced the concept of ‘China-centric’ in his book *Discovering History in China:*

¹⁹ Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 110.

²⁰ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

²¹ J. K. Fairbank, ed., *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

²² Sidney A. Forsythe, *An American Missionary Community in China 1859-1905* (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Centre, Harvard University, 1971).

²³ Edward Gulick, *Peter Parker and the Opening of China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

²⁴ Irwin T. Hyatt, *Our Ordered Lives Confess: Three Nineteenth Century American Missionaries in East Shantung* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).

²⁵ Shirley S. Garrett, *Social Reformers in Urban China: The Chinese Y. M. C. A., 1895-1926* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

American Historical Writings on the Recent Chinese Past.²⁶ One of the most productive studies under the guidance of this concept is Daniel H. Bays' *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, which clearly demonstrated the shift of academic approach from missions to Chinese indigenous churches.²⁷ Since then many works on Chinese indigenous churches, Chinese independent churches, Chinese Christian figures and Chinese theology have emerged, and an increasing amount of Chinese language sources have been used for research. In 2002, Peter Chen-main Wang organised an international Sinology conference at Leiden University, focussing on the topic of 'Contextualisation of Christianity in China: An Evaluation in Modern Perspective.' 'Contextualisation approach' to the study of Christianity in China was brought forward to balance the studies on missions and Chinese churches.²⁸

Referring to the historiography of Christianity in China, there were several attempts in church circles before 1949. One of the most prominent works was Christian intellectual Wang Zhixin's *Zhongguo Jidujiao Shi Gang (A Brief History of Christianity in China)*.²⁹ Despite the efforts and achievements made by a considerable number of contemporary scholars from Hong Kong and Taiwan, the study of Christianity in China barely existed in mainland China prior to the 1980s.

²⁶ Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writings on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

²⁷ Bays, *Christianity in China*.

²⁸ Peter Chen-main Wang, 'Moving toward a Mature, Balanced Stage of Studying Christianity in China,' *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter*, no. 27 (2002): 22.

²⁹ Wang Zhixin 王治心, *Zhongguo Jidujiao Shi Gang 中國基督教史綱 (A Brief History of Christianity in China)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2004).

Nonetheless, the last three decades have witnessed a dramatic growth in this field in mainland China.

The evolution of the study of Chinese Christianity in mainland China can be divided into three stages.³⁰ During the first stage (the 1980s), a number of Chinese scholars started to re-think the paradigm of ‘cultural imperialism’ in the study of Christianity in China. They tended to recognise certain positive elements in the missionary activities in China. During the second stage (from the late 1980s to 2002), scholars adopted the approaches of ‘Sino-Western interaction’ and ‘modernisation’ in the study of Christianity in China. To a large number of scholars, Christian movements and missionary activities were closely associated with the course of modernisation in Chinese society.³¹ The third stage (from 2002 onwards) saw an increasing number of studies of indigenous churches and Chinese Christian figures. As noted previously, the concept of ‘China-centric’ and the efforts of a number of western scholars along these lines greatly encouraged mainland scholars to carry out

³⁰ Daniel H. Bays, ‘Preface,’ in *Liyi yu Ronghui: Zhongguo Jidutu yu Bense Jiaohui de Xingqi* 離異與融會：中國基督徒與本色教會的興起 (*Fracture and Consolidation: Contextualizing the Church in China*), ed. Liu Jiafeng 劉家峰 (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 2005); Tao Feiya 陶飛亞 and Yang Weihua 楊衛華, ‘Gaige Kaifang Yilai de Zhonghua Jidujiao Shi Yanjiu 改革開放以來的中國基督教史研究 (The Study of the History of Chinese Christianity after the Reform and Opening of China),’ *Shixue Yuekan* 史學月刊 (*Historiography Monthly*), no. 10 (2010): 5-21. As Bays’ article was written earlier than Tao’s, he marked the three stages as: the first stage: the early 1980s; the second: the late 1980s; and the third stage: from the 1990s onwards.

³¹ For example, Shi Jinghuan 史靜寰 and He Xiaoxia 何曉夏, *Jiaohui Xuexiao yu Zhonghua Jiaoyu Xiandaihua* 教會學校與中國教育現代化 (*Mission Schools and the Modernisation of Education in China*) (Guangzhou: Guangdong Education Publishing House, 1996); Zhuang Weimin 莊維民, ‘Jidujiao yu Shijiu Shiji Zhonghua Shehui de Xiandaihua Licheng 基督教與十九世紀中國社會的現代化歷程 (Christianity and the Process of Modernisation of Chinese Society in the Nineteenth Century),’ *Qingdao Daxue Xuebao* 青島大學學報 (*Journal of Qingdao University*), no. 1 (1991); and Wang Lixin 王立新, *Meiguo Chuanjiaoshi yu Wan Qing Zhongguo Xiandaihua* 美國傳教士與晚晴中國現代化 (*American Missionaries and the Modernisation of the Late Qing China*) (Tianjin: Tianjin People’s Publishing House, 1997).

this study. With growing scholarly efforts in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, the study of Chinese churches has developed much faster in these regions than anywhere else.³² During the last decade, it has gone deeper and become more detailed, and as a result, a large number of case studies on individual churches, certain areas of China or Christian figures have emerged, adopting various methods in sociology, anthropology and oral history. In recent years, Peter Tze-ming Ng has applied the sociological concept of ‘glocalisation’ (to consider both global and local perspectives) in the study of Christianity in China.³³ In a similar manner to Peter Chen-main Wang, Ng attempted to correct the tendency to focus chiefly on the Chinese context and Chinese elements, and therefore neglect foreign factors and the roles of missionaries in the study of Chinese Christianity among Chinese scholars. Li Tiangang also shared this view and suggested Chinese scholars study this issue with a global perspective, whilst western scholars were adopting a ‘China-centric’ approach.³⁴

The study of Chinese churches and Christianity indigeneity has been approached

³² Lin Chi-Ping 林治平, ed., *Jidujiao yu Zhongguo Bensehua 基督教與中國本色化 (Christianity and the Indigenisation of China)* (Taipei: Today's China Press, 1990); Liu Jiafeng, *Liyi yu Ronghui (Fracture and Consolidation)*; Yang Senfu 楊森富, *Zhonghua Jidujiao Bensehua Lunwen Ji 中華基督教本色化論文集 (Studies of The Indigenisation of Christianity in China)* (Taipei: Christian Cosmic Light, 2006); Lee Kam-keung 李金強 and Leung Ka-lun 梁家麟, eds., *Zhonghua Bense: Jindai Zhongguo Jiaohui Shilue 中華本色：近代中國教會史略 (The Indigenisation of China, The History of Modern Chinese Church)* (Hong Kong: Alliance Press, 2007).

³³ Peter Tze Ming Ng, “‘Glocalization’ as a Key to the Interplay between Christianity and Asian Cultures: The Vision of Francis Wei in Early Twentieth Century China,” *International Journal of Public Theology* 1, no. 1 (2007): 101-11; Ng, *Chinese Christianity: An Interplay between Global and Local Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

³⁴ Li Tiangang 李天綱, ‘Jin Ershi Nian Zhongguo Jidu Zongjiaoshi Yanjiu Zongshu 近二十年中國基督教史研究綜述 (A Literature Review of the Historiography of Christianity in China in Recent Twenty Years),’ *Lishi Jiaoxue Wenti 歷史教學問題 (History Teaching and Research)*, no. 1 (2008): 42-50.

in several different ways. One of them is to discuss this issue as a whole, as demonstrated by Yamatoto Sumiko's *History of Protestantism in China: The Indigenization of Christianity* in 1972, Zhang Hua's 'Jidujiao Zaoqi 'San Zi' de Lishi Kaocha (A Historical Review of the 'Three-Self' in China)', and Duan Qi's *Fenjin de Licheng: Zhongguo Jidujiao de Bensehua (Indigenisation of Christianity in China)*. Yamatoto's work contains two main parts; the first concerns the course of the church indigeneity movement in China, including Chinese independent churches, such as the Jesus Family and the Little Flock, the second is a study of several Chinese Christian figures, such as Zhao Zichen and Wu Yaozong 吳耀宗 (Y. T. Wu).³⁵ Zhang Hua's study points out that the 'three-self' movement during the course of the church indigeneity movement in the early twentieth century was different from the Three-Self Patriotic Movement after 1949. She defines the former as a religious movement and the latter a political one.³⁶ Duan Qi's book covers the period from the beginning of the Protestant missions in China in 1807 to contemporary China. It presents a comprehensive account of the history of church indigeneity in China, mainly based on the Chinese language sources.³⁷ Additionally, the examination of the relationship between church indigeneity and the anti-Christian movements in

³⁵ Sumiko Yamatoto, *History of Protestantism in China: The Indigenization of Christianity* (Tokyo: Toho Gakkai, 2000).

³⁶ Zhang Hua 張化, 'Jidujiao Zaoqi "San Zi" de Lishi Kaocha 基督教早期“三自”的歷史考察 (A Historical Review of the "Three-Self" in China),' in *Jidujiao yu Jindai Wenhua 基督教與近代文化 (Christianity and Modern Culture)*, ed. Zhu Weizheng 朱維錚 (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1994), 144-5.

³⁷ Duan Qi 段琦, *Fenjin de Licheng: Zhongguo Jidujiao de Bensehua 奮進的歷程：中國基督教的本土化 (Indigenisation of Christianity in China)* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2004).

China during the 1920s has also been a popular approach.³⁸

In his article, ‘The Growth of Independent Christianity in China, 1900-1937,’ Daniel Bays named one category of Chinese churches, which aimed to realise ‘three-self’ in the mission-related structure, as the ‘Sino-foreign Protestant establishment.’³⁹ This term has generally been used by mainland scholars when referring to the mission-related churches or the mainline churches. In his new book, *A New History of Christianity in China*, Bays explains in detail the origins and evolution of the so-called ‘Sino-foreign Protestant establishment.’ According to him, this ‘Sino-foreign Protestant establishment’ was formed by certain influential missionary individuals as ‘an elite policy-setting and decision-making ‘establishment’ among missionaries in the late nineteenth century, and only after 1910 were Chinese Christian leaders gradually incorporated into this establishment.’⁴⁰

³⁸ There have been several important works on this topic, such as Yip Ka-che, *Religion, Nationalism and Chinese Students: The Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-1927* (Bellevue: Western Washington University, 1980); Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-1928* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Cross Cultural Publications, 1988); Lam Wing-Hung 林榮洪, *Fengchao zhong Fenqi de Zhongguo Jiaohui 風潮中奮起的中國教會 (The Chinese Church in Storm)* (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 1980); Yeh Jen-chang 葉仁昌, *Wusi Yihou de Fandui Jidujiao Yundong: Zhongguo Zhengjiao Guanxi de Jiexi 五四以後的反對基督教運動：中國政教關係的解析 (The Anti-Christian Movement after May Fourth: An Analysis of the Church-State Relationship in China)* (Taipei: Jiu Da Publishing House, 1992); Yang Tianhong 楊天宏, *Jidujiao yu Jindai Zhongguo: Zhongguo Fei Jidujiao Yundong Yanjiu 基督教與近代中國：中國非基督教運動研究 (Christianity and Modern China: Study of the Anti-Christian Movement in China)* (Chengdu: Sichuan People’s Publishing House, 1994); Samuel D. Ling, ‘The Other May Fourth Movement: The Chinese Christian Renaissance, 1919-1937,’ PhD diss., Temple University, 1981; Jonathan T’ien-en Chao, ‘The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement, 1919-1927: A Protestant Response to the Anti-Christian Movement in Modern China,’ PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1986; Ying Fuk-tsang 邢福增, ‘Bensehua yu Minguo Jidujiao Shi Yanjiu 本色化與民國基督教史研究 (A Study of Indigenisation and the History of Christianity in Republican China),’ *Jindai Zhongguo Jidujiao Shi yanjiu Jikan 近代中國基督教史研究季刊 (Studies of Modern Chinese Christian History)*, no.1 (1998): 85-100; and Ying, *Wenhua Shiying yu Zhongguo Jidutu, 1860-1911 文化適應與中國基督徒, 1860-1911 (Cultural Accommodation and Chinese Christians, 1860-1911)* (Hong Kong: Alliance Press, 1995).

³⁹ Bays, ‘Growth of Independent Christianity,’ 308-9.

⁴⁰ Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012),

By demonstrating how generally insufficient the churches within this institution-heavy ‘Sino-foreign Protestant establishment’ were in making efforts towards authentic indigeneity and autonomy, and in responding to changes in political and financial conditions in China before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Bays draws scholars’ attention to a completely different Chinese Christian sector, which was ‘independent of foreign missions, autonomous in operations, and indigenous in ideas and leadership’ but has been neglected by scholars in Chinese Christianity studies,⁴¹ and includes institutions such as the True Jesus Church and the Spiritual Gifts Church alongside Chinese evangelists such as Ding Limei 丁立美 (Ting Li-mei) and Chen Chonggui. Along these lines, an increasing number of studies have been done with a focus on these independent churches and evangelists in China,⁴² and there is plenty of scope left for further

99-104.

⁴¹ Bays, ‘Growth of Independent Christianity,’ 309-16.

⁴² Daniel H. Bays, ‘Christianity in China, A Case Study of Indigenous Christianity: The Jesus Family, 1927-1952,’ *Religion, Journal of the KSR* 26, no.1 (1988); Bays, ‘Christian Revival in China, 1900-1937,’ in *Modern Christian Revivals*, eds. Edith L. Blumhofer and Randall Balmer (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 161-79; Bays, ‘Indigenous Protestant Church in China, 1900-1937: A Pentecostal Case Study,’ in *Indigenous Response to Western Christianity*, ed. Steven Kaplan (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 124-143; Cha Shih-chieh, ‘Shandong “Yesu Jiating” de Jingji Xingtai Chu Tan, 1927-1949 山東“耶穌家庭”的經濟形態初探 (The Economic Activities of the “Jesus Family” in Shandong, 1927-1949),’ *Guoli Taiwan Daxue Lishixue Xi Xuebao 國立台灣大學歷史學系學報 (Bulletin of the Department of History of National Taiwan University)*, no. 15 (1990): 217-38; Zhang Hua, ‘Yesujiao Zilihui (Jesus Independent Church)’; Tao Feiya, ‘Zhongguo Jidujiao Wutuobang: Guanyu Yesu Jiating de Lishi Yanjiu 中國基督教烏托邦：關於耶穌家庭的歷史研究 (The Chinese Christian Utopia: A Historical Study of the Jesus Family),’ PhD diss., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2000; Tao, ‘Pentecostalism and Christian Utopia in China: Jing Dianying and the Jesus Family Movement, 1921-1952,’ in *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities*, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 238-52; Melissa Inouye, ‘Miraculous Mundane: The True Jesus Church and Chinese Christianity in the Twentieth Century,’ PhD diss., Harvard University, 2011. Ying Fuk-tsang points out that it is important to study not only how those churches achieved the ‘three-self,’ but also how they balanced their church structures and theology with Chinese society and Chinese culture. He believes that these independent churches did not have consciousness to indigenise Christianity, however, they expressed their Christian faith and experience through the way of Chinese folk religion. See Ying, ‘Bensehua (Indigenisation),’ 91. The latest monograph on independent churches is Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire*,

detailed studies in this field.

As for case studies of the mainline Protestant churches, the majority of works have focussed on the evolution of churches in certain regions of China, such as Hu Weiqing's study of the Lingdong (East Guangdong) Presbyterian Church and Ryan Dunch's monograph on the experiences and social role of Chinese Protestants in the Fuzhou area of southeast China.⁴³ So far, the only monograph on the Church of Christ in China, the largest mainline church before 1949, is Wallace Merwin's *Adventure in Unity, The Church of Christ in China*.⁴⁴ It presents a detailed account of the Church of Christ in China, as a whole, from its preparation for inauguration to its decline in mainland China during the 1950s and 1960s. As Merwin states in the book, his intention was to write a 'brief, popular history' of the church. His book is not written from an academic perspective. Moreover, as it was finished quite early, the author still held a very positive view about Christian missions to China and the achievement of the Church of Christ in China towards church indigeneity and unity. Nonetheless, as the only detailed study on this topic, Merwin's book is an important source of reference for scholars when discussing the history of the Church of Christ in China.

Other works related to the Church of Christ in China include Wu Yixiong's essay

The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁴³ Hu Weiqing 胡衛清, 'Lujing yu Kunjing: Lingdong Zhanglaohui Zili Yundong Ge'an Yanjiu 路徑與困境：嶺東長老會自立運動個案研究 (Path and Predicament: A Case Study on the Indigenous Movement of Lingdong Presbyterian Church),' in *Liyi yu Ronghui (Fracture and Consolidation)*, ed. Liu Jiafeng, 126-155; Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China 1857-1927* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

⁴⁴ Wallace C. Merwin, *Adventure in Unity, The Church of Christ in China* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974).

on the Guangdong Synod of the Church of Christ in China.⁴⁵ In this case study, he examines the role of western missionaries in the matter of church indigeneity in China.⁴⁶ Wu believes that it is still important to study the role of western missionaries in the process of church indigeneity in China, and that the study of Christianity in modern China will not be integral if the study of missionary movements is not properly developed. Wu's research shows that the American Presbyterian Mission (North) played an indispensable role in church indigeneity in Guangdong. It is another attempt to correct a perceived imbalance in the historiography towards the 'Chinese factor.' Another essay, by Timothy Brook, examines the Church of Christ in China as a case study during the period of the Sino-Japanese War. He argues that the wartime was vital in accelerating the steps of Chinese churches towards church independence and unity. The case of the Church of Christ in China, to him, demonstrates that the Japanese occupation in fact pushed forward the independence and unity of the Chinese church, as it severed the ties between churches and missions due to the withdrawal of missionaries by 1941, and forced the church to unify itself among denominations, which Japan considered to be consistent with the occupation state.⁴⁷ In addition, there are Yang Tianhong and

⁴⁵ Wu Yixiong 吳義雄, 'Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Guangdong Xiehui yu Bense Jiaohui Yundong, 1919-1949 中華基督教會廣東協會與本色教會運動, 1919-1949 (The Guangdong Synod of the Church of Christ in China and the Indigenous Church Movement, 1919-1949),' *Shijie Zongjiao Yanjiu 世界宗教研究 (Studies in World Religions)*, no. 2 (2002): 75-85.

⁴⁶ Wu Yixiong, 'Meiguo Bei Zhanglaohui yu Huanan Jidujiao de Bensehua Guocheng 美國北長老會與華南基督教的本色化過程 (American Northern Presbyterian and the Process of Indigenisation of Christianity in Huanan),' in *Liyi yu Ronghui (Fracture and Consolidation)*, ed. Liu Jiafeng, 89-125.

⁴⁷ Timothy Brook, 'Toward Independence: Christianity in China under the Japanese Occupation, 1937-1945,' in *Christianity in China*, ed. Bays, 317-37.

Deng Jie's studies on the 'Border Mission' of the Church of Christ in China during the wartime.⁴⁸

The study of the church unity movement in China, especially within several major national Protestant organisations, such as the National Christian Council of China and the Church of Christ in China, has been confined to a few brief treatments scattered in a number of works regarding the history of Christianity in China, with the exception of Merwin's narratives. There are roughly two categories of studies which have noted the mainline church unity movement. The first category refers to works from a traditional missiological approach, for example, Latourette's *A History of Christian Missions in China* and Norman Goodall's *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945*.⁴⁹ They usually hold a positive attitude towards this movement. The second one includes a number of contemporary academic studies, such as Bays' *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century Present and A New History of Christianity in China*, Lian Xi's *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*, R. G. Tiedemann's 'Comity Agreements and Sheep Stealers: The Elusive Search for Christian Unity among Protestants in China,' Philip Wickery's *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the*

⁴⁸ Yang Tianhong, *Jiushu yu Ziji: Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Bianjiang Fuwu Yanjiu 救贖與自救：中華基督教會邊疆服務研究* (*Salvation and Self-salvation: A Study of the Border Service of the Church Christ in China*) (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2010); Deng Jie 鄧杰, *Yiliao yu Budao: Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui zai Chuan Kang Biandi de Yiliao Fuwu Yanjiu 醫療與佈道：中華基督教會在川康邊地的醫療服務研究* (*Medical and Evangelism: A Study of the Medical Service of the Church of Christ in China in the borderlands of Sichuan and Xikang*) (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2011).

⁴⁹ Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).

Three-Self Movement, and China's United Front, Kevin Xiyi Yao's *The Fundamentalist Movement among Protestant Missionaries in China, 1920-1937*, and Guo Weilian's *Fandui Heyi?! Jia Yuming, Jiyao Zhuyi yu Heyi Yundong de Jiuji* (*Against Union?! Jia Yuming, the Entanglement of Fundamentalism and Union Movement*).⁵⁰ These works recognise the efforts of mainline Chinese Protestants towards a united indigenous church in China, and that of several missions towards a greater breadth of co-operation and federation, such as in educational and medical work. Meanwhile, through revealing the dynamics of the growing diversity and fragmentation in Chinese Protestantism, particularly in the twentieth century, they provide critical assessments of the quest for church unity. However, as a number of them focus specifically on either independent sects, the TSPM churches, or on conservatives and fundamentalists, the mainline churches, together with their vision of Christian unity, are occasionally regarded as in an inferior position due to their insufficient indigeneity and incomplete unity.

Regarding case studies on Chinese Christian figures, a good number of works have been done both on Christian intellectuals, such as Zhao Zichen, Wu Leichuan 吳雷川,⁵¹ Xu Baoqian,⁵² Liu Tingfang 劉廷芳 (Timothy Tingfang Lew),⁵³ Yu

⁵⁰ R. G. Tiedemann, 'Comity Agreements and Sheep Stealers: The Elusive Search for Christian Unity among Protestants in China,' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 36, no. 1 (2012): 3-8; Philip Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China's United Front* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988); Kevin Xiyi Yao, *The Fundamentalist Movement among Protestant Missionaries in China, 1920-1937* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003); Kwok Wai-lin 郭偉連, *Fandui Heyi?! Jia Yuming, Jiyao Zhuyi yu Heyi Yundong de Jiuji 反對合一?! 賈玉銘, 基要主義與合一運動的糾結* (*Against Union?! Jia Yuming, the Entanglement of Fundamentalism and Union Movement*) (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2002).

⁵¹ Philip West, 'Christianity and Nationalism: The Career of Wu Lei-chuan at Yenching University,' in

Rizhang 余日章 (David Yui),⁵⁴ Wei Zhuomin 韋卓民 (Francis Wei),⁵⁵ Wu Yaozong, Ding Guangxun,⁵⁶ and independent evangelists, including Wang Mingdao,⁵⁷ Ni Tuosheng,⁵⁸ Song Shangjie⁵⁹ and Chen Chonggui.⁶⁰ Among them, Zhao Zichen and Wu Yaozong are the most popular figures.⁶¹

Missionary Enterprise, ed. Fairbank, 226-246; Ng Lee-ming, 'Christianity and Social Change: The Case in China 1920-1950,' PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1971; Ling, 'Other May Fourth Movement'; Chu Sin-jan, *Wu Leichuan: A Confucian-Christian in Republican China* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); Li Wei 李韋, *Wu Leichuan de Jidujiao Chujinghua Sixiang Yanjiu* 吳雷川的基督教處境化思想研究 (*A Study of Wu Leichuan's Perspectives of Christianity Contextualisation*) (Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher, 2010).

⁵² Yeung Kwok-keung, 'Taking up Worldly Cause with a World-Rejecting Spirit: The Religion-Political Identity Negotiation of the Chinese Christian, Xu Baoqian (1892-1944),' PhD diss., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2000.

⁵³ Wu Xuxing 吳旭興, 'Liu Tingfang Zongjiao Jiaoyu Linian zhi Shijian yu Zhongguo Shehui Bianqian, 1891-1947 劉廷芳宗教教育理念之實踐與中國社會變遷 1891-1947 (The Practice of Liu Tingfang's Idea on Religion Education and the Changing of Chinese Society),' PhD diss., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001; Wu, 'Xiang Fan Zongjiao Jiaoyu Tiaozhan: 1920 Nian Liu Tingfang yu Jiaoyu Bentuhua zhi Lu 向反宗教教育挑戰: 1920年劉廷芳與教育本土化之路 (Challenge the Anti-Religion Education: Liu Tingfang and Education Indigenisation in 1920),' *Taiwan Jinxinhui Shenxueyuan Xueshu Nian Kan* 台灣浸信會神學院學術年刊 (*Taiwan Baptist Seminary Journal*), no. 6 (2003): 61-81.

⁵⁴ Peter Chen-main Wang 王成勉, 'A Patriotic Christian Leader in Changing China: Yu Rizhang in the Turbulent 1920s,' in *Chinese nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases*, eds. C. X. George Wei and Liu Xiaoyuan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 33-52; Wang, 'Yu Rizhang Zhengjiao Guan zhi Yanjiu 余日章政教觀之研究 (A Study of Yu Rizhang's Suggestions on the Church-State Relationship),' in *Liyi yu Ronghui (Fracture and Consolidation)*, ed. Liu Jiafeng, 183-203.

⁵⁵ Peter Tze Ming Ng, "'Glocalisation" as a Key to the Interplay between Christianity and Asian Cultures: The Vision of Francis Wei in Early Twentieth Century China,' *International Journal of Public Theology* 1, no. 1 (2007): 101-11.

⁵⁶ Philip L. Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China: K.H. Ting and the Chinese Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).

⁵⁷ Lam Wing-Hung, *Wang Mingdao yu Zhongguo Jiaohui* 王明道與中國教會 (*Wang Mingdao and the Chinese Church*) (Hong Kong: China Graduate School of Theology Press, 1982).

⁵⁸ Lam Wing-Hung, *Shu Ling Shenxue: Ni Tuosheng Sixiang de Yanjiu* 屬靈神學: 倪柝聲思想的研究 (*Spiritual Theology: A Study of Watchman Nee's Thoughts*) (Hong Kong: Alliance Press, 1985); Leung Ka-lun, *Ni Tuosheng de Rongru Shengchu* 倪柝聲的榮辱升黜 (*Watchman Nee's Honour and Disgrace*) (Hong Kong: Alliance Press, 2003).

⁵⁹ Leung Ka-lun, *Huaren Chuandao yu Fenxing Budaojia* 華人傳道與奮興佈道家 (*The Chinese Preachers and Evangelists*) (Hong Kong: Alliance Press, 1999).

⁶⁰ Daniel Bays, 'Foreign Missions and Indigenous Protestant Leaders in China, 1920-1955: Identity and Loyalty in an Age of Powerful Nationalism,' in *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of Empire*, eds. Brian Stanley and Alaine Low (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 144-64; Ying Fuk-tsang, *Zhongguo Jiyao Zhuyi Zhe de Shijian yu Kunjing: Chen Chonggui de Shenxue Sixiang yu Shidai* 中國基要主義者的實踐與困境: 陳崇桂的神學思想與時代 (*The Praxis and Predicament of a Chinese Fundamentalist: Chen Chonggui, his Theological Thought and his Time*) (Hong Kong: Alliance Press, 2001).

⁶¹ Works on Zhao Zichen include Winfried Glier, *Christliche Theologie in China: T. C. Chao*

As one of the most outstanding Christian leaders of the mainline churches, Cheng Jingyi's name was bound together with numerous Christian movements in China during the first half of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, modern scholarship has yet to produce a complete study of him. Jonathan Ti'en-en Chao was perhaps the first scholar who attempted to focus on Cheng Jingyi. However, due to the shortage of sources, Chao failed to complete his study.⁶² His partial essay on the subject examines Cheng's early life, from his education within the system of the LMS and his experience in Britain, to his ordination as a pastor in Beijing. Using Cheng Jingyi's early life as a case study, Chao analyses the features and style of the work of the LMS in late nineteenth-century China, and points out several contradictions in the work of the LMS between their theory of church planting and their actual practice. These contradictions, to Chao, explained the failure of foreign missions in achieving the goal of the establishment of indigenous churches in China. He therefore evaluates Cheng's ordination to be a Chinese pastor in the LMS church as 'a breakthrough in this impasse.'⁶³ In addition, Chao argues that Cheng's experience

1918-1956 (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1979); Lam Wing-Hung, *Qugaohagua: Zhao Zichen de Shengping ji Shenxue* 曲高和寡：趙紫宸的生平及神學 (*Too High to be Popular: The Life and Theology of T. C. Chao*) (Hong Kong: China Graduate School of Theology Press, 1994); and Ying Fuk-tsang, *Xunsuo Jidujiao de Dutexing: Zhao Zichen Shenxue Lunji* 尋索基督教的獨特性：趙紫宸神學論集 (*In Search of the Uniqueness of Christianity: Analects of T. C. Chao's Theology*) (Hong Kong: Alliance Press, 2003); Works on Wu Yaozong include Leung Ka-lun, *Wu Yaozong San Lun* 吳耀宗三論 (*Study of Y. T. Wu*) (Hong Kong: Alliance Press, 1996); and Ying Fuk-tsang, ed., *Da Shidai de Zongjiao Xinyang: Wu Yaozong yu Ershi Shiji Zhongguo Jidujiao* 大時代的宗教信仰：吳耀宗與二十世紀中國基督教 (*Abiding Faith for a Nation in Crisis: Y. T. Wu and Twentieth-Century Chinese Christianity*) (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, 2011).

⁶² China Graduate School of Theology, Jonathan T'ien-en Chao, 'The Indigenization of Protestant Christianity in Modern China as Seen through the Life and Work of Cheng Ching-yi (1881-1939),' Partial Draft, 1978.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 160.

in Britain brought him ‘unexpected liberation from ecclesiastical servitude.’⁶⁴

In his recent *IBMR* article, Peter Tze-ming Ng provides a brief narrative of the efforts of Cheng Jingyi and other Chinese Protestants towards the goal of church independence and indigeneity. He quoted John Mott’s compliments on Cheng Jingyi to appraise him as ‘a great prophet of his time.’ Ng further notes the historical significance of Cheng Jingyi by pointing out that a number of issues which Cheng regarded as essential during the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference are still of significance to the development of Christianity in China today.⁶⁵

Several scholars have noted Cheng during their discussions of the period of history related to him. In her book *Fenjin de Licheng: Zhongguo Jidujiao de Bense Hua (Indigenisation of Christianity in China)*, Duan Qi mentioned Cheng Jingyi several times when discussing church indigeneity and the various activities and conferences organised by the China Continuation Committee, the National Christian Council of China and the Church of Christ in China, all of which Cheng served in key positions. Duan fully acknowledges Cheng’s contribution to church indigeneity in China; however, she did not form any particular analysis on Cheng’s perspectives and contribution, only treating him as one of the leading figures in the church indigeneity movement in China, due to the nature of her book as a general history of church indigeneity in China.

Brian Stanley provides a comprehensive account of Cheng Jingyi’s presence at

⁶⁴ Ibid., 139.

⁶⁵ Peter Tze-ming Ng, ‘Cheng Jingyi: Prophet of His Time,’ *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 36, no. 1 (2012): 14-6.

the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in his book *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*. Cheng's call for a united church in China is discussed under an international background, rather than focussing on China alone. According to Stanley, the Edinburgh conference played an important role by giving Cheng an opportunity to express his ideas regarding church unity.⁶⁶ With a brief introduction to Cheng's activities on church unity within the China Continuation Committee, the National Christian Council of China and the Church of Christ in China after the Edinburgh Conference, Stanley claims that Cheng's practice on church unity can be seen as a partial realisation of the three-self non-denominational church, which the Chinese Communist Party imposed on the Chinese church after 1951.⁶⁷ Cheng is considered by Stanley as 'one of the major figures in early twentieth-century ecumenism.' Additionally, Stanley points out that Cheng's selection as the secretary of the China Continuation Committee was 'noteworthy,' since Cheng was a Manchu and the Qing sovereignty had already been wiped away in Republican China.⁶⁸

In his book *Redeemed by Fire, The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*, Lian Xi states an altogether different opinion from Chao's view of Cheng Jingyi's ordination as a milestone in the erosion of missionary dominance over Chinese churches. The image of Cheng Jingyi which Lian presents is one of a moderate Christian leader, who chiefly followed missionaries' lead regarding church affairs in the mission-related structure, and who was a 'gradualist' towards church

⁶⁶ Stanley, *Edinburgh 1910*, 311.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

independence, ‘carefully balanced between patriotism and recognition of the reality of financial and administrative dependence on western missions.’⁶⁹ It should be noted that Lian does give credit to the efforts of western missionaries and Chinese Christians of the mission-related churches towards ‘an indigenous Christianity,’ and the important role Cheng Jingyi played as ‘one of the most visible Chinese Christian leaders’ within the missionary enterprise. Additionally, he indicates the gulf that existed between the different backgrounds of the western-educated Chinese Protestant leaders and ‘modern urban elites,’ such as Cheng Jingyi and Liu Tingfang, and the independent church leaders, such as Wei Enbo, the founder of the True Jesus Church.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Cheng seems to be described as a puppet of foreign missions, and the church indigeneity which he and other leaders ardently advocated is criticised as merely a ‘missionary vision of a native church safely within the limits of mainline western Protestantism.’⁷¹

As noted previously, in his book *A New History of Christianity in China*, Daniel Bays points out the insufficient indigeneity of mainline Chinese churches and the failure to achieve a wide denominational representation of the Church of Christ in China. However, he does evince sympathy for Cheng Jingyi’s ultimate goal of the establishment of a united church in an ecclesiastical aspect, and a single indigenous church in practice, which set keynotes for the formation of the Church of Christ in

⁶⁹ Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 58-9.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 35-6, 40-1, 58-61.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 40-1.

China.⁷²

So far, the only detailed study of Cheng Jingyi has been written by Liu Jiafeng. Liu studied Cheng Jingyi in his post-doctoral dissertation, which was the first detailed study of Cheng's life, his ideas and activities regarding church indigeneity.⁷³ In this work, Liu focusses not only on Cheng's perspectives, but also on his deeds for the 'Sino-foreign Protestant establishment' and church indigeneity. As a detailed narrative of a series of Cheng's activities, his dissertation contributes to the study of the practice of leading Chinese Christian figures, a field of study which has not been fully developed. Based on this research, Liu published another two essays on Cheng Jingyi and the church indigeneity movement in China.⁷⁴ 'Cong Chaihui dao Jiaohui: Cheng Jingyi de Bense jiaohui Sixiang Jiexi (From the Missions to the Church: An Analysis of Cheng Jingyi's Perspectives on Church Indigenisation)' focusses on Cheng's ideas. Liu points out that Cheng's opinions on church indigeneity contained two aspects: one was Christianity indigeneity, that is, to adapt Christianity to Chinese culture and Chinese civilisation; and the other was church indigeneity, namely, the church should be independent with regard to economy, structure and personnel. He

⁷² Bays, *New History*, 102.

⁷³ Liu Jiafeng, 'Cheng Jingyi (1881-1939) yu Zhongguo Jiaohui Bensehua Yundong 誠靜怡 (1881-1939) 與中國教會本色化運動 (Cheng Jingyi (1881-1939) and The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement),' Post-doctoral diss., Sun Yatsen University, 2004.

⁷⁴ Liu Jiafeng, 'Cong Chaihui dao Jiaohui: Cheng Jingyi de Bense jiaohui Sixiang Jiexi 從差會到教會：誠靜怡的本色教會思想解析 (From the Missions to the Church: An Analysis of Cheng Jingyi's Thoughts on the Church Indigenisation),' *Shijie Zongjiao Yanjiu 世界宗教研究 (Studies in World Religions)*, no. 2 (2006): 113-22; Liu, 'Cong Zhushou dao Lingxiu: 1910 Niandai de Zhongguo Jidutu – Yi Cheng Jingyi wei Zhongxin de Kaocha 從助手到領袖：1910年代的中國基督徒——以誠靜怡為中心的考察 (From Helper to Leader: Chinese Christians in the 1910s – A Case Study of Cheng Jingyi),' *Shehui Kexue Yanjiu 社會科學研究 (Social Science Research)*, no. 2 (2007): 155-62.

argues that these two aspects formed Cheng's perspectives on what an indigenous church should be. Additionally, he notes that Cheng had a special concern with 'nationalism,' and emphasised the spiritual nature of Christianity when discussing church indigeneity. The other essay 'Cong Zhushou dao Lingxiu: 1910 Niandai de Zhongguo Jidutu – Yi Cheng Jingyi wei Zhongxin de Kaocha (From Helper to Leader: Chinese Christians in the 1910s – A Case Study of Cheng Jingyi)' discusses Cheng's major activities during the 1910s, when he was emerging from a helper of missionaries to a leader of the Chinese church. Liu attempts to discover why it was around the 1910s that the 'Sino-foreign Protestant establishment' formed and how its formation took place. Taking Cheng as an example, his essay explores the significant position of the period of the 1910s in the history of Christianity in China.

Liu's study initiated a good start on the study of Cheng Jingyi, a figure who has been neglected in academic research. Based on Cheng's writings and abundant documents of the major institutions which Cheng served, such as the China Continuation Committee, the National Christian Council of China and the Church of Christ in China, Liu's post-doctoral dissertation contains rich information regarding Cheng's life. It is a detailed introduction to further and deeper study of this figure, for instance Cheng's vision of a united single national church, especially of an interdenominational Christian union, Cheng's conviction of the fraternal church-mission relationships, as well as the connection between his early life and later approach to church construction in China.

As Jonathan Chao states, Cheng's stay in Britain liberated him from denominationalism. The question of whether this ecumenical conviction was solely a western idea or rather a Chinese indigenous one is worthy of exploration, for this leads to the evaluation of the nature of the efforts of the mainline churches towards the goal of establishing a united indigenous church. Was this desire for a single union church in China an authentic indigenous concern of a considerable number of Chinese Christians, or was it, as Lian Xi states, merely a missionary vision of a native church? With the review of the church unity movement in early twentieth-century China, and in particular the examination of the Church of Christ in China, one may get an integral picture regarding this matter. Additionally, the exploration of Cheng's perspectives on Christian unity is of importance to the understanding of the church-mission relationships of the mainline churches, for example, the Church of Christ in China. Was the maintenance of this relationship chiefly out of the concern over foreign subsidies, or was there a genuine conviction of international Christian fellowship? Furthermore, did Cheng Jingyi's role in a number of major Christian institutions only function as a puppet under missionaries' control, or as Jonathan Chao comments, was it the 'end of a missionary era?'⁷⁵ All of these questions concerning Cheng Jingyi, the Church of Christ in China, and the church unity movement in early twentieth-century China require further exploration and discussion in a wider context rather than being confined only to China. This thesis will attempt this further exploration and analysis.

⁷⁵ Chao, 'Indigenisation of Protestant Christianity,' 139.

1.6. Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 focusses on a chronological study of Cheng Jingyi's early life prior to his attendance at the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference. It delves into the course of the formation of Cheng's convictions of the ecumenical future of the Chinese church.

Chapter 3 examines the evolution of Cheng's ecumenical convictions which were shared by a considerable number of mainline Chinese Christian leaders, and explores how the desire for a united indigenous church in China was proclaimed, reinforced and promoted through the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 and the work of its Continuation Committee in China during the 1910s.

Chapter 4 surveys the course of the establishment of the National Christian Council of China [NCC] and its effort toward building a united indigenous church appropriate to the complex social and political circumstances in China stirred by the Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-1927. Additionally, the 1920s witnessed the challenge of the controversy between Protestant liberals and fundamentalists which deeply affected the NCC and the Protestant enterprise in China. An examination of how this controversy affected the NCC and the church unity movement, and how Protestant ecumenism in China evolved at this stage, also forms the content of this chapter.

Chapter 5 uses the Church of Christ in China [CCC] as a case study, canvassing the evolution of the CCC and its efforts towards church union from 1927 to 1939. Through a discussion of the feasibility of the mode of church union of the CCC, it evaluates the legacy of the church unity movement in early twentieth-century China for the Chinese church of today and the world ecumenical movement.

Chapter 2:

Cheng Jingyi's Early Life and his Search for A United Indigenous Church in China (before the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, 1910)

Chapter 2 is a chronological study of Cheng Jingyi's early life, including his education associated with the London Missionary Society [LMS] in Beijing, his experience in Britain, his ministry in Beijing following his return, and his first published article, which expressed his ecumenical outlook, in early 1910. These events are worth exploration, as Cheng's early experience was closely linked to a series of social, political and historical shifts in Chinese society and Christian enterprise in China from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, and played a significant role in the formation of his perspectives on Christian ecumenism and church indigeneity in China.

2.1. Cheng's Early Life Associated with the London Missionary Society

During his early life, Cheng Jingyi was closely associated with the LMS. His father, Po Hai-ting 博[?]海亭,⁷⁶ served as a preacher in one of the branch churches of the

⁷⁶ All the existing available sources regarding Po Hai-ting refer him as 海亭公 (Monsieur Haiting), with the Chinese character corresponding to his family name Po remaining a mystery. According to *Jianming Manzu Xingshi Quanlu 簡明滿族姓氏全錄 (A Brief Index of Manchu Given Names)*, Po possibly corresponds to the following Han family names which were adopted by some Manchu clans: 博 (for example, Bodori Hala, Bohori, Borjik Hala and Fujuri Hala), 坡 (Po Hala) or 頗 (Pogiya

LMS in Beijing, and Cheng was brought up in the church, studied in both the Boys' Boarding School of the West city mission of Beijing and the Theological Institute of the LMS in Tianjin. His association with the LMS formed the early half of his lifetime, and even in subsequent years Cheng still kept a close connection with the LMS.

The late eighteenth century had seen a remarkable revival of evangelical fervour in Britain, which gave birth to a number of missionary societies.⁷⁷ These societies included the Baptist Missionary Society [BMS] (1792), the LMS (1795) and the Church Missionary Society [CMS] (1799). The LMS demonstrated the non-denominational concern of its founders from the very beginning, and this was embodied in its *Fundamental Principle*:

As the union of God's People of various Denominations, in carrying on this great Work, is a most desirable Object, so, to prevent, if possible, any cause of future dissention, it is declared to be a fundamental principle of the Missionary Society, that our design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church Order and Government (about which there may be differences of opinion among serious Persons), but the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the Heathen: and that it shall left (as it ever ought to be left) to the minds of the Persons whom God may call into the fellowship of his Son from among them to assume for themselves such form of Church Government, as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God.⁷⁸

Although the subsequent history of the LMS showed that this genuine

Hala). See *Jianming Manzu Xingshi Quanlu* 簡明滿族姓氏全錄 (A Brief Index of Manchu Given Names), <http://wenku.baidu.com/view/3b660140a8956bec0975e3a4.html###>, 66.

⁷⁷ Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 2.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

enthusiasm towards interdenominational co-operation was impossible to maintain, and the society gradually turned into a Congregational and Presbyterian agency,⁷⁹ its original commitment to its *Fundamental Principle*, to some extent, still encouraged openness towards other missions and cultures, as revealed by the extent of its co-operation with other missions and its constant promotion of church union and the liberty of churches in the mission fields on the adoption of church order.⁸⁰

2.1.1. The LMS in Beijing

The work of the LMS in Beijing began on 18 September 1861 when missionary William Lockhart gained admission to Beijing as medical officer of the British legation.⁸¹ Until 1881, when Cheng was born, the LMS had two mission stations in Beijing, one of which was in the East city and originated from the hospital and mission station founded by Lockhart in 1861, while the other was in the West city, started in 1878.⁸² Although the strategy of the LMS in the mission fields was shaped by the ‘three-self’ formula, which aimed at planting a ‘self-supporting,

⁷⁹ See Brian Stanley, ‘The Reshaping of Christian Tradition: Western Denominational Identity in a Non-Western Context,’ in *Unity and Diversity in the Church, Studies in Church History, Vol. 32*, ed. R. N. Swanson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 399-426; Andrew Porter, *The Council for World Mission and its Archival Legacy* (London: Library, School of Oriental and African Studies, Archives and Manuscript Division Occasional Paper, 1999); Goodall, *History of LMS*, 1-14.

⁸⁰ Porter, *CWM*, 6.

⁸¹ Goodall, *History of LMS*, 146; *Report of the London Missionary Society*, 1863, 26.

⁸² *Report of LMS*, 1894, 75.

self-governing, and self-propagating church,⁸³ the LMS's work in Beijing was 'mission-centric' rather than 'church-centric' until the early twentieth century. Missionaries dominated church affairs and made all decisions through the North China District Committee [NCDC], which consisted entirely of LMS missionaries in North China.⁸⁴ The outstanding Chinese Christians who were selected and trained to serve in mission stations were considered only as 'native helpers' with the status of employees of missionaries.⁸⁵

Cheng's father, for example, was one of the main assistants of the Rev. George Owen in the East city church in Beijing and became a preacher entrusted with the affairs of the West city church after 1900, where he 'faithfully' carried on his work until 1910, when he had to retire due to a long illness.⁸⁶ During his lifetime, Po was held in esteem by many LMS missionaries of Beijing for his faithful service and his powerful preaching, although he never gained the position of pastor. The LMS even voted to offer him a retiring allowance of half his salary in consideration of his service both in the East city and the West city churches.⁸⁷ As a Manchu who had converted to Christianity, Po risked the sacrifice of his monthly allowance offered by the Qing Government to all Manchus.⁸⁸ Owen appraised him as a 'spiritually

⁸³ Goodall, *History of LMS*, 7-8.

⁸⁴ School of Oriental and African Studies [SOAS] Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 4, Minutes of the North China District Committee [NCDC], 1874-1909, and Box 5, Minutes of NCDC, 1910-1920.

⁸⁵ China Graduate School of Theology, Jonathan T'ien-en Chao, 'The Indigenization of Protestant Christianity in Modern China as Seen through the Life and Work of Cheng Ching-yi (1881-1939),' Partial Draft, 1978, 71-7.

⁸⁶ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, 31 December 1911.

⁸⁷ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, 31 December 1910.

⁸⁸ *Report of LMS*, 1900, 91.

minded earnest man and invaluable helper.’⁸⁹ The Rev. S. E. Meech, who was responsible for the East city mission, also mentioned Po in his annual report:

He was a remarkable man...of commanding demeanour...was possessed of a considerable power of speech, and was a welcome speaker at the united gatherings of Christians...He was somewhat of an autocrat, and, though the Church was supposed to be founded on congregational lines, his was the ruling will.⁹⁰

As Cheng was growing into a young man, his first and foremost influence came from his father. Cheng’s faithfulness and Christian loyalty, his enthusiasm for his work, as well as his elocution left a deep impression upon his fellow-workers, and he was acclaimed as a Chinese Christian statesman.⁹¹ All of these characteristics were ones Cheng shared with his father.

Apart from family influence, most of Cheng’s time was spent in the school and college of the LMS during his early lifetime. To understand the impact of the LMS on his early life, it is vital to explore the role of Cheng’s early education with the LMS.

2.1.2. Cheng’s Early Education with the LMS

The 1890s saw a rapid expansion of mission schools in China, as an increasing

⁸⁹ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 3, 1892-1897, No. 5077, Arrival No. 7594, G. Owen, 29 March 1897.

⁹⁰ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, 31 December 1911.

⁹¹ Nelson Btton, ‘Cheng Ching-yi: A Christian Statesman,’ *International Review of Missions [IRM]* 30 (1940): 513-520.

number of missionaries came to believe that school education was ‘the best way’ of obtaining qualified Chinese workers. Through this they could stress a solid scriptural knowledge for children among whom they could select those who were willing to become pastors and teachers for further theological training.⁹² Under such an educational strategy, Cheng was moulded by the Boys’ Boarding School and the Theological Institute of the LMS.

The Boys’ Boarding School in the West city of Beijing

Cheng entered the LMS Boys’ Boarding School in the West city of Beijing in 1894 at the age of thirteen, the same year the school was established by the Rev. J. M. Allardyce.⁹³ Allardyce had foreseen the urgent need for teachers and evangelists in the LMS mission work in North China, and by establishing this school he aimed to bring up well-trained students and prepare their way for further theological training.⁹⁴

The school provided students, who mainly consisted of ‘sons and adopted sons of the converts of the mission,’ with a Christian elementary education. As revealed

⁹² Martin Shaub, ‘The Best Method of Selecting and Training Efficient Native Assistants, Preachers, School Teachers, etc.,’ *Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China, held at Shanghai, May 7-20, 1890* (Shanghai, 1890), 479-80.

⁹³ Before entering the Boy’s School, Cheng’s education on Chinese classics had already started by studying philosophy at the age of four and Chinese classics at about eight or nine. See SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, China, Personal, Box 11, ‘A Leader in the Chinese Church: Dr Cheng spends a summer in England,’ 1931; *Report of LMS*, 1894, 75.

⁹⁴ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 8, 1892-1893, No. 2491, Arrival No. 2971, J. M. Allardyce to Thompson, Peking, 18 May 1893.

by the *Report of the LMS* in 1897, during the time when Cheng studied in the school, the curriculum contained ‘the Scriptures, the Chinese classics, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Physical Geography, Electricity, and Singing.’⁹⁵ The Chinese classics were embraced into the curriculum but the school also placed much emphasis on western scientific learning. Many missionaries believed that these western subjects would give Chinese students ‘new ideas about the world and new habits of thought’ that ‘no place in the attainments of the Chinese scholars’ would find.⁹⁶ Besides western learning being introduced into the school curriculum, the western style of living had been brought into school life. As Allardyce noted:

It is really wonderful the change they [students] have undergone, not only in knowledge, but also in personal appearance...the dull stolid look of the utterly ignorant changes to the bright intelligent countenance of a schoolboy who loves to acquire knowledge.⁹⁷

Through education, a western style ‘product’ was thus intended by the school. This in fact reflects the gulf between the actual practice of the LMS in its mission fields and its *General Instructions to Missionaries*, which required missionaries not to ‘Anglicise’ their converts but to ‘seek to develop and mould a pure, refined, and Christian character, native to the soil.’⁹⁸ It seemed to be inevitable that missionaries would assess a student or a native co-worker according to their own cultural values,

⁹⁵ *Report of LMS*, 1897, 68.

⁹⁶ *Report of LMS*, 1895, 59; 1896, 54.

⁹⁷ *Report of LMS*, 1894, 81.

⁹⁸ Porter, *CWM*, 7.

and would define a church in China in accordance with their own criteria.

In this manner, students who graduated from the LMS schools tended to be more favourable to missionaries than those who had not had experience in a mission institution. Some of them were admitted to ‘the fellowship of the church,’ or went to mission hospitals, or became assistants of missionaries, while others who were ‘brighter and better’ were sent to be trained as preachers and pastors of the LMS churches.⁹⁹ Allardyce was in charge of selecting ‘promising’ students and recommending them for further study at the Theological Institution in Tianjin.¹⁰⁰ During his three years in the Boys’ Boarding School, Cheng had been fully trained with biblical knowledge, western scientific subjects, as well as the western style of behaviours and manners. Compared with those of the same age who either had not had any education or had gone to Chinese schools, both Cheng’s outlook and appearance would have been quite different. Most of all, he became one of those ‘brighter and better’ students who were selected to study in Tianjin in 1897.

The Theological Institute in Tianjin

The Theological Institute in Tianjin was founded for the purpose of training preachers and other native workers by the Rev. Jonathan Lees in 1863 and underwent significant enlargement during the period from 1896 to 1898 due to an urgent need

⁹⁹ *Report of LMS*, 1894, 81; 1896, 54; 1897, 68.

¹⁰⁰ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 8, 1892-1893, No. 2491, Arrival No. 2971, J. M. Allardyce to Thompson, Peking, 18 May 1893.

for the theological training of qualified native workers and evangelists in North China.¹⁰¹ The LMS missionary S. Lavington Hart donated funds to renovate the institute in memory of his brother J. Walford Hart, and the institute was thus renamed ‘The Walford Hart Memorial College’ when the renovation was completed in 1898.¹⁰² Cheng was enrolled with five other students in the autumn of 1897.¹⁰³ In 1898, when the renovation was completed, it was equipped with more advanced facilities.¹⁰⁴ The administration of students in the institute was very strict and was controlled by missionaries. In spite of several cases where some students were dismissed, most of the graduates became evangelists and helpers of missionaries in all parts of North China.¹⁰⁵

Apart from teaching theological knowledge, the institute played a special role in Cheng Jingyi’s life. According to the register form of the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow, where he was enrolled in a theological course in 1906, Cheng confessed that he was converted to Christianity during a revival meeting when he was

¹⁰¹ Jonathan Lees, ‘The Tientsin and Peking Missions,’ *The China Mission Hand-book* (Taipei, 1973), reprinted, Part II, 20; ‘The Walford Hart Memorial College,’ *The Chronicle* (1898): 212; SOAS, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 4, 1895-1909, Minutes of NCDC, 27 April-1 May 1896, 27.

¹⁰² SOAS, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 4, 1895-1909, Minutes of NCDC, 27 April-1 May 1896, 27; CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 10, 1896-8, No. 4528, Arrival No. 6639, Alex King to the LMS, Tientsin, 2 May 1896; No. 5428, Arrival No. 8065, S. L. Hart to the LMS, Tientsin, 7 August 1897; ‘The Walford Hart Memorial College,’ *The Chronicle* (1898): 209. The college was combined to the Anglo-Chinese College in 1903 with S. Lavington Hart as its principal.

¹⁰³ *Report of LMS*, 1898, 58.

¹⁰⁴ The new college building was built with western architectural taste and S. Lavington Hart attempted to reproduce some features of his university, St. John’s College, Cambridge. There was a museum in the college. A large amount of scientific equipment was displayed inside, such as telescope, orrery, working models of steam or gas engines, telephonic and telegraphic instruments, X-ray apparatus, specimens of stuffed birds and beasts, etc. See ‘Walford Hart Memorial College,’ 209-213; *Report of LMS*, 1899, 58.

¹⁰⁵ SOAS, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 4, 1895-1909, Minutes of NCDC, 1 May 1899, 95; ‘Walford Hart Memorial College,’ 213.

seventeen years old.¹⁰⁶ This referred to a series of revival meetings held in the institute in the spring of 1898. On 9 April 1898, over 100 institute students and church members gathered together in the college chapel for earnest prayers, which lasted two weeks with ‘great emotion.’¹⁰⁷ According to several LMS missionaries in North China, this series of revival meetings was of great help in promoting the spiritual growth of the students.¹⁰⁸ Although he had grown up in a Christian family and had studied in the mission school, Cheng’s Christian faith was ‘awakened’ in the institute where, at the age of seventeen, he had become an adult. In what way Cheng was involved in these revival meetings and the detail of his ‘conversion’ experience is not known, but there is no doubt that the institute played a considerable part in shaping Cheng’s spirituality.

As mentioned previously, the institute was established by Jonathan Lees, one of the missionary ‘pioneers’ of the LMS to China.¹⁰⁹ Lees believed that education should be based on local conditions and suitable to national life. He criticised the ‘semi-foreign’ educational methods which were copied from other countries, trained

¹⁰⁶ International Christian College [ICC], Bible Training Institute [BTI] Students Record 1904-1910, vol. 4.

¹⁰⁷ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 4, 1898-1903, S. Lavington Hart, Tientsin, 1898.

¹⁰⁸ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 4, 1898-1903, A. King, Tientsin Theological College, 28 January 1899; T. Bryson, Tientsin, 1898; Mrs T. Bryson, Tientsin, 1898.

¹⁰⁹ Lees joined J. Edkins in Tianjin in March 1862 and soon took responsibility for the entire mission work in Tianjin after Edkins moved to Beijing. Owing to Lees’s efforts, foundations of churches were laid in many districts of the LMS in North China, two new stations were established in Xiaozhang and Cangzhou, and medical as well as educational work was fostered and encouraged by him. Additionally, he made a great contribution toward Hymnology and the compilation of the Chinese Church Hymnal, which was used by six different missions in seven provinces throughout China. See ‘The Late Rev. Jonathan Lees,’ *The Chronicle* (1902): 191-2; Goodall, *History of LMS*, 150-4; SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 15A, 1903-4, No. 2379, Arrival No. 2857, S. E. Meech to the LMS, Peking, 5 May 1903.

native helpers solely through western science, and put the hope of uplifting the native church on the early education of young Chinese. These methods, to him, would create a gap between native helpers and the ordinary Chinese people.¹¹⁰ He chose students from all ages and emphasised ‘personal influence’ during education, which showed students ‘Christ-like’ virtues through the example of their teachers.¹¹¹ Lees’s educational approach had given the institute a strong impact, though there were an increasing number of western scientific subjects being introduced into the institute.

In 1927, twenty-five years after the formation of the Tianjin Anglo-Chinese College, the LMS missionary Evan E. Bryant recalled the history of the college and printed a photograph of the college library revealing a history of its early time. Bryant’s historical narrative records two names, Jonathan Lees and Cheng Jingyi.¹¹² The college library in the photo was the lecture room of the Theological Institute, over which Jonathan Lees presided; and Cheng, one of the Chinese preachers trained by Jonathan Lees,¹¹³ used to sit right in front of the lecturer’s reading desk in the lecture room.¹¹⁴ This intimate relationship that existed between the two seems to strongly support Jonathan Chao’s deduction regarding the possible impact of Lees on Cheng Jingyi. In accord with Lees’s educational philosophy, Cheng became one of the objects of Lees’s ‘personal influence.’ Lees was described as ‘open-handed,

¹¹⁰ Jonathan Lees, ‘The Best Method of Selecting and Training Native Preachers,’ *General Conference 1890*, 483-6.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 490.

¹¹² SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, China, Personal, Box 11, S. Lavington Hart Personals, Evan Bryant, ‘An Historic Place and an Historic Relic,’ 11 March 1927.

¹¹³ Goodall, *History of LMS*, 153.

¹¹⁴ SOAS, CWM, China, Personal, Box 11, S. Lavington Hart Personals, Bryant, ‘An Historic Place.’

fervent, ardent and enthusiastic' by George Cousins, the joint foreign secretary of the LMS.¹¹⁵ As a Christian, he was 'devout and truly consecrated,' and 'stood forth prominently as a leader of men;'¹¹⁶ as a missionary, Lees 'freely, lavishly gave himself, his vigour and his possessions' to the evangelisation of China.¹¹⁷ Chao believes that these characteristics were replicated in Cheng's life in later years.¹¹⁸ Lees's teachings in Christian doctrine, morality and life were certainly influential on Cheng's growth into a preacher and Christian leader.

After graduation Cheng was assigned to Dong'an, near Beijing, by the LMS in 1900.¹¹⁹ However, his way to Dong'an was blocked by the outbreak of the Boxer Uprising. The Boxer Uprising of 1899-1900¹²⁰ is widely considered to be a 'major anti-foreign explosion and watershed event in Chinese history.'¹²¹ Thousands of Boxers streamed into Beijing, destroying mission stations, burning churches and Chinese Christians' homes, attacking the legations and commencing a massacre of Chinese Christians in June 1900. 180 Chinese Christians of the LMS found refuge in

¹¹⁵ 'Jonathan Lees,' 192.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 192.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 192.

¹¹⁸ Chao, 'Indigenization of Protestant Christianity,' 127-9.

¹¹⁹ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 12, 1900, No. 7701, Arrival No. 1823, Alex King to the LMS, Tientsin, 10 May 1900. During that period, Cheng's name was Cheng Xin 誠信 (Cheng Hsin) or Po Chengxin (Po Cheng-hsin). He later chose his family name as Cheng and first name Jingyi, according to the Manchu custom. See Bitton, 'Cheng Ching-yi,' 514; SOAS, CWM, China, Personals, Box 11, S. Lavington Hart to Cecil Northcott, 17 July 1941.

¹²⁰ Studies on the Boxers include Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Cohen, *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on the Chinese Past* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2003); Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and Xiang Lanxin, *The Origins of the Boxer War: a Multinational Study* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2003).

¹²¹ Cohen, *China Unbound*, 105.

the British legation, including Cheng's family.¹²² Cheng Jingyi, at the age of eighteen, served as interpreter and stretcher bearer, accompanying the International Alliance Troops entering Beijing. He later participated in the supervision of civilian relief and, in the face of great danger, narrowly escaped death.¹²³ During the Boxer Uprising, the LMS suffered great loss. All LMS property in Beijing, including both the East and the West city missions, was destroyed, and the membership of the congregations in the East city church dropped from 224 to 107, in which the adult Christians declined from 197 to 35.¹²⁴ Around 150 deaths were reported in Beijing district, 230 in Cangzhou, and 121 adults and 26 children in Xiaozhang.¹²⁵

Being the targets of the Boxers' atrocities, Cheng and his family shared the same fate with foreign missions and found themselves standing on the side of missions alongside other foreigners. Certainly this experience deepened their identification with Christian missions in China. Meanwhile, being a witness to the Boxers' persecution of Christians and the Chinese Christians' faithfulness, Cheng endured great challenges, and this event impressed on him the true extent of the Chinese hatred towards the Christian church in China due to its western affinity. His experience of the Boxer Uprising may have shaped his subsequent attitudes towards Christian mission enterprise and church construction in China, as he assumed more responsibility in church affairs and acted more independently of foreign missions.

¹²² 'Peking since the Siege,' *The Chronicle* (1900): 287; 'The Story of the Siege and Relief of the Legation,' *The Chronicle* (1900): 263-4.

¹²³ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, 1941-50, CH34, C/13/40/18A, No. 9739, A. R. Kepler to Brown, 4 December 1939.

¹²⁴ *Report of LMS*, 1902, 93.

¹²⁵ Goodall, *History of LMS*, 173.

Additionally, after order was restored in China, foreign missions started to shift their strategies, and churches in China attempted to wash off their western colour, due to the increasing awareness of the shortcomings of the Christian mission enterprise in China uncovered by the Boxer Uprising.

2.2. Cheng's Experience in Britain

Having been educated by the LMS, Cheng would normally have followed in the footsteps of other graduates of the LMS schools and served as a native helper in one of its mission stations in North China while awaiting appointment as a preacher, and hopefully a pastor, in the LMS churches. However, this course was interrupted by Cheng's experience in Britain. This section will examine Cheng's experience in Britain, including his assistance in the Mandarin Union Version New Testament translation, his study in the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow and his attendance at the Keswick Convention.

2.2.1. The Mandarin Union Version New Testament Translation

Cheng's experiences in Britain began in 1903 when he was invited by the Rev. George Owen to assist him in the translation of the Mandarin Union Version New

Testament in England.¹²⁶ George Owen was a LMS missionary, chiefly associated with Beijing from 1875 to 1902. He was in charge of the affairs of the East city church in Beijing from 1881 and was appointed as one of the seven translators of the Mandarin Union Version New Testament.¹²⁷ Owen had known Cheng's family for a long time through Cheng's father, and he baptised Cheng Jingyi.¹²⁸ It was Owen who first discovered and encouraged Cheng's gifts when Cheng studied in the Boys' Boarding School. He asked the British and Foreign Bible Society [BFBS] to arrange for Cheng to go to Britain and assist him in the New Testament translation in 1903.¹²⁹ As the genesis of Cheng's experience abroad, working with the BFBS afforded him the experience of adaptation to a foreign country, which gave him extraordinary impressions, both physical and spiritual. Since the Chinese Bible translation was dominated by foreign missionaries, we should take full note of the fact that Cheng was listed as one of few Chinese assistants whose names are noted in the history of the Chinese Bible translation.¹³⁰

There is no record of George Owen's Chinese assistant during his stay in China,

¹²⁶ George Owen (1843-1914) was born in Pembroke. He was appointed to Shanghai by the LMS in 1866, where he undertook pastoral and evangelistic work until 1872 when he was appointed to work in Japan by the Japanese government. Owen was re-engaged by the LMS and appointed to Beijing in 1875. In 1900, Owen attended the Ecumenical Conference in New York as a delegate. He returned to England in 1902 and devoted himself to the Mandarin Union Version New Testament translation until 1906. In 1908, he was appointed Professor of Chinese in King's College, London by the Senate of London University and held this position until 1913. See James Sibree, *A Register of the Missionaries, Deputations, etc., From 1796 to 1923* (London: London Missionary Society, 1923), 86.

¹²⁷ Goodall, *History of LMS*, 154.

¹²⁸ SOAS, CWM, China, Personal, Box 11, Cheng Ching-yi Personals, A Card with Cheng's name and other details.

¹²⁹ Goodall, *History of LMS*, 154; Cambridge University Library [CUL], Bible Society's Library [BSL], Owen, 18 June 1903, in The Editorial Sub-Committee Minutes [ESC] of the British and Foreign Bible Society, vol. 30, 24 June 1903, 19.

¹³⁰ Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: the History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China* (Sankt Augustin, Germany: Institut Monumenta Serica, 1999), 185-9.

but in England his assistant was Cheng Jingyi. Owen returned to England in 1902 due to his wife's serious illness, but was able to continue the New Testament translation at home.¹³¹ The BFBS committee agreed to arrange for a 'Chinese scholar' to assist him, and Owen thereupon recommended Cheng Jingyi, 'a young man of marked ability and good scholarship,' to be appointed.¹³²

Cheng started to work with Owen as soon as he arrived in England on 27 July 1903. The correspondence of the BFBS indicates that both Cheng and Owen resided in Wandsworth. It seems very likely that Cheng lodged and worked in Owen's home. Cheng's appointment to the translation work was for three years, at the expense of the BFBS, with a contribution from the National Bible Society of Scotland [NBSS].¹³³ After Cheng joined the project, the translation work went 'steadily forward' and no holiday was taken during the three years, with the exception of a short period in which Cheng had to refit his glasses.¹³⁴ Their work included the books of Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1 and 2 Timothy, Philemon and Revelation, as well as a revision of the whole New

¹³¹ CUL, BSL, Owen; and C. W. Mateer, 10 October 1902, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 29, 29 October 1902, 64-5; J. W. Stevenson, 2 January 1903, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 29, 25 February 1903, 108; T. W. Thompson, 11 February 1903, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 29, 25 February 1903, 118.

¹³² CUL, BSL, Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society 1903, 436; Owen, 18 June 1903, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 30, 24 June 1903, 19.

¹³³ Cheng left Beijing on 8 June and arrived in England on 27 July 1903. The cost of his voyage was £100. Cheng's salary was originally £100 per annum for three years. The BFBS issued him half-pay during the journey which was £7 10s. See CUL, BSL, Owen, 10 October 1902, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 29, 29 October 1902, 64; The NBSS shared £80 of Cheng's three-year salary, while the American Bible Society [ABS] declined their share. Slowan (NBSS), 16 June 1903, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 30, 24 June 1903, 19; G. H. Bondfield, 5 August 1903, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 30, 2 September 1903, 46; Owen, 17 May 1906, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 33, No. 3, 6 June 1906; Report of BFBS 1904, 413.

¹³⁴ CUL, BSL, Owen, 30 December 1905, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 32, No.13, 7 March 1906, 148.

Testament.¹³⁵ Cheng Jingyi's contribution to the translation work was revealed by Owen, who always reported to the BFBS with a high estimate of Cheng, stating, for example:

He [Cheng] has an unusually minute knowledge of the Bible and a deep love of its truths. He has also an excellent Chinese style and a fine perception of the meaning of words. He is peculiarly fitted for translation work and takes a deep interest in it.¹³⁶

And 'I am greatly pleased with my assistant. He is rendering me splendid help.'¹³⁷

According to Thor Strandenaes, the knowledge of classical Chinese and the receptor language which Chinese assistants possessed was essential to the process of Bible translation.¹³⁸ Owen's reports clearly showed that Cheng possessed these skills, which he had obtained through an early education in classical Chinese along with his residence in Beijing where Mandarin was the dominant spoken language.

Additionally, Cheng's experience of school education and theological training under the LMS brought him good English language skill and Bible knowledge, and gave him a competence in such a role which many other Chinese assistants did not have.

Although Owen was 'thoroughly satisfied and delighted' with Cheng's efforts, he showed concern over Cheng's life in Wandsworth outside his translation work.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ CUL, BSL, Report of BFBS 1904, 413; 1906, 387.

¹³⁶ CUL, BSL, Owen, 14 November 1903, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 30, 25 November 1903, 69.

¹³⁷ CUL, BSL, Owen, 1 and 7 April 1904, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 31, No.1, 27 April 1904, 7.

¹³⁸ Thor Strandenaes, 'Anonymous Bible Translators: Native Literati and the Translation of the Bible into Chinese, 1807-1907,' in *Sowing the Word: The Cultural Impact of the British and Foreign Bible Society 1804-2004*, eds. Stephen Batalden, Kathleen Cann and John Dean (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2004), 145-7.

¹³⁹ CUL, BSL, Owen, 27 July 21 August 1904, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 31, No.5, 31 August

It was Owen who applied to the BFBS committee, asking that a half salary should be paid during Cheng's voyage to England, as Cheng hoped to share a portion (£2 per month) of his salary with his family in Beijing during his work with the BFBS.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, Owen appealed to the BFBS committee to provide Cheng with a larger allowance due to the high level of Cheng's living expenses. Cheng's original annual allowance was £100, of which he allocated £24 to his family in Beijing, spent £52 on board and lodgings, leaving only £24 for his living expenses. The BFBS granted Owen's appeal and increased Cheng's allowance to £120 per annum.¹⁴¹ Owen's care for Cheng, and his influential requests to the BFBS regarding the above matters, not only brought Cheng a more adequate stipend, but also enabled him to be treated properly as a Chinese assistant. Nevertheless, there was still a gap in status between Owen who was a translator and Cheng Jingyi, an 'assistant.' Cheng's salary was less than half of Owen's (£250 per annum), which was supported by the BFBS and the LMS, even though the work Cheng conducted was outstanding. The disparity between Cheng's salary and that of Owen symbolised the fact that there was a systematic under-valuing of the importance of Chinese co-workers in translation work both by the Bible societies and individual missionaries.¹⁴² Although the missionary dominance of the translation process was gradually amended and Chinese

1904, 38.

¹⁴⁰ CUL, BSL, Owen, 29 July 1 August 1903, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 30, 2 September 1903, 46.

¹⁴¹ CUL, BSL, Owen, 14 November 1903, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 30, 25 November 1903, 69; Owen, 26 November and 14 December 1903, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 30, 30 December 1903, 79.

¹⁴² Strandenaes, 'Anonymous Bible Translators,' 147.

assistants' significance was gradually acknowledged as the translation work progressed, exemplified by their full names appearing in the records, the tendency to leave Chinese assistants' contributions in the dark was still apparent at this time.¹⁴³ It is likely that Cheng, without Owen's appeal, would not have received adequate appreciation regarding his role and influence in the New Testament translation. His name was seldom mentioned in the annual reports of the BFBS.¹⁴⁴ The missionary domination of the Christian enterprise in China resulted in the invisibility of Chinese Christians, and time was needed for missionaries in general to realise the importance of their Chinese fellow-workers.

Despite such inequality, being chosen to work on the translation was a remarkable experience for Cheng Jingyi, as it was a task mainly undertaken by missionaries. The advantage of doing assistant work in Britain enabled Cheng to participate in the activities of the BFBS and to win him wider recognition from missionary circles. An example was the 1905 BFBS annual meeting, at which Cheng presented on the stage, together with the Bishop of St. Albans and the leading Baptist missionary Timothy Richard, when they were discussing the report of the BFBS committee.¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the non-denominational character of the BFBS may have contributed to Cheng's ecumenical concern by its diversity of membership around the world and its principle to 'cut off the occasion of theological hostilities, and

¹⁴³ Ibid., 143.

¹⁴⁴ In the Report of the BFBS in 1904, Cheng's name was not mentioned, but 'a Chinese helper' instead; and in the Report in 1905, his name was wrongly written as 'Cheng Ching.' See CUL, BSL, Report of BFBS 1904, 413; 1905, 372.

¹⁴⁵ CUL, BSL, Report of BFBS 1905, xvi.

invite Christians in general to associate for the more extensive propagation of their common faith.¹⁴⁶

After completing their translation work in August 1906, Cheng was appointed as one of the BFBS Honorary Foreign Members, while Owen became Honorary Governor for Life.¹⁴⁷ Both of them were presented with a specially bound copy of the 'English Jubilee Bible' (four volumes) with an inscription by the BFBS.¹⁴⁸ On the one hand, this was certainly an award for their labour in the translation work. On the other, it can be understood as a sign indicating that Cheng's ability was acknowledged by the BFBS, for amongst these eight members, Cheng was the only non-European who was appointed with this honour, and furthermore, the first Chinese.¹⁴⁹

In addition to Cheng's association with the BFBS, another movement which Cheng would have encountered during his three-year stay in England may have influenced his view of Christian co-operation and federation. This was the Free Church Council Movement, which began in the late nineteenth century in response to the need for co-operation in the face of religious and social issues, as well as the

¹⁴⁶ Batalden et al., 'Introduction: Two Hundred Years of the British and Foreign Bible Society,' in *Sowing the Word*, 2.

¹⁴⁷ CUL, BSL, Report of BFBS 1906, 429; Cheng Ching-yi, 17 August 1906, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 33, No. 6, 5 September 1906, 73.

¹⁴⁸ CUL, BSL, Cheng Ching-yi, 13 November 1906, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 33, No. 12, 9 January 1907, 128.

¹⁴⁹ Honorary Foreign Members of 1906: 'The Archbishop of Finland; Baron Banffy, of Budapest; Baron Pronay, of Budapest; Prof. Dr. D. Warneck, of Halle; Pastor T. Logstrup, of the Danish Missionary Society; Pastor Beskow, of the Swedish Bible Society; the Rev. A. H. Francke, of the Moravian Mission, Leh, Tibet; Mr. Cheng Ching-Yi, of Peking.' See CUL, BSL, Report of BFBS 1906, 429.

desire for church reunion.¹⁵⁰ Around 1890, the proposal for a Nonconformist Church Congress, which was analogous to the Anglican Church Congress, was seriously considered by a number of Nonconformist churches and bodies. The first congress was held in Manchester on 7 November 1892, and it appointed a committee to take immediate action to communicate with various denominations for Free Church co-operation.¹⁵¹ Co-ordination of visitation evangelism became the chief aim and the identity of 'free churchmanship' consolidated the feeling of oneness among various Nonconformists, such as Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians. The representatives of local councils attended the congress not as denominationalists but as evangelical free churchmen.¹⁵²

As members of the Congregational denomination, Owen and Cheng would certainly have learned of this movement, not only from the church they attended in Wandsworth, but also from newspapers and other means, as the Nonconformists' political agitation was at a peak during the first decade of the twentieth century.¹⁵³ Although it may have helped to open Cheng's mind towards other denominations, as it was a movement towards federation and union among certain denominations, the influence of this movement on Cheng's experience in Britain, and especially his ecumenical formation, was probably limited. This was because its federal objective was confined to the Nonconformists, large numbers of whom demonstrated a strong

¹⁵⁰ D. W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and politics, 1870-1914* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1982), 61-64.

¹⁵¹ E. K. H. Jordan, *Free Church Unity: History of the Free Church Council Movement 1896-1941* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 33.

¹⁵² Bebbington, *Nonconformist Conscience*, 67-73.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 75-8.

antipathy towards the Anglicans.¹⁵⁴ Compared with this, the scope of Cheng's ecumenical outlook formed in later years was considerably wider.

It should be noted that some of Cheng's lifelong colleagues testify that Cheng's faith was shaken during his engagement in the New Testament revision.¹⁵⁵ Although we are unable to know the reason, it appears that Cheng gave up attending church services, daily prayer and Bible reading presumably during 1903-04. It was with the help of Dr. and Mrs. Eliot Curwen that Cheng restored his faith.¹⁵⁶ No information regarding the course of this event survives, however, an intimate connection between Cheng and this couple was evident in many ways. Cheng's connection with Eliot Curwen can be traced back to 1897 when he was suffering from a serious fever at the age of sixteen. It was owing to Curwen's medical treatment that Cheng 'narrowly escaped from death.'¹⁵⁷ This may explain why Cheng became so close to Curwen. During the time when Cheng was in Britain, Curwen suggested that Cheng stay for a few months after finishing the New Testament translation for a short course of study in English and biblical exegesis.¹⁵⁸ He was also one of the three referees when

¹⁵⁴ Bebbington, *Nonconformist Conscience*, 62, 71-2; Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, 29-32.

¹⁵⁵ Bitton, 'Cheng Ching-yi,' 514; SOAS, CWM, China, Personal, Box 11, S. Lavington Hart to Cecil Northcott, 17 July 1941; Goodall, *History of LMS*, 231.

¹⁵⁶ Bitton, 'Cheng Ching-yi,' 514. Bitton mentioned that: 'The spirit of God came upon him [Cheng] and the hands that were laid upon him were those of a devoted Christian Englishwoman [Mrs. Curwen].' Eliot Curwen was appointed as a medical missionary to Beijing by the LMS in 1894. He returned to England under medical advice and resigned in 1899. Curwen served as chairman of the LMS Medical Council from its inception in 1909 to 1922. Mrs. Curwen, maiden name as Annie B. Pearson, was appointed to the West city of Beijing in 1887 by the LMS. See SOAS, Sibree, *Register of LMS Missionaries*, 117, 132.

¹⁵⁷ 'Cheng Jingyi Boshi Shilue 誠靜怡博士史略 (A Brief Biography of Dr. Cheng Jingyi),' *Zhonghua Gui Zhu 中華歸主 (China for Christ)*, no. 201 (1939): 16; Cheng himself also mentioned this fever on the registration form of the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow in 1906. See ICC, BTI Students Record 1904-1910, vol. 4.

¹⁵⁸ CUL, BSL, Owen to the BFBS, 17 May 1906, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 33, No. 3, 6 June 1906.

Cheng applied to the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow, and paid the tuition fee (£20) for him.¹⁵⁹ Their close relationship was likely to have been reinforced during Cheng's revision work in Wandsworth. The Curwens lived in St Albans, north of London. Such a distance made travelling between Wandsworth and St Albans to visit each other attainable. Furthermore, the evidence is strengthened by one of Cheng's letters to Mrs. Curwen, in which he called her 'mother' and Eliot Curwen 'father.'¹⁶⁰ As the key persons who helped to re-establish Cheng's faith, the Curwens may have behaved as 'godparents' in Cheng's life. This built an unusually close relationship between them, and Cheng's appreciation of missions and his association with the LMS may have been intensified due to this dramatic event.

2.2.2. The Bible Training Institute, Glasgow

Cheng Jingyi was enrolled in a two-year theological course at the Bible Training Institute [BTI] in September 1906, after the completion of the Mandarin Union Version New Testament revision.¹⁶¹ The BTI was established in 1892 for Christian workers in Scotland. When the American evangelist D. L. Moody visited Scotland he realised the great need for training Christian workers in Scotland and called upon the establishment of a training college at the annual meeting of the Glasgow United

¹⁵⁹ ICC, BTI Students Record 1904-1910, vol. 4; BTI Students Fee Register 1905-1914, vol. 5, 7.

¹⁶⁰ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 7, Cheng Ching-yi to Mrs. Curwen, 3 July 1916.

¹⁶¹ Now the International Christian College [ICC], Glasgow.

Evangelistic Association on 10 March 1892. Moody's suggestion was innovative in its call for volunteers for evangelistic ministry work from those classes of people who had not been reached by the existing churches and was fully supported by the directors of the Glasgow United Evangelistic Association. After a series of meetings, the directors agreed to establish the institute and appointed John Anderson to be its superintendent.¹⁶² In order to serve its objectives well, the institute trained Christian workers in a number of ways, with an emphasis on knowledge and use of the Bible, addressing meetings, dealing with various classes of people, carrying out evangelistic work and leading the service of praise.¹⁶³

It should be noted that the interdenominational and international characteristics of the BTI were demonstrated from the very beginning. Working together with churches and missionary societies as an auxiliary, the BTI functioned as a platform for communication between different churches and denominations. Additionally, the institute's wide range of recruitment also contributed to the formation of its interdenominational and international characteristics. As mentioned in the annual report of 1908-09, students were drawn from all over the UK and other parts of the world, and the churches which these students belonged to represented various denominations.¹⁶⁴ The office records on 10 September 1906 show that four students from the Hermannsburg Mission were sent to study in the institute for three or four months in the same academic session as Cheng Jingyi. These students had completed

¹⁶² ICC, A4228, Glasgow United Evangelistic Association Committee, No. 10, 1-6.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 1-6.

¹⁶⁴ ICC, BTI Annual Reports 1908-09.

their course of study in Germany and were sent to the institute to have a short experience of training before they moved on to their mission stations in China and India.¹⁶⁵ According to the regulations of the institute, students of the BTI were expected to reside in the institute, living and studying together. This situation easily fostered an environment for closer interdenominational and international communication.

The allocation of the BTI graduates also revealed the denominational diversity and world-wide scope of the institute. Graduates who were allocated to work in Britain engaged in various positions, such as evangelists and church ministers, while the majority were distributed to foreign mission fields after special training offered by their respective churches and denominations. At the end of the academic year 1906-07, three men were assigned to China, one to Africa, one to Salonica, three to South America, four to Australia, four to Canada, and ten women were waiting to proceed to the mission fields.¹⁶⁶ The annual report of 1908-09 indicated that graduates who were sent abroad found that the training in the BTI not only 'qualified them for efficient service,' but also given them a 'special fitness' to guide and instruct native evangelists and pastors.¹⁶⁷

Not many records with regard to Cheng's life in the BTI survive in the International Christian College. According to the student records, Cheng was enrolled in September 1906 with George Owen, Elliot Curwen, and G. Thomas from

¹⁶⁵ ICC, Central Offices, 10 September 1906.

¹⁶⁶ ICC, Central Offices, 9 September 1907.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

the BFBS as his referees.¹⁶⁸ As noted previously, Elliot Curwen also paid the tuition fee (£20) for Cheng.¹⁶⁹ Information regarding Cheng's course of study is no longer available, although the annual report shows in detail the courses of study for the academic year 1908-09, the year after Cheng's graduation. The length of study was two sessions of ten months each, with various courses including a comprehensive study of the English Bible, a course of study in Bible doctrine, Biblical theology and Christian evidences, church and mission history, homiletical and practical studies (including elocution, music, preparation of addresses, organisation of work, conducting meetings and dealing with enquirers), practical work, conducting services and addressing meetings, medical lectures and dispensary work. Examinations were held every month and the marks were included in the diplomas.¹⁷⁰ As an auxiliary of the churches, and a training institute for Christian workers, the institute had a very practical curriculum.

If life in the Boys' Boarding School the Theological Institute of the LMS had equipped Cheng with western learning and biblical knowledge in all ways and made him a satisfying 'native helper' of missionaries, then life in the BTI not only gave Cheng a firm foundation for conducting church ministry and evangelistic work in China, but also offered him an extraordinary experience of interdenominational and international Christian fellowship, which were attested to by the curriculum of the BTI and its study and life environment. Before Cheng entered the BTI in 1906, the

¹⁶⁸ ICC, BTI Students Record 1904-1910, vol. 4.

¹⁶⁹ ICC, BTI Students Fee Register 1905-1914, vol. 5, 7.

¹⁷⁰ ICC, BTI Annual Reports 1908-09.

scope of his Christian activities was limited to the circle of the LMS. Even during the course of the New Testament translation, most of Cheng's time was spent with Owen and the Curwens. Not until he was enrolled in the BTI did Cheng begin to have independent and direct contact with Christians from other denominations. It was in the interdenominational and international atmosphere at the BTI that Cheng's view was broadened and his outlook towards denominations and Christian fellowship was renewed. Cheng himself confirmed the decisive impact the BTI had on him, confessing that he used to 'hold very poor ideas about men of other denominations, especially those of the Church of England,' but that his attitude towards other denominations completely changed during a later stage, which he attributed to his two-year experience in the BTI, where 'Christian federation and unity was manifested in actual practice.'¹⁷¹ Throughout his lifetime, he consistently expressed his 'deep gratitude' towards the BTI and, as his own testimony demonstrates, the influence of his experience in the institute towards his ecumenical formation cannot be exaggerated and deserves particular attention.¹⁷² It is fair to conclude that Cheng's openness towards denominations and his conviction of the universal nature of Christian fellowship, which were demonstrated in both his subsequent articles and actions, were forged during his study in the BTI.

2.2.3. The Keswick Convention

¹⁷¹ Cheng Ching-yi, 'What Federation can Accomplish for the Chinese Church,' *The Chinese Recorder* 41, no. 2 (1910): 159.

¹⁷² Bitton, 'Cheng Ching-yi,' 514-5.

Cheng's experience in Britain also included his attendance at the Keswick Convention, which was noted in his later works.¹⁷³ The Keswick Convention traces its origins back to 1875.¹⁷⁴ It was founded by Thomas Dundas Harford-Battersby, an Anglican clergyman, and Robert Wilson, a Quaker businessman, under the influence of the holiness movement which emerged in the United States in the 1830s.¹⁷⁵ The convention's primary concern was a deepened and revived spiritual life, which should be Bible-based and Christ-centric, as well as an effective and transformed Christian way of life. As soon as it was formed, it quickly became the centre of the 'higher life' movement and its teaching on spiritual experience increasingly became mainstream evangelical teaching in Britain.¹⁷⁶ As the influence of the Keswick Convention has been worldwide, what it contributed to Cheng's ecumenical formation and the growth of his Christian personality is certainly worthy of exploration.

Despite the fact that no information survives regarding which convention Cheng actually attended, nor did he ever mention any speaker or address, two points are beyond doubt regarding Cheng's attendance at the convention. One is that Cheng certainly attended the convention at least once, most probably in either 1907 or 1908,

¹⁷³ Cheng, 'Federation,' 156.

¹⁷⁴ Studies on the Keswick Convention include Steven Barabas, *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1952); J. C. Pollock, *The Keswick Story* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964); David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000) and Charles Price & Ian Randall, *Transforming Keswick* (Carlisle, Cumbria: OM Pub., 2000).

¹⁷⁵ Bebbington, *Holiness in England*, 75.

¹⁷⁶ Price, *Transforming Keswick*, 31-3.

during his study in the BTI,¹⁷⁷ and the other is the deep impression that the convention's motto – 'All One in Christ Jesus' – had on Cheng Jingyi.¹⁷⁸

The motto 'All One in Christ Jesus' was interpreted by Cheng as the very essence of an ecumenical spirit.¹⁷⁹ Although Keswick had 'special links' with certain missions, such as the CMS and the China Inland Mission [CIM], and its connection with the Church of England was particularly strong,¹⁸⁰ Cheng was inclined to think very positively of Keswick. Keswick's ecumenity owed much to its evangelical enthusiasm and mission orientation: the enthusiasm for spreading the Keswick message had great impact on foreign missions after the 1880s, and its emphasis on holiness and consecration did not allow theological disputes to spoil its teachings.¹⁸¹ At the conventions of 1907 and 1908, one of which Cheng attended, all the addresses were Christ-centred and stressed 'practical godliness' rather than any specific scheme of Christian union. However, this Christ-like godliness strengthened the brotherhood of all participants.¹⁸² The national and international links which Keswick helped to shape among evangelicals created an interdenominational and international atmosphere, which Cheng Jingyi was better placed to appreciate than any other

Briton or westerner. As he testified subsequently:

¹⁷⁷ It was unlikely that Cheng attended the Keswick Convention in 1904-06, because the Bible translation work was so intense that Owen and Cheng did not take any holiday during their revision work. See CUL, BSL, Owen to the BFBS, 27 July and 21 August 1904, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 31, No. 5, 31 August 1904; Owen, 30 December 1905, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 32, No. 31, 7 March 1906; Owen, 22 August 1906, in ESC Minutes of BFBS, vol. 33, No. 6, 5 September 1906.

¹⁷⁸ 'All One in Christ Jesus' is the Bible text (Gal. 3:28). It was lifted up at the first Convention and remained to be the motto of the Convention ever since then. See Price, *Transforming Keswick*, 31.

¹⁷⁹ Cheng, 'Federation,' 155-6.

¹⁸⁰ Price, *Transforming Keswick*, 43, 114.

¹⁸¹ Bebbington, *Holiness in England*, 78; Price, *Transforming Keswick*, 114.

¹⁸² *The Christian*, 25 July 1907; 30 July 1908; Evan H. Hopkins, 'Walking in The Light,' *The Keswick Week*, 19 July 1908, 11.

As a foreigner in a foreign country they [the words ‘All One in Christ Jesus’] seemed especially comforting and delightful. I do not think I can recollect now the...addresses...but this grand text has ever been a comfort in my soul and constantly before my mind’s eyes...¹⁸³

To him, the motto surpassed all national and personal barriers and invited him to find home in Christ and in Britain. Additionally, David Bebbington has pointed out the ‘romantic affinities’ of Keswick,¹⁸⁴ and we will suggest in later sections of the thesis that romantic and idealistic characteristics were displayed in Cheng’s life. Furthermore, Keswick had a strong connection with the Student Volunteer Missionary Movement and this connection gave much impulse to Keswick’s ecumenical dimension. Many Student Volunteer leaders had spoken at Keswick, such as Robert Speer and John R. Mott.¹⁸⁵ When Cheng attended Keswick, he was around the age of twenty-five to twenty-six, a stage in which he was easily moved and stimulated by any emotional and idealistic calling. To Cheng, the experience of Keswick was symbolised by its motto and message. ‘All One in Christ Jesus’ had been accepted by Cheng Jingyi with all his heart.

To summarise, Cheng’s experience in Britain first of all prepared the way for his future Christian leadership in China. Cheng’s work with missionary societies at their home base and his study in a western Bible institute not only laid a firm foundation

¹⁸³ Cheng, ‘Federation,’ 155.

¹⁸⁴ Bebbington, *Holiness in England*, 78-85.

¹⁸⁵ Price, *Transforming Keswick*, 116-8.

for his future church ministry, but also uplifted his status, with his ability being increasingly acknowledged in missionary circles. It provided the precondition for his ordination as a pastor at a later stage and subsequently opened the door for his future leadership in various Christian movements in China. Additionally, his five-year life in Britain enabled Cheng to master the English language to a high level, which became 'invaluable' to him in his subsequent work with missions and his international activities.¹⁸⁶

Secondly, Cheng's experience in Britain was vital to his ecumenical formation. His horizon and contacts were broadened by his work with the BFBS, a non-denominational society, the propaganda of the widespread Free Church Council Movement, as well as his presence at the Keswick Convention which contributed to evangelical unity. More significantly, the BTI played a vital part in Cheng's ecumenical formation due to its interdenominational and international features. As Chao indicated, Cheng's foreign experience brought him 'unexpected liberation from ecclesiastical servitude.'¹⁸⁷

Thirdly, Cheng's life in Britain reinforced his Chinese identity. Cheng's education under the LMS and his experience during the Boxer Uprising encouraged his sympathy and identity with western missions, but his experience abroad stimulated the development of his distinctive Chinese viewpoint, though this did not mean that he abandoned his affinity with missions. Cheng's work on the Bible

¹⁸⁶ Bitton, 'Cheng Ching-yi,' 514.

¹⁸⁷ Chao, 'Indigenization of Protestant Christianity,' 139.

translation brought to the fore his Chinese perspective, as he was expected to consider those vexed disputes in translation and to provide advice from the angle of the expression of Chinese language and the Chinese understanding. One example was that he once replied to a friend in London regarding the ‘Term Question’ by saying that: ‘Any of these titles will be quite good and suitable, as long as such a harmony will be made.’¹⁸⁸ His emphasis was typical of the high value given to achieving a sense of harmony in Chinese culture. His indigenous concern and his Chinese identity were also demonstrated by his desire to ‘look to the Church of his own land as the medium of his ordination,’ though he was offered an opportunity to be ordained in Britain after his graduation from the BTI.¹⁸⁹ Cheng’s experience in Britain brought him an educational qualification and ministry experience, a broadened outlook regarding denominations and international Christian fellowship and a reinforced Chinese viewpoint.

2.3. Movements towards Christian Federation and Church Independence in Early Twentieth-Century China

During the period when Cheng was in Britain, there was a series of dramatic changes emerged in the Protestant enterprise in China. As the Boxer Uprising disclosed the shortcomings of Christianity in China, both missionaries and Chinese Christians

¹⁸⁸ Cheng, ‘Federation,’ 156.

¹⁸⁹ Bitton, ‘Cheng Ching-yi,’ 515.

started to seek changes to the situation of Christianity in China, with new approaches being introduced. Protestant churches in China saw two parallel trends after 1900: one of which was an extensive modification in foreign missions' strategies, especially with regard to the co-operation and federation among various missions. The other was the increasing desire for church independence claimed by Chinese Christians. As a member of both the LMS and its branch church in Beijing, Cheng would have been inspired by the growth of missions and churches in China when he returned in 1908. Movements towards Christian federation and church independence in China provided Cheng with a new context in which to develop his outlook.

2.3.1. The Early History of the Federation Movement in China

Due to the rapid expansion of Protestant missions in China during the early twentieth century, an increasing number of missions recognised the significance of collaboration, and therefore rapidly carried out programmes towards co-operation among Protestant bodies in China.¹⁹⁰ Although the progress towards Protestant co-operation did not start in 1900, extensive progress towards interdenominational co-operation was only made at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The federation movement originated from a paper read by Thomas Cochrane of

¹⁹⁰ From 1905 to 1910, the number of Protestant missionaries had risen from 3,445 to 5,144. For the Protestant church in China as a whole, from 1900 to 1906, the number of Protestant communicants increased from 85,000 to 178,251. See Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 567, 606; World Missionary Conference, 1910, Reports, vol. 1, 90-2.

the LMS on 'Some Problems in Mission Work' at a meeting of the Beijing Missionary Association (Peking Missionary Association) in November 1902. The paper emphasised the significance of union among Protestantism in China and proposed the appointment of a committee to work on this matter. A committee on church union was thus formed with Cochrane being chairman. It consisted of seven members representing all the missions in Beijing in 1903.¹⁹¹ After several meetings, the committee proposed two letters, one of which was sent to every Protestant missionary in North China, explaining the federation scheme and asking for their opinions concerning four questions:

1. Would you approve of the preparation of a Union Hymn Book?
2. Would you approve of a common designation for our churches and chapels such as Yeh Su Chiao Li Pai T'ang for places of worship, and Yeh Su Chiao Fu Yin T'ang for street chapels?
3. Would you be willing to adopt common terms for God and the Holy Spirit such as Shang Ti and Sheng Ling?
4. Would you favour the federation of all the Protestant churches in China and the appointment of a committee to consider the question?¹⁹²

The other letter was sent to every Protestant missionary throughout the country, with the latter three questions. With ninety to ninety-eight per cent affirmative responses

¹⁹¹ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 15A, 1903-04, John Wherry, Proposed Letter to Missionaries in China from the Committee on Church Union, Peking, 27 February 1903. The seven members were Thomas Cochrane, LMS, W. S. Ament, ABCFM, Rev. Frank L. Norris, SPG, John Wherry, American Presbyterian Mission [APM], H. H. Lowry, MECM, Rev. C. Cheesman, Mission to the Blind, and Rev. J. L. Thurston, Yale University Mission.

¹⁹² SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 15A, 1903-04, No. 2128, Arrival No. 3473C, 'Peking Missionary Association Committee on Church Union,' Thomas Cochrane to the London Missionary Society, Peking, 30 January 1903.

having been received from missionaries to all questions,¹⁹³ a conference was called to meet for further discussion at Beidaihe on 24-26 August 1904, and Cochrane was chosen to be the chairman of this conference.

During the Beidaihe Conference, a considerable number of missionaries showed their readiness to organise a 'Union Protestant Chinese Church,' despite several concerns expressed by Episcopal and Baptist missionaries. The conference attempted to enlarge the federation from North China on a nationwide scale by organising a general committee, representing each mission in China, to promote Protestant co-operation and federation.¹⁹⁴ Taking things a step further, the Beijing Conference, which was held in September 1905, approved the formation of local and national councils. It paved the way for the Centenary Missionary Conference in Shanghai from 25 April to 8 May 1907.¹⁹⁵

As a conference marking the one-hundred-year history of Protestant missions in China, the influence of the 1907 Centenary Conference was far beyond that of the previous conferences. One of the concerns and visions of the conference was to raise the level of the discussion, from a federation among various denominations and societies, which dominated the themes of the previous conferences, to a wider Protestant union and church unity in China. The majority of the committee on 'Comity and Federation' showed their readiness toward federation in the national

¹⁹³ 'Conference on Federation at Pei-tai-ho,' *The Chinese Recorder* 45, no. 11 (1904): 552.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 556.

¹⁹⁵ Latourette, *History of Christian Missions*, 667-8. The national council became unnecessary because of the formation of the China Continuation Committee after the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910.

scale, and some of them even saw federation as the first step towards an ‘organic union’ in China.¹⁹⁶ The approval by the conference of the goal of establishing a ‘Christian Federation of China’ was a significant step towards securing a national federation.

It should be noted that a link between the Chinese church and the federation among missions and denominations was indicated by a number of missionaries during this conference, though there was no Chinese delegate present.¹⁹⁷ The emphasis on the issue of the Chinese church and the goal to plant *one* church in China during the conference provided the promotion of a broader Protestant federation and church union with much impetus, though the ideal of establishing a ‘United Christian Church in China’ was dropped due to the lack of general support from missionaries.¹⁹⁸

The 1907 Conference prepared the way for further discussion on co-operation among world missions at the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference.¹⁹⁹ Delegates obtained experience and lessons through discussions. Provincial councils were formed immediately after the Shanghai Conference to work on Christian federation. This conference turned China into an experimental field for interdenominational co-operation, from where missionaries brought to the 1910 Conference their experience of co-operation and federation, together with the ideal of

¹⁹⁶ *Records of the China Centenary Missionary Conference: held at Shanghai, April 25 to May 8, 1907* (Shanghai, 1907), 690-709.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 412-416, 690-709.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4, 711.

¹⁹⁹ Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 280.

a 'United Christian Church in China.'

As noted previously, the inauguration of the federation movement owed much to Thomas Cochrane,²⁰⁰ a medical missionary of the LMS in North China from 1896 to 1912, who had a far-reaching vision regarding the evolution of Christianity in China. The Boxer Uprising left a deep impression on Cochrane concerning the unstable situation of foreign missions in China, and he was convinced of the significance of church indigeneity in China.²⁰¹ In order to promote the union scheme, he conducted a large amount of correspondence with the LMS board in the UK.²⁰² As early as 1903, Cochrane had already demonstrated his convictions about a united church in China in his article 'Church Union' in *The Chinese Recorder*, by saying that:

Missionaries in this land could do much toward forcing their home denominations to found in China not Methodist churches, or Presbyterian churches, but *one church, the Christian church of China.*²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Thomas Cochrane (1866-1953) was a medical missionary in North China and a promoter of mission surveys. He was born in Greenock, Scotland and was influenced by the American evangelist D. L. Moody. Cochrane trained as a doctor in Glasgow and later served in the LMS. He was appointed to Chaoyang in North China in 1897 and was transferred to Beijing after the Boxer Uprising, where he contributed to the birth of the Beijing Union Medical College (Peking Union Medical College) in 1906. After he returned to the UK in 1915, Cochrane served with the National Laymen's Missionary Movement and became one of the three trustees for the Survey Trust in 1918. In 1931 he purchased the Mildmay Centre in London as the base of the Movement for World Evangelisation which demonstrated his broad evangelical concern. See 'Thomas Cochrane,' in *The Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (London: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1998), 141; Francesca French, *Thomas Cochrane: Pioneer and Missionary Statesman* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1956); Kenneth G. Grubb, *The Story of the Survey Application Trust*, in *Reform of the Ministry*, eds. David M. Paton and Roland Allen (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968); Goodall, *History of LMS*, 195-6.

²⁰¹ French, *Thomas Cochrane*, 75.

²⁰² See Thomas Cochrane's Correspondence in SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 15A, 1903-04, Box 15B, 1905-6; Box 15C, 1907; Box 16, 1909-10; CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Boxes 4-7, 1898-1914; CWM, LMS, China, Eastern Outgoing Letters, Boxes 26-36, December 1902-November 1910.

²⁰³ Thomas Cochrane, 'Church Union,' *The Chinese Recorder* 34, no. 4 (1903): 179-82. Italics added.

This idea was later adopted into the recommendations of the 1907 Conference, in which Cochrane was a member of the committee on federation.

The federation movement reflected the attempts of a number of missionaries to promote a wider breadth of Protestant co-operation and federation in China, driven by the needs of the Protestant missions. It conformed to Cheng Jingyi's ecumenical convictions, which had developed during his time in the West, and further encouraged his desire for interdenominational union. It was the LMS and other North China missions in particular, where Cheng himself was based, which took the initiative during the movement. The link between the Chinese church and the federation movement, together with the vision regarding a united Christian Church in China expressed by several missionaries, inspired Cheng's ecumenical outlook and paved the way for his subsequent claim for church unity. Although the proposal for establishing a united church in China was not approved by the majority of missionaries, the issue was soon raised again by Cheng Jingyi from a Chinese stance.

2.3.2. The Efforts of Chinese Christians towards Church Independence and Unity in the Early Twentieth Century

The year 1900 was a turning point for the development of church indigeneity in China. According to Daniel Bays, the 'most important feature' of the period from 1900-25 was 'the growth of the spirit of independence in Chinese Protestant

churches.²⁰⁴ A strong desire among Chinese Christians for a new identity was increasingly ardent. One of the most outstanding cases, which was well-known throughout China at that time, was the efforts toward independence made by Yu Guozhen 俞國楨, a Chinese pastor associated with the American Presbyterians (North), and his fellow-workers in Shanghai during 1902-06.²⁰⁵ In 1902, Yu, together with other thirteen Chinese Christians formed an all-Chinese organisation called ‘Zhongguo Jidutu Hui 中國基督徒會 (The Chinese Christian Union),’ aiming to ‘connect Chinese Christians to be a union, to promote self-propagation in China, with the heart of loving the country and its people.’²⁰⁶ In 1906, Yu and other Chinese Christians established an independent and all-Chinese congregation. Based on it, a federation of churches was formed in the same year, entitled ‘Zhongguo Yesujiao Zilihui 中國耶穌教自立會 (The Chinese Jesus Independent Church).’²⁰⁷ According to its manifesto, the goals of this church included realising self-reliance, establishing a good reputation for churches, and uniting Chinese Christians in each locality in Shanghai. This church exhibited strong patriotic features and was supported by many well-to-do Chinese Christians, which laid a foundation for the

²⁰⁴ Daniel H. Bays, ‘The Growth of Independent Christianity,’ in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 308.

²⁰⁵ Bays, ‘Growth of Independent Christianity,’ 310-1; Chai Lianfu 柴連復, ‘Zhongguo Yesujiao Zilihui 中國耶穌教自立會 (The China Jesus Independent Church),’ in *Zhonghua Jidujiaohui Nianjian 中華基督教會年鑒 (China Christian Church Year Book) 1929-30*, 92-3.

²⁰⁶ Duan Qi 段琦, *Fenjin de Licheng: Zhongguo Jidujiao de Bensehua 奮進的歷程：中國基督教的本土化 (The Process of Endeavour: Indigenisation of Christianity in China)* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2004), 114-5.

²⁰⁷ Duan Qi, *Fenjin de Licheng (The Process of Endeavour)*, 115-8; Bays, ‘Growth of Independent Christianity,’ 310; Zhang Hua 張化, ‘Zhongguo Yesujiao Zilihui Shuping 中國耶穌教自立會述評 (A Study of the Chinese Jesus Independent Church),’ *Shi Lin 史林 (Historical Review)*, no. 1 (1998): 57-66.

realisation of its self-support.²⁰⁸ Due to its patriotic sentiment, the China Jesus Independent Church was approved by the Qing government and local officials. By 1909, the number of members in its congregations reached over 10,000 and a General Assembly was formed in Shanghai in 1910.²⁰⁹

As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, both missionaries and Chinese Christians had launched movements towards Protestant federation and church independence, contributing much to the evolution of Christianity in China. When Cheng Jingyi returned to China in 1908, dramatic changes had taken place in Chinese society, and much progress had been made in the Christian enterprise of China. On the one hand, the federation movement encouraged Cheng's desire for an interdenominational union. The vision of a united Christian Church in China raised during the 1907 Conference further inspired Cheng's ecumenical convictions and paved the way for his subsequent efforts towards church unity. On the other hand, Chinese Christians' desires for church independence and their endeavours towards self-reliance of Chinese churches brought forth a nationwide movement toward church independence in China. The widespread patriotic sentiment and the increasing tide of church independence in China stimulated Cheng's Chinese concern and enable him to foresee an independent future for the Chinese church.

²⁰⁸ Duan Qi, *Fenjin de Licheng (The Process of Endeavour)*, 117-8.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

2.4. Cheng's Ministry in the East City Church in Beijing

After graduating from the BTI in 1908, Cheng Jingyi was appointed to be an assistant pastor in association with the Rev. Hopkyn Rees in the church of his childhood, the East city church in Beijing. As a young man who had just finished a course of education and theological training and who had begun to conduct church ministry as a Chinese assistant, Cheng's selection as a delegate to the 1910 Edinburgh Conference may have owed much to his two-year ministry in Beijing.

Compared to the West city church, the East city church had larger congregations and possessed a more important position in the LMS mission work in North China.²¹⁰ Cheng's work in the East city church included conducting regular services, directing two Sunday Schools of the East city church, taking charge of Bible readings on Thursday evenings, Christian Endeavour meetings on Sunday and Thursday mornings, prayer meetings on Wednesday afternoons, morning prayers in the Girls' Boarding School and Friday evening meetings in that school once a fortnight. Cheng conducted all these tasks with passion and gained much appreciation from the LMS missionaries.²¹¹ Additionally, Cheng, together with the LMS missionary Howard Smith, assisted Rees in the summer and winter classes for native workers from all

²¹⁰ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, Report of Peking and District for the Period January 1901 to December 1910. The congregation of the East city Church was 224 in 1899, while that of the West city Church was only 67 in the same year.

²¹¹ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, Ethel S. Livens, Peking, December 31, 1908; M. Rowlands, London Mission Girls' Boarding School, Peking, February 1910 to January 1911; *Report of LMS*, 1910, 187-8.

areas around Beijing.²¹² Furthermore, Cheng was asked by Rees to be co-examiner during the examination of preachers in 1908-09, instead of the missionary T. Bryson, and all the papers were ‘independently’ examined by Cheng and Rees.²¹³ Cheng’s appointment to this position indicated that the LMS missionaries had recognised his outstanding ability among his Chinese fellow-workers, for this position was usually dominated by missionaries.

Cheng demonstrated his capacity to conduct church ministry to a high standard. His ministry impressed the LMS as ‘faithful,’ ‘successful’ and ‘exceptional,’ which accounts for his selection as a LMS delegate at the 1910 Edinburgh Conference.²¹⁴ It also convinced the LMS that he was ready for his own pastorate. During the NCDC annual meeting of 1909-10, Cheng was appointed to ‘take sole charge of’ the East city church and its branch churches.²¹⁵ However, Cheng’s ordination took place after the 1910 Conference, a detailed account of which will be given in the next chapter. Considering the fact that churches in China were largely controlled by foreign missions during that time, the rise of Chinese pastors was vital for Chinese churches to move towards self-fulfilment.

Cheng’s two-year ministry provided him with a good opportunity to put his ideas and knowledge into practice and to examine and correct them in reality. It was a

²¹² SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, W. Hopkyn Rees, Peking, 1908; *Report of LMS*, 1909, 204-6.

²¹³ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 5, Minutes of the NCDC Annual Meeting of 1910, 34.

²¹⁴ Nelson Bitton, ‘Mr. Cheng Ching-yi, “The Member for China”,’ *The Chronicle* (1910): 124; *Report of LMS*, 1910, 187.

²¹⁵ SOAS, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 5, Minutes of the NCDC, 1910, 20.

period of close contact with Chinese society and Chinese Christians, as daily church work revealed a true picture of the condition and need of Protestant churches in China, and in Beijing in particular. Meanwhile, as a member of this church, Cheng, together with the East city church, experienced a series of changes which were taking place in its administration, organisation and relationship with the missions. As a vital factor during the course of the independence of the East city church from the LMS, the formation and operation of the Chinese church council in North China requires exploration.

The LMS Chinese church councils were first formed in the Cangzhou and Jizhou stations in North China after the Boxer Uprising. They consisted of native Christians and conducted native church affairs through discussions during their general meetings.²¹⁶ During the NCDC annual meeting in 1908, church councils were combined into an integral part of the LMS church system and were subsequently formed in connection with both the East and West city churches, though they were yet to conform to any uniform regulation and system.²¹⁷ A joint committee of both Chinese workers and missionaries formulated a uniform system of local and district church councils in 1909, and the NCDC eventually adopted it with minor amendments during its annual meeting in early 1910.²¹⁸ According to the system,

²¹⁶ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, Report of Peking and District for the Period January 1901 to December 1910; CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 7, F. H. Hawkins, 'Missionary Problems in China,' *The British Congregationalists*, 22 July, 1909, 45.

²¹⁷ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, Report of Peking and District for the Period January 1901 to December 1910.

²¹⁸ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, Report of Peking and District for the Period January 1901 to December 1910; Goodall, *History of LMS*, 215-6.

three grades of church councils were formed, namely, local, district and annual church councils.²¹⁹ These councils were basically parallel to the structure of the LMS which had local, district and China national committees.²²⁰ They were composed of lay Chinese delegates, who were elected in accordance with the size of the churches, Chinese workers and missionaries. Native Christians determined church affairs. Local church councils controlled the admission and expulsion of church members and church finances; district councils had rights on the selection of school and college students, the establishment of new churches and the appointment and dismissal of church employees; and annual church councils dealt with general issues regarding both the LMS churches and organisations in North China.²²¹

The formation of these church councils was a significant step for Chinese churches striding toward independence in a practical way: the LMS Chinese churches became more autonomous and Chinese workers enjoyed more authority regarding church administration and school education. Church councils stimulated the self-consciousness of Chinese Christians to take responsibility for their own churches.²²² According to Meech's report, an outstanding example can be found in

²¹⁹ SOAS, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 5, Minutes of the NCDC, 1910, 39-44; CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, Report of Peking and District for the Period January 1901 to December 1910; 'Independence and Self-Support,' *The China Mission Year Book 1910*, 190-191.

²²⁰ SOAS, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 5, Minutes of the NCDC, 1910, 35. The annual church council in North China was in fact a provincial church council, and a Chinese advisory church council which was composed of Chinese workers throughout China was formed in 1912, and constantly promoted church union in China. It was convinced to be one of the important factors in the preparation of the formation of the Church of Christ in China in 1927. See Goodall, *History of LMS*, 216-222, 451.

²²¹ SOAS, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 5, Minutes of the NCDC, 1910, 39-44.

²²² SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, Report of Peking and District for the Period January 1901 to December 1910.

Cheng's church: it supported its own pastor, chapel keeper and school teachers, and covered its own expenses and those of two branch churches, demonstrating itself as a 'living church.'²²³

As an assistant pastor of the East city church, Cheng was certainly a member of its church council and would have taken part in decision-making regarding its church affairs. Church councils provided Cheng with an opportunity to refine his ideas of church construction and to obtain experience for his future leadership in mainline Chinese Protestant circles. The moves of the East city church towards independence largely stimulated Cheng's conviction for an indigenous future of Christian enterprise of China. It should be noticed that a council's financial capacity for self-support was not the condition for the transfer of administrative and executive authorities, and the council could administer grants from overseas and decide the best use for them.²²⁴ Chinese church councils obtained autonomy with the co-operation of the LMS and were combined into the system of the LMS churches, a significant contrast from those Chinese churches which achieved independence by severing relations with foreign missions. The course of the LMS churches toward independence did no harm to their relationships with the missionary society, which certainly had a strong impact on Cheng's convictions of a co-operative mode of church-mission relationships.

²²³ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, Report of Peking and District for the Period January 1901 to December 1910; 'Independence and Self-Support,' 190-191.

²²⁴ Goodall, *History of LMS*, 451.

2.5. Cheng's Article 'What Federation can Accomplish for the Chinese Church'

Cheng's ecumenical convictions were finally put in print in his article 'What Federation can Accomplish for the Chinese Church,' which was published in *The Chinese Recorder* in February 1910, four months before the 1910 Edinburgh Conference. The editors of *The Chinese Recorder* had seen the significance of church unity in China and therefore gave special attention to the themes of federation and church union in the February issue.²²⁵ Articles were contributed by Christians from various denominations and backgrounds, including Charles George Sparham, the LMS missionary in Hankou, Bishop F. R. Graves, American Protestant Episcopal Church Mission [APECM], Shanghai, the Rev. James V. Latimer, American Baptist Missionary Union [ABMU], Huzhou, and Cheng Jingyi. In particular, the editors aimed to bring in Chinese opinions in order to render to missionaries 'considerable help' in disposing of the problems which emerged in the mission fields.²²⁶ Cheng's view of federation and church union in China was, to them, representative, and was therefore specifically chosen to present the Chinese point of view.²²⁷

²²⁵ 'Editorial,' *The Chinese Recorder* 41, no. 2 (1910): 125.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

²²⁷ The Rev. W. Nelson Bitton, one of the associate editors of *The Chinese Recorder*, was Cheng's life-long friend. He was one of the members of the committee on federation during the Centenary Conference in Shanghai in 1907, holding the view that a national organisation was of importance to set up for bring all provinces together regarding issues of federation and co-operation. He travelled with Cheng from China to London via Siberia for the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in June 1910 and held high estimation of Cheng in both his short biographies of Cheng's life in 1910 and 1941. See *Centenary Conference 1907* (Shanghai, 1907), xxxvii, 691-719; Bitton, 'Member for China,' 123-4; Bitton, 'Cheng Ching-yi,' 513-520.

This article reveals that Cheng's ecumenical convictions had surpassed those of large numbers of missionaries by early 1910. By claiming his dream of 'a large organization of a union Chinese church where denominationalism will be out of the question,'²²⁸ Cheng demonstrated that his vision of the ecumenical future of the Chinese church was to realise church unity rather than to merely form a federation among various denominations, which was generally within the vision of western missionaries. Cheng began by making his point from a Chinese stance and intended to remind missionaries of the Chinese context, which they usually neglected. According to him, denominationalism did not have Chinese roots, and was a matter in which Chinese Christians took 'little or no interest.' On the contrary, they appreciated the concept of harmony and unity.²²⁹

Secondly, Cheng stressed in his article the church-centric approach to be adopted in the Christian work in China. On the matter of co-operation and union, despite the fact that several missionaries had recognised the liberty of the Chinese church in its own development during the 1907 Centenary Conference, the majority discussed the issue of federation and union from a missionary viewpoint based on the practical needs of their work in China. Cheng, on the other hand, considered church unity as an integral aspect of the establishment and development of the Chinese church. As he indicated,

²²⁸ Cheng, 'Federation,' 157.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 156-8.

Protestant missions have been in China more than a century now, and it is time for the Chinese Christians to show their interest in, and activities for, the Christian cause in a practical way. So now is the time of the beginning of the *Chinese church*.²³⁰

This exhibited an altogether different orientation towards the matter of church unity from that of the missionaries.

It should be noticed that there was a divergence in the approaches taken towards the goal of ‘three-self’ between the majority of missionaries and most Chinese Christians. Missionaries usually insisted that self-support was a prerequisite of independence, a status which most of the churches in China failed to meet at that time.²³¹ Just as David J. Bosch complained, the ‘three-self’ principle itself was derived from a western idea of a living community, and was treated as the criterion for church maturity, by which churches in the mission fields were measured and judged.²³² In contrast, Cheng’s article reflected that the primary concern of Chinese Christians in general was ‘self-government.’ Native Christians in the mission fields, including in China, were inspired by this principle and sought for an independent national church on the basis of it, especially on the aspect of ‘self-government.’ What form the Chinese church should adopt therefore became the question that needed to be solved first and foremost. It also raised a sub-question of whether or not those

²³⁰ Ibid., 158. Italics added.

²³¹ Chao, ‘Indigenization of Protestant Christianity,’ 154-6; S. L. Baldwin, ‘Self-Support of the Native Church,’ in *Records of the General Conference of Protestant Missionaries of China, Shanghai, May 10-24, 1877* (Shanghai, 1878), 287; H. D. Porter, ‘What Ought to be the Policy of Missionaries in Regard to the Ordination of Native Pastors?’ *The Chinese Recorder* 17, no. 5 (1886): 184; Rev. G. L. Mason, ‘Methods of Developing Self-support and Voluntary Effort,’ in *General Conference 1890*, 415-424, 426-8.

²³² David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 450.

church forms which western missions had unconsciously transplanted into China should necessarily be kept by the Chinese church. Cheng's article reflected a Chinese perspective on church independence, not only from western missionary control, but also from western denominationalism.

Although Cheng's ecumenical convictions were forged in the West and were further inspired during the federation movement in China, which were initiated with a western perspective on Christian co-operation and union, this article showed that Cheng's ecumenical outlook had shifted from a western form, which was driven to a large extent by western ecclesiastical preoccupations, to an indigenous form of ecumenism, which was driven by the strong national quest for the establishment of a native church. The desire for church independence surpassed denominational barriers, and became the dynamic of the quest for a united indigenous church in China. The efforts of Chinese Christians towards church independence and self-reliance provided Cheng with an intimate understanding of the actual needs of the Chinese church and elevated his perspectives to a higher level.

Thirdly, although Cheng's Chinese identity added volume to his original outlook regarding church unity, his vision remained in a wider scope that was based on the scriptural truth of Christian unity beyond denominational and national boundaries, as he proclaimed at the end of the article:

Thus union with Christ, union of all denominations and union of all

nationalities forms ‘a three-fold cord which is not easily broken!’²³³

This declaration certainly found a similarity to Keswick teaching.²³⁴ Cheng’s experience at the BTI and the Keswick Convention, his connection with the LMS and his friendship with its missionaries, all contributed to this dimension of his ecumenical convictions. It continued to make a strong impact on Cheng’s subsequent Christian leadership and his approach to the church-mission relationships, especially in the face of strong nationalistic sentiment, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has examined Cheng Jingyi’s early life, and explored the influence of a series of events which occurred during this period and reflected a series of socio-political shifts in Chinese society and the Protestant enterprise in China from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. To begin with, it followed the course of the shaping of a Chinese Christian leadership, as Cheng’s early life witnessed his rise to Chinese church leadership. Although Cheng’s early life associated with the LMS was always likely to shape him into a qualified ‘native helper,’ his vision was broadened by his experience in Britain. His church ministry in Beijing, to a large extent, qualified him to be a delegate at the 1910 Edinburgh

²³³ Cheng, ‘Federation,’ 160.

²³⁴ Hopkins, ‘Walking in Light,’ 11.

Conference and prepared him for future leadership in the mainline Chinese Protestant churches. Cheng had matured from a native assistant under the umbrella of the LMS into a capable church leader with an independent outlook regarding the future of the Chinese church. During the course of the development of Christianity in China, the rise of Chinese leadership was a significant step towards the realisation of self-fulfilment of the Chinese church.

Secondly, this chapter has uncovered the course of the formation of Cheng's ecumenical convictions. The Chinese context and the indigenous demand for self-reliance of the Chinese church became a vital factor in reshaping his ecumenical outlook, which was forged during his time in the West. Its focal point had shifted to the construction of the Chinese church. Cheng's convictions of an ecumenical future of the Chinese church prior to the 1910 Conference had already demonstrated the national consciousness for church unity. Yet it had not lost the theological convictions of universal Christian union.

Chapter 3:

Cheng Jingyi and the China Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference (1910-1922)

As noted previously, Cheng Jingyi's ecumenical convictions featured a strong desire for church independence and unity in China, differing considerably from the western style of ecumenism. Cheng's vision was endorsed by a considerable range of Chinese Christian elites of the time, including Yu Rizhang, Wang Zhengting 王正廷 (C. T. Wang), Zhang Boling 張伯苓 (Chang Po-ling), Xu Shengyan 許聲炎 (Hsu Sheng-yen) and Chen Jinyong 陳金鏞 (Chen Kin-yung).²³⁵ This chapter will focus

²³⁵ Wang Zhengting (1882-1961), Chinese Christian politician, businessman and diplomat. Wang studied in Japan in 1905 and became the secretary of the Chinese Young Men's Christian Association [YMCA] in Tokyo. He continued his studies at the University of Michigan in 1907 and then transferred to Yale University in 1908. In 1913 he became general secretary of the national YMCA while also acting as governor of the 81st District of Rotary International. He was one of the five Chinese delegates sent to the Paris Peace Conference. He was appointed minister of foreign affairs in Beijing in 1922, and served as foreign minister of the national government from 1928 to 1931. Zhang Boling (1876-1951), one of the most influential private educators in China and the founder of Nankai University in Tianjin. Zhang converted to Christianity in 1908 following contact with the YMCA in Tianjin. He was one of the key figures in the establishment of the Chinese Christian Church in Tianjin. The church drew in many elite Chinese converted through the YMCA. By 1920 it had grown to four separate congregations spread around the city with over 600 members. Zhang was also a key lay leader in the Chinese YMCA. He served as head of the Tianjin YMCA Board of Trustees from 1909 until the Japanese invasion in 1937. Rev. Xu Shengyan (1865-1948), pastor of the Jinjing Church in Fujian and founder of the Yuying School in Jinjiang, Fujian and the Minnan (South Fujian) Bible College. Xu established the Jinjing church 金井教會 (Chin Ching) in 1890, largely with Chinese funds. The Jinjing church grew quickly and gained independence in 1895, soon realising 'three-self.' In the early twentieth century, the Jinjing church expanded into twelve branches, and the number of its congregation grew to 398 in 1928, becoming the largest church in the Jinjiang area. It developed further during the 1930s, with the number of communicants reaching around 3000 at its peak. Xu was elected as vice-moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China in 1927, the year of its inauguration. Rev. Chen Jinyong (1868-1939) dedicated his life to Christian education and literature in China. Chen came from an American Presbyterian (North) background. He taught in the Nanjing Theological Seminary (Nanking Union Seminary) from 1906 to 1918. In 1914, he became the chief editor of *Shenxuezhì* 神學志 (*Theological Journal*) holding the post from its first issue. From 1918 to 1927 he served as an editor in the Christian Literature Society for China, and published a large number of articles regarding church indigeneity and independence. He also served as chairman of the committee on literature of the Chinese Home Missionary Society, and became editor-in-chief of its official

on the evolution of this type of ecumenism in China, in order to explore how the desire for a united indigenous church, represented by Cheng Jingyi, was proclaimed, reinforced and promoted through the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 and the work of its Continuation Committee up until the establishment of the National Christian Council of China.

3.1. The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910

It has been noted that a series of movements towards the goal of a united Chinese church were carried out, and made considerable progress, in China prior to the 1910 Conference. All of these facts serve to qualify the significance of the 1910 Conference to the world ecumenical movement, especially in the course of the establishment of a united national church in China. Nonetheless, as a worldwide missionary conference, the 1910 Conference provided a platform for a broader discussion of Christian indigeneity and interdenominational co-operation. This section does not claim to significantly advance the state of scholarly knowledge surrounding the 1910 Edinburgh Conference. However, it forms an indispensable foundation for the rest of this chapter, as the desire for a united national church in China was not only indicated through the correspondence of several missionaries in China, but also proclaimed by Cheng Jingyi, as a Chinese delegate, through his

journal *Fuyin Zhong* 福音鐘 (*The Gospel Bell*) in 1925. See Chen Kin-yung, 'A Chinese View,' in 'The Independence of the Chinese Church,' *The China Mission Year Book 1914*, 255-261. In this article Chen pointed out that 'independence without union means merely isolation, and is not reliable.'

speeches at the conference. If Cheng's article 'What Federation can Accomplish for the Chinese Church' in *The Chinese Recorder* can be seen as a prelude to express the point of view of a Chinese Christian, his addresses at the 1910 Conference, manifesting the convictions of an ecumenical future of the Chinese church, became a formal declaration of the standpoint of the majority of Chinese churches in front of a wider audience. Cheng's activities at this conference directly related to his subsequent leadership in Christian movements in China, and therefore are worthy of examination.

The 1910 Conference differed from previous international Protestant missionary conferences in the analytic and even 'scientific' nature of its objectives.²³⁶ It contained eight commissions devoted to the chosen themes.²³⁷ After a long period of preparation, the conference was held in Edinburgh from 14 to 23 June 1910, with John R. Mott as chairman. There were 1,215 official delegates present, nineteen of whom were from the churches in the mission fields, including Cheng Jingyi.²³⁸

²³⁶ For example, the conference held in London in 1888 and the World Missionary Conference in New York in 1900. For details of the origins and preparations of the 1910 Conference see Chapter 3 'Origins and Preparations,' in *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 18-48; W. H. T. Gairdner, *'Edinburgh 1910': An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier in Komm., 1910), 17-26; and World Missionary Conference, *The History and Records of the Conference*, Edinburgh, 1910, 3-17.

²³⁷ They were: I. Carrying the Gospel to all the World; II. The Native Church and its Workers; III. Educational in relation to the Christianisation of National Life; IV. The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions; V. The Preparation of Missionaries; VI. The Home Base of Missions; VII. Relation of Missions to Governments; VIII. Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity.

²³⁸ Cheng was one of the three official Chinese delegates to the 1910 Conference. The other two were Zhang Tingrong (T. Y. Chang) 張廷榮 of the Presbyterian Church in Shanghai and Professor Dong Jing'an 董景安 of Shanghai Baptist Theological Seminary. Two other Chinese Christians attended the conference but were not on the official delegate lists. They were C. C. Wang, from a LMS church in Shanghai, who was pursuing medical studies in Edinburgh, and Kang Cheng (Ida Kahn) 康成, a Chinese woman doctor in Jiujiang. Alongside Cheng, Moses Zhou 周摩西 was one of the two original delegates of the LMS Chinese churches. However, due to his doctoral examination in the

The cost of Cheng's journey to the 1910 Conference was entirely borne by Chinese Christians from the LMS churches in Beijing, Tianjin, Cangzhou and Xiaozhang, which the LMS missionary Nelson Bitton, referred to as an 'outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace and growth' of Chinese churches.²³⁹ Cheng delivered two speeches during the separate discussions of two commissions, despite the fact that he was probably the youngest delegate at the conference at the age of twenty-eight.²⁴⁰ His first speech was made during the debate of Commission II on 'The Church in the Mission Field' on 16 June, in which he expressed the strong demand of the Chinese churches for self-reliance, alongside appeals from other delegates of churches in the mission fields and several missionaries. Cheng began his speech with the statement that: 'The problem in China is the independence of the Chinese church.'²⁴¹ He claimed that Chinese Christians had realised their responsibility for their churches and the propagation of the Christian faith, and thus urged missionaries to pass over the responsibility for church administration and sustenance to the Chinese church.²⁴²

It was Cheng's second address, which was during the discussion of Commission VIII on 'Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity' on 21 June, that left a stronger impression on the audience at the conference. The address has been frequently cited

University of Berlin he was unable to attend the 1910 Conference. See Stanley, *Edinburgh 1910*, 91-2, 102-4.

²³⁹ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 5, Minutes of the North China District Committee, 1912; Nelson Bitton, 'Mr. Cheng Ching-yi, "The Member for China"', *The Chronicle* (1910): 123.

²⁴⁰ Stanley, *Edinburgh 1910*, 108.

²⁴¹ World Missionary Conference, *Report of Commission II* (Edinburgh, 1910), 352.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 352-3.

when discussing the subsequent history of ecumenism. ‘Seven Points in Seven Minutes’ was the title given by the editor of *The Chronicle*, in which this speech was put in print, and is an indication of how substantial the speech was.²⁴³ This was not the first time Cheng Jingyi had declared from a Chinese standpoint the desire of Chinese Christians for ‘a united Christian Church without any denominational distinctions.’²⁴⁴ For the majority of missionary delegates and those at the home base, who viewed the issue of co-operation and unity mainly from the perspective of a concern for missionary activities in the mission fields, the demand of the Chinese church which Cheng demonstrated must have been impressive. As Cheng stated at the beginning of his speech, he spoke ‘entirely from the Chinese standpoint,’ his address therefore echoing the voice of the Chinese church, which was usually obscured due to the missionary dominance of Christian work in China. As he declared:

This may seem somewhat peculiar to some of you, but, friends, do not forget to view us from our standpoint, and if you fail to do that, the Chinese will remain always as a mysterious people to you!²⁴⁵

Through his address, this voice was heard by Christians throughout the world.

A Chinese standpoint, according to Cheng’s addresses, referred to the need for a

²⁴³ The seven points were: 1. Why do we want such a union? 2. Is such a union possible? 3. Is it desirable? 4. Is it timely? 5. Is it an ideal to be aimed at? 6. Will such a union be lasting? 7. How is such a union to be accomplished? ‘Seven Points in Seven Minutes, Mr. Cheng Ching-yi’s Speech,’ *The Chronicle* (1910): 143.

²⁴⁴ World Missionary Conference, *Report of Commission VIII* (Edinburgh, 1910), 196.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

united Christian effort toward helping the growth of Chinese churches, the lack of interest in denominationalism in the Chinese mind, and the desirability of union in national life.²⁴⁶ Although these ideas were certainly developed from the basis of his previous article, this time it was a more emphatic expression concerning ‘the establishment of the Church of Christ in China.’²⁴⁷ In addition, it should be noted that the concept of church unity beyond denominations and nationalities was brought forward by Cheng in order to balance the emphasis on church indigeneity and independence in China. The Keswick motto of ‘All one in Christ Jesus’ once again appeared in Cheng’s talk.²⁴⁸ It demonstrated that Cheng’s claim for a united national church remained consistent with his theological convictions of Christian unity, though it had an indigenous prerequisite.

Cheng’s second speech has been commended as a ‘classic statement’ in Protestant missionary annals.²⁴⁹ Nonetheless, to perhaps the majority of missionaries who were present at the conference, Cheng’s ideal of a united national church in China raised a controversial issue regarding federation and union. W. H. Temple Gairdner argued that Cheng’s speech amply illustrated the cogency of two warnings regarding the intemperate pursuit of church unity in the mission fields, though these two warnings were aimed in rather opposite directions. The first was from the Right Rev. Bishop Roots (Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA) of Hankou, who had

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 196.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 197.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 197.

²⁴⁹ Howard L. Boorman and Richard C. Howard, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, Vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 285.

been aware of the nationalistic drive behind the demand for a united church in China and urged missionaries to concede to this demand. To Gairdner, Cheng's enthusiastic speech reflected a nationalistic sentiment, which according to Bishop Roots, should not be neglected.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Gairdner also regarded the dream of a united church illustrated by Cheng as naïve, and as evidence of his unawareness of the 'real difficulties and essentialities of the question [of church unity].'²⁵¹ In Gairdner's mind, this speech was an example to justify the warning of Charles Gore, the Bishop of Birmingham, in the debate of Commission II, where he argued that the 'essentials or real Catholic features' of the Church should be introduced to the mission fields before any encouragement was given to the haste of native Christians towards church unity.²⁵²

Although the 1910 Conference is frequently remembered as a milestone in the world ecumenical movement, its agenda was officially limited to the promotion of practical co-operation among mission agencies and denominations. Discussions in Commission VIII amply demonstrated the divergence between the western style of ecumenism and the ecumenism which emerged in the mission fields. The majority of the participants treated the conference merely as 'a conference about world mission in which like-minded Protestants would consult about more effective common strategies for the evangelisation of the world,' rather than a conference to promote

²⁵⁰ Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, 183-4.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 183-6.

²⁵² *Report of Commission II*, 355.

the goal of Christian unity.²⁵³ No judgement or decision on practical union among different ecclesiastical authorities could be made due to the agreement, which was reached during the conference preparations, that the commissions would not deal with any question or proposals of union which involved church policy or ecclesiastical order.²⁵⁴ Under such circumstances, Cheng's appeal for church unity in China was not taken seriously by most of the participants, with a few exceptions from missionaries, such as Rev. E. W. Burt (English Baptist Mission in Shandong, China), Rev. S. Thomas (English Baptist Mission in Delhi), Rev. J. P. Jones (ABCFM, South India), and Rev. J. Campbell Gibson (Presbyterian Church of England, Shantou, China).²⁵⁵ Although the ideal of one united Church of Christ and the importance of the tendency towards unity to social change in the Asian mission fields caught missionaries' attention, the ideal was believed to be in the 'far distance.'²⁵⁶ Additionally, the rationale of co-operation among missions was evangelistic, rather than arising out of a concern for church unity of Asian Christians imbued with national consciousness.

Nevertheless, the work of Commission VIII was still of significance, for it 'had a greater impact on subsequent ecumenical history than that of all the other Commissions put together.'²⁵⁷ According to Nelson Bitton, the presence of the Chinese church at the conference was considered to be 'a reminder to western

²⁵³ Stanley, *Edinburgh 1910*, 279.

²⁵⁴ *World Missionary Conference 1910 Monthly News Sheet*, May 1910, 156.

²⁵⁵ *Report of Commission VIII*, 192-212.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 131-3.

²⁵⁷ Stanley, *Edinburgh 1910*, 278.

Christianity' of the rise of the Chinese church and that mission work would increasingly be in the hands of native workers.²⁵⁸ Missionaries generally acknowledged the link between national consciousness and the desire for church unity in the mission fields. The theme of Commission VIII was unpremeditatedly raised to a new plane by the appeal for a 'visible unity of indigenous national churches' from the Asian delegates.²⁵⁹ More significantly, the most important contribution of the 1910 Conference to the world ecumenical movement was the appointment of a Continuation Committee, which aimed to carry forward the co-operative spirit of the 1910 Conference, continue its work, carry out further investigations and prepare for the formation of a permanent International Missionary Committee.²⁶⁰ The Continuation Committee consisted of thirty-five members of the Edinburgh Conference, with ten coming from each of America, Britain and the Continent, and one from each of Australasia, South Africa, Japan, China and India, with John Mott being elected as chairman.²⁶¹

Through his two speeches, and especially the second, Cheng Jingyi caught the attention of John Mott, who he had already served as an interpreter during Mott's 1907 tour in China.²⁶² On 22 June, he was chosen as the sole Chinese representative among the thirty-five members of the Continuation Committee.²⁶³ As noted above,

²⁵⁸ Bitton, 'Member for China,' 123.

²⁵⁹ Stanley, *Edinburgh 1910*, 279-80.

²⁶⁰ *History and Records*, 95-7.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁶² Charles Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott, 1865-1955: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 358.

²⁶³ *History and Records*, 102.

the cost of Cheng's journey was borne by several LMS churches in North China, and it was his duty to report to each of them on the message of the conference. His position in the Continuation Committee enabled Cheng to implement his vision of an ecumenical and indigenous future for the Chinese church with authority. The work of the China Continuation Committee, which was formed in 1912 under the leadership of Cheng Jingyi, pushed the Chinese church forward towards the goal of establishing a united national church in China. Nevertheless, before we examine the work of the China Continuation Committee, there is another event which requires exploration: Cheng's ordination as the first Chinese pastor of the East city church in Beijing.

3.2. Cheng's Ordination and the Independence of the East City Church

Jonathan Chao has evaluated Cheng's ordination as 'the end of a missionary era.'²⁶⁴ Although this judgement appears exaggerated, Cheng's ordination as the first Chinese pastor of this church was certainly meaningful, occurring as it did during a time when the majority of Protestant churches in China were controlled by missionaries. As discussed previously, it was difficult for churches to realise independence due to the standard of missions, according to which self-support was the first step towards independence. As most of the churches in China were unable to realise self-support, such standards could not result in a productive outcome. A

²⁶⁴ China Graduate School of Theology, Jonathan T'ien-en Chao, 'The Indigenization of Protestant Christianity in Modern China as Seen through the Life and Work of Cheng Ching-yi (1881-1939),' Partial Draft, 1978, 139.

Chinese pastor was of great importance if the church wanted to gain independence from missions, as churches in China needed an indigenous leadership, who were able to speak for them, represent their views and guide them toward their goals. As demonstrated by his church ministry and activities during the 1910 Conference, Cheng was certainly the right man for the job.

Cheng's ordination took place on 13 October 1910, with a large audience composed of 'members of all the Protestant missions' in Beijing. Pastors and elders of all the Protestant missions in Beijing, both foreign and Chinese, took part in the service, with the sole exception being those attached to the Anglican churches.²⁶⁵ Once again Cheng became a figure in *The Chronicle*, in which this event was noted to western readers.²⁶⁶ Cheng's ordination was considered a 'great change' in the East city church, as this position had always been held by missionaries.²⁶⁷ Additionally, as this church was at the core of the LMS's work in Beijing, Cheng's appointment as the first ordained native was even more significant. To the Chinese congregations, it was certainly a sign of the advent of Chinese leadership. This significance is demonstrated in the LMS annual reports of 1865-1913: Cheng was the only ordained native pastor of the LMS in Beijing from 1881 to 1913 and the only one in North China from 1884 to 1913, becoming one of only thirteen ordained nationals of the LMS in the whole of China during 1910 and 1911.²⁶⁸ Although an accurate figure

²⁶⁵ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, Report of Peking and District for the Period January 1901 to December 1910.

²⁶⁶ 'Native Pastors in China and Africa,' *The Chronicle* (1911): 12-3.

²⁶⁷ *Report of LMS*, 1911, 200.

²⁶⁸ *Report of LMS*, 1910, 330-1; 1911, 356-7; 1912, 338-9; 1913, 395-6. As shown in the Reports,

for the total number of ordained Chinese Protestant pastors in Beijing during Cheng's ordination is unavailable, a group photograph which was taken during the ceremony makes clear that there were only a handful of ordained natives in Beijing at that time. The notes on the back of the photograph indicate that the Chinese in the front row were either deacons of the East city church or Chinese pastors of other missions, with the rest being mainly Chinese delegates to the ordination. As shown in the photograph, in addition to Cheng, there were altogether thirty-five Chinese, ten of which were in the front row. From this information we can conclude that the number of ordained native pastors in Beijing was certainly less than ten. The LMS missionary, S. E. Meech, noted several Chinese pastors who attended Cheng's ordination in his own account, including Pastor Jen and Pastor Li of the churches associated with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions [ABCFM], and Pastor Chen of the American Methodist Church.²⁶⁹ As can be seen, Cheng's ordination was a momentous event for Chinese Protestant churches in Beijing and across North China.

there was one ordained native in Beijing from 1877 to 1880, two in Tianjin from 1877 to 1881 and one in Tianjin from 1882-1884.

²⁶⁹ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, Report of Peking and District for the Period January 1901 to December 1910.



Figure 2: ‘Ordination of Mr. Cheng in Peking, October 1910’

Source from SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, China Photographs, Box 13, File 80; reprinted in ‘Native Pastors in China and Africa,’ *The Chronicle* (1911): 12-3.

Perhaps for the LMS, Cheng’s ordination was no more than some sort of ‘experiment’ with a native pastor, but for the Chinese congregations in the East city church at least, this was symbolic of the promising future of self-fulfilment.²⁷⁰ In the LMS reports, Cheng’s church was already regarded as an ‘entirely independent’ church during 1910 and 1911, self-governed by its own church council of twenty-four members, twenty of whom were Chinese.²⁷¹ It should be noted, however, that in the case of the Chinese congregations in the East city church, the ‘independence’ stated in most of the records prior to 1912 implies independence in

²⁷⁰ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, China Eastern Outgoing Letters, Box 38, August 1911 – March 1912, No. 3806, Martin to Meech, 20 January 1912.

²⁷¹ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, Report of Peking and District for the Period January 1901 to December 1910; *Report of LMS*, 1911, 200.

church administration, rather than financial self-reliance, though it is undeniable that the congregations were moving towards the goal of self-support, as will be discussed shortly. The church buildings in the East city compound, in which the main part of Cheng's congregations were based, belonged to the LMS. Cheng's salary was \$40 (Mexican) a month, \$30 of which was offered by Eliot Curwen.²⁷² Although the church was yet to realise self-support, Cheng's leadership soon became an accelerator in its progress towards further independence.

According to Meech, Cheng and a number of members of the Chinese congregations manifested a strong desire for establishing a truly independent church. It should be noted that part of the congregations were situated at the East city church, which was located in the East city compound in the area of Dengshikou 燈市口 (Deng Shih Kou) and Hademen Street 哈德門大街 (Hatamen), whilst others gathered in two branch stations of the East city church at Dongzhimen 東直門 (Tung Chih Men) and Ciqikou (South) 磁器口 (Tsz Chi Kou). Their first move towards this goal was to apply to the LMS for the transfer to them of the street chapel and the adjacent church buildings in the East city compound for their use in early 1911. As this was declined by the LMS Advisory Council, in the autumn of 1911 the congregations decided to move out of the compound and to establish their headquarters at the South city chapel at Ciqikou. They therefore requested the LMS legally hand over to them the chapels and buildings of the above two branch

²⁷² SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 6, 1908-11, S. E. Meech, Report of Peking and District for the Period January 1901 to December 1910; North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 16, 1909-10, No. 9505, Meech, Peking, 19 August 1910.

stations.²⁷³ Shortly after, in early 1912, the LMS home board approved this request, as the chapels and buildings of these two sites were not formally listed as the property of the LMS corporation.²⁷⁴ The outcome of this move was that Cheng, as its pastor, followed the Chinese congregations to its new quarters, and gave up the charge of the church and congregation remaining in the East city compound, which devolved to the LMS.²⁷⁵ The remaining congregation was later known as the Mishi

²⁷³ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 17, 1911, No. 5, Meech, 16 and 20 February 1911; No. 597, 16 October 1911; No. 677, 28 November 1911; Box 18, 1912-3, No. 824, Meech, Peking, 2 and 5 February 1912. The East city church was located in the area of the Legation Quarter on Hadamen Street, and in some records is referred to as the Shuangqigan church 雙旗杆教會. According to Meech, the chapel and buildings at Dongzhimen had always been the property of the Chinese congregations. They were located outside of the East Gate of the ancient city of Beijing, and were conveyed to the East city church by the missionary John Dudgeon during the 1870s. The Ciqikou chapel, which used to be a temple, was donated to the LMS by a Chinese Christian, Jin De'en 金得恩 in 1900. It was located outside of the Chongwenmen 崇文門 (Chongwen Gate) in the South of the city of Beijing, and had also been considered to be the property of the Chinese congregations. It is also known as the Liushujing 柳樹井 chapel in some literature. See Meng Xingwu 孟省吾, 'Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Lishi: Beijing Dong Liushujing 中華基督教會歷史: 北京東柳樹井 (The History of the Church of Christ in China [CCC]: The East Willow Well Chapel in Beijing),' *Shenxue Zhi 神學志 (Theological Journal)* 10, no. 3 (1924): 33. According to Lian Xi, Wei Enbo 魏恩波 (Paul Wei), the founder of the True Jesus Church, was a member of the Ciqikou chapel from 1902 to 1912. See Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire, The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 42-3.

²⁷⁴ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 17, 1911, No. 677, Meech, 28 November 1911; CWM, China Eastern Outgoing Letters, Box 38, August 1911- March 1912, No. 3792, Currie Martin to Meech, 12 January 1912.

²⁷⁵ Howard Smith was in sole charge of the clerical side of the work in the East city, including union evangelistic work, comity work, the Boys' Boarding School and the work of the East city church. Meanwhile, Cheng remained as the pastor of the East city church until the transfer of the chapels and buildings of the two sites was validated in 1913-14, after the formation of the Republic of China. Cheng ceased to be the pastor in 1913, and took up the position of the Chinese secretary of the China Continuation Committee. The East city church (Mishi) was under the superintendence of a Chinese pastor, Rev. Gao Chengzhai 高誠齋. See SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 17, 1911, No. 597, Meech, 16 October 1911; No. 677, 28 November 1911; Box 18, 1912-3, No. 824, Meech, Peking, 2 and 5 February 1912; CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 7, the Mishi Chinese Christian Church to the General Committee of the LMS, Peking, 25 June 1917; CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 8, 1915-21, James D. Liddell, 31 December 1915; Meng, 'Liushujing (Willow Well Chapel),' 33; 'The Growth of the Chinese Church,' *The Chronicle* (1920): 75; Shanghai Municipal Archives [SMA], U102-0-128-124, 'Beiping Mishi Tanghui Limu Jishi 北平米市堂會立牧紀實 (Ordination Service in the Mishi Church in Beijing),' *Zonghui Gongbao 總會公報 (The General Assembly Record)* 8, no. 5 (1936): 22-3.

米市 church (Mi Shih).²⁷⁶ Its steps towards independence took place during 1916 to 1920, and will be examined in Section 3.3.2.

The available data are insufficient to draw a clearer picture of the relationship between Cheng's congregations and the remaining church, or to answer questions such as how many church members remained with the original congregation and what their status was. Nonetheless, these records are ample for demonstrating that Cheng's church had obtained visible independence, with Cheng himself playing a vital part in this process. As revealed in the letter from Currie Martin to Meech in early 1912 regarding the issue of the independence of the Chinese congregations, it seemed to be beyond the expectation of the LMS home board that Cheng might identify himself with the Chinese view of the question:

I wonder what was the reason of the failure of the experiment...of having Mr. Cheng as pastor of the East City Church? Dr Cochrane thought that Mr. Cheng quite understood the position that it was impossible for us to hand over the property to the Chinese and that Mr. Cheng would be able to put the case to them so clearly that there would be no further trouble. It appears, however, as if this had not been so.²⁷⁷

Meech replied as follows:

²⁷⁶ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 7, 1917, Cheng Ching-yi to Mrs. Curwen, 3 July 1916. Since 1911-12 the name 'Mishi Church' started to appear in various records. See 'Cheng Jingyi Boshi Shilue 誠靜怡博士史略 (A Brief Biography of Dr. Cheng Jingyi),' *Zhonghua Gui Zhu 中華歸主 (China for Christ)*, no. 201 (1939): 16; 'A Chinese Christian Church,' *The Chronicle* (1912): 168; Cheng Ching-yi, 'The Leading of the New China,' *The Chronicle* (1914): 152; Cheng Ching-yi, 'A Brief Survey of Church Activities as seen in Christian Periodicals,' *The China Mission Year Book 1916* (Shanghai, 1916), 335.

²⁷⁷ SOAS, CWM, China Eastern Outgoing Letters, Box 38, August 1911- March 1912, No. 3792, Currie Martin to Meech, 12 January 1912.

Mr. Cheng does not consider himself pastor of the East City Church, but pastor of the independent church, part of which happens to meet in the East City compound... It is Mr. Cheng's hope repeatedly expressed, that he does not desire to break away from the mission, but to work in fullest harmony, though still, independent.²⁷⁸

As a man who usually enjoyed good relationships with missions, to cause the discontent of the LMS was rather a rare event in Cheng's life. It reflected the fact that, while maintaining a fraternal church-mission relationship had always been part of his convictions, it was the Chinese church above all which was his focal point. In this matter, Cheng's sympathies obviously lay with the Chinese.

The advent of Chinese leadership encouraged church independence in a larger context. A conference, with Cheng as chairman and more than forty Chinese Christian delegates of the churches in Beijing and Tianjin present, was held in the Mishi church on 4 May 1912. One of the outcomes was the resolution to form the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing (The Chinese Christian Church of Peking).²⁷⁹ A church organising committee was formed, with Cheng elected as vice-director. It consisted of three Chinese members of each denomination and mission in Beijing, including the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, the American Methodist Episcopal Mission, the ABCFM, the American Presbyterian Mission (North), the YMCA and the LMS.²⁸⁰ At the beginning, the church was only composed of Cheng's congregations, those in the Dongzhimen and Ciqikou

²⁷⁸ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 18, 1912-3, No. 824, Meech, Peking, 2 and 5 February 1912.

²⁷⁹ 'A Chinese Christian Church,' 168; Meng, 'Liushujing (Willow Well Chapel),' 33.

²⁸⁰ Meng, 'Liushujing (Willow Well Chapel),' 33.

chapels.²⁸¹ It centred on the Ciqikou chapel, with Rev. Meng Jizeng 孟繼曾 (Meng Chi-tseng), once the pastor of the Ciqikou chapel, taking up the same position at the new church.²⁸² The Chinese Christian Church of Beijing had two goals: one was to carry out effective evangelistic work under its status as a Chinese church, and to realise ‘three-self,’ whilst the other was to achieve Christian unity.²⁸³ As indicated in the constitution, it accepted the ‘Evangelical and Trinitarian Creeds’ of all the recognised Protestant churches, and was open to all Christians without any national or denominational distinctions.²⁸⁴ A board of directors consisting of fifteen members representing all Protestant churches in Beijing ‘except one,’ were in charge of its church affairs. Meanwhile, it demonstrated a willingness to maintain its friendship with missions, allowing its members to retain their membership of the existing mission churches when joining. In addition, an advisory board was organised with four missionaries representing four Protestant missions in Beijing as a symbol of the maintenance of church-mission co-operation.²⁸⁵

What should be noted is that after the transfer of the chapels and buildings of the LMS to the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing was eventually validated in 1913-14,

²⁸¹ In 1917, the Kuanjie church 寬街 of the ABCFM joined in the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing. In 1920, the Mishi church joined following its final independence from the LMS. In 1921, the LMS donated the Sanjianfang church 三間房 which was located outside of the Chaoyangmen 朝陽門 to the church. From this point on, the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing owned five sites and congregations, four of which, comprising the Dongzhimen, Dong Liushujing, Kuanjie, and Mishi churches, formed a district church council with sixteen members taking charge of church affairs. See Meng, ‘Liushujing (Willow Well Chapel),’ 38-9.

²⁸² Meng Jizeng, also known as Meng Xingwu 孟省吾, was formerly a member of the ABCFM in Baoding. See Cheng, ‘Brief Survey,’ 335; Meng, ‘Liushujing (Willow Well Chapel),’ 32.

²⁸³ ‘A Chinese Christian Church,’ 168.

²⁸⁴ Thomas Cochrane, *Survey of the Missionary Occupation of China* (Shanghai, 1913), 296

²⁸⁵ C. Y. Cheng, ‘The Chinese Church in 1916,’ *The China Mission Year Book 1917* (Shanghai, 1917), 285; ‘The Year 1912 – China,’ *IRM* 1 (1912): 18.

Cheng Jingyi and several other Chinese leaders registered the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing with the Ministry of the Interior of the newly established national government in 1915. The church became the first Chinese Protestant church to take this step, and the first to be validated by the government.²⁸⁶ This action can be seen as a remarkable step in the course of the development of the Chinese church, especially in terms of church independence and indigeneity. As Christian churches in China had long been under the wings of missions, and protected by the ‘toleration clauses’ of the ‘unequal treaties,’ they had never enjoyed legal status in Chinese society, but only caused the hatred of Chinese nationalists. This situation became even more acute during the 1920s, which will be examined in detail in the following chapter. Registration with the government enabled a church to obtain a legal status, and have the right to deal with its property, which was pragmatically advantageous to its future expansion. More significantly, it secured a social and legal standing for the church, with consequent recognition from Chinese society. This was vital for a church to not only become independent, but also to be Chinese with a firm foundation. On this matter, Cheng Jingyi’s outlook exercised a vital role. As early as 1912, he already held the convictions of securing religious liberty from the government for the sake of the development of the Chinese church.²⁸⁷ Cheng’s view of the legal status of the church had undoubtedly been impacted greatly by the Boxer Uprising. In addition, we might also trace some influence of modern thought

²⁸⁶ Meng, ‘Liushujing (Willow Well Chapel),’ 34; ‘Cheng Jingyi (Biography of Cheng),’ 16.

²⁸⁷ Cheng Ching-yi, ‘The Chinese Church in Relation to Its Immediate Task,’ *IRM* 1 (1912): 381-92.

concerning the western liberal social and political model of nation state and the spirit of the rule of law, which became increasingly welcome in Chinese society, particularly among intellectuals and metropolitan elites, in the early twentieth century.

The Chinese Christian Church of Beijing also endeavoured to realise the goal of self-support. When it was established in 1912, both the Dongzhimen and the Ciqikou chapels were receiving a monthly allowance from the East city church. By the summer of 1915, the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing was ‘entirely’ self-supported, and no longer received any financial aid from the East city church.²⁸⁸ A scheme for raising funds to construct new church buildings at Ciqikou was adopted, requiring each member of the church to contribute ‘at least a copper a day.’ A new church building was thus established with these funds, which amounted to approximately two thousand dollars in total, in addition to contributions from other sources.²⁸⁹ The Chinese Christian Church of Beijing was an outstanding example of the endeavour of Chinese Christians towards the goal of a united Chinese church in the early twentieth century. As one of the key figures who enabled the realisation of this goal, Cheng Jingyi certainly played a vital role in its formation.

As examined in the previous chapter, the first decade of the twentieth century saw a rising tide of Chinese Christians’ endeavours towards church independence and unity. This tide became even stronger in the second decade, especially after the

²⁸⁸ Cheng, ‘Brief Survey,’ 335; Meng, ‘Liushujing (Willow Well Chapel),’ 34-8.

²⁸⁹ Cheng, ‘Brief Survey,’ 335; SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 8, 1915-21, James D. Liddell, 31 December 1915.

1911 Revolution and the establishment of a Republic. 'The Chinese Christian Churches' thrived not only in Beijing, but also in Tianjin, Jinan, Qingdao and Yantai. The independence of Cheng's congregations and the formation of the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing were good examples of how Cheng's claim during the 1910 Conference was becoming a reality, and how significant the native leadership was to the self-reliance of the Chinese church. It should be noted, however, that Cheng could not exert a wider influence if he had remained merely as a Chinese pastor in a Chinese church. It was Cheng's efforts in the China Continuation Committee that carried his vision of a united Chinese church nationwide.

3.3. The Work of the China Continuation Committee and Cheng's Activities

3.3.1. The National Christian Conference of Shanghai, 1913

Following the appointment of the Continuation Committee at the Edinburgh Conference, a resolution was adopted during its first meeting calling upon the chairman to visit the mission fields to consult missionaries and native Christian leaders with regard to the work and plans of the committee.²⁹⁰ From this point on, John Mott, as chairman, was engaged in a worldwide tour during which a number of conferences were held in the mission fields.²⁹¹ In China, his visit took place in

²⁹⁰ SOAS, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 5, S. Hughes to the Church of England Mission, Peking, 3 July 1912.

²⁹¹ More studies on John Mott and the Continuation Committee can be found in William Richey Hogg,

February and March 1913. During Mott's visit, sectional conferences were held in Guangdong (Canton), Shanghai, Jinan, Beijing and Hankou, followed by a National Conference in Shanghai and a supplementary conference in Shenyang (Mukden).²⁹²

The National Conference of Shanghai was held from 11 to 14 March 1913. As a nationwide conference which followed in the wake of the Shanghai Centenary Conference of 1907, the 1913 Conference demonstrated the productive achievements which had been made in the intervening period; for example, the Chinese church had become the central point of the conference, and the attendance of Chinese Christians equated to one third of the total 120 delegates.²⁹³

Among the various topics for discussion, the issues of 'the Chinese church' and 'co-operation and unity' attracted particular attention from conference delegates. These two topics were not only discussed during the sessions of their own committees, but also received attention during those of the other nine committees. It should further be noted that Chinese Christians claimed and obtained a larger share of the administration of church affairs through conference resolutions. Additionally, conference delegates generally recognised a single union church to be the direction of the evolution of the Chinese church, though the goal of federation was considered

Ecumenical Foundations (New York: Harper, 1952); Hans-Ruedi Weber, *Asia and the Ecumenical Movement, 1895–1951* (London: SCM Press, 1966); and *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott* (New York: Association Press, 1946-7).

²⁹² 'The Year 1913 – China,' *IRM* 2 (1913): 18.

²⁹³ G. H. Bondfield, 'The National Conference,' and Cheng Ching-yi, 'A Chinese View of the Conferences,' in 'The Continuation Committee Conferences in China,' *IRM* 3 (1913): 501-2, 507; *Findings of the National Conference held in Shanghai March 11 to 14 1913, Under the Presidency of Dr J. R. Mott Chairman of the Continuation Committee of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference* (Shanghai, 1913), i.

to be a preliminary step.²⁹⁴ In particular, two conference resolutions were of significance in the course of the evolution of Christianity in China. One was that ‘Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui’ 中华基督教会 (The Chinese Christian Church or the Christian Church in China) – the title recommended for use in all Christian churches in China – was adopted during the conference.²⁹⁵ The name ‘The Chinese Christian Church’ was put forward for common use in Chinese churches by Cheng Jingyi in his article ‘The Chinese Church in Relation to its Immediate Task,’ which was published in the first issue of *International Review of Missions* in 1912.²⁹⁶ As discussed previously, this name was adopted by his independent church in Beijing. Being adopted by a national conference meant that this name would be used in churches throughout China, and as a result, the spirit of independence and unity which this name reflected would disseminate considerably.

The other resolution, which was a momentous step, was the recommendation that a China Continuation Committee be formed on the model of the Edinburgh Continuation Committee. Although the 1907 Conference had already approved the organisation of a national council to advocate Christian co-operation and union, no such council was established during the following six years, due to the unfinished work in forming district and provincial councils. A solution was brought forward at

²⁹⁴ J. W. Bashford, ‘The Action of the Conferences in regard to Co-operation and Unity,’ in ‘The Continuation Committee Conferences in China,’ *IRM* 3 (1913): 516; Cheng, ‘Chinese View,’ 509-10

²⁹⁵ *National Conference 1913*, 4-8; ‘Extracts from the “Findings”,’ *The Chinese Recorder* 44, no. 4 (1913): 221-222; J. W. Bashford, ‘The Action of the Conferences in regard to Co-operation and Unity,’ in ‘The Continuation Committee Conferences in China,’ *IRM* 3 (1913): 515-8; *The Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia, 1912-1913: A Brief Account of the Conferences together with Their Findings and Lists of Members* (New York, 1913), 328.

²⁹⁶ Cheng, ‘Immediate Task,’ 389.

the end of the 1913 Conference that a national organisation, representing both foreign missions and Chinese churches, should be formed as an interim substitute for a national council. The China Continuation Committee consisted of fifty members, of which no less than one-third were Chinese.²⁹⁷ Its objectives included: 1) to carry out the recommendations of the 1913 national and sectional conferences in China; 2) to serve as a means of communication between Christians bodies in China, the Edinburgh Continuation Committee and mission boards; 3) to serve as a means through which Christian bodies in China could express themselves united; 4) to promote Christian co-operation and co-ordination in China; and 5) to act as a board of reference.²⁹⁸

G. H. Bondfield of the BFBS commented that the formation of the China Continuation Committee was ‘the only constructive act of the National Conference,’ and ‘one of the most important steps ever taken by the missionary body in China.’²⁹⁹ For the first time, it provided a platform for both mission home boards and the missionary enterprise in China to communicate with each other, and for both missionaries and Chinese Christians to gather together and discuss issues that emerged during the development of Christianity in China as a whole. More importantly, Chinese Christians started to share more responsibility for church work, and joined missionaries in determining the future of the Protestant enterprise in

²⁹⁷ Bondfield, ‘National Conference,’ 505-6.

²⁹⁸ *Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia*, 349.

²⁹⁹ Bondfield, ‘National Conference,’ 506; G. H. Bondfield, ‘The China Continuation Committee,’ *The Chinese Recorder* 44, no. 4 (1913): 218; *National Conference 1913*, 41.

China. Matters such as the Chinese church and Christian federation and union were treated with particular care. Through the common strategy and policy it adopted, the China Continuation Committee was able to mobilise the nationwide Protestant strength to move towards the goal of a united Chinese church.

3.3.2. The Work of the China Continuation Committee towards a United Chinese Church and Cheng's Role

As the only Chinese representative of the Continuation Committee of the 1910 Conference, Cheng Jingyi not only took charge of the preparations for Mott's visit to China, but also accompanied Mott during his tour of conferences as one of the interpreters.³⁰⁰ As soon as the China Continuation Committee was formed, Cheng, as Mott's 'great favourite,' was elected as the first Chinese secretary with Mott's strong support, working together with the foreign secretary, the American Presbyterian (North) missionary E. C. Lobenstine.³⁰¹ This appointment demonstrated that Cheng's capability for Christian leadership had been recognised by a large number of missionaries and Chinese Christians. The China Continuation Committee came into being during a transitional period, a time when Chinese Christians began to take on more responsibility for church administration from

³⁰⁰ SOAS, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 5, S. Hughes to the Church of England Mission, Peking, 3 July 1912; Yale Divinity School Library, Special Collections, Manuscript Group 45, Mott Papers, John R. Mott to Charles Gillett, 12 September 1922.

³⁰¹ Hopkins, *John Mott*, 395; *National Conference 1913*, iv.

missionaries' hands. During this period, an increasing number of articles emerged in various Christian journals and periodicals, written by both missionaries and Chinese Christians, discussing the issues related to this transitional era, such as the task of the Chinese church, the goal of 'three-self,' church-mission relationships and Christian co-operation and union, in order to provide some guidelines for actual Christian work. It was also during this period that Cheng's ideas of church construction blossomed and became systematised. His position within the China Continuation Committee provided him with more opportunities to gather information nationwide and examine his ideas, while also giving him the power to implement these ideas directly through the work of the committee. Meanwhile, as the Chinese secretary of the committee, Cheng's ideas that were put in print also echoed the will of the committee.

First of all, comprehension of the nature of this period was essential in evaluating other related issues for both missionaries and Chinese. As early as 1912, in his *IRM* article 'The Chinese Church in Relation to its Immediate Task,' Cheng described the course of the evolution of Christianity in China as follows:

The time is passed from the period of the *China Mission* into the period of the *China Church*, and it will slowly but surely pass from the period of the Church *in* China to that of the Church *of* China. During the time of the first period it was of necessity that the work was entirely in the hands of European missionaries. In the second period joint action and the united efforts of the West and East are of absolute necessity. In the third period we may hope for the time when the Chinese Church will undertake her own responsibility, and our missionary friends will be spared to evangelise other unoccupied dark fields.³⁰²

³⁰² Cheng, 'Immediate Task,' 383. Italics added.

The above analysis of the characteristics of three stages of Christian work in China, and in particular of the transitional stage, set the keynote for Cheng's arguments on the 'immediate task' of Christian work in China in his subsequent articles during this period. Accordingly, the central position of the Chinese church was once again emphasised, with the intention to call for missionaries to shift the focus of their work:

The Church work as far as possible should be gradually in the hands of Chinese pastors...In the end the Church must become Chinese, so let the missionary do his best to lead them [Chinese Christians] into the right and proper way...the question seems clear as to *how* the Chinese Church should be established.³⁰³

Compared to his emphasis on the Chinese church before 1912, Cheng's arguments on the central position of the Chinese church were more emphatic and specific at this stage, which may be related to his work associated with the China Continuation Committee, as the 'church-centric' principle was largely embodied in the work of the committee. From its formation onwards, the committee held annual meetings to hear the reports of its special committees, to organise discussions and to adopt recommendations concerning various aspects of Christian work in China, such as the Chinese church, evangelistic work, theological education, Christian literature, self-support, comity, survey and occupation, etc. Most of the work of other special committees related to that of the committee on the Chinese church, of which the

³⁰³ Ibid., 384-6.

regular members were all Chinese.³⁰⁴ Cheng's top priority lay with this committee, into which his vision of a united Chinese church was incorporated.³⁰⁵

Referring to the method to realise an indigenous church, due to his experience in church ministry, Cheng's discussion tended to focus on how churches should deal with practical issues of church life and Christian ethics, such as the commemoration of ancestors, marriage and burial customs, as well as polygamy and concubinage. This reflected the continual work of the special committee on the Chinese church regarding these matters. From 1917 onwards, the special committee had studied and discussed these issues through a series of annual meetings.³⁰⁶ From 1919, studies of other issues were brought onto the agenda of the committee, including church unity, self-support, the situation of Chinese pastors, the Christian church and social service, methods of securing, training and utilising Christian leaders, etc., some of which had previously been the focal points of other special committees.³⁰⁷ To gather them into the work of the special committee on the Chinese church may have been an economic decision, which prevented the work of the China Continuation Committee from overlapping. In addition, all these issues were closely related to the growth of the

³⁰⁴ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CBMS 348, Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the China Continuation Committee, Hangchow, April 27-May 2 1917, 35.

³⁰⁵ Cheng served as chairman of the committee on the Chinese church from 1917 to 1920. He was also a member of the editorial committee of *The China Mission Year Book* during this period. In 1916, he served in the committee on evangelistic literature. See SOAS, CBMS 348, Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the China Continuation Committee, Shanghai, April 27-May 2 1916, 14-5, 58-60, 88, 92; Fifth, 1917, 131, 134; Sixth, Shanghai, April 19-24 1918, 72, 76; Seventh, Shanghai, April 25-30 1919, 95, 101; Ninth, Shanghai, May 5-10 1921, 107.

³⁰⁶ SOAS, CBMS 348, Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the China Continuation Committee, 1917, 11-2, 34-41.

³⁰⁷ Cheng Ching-yi, 'Report of the Special Committee on the Chinese Church,' *The Chinese Recorder* 48, no. 6 (1917): 369; SOAS, CBMS 348, Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the China Continuation Committee, 1919, 7-8, 39-42.

Chinese church. The work concerning the Chinese church would have become more effective after these issues were concentrated into one committee and were studied and discussed under coherent guidelines. Through the work of the special committee, the construction of the Chinese church was not confined to theoretical discussion, but was carried out through the implementation of practical measures.

Cheng's stress on the central position of the Chinese church embraced an indispensable dimension: the international character of the church. As the self-consciousness of Chinese people was growing, and anti-foreign sentiments became stronger, especially after the 1911 Revolution, the Chinese church was also affected by these currents. The idea of 'China for the Chinese' emerged in a number of Chinese churches, with church-mission relationships becoming subject to tension as a result. In many of his articles, Cheng therefore emphasised the 'essentially universal' nature of the church, and applied this principle to the church-mission relationship in particular, aiming to keep the trend towards church independence from the spoilage of nationalistic sentiments and political interests.³⁰⁸ As noted previously, the organisation of a missionary advisory board in the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing was an example of maintaining a fraternal relationship between churches and missions.

This fraternal relationship between churches and missions resulted from Cheng's strong convictions of Christian unity. According to him, the Chinese church was a

³⁰⁸ Cheng Ching-yi, 'The Missionary and the Church,' *The Chronicle* (1914): 178; 'Report of Special Committee,' 360; 'Church in 1916,' 284-5; 'The Chinese Church of Today I,' *The Chinese Recorder* 49, no. 10 (1918): 662.

part of the universal church. It enjoyed equality with churches in other parts of the world, while they together formed mutual co-operative relationships.³⁰⁹ Cheng considered such a relationship to be a healthy one for the Chinese church. Accordingly, even though large numbers of Chinese churches still relied on foreign funds, which to a certain extent became one of the main factors explaining the maintenance of a friendly church-mission relationship, Cheng reminded Chinese Christians that the church-mission relationship was not a 'dollar-and-cent' one.³¹⁰ To him, this relationship must not be based on financial subsidies or other means, but solely on an equal footing.

Pragmatically, Cheng believed that the co-operation between churches and missions was of the 'greatest importance' during the transitional period, and therefore 'joined action of both the workers of the West and the East should be certainly the policy' of the work of Protestant enterprise in China during this time, in order to 'save the Church from an immediate and disastrous situation.'³¹¹ His view on this matter was consistent with the principle of the China Continuation Committee.

It should be noted that Cheng's convictions of the fraternal church-mission relationships were to a considerable extent influenced by his friendship with Christians of other lands, and in particular with the LMS. His strong identification with the LMS was demonstrated in a letter to Mrs. Curwen in July 1916, concerning the independence of the East city church and its joint action with the Chinese

³⁰⁹ Cheng, 'Missionary and Church,' 178.

³¹⁰ Cheng Ching-yi, 'The Chinese Church of Today II,' *The Chinese Recorder* 49, no. 11 (1918): 712.

³¹¹ Cheng, 'Chinese View,' 510-1.

Christian Church of Beijing.

As the LMS sold the East city compound to the Rockefeller Foundation in 1916, the Chinese congregation of the East city church, known as the Mishi church at that time, needed a site for a new church building. Frank Yong Tao 雍濤 (Yung Tao), a well-known philanthropist in Beijing who had recently joined the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing through baptism, offered to contribute his property (about \$20,000), which was opposite to the old compound, to the Mishi church on condition that the church would become an entirely Chinese independent church free from any association with the LMS.³¹² Cheng, who had a strong tie with the Mishi church since childhood, expressed to Mrs. Curwen his discontent with Yong's proposal:

While I have been, and I am still, a hearty supporter of the Chinese Church movement I do not favour this proposal of Mr. Young [Yong]'s. If he is willing to build a purely Chinese Church well and good, but to put the London Missionary Society Church out of existence in the East City where the work originally started is totally against my personal wish. I like to see both these Churches grow and develop...I sincerely hope the three letters 'LMS' shall always be connected with the East City Church...The LMS has done so much for the Mi Shih Church, and it is a grateful heart that has prompted me to write to you this letter...³¹³

Cheng's attitude, as revealed in this letter, seems to be inconsistent with that which he held during 1911-12 when he led the Chinese congregations to achieve independence. However, both instances reflect the fact that Cheng was not against

³¹² 'Enthusiasm in Peking,' *The Chronicle* (1917): 80; SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 7, Cheng Ching-yi to Mrs. Curwen, 3 July 1916; CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 8, 1915-21, James D. Liddell, 31 December 1915; *Report of LMS*, 1918, 49.

³¹³ SOAS, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 7, Cheng Ching-yi to Mrs. Curwen, 3 July 1916.

the independence of the Mishi church. As indicated by the Mishi church, the reasons behind its independence and joining with the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing were identical with Cheng's outlook for church independence. For example, for the Mishi church, the adoption of the name 'the Chinese Christian Church' rather than 'London Mission' was founded on their convictions that it demonstrated thoroughly the non-denominational nature of the Chinese church.³¹⁴ This was identical with Cheng's argument in his 1912 article. Additionally, the action of the Mishi church in affiliating to the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing was approved by the LMS home board, and Cheng noted it in a positive tone in his article of 1917.³¹⁵ Nonetheless, there would definitely have been some contradiction within Cheng's mind if the situation had gone too far as in this case, which, perhaps in his view, was to the extreme. What seems to have troubled him was the consequences of the action of independence, which would have 'put the London Missionary Society Church out of existence in the East City.' Cheng's personal gratitude to the LMS could sometimes be emotional, and his association with the LMS certainly had a strong impact on his attitude towards church-mission relationships.

Through the studies and conferences of each special committee, as well as the annual meetings of the China Continuation Committee, a closer contact between Chinese Christians and missionaries was formed and a co-operative mode of work was established. The Chinese church and the Christian enterprise in China were

³¹⁴ SOAS, CWM, LMS, China Odds, Box 7, the Mishi Chinese Christian Church to the General Committee of the LMS, Peking, 25 June 1917.

³¹⁵ Cheng, 'Church in 1916,' 285.

viewed as a whole when decisions were made. Although Chinese Christians had been unable to obtain sole control of their own church affairs, and little progress had been made towards the goal of a single union church in China, rather than Protestant co-operation and federation, concrete measures were taken by the committee for the development of the Chinese church, and were increasingly based on the vision of Chinese Christians. L. H. Roots, chairman of the China Continuation Committee, gave credit to the secretaries of the committee, including Cheng Jingyi, for the active roles which they played in, and the contributions which they made to, the work of the China Continuation Committee. As Roots expressed it:

It has been no small thing to have the whole time of the Chinese Secretary, Dr. Cheng Ching-yi, devoted to the common interests of half a million of his fellow Christians in China.³¹⁶

3.3.3. Two Christian Movements under Cheng's Leadership

In addition to the regular work regarding church construction and other issues conducted by Cheng Jingyi and the China Continuation Committee, two movements were inaugurated and led by Cheng during this period, one of which was the Home Mission Movement,³¹⁷ and the other the China for Christ Movement. Under Cheng's

³¹⁶ L. H. Roots, 'What the China Continuation Committee has done,' *The Chinese Recorder* 50, no. 6 (1919): 367.

³¹⁷ Studies which give a brief account of the history and work of the Home Mission Movement are: Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 807; Yang Xuezheng 楊學政 and Ying Fuk-tsang 邢福增, eds., *Yunnan Jidujiao Chuanbo ji Xianzhuang Diaocha Yanjiu* 雲南基督教傳播及現狀調查研究 (*Christianity in Yunnan: Past And Present*)

leadership, both movements were infused with his ideas and vision of the development of the Chinese church, and therefore required further examination.

3.3.3.1. The Chinese Home Mission Movement

Following the formation of the China Continuation Committee, the special committee on the forward evangelistic movement eagerly endeavoured to promote a national evangelistic movement in China.³¹⁸ Accordingly, a series of evangelistic campaigns centred in Chinese churches in a number of cities took place from the autumn of 1917, with assistance from Frank Buchman, Sherwood Day and Sherwood Eddy. One result of these campaigns was that considerable progress was made in the recognition of the individual responsibility of Chinese Christians towards evangelism, and the discovery of the capability of Chinese evangelists. An increasing evangelistic zeal had been evident among Chinese Christians.³¹⁹ Another outcome was that a number of united evangelistic committees had been permanently organised, representing all the Protestant bodies in each city, and there was ‘an increased sense of real unity’ among Christian workers.³²⁰ Additionally, the evangelistic campaigns enabled Chinese Christians to perceive the urgent need of organising a missionary society, which would aim to bring the gospel to the far corners of the country, and

(Hong Kong: Alliance Press, 2004), 263-6; Xiao Yaohui 肖耀輝 and Liu Dingyin 劉鼎寅, *Yunnan Jidujiao Shi 雲南基督教史 (The History of Christianity in Yunnan)* (Kunming: Yunnan University Press, 2007), 89-90.

³¹⁸ Roots, ‘China Continuation Committee,’ 368.

³¹⁹ ‘A Review of the Evangelistic Work of the Year,’ *The China Mission Year Book 1918*, 154-157.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

which was expected to depend wholly on the Chinese church and express its own missionary purpose.³²¹

It was against such a background that the Chinese Home Missionary Society [CHMS] came into being at a conference for English-speaking Christian leaders on personal evangelism in Guling, 1918, where a desire to evangelise China was expressed by a number of Chinese delegates and missionaries, mainly female. The Home Mission Movement to Yunnan was therefore launched, followed by the formation of a committee of seven Chinese members.³²² Cheng Jingyi became fully involved in its work and served as chairman and chief executive officer of the CHMS.

A number of outstanding features of the CHMS are worthy of discussion. First of all, as Cheng once commented, it was ‘a Chinese movement.’³²³ The CHMS fully demonstrated the characteristics of ‘three-self’ in its work. It was initiated by and composed of Chinese Christians, and was centred in the Chinese church. According to its constitution, only Chinese Christians were eligible to become members, and foreign missionaries could only participate in an advisory committee.³²⁴ It was a

³²¹ Ibid., 155-156.

³²² SOAS, CBMS 348, C. Y. Cheng, ‘Statement on the Yunnan Mission Movement,’ in Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the China Continuation Committee, 1919, 36; Deng Ziliang 鄧梓良, ‘Zhonghua Guonei Budaohui 中華國內佈道會 (The Chinese Home Missionary Society [CHMS]),’ *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Nianjian 中華基督教會年鑒 (China Christian Church Year Book) 1921*, 70. The seven Chinese members were Miss Hu Suzhen (Katie Woo) 胡素貞 of Hong Kong, Miss Cai Sujuan 蔡蘇娟 of Nanjing, Dr. Mary Stone (Shi Meiyu) 石美玉 of Jiujiang, Mrs. Song Faxiang 宋發祥 of Beijing, Dr. Chen Weiping 陳維屏, Dr. Yu Rizhang (David Yui) 余日章 and Dr. Cheng Jingyi.

³²³ Cheng, ‘Statement on Yunnan Mission,’ 38-9.

³²⁴ SMA, U127-0-1-3, ‘The Missionary Awakening among the Chinese Christians,’ *Zhonghua Guonei Budaohui Jianzhang 中華國內佈道簡章 (A Brief History and Constitutions of the Chinese Home Missionary Society)*, 1925, 18; U127-0-12-74, *The Chinese Home Missionary Society*, 1922, 4.

‘self-governing’ organisation free from the control of missions. This became crucial to the ability of the society to carry out evangelistic work in the mission fields.

According to No. 6 issue of the official journal of the CHMS, *Fuyin Zhong* 福音鐘 (*The Gospel Bell*), there was a strong anti-foreign sentiment in Yunnan when the first commission of the CHMS entered in 1919. This was mainly due to the fact that their neighbours were colonised by foreign countries, for example, Burma was a British colony at that time and Vietnam French.³²⁵

It should be noted that according to Cheng’s ideas of church construction, ‘self-propagation’ was considered to be the ‘supreme task of every Christian worker,’ and a sign of a living and true church. Cheng’s convictions were fully embodied into the CHMS.³²⁶ The birth and growth of the CHMS manifested the increasing evangelistic consciousness of Chinese Christians. The society chose Yunnan, one of the ‘unevangelised’ areas of China, to begin their work. Some of the areas in Yunnan, for example Gejiu (Kokiu), had never been entered by a missionary society, whether foreign or Chinese.³²⁷ The mission work of the CHMS included church planting, evangelistic meetings, theological training, educational and medical work and evangelistic work in prisons, hospitals, police offices, academia and even tea houses.³²⁸ A number of well-known Chinese evangelists joined the CHMS,

³²⁵ SMA, U127-0-2-74, ‘Dian Gong Zhuangkuang 滇工狀況 (The Situation of the Fellow Workers in Yunnan),’ *Fuyin Zhong* 福音鐘 (*The Gospel Bell*), no. 6 (1920): 7.

³²⁶ Cheng Ching-yi, ‘The Chinese Church of Today II,’ *The Chinese Recorder* 49, no. 11 (1918): 713.

³²⁷ SMA, U127-0-12-74, The Chinese Home Missionary Society, 37; U127-0-10-70, ‘Benhui Bennian Diankang Ge Jiaoqu Gongzuo Zhuangkuang 本會本年滇康各教區工作狀況 (The Work Progress of the CHMS in Each Parish This Year),’ *Fuyin Zhong*, *Wartime News*, no. 14 (1940): 3-6.

³²⁸ SMA, U127-0-4-147, Hou Wuling 侯悟靈, ‘Gejiu Jiaoqu Budao zhi Gaikuang 個舊教區佈道之

including Ding Limei 丁立美, a travelling secretary for ministry associated with the Student Volunteer Movement for more than ten years. He was one of the seven members of the first CHMS commission to Yunnan in 1919.³²⁹ More significantly, this evangelistic spirit of Chinese Christians was not confined to domestic mission, but developed into a broader vision of evangelising countries and regions in and around the Chinese borders, including Tibet, Xinjiang, Burma (Myanmar), India, Afghanistan and Nanyang.³³⁰

Furthermore, a sense of ‘self-support’ emerged within Chinese churches during the movement, with contributions being received daily from individuals and churches all over the country.³³¹ Statistics show that from 1918 to 1921, the number of Chinese individual contributors rose from 7 to 1,380, with their contributions totalling twenty-six per cent of the entire budget. Contributions received from foreign individuals equated to five per cent, with the remaining sixty-nine per cent coming from Christian organisations and churches as well as western missionary societies.³³² The CHMS can be seen as one of the best examples of the

概況 (The Situation of the Evangelistic Work in Gejiu),’ *Fuyin Zhong*, no. 55 (1925): 7-8.

³²⁹ ‘Missionary News,’ *The Chinese Recorder* 50, no. 4 (1919): 276.

³³⁰ SMA, U127-0-4-1, Chen Jinyong 陳金鏞, ‘Guonei Budao Nianhui hou zhi Ganxiang 國內佈道年會後之感想 (Some Reflections after the Annual Meeting of the CHMS),’ *Fuyin Zhong*, no. 44 (1924): 5; U127-0-4-147, Chen Jinyong, ‘Mo Cuoguo Budao de HaoJihui 莫錯過佈道的好機會 (Do not Miss the Good Opportunity of Evangelism),’ *Fuyin Zhong*, no. 51 (1925): 2. Nanyang referred to the geographical region south of China, particularly Southeast Asia.

³³¹ ‘Missionary News,’ *The Chinese Recorder* 50, no. 5 (1919): 353.

³³² Several accounts indicate that ninety to ninety-five per cent of the annual expenditure of the CHMS and its mission work came from Chinese sources. See Elijah Nieh, ‘The Chinese Home Missionary Movement,’ *The China Mission Year Book 1923*, 114; SMA, U127-0-4-328, ‘Zhonghua Guonei Budaohui yu Zhonghua Quanguo Jidujiao Xiejinhui zhi Qubie 中華國內佈道會與中華全國基督教協進會之區別 (The Differences between the CHMS and the National Christian Council of China),’ *Fuyin Zhong*, no. 61 (1926): 2; U127-0-1-3, ‘The Missionary Awakening among the Chinese Christians,’ 9. Compared with the statistics of 1918-21, it seems that the reporters who provided the

self-propagation of the Chinese church, in which self-support served as a means to achieve this goal.

Secondly, it was described by Cheng Jingyi as ‘a united movement.’³³³ The CHMS bore an interdenominational characteristic from its inauguration. The membership of the first commission to Yunnan in 1919 reflected this feature. Rev. Ding Limei had a Presbyterian background, and his wife was associated with the American Methodist Episcopal Church [AME] in Jiujiang. Rev. Li Yunsheng 李雲陞 was from the AME, while Rev. Sang Jiantang 桑堅棠 and Miss Li Jingqian 李靜謙 were connected with the Southern Presbyterian churches in Hangzhou, and Miss Chen Yuling 陳玉玲 was a member of the American Board Mission in Beijing.³³⁴ Chinese Christians from various denominational backgrounds were all welcome to join the CHMS. Additionally, its work in Yunnan was in close co-operation with a number of foreign missions which had already begun their work in the province, including the China Inland Mission [CIM], the Pentecostal Missionary Union, the YMCA, the Methodist Episcopal Mission (South), and Zhonghua Shengong Hui 中華聖公會 (Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui, the Holy Catholic Church of China, Anglican), as well as several independent missionaries.³³⁵

It was also recorded that the LMS churches were formally affiliated with the

above accounts considered the sixty-nine per cent of the entire budget which was from Christian organisations and missionary societies to be from Chinese sources. The contributions may have been made on behalf of Chinese churches and organisations; however, it is very unlikely that these churches and organisations were truly self-supporting. See SMA, U127-0-12-74, The Chinese Home Missionary Society, 4, 22.

³³³ Cheng, ‘Statement on Yunnan Mission,’ 38.

³³⁴ Ibid., 37.

³³⁵ SMA, U127-0-12-74, The Chinese Home Missionary Society, 5.

CHMS.³³⁶ Some of them co-operated with the CHMS by encouraging their own Chinese congregations to participate, handing over their stations or offering districts in which the CHMS could expand its work.³³⁷

Thirdly, the CHMS demonstrated an early attempt by Chinese Christians to plant ‘three-self’ churches along interdenominational lines in the mission fields. There were a number of pragmatic reasons for doing so. For example, the missionary activities did not only involve Han majorities, but also local ethnic minorities, such as the Miao and Yi, whose customs, expression and psychology were altogether very different. Local native evangelists were of great importance in the smooth operation of mission work. Additionally, the rapid turnover of the missionary personnel of the CHMS often led to the discontinuity of church work in the mission fields, especially when the hardship in those remote areas caused some of the missionaries to cease or give up their work. Moreover, although the CHMS was substantially self-supporting, there was a possibility of causing the dependency of local churches by relying solely on mission funds, just as Chinese churches had on western financial subsidies. This was shown to be the case during the late 1930s, as socio-political turbulence, financial depression, and the shortage of funds to the CHMS caused difficulties for missionary activities and the subsistence of some of the local churches in the mission

³³⁶ SMA, U127-0-12-74, The Chinese Home Missionary Society, 5; Deng, ‘Budaohui (CHMS),’ 72.

³³⁷ Deng, ‘Budaohui (CHMS),’ 72; J. O. Fraser, ‘With Rev. Ting Li-mei in Western Yunnan,’ *The Chinese Recorder* 51, no. 3 (1920): 158-165; SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CBMS 362, *The Great Migration and the Church in West China: Report of a Survey made under the auspices of the Nanking Theological Seminary and the National Christian Council of China* (Shanghai, 1940), 89.

fields.³³⁸

In response to the above issues, the CHMS encouraged local fund-raising in each area and the self-support of the churches. According to several records, seven out of the eight stations of the Heilongjiang (Heilungkiang) Mission, which joined the CHMS in 1921, were able to build their own venues by 1926.³³⁹ The society also encouraged each parish to carry out its own evangelistic work and to train suitable local personnel for taking up the responsibilities of church administration and expansion. The erection of the Bible College in Yunnan was for this purpose.³⁴⁰ It should be noted that it remains unclear whether the CHMS granted local congregations real authority to administer their own churches affairs without the supervision of CHMS missionaries. Most of the available sources regarding local church statistics in the mission fields do not identify whether the leaders of these churches were raised from local congregations or sent by the CHMS office in Shanghai. There are several cases which might indicate the possibility of local congregations running their churches. One example can be found in Hailar of the Heilongjiang Mission. Instead of sending Chinese missionaries to Hailar, the Heilongjiang Mission encouraged local congregations to raise their own evangelists

³³⁸ SMA, U-127-0-10-1, 'Bayisan hou Benhui Gaikuang 八一三后本會概況 (The Situation of the CHMS after the August Thirteenth Incident),' *Fuyin Zhong, Wartime News*, no. 1 (1937): 2.

³³⁹ SMA, U127-0-8-133, Chen Jiuru 陳九如, 'Diansheng Jiaoqu 滇省教區 (Parishes in Yunnan),' *Fuyin Zhong*, no. 122 (1935): 15-6; U-127-0-10-1, 'Bayisan (Thirteenth August Incident),' 1-5; U127-0-10-70, 'Diankang Zhuangkuang (Work Progress),' 4-5; U127-0-1-3, 'Heilongjiang Budaoshi 黑龍江佈道史 (The History of the Heilongjiang Mission),' *Zhonghua Guonei Budaoshi Jianzhang 中華國內佈道簡章 (A Brief History and Constitutions of the Chinese Home Missionary Society)*, 17.

³⁴⁰ SMA, U127-0-6-219, 'Wuyun zhong zhi Guonei Budaohui 五運中之國內佈道會 (The CHMS during the Five-Year Movement),' *Fuyin Zhong*, no. 93-4 (1930): 2.

and to expand churches on their own.³⁴¹ However, it is difficult to tell whether this method was also applied to Yunnan, where the ethnic minorities were usually regarded to be ‘uncivilised’ and ‘backward’ by Han Chinese, especially those who were from more developed regions. Several accounts reveal that the missionary activities of the CHMS were unable to surpass the cultural barrier. A number of CHMS missionaries embraced the intention of ‘civilising’ the Yunnan local people by spreading the gospel.³⁴² Moreover, the Chinese culture and traditions to which they referred were chiefly those of the Han majorities. Although the CHMS was already aware of the significance of native evangelism and church indigeneity, one can perceive a ‘cultural motive’ behind their mission work, which sought unconsciously to transfer the missionary’s superior culture to the mission fields.³⁴³

Records in later years also show that the churches which the CHMS planted were separate from those established by other denominations, and they bore the name of CHMS churches, though a number of practical problems emerged at a later stage, such as the baptismal forms and the rituals for weddings and funerals.³⁴⁴ As Cheng

³⁴¹ SMA, U127-0-4-147, Ren Anliang 任安良 and Shang Kuiying 尚魁英, ‘Guonei Budaohui Heilongjiang Zhibu Jianglai de Jihua 國內佈道會黑龍江之部將來的計劃 (Plans of the Heilongjiang Mission of the CHMS),’ *Fuyin Zhong*, no. 53 (1925): 15-6.

³⁴² SMA, U127-0-2-26, Xiao Muguang 蕭慕光, ‘Lun Diannan Budao yu Zhongguo Jidujiao Qiantu zhi Guanxi 論滇南佈道與中國基督教前途之關係 (The Relationship between the South Yunnan Mission and the Future of Chinese Christianity),’ *Fuyin Zhong*, no. 4 (1919): 1.

³⁴³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 5.

³⁴⁴ SOAS, CBMS 362, *Great Migration*, 89; Li Qiongjie 李瓊階, ‘Zhonghua Guonei Budaohui zhi Xianzhuang 中華國內佈道會之現狀 (The Current Situation of the Chinese Home Missionary Society),’ *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Nianjian 1925*, 77; Chen Hexiang 陳和相, ‘Zhonghua Guonei Budaohui Jinkuang 中華國內佈道會近況 (The Recent Situation of the CHMS),’ *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Nianjian 1928*, 11, 14; SMA, U127-0-7-41, Chen Jinyong 陳金鏞, ‘Wosuo Xiwang yu Jinhou zhi Guonei Budao 我所希望於今後之國內佈道 (My Expectation towards the Home Mission in the Future),’ *Fuyin Zhong*, no. 113 (1933): 5.

indicated, the CHMS's mission work was an experimental case study in the capacity of Chinese Christians to create a united indigenous self-propagating church.³⁴⁵

The CHMS made slow but visible progress following its formation. The missionary branch of the Scottish-Irish Presbyterian Mission in Manchuria joined the CHMS in 1921, becoming the Heilongjiang branch of the CHMS. In 1925, it launched the Mongolia Mission. Within the first seven years, the membership of the supporting churches of the CHMS rose from only 7 to over 13,000 Chinese Christians, with twenty foreign missionaries acting as advisory members. The society also established 264 auxiliaries, which were scattered not only in China but also overseas, including in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Tokyo.³⁴⁶ By the late 1930s, the Yunnan Mission had enlarged to include both Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, with seven formal parishes, nineteen missionaries, thirty local evangelists, four clinics, and twenty-five churches. The total number of communicants and inquirers was 1,786.³⁴⁷ As the first Protestant evangelistic movement on a national scale launched by Chinese Christians, directed by Chinese minds and supported by Chinese funds,³⁴⁸ the CHMS and its Home Mission Movement were a profound attempt at realising Chinese Christians' ambitions of self-propagation with an inter-denominational character. The CHMS and its Home Mission Movement demonstrated, and even further stimulated, Chinese Christians' consciousness of the

³⁴⁵ Cheng Jingyi, 'You Dian Ganyan 游滇感言 (Feeling of the Trip to Yunnan),' *Zhonghua Gui Zhu 中華歸主 (China for Christ)*, no. 52 (1925): 1-2.

³⁴⁶ SMA, U127-0-1-3, 'The Missionary Awakening among the Chinese Christians,' 9-11; U127-0-1-3, 'Heilongjiang Budao Shi (Heilongjiang Mission),' 17.

³⁴⁷ SMA, U-127-0-10-1, 'Bayisan (August Thirteenth Incident),' 4.

³⁴⁸ J. L. Stuart, 'Changes of Emphasis in Missionary Work,' *The China Mission Year Book 1919*, 68.

‘selfhood’ of the Chinese church. The advocacy of the church-centric idea, the evangelistic spirit and Christian unity, as well as the encouragement of the application of church indigeneity in the mission fields, were signs of the growth of the Chinese church, and accelerators for its further development.

3.3.3.2. The China for Christ Movement

The China for Christ Movement was launched under the background of a series of cultural, social and political changes taking place in China in the late 1910s. These changes included the emergence of the New Culture Movement, which eagerly advocated the ‘Science’ and ‘Democracy’ of western countries. As a movement which resulted in a new intellectual awakening in China, the New Culture Movement was called the ‘Chinese Renaissance’ by several Chinese intellectuals, and even Christians.³⁴⁹ During this movement, a series of discussions, evaluations and

³⁴⁹ SOAS, CBMS 348, Timothy Tingfang Lew 劉廷芳, ‘China’s Renaissance: the Christian Opportunity,’ in Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meetings of the China Continuation Committee, 1921, 12-3. The New Culture Movement 新文化運動 was also known as the New Thought Movement. Scholars such as Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀, Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, Li Dazhao 李大釗, Lu Xun 魯迅, and Hu Shi 胡適, had classical educations, but began to lead a revolt against Confucian culture, calling for the creation of a new Chinese culture based on global and western standards, especially those of democracy and science. On 4 May 1919, students in Beijing protested against the Paris Peace Conference giving German rights over Shandong to Japan, turning this cultural movement into a political one, which was known as the May Fourth Movement 五四運動. Studies on the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement include Benjamin Schwartz, ‘Themes in Intellectual History: May Fourth and After,’ in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 12, Republican China 1912–1949, Part 1*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Cambridge Histories Online, Cambridge University Press, accessed 19 May 2012, doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521235419.009, 406–504; Vera Schwartz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China’s Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1999); and R. Keith Schoppa, ‘Constructing a New Cultural Identity: The May Fourth

critiques emerged among Chinese intellectuals concerning issues of religion and faith, especially with regard to Christianity. At the same time, Chinese Christians were forming different attitudes and responses to this movement. Some Christians considered it a threat to churches in China, while others were more receptive to the new ideas which were emerging, and viewed the movement as an opportunity to reform the Protestant churches in China and enlarge the influence of Christianity.³⁵⁰ Additionally, the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement in 1919, and the subsequent rising tide of nationalism in China, hastened Chinese Christians and the Chinese church to re-think their social roles and duties, and to take action at this crucial junction.

The growth of the national consciousness of Chinese Christians, particularly among Christian elites and intellectuals, resulted in a number of Chinese Christians drawing a connection between Christianity and the concept of ‘national salvation’ (Jiu Guo 救國). National salvation, to them, could be interpreted as helping China rid herself of invasion and decline, and to restore her sovereignty, justice and order. These Christians turned to Christianity for reference, and believed that Christ himself was an example of patriotism, as the gospel was given to the Jews before the Gentiles, as was salvation.³⁵¹ They deemed that individual salvation would lead to

Movement,’ in *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History*, ed. R. Keith Schoppa (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 160-76.

³⁵⁰ Duan Qi 段琦, *Fenjin de Licheng: Zhongguo Jidujiao de Bensehua 奮進的歷程：中國基督教的本土化 (The Process of Endeavour: Indigenisation of Christianity in China)* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2004), 137-156.

³⁵¹ Xu Qian 徐謙, ‘Jidujiao Jiuguo zhuyi 基督教救國主義 (The Christian National Salvation),’ *Yue Bao 月報 (Monthly Newsletter)*, no. 16 (1918): 7.

national salvation, for a nation consisted of many individuals. Nonetheless, their perspectives on national salvation were not limited to an expansion of the salvation of individuals, but included carrying out reforms in both Christian churches and society as a whole, affecting both spirituality and politics. During the conference in Guling in 1918, when the Home Mission Movement was launched, more than sixty Chinese Christian leaders, including Cheng Jingyi, shared this consciousness for national salvation, and eagerly discussed and made practical schemes regarding 'Christian patriotism and personal evangelism.'³⁵²

To apply Christianity nationwide to provide assistance and guidance to China, and to meet the social and individual needs of China with an evangelistic spirit, were always Cheng Jingyi's convictions. As early as 1912, he had expressed his belief that Christianity had 'a great deal' to do with the social reform led by the new Republic.³⁵³ He was one of the Chinese Christian leaders who responded to the May Fourth Movement at an early stage with a positive stance.³⁵⁴ Although Cheng was against the idea of 'China for the Chinese,' which was a purely nationalistic approach to Christianity, he made his standpoint clear regarding patriotic activities towards social justice, stating that:

We believe that Chinese Christians should take a leading part in real patriotic activities, and in upholding true democratic ideals. This is not, as we have said before, to suggest that the Church should become a political party, but it

³⁵² 'Churches and Missions,' *The China Mission Year Book 1918*, 150-1, 162-3.

³⁵³ Cheng 'Immediate Task,' 381-2.

³⁵⁴ Cheng, 'Chinese Christian Church and National Movements,' *The Chinese Recorder* 50, no. 7 (1919): 457.

is its duty to seek and work for the salvation of the individual, the society, the nation, and the world.³⁵⁵

Cheng's 'salvation of the society, the nation and the world' can be understood as an appeal to Chinese Christians to take responsibility for Chinese society and to restore social morality in China. This was demonstrated in Cheng's speech of the same period, in which he asked for Chinese Christians to give their 'responsibility, solidarity and renewal' in order to build a stronger China with Christian faith.³⁵⁶

In the face of such political and social turbulence, the conscience of Chinese Christians was awakened, and the Chinese church desired to express its patriotism in a Christian way. The China for Christ Movement was thus inaugurated during a conference in Shanghai on 16 December 1919, when 110 Christian workers – half Chinese and half foreign – representing twenty-six Christian organisations, were invited by the China Continuation Committee to discuss how the Christian church could help China in an effective way.³⁵⁷ As one of the initiators of this movement, Cheng gave a detailed explanation of the necessity, scope and aim of the movement. He stated that it was church-centric, and aimed to stimulate Chinese Christianity into a nation-wide movement, express Christian patriotism, and save and strengthen China through a strengthening of the spiritual life of Chinese Christians.³⁵⁸ Although Cheng emphasised that the movement was purely religious, and not political, it

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 460.

³⁵⁶ 'Cheng Jingyi Boshi Shengcanri zhi Yanci 誠靜怡博士聖餐日之演辭 (Dr. Cheng Jingyi's Speech on the Day of the Eucharist),' *Yue Bao*, no. 27 (1919): 3.

³⁵⁷ Editorial, 'The China for Christ Conference,' *The Chinese Recorder* 51, no. 1 (1920): 3.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 3-7.

demonstrated the influence of the 'social gospel' to a large number of Chinese Christian intellectuals. It stressed the duty of the Chinese church in social work and its 'social message.' In other words, it focussed on the function of the Chinese church in saving Chinese society from social injustice, selfishness and godlessness.³⁵⁹ These Christian intellectuals' understanding of Christianity in China had already been expanded from individual salvation to a wider concept of the social and political salvation of China, which would strive to make the conditions of life in China correspond to Christian life and values, promote both the spiritual and social welfare of Chinese people, and make Christianity a dynamic in China.³⁶⁰

There were five major features of the China for Christ Movement, which can be termed 'spiritual,' 'immediate,' 'practical,' 'Chinese' and 'united.'³⁶¹ The focal point was to deepen the spiritual life of Chinese Christians, in order to help the Chinese church realise its responsibility in evangelism.³⁶² Evangelism once again became the central theme of a Christian movement in China. Nonetheless, compared to the Home Mission Movement, this was first of all an inward and individual movement, which then spread outward and nationwide for the 'entire Church,' the 'united Church.' As Cheng himself stated, in addition to the work for individuals, the focus of this movement was on the community.³⁶³ After one year of effort, the movement

³⁵⁹ SOAS, CBMS 348, C. Y. Cheng, 'The China for Christ Movement,' in Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meetings of the China Continuation Committee, 1921, 80.

³⁶⁰ F. Rawlinson, 'Christian Co-operation for a Nation-wide Task,' *The Chinese Recorder* 51, no. 6 (1920): 420-5.

³⁶¹ Quan Shaowu 全紹武, 'Zhonghua Guizhu Yundong 中華歸主運動 (The China for Christ Movement),' *Zhonghua Jidujiaohui Nianjian 1921*, 45.

³⁶² Cheng, 'China for Christ Movement,' 78.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 80-1.

had taken root in Guangdong, Beijing, Yantai, Changsha, Hangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Hankou, Yichang, Jiujiang, Kaifeng and Xiangtan. Several missions and denominations, including the American Methodist Episcopal Mission, the Lutheran Mission, the Church of England Mission, the Methodist Episcopal Mission (South), the American Presbyterian Mission and the YMCA, in various areas of China joined in this movement, alongside with the united activities of churches in the previously noted cities and provinces.³⁶⁴

The China for Christ Movement was an evangelistic response by Chinese Christians to a series of national events in the late 1910s, and a sign of the awakening of the social consciousness of a number of them. As one of its leaders, Cheng's convictions of the social function of the church and his concern over the spiritual life of the church were fully embodied into this movement. Differing from the Home Mission Movement, the China for Christ Movement not only stressed the evangelisation of others, but also laid emphasis on the quality of the inner life of Chinese Christians. By strengthening Chinese Christians' spiritual life, the Chinese church itself was much strengthened.

It is worthy of noting that at the beginning of the China for Christ Movement discussions were initiated concerning the organisation of the movement, as both the organising committee of the China for Christ Movement and the China Continuation Committee were aimed at a nation-wide evangelistic campaign, and their machinery

³⁶⁴ Quan 'Zhonghua Guizhu (China for Christ),' 46; SOAS, CBMS 348, Cheng, 'China for Christ Movement,' 77.

and personnel were similar. Organisers faced two choices in attempting to secure an efficient nation-wide service, either retaining the China for Christ Movement as a separate and limited activity, or combining its work with that of the China Continuation Committee. In an attempt to avoid a division between western and Chinese Christians, Cheng stated that the Christian church in China was not financially able to handle a nationwide movement, and therefore, co-operation between Chinese and foreigners and between churches and missions was needed.³⁶⁵ Consequently, the China for Christ Movement was merged into the China Continuation Committee. On the one hand, this move secured co-ordinated efforts between western and Chinese Christians in a single nation-wide evangelistic campaign; and on the other, it stimulated several changes in the China Continuation Committee. In accordance with the proposal made by the organising committee of the China for Christ Movement, the membership of the China Continuation Committee was changed to one-half Chinese and one-half foreigners, and the general secretaryship of the China for Christ Movement was held by a Chinese, Cheng Jingyi, whilst the issue of renaming the China Continuation Committee would be discussed and solved during the 1922 China Continuation Committee annual meeting.³⁶⁶ This was a significant change, as the number of Chinese delegates increased and the strength of Chinese leaders in the China Continuation Committee began to grow. Meanwhile, the proposal to rename and re-organise the China Continuation

³⁶⁵ Rawlinson, 'Christian Co-operation,' 420-1.

³⁶⁶ Quan, 'Zhonghua Guizhu (China for Christ),' 47; SOAS, CBMS 348, Cheng, 'China for Christ Movement,' 75.

Committee paved the way for the 1922 National Christian Conference in Shanghai.

3.4. Conclusion

The second decade of the twentieth century witnessed the rise and establishment of Cheng Jingyi's leadership, first in a Chinese church, and then in the Protestant enterprise in China. His leadership in the East city church in Beijing had borne visible fruit: it brought forth the independence of the church from the LMS and the establishment of the Chinese Christian Church of Beijing, a united Chinese church, yet one which maintained friendly relationships with missions, and embodied his outlook. In addition, his election to the secretaryship of the China Continuation Committee symbolised an increasing share of responsibility for Chinese Christian elites in the Protestant enterprise. With one third of the membership of the China Continuation Committee, and as much as a half when approaching 1922, Chinese Christians had joined missionaries in the determination of the future of Protestantism in China. What Daniel Bays has called a 'Sino-foreign Protestant establishment' had taken shape.³⁶⁷

During this period, a Chinese form of ecumenism, which aimed for a united national church in China, was not only proclaimed by Cheng in the presence of a worldwide Protestant audience during the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, but was also

³⁶⁷ Daniel H. Bays, 'The Growth of Independent Christianity in China, 1900-1937,' in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 307-16.

brought into greater context in China through the work of the China Continuation Committee. Although it began pragmatically in the form of Protestant co-operation and federation, the central position of the Chinese church was considerably emphasised through both a large amount of literature which emerged in Christian journals and periodicals, and the discussions and actions taken by special committees of the China Continuation Committee. Cheng Jingyi's perspectives on church construction had developed and incarnated into the work of the committee and several Christian movements during this period. Through the two movements under his leadership, the Home Mission Movement and the China for Christ Movement, the Chinese church showed signs of its growing 'selfhood,' demonstrated its increasing consciousness of self-propagation and social responsibility, and began to respond to the times and contemporary Chinese society with its own voice. All these efforts further contributed to and impelled the growth of the Chinese church, preparing the way for the opening of the National Christian Conference in 1922 and the formation of a National Christian Council.

Chapter 4:

Cheng Jingyi and the National Christian Council of China – the Church Unity Movement during the Anti-Christian Movement in China (1922-1927)

The 1920s were a vital period for the evolution of Christianity in China. During this period, the most significant achievements of the church unity movement were the opening of the National Christian Conference and the establishment of the National Christian Council of China [NCC] in 1922. As a formal national organisation among Protestant communities in China, the formation of the NCC was a significant step in co-ordinating different churches and missions towards the goal of a united indigenous church in China. Following its formation, the NCC encountered extraordinary challenges from a series of nationalist movements which were dedicated to the establishment of a strong sovereign and independent state. Among them was the Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-27 which brought Christianity in China under serious attack. This chapter focusses on the activities of the NCC, aiming to explore how these activities were shaped by the Anti-Christian Movement and how successful the NCC was, as a chief organ of Protestant ecumenism in China during 1922 to 1927, in building a united indigenous church in a form it considered appropriate to a complex social and political environment. Additionally, the 1920s witnessed the challenge of the controversy between Protestant liberals and

fundamentalists which deeply affected the NCC and the Protestant enterprise in China. An examination of how this controversy affected the NCC and the church unity movement, and how Protestant ecumenism in China evolved at this stage, also forms the content of this chapter.

4.1. A Brief Account of the Course of the Anti-Christian Movement in China

The Anti-Christian Movement emerged in response to a conference of the World Student Christian Federation [WSCF] on 4 April 1922 at Tsinghua University in Beijing.³⁶⁸ A brief account of the evolution of the Anti-Christian Movement and the various issues which emerged during its course is a necessity in uncovering the social and political background of the period with which this chapter is concerned, and in introducing the vital challenge which the NCC and Christianity in China faced. An understanding of the seeming contradiction between Christianity and Chinese society

³⁶⁸ Studies of the Anti-Christian Movement include Yip Ka-che, *Religion, Nationalism and Chinese Students: The Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-1927* (Bellegan: Western Washington University, 1980); Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-1928* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Cross Cultural Publications, 1988); Lam Wing-Hung 林榮洪, *Fengchao zhong Fenqi de Zhongguo Jiaohui 風潮中奮起的中國教會 (The Chinese Church in Storm)* (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 1980); Yeh Jen-chang 葉仁昌, *Wusi Yihou de Fandui Jidujiao Yundong: Zhongguo Zhengjiao Guanxi de Jiexi 五四以後的反對基督教運動：中國政教關係的解析 (The Anti-Christian Movement after May Fourth: An Analysis of the Church-State Relationship in China)* (Taipei: Jiu Da Publishing House, 1992); Yang Tianhong 楊天宏, *Jidujiao yu Jindai Zhongguo: Zhongguo Fei Jidujiao Yundong Yanjiu 基督教與近代中國：中國非基督教運動研究 (Christianity and Modern China: Study of the Anti-Christian Movement in China)* (Chengdu: Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1994); Jonathan T'ien-en Chao, 'The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement, 1919-1927: A Protestant Response to the Anti-Christian Movement in Modern China,' PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1986; and Thoralf Klein, 'Anti-Imperialism at Grassroot – Christianity and the Chinese Revolution in Northeast Guangdong, 1919-1930,' in *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s – Between Triumph and Disaster*, eds. Mechthild Leutner, Roland Felber, Mikhail L. Titarenko and Alexander M. Grigoriev (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2002), 289-306.

during this period helps to form an integral comprehension of the NCC's policies and actions.

During its first stage in 1922,³⁶⁹ the Anti-Christian Movement developed into a broader campaign to oppose all religions and to achieve social progress through the advancement of science.³⁷⁰ As the original leading forces in the movement, Chinese intellectuals and students stressed the 'unscientific' and 'outdated' nature of Christianity within modern societies.³⁷¹ Although it faded away after a couple of months, as the socio-political situation deteriorated, politics and ideology united, and the primary concern of the movement shifted to the relationship between Christian churches, imperialism and exploitation. During the second phase from 1924 to 1927, the movement featured the demand for the restoration of educational rights as well as customs rights and extraterritorial rights. Churches and mission schools were denounced as agents of foreign 'cultural aggression.'³⁷² The movement gradually became linked with two political parties, the Chinese National Party (Guomindang) [GMD] and the Chinese Communist Party [CCP].³⁷³ The 'May Thirtieth Incident'³⁷⁴

³⁶⁹ Jessie Lutz divided the movement into two stages: the Anti-Christian Movement of 1920-22 and the Educational Rights Movement of 1924-28. Jonathan Chao divided it into the Anti-Christian Movement of 1922 and that of 1924-27. He also used the term of 'The Anti-Imperialist Movement of 1924-27' to refer to the second stage of the movement, and argued that the movement developed from two sources during the period of 1924-27, one of which was the anti-imperialist campaign conducted jointly by the Chinese National Party and the Chinese Communist Party. The other source was the promotion of nationalism during the Restoration of Educational Rights Movement. See Lutz, *Chinese Politic*, 281-2; Chao, 'Chinese Indigenous Church Movement,' 170.

³⁷⁰ Zhang Qinshi 張欽士, *Zhongguo Jin Shinian Lai zhi Zongjiao Sichao 中國近十年來之宗教思潮* (*Religious Thought Movements in China during the Last Decade*) (Beijing: Jinghua Press, 1927), 193-196.

³⁷¹ Yip, *Religion*, 29-30.

³⁷² Klein, 'Anti-Imperialism,' 293.

³⁷³ Lutz, *Chinese Politic*, 281-2.

³⁷⁴ In the middle of May 1925, a Japanese foreman killed a striking Chinese worker in a Japanese cotton factory in Shanghai. The strikers then held a meeting to commemorate his death. Some students

in 1925 acted like a spark to gunpowder in spreading anti-foreignism throughout the country. Leftists successfully transformed the anti-Christian sentiment into an anti-imperialist one. It was not until the establishment of the new government in Nanjing in 1927 that the hostility to Christianity and mission work began to moderate into an attitude of conciliation.

As a whole, the Anti-Christian Movement differed from previous expressions of hatred towards Christianity, such as the Boxer Uprising. The CIM missionary and historian Marshall Broomhall concluded that the Boxer Uprising had been largely ‘the work of mobs,’ but the Anti-Christian Movement was ‘the work of the intelligentsia.’³⁷⁵ Nonetheless, a number of studies on this matter show that this movement was far more than what Broomhall considered to be merely an intellectual opposition to Christianity. This movement uncovered a number of issues which Christian churches were facing in Chinese society, and once again reminded churches in China of their precarious situation in this semi-colonial context.

Firstly, Christian churches in China had failed to respond adequately to China’s desire for national unity, strength and sovereignty. As noted in the previous chapter, one of the most important issues in modern Chinese history was the desire to seek a

who attended the meeting were arrested by the foreign police on 24 May. Students in Shanghai prepared a massive demonstration on 30 May to show their support for the strikers and protest the arrests. This was followed by a memorial parade organised by students and workers, which led to a serious conflict between the demonstrators and the police. Thirteen Chinese died and at least ten were injured under fire from British policemen. This event came to be known as the ‘May Thirtieth Incident.’

³⁷⁵ Marshall Broomhall, *By Love Compelled: The Call of the China Inland Mission* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1947), 78.

path towards ‘national salvation.’³⁷⁶ Yip Ka-che identified two dimensions of the concept of ‘national salvation:’ the ending of foreign domination in China and the establishment of a strong centralised state equipped with socioeconomic modernisation.³⁷⁷ On the one hand, Christianity was unable to offer solutions for the first dimension owing to its apparently inseparable relationship with foreign countries. The incomplete indigeneity of Christian churches and schools became a source to stir up the hatred of nationalists and anti-Christian sentiment in Republican China.³⁷⁸ Concerning the establishment of a powerful national state, on the other hand, the assumption of both foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians that it was necessary to establish a western liberal social and political model for Christian China became discredited after World War I, when western countries betrayed China’s interests at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919.³⁷⁹ Meanwhile, with the large-scale introduction and adoption of western science, technology, thought and learning into Chinese society, the majority of Chinese, especially intellectuals, increasingly considered Christianity to be irrelevant to the realisation of the goal of political unity and economic growth. More damaging was the fact that, according to Lutz, several

³⁷⁶ See Chapter 3, 3.3.3.2.

³⁷⁷ Yip Ka-che, ‘China and Christianity: Perspectives on Missions, Nationalism, and the State in the Republican Period, 1912-1949,’ in *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of Empire*, eds. Brian Stanley and Alaine Low (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 134.

³⁷⁸ Lutz, *Chinese Politics*, 288.

³⁷⁹ Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China 1857-1927* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 185. The Paris Peace Conference was the conference of the Allied victors following the end of World War I to set the peace terms for Germany and other defeated nations, and to deal with the empires of the defeated powers following the Armistice of 1918. It took place in Paris in 1919 and involved diplomats from more than 29 countries, including China. During the conference, Chinese delegate Gu Weijun 顧維鈞 demanded the return of Shandong from Japan. He also called for an end to imperialist institutions such as extraterritoriality. As Western powers refused his claims, the Chinese delegation was the only one not to sign the Treaty of Versailles at the signing ceremony of the conference.

Christian intellectuals attempted to defend Christianity in terms of Confucianism during a time when Confucianism was declining in the face of accusations that it was 'immoral and feudalistic.'³⁸⁰ As a result, Christianity, together with other religions, was criticised as counterproductive and backward within modern societies.

Secondly, a new type of nationalism, which matured in the 1920s, dramatically changed the image of Christianity from being viewed as a positive factor in China's modernisation to that of a hated cultural imperialist invasion.³⁸¹ This new ideological direction of nationalism, which developed during the May Fourth Movement, was in comparison with earlier expressions of Chinese nationalism more radical and more sceptical towards the western presence in China, under the influence of Lenin's theory of imperialism.³⁸² Owing to Lenin's expansion of the definition of imperialism to include cultural aggression, Chinese nationalists began to identify Christian churches and foreign missions in China with the political ambitions of western countries, particularly the US.³⁸³ The position of Christianity was thus relocated on the political map of 1920s China.

During the third decade of the twentieth century, Chinese nationalists became convinced that unless China was rid of foreign interference and exploitation it could not survive as a nation. Christianity not only became irrelevant to the modernisation of China under the influence of various secular ideas, its entanglement with western

³⁸⁰ Lutz, *Chinese Politics*, 286-7.

³⁸¹ Daniel H. Bays, 'Foreign Missions and Indigenous Protestant Leaders in China, 1920-1955: Identity and Loyalty in an Age of Powerful Nationalism,' in *End of Empire*, eds. Stanley and Low, 146.

³⁸² Dutch, *Fuzhou Protestants*, 186.

³⁸³ Lutz, *Chinese Politics*, 288-90.

imperialism also caused it to become a target of the new nationalism in China. As a national expression of anti-imperialism, the Anti-Christian Movement brought an extraordinary challenge to the Christian enterprise in China during the 1920s.

4.2. The National Christian Council and its Role in Building a United Indigenous Church

The National Christian Council [NCC] was formed during the 1922 National Christian Conference. During a time when anti-Christian sentiment and nationalism strongly challenged Christianity in China, the NCC's policies and activities were more or less shaped by the Anti-Christian Movement and marked with the features of the times. In this section, I will give a detailed account of the origin of the NCC before moving on to explore how successfully the NCC functioned in the realisation of an indigenous and ecumenical scene of the Chinese church during the Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-27.

4.2.1. The 1922 National Christian Conference and the Establishment of the NCC

To a large extent, the formation of the NCC was a consequence of the efforts of the China Continuation Committee towards the realisation of a co-operative Protestant

enterprise in China, and was not directly linked with the Anti-Christian Movement in 1922. As noted in the previous chapter, the China Continuation Committee was formed as an interim substitute for a national interdenominational council until a more representative council could be brought into existence.³⁸⁴ As Protestant churches and organisations in China gradually acknowledged the importance of developing co-ordinated aims, the desire to establish a formal national council became increasingly stronger.³⁸⁵ Additionally, in the face of the unsettled political and social environment, and the challenge and inspiration which the New Culture Movement posed to Christianity in China, a large number of Protestant bodies in China were convinced of the need to gather together through a nationwide conference and examine the situation confronting them in China in its entirety.³⁸⁶ After a decade of co-operative practice under the leadership of the China Continuation Committee, its member missionary societies and other Protestant groups were ready to consider the idea of establishing a national council which would link more closely with missions and churches. Simultaneously, as previously noted, the proposal to rename and re-organise the China Continuation Committee, which had been made by the organising committee of the China for Christ Movement in 1919, further put the establishment of a formal national Christian council on the

³⁸⁴ See Chapter 3, 3.3.1.

³⁸⁵ Li Ganchen 李幹忱, '1922 Nian Jidujiao Quanguo Dahui 1922 年基督教全國大會 (The 1922 National Conference 1922)', *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Nianjian 中華基督教會年鑒 (The China Christian Church Year Book) 1921*, 176-8.

³⁸⁶ *The Chinese Church, as revealed in the National Christian Conference: held in Shanghai, Tuesday, May 2, to Thursday, May 11, 1922* (Shanghai: The Oriental Press, 1922). 74-5.

agenda.³⁸⁷

Under such circumstances, the China Continuation Committee called a national Christian conference in Shanghai on 2-11 May 1922. The total number in attendance was 1,185, including 564 Chinese delegates and 486 foreign delegates. The remainder was made up of delegates of missionary home boards and neighbouring countries, and Chinese and foreign visitors, altogether 135.³⁸⁸ The composition of delegates of this conference truly achieved the goal of being ‘nationally representative,’ with its wide range of delegates, covering churches and missions from nineteen provinces, six major denominations, including the Anglicans, Baptists, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and CIM, YMCA, YWCA, forty-two other missions, independent churches, the newly established provisional Church of Christ in China, and other nationwide Christian organisations.³⁸⁹ It should be noted that this conference paid particular attention to the issues of women in the church. There were approximately 248 female attendees at the conference. Cheng Jingyi’s younger sister, Cheng Guanyi 誠冠怡 (Ruth Cheng) of Yenching University in Beijing, and Fan Yurong 范玉榮 (Fan Yu Jung) of the national YWCA in Shanghai, delivered addresses on ‘Women and the Church’ and ‘Women Leaders’ respectively during the conference, followed by discussions.³⁹⁰ This can be seen as a response to the New Culture Movement and the Anti-Christian Movement, as there

³⁸⁷ See Chapter 3, 3.3.3.2. The executive committee of the China Continuation Committee scheduled a National Conference 1922 in the spring of 1921. This conference was then postponed to 1922.

³⁸⁸ *National Conference 1922*, 19-21.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, III-V, 3-21.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-21, 240-2, 272-4, 597-602.

were a number of criticisms of the backwardness of Christianity through pointing out women's unequal status in the church.³⁹¹

The conference in many ways demonstrated a similar mode of operation to the 1907 Shanghai Missionary Conference and the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference. For example, delegates were allocated to commissions which were appointed in advance and were responsible for drafting reports, and the procedure of the conference was based on the discussion of these commission reports.³⁹² Even the commissions of the 1922 Conference paralleled those of the 1910 Conference: Commission I on 'The Present State of Christianity in China' and Commission II on 'The Future Task of the Church' in the 1922 Conference were similar to Commission I and II of the 1910 Conference on 'Carrying the Gospel to all the World' and 'The Native Church and its Workers'; the former's Commission III on 'The Message of the Church' resembled the latter's Commission IV on 'The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions'; and Commission V on 'Co-ordination and Co-operation' in 1922 replicated the subject of Commission VIII in 1910.³⁹³ Cheng Jingyi was elected as chairman of this conference and delivered both the opening and closing addresses.

In almost all the accounts of the 1922 National Christian Conference published

³⁹¹ Duan Qi, *Fenjin de Licheng: Zhongguo Jidujiao de Bensehua* 奮進的歷程：中國基督教的本色化 (*The Process of Endeavour: Indigenisation of Christianity in China*) (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2004), 185.

³⁹² Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 27-8.

³⁹³ *National Conference 1922*, Contents; Chen Hongjun 陳鴻鈞, 'Minguo Shiyinian Jidujiao Quanguo Dahui 民國十一年基督教全國大會 (The 1922 National Conference),' *Zhonghua Jidujiaohui Nianjian 1924*, 62-3.

in *The Chinese Recorder*, *The Chinese Christian Church Year Book*, and other church periodicals of the time, two features were given special attention. One was the central position of the Chinese church during conference discussions, while the other was the need to encourage a spirit of co-operation among Protestantism in China and a common expression of Christian unity. This showed continuity with the 1913 Conference and demonstrated that these two features had become a two-fold theme throughout the evolution of Protestantism in early twentieth-century China.

Firstly, 'the Chinese church' was the central theme of this conference. For the first time in the history of Christianity in China, the number of Chinese delegates exceeded that of their foreign counterparts. It reflected a dramatic change from the three previous national conferences of 1877, 1890 and 1907, during which Chinese Christians hardly participated. According to the accounts of the conference, Chinese delegates showed an eagerness to participate in discussions and to express their own voices.³⁹⁴ The chief editor of *The Chinese Recorder*, Rev. Frank Rawlinson³⁹⁵ referred to this eagerness as 'a new Christian ambition' of Chinese Christians.³⁹⁶ The work of the China Continuation Committee had made much progress in this mission-church transitional period and resulted in the growth of both the self-consciousness of Chinese Christians and the articulation of the mind of the

³⁹⁴ 'Dahui Baogao hao 大會報告號 (The Conference Report),' *Zhonghua Gui Zhu 中華歸主 China for Christ*, no. 23 (1922): 7; *National Conference 1922*, III.

³⁹⁵ Rev. Frank Rawlinson went to China in 1902 as a Southern Baptist missionary but was dismissed due to his liberal views in 1921. He then joined the ABCFM in May, 1922, and became involved with the NCC and edited *The Chinese Christian Yearbook* from 1922. Rawlinson also served as the editor-in-chief of *The Chinese Recorder* from 1914 until his death in Shanghai in 1937 due to Japanese bombing.

³⁹⁶ *National Conference 1922*, V-VIII.

Chinese church. This conference can without doubt be described as ‘the first really representative gathering of Protestant Chinese Christians in China.’³⁹⁷

The discussions of all five of the commissions exhibited an ecclesiocentric emphasis. Both in his article ‘Zhongguo de Jiaohui 中國的教會 (The Chinese Church),’ which was published in the journal of National Committee of the YMCA of China, *Qingnian Jinbu 青年進步 (Association Progress)*, one month before the opening of the conference, and in his chairman’s opening address, Cheng Jingyi urged that the matter of church independence should be the central theme of the conference.³⁹⁸ Among the five commissions, Commission III on ‘The Message of the Church’ was especially noteworthy. It was entirely Chinese in its origin and organisation, aiming to provide an opportunity for the Chinese church to express its own opinions and Chinese Christians to formulate a statement of their own religious experiences for presentation during the conference.³⁹⁹

As chairman of this commission, Cheng Jingyi called for several conferences of the commission members during 1921, to discuss the best measures of carrying out their work. During the preliminary conference in Shanghai in November 1921, the Committee on Arrangements of the 1922 National Conference organised five sub-committees of Commission III to meet in Guangzhou, Fuzhou, Suzhou, Hankou and Beijing, to study issues surrounding the scope of its message. The chairmen of

³⁹⁷ Ibid., III.

³⁹⁸ SMA, U120-0-138-125, Cheng Jingyi, ‘Zhongguo de Jiaohui 中國的教會 (The Church of China),’ *Qingnian Jinbu 青年進步 (Association Progress)*, no. 52 (1922): 16-26; *National Conference 1922*, 30-8.

³⁹⁹ *National Conference 1922*, 495, 525-6.

the five sub-committees and Cheng Jingyi formed a central committee to draft the commission report. Two questionnaires were sent to both Christian and non-Christian authorities throughout China to investigate the religious needs and conditions of China from Chinese points of view. The Dean of Yenching Graduate School of Religion, Liu Tingfang 劉廷芳 (Timothy Lew), was asked to study the replies to these questions and to present a digest which would form the basis of the commission report, together with the findings of five sub-committees.⁴⁰⁰ The central committee completed the final draft of the report during a conference in Hangzhou in February 1922, and decided to change the title of its report from the Chinese term ‘Shengming 聲明 (message)’ to ‘Xuanyan 宣言 (manifesto),’ which sounded more emphatic.⁴⁰¹ This change manifested Chinese Christians’ desire to express their self-consciousness of the central position of the Chinese church and their determination to make this public statement.

The fact that this report was the only commission report read directly to the conference gave prominence to the central theme of ‘the Chinese church.’⁴⁰² During the meeting of Commission III, Cheng Jingyi delivered a presentation speech to

⁴⁰⁰ Liu Tingfang (1891-1947), an influential Protestant leader during the Republican era. As teacher, lecturer, essayist, editor, translator, administrator, educationist, and poet, he played a versatile role in the Protestant movement in China and in Chinese Christian contacts with the West. Liu was one of the organisers of the NCC in 1922. He served on the board of directors for the Beijing YMCA and on the Commission on Literature of the National Committee of the YMCA for many years. In 1924, he became the first Chinese president of the China Christian Educational Association. In 1930, he was unanimously elected to the sixteen constituent bodies as chairman of the China National Committee on Christian Higher Education, being re-elected in five subsequent years. Liu also edited the Chinese union hymnal, *Hymns of Universal Praise* 普天頌贊. He contributed a number of original hymns, translated many, and supervised the editing of all.

⁴⁰¹ *National Conference 1922*, 525-534.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, IV.

introduce the *Message* of the church, whilst Liu Tingfang read the first section of the *Message*, 'To Christians.' In this section of the *Message*, church unity, church indigeneity, evangelism and international fellowship were all emphasised from Chinese viewpoints. The *Message*, which was issued on behalf of 'various branches of the Christian Church and of the organisations and institutions,' expressed a desire for 'an essential unity' among all Chinese Christians without the division of denominationalism, and 'an indigenous church' that would present 'an indigenous Christianity' and bear the features of self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating.⁴⁰³ Cheng Jingyi's outlook on the two-fold task of the construction of the Chinese church, which, as he stated in 1912, consisted of both church unity and indigeneity, doubtless found an echo here.⁴⁰⁴ His advocacy of 'a united Christian Church without any denominational distinctions' during the 1910 Conference had been accepted by a considerable number of Chinese Christians, and was re-affirmed by this statement in a stronger tone.⁴⁰⁵ As Rawlinson commented, 'self-expression is one element of self-consciousness,'⁴⁰⁶ and the *Message*, which was addressed to both Chinese Christians and non-Christians, as well as to missionaries, demonstrated the growing consciousness of Chinese Christians of their mission and duties in the development of Christianity in China, as well as their actions to discharge them. Liu Tingfang regarded the *Message* to be symbolic, as for the first time in the history of

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 495-503.

⁴⁰⁴ Cheng Ching-yi, 'The Chinese Church in Relation to Its Immediate Task,' *IRM* 1 (1912): 383.

⁴⁰⁵ See Chapter 3, 3.1.

⁴⁰⁶ *National Conference 1922*, V.

Protestantism in China, Chinese Christians obtained sole responsibility in formulating a statement of the Chinese church.⁴⁰⁷ The *Message* thus marked a significant step forward in the direction of an indigenous and ecumenical future for Christianity in China.

It should be noted that, in both sections of the *Message*, ‘To Christians’ and ‘To Non-Christians,’ Christianity was declared to be a means of both individual and national salvation, just as a number of Chinese Christians, such as Cheng Jingyi, had stated at the time of the China for Christ Movement in 1919.⁴⁰⁸ Chinese Christians’ optimism, and their social conscience which was stimulated by this optimism, were still in their heyday. Meanwhile, the impact of the social and political turbulence in China during the early twentieth century, and especially the newly-emerging anti-Christian sentiment of 1922, were disclosed in the *Message*. Not only did phrases such as ‘[western countries’] unchristian exploitation’ and ‘aggression upon the sovereignty of China’ appear in the *Message*, even the section of the *Message* devoted to ‘international brotherhood’ called for Christians in China to fight against international injustice and asked for efforts from missionaries to improve this situation. Chinese Christians were aware that their close relationship with western missions had become a highly sensitive matter in the face of the challenge of nationwide anti-Christian movements.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Liu Tingfang, ‘Jidujiao Quanguo Dahui 基督教全國大會 (The National Christian Conference),’ *Shengming Yuekan 生命月刊 (Life Monthly)* 2, no. 3 (1921): 2.

⁴⁰⁸ *National Conference 1922*, 519-22.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 505.

Secondly, this conference exhibited a spirit of co-operation and unity by avoiding doctrinal schism but seeking the ‘common ground’ among Protestant communities. It endeavoured to avoid doctrinal discussion and make its own theological stance as wide as possible in order to assemble as many Protestant bodies as it could into the union. In a similar manner to the 1910 Conference, it was ‘corporate unity’ among Protestant bodies rather than ‘ecclesiastical unity’ that this conference aimed to achieve in Protestant movements in China.⁴¹⁰ As a result, phrases such as ‘common expression,’ ‘common faith,’ ‘common Lord,’ ‘common responsibility’ and ‘common service of the Church in China’ became keywords of its statements, just as Rawlinson stated in the conference report:

In 1907 there was considerable [*sic*] said as to whether any or what creed should be taken as a guide. This Conference attempted to get down to the fundamentals beneath the creeds. In 1907 it was to some extent a question of which denominational position came nearest to expressing the belief of all. In 1922 the issue was to find an expression of faith that left denominational statements unimpaired while finding one through which all could in some measure express their faith...The Conference desired a common expression of faith in a common Lord but not necessarily uniformity of statement.⁴¹¹

The effort to focus on the ‘common ground’ of Protestantism in China reflected the principle adopted by this conference to stay neutral in ecclesiastical and theological divergence. Nonetheless, a neutral stance on current matters of theological controversy did not please a number of missions and denominational bodies, which

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., IX-X, 501.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., VIII.

began to question the theological convictions the conference held. This was largely due to the rise of the controversy between Protestant fundamentalists and liberals during the 1920s, which will be discussed in later sections.

As one of the main purposes of organising this conference, a National Christian Council was eventually appointed, aiming to carry out the work of the 1922 Conference, make provision for dealing with issues regarding Christian movements in China, and promote co-operation among all Protestant bodies in China. Its functions, which consisted of thirteen items, fully embodied the themes of the conference, namely, the Chinese church and Christian unity.⁴¹² As a representative and advisory body, the NCC neither served as a super-church council, nor had any authority to deal with any issue of ecclesiastical polity, doctrine or principle of churches and missions. Yet it was entrusted with certain executive powers on behalf of the bodies it represented, and was able to direct co-operative activities on a national scale.⁴¹³ At this stage of the evolution of Christianity in China, the NCC was a timely organ for co-ordinating different Protestant groups in China to co-operate coherently in nationwide Christian programmes.

The NCC consisted of representatives from most of the denominations and organisations which were present during this conference, including the Anglicans, Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists, CIM, Seventh-Day Adventists, YMCA, YWCA, in addition to other missions, colleges,

⁴¹² Ibid., 636-702.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 636-8.

national organisations, Bible societies and literature organisations, Christian and Missionary Alliance, independent churches and the provisional Church of Christ in China. The number of the NCC members to be elected from each denomination or organisation was in accordance with the number of the communicants in each group. Seventy-five members were elected, and they in turn recommended another twenty-five as general members. This was out of a concern to make the NCC as representative as possible of various forms of Christian work in China. Additionally, twenty-one out of the one hundred members were elected to form an executive committee. The number of the Chinese members in both the NCC and its executive committee was required to exceed half.⁴¹⁴ The general secretary of the national YMCA, Yu Rizhang 余日章 (David Yui), was elected as the first chairman of the council and of the executive committee.⁴¹⁵ According to the reports of the four subsequent annual meetings of the NCC held from 1923 to 1926, the proportion of Chinese members to all NCC members was 34:60 in 1923, 34:59 in 1924, 26:52 in 1925, and 31:54 in 1926.⁴¹⁶ Thus the proportion of Chinese members never fell below half.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 695-702.

⁴¹⁵ Yu Rizhang (1882-1936) served as general secretary of the national YMCA for sixteen years from 1916. When John R. Mott came to China in 1913, Yu served as one of the interpreters, together with Cheng Jingyi. He was selected as one of two 'citizen representatives' by the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce and the National Federation of Educational Associations to attend the Washington Conference in 1921. He encouraged the Chinese delegation to redeem the Shandong railway from the Japanese, and headed the fund-raising campaign that remitted the full sum to Japan in 1922. Yu was elected chairman of the NCC in 1922. He was also involved with the World Student Christian Federation. He attended the International Missionary Conference in Jerusalem in 1928. Yu was famous for his phrase, 'Renge Jiuguo 人格救國' (national salvation through the development of individual integrity). This belief resulted in his stress on the training of Chinese youths.

⁴¹⁶ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CBMS 348, The National Christian Council: A Five Year's Review, 1922-1927, 6.

During the 1922 Conference, the themes of the central position of the Chinese church and the spirit of Christian unity were re-emphasised. These two themes continued to serve as a two-fold task of the Chinese church construction and Christian movements in China in subsequent years. Undeniably, there was criticism expressed of this conference. For instance, the delivery of conference addresses in the English language contradicted the central theme of the conference, ‘the Chinese church;’⁴¹⁷ the concept of ‘the Chinese church,’ in the view of certain Chinese Christians, was unduly nationalistic;⁴¹⁸ and the influence of liberal theology at this conference, especially on Committee V regarding the doctrinal stance of the NCC, annoyed some fundamentalists. Nevertheless, to the majority of attendees, whether Chinese Christian leaders or missionaries, the conference seemed to promise them a desirable future of the Protestant enterprise in China. In particular, the establishment of the NCC provided Protestantism in China with institutional support for further progress on a nationwide scale.

4.2.2. The NCC’s Role in the Development of a United Indigenous Church

During the period from 1922 to 1927, the attempts of the NCC to forward the growth of Christianity in China comprised a number of aspects. Firstly, with the purpose of

⁴¹⁷ *National Conference 1922*, 647-659; Zhang Junjun 張君俊, ‘Ping Jidujiao Quanguo Dahui 評基督教全國大會 (The Evaluation of the National Conference 1922),’ *Shengming Yuekan* 2, no. 9-10 (1922): 3-5.

⁴¹⁸ Wang Zhixin 王治心, ‘Juguo Jidujiao Quanguo Dahui Yihou 聚過基督教全國大會以後 (After the Gathering of the National Christian Conference),’ *Shenxue Zhi 神學志 (Theological Journal)* 8, no. 2 (1922): 4-5.

encouraging co-ordination and co-operation among all Protestant bodies in China, the NCC called for annual meetings, as a platform for Christian groups and individuals to communicate, discuss major issues which emerged during the development of Christianity in China, and make recommendations for future action.⁴¹⁹ Secondly, the NCC appointed committees to investigate major issues regarding Christianity in China each year and to report their investigations and recommendations concerning those problems during annual meetings. These issues included evangelism, Christian education, self-support of churches, training of missionaries, work among Muslims and Buddhists, industrial and rural conditions, home life, social betterment and international relations.⁴²⁰ Thirdly, as a central bureau of information for churches and missions in China, the NCC continued to provide churches with information, such as personnel, church and mission actions, and with accounts of progress being made, through a series of Christian journals and bulletins, including *The China Mission Year Book*, *The China Church Year Book*, the *Missionary Directory* and the *NCC Bulletin*.⁴²¹ From 1922 to 1927, the NCC's activities extended into almost every aspect of Christian life and Christian movements in China, and this helped churches and missions in China to view the growth of Christianity and to plan Christian work as a whole. Meanwhile, the focal points of the NCC's activities were largely shaped by the pressure of nationwide

⁴¹⁹ SOAS, CBMS 348, A Five Years' Review, 9-11.

⁴²⁰ SOAS, CBMS 348, A Five Years' Review, 13-4; SMA, U106-0-118-274, Cheng Jingyi, 'Xiejinhui duiyu Jiaohui zhi Gongxian 協進會對於教會之貢獻 (The Contributions of the NCC to the Chinese Church),' *Zhenguang Zazhi 真光雜誌 (True Light Journal)* 26, no. 6 (1927): 7.

⁴²¹ SOAS, CBMS 348, A Five Years' Review, 12.

anti-Christian movements and other nationalist movements during this period.

Accordingly, the attempt to build a united indigenous church in a form appropriate to the complex social and political environment overwhelmed any other theme in the NCC during the 1920s.

4.2.2.1. Church Indigeneity

In the face of the attack from the Anti-Christian Movement of the 1920s, the primary task facing Chinese Christians suddenly shifted from an active participation in the construction of a modernised national state to a defensive response to the new type of nationalism, in which the elimination of the foreign colour of Christianity and the desire to make it an authentically Chinese Christianity became focal points. Although the concern to express the Christian faith in a Chinese way and to plant churches on Chinese soil was ardent before the Anti-Christian Movement, the growth of nationalistic sentiment during this movement heightened this desire to its peak. The range of discussions of, and actions towards church indigeneity, in terms of administrative independence and culturally and liturgically Chinese, was never so broad as in the 1920s, and nationwide movements towards the goal of church indigeneity became a unique feature of the history of Protestantism in China in this period. As a national Christian organisation, the NCC certainly treated this goal with high priority.

After the formation of the NCC, the first concentrated effort on the matter of church indigeneity was made during the second NCC annual conference in Shanghai during 13-20 May 1924. The executive committee of the NCC appointed a standing and special committee on 'the indigenous church' to give particular attention to this issue, and asked Cheng Jingyi and E. C. Lobenstine, the former foreign secretary of the China Continuation Committee, to make the study of this subject a 'major part' of their work as council secretaries.⁴²² By this time, Cheng's leadership in Chinese Protestantism had been fully recognised by both Chinese Christians and missionaries. When the NCC was formed in 1922, Cheng and Lobenstine were appointed merely as honorary secretaries of the council due to their absence from China. Lobenstine returned to China from America on 15 February 1924, and was appointed by the executive committee of the council as a regular full-time secretary, with a considerable part of his time being devoted to the work of the Council of Higher Education.⁴²³ Cheng went to the US to pursue further study at Union Theological Seminary in New York from 1922 to 1924. As soon as he returned to China in the autumn of 1924 he took up work as a full-time secretary of the council, mainly focussing on the work of the committees on 'the indigenous church' and 'retreat and evangelism.'⁴²⁴ Meanwhile, Cheng was still largely involved in the work of the CHMS. Members of the nucleus committee on the indigenous church, who were

⁴²² SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CBMS 350, *The Bulletin of the National Christian Council [BNCC]*, no. 9 (1924): 10.

⁴²³ SOAS, CBMS 350, *BNCC*, no. 2 (1923): 6; no. 8 (1924): 9.

⁴²⁴ SOAS, CBMS 350, *BNCC*, no. 11 (1924): 2.

appointed by the executive committee for the period from 1924 to 1925, consisted of Liu Tingfang, Zhao Zichen 趙紫宸 (T. C. Chao),⁴²⁵ C. G. Sparham, a LMS missionary from Shanghai, R. J. McMullen, a Southern Presbyterian missionary from Hangzhou, John Y. Lee of the National Committee of the YMCA in Shanghai, as well as Cheng and Lobenstine. As council secretaries, Cheng and Lobenstine organised local committees in Shenyang (Mukden), Beijing, Jinan, Hankou, Changsha, Shanghai, Fuzhou, Guangzhou and Chengdu, and held conferences in Wuchang, Changsha, Tianjin, Yantai (Chefoo), Tengxian, Hangzhou and Hong Kong with local church leaders and missionaries, in order to get the most representative opinions on this subject.⁴²⁶

The period from 1924 to 1927 was one in which the discussion of church indigeneity flourished. A number of Christian journals and periodicals, such as *The Chinese Recorder*, *Qingnian Jinbu*, *Shengming Yuekan* 生命月刊 (*The Life Monthly*)⁴²⁷ and *Wenshe Yuekan* 文社月刊 (*Wenshe Monthly*),⁴²⁸ became the

⁴²⁵ Zhao Zichen (1888-1979), Chinese Christian theologian, writer and educator. In the years 1914-17, he studied and received his MA and BD in Vanderbilt University. In 1926 he started to teach in Yenching University in Beijing as a professor of theology. He became dean of the School of Religion in 1928, a post he held until 1952, when he was denounced politically and removed. From the 1910s to 1940s, Zhao tried to make Christianity relevant to the needs of Chinese culture and society. He was recognized in China by the mainline churches before the coming of the new government as one of its leading theologians. He was concerned that the church be purified both institutionally from its denominationalism and doctrinally from its many non-scientific views. He was also concerned that Christianity be related to Confucianism and, more broadly, to humanism. Zhao reconciled himself to the new Communist government after 1949. When the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was launched, he was one of the forty church leaders who signed *The Christian Manifesto*.

⁴²⁶ SOAS, CBMS 350, *BNCC*, no. 11 (1924): 4; SOAS, CBMS 348, *The National Christian Council Annual Report 1924-5*, 18-9, 83-4.

⁴²⁷ *Shengming Yuekan* (1920-26) was a journal founded in 1920 by Protestant intellectuals in Beijing in response to the New Culture Movement.

⁴²⁸ *Wenshe Yuekan* was a monthly journal issued by Zhonghua Jidujiao Wenshe 中華基督教文社 (The National Christian Literature Association) in October 1925. It acted as a platform to discuss church indigeneity in China, and was terminated in June 1928 after the publication of twenty-eight issues. See Peter Chen-main Wang, 'Contextualizing Protestant Publishing in China: The Wenshe,

platform for discussions, and Chinese Christians published numerous articles and essays to express their opinions. Many of them were NCC members, such as Cheng Jingyi, Zhao Zichen, Liu Tingfang and Wang Zhixin 王治心.⁴²⁹ The definition of an indigenous church and the methods to achieve it were the focal points of discussion.

The Definition of an Indigenous Church

In the face of the emergence of various ideas and concepts of an indigenous church, a number of Chinese Christian leaders and intellectuals saw the necessity of first clarifying what an indigenous church was *not*. As early as 1923, Cheng Jingyi had published an article, 'The Development of an Indigenous Church in China,' in the *International Review of Missions*, giving a detailed explanation and discussion of this issue. In this article, Cheng pointed out a number of misconceptions surrounding the use of the word 'indigenous,' one of which was to consider an indigenous church to be a church which was born on the Chinese soil according to the literal meaning of the word 'indigenous,' and the other was to build an indigenous church upon nationalistic sentiment, in other words, with the colour of anti-foreignism.⁴³⁰ Wang Zhixin in his article 'Bense Jiaohui yu Bense Zhuzuo 本色教會與本色著作 (The

1924-1928,' in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 292-306.

⁴²⁹ Wang Zhixin (1881-1968), Chinese Christian scholar, educator and historian. In 1921 he served as professor of philosophy in Jinling (Ginling) Theological Seminary in Nanjing. In 1926 he became the chief editor of the Christian journal *Wenshe Yuekan* which aimed to advocate the indigenisation of Christianity in China.

⁴³⁰ C. Y. Cheng, 'The Development of an Indigenous Church in China,' *IRM* 12 (1923): 369.

Indigenous Church and the Indigenous Literature)’ also criticised three mistaken concepts of what indigeneity meant, namely, church indigeneity on the basis of anti-foreignism, the restoration of the ancient practice of Chinese religious rituals in church services and Christian worship, and the adaptation of Christianity to Buddhist expression and practice.⁴³¹ For both Cheng and Wang, church indigeneity above all demanded that the essentials of Christian doctrine as well as its universal nature should be preserved.

Regarding the definition of an indigenous church, on the positive side, Jonathan Chao has identified three ‘essential elements’ of the Chinese concept of an indigenous church, which were emphasised by a number of Chinese Christians, namely, de-westernisation, adaptation, and a distinctively Chinese expression of Christian belief. Chao argues that the first point of ‘de-westernisation’ was mainly suggested by Wang Zhixin, with the second being emphasised by Cheng Jingyi and the third stressed by Zhao Zichen.⁴³² Nonetheless, the views of these writers and many others more or less overlapped with each other when they were forming detailed and integrated discussions. They may have stressed one or two particular

⁴³¹ Wang Zhixin, ‘Bense Jiaohui yu Bense Zhuzuo 本色教會與本色著作 (The Indigenous Church and the Indigenous Literature),’ *Wenshe Yuekan* 1, no. 6 (1926): 1-2; Wang Zhixin, *Zhongguo Jidujiao Shigang 中國基督教史綱 (The Outline of Christianity in China)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2004), 236-7. The third misconception was represented by Xie Fuya 謝扶雅 (Z. K. Zia), Wang Shanzhi 王善治 and Shen Yalun 沈亞倫. See Xie Fuya, ‘Jidujiao Xinsichao yu Zhongguominzu Genben Sixiang 基督教新思潮與中國民族根本思想 (Christian New Thought and the Essential Ideas of Chinese Nation),’ *Qingnian Jinbu*, no. 82 (1925): 1-15; Wang Shanzhi, ‘Shiyong Shenxue 實用神學 (Practical Theology),’ in ‘Guanyu Libai Yishi de Taolun 關於禮拜儀式的討論 (Discussion on Service Rites),’ *Shenxue Zhi* 9, no. 2 (1923): 168; Shen Yalun, ‘Ruhe YIngyong Shubenshang Shenxue dao Shehuishang qu 如何應用書本上神學到社會上去 (How to Apply Textbook Theology to Society),’ *Shenxue Zhi* 9, no. 1 (1923): 23.

⁴³² Chao, ‘Chinese Indigenous Church Movement,’ 247-9.

points, but this did not imply that they had neglected the rest.

Referring to the first point that an indigenous church was one that had gone through a process of ‘de-westernisation,’ Wang Zhixi suggested:

An indigenous church is one which has successfully been *de-Westernised* and is made to suit Chinese ethnic characteristics. This reform does not shake the foundations of Christian truth, but rather integrate traditional Chinese culture with Christian truth, so that the religious life of Chinese Christians would suit the sentiments of Chinese people and avoid the sense of alienation between the two.⁴³³

On the second point, as early as 1918, Cheng had already pointed out the adaptable nature of Christianity to other cultures.⁴³⁴ In his article in 1923, Cheng stated that:

...an indigenous church means nothing more or less than the power of the Christian Church to *adapt* itself to the people of China, and to be able freely and fully to express itself and determine its work.⁴³⁵

In his article ‘Bensejiaohui zhi Shangque 本色教會之商榷 (A Discussion on the Indigenous Church),’ which was published in *Wenshe Yuekan* in 1925, Cheng not only raised the idea of an indigenous church as one which adapted to the ethnic characters of Chinese people, but also added another point into the definition of an indigenous church, by emphasising the self-reliance of the Chinese church:

⁴³³ Wang Zhixin, ‘Zhongguo Bensejiaohui de Taolun 中國本色教會的討論 (Discussion on the Chinese Indigenous Church),’ *Qingnian Jinbu*, no. 79 (1925): 13. Italics added.

⁴³⁴ Cheng Ching-yi, ‘The Chinese Church of Today I,’ *The Chinese Recorder* 49, no. 10 (1918): 656-9.

⁴³⁵ Cheng, ‘Development of Indigenous Church,’ 370. Italics added.

If Christianity is to be indigenous it must root itself in the rich soil of China's past... Chinese Christians should take the responsibility of the development of the Church... the major share of the responsibility for promoting Christianity in China has been borne by foreigners.⁴³⁶

As Liu Jiafeng points out in his study of Cheng Jingyi, Cheng's definition included two aspects of indigeneity, one of which was indigenisation of Christianity as a religion, and the other indigenisation of the church as an institution.⁴³⁷ The third point emphasised that an indigenous church must express its faith and life in Chinese cultural forms, as Zhao Zichen stated:

The indigenous church is one which unifies all truth contained in Christianity and in *Chinese ancient culture* and which thus manifests and expresses the religious life and experiences of Chinese Christians in a fashion that is alive and natural to them.⁴³⁸

While Wang Zhixin and Zhao Zichen gradually inclined toward the search for integration between Christianity and Chinese culture after 1925, Cheng focussed more on the practicalities of church indigenisation.

Based on the conferences and discussions conducted during 1924 and 1925, the

⁴³⁶ Cheng Jingyi, 'Bense Jiaohui zhi Shangque 本色教会之商榷 (Discussing the Indigenous Church),' *Wenshe Yuekan* 1, no. 1 (1925): 8-10. This article was translated into English by Willard Lyon and published in *The Chinese Recorder* in the same year. See D. Willard Lyon, 'Dr. C. Y. Cheng's Thoughts on the Indigenization of the Chinese Church,' *The Chinese Recorder* 56, no. 12 (1925): 814-20.

⁴³⁷ Liu Jiafeng 劉家峰, 'Cong Chaihui dao Jiaohui: Cheng Jingyi de Bense Jiaohui Sixiang Jiexi 從差會到教會：誠靜怡本色教會思想解析 (From the Missions to the Church: An Analysis of Cheng Jingyi's Thoughts on the Church Indigenisation),' *Shijie Zongjiao Yanjiu 世界宗教研究 (Studies in World Religions)*, no. 2 (2006): 113-22.

⁴³⁸ T. C. Chao, 'The Indigenous Church,' *The Chinese Recorder* 56, no. 8 (1925): 496-505; Zhao Zichen, 'Bense Jiaohui de Shangque 本色教會的商榷 (A Discussion on Church Indigenisation),' *Qingnian Jinbu*, no. 76 (1924): 8-9. Italics added.

committee on the indigenous church presented a statement on the definition of an indigenous church in their report during the third annual meeting of the NCC in Shanghai during 13-20 May 1925, only a couple of days before the outbreak of the ‘May Thirtieth Incident.’ The statement first of all clarified that an indigenous church did *not* imply an intention to spread ‘anti-foreign propaganda,’ to establish ‘a new denomination,’ to organise ‘a national church,’ to produce ‘an eclectic religion’ or to preach ‘a new Gospel other than that of Jesus Christ.’ It then defined an indigenous church more positively as:

- (a) To make organised Christianity more congenial to Chinese life and environment.
- (b) To help Chinese Christians to realise more and more their individual and corporate responsibility.
- (c) To enrich the Christian life and enlarge the usefulness of the Christian Religion by laying at the feet of the Master the contribution of China.⁴³⁹

After the outbreak of the ‘May Thirtieth Incident,’ the tension between China and foreign countries dramatically increased. During the fourth annual meeting of the NCC from 13 to 20 October 1926, at which Cheng accepted the invitation to serve as general secretary, the committee made supplements to the original definition:

- (2) The Chinese Church is a member of the Church Universal.
- (3) The Indigenous Church does not mean an Anti-Foreign Church, nor a vain, glorification of the Chinese civilisation. Her true aim seems to be bringing into fusion the best elements of both the Western and the Eastern

⁴³⁹ SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1924-5, 83-5.

civilisations, after the draining out of the dross.⁴⁴⁰

As anti-foreign nationalism spread throughout the country, the above definition of church indigeneity reflected the NCC's attempt, on the one hand, to manifest the Chinese features of the church, and on the other, to ease the possible tension caused by political ferment between churches and missions, and to avoid a radical nationalistic approach to church indigeneity. Both statements reflected the NCC's attempt to communicate the message to both churches and missions in China, that alongside the dimension of making the church indigenous, the Chinese church construction also contained the aspect of cultivating the international characteristics of the church. The NCC's definition of an indigenous church bore a much closer similarity to Cheng Jingyi's perspectives than to others, as is demonstrated in his reminder to Chinese Christians not to follow the idea of 'China for the Chinese' but 'China for Christ.'⁴⁴¹

The Methods of Realising Church Indigeneity

Jonathan Chao has discerned three 'essential guidelines' for the establishment of an indigenous church shaping the outlook of Chinese Christian intellectuals and church leaders. The first one was to develop ecclesiastical independence, the second was to

⁴⁴⁰ SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1925-6, 166-7.

⁴⁴¹ Cheng, 'Church of Today I,' 662; SOAS, CBMS 348, C. Y. Cheng, 'The China for Christ Movement,' in Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meetings of the China Continuation Committee, 1921, 75-81.

shift contextual thinking, and the third was to foster indigenous church leaders. Chao also pointed out three external manifestations of an indigenous church, namely, a united church without denominational distinctions, the Christianisation of Chinese lifestyle and the practical expressions of indigeneity in social customs.⁴⁴² Chinese Christian figures, such as Cheng Jingyi, Zhao Zichen and Wang Zhixin, all contributed to this subject through their writings, which more or less covered the three points which Chao identified. In his *IRM* article, Cheng emphasised ecclesiastical independence and indigenous church leadership by saying that the transfer of control from missions to churches was ‘one of the most effective ways’ of realising church indigeneity.⁴⁴³ He also referred to two movements in Chinese churches, which in his opinion, manifested the self-consciousness of Chinese Christians. One was the desire for church unity in China, and the other was the re-appreciation of traditional customs in the light of Christian faith.⁴⁴⁴

Firstly, as Cheng noted, the goal of realising church unity in China was embraced within the discussion of church indigeneity during this period. An increasing number of Chinese Christians had shared Cheng’s perspective on this matter and seen denominationalism to be a western element which was transplanted into the Chinese church by missions. To realise church unity, to them, had become part of the theme of achieving church indigeneity. Some suggested promoting co-operation and union through the work of several interdenominational

⁴⁴² Chao, ‘Chinese Indigenous Church Movement,’ 250-261.

⁴⁴³ Cheng, ‘Development of Indigenous Church,’ 374-5.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 375-8.

organisations, such as the NCC and the CHMS, and enlarging interdenominational co-operation in education, particularly theological education, in order to cultivate a spirit of union among students.⁴⁴⁵ Cheng pointed out the emergence of serious theological disputes among both missionaries and Chinese Christians at this stage as an obstacle to church union.⁴⁴⁶ Considering this article was published in 1927, Cheng was very likely to refer to the controversy between fundamentalists and liberals.

Secondly, Cheng laid great emphasis on the issue of practical expressions of indigeneity in social customs when he discussed church indigeneity. As noted in the previous chapter, his work in the China Continuation Committee was largely engaged in the study of these issues, for example, ancestor veneration.⁴⁴⁷ He disapproved of the total rejection of ancestor veneration and suggested a distinction between what he called ‘unworthy’ and ‘worthy’ motives of veneration. According to him:

The backbone of all Chinese ethical teaching is to be found in ‘Filial Piety,’ which is quite in keeping with the great Commandment of God, ‘Honour thy father and thy mother’...The desire to maintain the family unity...forms the basis of society and of the nation.⁴⁴⁸

He also suggested establishing some Christian forms of commemoration to

⁴⁴⁵ Jiong 炯, ‘Jiaohui zhi Tongyi 教會之統一 (Church Unity),’ *Shenxue Zhi* 9, no. 1 (1923): 45-57.

⁴⁴⁶ Cheng Jingyi, ‘Zhongguo Jidujiao de Xingzhi he Zhuangtai 中國基督教的性質和狀態 (The Nature and State of Christianity in China).’ *Wenshe Yuekan* 2, no. 7 (1927): 53-64.

⁴⁴⁷ Cheng Ching-yi, ‘Church of Today I,’ 656-9.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 658.

appreciate traditional virtues which were embodied in ancestor veneration, like filial piety, and on the other hand, to reshape the traditional practice into a Christian one.⁴⁴⁹ To him, it was in these practical matters that lay the capacity of a church to become indigenous:

This problem of ancestor worship illustrates a point on which I wish to lay emphasis, namely, that Christianity is capable of becoming *indigenous* in every land and is *adaptable* to all peoples.⁴⁵⁰

Others, like Zhao Zichen and Wang Zhixin, laid much emphasis on indigenous leaders and literature. Whilst Chinese Christians expressed their ideas of how to realise church indigeneity, the NCC passed several resolutions during the third annual meeting in 1925, which emphasised ‘the study of Chinese language and literature’ among missionaries and in Christian schools, ‘the sympathetic understanding of Chinese ceremonies’ and ‘the conserving of the best and most characteristic elements of Chinese civilisation,’ the development of ‘actual Chinese leadership’ in the church, and investigation regarding church property which related to missions.⁴⁵¹ During the fourth annual meeting of the NCC in 1926, the committee on the practice of church indigeneity added a number of points to their recommendations, such as the ‘three-self’ principle, a detailed ‘modified Christian form’ of ancestor veneration and the institution of church festivals which included both Christian and Chinese festivals,

⁴⁴⁹ Cheng, ‘Zhongguo de Jiaohui (Church of China),’ 17.

⁴⁵⁰ Cheng, ‘Church of Today I,’ 659. Italics added.

⁴⁵¹ SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1924-5, 32-4.

such as the Lantern Day and the Day for the Sweeping Ancestral Graves.

Additionally, the committee suggested individual's 'free choice' in the manner of baptism,⁴⁵² which can be seen as an attempt to 'de-westernise' Christian practice and encourage indigenous understanding and acceptance of Christian rites free from denominational compulsion. Due to the more acute socio-political situation after the outbreak of the 'May Thirtieth Incident,' the committee was wary of any issues that could possibly stir up nationalistic sentiment, and thus resolved that:

The deletion of that part of the official name of the mission or church which indicates foreign nationality. That there be no hoisting of flags of foreign nations over the church for protection, to the infringement of China's sovereignty and the resentment of the people.⁴⁵³

Compared to the recommendations of the committee on the Chinese church of the China Continuation Committee, the recommendations of the NCC regarding church indigeneity were more specific and pragmatic. Nonetheless, the committee revealed that it had failed to implement its original plan for organising local committees to study further the issues of this subject during the years of 1925 to 1926, due to Cheng's illness and, more significantly, the outbreak of the 'May Thirtieth Incident.' Although discussions on church indigeneity continued among Protestant bodies in China, the NCC ceased to re-appoint the committee on the indigenous church at its annual meeting of 1926. Perhaps Cheng's health issues and the social and political

⁴⁵² SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1925-6, 168-9.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 168-9.

turbulence forced the committee to drop the plan of forming guidance for churches in China to achieve indigeneity officially; or the enthusiastic discussion among Chinese intellectuals and church leaders in various Christian journals and periodicals and the effort of churches toward the goal of indigenisation throughout the country convinced the organisers of the NCC that church indigeneity in China was already becoming a reality. For instance, Yu Rizhang mentioned in his chairman's address during this meeting that Christians of the Lutheran, the Methodist and the Baptist churches in Harbin had come forward to organise a Chinese Christian church. He concluded optimistically that 'the Chinese Christian Church is fast approaching realisation.'⁴⁵⁴ Although the NCC organisers did not indicate any reason for ceasing to re-appoint the committee on this subject, one thing was for certain: from this point on, the focal point of the NCC shifted from the promotion of church indigeneity to a more urgent demand for a Christian response to the socio-political situation, especially the Chinese church's response to the abolition of the 'unequal treaties' and the registration of Christian schools.

4.2.2.2. The Tension between Christianity and Nationalism

The majority of the Chinese members of the NCC had positively responded to the Anti-Christian Movement and nationalism either by engaging in self-criticism or by seeking a way to make Christianity more adaptable and acceptable to Chinese society.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 9.

As discussed previously, several Chinese Christian leaders, such as Cheng Jingyi and Yu Rizhang, had paid particular attention to the expression of Christian patriotism and the social consciousness and responsibility of Chinese Christians, aiming to demonstrate the Chinese identity of the church and deliver a Christian message regarding China's problems. After the formation of the NCC, this concentration was also embodied within the work of the NCC, especially in its response to the 'May Thirtieth Incident.'

The day after the incident, the Shanghai members of the NCC executive committee called an emergency meeting to discuss this issue. They unanimously determined to take action, urging editors of both foreign and Chinese newspapers to withhold judgement until the facts were clarified, and urging the NCC to provide constructive instructions to churches and missions in China regarding this issue.⁴⁵⁵ On 8 June 1925, the NCC executive committee addressed an official letter to the Shanghai Municipal Council, urging the appointment of a special commission of enquiry to investigate the incident, with enough Chinese members being included.⁴⁵⁶ The committee also appointed a sub-committee to draft a *Message to Christians* throughout China concerning the social and political conflict between Chinese and foreign countries at that moment. This *Message* was adopted by the executive committee on 16 July 1925, and was published on the front page of the *NCC Bulletin*.

⁴⁵⁵ SOAS, CBMS 350, 'Message of the National Christian Council to the Christians in China,' *BNCC*, no. 15 (1925): 1-2.

⁴⁵⁶ SOAS, CBMS 350, David Z. T. Yui, 'Letter to Shanghai Municipal Council,' *BNCC*, no. 15 (1925): 3-4.

In the *Message*, the executive committee raised a number of questions for Christians in China to consider and discuss, such as what steps churches and missions should take in light of the current situation, and what attitudes Christians in China should hold. It called for a Christian response to contemporary problems in Chinese society. Overall, the *Message* was composed in a rather strong political vein. There were two questions it sought to answer, one of which concerned Christianity and patriotism, with the other regarding the church and politics. On the first point, the *Message* stated:

Christianity, patriotism, and good citizenship are not necessarily opposed to each other. To be a Christian does not at all mean to be unpatriotic or to surrender one's rights of citizenship. We are not dealing with that kind of narrow and selfish patriotism and citizenship... To us, a Christian should be the highest type of patriot and the noblest example of citizen.⁴⁵⁷

By saying this, the same national identity and social responsibility which Chinese Christians shared with common Chinese citizens were highlighted. The two identities, Chinese and Christian, which were assumed to be incompatible during the first hundred years of the history of Christianity in China, were brought together. Concerning the second point, the *Message* firstly clarified the nature of the church's involvement with politics:

...the Church should not meddle, if by that we mean for the Church to seek to control the government or actually to interfere with its functions... On the

⁴⁵⁷ SOAS, CBMS 350, 'Message to Christians,' 2.

other hand, if political powers violate any or all of the Christian principles of life, should the Church remain silent and passive?⁴⁵⁸

The Chinese leaders of the NCC still confidently believed in the social transformative function of Christian faith in relation to all issues within Chinese society, including politics:

Christianity will penetrate and transform the economic, social, and political life of the people; and it will reign supreme in all international relations. It is inconceivable that certain areas of life should be shut out from the Christian way or influences.⁴⁵⁹

Behind this *Message* lay the eagerness of several leading Chinese Christian figures to manifest the Chinese identity of the church, to clarify its standpoint, and to deliver a Christian response in the face of national crisis. The *Message* perfectly reflected the tension between Christian faith and nationalism which a number of Chinese Christians were experiencing, and which affected the NCC itself.

In June 1925, Cheng Jingyi also wrote an article referring to the incident and his opinions. The tone of this article was more or less in accordance with the *Message* of the NCC:

In this trouble, Christian people cannot stand with folded hands neglecting their duty. On the other hand, should they act upon their temporary emotions or hot excitement? Or should they follow the trend of the time, based on narrow, patriotic but uncontrollable current...In short, while it is better for

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 2.

the Christian Church never to interfere in politics, nevertheless the fundamental principles of Christianity do have a bearing upon government.

Cheng here was attempting to encourage a broad and what he believed to be well-balanced nationalism in China which was driven by Christian morality. Yet there was one point on which Cheng spoke with a rather determined tone:

Since the rise of the anti-Christian movement all the young people of this country aim at this target, the duplicate protection given to Christianity by the unequal treaties. They call Christianity a foreign doctrine, and Christians, foreign followers. They even consider them to be slaves of imperialism and capitalism.... there is no need of this further protection.⁴⁶⁰

Cheng's words reflected the consistency between his attitude toward the 'unequal treaties' in this situation and his advocacy of church registration and claim for religious liberty during the 1910s.⁴⁶¹ The abolition of the 'unequal treaties,' to him, would provide the Chinese church with an opportunity to get rid of foreign domination and imperialist condemnation, which were of significance in securing a legal status for further development in Chinese society.

As discussed in Cheng's article, the abolition of the 'toleration clauses' of the 'unequal treaties' became one of the central themes of the Anti-Christian Movement during its second stage, and one of the focal points of the NCC. Wang Zhixin took

⁴⁶⁰ SOAS, CBMS 396, Cheng, 'The Tragedy of May 30th'.

⁴⁶¹ Cheng was one of the leaders of a series of campaigns for religious liberty, and against the proposal of making Confucianism the state religion during 1913-17. He was a member of the Beijing Association for Religious Liberty and Against National Religion in 1913, and one of the leaders of the Society for Religious Liberty in 1916. The clause of religious liberty was eventually guaranteed in the constitution.

the initiative to organise a committee to promote the abolition of the ‘toleration clauses’ of the ‘unequal treaties’ in Nanjing immediately after the outbreak of the ‘May Thirtieth Incident.’ Following his action, large numbers of Chinese Christians in Nanjing, Nanchang, Guangzhou, Wuxing, Hengshan and Danyang issued manifestos to promote abolition. Christian journals and periodicals also published special issues for articles on this subject.⁴⁶² Nonetheless, at the beginning, there were different opinions on this subject within both Chinese churches and missions. Some Chinese Christians insisted that churches should not interfere with politics, and therefore were against the abolition; others opposed the abolition on the grounds that churches needed to be protected by the ‘toleration clauses’ of the ‘unequal treaties,’ especially at a time when the socio-political situation in China was unstable; whilst others again approved of it, for these treaties were against the principles of Christianity and they caused the hatred of Chinese people to Christian churches.⁴⁶³ The NCC sent a questionnaire consisting of fourteen questions to Chinese Christians in each province in January 1926, before its annual meeting in October. Questions included whether churches should respond to political issues, whether the ‘toleration clauses’ were compatible with the Christian doctrine, whether the protection of the ‘toleration clauses’ was necessary when religious liberty was guaranteed in the committee on international relations, the 275 replies to the questionnaire showed that

⁴⁶² Duan, *Fenjin de Licheng (Process of Endeavour)*, 361-3.

⁴⁶³ ‘Zhongguo Jiaohui duiyu Chuanjiao Tiaoyue Wenti zhi Yijian 中國教會對於傳教條約問題之意見 (The Opinions of the Chinese Church to the Issue of ‘Missionary Treaties’),’ *Zhonghua Gui Zhu*, no. 63-4 (1926): 2.

between sixty and seventy-five per cent agreed that:

...the 'toleration clauses' are incompatible with the teachings of Christianity, and further that even if they were not, they are no longer needed and by implication, not desirable; and that in order to do away with them a formal declaration, voluntarily made, by missionaries and (or) Chinese Christians, signifying their willingness to see them abolished, would be of value.⁴⁶⁴

The report also quoted several resolutions adopted by a number of Chinese churches, such as Huabei Gonglihui 華北公理會 (the North China Kung Li Hwei, the North China Congregational Union) and the Guangdong Divisional Council of the Church of Christ in China. Their opinions, and those of large numbers of Chinese Christians, regarding the abolition of the 'unequal treaties' were determined. During this stage, there was in general a visible divergence in opinions between Chinese Christians and missionaries regarding this matter. Mission home boards in general preferred 'the revision of the existing treaties,' but missionaries seemed to have divergent opinions. In addition, there was a 'definite opinion' 'strongly' held by certain missionaries and several Chinese Christians that 'any change at the present time would be premature.'⁴⁶⁵ Concerning the divided opinions on this issue, especially between Chinese Christians and missionaries, the resolutions the committee finally adopted included:

1. That the Christian Church and Christian Missions should preach the

⁴⁶⁴ SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1925-6, 124-5

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 123-30.

Gospel and perform Christian service in China upon the basis of religious liberty freely accorded by the Republic of China, and that all provisions in the treaties with foreign countries for special privileges for the churches or missions should be removed.

2. That the present treaties between China and foreign Powers should be *revised* on a basis of freedom and equality.⁴⁶⁶

The above resolutions indicated that certain progress had been made regarding the issue of the ‘unequal treaties,’ for both Chinese Christians and missionaries in general had reached an agreement on the removal of the special privileges for churches and missions, though it was rather a compromise between Chinese Christians and missionaries, and the desire of large numbers of Chinese Christians for the abolition of the ‘unequal treaties’ had not yet achieved its goal.

In addition to the abolition of the ‘toleration clauses,’ the issue of Christian school registration with the government was the other main theme of the times. It was raised during the second stage of the Anti-Christian Movement in early 1924. Before the outbreak of the ‘May-Thirtieth Incident,’ there were quite divergent attitudes among Chinese Christians towards this matter. Some, such as Li Denghui 李登輝, Principal of Fudan University in Shanghai, entirely disapproved of registration and thought highly of Christian education;⁴⁶⁷ others, such as Wang Biting 汪弼廷, viewed it in a positive way; whilst others again, such as Liu Tingfang, urged reforming Christian schools.⁴⁶⁸ In general, Chinese Christians, with only a few

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁶⁷ Li Denghui, ‘Guojia Jiaoyu yu Jidujiao 國家教育與基督教 (National Education and Christianity),’ *Zhonghua Jidujiao Jiaoyu Jikan 中華基督教教育季刊 (Chinese Christian Education Quarterly)* 1, no. 1 (1925): 25-6.

⁴⁶⁸ Wang Biting, ‘Zhongguo Shouhui Jiaoyuquan de Rizhi Dao ma 中國收回教育權的日子到嗎

exceptions, such as Zhao Guanhai 招觀海, still believed in the necessity of carrying out religious education in schools.⁴⁶⁹ After 30 May 1925, anti-Christian sentiment became stronger in both Christian schools and Chinese society, and many Christian schools and colleges were affected by student strikes. On 16 November 1925, the Beijing Board of Education issued ‘Regulations Governing the Recognition of Educational Institutions Established by Funds Contributed from Foreigners,’ and required that schools should have Chinese principals or vice-principals, that the curriculum must conform to the standard of the Ministry of Education, that there be no compulsion to attend religious ceremonies and that no course in religion should be included in the compulsory subjects.⁴⁷⁰ According to the report of the meeting of the China Christian Educational Association [CCEA] in May 1926, an association which was affiliated to the NCC and represented ten Christian educational associations and other bodies in China, Chinese Christian leaders generally agreed that schools should accept the regulations and register with the government. However, there was still much reservation regarding the issue of making religious education and practice optional in schools. The cost of the acceptance of this item was that the Christian characteristics of the schools would be much weakened. It therefore became the central concern for both missionaries and Chinese Christian leaders and educators

(Has the Day to Restore Educational Rights Arrived yet in China?),’ *Shengonghui Bao* 聖公會報 (*The Chinese Churchman*) 18, no. 5 (1925): 10-14; Liu Tingfang, ‘Fandui Jidujiao Jiaoyu Yundong Wenti de Yanjiu – Jidujiao Quanti de Taidu 反對基督教教育運動問題的研究——基督教全體的態度 (A Study of the Anti-Christian Education Movement: the Attitude of Christianity as a Whole),’ *Shengming Yuekan* 5, no. 5 (1925): 1-5.

⁴⁶⁹ Zhao Guanhai, ‘Woguo Zongjiao Jiaoyu zhi Jianglai 我國宗教教育之將來 (The Future of Religious Education in China),’ *Shengonghui Bao* 18, no. 10 (1925): 3-5.

⁴⁷⁰ SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1925-6, 196-211.

over the acceptance of the complete regulations issued by the national government.

The majority of mission home boards and missionaries were unwilling to register and considered the regulations as an interference with religious liberty. Concerning various opinions, the CCEA therefore stated that:

Christian educational institutions have been established to serve the interests of China and should conform to the law of the land and official regulations. The Chinese constitution having guaranteed full religious liberty, it follows that laws and official regulations cannot be inconsistent with this fundamental principle. There is general agreement as to the desirability of the registration of Christian educational institutions...⁴⁷¹

It then resolved to urge Christian educational institutions to put government regulations on Christian education into effect and to register with the government.

Regarding concerns over the regulation that religious education should be optional in schools, the CCEA decided to send a group of people to negotiate with the Ministry of Education.⁴⁷²

On 18 October 1926, during its annual meeting, the NCC for the first time devoted a considerable part of its discussions to the problem of Christian education in China.⁴⁷³ With the reference of the report of the CCEA, the committee on religious education stated the following regarding school registration:

The disadvantages of non-registration will be so serious for middle schools and colleges that every effort must be made to retrieve whatever loss in

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 201.

⁴⁷² Ibid., 201-2.

⁴⁷³ SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1925-6, 3; CBMS 350, *BNCC*, no. 21 (1926): 4.

opportunity for religious education may be involved in registration. Manifestly an added responsibility will fall on the Church to meet this loss by providing a more adequate programme of religious education.⁴⁷⁴

During the North Expedition of 1926-28, large numbers of Christian schools and colleges came under serious attack from nationalists, and the government constantly urged schools to be registered in accordance with the government's regulations. Faced with such a severe situation, both Chinese Christians and missionaries were obliged to alter their views of school registration. A large number of Chinese Christian educators, such as Zhao Zichen and Wu Leichuan, began to accept the regulations of the Ministry of Education and agreed to make religious education optional in schools.⁴⁷⁵ If the approval by Chinese Christians of the abolition of the 'unequal treaties' can be seen as a positive response to nationalism and an active action to demolish the foreignness of the church, then their gradual agreement with the regulations of school registration, particularly on the issue of religious education in schools, was a rather passive acceptance of the claims made by the growing nationalism in Chinese society, at the cost to the mission schools of losing their distinctively Christian features and rights.

From 1925 to 1927, the NCC's message to Chinese churches and Christians contained more and more political and social elements. For instance, during the

⁴⁷⁴ SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1925-6, 151-2.

⁴⁷⁵ Zhao Zichen, 'Wo Duiyu Jinhou Jidujiao Xuexiao nei Zongjiao Jiaoyu de Guanjian 我對於今後基督教學校內宗教教育的管見 (My Opinions of the Future Religious Education in Christian Schools)', *Jiaoyu Jikan* 3, no. 2 (1927): 11-18; Wu Leichuan, 'Wode Zongjiao Jiaoyu Tan 我的宗教教育談 (My Opinions of Religious Education)', *Jiaoyu Jikan* 3, no. 2 (1927): 19-21.

group discussion on several ‘outstanding questions’ of the Christian movement at the fourth annual meeting in 1926, some points of Yu Rizhang’s opening speech were rather radical and reflected this trend:

The nationalistic movement is due...Christians should sympathise with it and help it. The Church should also contribute to China’s national life. Politics and religion should *not* be separated.⁴⁷⁶

During the fifth annual meeting of the NCC on 13-20 October 1927, Yu distinguished between nationalism as a general popular movement and the nationalism of various governmental parties, and once again expressed his sympathy with nationalist movements by saying that Christians should co-operate with these movements which sought national reconstruction.⁴⁷⁷ During the same meeting, in his chairman’s closing address, Cheng Jingyi approved of a number of Christian practices in Chinese society:

I believe that there is a real contribution, and we are beginning to see that there is a great task for the Christian Church to undertake in the social phases of life... We think that the church has also some part to play in the shaping of the political life of the nation, and we have the conviction that Christianity and the principles of Jesus Christ can be brought into the political life of the nation though it is positive and definite; and yet at the same time we must not forget or belittle that spiritual contribution of the Christian Church... We must not emphasise the one to the neglect of the other... the Christian gospel has a social side. I do not agree with the frequently used term ‘The Social Gospel.’ Personally I do not think there is such a thing as a ‘Social Gospel.’ I honestly believe there is one gospel of Jesus Christ, and that gospel is for

⁴⁷⁶ SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1925-6, 63. Italics added.

⁴⁷⁷ SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1926-7, 54-5.

both personal and social betterment and change and transformation...The application of Christianity is good and right, and yet that personal touch with the eternal should be ever kept before us.⁴⁷⁸

Such an attitude showed continuity with his ideas on the social application of the gospel throughout the 1910s and 1920s, though it is undeniable that a more political tone is reflected in his addresses and talks during this period. It should be noted that while advocating the social and political functions of Christianity in Chinese society, Cheng, as manifested in this address, never neglected the spiritual side of the church. Further examples of this breadth of emphasis can be found in Rev. Zhang Fang 張坊 (Djang Fang), the NCC secretary, Gu Ziren 顧子仁 (T. Z. Koo) of the national YMCA and Rev. Tan Woxin 譚沃心 (Y. S. Tom), general secretary of Guangdong Synod, the Church of Christ in China. During this meeting, they did not only pay attention to the actual needs of individuals and society, but also re-emphasised the precedence of the inward life of the church and the desire for Christian solidarity and unity.⁴⁷⁹

In the face of a series of national crises and attacks against Christian churches in China, it was impossible that the declarations of a number of leading Chinese Christian figures in the NCC would not be affected by the political atmosphere, as shown for instance by Yu's and Cheng's points. Out of the conviction that Christian unity was a universal Christian principle that should not be broken by narrow nationalism, and that churches in China were pragmatically still in need of

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 36-9.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 54-8.

co-operation with foreign missions, the NCC and its member churches and societies maintained the link with foreign missions. This resulted in severe criticism from Chinese society, which was stirred by nationalistic sentiment. Under such circumstances, the Chinese leaders of the NCC endeavoured to express the churches' patriotism and demonstrate their Chinese identity by taking a stand on social and political events.

On the other hand, the concern to make the church indigenous and to stress the social application of Christianity in China should not be seen only as a response to a politically hostile environment. It was also a natural step during the course of the growth of the 'selfhood' of the church, and a wider dimension of the vision of the future of Christianity in China held by a number of Christian figures. Influenced by social gospel teachings and a metropolitan intellectual elitist culture,⁴⁸⁰ a group of Chinese Christian leaders and intellectuals, especially those involved in the NCC, as represented by Cheng Jingyi and Yu Rizhang, were optimistically convinced that Christianity had great value within Chinese society, not only for the realisation of personal salvation through the evangelical aspect of the Christian faith, but also for social transformation through the application of an ethical Christianity. The NCC's activities in searching for the conjunction between Christianity and the reconstruction and salvation of the Chinese nation were of this manner. It should be noted that, during the Anti-Christian Movement, Chinese Christians' claims for a

⁴⁸⁰ Bob Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter: China and Christianity* (Glasgow: W. Collins Sons, 1988), 156-7.

Chinese church were stimulated by the growing nationalism in Chinese society. During the annual meeting of 1927, a desire emerged among a number of NCC delegates, in particular Chinese delegates, to re-organise the NCC, in order to make it more directly and effectively representative of Chinese churches. According to the report of the annual meeting, the ‘church-centric consciousness’ of the delegates quite overwhelmed the discussion.⁴⁸¹

Nevertheless, the efforts of the NCC and the mission-related churches may not have convinced contemporary critics to change their unfavourable image of Christian churches in China as a form of ‘cultural aggression.’ The NCC’s renewed emphasis on the spiritual life of the Chinese church from 1926 to 1927 was not only a pure spiritual reminder to Christians in China, but also a reflection of the diversion of the attention of the Chinese church towards the building of inner church life after its quest for wider social application had met with considerable frustration.⁴⁸²

4.2.3. A ‘National’ Christian Council?

During the 1920s, not only was the NCC’s attempt to achieve church indigeneity in China challenged by the nationwide anti-Christian sentiment, but its ecumenical outlook of a co-operative consensus among all Protestant bodies in China was also

⁴⁸¹ SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1926-7, 63-4.

⁴⁸² SMA, U123-0-63-55, Cheng Jingyi, ‘Lingxing de Yubei 靈性的預備 (The Preparation of Spiritual Life),’ *Zhonghua Gui Zhu*, no. 60-1 (1926); SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1926-7, 16-7, 53-8.

put on severe trial owing to a series of intensified theological disputes. In particular, the controversy between liberals and fundamentalists deeply affected the NCC. Some communities did not join the NCC due to this dispute, whilst others withdrew during a later stage. Considering that this controversy had a vital influence over ecumenism in China during the 1920s and 1930s, and that two major Protestant organisations that this thesis deals with, the NCC and the Church of Christ in China, both had dramatic interaction with it, this section will pay particular attention to the evolution of this controversy during this period, and examine in what way it affected the NCC.

The fundamentalist movement emerged in North America during the late 1910s and early 1920s as a militant evangelical opposition to modernists.⁴⁸³ According to George Marsden, fundamentalism had its roots in the nineteenth-century traditions of revivalism, evangelicalism, pietism, Americanism and variant orthodoxies. Marsden

⁴⁸³ Current scholarship on the subject of modern fundamentalist and liberal movements includes Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture, The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Hutchison, 'Modernism and Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Christianity, 1875-1935,' in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); M. Searle Bates, 'The Theology of American Missionaries in China, 1900-1950,' in *Missionary Enterprise*, ed. Fairbank; Joel A. Carpenter, ed., *Modernism and Foreign Missions, Two Fundamentalist Protests* (New York: Garland Pub., 1988); Carpenter, *Revive Us Again, The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); David Bebbington, 'Martyrs for the Truth: Fundamentalists in Britain,' in *Martyrs and Martyrologies, Studies in Church History, Vol. 30*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 417-51; Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries, Liberalism in American Protestant, Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); and Kevin Xiyi Yao, *The Fundamentalist Movement Among Protestant Missionaries in China, 1920-1937* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003). Yao devoted each chapter of his book to case studies of several major events, persons, institutions and issues of the controversy, such as the well-known fundamentalist alliance – the Bible Union of China, the Nanking Theological Seminary, the North China Theological Seminary, and the CIM's withdrawal from the NCC, presenting an integral picture of the features, concerns and evolutions of the fundamentalist movement in China during the 1920s and 1930s.

identified several major streams in shaping fundamentalism before the First World War, particularly dispensational premillennialism, the holiness movement, and Princeton theology based on Scottish Common Sense philosophy. After the First World War, as he noted, in the face of the modernist erosion of Christian civilisation and morality as well as changes in Christian views towards culture which modernism endorsed, fundamentalists took a stand and fought back.⁴⁸⁴ On the other hand, William Hutchison has identified liberalism as having three major components, namely, ‘the conscious, intended adaptation of religious ideas to modern culture,’ ‘God’s immanence in human cultural development and revelation through it,’ and ‘the realisation of the Kingdom of God in human society.’⁴⁸⁵ It spread widely among the mainline Protestant denominations and their foreign missions in the early twentieth century, and was transmitted through the Student Volunteer Movement and the YMCA. According to Hutchison, liberalism became a ‘powerful orthodoxy’ in missions during the 1920s.⁴⁸⁶ This certainly caused serious concerns among fundamentalists in North America, who immediately assembled the young missionaries of their side. The dispute continued to develop when the young generation of missionaries imported it into China.

As a part of the international fundamentalist movement, the fundamentalist movement in early twentieth-century China had an intimate connection with that in

⁴⁸⁴ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 4, 143-64, 201; Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 9-11

⁴⁸⁵ Hutchison, *Modernist Impulse*, 2; Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 11.

⁴⁸⁶ Hutchison, ‘Modernism and Missions,’ 124-6.

North America. However, Kevin Yao has pointed out that the fundamentalist movement in China was also shaped by a Chinese context; its roots, theological agenda and practice were ‘not completely identical’ with those in North America. Some characteristics of the movement in North America, such as premillennialism, were not so obvious in China. According to Yao, the central doctrinal tenets of the movement in China were biblical authority and the supernatural aspects of the gospel. Liberals developed a ‘social-gospel model’ of mission work, which was heavily inclined towards educational, medical and other social programmes, whilst fundamentalists held a conversionist approach which was preaching-centric rather than focussed on social involvement.⁴⁸⁷ It has been suggested that these characteristics of the two parties in China demonstrate that the dispute between them more or less inherited the two different missionary approaches that emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century, as represented by Timothy Richard, the Welsh Baptist missionary, and Hudson Taylor, the founder of the CIM. Generally speaking, Richard was flexible and culture-oriented, while Taylor was driven exclusively by evangelistic enthusiasm, although it must be stressed that they shared the common goal of evangelising China (Richard had, after all, originally applied to the CIM). As a result, Richard’s approach was not merely focussed on soul-salvation but also on social reform by western civilisation, with Taylor insisting on the priority of the preaching of the gospel and the salvation of souls. Their models were considered to be the most representative and influential approaches in shaping the

⁴⁸⁷ Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 280-5.

whole Protestant missionary movement and Chinese churches.⁴⁸⁸ Each side had a group of missionary supporters. Nonetheless, as Yao noted, Richard and Taylor demonstrated two different emphases and tendencies within the unbroken nineteenth-century missionary consensus. A dramatic conflict between the two parties began to take shape as the divergence intensified in North America and among the young generation of missionaries to China. Although to liberals the controversy only raised the question of which Christian expression would be more effective to modern societies, to conservatives it raised the fundamental question of whether the liberals were spreading the same gospel as them. As Hutchison pointed out, by the 1920s, the hard-line opposition to liberalism in the mission fields focussed on the question of 'Is it Christianity?' rather than 'Is it effective?'⁴⁸⁹ This judgement of fundamentalists tended to deepen the gulf between the two parties.

During the 1920s, the majority of fundamentalist missionaries in China viewed the church unity movement with disfavour, which they believed to be a liberal-dominated movement.⁴⁹⁰ As a milestone in the evolution of ecumenism in China, the NCC certainly evoked their caution and anxiety. It was accused by these fundamentalists of disseminating western ecumenical propaganda, which they traced back to the 1910 Conference.⁴⁹¹ Fundamentalist missionaries simply equated these

⁴⁸⁸ Paul A. Cohen, 'Missionary Approaches: Hudson Taylor and Timothy Richard,' *Papers on China* 11 (1957): 29-62; Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*. (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 387; Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 32-6.

⁴⁸⁹ Hutchison, 'Modernism and Missions,' 124.

⁴⁹⁰ Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 183.

⁴⁹¹ Delegates of the Mission to the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions, 13 September 1922, Bridges Papers, PHS, Montreal, NC, in Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 206.

Chinese leaders with liberals of the West, and the NCC and the church unity movement in China with western ecumenism.

Fundamentalists saw the NCC as consisting mainly of liberal Chinese church leaders and missionaries. For example, the North Jiangsu (Kiangsu) Mission of the Southern Presbyterian Church refused to join the NCC, though they sent four delegates to the National Christian Conference in 1922. In a letter to the executive committee of foreign missions, delegates complained about the modernistic features of the NCC:

The movement is largely a modernist movement. While some conservative men are on the various Committees, the majority are men of modernist sympathies. The Chinese put forward as speakers and leaders in the National Conference, with the exception of Dr. Chen Ching I [Cheng Jingyi], were mainly of the same class. The whole general drift of the movement, both as regards religious beliefs and administration, is opposed to the convictions and policies of our Southern Presbyterian Church.⁴⁹²

To them and other conservative missions, the addresses of several Christian intellectuals, such as Zhao Zichen and Liu Tingfang, were potent examples of the NCC's liberalism. Zhao expressed a strong cultural and social concern over Christianity in China, especially in his search for integration of Christianity and Chinese traditional culture. In his speech, phrases like 'social consciousness' and 'social needs' frequently appeared, which echoed the 'social-gospel thinking' of the

⁴⁹² Delegates of the Mission to the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions, 13 September 1922, in Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 206.

NCC.⁴⁹³ Liu Tingfang openly welcomed ‘scientific investigation’ and ‘critical study’ of the Scripture in his address, which also fitted the fundamentalists’ criteria for being a liberal.⁴⁹⁴

As mentioned previously, fundamentalists were dissatisfied with the neutral theological stance of the 1922 National Christian Conference and its resultant council. What they were concerned about most was whether the NCC shared the necessary fundamentals of the faith which would make co-operation possible. The NCC certainly failed to meet the criteria of the North Jiangsu Mission.⁴⁹⁵ Others, such as the CIM, chose to join the NCC, though had reservations about it. Yao has provided a broad survey of the course of negotiations between the CIM and the NCC.⁴⁹⁶ According to him, the reasons behind the CIM’s joining included that it always acknowledged the importance of Christian unity in China and was willing to contribute a doctrinally orthodox voice to the NCC discussions, even though the theological views that some bodies of the union held may have been quite different from their own. Additionally, the CIM never felt at ease with the NCC, and desired to keep a close watch on the NCC’s policy and actions, and gain influence over certain

⁴⁹³ T. C. Chao, ‘The Strength and the Weakness of the Church in China,’ *National Conference 1922*, 206-9; Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 191.

⁴⁹⁴ Timothy Tingfang Lew, ‘The Church of Christ in China,’ *National Conference 1922*, 225-9.

⁴⁹⁵ The Minutes of the North Kiangsu Mission, August 1922, China Mission Papers, PHS, Montreal, NC, in Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 205.

⁴⁹⁶ Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 195-207; Yao Xiyi, ‘Jiaohui Heyi Linian de Chongtu: Zhongguo Neidihui yu Zhonghua Jidujiao Xiejinhui Guanxi zhi Yanbian, 1922-1926 教會合一理念的衝突：中國內地會與中華基督教協進會關係之演變 (1922-1926) (The Conflict between Different Visions of Church Union, The Evolution of the Relationship between the China Inland Mission and the National Christian Council of China, 1922-1926),’ *Jidujiao Wenhua Pinglun 基督教文化評論 (Chinese Journal of Theology)* 20 (2004): 233-254.

doctrinal matters through joining the NCC.⁴⁹⁷ Furthermore, as Yao pointed out, there were quite a number of ‘moderates’ or ‘mild fundamentalists’ in the fundamentalist camp. They ‘could agree with the fundamentalists on such issues as the authority of the Bible and supernatural Christology and regretted the rise of modernism,’ but did not join the anti-modernist campaign for the sake of Christian unity within the missionary community.⁴⁹⁸ For example, as David Bebbington has noted, there were the British ‘conservative evangelicals,’ who were ‘often eager to distinguish themselves from’ fundamentalists.⁴⁹⁹ The CIM’s joining and later withdrawal from the NCC may also have revealed such a divergence in attitudes within the mission on union with the NCC.

During the commission’s discussion on the formation of the NCC, D. E. Hoste, the CIM director, raised the concerns of the CIM regarding the doctrinal statement of the NCC and suggested a doctrinal resolution with ‘three fundamental Christian truths’:

1. The Deity of our Lord.
2. Salvation through His atonement.
3. The trustworthiness and authority of the whole Bible.⁵⁰⁰

Hoste’s claim was supported by Ruth Paxson, a famous evangelist in China during the 1920s, and a member of the executive committee of the Bible Union of China

⁴⁹⁷ Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 200-1.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 281-4.

⁴⁹⁹ Bebbington, ‘Fundamentalists in Britain,’ 420.

⁵⁰⁰ *National Conference 1922*, 648.

which was formed in 1920 as ‘the most significant indicator of the fundamentalist rallying against’ the liberals.⁵⁰¹ It should be noted that most liberals would not have found any difficulty in signifying their approval of these three items. What large numbers of the NCC organisers were concerned about was that:

The conference however is not constituted as a church council with authority to pass upon questions of doctrine and of church polity or to draw up a creedal or doctrinal statement of any kind.⁵⁰²

Hoste’s suggestion even encountered strong opposition from a number of conservative missionaries, for they also believed that the NCC had no authority over any doctrinal matters, and therefore had no power to insert a doctrinal statement in the new constitution.⁵⁰³

As a British conservative evangelical, or moderate fundamentalist, Hoste’s claim could hardly satisfy his North American colleagues, who held a more radical view of the theological statement. According to Alvyn Austin, the American CIM was inclined to step into the ‘tent of the hardest of hard-liners’ in the early twentieth century.⁵⁰⁴ Fundamentalists eventually obtained dominance in the mission, and the CIM thus formally withdrew from the NCC on 15 March 1926, in order to protect the mission’s doctrinal orthodox image and principles.⁵⁰⁵ In addition to the CIM, the

⁵⁰¹ Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 200-1.

⁵⁰² *National Conference 1922*, 693-4.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 658.

⁵⁰⁴ Alvyn Austin, ‘Only Connect: The China Inland Mission and Transatlantic Evangelicalism,’ in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 308-10.

⁵⁰⁵ SOAS, CBMS 350, *BNCC*, no. 19 (1926): 2.

Christian and Missionary Alliance also withdrew in 1926. In response, the NCC, while expressing its regret over this issue, which it considered to be the outcome of a ‘fundamental misconception’ over the nature and function of the council, once again stressed its theological neutral stance in 1926 by stating that:

We wish to take this opportunity of making absolutely clear that the NCC does not stand for nor seek to promote the point of view of any one group or party in the Christian family.⁵⁰⁶

The NCC believed that Protestant communities in China were able to unite on the basis of a common faith in a common Christian God, no matter if there was ecclesiastical difference or theological divergence. That was why the council took a theologically neutral stand and constantly advocated that Christians should ‘agree to differ but resolve to love.’⁵⁰⁷ However, for fundamentalist missions, such as the North Jiangsu Mission and the CIM, genuine unity could only be based on a common faith with a common theological and doctrinal expression. Yao has interpreted the divergence as a conflict between ‘two different visions of church union,’ one liberal, and the other evangelical.⁵⁰⁸ Nonetheless, if we go back to Hutchison’s claim, which suggested the existence of two competing Christianities of modernism and fundamentalism, we might find that the ultimate problem of the divergent views of unity between the NCC and the CIM lay in divergent answers to such basic

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁰⁷ SOAS, CBMS 350, *BNCC*, no. 19 (1926): 3.

⁵⁰⁸ Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 204, 220.

theological questions as: What standards did the common faith refer to – the love of God in Christ, or biblical authority and doctrinal consensus? On what level should the theological lowest common denominator be drawn?

Apart from the controversy between liberals and fundamentalists, there were also criticisms from other missions of the NCC's sympathy with political movements, in particular from the Lutherans. During the commission debate on the NCC at the 1922 Conference, Siegfried Knak, the director of the Berlin Mission Society, questioned the council's political stance:

Should the National Council deal with political matters or not? ...A Church and a national Christian council should not have to do with political methods. Evangelism must be kept free from political polity. The German missions did so before the war, following the great doctrine of Martin Luther. It is not dealing with politics which makes the church a fountain of strength. The Chinese Church is not asking, what is heavenly, but what is Chinese... Very soon the church of China will be mixed up with politics.⁵⁰⁹

Following the traditional Lutheran doctrine of the separation of the two kingdoms, Knak and the Berlin Mission strongly opposed the entanglement between Christianity and politics, and emphasised 'the purity' of the gospel and the Reformation roots of his mission.⁵¹⁰

After the 'May Thirtieth Incident,' the NCC's letter to the Shanghai Municipal

⁵⁰⁹ *National Conference 1922*, 661-2.

⁵¹⁰ Karla Poewe, 'The Spell of National Socialism: The Berlin Mission's Opposition to, and Compromise with, the Völkisch Movement and National Socialism: Knak, Braun, Weichert,' in *Mission und Gewalt: Der Umgang christlicher Missionen mit Gewalt und die Ausbreitung des Christentums in Afrika und Asien*, Missions Geschichtliches Archiv, Band 6, eds. Ulrich van der Heyden and Juergen Becher (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000), 268-290.

Council in 1925, and the general attitudes of its Chinese members towards the abolition of the ‘unequal treaties,’ once again evoked general criticisms from the Lutherans:

Then again, as to the question of politics, we think if the Church involves herself in it, she is at once not keeping herself within the proper boundary of the field of endeavour...the Council is now planning to engage itself in the campaign of the abolition of Toleration Clauses and the ‘Unequal’ Treaties. This is to expose itself to the suspicion that it is meddling in political matters, and consequently it would seem that the Council has already gone beyond its limit.⁵¹¹

Then again, on 7 April 1927, a critical letter from thirty-two missionaries accused the NCC of causing division by its political actions:

It has endeavoured to determine the policy of the Missions and Churches in China; and has repeatedly put forth pronouncements in regard to political matters on its own authority without ascertaining the wishes of the co-operating bodies...For these reasons it has lost the confidence of a large part of the Missionary Body and we are making this protest against its being considered as representing our views and opinions. We regard its recent policy and methods as dangerous to and subversive of the best interests of the Churches in China.⁵¹²

The NCC, however, stated that the council was primarily responsible to Christian organisations rather than individuals, and only three of the thirty-two missionaries were members of the council.⁵¹³ This implied that the focal point of the above

⁵¹¹ SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC Annual Report 1925-6, 52-4.

⁵¹² SOAS, CBMS 348, NCC A Five Years’ Review, 31-2.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, 32.

criticism was in fact the NCC's attitude toward political issues rather than its departure from the constitution as a representative and advisory body.

Although the NCC intended to co-ordinate all Protestant bodies to step forward towards an ecumenical future of Protestantism in China, the reality was rather the frustration of such hopes. The controversy between liberals and fundamentalists had broken the Protestant consensus, and the NCC failed to unite all Protestant communities and merit the title of a 'national' council. Even within the NCC, there were dispute in opinions regarding politics and social involvement among different Protestant denominations and groups. Moreover, fundamentalist missionaries successfully trained a number of conservative Chinese evangelists, such as Wang Mingdao 王明道 and Jia Yuming 賈玉銘.⁵¹⁴ Each of them had considerable influence within Chinese Protestant churches. Although Chinese liberals and fundamentalists only 'occasionally' condemned each other, as their conflicts were not as severe or as frequent as among missionaries,⁵¹⁵ their increasing deviation from each other became a serious obstacle to the church unity movement in early twentieth-century China. Cheng Jingyi's ecumenical ideal of the Chinese church, which aimed to surpass denominational distinctions, failed to overcome this

⁵¹⁴ Wang Mingdao (1900-1991) was an independent Chinese Protestant pastor and evangelist. He began holding religious meetings in his home in Beijing in 1925, which eventuated in the founding of the Christian Tabernacle. Wang strongly opposed liberal theology which he said had destroyed the faith of young people. He founded the Christian Church in Christ, which emphasized the practical aspects of the Christian life. He was imprisoned for his faith by the Communist government from 1955 until 1980.

Jia Yuming (1880-1964) was ordained as a pastor in 1904. He went to teach in Nanjing Seminary in 1915 and then to Tengxian, Shandong, as vice-principal at North China Theological Seminary. In 1948, Jia attended the World Gospel Conference held in Holland and was nominated as vice-chairman. In 1954, he was chosen as vice-chairman of the Committee of the Chinese Church Three-Self Patriotic Movement.

⁵¹⁵ Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 286-7.

liberal-fundamental theological divergence.

4.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the course of the establishment of the National Christian Council of China and its effort toward building a united indigenous church appropriate to the critical social and political circumstances in China which were stirred by the Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-1927. Behind a series of responses by the NCC to the Anti-Christian Movement was the constant desire for church indigeneity and unity in China. This desire became even stronger in the face of nationwide nationalism and deteriorating socio-political circumstances in China. With numerous articles, the efforts of Chinese churches and the resolutions of the NCC, the church indigeneity movement reached its peak during this period. The self-consciousness of Chinese churches was expressed through their responses to several socio-political issues, such as the abolition of the 'unequal treaties' and the restoration of educational rights. A number of Chinese Christian elites endeavoured to testify the Chinese identity of the church in the presence of Chinese nationalists. The NCC responded to the times positively, and its advantages as a national advisory body were demonstrated in activities such as collecting information, proposing recommendations and conducting investigations on a nationwide basis. Nevertheless, due to the unavoidable connection with foreign missions, the endeavour of those

mission-related churches and the NCC in church indigeneity and social transformation failed to convince Chinese people to change their unfavourable image of Christianity as a 'foreign religion' and 'cultural aggression.' Those Chinese Christian elites aimed to demonstrate the Chinese characteristics of the church by adapting Christianity into Chinese life and culture through social involvement, church indigeneity and patriotic response to political issues. However, what Chinese nationalists sought was chiefly for the church to sever its connection with foreign powers. The NCC and the mainline churches proved unable to meet even this limited demand.

In addition, this chapter has shown that the NCC's self-proclaimed status as a 'national' council was increasingly challenged by the divergence in theological convictions of different Protestant communities. The 1920s witnessed the rise of the controversy between Protestant liberals and fundamentalists in China, with the church unity movement and its resultant council becoming the main targets of the missionary fundamentalist movement. The gulf between the two different visions of 'church unity,' and even the 'two Christianities,' seemed to be impassable. The obstacles to the church unity movement in China at this stage were not only denominational distinctions but also theological divergence.

As David Paton stated: 'The struggle among the educated – which was not usually overt – was between those who primarily wanted a Chinese church responsive to the national need and the national mood and those who wanted a

Chinese church primarily faithful to the ecclesiological understandings and cultural assumptions of the missionary movement.’⁵¹⁶ For many Christian leaders in the NCC, such as Zhao Zichen, Liu Tingfang and Yu Rizhang, the former was certainly their preference. Referring to Cheng Jingyi, as the North Jiangsu Mission delegates noted, he was not a liberal to them; but neither did he belong to the class of fundamentalists. He was inclined to be sympathetic to the liberal approach to social reform through Christian faith, and had a strong national and social consciousness which inclined him to link Christianity and the concept of ‘national salvation.’ Yet he never lost sight of the goal of the evangelisation of China, or concern over the spiritual life of the individual and the Protestant community. There were a number of Protestants, both foreign and Chinese, in the middle of the dispute between fundamentalists and liberals, such as Cheng Jingyi and D. E. Hoste. Nonetheless, this group of Protestants were able to stop neither the liberal inclination of the NCC nor the increasing hostility of fundamentalists to it. The tendency of polarisation between the two extremes in the subsequent history of Protestantism in China put ecumenism in China under severe trial.

⁵¹⁶ Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, 153.

Chapter 5:

The Church of Christ in China as a Case Study of the Church Unity Movement (1927-1939)

During the 1920s, the Chinese church and the Chinese ecumenical movement had endured a series of challenges, both outside and within the church, such as the Anti-Christian Movement and the conflict between conservatism and liberalism which emerged in Protestant missions and churches in China. Nevertheless, the efforts of the mainline Chinese churches towards the goal of a united national church had continued during this period. One of the most significant steps towards this goal was the organisation of the General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China [CCC] in Shanghai in 1927. As a united Chinese church, co-operating with fourteen denominations and missions at the time of its formation, and with the number of communicants totalling one third of the whole body of Protestant communicants in China, the formation of the CCC seemed to be a symbolic event that marked the realisation of Cheng Jingyi's dream of a united indigenous church, which he had proclaimed during the 1910 Edinburgh Conference. The CCC played an active role in the promotion of church unity in China and in formulating a Christian response to various social and political issues during the subsequent three decades, a role that should not be neglected in recording the history of Chinese Christianity in the twentieth century. This chapter uses the CCC as a case study, focussing on the

evolution of the CCC from 1927 to 1939,⁵¹⁷ and aims to answer the following questions: 1. As a united indigenous church, how did the CCC seek its own development and how did it promote further union in China between 1927 and 1939? 2. What was the role of Cheng Jingyi in the development of the CCC? 3. What was the legacy of the CCC for Chinese Christianity and the world ecumenical movement?

5.1.The Formation and Development of the CCC

5.1.1. The Origin of the CCC

Although the first General Assembly of the CCC met in Shanghai in 1927, the history of the formation of the CCC can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century. The origin of the CCC owed much to the efforts of the Presbyterian churches in China towards union. As mentioned in Chapter 2, a number of churches and western missions had already foreseen the necessity and possibility of church union in China in the early twentieth century, and among them were the Presbyterians. During a conference in Shanghai in October 1901, fifty-four representatives of ten Presbyterian church bodies, mainly based in central and north China, expressed their sense of the ecumenical future of the Christian movement in China, and indicated that the first step towards this goal was to achieve a union

⁵¹⁷ Cheng Jingyi died in late 1939. As the central figure, this thesis confines its scope to issues and events during his lifetime.

between the ten Presbyteries in China.⁵¹⁸ The conference approved two resolutions:

1. This Conference earnestly desires the unity of the Christian Church in China and cordially welcomes all opportunity of co-operation with all sections of the Church. This conference resolves therefore to take steps for uniting more closely the Presbyterian Churches, hoping thereby to facilitate the ultimate attainment of a wider union.
2. The Conference therefore recommends the appointment of a committee to prepare a plan of union, organic or federal as may be found practicable, and submit [the] same to the church courts (native or foreign) concerned.⁵¹⁹

The conference then sent letters to all the Presbyterian churches in China to discuss the possible union.⁵²⁰ In April 1907, a federal council of the Presbyteries in China was formed in Shanghai, with approximately equal numbers of Chinese and missionary delegates.

Meanwhile, a number of Congregational churches, for example, those planted by the LMS, were also keen to explore possible union among various denominations. The formation of the CCC reflected a convergence between the efforts of these two denominations. What made their union feasible in China was the synthesis of their church polities. The history of Protestant missions demonstrates that there was

⁵¹⁸ SMA, U102-0-15-53, Xu Shengyan 許聲炎, 'Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Qianyinhouguo 中華基督教會前因後果 (The Account of the Church of Christ in China),' *Shuguang 曙光 (Twilight)*, no. 2, 19 July 1937, 11; Wallace C. Merwin, *Adventure in Unity, The Church of Christ in China* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 22.

⁵¹⁹ Merwin, *Adventure in Unity*, 22.

⁵²⁰ These were the Presbyterian Church of Ireland and Scotland in Manchuria; the American Presbyterian Church (North) and the Presbyterian Church of Canada in North China, Shandong, Hebei and Henan; the American Presbyterian Church (North) and the Church of Scotland in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Hunan and Hubei; the Reformed Presbyterian Church of the US and the English Presbyterian Church in South Fujian; the Lingdong English Presbyterian Church; and the American Presbyterian Church (North), the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand and the Presbyterian Church of Canada in Guangdong. See SMA, U102-0-15-53, Xu, 'Qianyinhouguo (The Account of the CCC),' 11.

usually a shift in the shape of Protestant traditions between the domestic church and the church in the mission fields after these traditions were transmitted from one culture to another.⁵²¹ According to Norman Goodall, as early as the second half of the nineteenth century the LMS had been encouraging the establishment of some form of church union among its local congregations in India and China in order to foster responsible relationships among them. This policy was embodied in its *Instructions to Missionaries*.⁵²² The creation of district committees in the mission fields during the 1860s not only made this strategy applicable in China, but also to some extent redefined Congregational traditions of church government. Instead of individual congregations being the seat of authority, district committees attempted to foster the corporate responsibility of missionaries for the direction of church work. In 1910 an Advisory Council, which represented all the district committees, was established to superintend the LMS work in China as a whole with a common policy. This indicated the LMS's move away from Congregational independency towards a functional presbyterate. The formation of a parallel Chinese Advisory Council of the LMS in 1912 accelerated the pace towards Christian union, for Chinese Christians were particularly enthusiastic about this matter. At its first meeting in 1912, the Chinese Advisory Council urged the necessity of union by declaring that:

⁵²¹ Brian Stanley, 'The Reshaping of Christian Tradition: Western Denominational Identity in a Non-Western Context,' in *Unity and Diversity in the Church, Studies in Church History, Vol. 32*, ed. R. N. Swanson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 406-420.

⁵²² Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 214.

In the opinion of the Chinese Council the surest way to secure union between the church denominations is first to secure throughout our churches the dropping of our distinctive denominational names...Further, the Chinese Council think that an inclusive term should be agreed upon, as e.g., Chi Tu Chiao Hui (Christian Church), and further designation should be local or geographical, rather than mission or denominational. Our aim is to prepare in every possible way for union with others...⁵²³

In a simultaneous development, a number of Presbyterian churches showed an opposite tendency towards encouraging both native leadership and self-support of individual churches during the mid-nineteenth century, particularly in Guangdong and Fujian.⁵²⁴ The emergence of autonomous local congregations in some of the Presbyterian churches demonstrated a trend among Presbyterians towards a less centralised administration and an incorporation of certain Congregational elements regarding the autonomy of native churches.

As a matter of course, the next stage witnessed an intersection of the converging efforts towards union being made by both Presbyterians and Congregationalists. The formation of the South Indian United Church in 1908 further inspired some of the leaders of both denominations, who had already borne in mind the possibility of a similar union in China. In April 1918, during the course of the formation of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in China, the federal council of the presbyteries met in Nanjing and formally invited representatives of the LMS and the ABCFM to be present. Delegates of the three bodies approved the principle of a wider union among them, and accordingly appointed a committee of twelve members

⁵²³ Ibid., 215-7.

⁵²⁴ Merwin, *Adventure in Unity*, 72-3.

on the Basis of Union to draft a scheme of union and to submit it to the church courts for consideration. The council voted to call the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in China and, as a result, to dissolve itself.⁵²⁵ Efforts at actual co-operation soon became ardent among a number of uniting churches in several regions. This was most conspicuous in Guangdong and South Fujian, where the united churches evolved into the CCC synods after the inauguration of the CCC in 1927. According to *The China Mission Year Book*, all the churches of a Congregational or Presbyterian character in Guangdong had joined in organising a divisional council of the united church in 1919, and similar actions were taken in South Fujian.⁵²⁶ As a result of the fact that over two-thirds of the votes within the LMS, ABCFM and Presbyterian churches agreed to this union, the Provisional General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China met in Shanghai in April 1922.⁵²⁷ The official representatives in attendance included those of the Presbyterian Church in China, churches and church councils associated with the LMS and the ABCFM, and the synods of the Church of Christ in Guangdong and South Fujian.⁵²⁸ The Provisional General Assembly adopted the doctrinal basis of union and the

⁵²⁵ SMA, U102-0-15-53, Xu, 'Qianyinhouguo (The Account of the CCC),' 11; Merwin, *Adventure in Unity*, 32-3; A. R. Kepler, 'Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Zonghui Gaishu 中華基督教會總會概述 (A Brief History of the General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China),' *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Nianjian 中華基督教會年鑒 (The China Christian Church Year Book) 1928*, Part 3, 1; SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, *An Adventure in Church Union in China, Origin, Nature and Task of the Church of Christ in China* (New York, 1944), 6; CWM, LMS, Central China, Reports, Box 8, 1915-20, C. G. Sparham, A Year's Work for the Advisory Council, Shanghai, 5 February 1919; Goodall, *History of LMS*, 217-8.

⁵²⁶ *The China Mission Year Book 1919*, 61.

⁵²⁷ SMA, U102-0-15-53, Xu, 'Qianyinhouguo (The Account of the CCC),' 11. Those who did not vote for the union included the Jiangbei Presbyterian churches, several District Associations in South Shandong, and the LMS and the ABCFM in North China. In 1920, the Presbyterian churches in South Fujian had already united with the LMS and formed the Synod of South Fujian.

⁵²⁸ *The China Mission Year Book 1925*, 125.

provisional constitutions prepared by the committee on the Basis of Union. This paved the way for the first General Assembly of the CCC in Shanghai five years later, which marked the official establishment of the CCC.

It should be noted that although the origins of the CCC owed much to the efforts of the above two denominations towards interdenominational co-operation and union, it was Chinese Christians who pushed the realisation of a united Chinese church further forward. Referring to the name of the united church, Chinese Christians demonstrated their determination to see the establishment of a single non-denominational Chinese church. According to both Norman Goodall and Wallace Merwin, it was the consensus of Chinese Christians that organic union was preferable to federal union.⁵²⁹ The Chinese delegates of the 1922 Provisional General Assembly decided unanimously on the name ‘Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui 中华基督教会 (The Church of Christ in China),’ which resembled the name ‘Chi Tu Chiao Hui’ in the previous quotation from the Chinese Advisory Council of the LMS, instead of ‘Zhonghua Jidujiao Lianhui 中華基督教聯會 (Federal Council of Christian Churches in China),’ the name which western delegates proposed.⁵³⁰ As Sparham revealed, Chinese Christians ‘firmly objected to give any other name as it might be construed as denominational,’ even including the word ‘united’ which, to them, implied a union of western denominations.⁵³¹ According to Xu Shengyan 許

⁵²⁹ Goodall, *History of LMS*, 220; Merwin, *Adventure in Unity*, 33-4.

⁵³⁰ Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-1928* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Cross Cultural Publications, 1988), 83.

⁵³¹ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, Central China, Reports, Box 9, 1921-25, C. G. Sparham, Advisory Council Secretary’s Report for the year 1922.

聲炎, vice-moderator of the first General Assembly of the CCC, the name ‘Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui,’ to Chinese Christians, embodied the ‘three-self’ characteristics of an ideal church, a church which was national and was independent from western administrative control and denominational influence.⁵³² As discussed in Chapter 3, Cheng Jingyi had recommended that this name be adopted by all Chinese churches as early as 1912, the same year his independent church began using this name.⁵³³ During the 1913 National Conference in Shanghai, the name ‘Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui’ had been recommended for use by all Chinese churches.⁵³⁴ The adoption of the name ‘Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui’ by the 1922 Provisional General Assembly thus showed continuity with the desire for a united independent Chinese church.

5.1.2. The First General Assembly of the CCC, Shanghai, 1927

The first General Assembly of the CCC met in St Mary’s Episcopal School in Shanghai from 1 to 11 October 1927. Cheng Jingyi served as moderator while A. R. Kepler, a missionary of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, was appointed general executive secretary. There were eighty-eight commissioners, of whom sixty-six were Chinese and twenty-two were missionaries, officially representing eleven divisional councils and forty-six district associations. Additionally, there were eight

⁵³² Xu Shengyan, ‘Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui 中華基督教會 (The Church of Christ in China),’ *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Nianjian 1929-30*, Part 2, 1.

⁵³³ See Chapter 3, 3.2.

⁵³⁴ See Chapter 3, 3.3.1.

commissioners from two presbyteries who disapproved of the scheme of union, and twenty-eight fraternal delegates from other communions which had not yet joined the union. The general theme of the Assembly was ‘Our Church,’⁵³⁵ which was fully demonstrated by Cheng Jingyi’s address, ‘The Chinese Church of Tomorrow.’ Cheng stated six key points of church indigeneity, including the realisation of the ‘three-selves’ of the Chinese church, the adaptation of Christianity to Chinese culture and the formation of a united Church of Christ in China.⁵³⁶ Not only was church indigeneity stressed as a central theme of the General Assembly, Christian unity was equally emphasised: the first Assembly issued a call for Christian solidarity to all Christians in China.⁵³⁷

The commissioners were assigned to fourteen commissions where they were to study and report their findings regarding a number of issues centred on the general theme of ‘Our Church.’⁵³⁸ Among these issues, it is worth noting that the General Assembly adopted a statement regarding the position of women in the church, which stated that ‘in the church men and women have an equal personality and in society they are mutually necessary.’ Ding Shujing 丁淑靜, the first Chinese female leader of the national YWCA, delivered an address on this topic during the Assembly,

⁵³⁵ SMA, U102-0-236-233, Digest of Important Actions of the First General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China, St. Mary’s Hall, Shanghai October 1-11, 1927, 2-3.

⁵³⁶ SMA, U102-0-7-1, Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Zonghui Diyici Huiyi Jilu 中華基督教總會第一次會議記錄 (Minutes of the First General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China), 1927, 7-8.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 22-6.

⁵³⁸ The subjects included the message of the General Assembly, the place of missions in the church, union with other communions, the control of property, rural evangelism, the place of women in the church, the literary task, educational work, theological education, non self-supporting churches, the budget of the General Assembly office, the worship of the church, the relationship between the CCC and other Christian bodies, and the form of government, discipline and directory for worship of the church. See SMA, U102-0-236-233, Digest of First General Assembly, 2.

discussing the actual situation with regard to the position of women in Chinese churches, the necessity of lifting up their position, and strategies for achieving this goal.⁵³⁹ At a time when footbinding had not been entirely eliminated in some areas of China, this resolution was certainly an advanced one. In 1928 when Kepler published a brief introduction of the CCC in *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Nianjian*, he stated that one of the tasks of the CCC was to ‘safeguard women’s rights.’ According to him, there was no objection to the ‘possibility’ of the ordination of women to ministry in the CCC.⁵⁴⁰ Merwin commented that the right of the ordination of women was accepted by the CCC ‘long before most Western churches had agreed to it.’⁵⁴¹ In this regard, the CCC made remarkable progress.

The first General Assembly voted that the CCC should administer its affairs through four levels of councils, namely, local church, district association, synod, and the General Assembly.⁵⁴² This form of organisation was considered as a suitable type

⁵³⁹ SMA, U102-0-7-1, Diyici Huiyi Jilu (Minutes of First General Assembly), 19-22.

⁵⁴⁰ Kepler, ‘Gaishu (Brief History),’ 4.

⁵⁴¹ The question of whether or not women could be ordained to the ministry was raised by the Huabei (North China) Synod during the fourth General Council Meeting of the CCC on 1-7 October 1931. According to Kepler, women had already served as evangelists, deacons, elders, and as members of district associations, synods, the General Assembly and their standing committees by the late 1930s. The constitution of the CCC made no distinction between men and women, and each synod was free to decide whether to ordain female pastors accordingly. As revealed by Wen Nandou 文南斗, Rev. Peng Suxian 彭素賢 of Sichuan Synod was the first ordained female pastor in the CCC. Her ordination possibly took place during the period from the late 1930s to the 1940s. Merwin, *Adventure in Unity*, 57-8; Wen Nandou, *He Er Wei Yi 合而為一 (Let us Unite)*, 1948, 15; SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CBMS 393, A. R. Kepler, *Let us Unite, The Church of Christ in China, Church Unity in China and Church and Mission Cooperation* (Shanghai, 1938), 32.

⁵⁴² ‘A local church is a company of believers regularly organized and assembling stately for public worship in one or more places, and recognized by the district association in whose bounds it is located. A district association is a body composed of the lay-representatives of the churches within a defined district and their ministers and their evangelists or licentiates who are recognized by such district association. A synod is a body composed of delegates appointed by two or more district associations within a given area. The General Assembly, the highest council of the Church, is a body composed of commissioners elected by all the respective synods.’ See SMA, U102-0-7-1, Diyici Huiyi Jilu (Minutes of First General Assembly), 56-7.

for the ‘initial’ and ‘transitional’ period and would, it was hoped, be replaced with a more perfect form in the future. In a booklet, *Let us Unite, The Church of Christ in China, Church Unity in China and Church and Mission Cooperation*, written by A. R. Kepler and published in 1938, there was a clear explanation of the principles underlying the organisation of the CCC. Kepler stated that the principles were ‘democratic and not hierarchical,’ which guaranteed adequate freedom to local congregations and recognised that power and authority were not imposed from above but arose from within the church – a central principle of Congregationalism.⁵⁴³

The first General Assembly established twelve synods (divisional councils), comprising Guandong (Manchuria), Zhili, Shandong, Hebei, Huadong (East China), Lianghu (Hunan and Hubei), Minbei (North Fujian), Minzhong (Central Fujian), Minnan (South Fujian), Lingdong (East Guangdong), Guangdong and the independent district association of Hainan.⁵⁴⁴ As churches in Yunnan had not been organised into a district association, the work in Yunnan was directly placed under the General Council of the CCC.⁵⁴⁵ These synods were regionally divided and a large number of them contained a denominational mix. For example, there were seven missions incorporated in the Guangdong synod, including the American Presbyterian Mission (North), Canadian Presbyterian Mission, New Zealand Presbyterian Mission, the LMS, the ABCFM, the United Brethren Mission and the

⁵⁴³ SOAS, CBMS 393, Kepler, *Let us Unite*, 13-4.

⁵⁴⁴ See Figures 2 and 3.

⁵⁴⁵ SMA, U102-0-7-1, Diyici Huiyi Jilu (Minutes of First General Assembly), 14.

Swedish American Mission.⁵⁴⁶ The Lianghu synod consisted of churches affiliated with the American Presbyterian Mission (North), the Reformed Church in the United States Mission, the Church of Scotland Mission, the LMS and the English Presbyterian Mission. The Minnan synod contained churches related to the Reformed Church in America Mission, the LMS and the English Presbyterian Mission. It was considered to be one of the strongest synods, and perhaps as a model of the union of the CCC. Kepler even commended it as ‘one of the rare places in the Christian world where denominationalism has been entirely eliminated.’⁵⁴⁷ Additionally, the CCC contained 51 district associations, 585 organised churches, 2,035 preaching places, 333 ordained pastors, 2,072 evangelistic workers and 120,175 communicants, which was reported to be approximately one third of the number of Protestant communicants in China.⁵⁴⁸ When the first General Assembly was organised, there were altogether fourteen missionary societies which co-operated in and with the CCC, including the ABCFM, Baptist Missionary Society [BMS], LMS, and the mission agencies of the Church of Scotland, Evangelical and Reformed Church, Presbyterian Church of England, Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Presbyterian Church in the USA (North), Presbyterian Church in the US (South), Reformed Church in America, United

⁵⁴⁶ *The China Mission Year Book 1925*, 126-7.

⁵⁴⁷ *The China Mission Year Book 1925*, 127; Merwin, *Adventure in Unity*, 73. The Methodist South Fujian Conference joined the Minnan synod in 1934 and became a district association. I shall discuss the details in the next section.

⁵⁴⁸ SMA, U102-0-236-233, Digest of First General Assembly, 7; Kepler, ‘Gaishu (Brief History),’ 1. In Kepler’s article, the number of the organised churches was 529, the number of the preaching places was 2,091, and the number of the evangelistic workers was 2,405.

Brethren in Christ and United Church of Canada.⁵⁴⁹ Although the above co-operative groups were mainly of Reformed theological background and of either Presbyterian or Congregational polity, the scale of the union of the CCC was the largest in China at that time, and there were other churches, such as those affiliated to the missions of the United Brethren and of the United Church of Canada, which joined in. Kenneth Scott Latourette has aptly commented that though ‘the Church of Christ in China... was a name which as yet expressed a hope rather than a reality, it was more inclusive than any ecclesiastical union ever formed in any country.’⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁹ SMA, U102-0-236-233, Digest of First General Assembly, 7; SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, *Adventure in Church Union*, 7.

⁵⁵⁰ Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 801.

12 Synods of the CCC in 1927
 圖域區會教督基華中

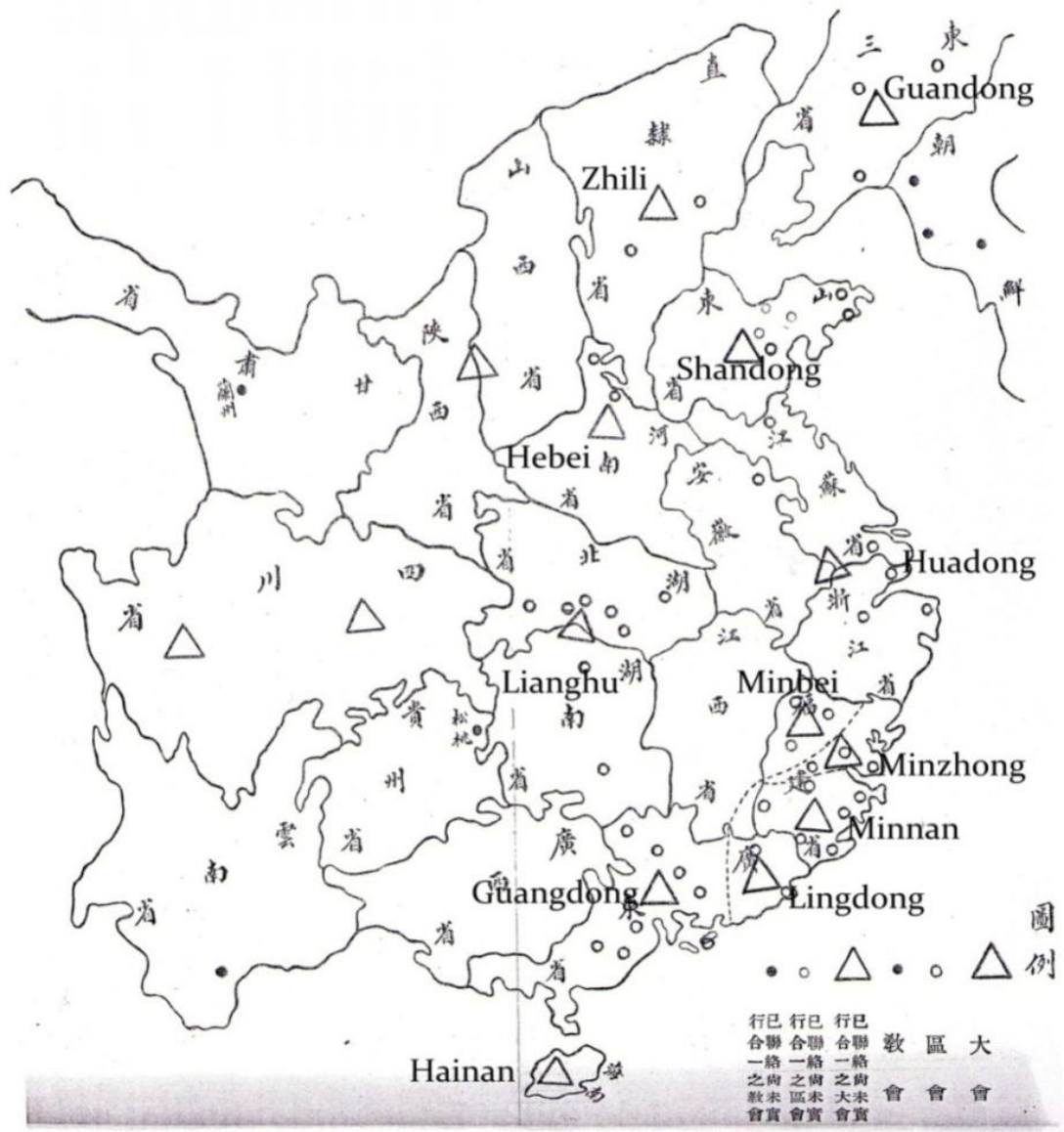


Figure 3: Twelve Synods of the CCC in 1927
 Source from SMA, U102-0-7-1, Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Zonghui Diyici Huiyi Jilu
 中華基督教會總會第一次會議記錄 (Minutes of the First General Assembly of the
 Church of Christ in China), 1927.

Synod	No. of District Association	No. of Communicants
Guandong	3	20,000
Zhili	2	2,700
Shandong	3	8,500
Hebei	2	5,000
Lianghu	8	10,000
Huadong	6	18,000
Minbei	3	15,000
Minzhong	3	
Minnan	6	
Lingdong	2	29,000
Guangdong	8	
Hainan District Association		4,100
Yunnan Church		300

Figure 4: The Number of District Associations and Communicants in Each Synod of the CCC in 1927.

Source from SMA, U102-0-7-1, *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Zonghui Diyici Huiyi Jilu* 中華基督教會總會第一次會議記錄 (Minutes of the First General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China), 1927.

A. R. Kepler defined the CCC in an article on the genesis of the CCC in

Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Nianjian (*The Chinese Christian Church Year Book*) in 1928

as follows:

The Church of Christ in China is a church formed by Chinese Christians, under the basis of the orthodox faith. It advocates neither denominations nor national boundary. It only seeks to accommodate the Chinese situation and Chinese needs.⁵⁵¹

The two-fold theme of Christian movements in China during the twentieth century –

⁵⁵¹ Kepler, 'Gaishu (Brief History),' 2.

church indigeneity and unity – was manifested in this definition. Cheng Jingyi's dream of a united Chinese church, expressed during the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, had partially come true.

In spite of the fact that the limited breadth of denominations represented by the CCC frustrated some of the union advocates,⁵⁵² the first General Assembly insisted on its conviction of the ecumenical future of Christianity in China:

The Church of Christ...are ready and willing to enter into *organic union* with all other churches who are of a like mind concerning unity.⁵⁵³

As it aimed for an organic union, the issue of the doctrinal basis of union of the CCC is worth exploration. It was first drafted during the 1922 Provisional General Assembly of the CCC, and had undergone two revisions since then. At the time of the first General Assembly in 1927, the credal statement was as follows:

1. Faith in Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Lord on whom the Christian Church is founded; and in an earnest desire for the establishment of His Kingdom throughout the whole earth.
2. Acceptance of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the divinely inspired word of God, and the supreme authority in matters of faith and duty.
3. Acknowledgement of the Apostles' Creed as expressing the fundamental doctrines of our common evangelical faith.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵² Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 111.

⁵⁵³ SMA, U102-0-236-233, Digest of First General Assembly, 29-30. Italics added.

⁵⁵⁴ SMA, U102-0-7-1, Diyici Huiyi Jilu (Minutes of First General Assembly), 56.

The basis of union was considered to be ‘experimental and tentative,’ for the CCC aimed to formulate its own creed in the future, as a product of the doctrinal convictions of the Chinese church, without any imprint from the church of the West.⁵⁵⁵ During the first General Assembly, delegates’ responses towards the basis of union were generally positive. Xie Zhixi 謝志禧 (T. H. Zia) reported that out of twenty-four Presbyteries of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church there were nineteen in favour of it, four opposed it, whilst one, the Jiaxing Presbytery, abstained. Churches affiliated with both the ABCFM and the LMS unanimously approved of it. Two district associations proposed amendments to it: the Jinan district association suggested an amendment that would have made the Apostles’ Creed to ‘be’ rather than to ‘express’ the fundamental doctrines of the common evangelical faith of the CCC, and the Jiangnan district association desired further revision of the basis of union. Nonetheless, the commission retained the 1927 version and deferred amendments until the next General Assembly three years later.⁵⁵⁶

It should be noted that, according to C. G. Sparham, the LMS secretary in China, the mention of the Apostles’ Creed was owing to the strong insistence of Chinese pastors, and not to missionaries.⁵⁵⁷ As early as 1912, the Chinese Advisory Council of the LMS had adopted the Apostles’ Creed as its doctrinal basis.⁵⁵⁸ It may be that for Chinese Christians, only the Apostles’ Creed symbolised the orthodox faith in the

⁵⁵⁵ SMA, U102-0-236-233, Digest of First General Assembly, 29; SOAS, CBMS 393, Kepler, *Let us Unite*, 22.

⁵⁵⁶ SMA, U102-0-236-233, Digest of First General Assembly, 4, 10.

⁵⁵⁷ Goodall, *History of LMS*, 218.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 218-9.

early centuries of the Christian era which was free from the influence of western denominationalism. The Apostles' Creed was widely considered to have a special ecumenical value, for example in the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 and the Lausanne Faith and Order conference of 1927.⁵⁵⁹ Although the eastern Orthodox church gives no place to the Apostles' Creed in its rites, it agrees with its teaching.⁵⁶⁰ Adopting the Apostles' Creed into the doctrinal basis reflected the CCC's intention of creating an image of itself as a church which accepted only the early orthodox Christian teachings and desired for a wider Christian union.

Considering the fact that the majority of the uniting churches were of either Presbyterian or Congregational polity, the doctrinal basis of the CCC can more or less be seen as a compromise. Churches from the Presbyterian tradition thought highly of a written creed, whilst churches of the Congregational polity had been proud of their freedom from creedal restraints and were hostile to any form of creedal subscription. In the short term, an expression of the common doctrinal basis of the CCC was a necessity in binding these two denominations together. According to the constitution of the CCC, all uniting churches were required to accept the creedal statement; meanwhile, the CCC granted local churches adequate freedom to express their Christian faith and life in various ways. For those churches which historically had adapted creeds, it was permissible for any synod to formulate a doctrinal

⁵⁵⁹ Nicholas Lossky, John Pobee, Jose Miguez Bonino, Tom Stransky, Geoffrey Wainwright and Pauline Webb, eds., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 40-1.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

statement as a supplement to the above three articles to serve as a standard in training evangelists and as a guide to Christians.⁵⁶¹ In the long term, this principle was also applicable in uniting other denominations which were either accustomed to a creed, or to anti-creedal traditions. In the view of the architects of the CCC, a creedal statement or basis of union rather than an enforceable creed created a more inclusive image of the CCC which enabled other denominational groups to consider joining.

Zhang Bohuai 張伯懷 (W. B. Djang), one of the key leaders of the CCC during the 1940s, considered the CCC as the ‘first fruit’ of the Chinese ecumenical movement.⁵⁶² Although the breadth of representation of the union fell short of what the union advocates expected, the CCC remained the largest autonomous Chinese church and the first union in China ‘to go beyond confessional lines’ during that period.⁵⁶³ In the following section I shall explore a number of issues, such as how the CCC sought its own development with various denominations and church groups being attached and how it advocated further church unity in China, and will endeavour to form an evaluation of the CCC’s role during the Chinese ecumenical movement.

5.1.3. Moving towards a Further Union

⁵⁶¹ SOAS, CBMS 393, Kepler, *Let us Unite*, 21-4.

⁵⁶² SMA, U102-0-75-31, Zhang Bohuai, ‘Gao Bolan Mushi Lueli 高伯蘭牧師略歷 (A Brief Life of the Rev. A. R. Kepler),’ *Zonghui Gongbao 總會公報 (The General Assembly Record)* 14, no. 7-10 (1942): 8.

⁵⁶³ Merwin, *Adventure in Unity*, 9.

After the first General Assembly in 1927, Cheng Jingyi and Kepler, together with several key members of a standing committee on church union, engaged in discussions and negotiations with various churches and missions on the issue of further union. A number of churches and denominations joined the CCC in subsequent years, including:

- 1) the BMS churches in Shandong (1928), which brought four district associations, 125 organised churches and more than 7,000 communicants into the CCC;⁵⁶⁴
- 2) the LMS churches in North China (1930), which added to the CCC four district associations, 170 organised churches and evangelistic centres, eighty-six evangelists and 3,390 communicants, and officially formed the Huabei synod (North China) in 1931;⁵⁶⁵
- 3) the independent churches of Beijing (known as Peiping during that period) (1931), the first group of independent churches to unite with the CCC;⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ A. R. Kepler, 'Jiaohui Heyi Yundong 教會合一運動 (The Church Unity Movement),' *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Nianjian 1929-30*, Part 2, 7; SMA, U102-0-7-59, *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Quanguo Zonghui Di'erjie Changhui Yilu 中華基督教會全國總會第二屆常會議錄* (Minutes of the Second General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China), 6.

⁵⁶⁵ From this point on, all the LMS churches in China were united with the CCC. See SMA, U102-0-127-456, 'Zonghui Di'erjie Ganbu Huiyi 總會第二屆幹部會議 (The Second General Workers Conference),' *Gongbao* 3, no. 8-9 (1931): 817-8.

⁵⁶⁶ They were products of the work of the LMS in Beijing and had been carrying on their work independently for years. After uniting with the CCC, the independent churches of Beijing brought together churches in Beijing of both the Huabei and Hebei synods into the new Beiping (Peiping) district association. It was expected to go forward in uniting the two into one synod for Hebei province. However, when the independent churches of Beijing formed the Beiping district association of the Hebei synod during the third General Assembly of the CCC, the Huabei synod still existed. During the fourth General Assembly of the CCC, it was reported that the Beiping district association was re-organised and became a part of the Huabei synod. See SMA, U102-0-236-131, Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the General Council of the Church of Christ in China, 25; U102-0-244-1, Records and Minutes of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the General Council of the Church of Christ in China (Together with Records and Recommendations and Reports of the Third General Workers Conference), 5-6; U102-0-236-2, Digest of the Minutes & Reports of the Third

- 4) the BMS churches in Shanxi 山西 and Shaanxi 陝西 (1933), which formed the Shaanxi and Shanxi synods respectively on 22 May and 29 May 1933;⁵⁶⁷
- 5) Sichuan Mei Dao Hui (the United Church of Canada, Methodist) (1934), which added to the CCC ten district associations, ninety-six local churches and 3,312 communicants, together with a number of schools and hospitals, and in particular one university;⁵⁶⁸
- 6) and the Yongchun Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church [MEFB] in South Fujian (1934),⁵⁶⁹ which was the first group of the Methodist Episcopal Church to unite with the CCC.⁵⁷⁰

When the fourth General Assembly of the CCC met in Qingdao from 15 to 29 July 1937, the CCC had sixteen synods, eighty-seven district associations, 828 local churches (excluding churches of Guandong and Henan synods due to the lack of reports) and more than 128,000 communicants. Huabei, Shanxi, Shaanxi and Sichuan synods, together with four district associations in Shandong and the Yong De Da (Yongchun) district association in South Fujian, were newly added after the first

Meeting of the General Assembly & of the Sixth Meeting of the General Council of the Church of Christ in China, 9; U102-0-12, *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Quanguo Zonghui Disijie Zongyihui Yilu* 中華基督教會全國總會第四屆總議會議錄 (Minutes & Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China), 76-7.

⁵⁶⁷ From that point, all the churches affiliated with the BMS in China became a part of the CCC. A. R. Kepler, 'Jiaohui Heyi Yundong zhi Qushi 教會合一運動之趨勢 (The Tendency of the Church Unity Movement),' *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Nianjian* 1933, 29.

⁵⁶⁸ SMA, U102-0-262-1, *Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Quanguo Zonghui Disanjie Changhui Yilu* 中華基督教會全國總會第三屆常會議錄 (Minutes of the Third General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China), 58.

⁵⁶⁹ SMA, U102-0-70-57, Wu Weimin 吳維敏, 'MinnanYongchun Meihui Heru Benhui de Qianhou 閩南永春美會合入本會的前後 (The History of the Union between the Yongchun South Fujian Conference and the CCC),' *Gongbao* 7, no. 3 (1935): 16-8.

⁵⁷⁰ SMA, U102-0-244-1, Records of Fifth General Council, 5-6.

General Assembly.⁵⁷¹ Additionally, there were altogether fifteen missionary societies co-operating with the CCC. Compared with the first General Assembly, the MEFB and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea were new additions whilst the Canadian Presbyterian Mission had withdrawn.⁵⁷²

Synod	No. of District Association	No. of Local Churches	No. of Self-supporting Churches	No. of Communicants
Guandong	8	67	33	18,033
Shandong	9	85	42	15,541
Hebei	2	22	9	3,823
Henan	2	60	7	5,564
Lianghu	10	199	73	6,090
Huadong	7	95	30	17,963
Huabei	4	89	63	3,800
Shanxi	3	19	7	1,250
Shaanxi	3	124	96	3,536
Minbei	3	14	3	1,192
Minzhong	3	29	6	2,618
Minnan	7	164	92	12,121
Lingdong	2	121	32	8,434
Guangdong	10	179	34	20,865
Hainan	3	13	4	4,753
Sichuan	10	54	9	2,913

Figure 5: The Number of District Associations, Local Churches, Self-supporting Churches and Communicants in Each Synod in 1936 (Statistics for Guandong Synod are based on its report of 1933)

Source from SMA, U102-0-136-1, Cheng Jingyi, 'Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui shi Shenme 中華基督教會是什麼 (What is the CCC),' 1938-39 [?], 41-5.

⁵⁷¹ SMA, U102-0-136-1, Cheng Jingyi, 'Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui shi Shenme 中華基督教會是什麼 (What is the CCC),' 1938-39 [?], 4-5.

⁵⁷² SMA, U102-0-12, Disijie Zongyihui (Minutes of Fourth General Assembly), 131.

Although the CCC had made progress towards church unity, and was continuing to develop fraternal relationships with other denominational groups, such as churches affiliated with the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in Lingdong, Huabei Gonglihui (the North China Congregational Union), the Methodist Episcopal Church in Shandong, the United Evangelical Church Mission in Hunan and the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden in Hubei (Lutheran), no surviving evidence indicates that any of them had joined the CCC by 1940. In addition, several large denominational unions, such as Zhonghua Shenggonghui 中華聖公會 (also known as ‘Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui’ [CHSKH], the Holy Catholic Church of China or the Chinese Episcopal Church, 1912), Zhonghua Xinyihui 中華信義會 (The Lutheran Church of China, 1920) and Zhonghua Jinlihui 中華浸禮會 (The China Baptist Council, 1930), had no intention of joining the CCC. Although the CCC did attempt to enlarge its union to include the CHSKH, it could only approach the CHSKH as a whole, which presented particular difficulties. This was because the characteristically Anglican emphasis on consistency and uniformity of ministry and order within the church and across the whole Anglican communion, meant that no action regarding church unity which diverged from the constitution of the General Synod of the CHSKH was allowed to be taken by any individual diocese.⁵⁷³ This raised practical difficulties for the efforts towards union between the CCC and the

⁵⁷³ SMA, U102-0-127-429, ‘Zhonghua Shenggonghui Diqijie Zongyihui Duiyu “Heyi” de Taidu yu Yi’an 中華聖公會第七屆總議會對於“合一”的態度與議案 (The Attitude and Resolutions towards “Unity” of the Seventh General Synod of the Chinese Episcopal Church),’ *Gongbao* 3, no. 6-7 (1931): 765.

CHSKH, as the CHSKH operated a clear and unified ecclesiastical order which seemed to be incompatible with that of the CCC. Apart from the formation of a 'Fellowship on Church Unity' during a CHSKH conference on church union in Shanghai on 24 and 25 January 1935, to which Kepler, as the representative of the CCC, was invited alongside representatives from the Methodist Episcopal Church in China, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, the Chinese Methodist Church, the American Baptist Church (North) and Huabei Gonglihui, no evidence is extant of any further progress being made towards this union during or after the Sino-Japanese War. According to evidence dating from 1948, none of the above denominational unions had joined the CCC.⁵⁷⁴ Existing alongside these major nationwide denominational united churches, the CCC was beginning to acquire the appearance of a denominational church due to the relatively narrow spread of its denominational representation.⁵⁷⁵

Even among those who joined the CCC, the factors which encouraged those churches to unite with the CCC depended heavily on the attitudes and policies of their parent western denominations towards union. For example, the LMS had already seen four-fifths of its churches join the CCC before the North China branch. It is therefore unsurprising that the NCDC of the LMS finally adopted policies congruent with those of the LMS Advisory Council towards the union with the CCC,

⁵⁷⁴ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, PCE, FMC, Series II, Box 13, The Church of Christ in China, 1948.

⁵⁷⁵ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, 1941-1950, CH35, Alex Baxter, Memorandum on the Church of Christ in China 1939, 11 July 1939.

as the council and the four-fifths of churches which had already joined had been ‘urging’ the North China branch to join ‘for several years.’⁵⁷⁶ Cheng Jingyi’s participation in the CCC was undoubtedly another influential factor, owing to his connections with both the LMS in North China and the independent churches of Beijing. His visits to the LMS North China stations and the independent churches of Beijing in November 1929 appear to have been a vital step in winning approval for the union with the CCC from the two bodies.⁵⁷⁷ In addition, the tendency towards union varied from one synod and region to another: the Minnan synod was considered to be one of the strongest synods of the CCC, and its influence in the South Fujian area may have accelerated the pace of unity. Furthermore, the newly-added churches reflected the need of western missions in the 1930s to curtail their budgets in response to the economic depression: ‘some of the most fundamental shifts in twentieth-century mission policy were...initiated...in response to urgent financial necessity.’⁵⁷⁸ For instance, owing to the economic depression, the BMS planned to hand over their work in the four district associations in Shandong to the CCC within a fifteen-year period expiring in 1947.⁵⁷⁹ In a series of issues of its official journal, *Xiwang Yuekan* 希望月刊 (*The Christian Hope*), the Sichuan Mei

⁵⁷⁶ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 10, 1928-31, W. F. Dawson, Peiping, 1930; Carol Lenwood, Newsletter, West city, Peiping, 30 January 1930.

⁵⁷⁷ SOAS, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 10, 1928-31, W. F. Dawson, Peiping, 1930; Carol Lenwood, Newsletter, West city, Peiping, 30 January 1930.

⁵⁷⁸ Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 385.

⁵⁷⁹ SMA, U102-0-70-33, ‘Zonghui Cheng Zongganshi Jilu Lvxing Jianbao 總會誠總幹事冀魯旅行簡報 (A Brief Report of General Secretary Cheng Jingyi’s Trip to Hebei and Shandong Provinces),’ *Gongbao* 7, no. 2 (1935): 17-8.

Dao Hui alluded to the financial pressure which its mission board faced, the United Church of Canada, and eagerly advocated self-support of the Mei Dao Hui churches.⁵⁸⁰ Since 1929, the United States headquarters of the MEFB had been withdrawing support and missionaries from the South Fujian (Minnan) Conference, due to the financial difficulties of the mission as well as the decline of the South Fujian Conference itself.⁵⁸¹ Additionally, when reporting on the union with the CCC in 1931, Evan E. Bryant, the LMS missionary to North China, revealed that the union relieved the LMS of responsibility for financial matters.⁵⁸² The financial crisis facing the mission boards was one of the key factors behind the entry into union with the CCC for all of the above churches. In conclusion, the CCC's desire for a further union among all Protestant bodies in China remained unfulfilled in 1940.

5.1.4. Church-Mission Relationships

One should not forget the fact that the CCC was the largest church in what Bays has termed the 'Sino-foreign Protestant establishment,'⁵⁸³ in which church-mission relationships were a continuing central theme. The issue of church-mission

⁵⁸⁰ Zhong Shanxue 鐘善學, 'MuhuiJingji dui Hua Jiaohui zhi Guanxi 母會經濟對華教會之關係 (The Relationship between the Financial Situation of the Mission Board and the Chinese Church),' *Xiwang Yuekan 希望月刊 (The Christian Hope)* 6, no. 1-2 (1930): 9-10; 'Sichuan Meidaohui Quanti Huiyuan Xiansheng Gongjian 四川美道會全體會員先生公鑒 (A Public Letter to All Members of the Sichuan Mei Dao Hui),' *The Christian Hope* 6, no. 8 (1930): 39.

⁵⁸¹ SMA, U102-0-70-57, Wu, 'Yongchun Meihui (Union between Yongchun and CCC),' 16-8.

⁵⁸² SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Reports, Box 18, 1928-31, Evan E. Bryant, Tsangchow, 1931.

⁵⁸³ See Chapter 1. 1.4.

relationships became more acute in the case of the CCC, as it co-operated with fourteen missionary societies. After the first General Council meeting of the CCC in Shanghai from 20 to 26 October 1928, there was a considerable volume of correspondence between the General Assembly or the General Council of the CCC and co-operating mission boards or home churches in America and Britain regarding the matter of mutual co-operation. It should be noted that the ‘church-centric’ principle, which the 1928 Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council adopted and advocated in the relationship between the ‘Older’ and ‘Younger’ churches, began to appear frequently in the correspondence, minutes and reports of the CCC, although this principle had been stressed and applied to church-mission relationships in the mainline churches in China since the 1910s.⁵⁸⁴ In addition to the good intentions of promoting universal Christian co-operation, fellowship and unity, which a number of Christian leaders, both Chinese and foreign, constantly advocated, as well as the conviction of the necessity of co-operation between the ‘Older’ and ‘Younger’ churches, which was discussed with enthusiasm among the delegates to the 1928 Jerusalem Meeting, the correspondence reveals rather realistic motives behind the CCC’s co-operation with various mission boards and home churches.

First of all, the CCC sought to establish an immediate and direct connection with the mission boards of the co-operating churches in America and Britain without any

⁵⁸⁴ *Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24 – April 8 1928, Vol. 3, The Relations Between the Younger and Older Churches*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 209-10.

intermediary missionary organisation in the field.⁵⁸⁵ The General Council of the CCC felt that there was a dual control over their arrangements and projects, as their actions had to first be referred to a mission agency for consideration and then submitted to the mission board. Being an independent national church, one of the major concerns of the CCC regarding the establishment of a direct connection was to firmly implement the ‘church-centric’ principle and cast off the control and influence of the missionary societies. This was a natural stage in the reallocation of power between Chinese and foreign missions in the ‘Sino-foreign Protestant establishment.’ Nevertheless, a more pragmatic reason for the concern of the General Council of the CCC to set up direct communication with mission boards and home churches was to secure a more rapid method of requesting and receiving financial and other support from the West.⁵⁸⁶ The fact that the majority of the correspondence sent by either Cheng Jingyi or A. R. Kepler, or (later) by other CCC executive secretaries, directly to mission boards throughout the two decades following the inauguration of the CCC asked for either financial funds or personnel support or both reflected the General Council’s primary motives and determination on this matter.

Secondly, this direct connection was to be built between mission boards and the centralised General Assembly of the CCC through its General Council. The widely

⁵⁸⁵ SMA, U102-0-234-1/U102-0-236-213, Minutes and Reports of the First Annual Meeting of the General Council of the Church of Christ in China, Shanghai, Oct. 20-26, 1928, 20; SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, Cheng Ching-yi to P. J. MacLagan, 26 November 1928; CWM, 1941-1950, CH35, Baxter, Memorandum on the Church of Christ in China 1939, 11 July 1939.

⁵⁸⁶ SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, Cheng Ching-yi to P. J. MacLagan, 26 November 1928; CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, The General Assembly, the Church of Christ in China to the Missionary Societies: Cooperating with the Church of Christ in China, 1939.

scattered constituency of the CCC made it almost impossible to foster a strong consciousness of their belonging together in a national organisation for nationwide tasks in a short time.⁵⁸⁷ The CCC leaders therefore felt an urgent need for a strong centralised General Assembly headquarters, in order to guide each synod, district association and local church, integrate them into one national church rather than the prevailing loose federation, and open up and carry out nationwide church programmes.⁵⁸⁸ Based on this conviction, the CCC required mission boards to place all of their financial and other support under the control and arrangement of the General Assembly. However, this led to the consequence that the CCC gradually turned the General Assembly office into a vast centralised body which needed a substantial amount of money and adequate staff to maintain its function and efficiency. One of the main items for which the CCC leaders continuously asked mission boards for financial support was the upkeep of the General Assembly office, including salaries of staff (including Cheng Jingyi's salary as general secretary of the CCC after 1933),⁵⁸⁹ office expenses, travel and the printing of church magazines. The second General Assembly of 1930 recommended three sources for maintaining the Assembly office: 1) contributions from Chinese Christian individuals and local self-supporting churches; 2) synods and district associations were required to allocate

⁵⁸⁷ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, C/13/37/1, X. 7005, filed under Yenching University, Extract from Rev. A. Baxter, 6 January 1936.

⁵⁸⁸ SMA, U102-0-234-1/U102-0-236-213, Minutes of First General Council, 22.

⁵⁸⁹ SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, A. R. Kepler to P. J. MacLagan, 3 March 1934; From 1927 to 1933, when Kepler served as general secretary of the CCC, his salary was entirely provided by the Presbyterian Church in the USA. See SMA, U102-0-243-72/U102-0-236-171, Minutes & Reports of the Second Meeting of the General Assembly of the CCC, 27.

two per cent of their total current work funds supplied by missionary societies to the General Council budget; and 3) the rest was to be supplemented by co-operating missions.⁵⁹⁰ Nevertheless, according to the accounts of subsequent years, the CCC failed to collect enough funds for this purpose from Chinese sources, as the general administration expenses were not as appealing as evangelistic work to Chinese contributors.⁵⁹¹ The burden of supporting the General Assembly office thus largely fell to co-operating mission boards.

Thirdly, a number of nationwide projects of the CCC were to a large degree in need of financial and personnel support from abroad. A number of major projects were launched during the period of the Sino-Japanese War, focussing on the southwest regions of China, including 1) the purchase of additional presses and equipment for the Canadian Press in Chengdu for printing the Bible, books, tracts and other Christian literature; 2) the border missions to ethnic minorities; 3) the evangelistic work in Kunming and Lanzhou, which were categorised as ‘free China;’ and 4) the so called ‘KKK’ projects in Kunming, Kaiyuan and Gejiu (Kokiu) of South Yunnan for evangelistic, educational and medical work. Although one of the original motives was to promote church indigeneity, the actual operation of the above projects went far beyond the financial ability of the CCC, and therefore largely relied on foreign mission funds. A letter from Zhang Bohuai to William Paton, the editor of the *International Review of Missions*, noted that two-thirds of the proposed budget

⁵⁹⁰ SMA, U102-0-243-72/U102-0-236-171, Minutes of Second General Assembly, 49-50.

⁵⁹¹ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH35, The General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China, Newsletter, No. 4, October 1944.

(approximately \$5,000) for part of the above projects and general office maintenance was voted by the provisional committee of the CCC to be raised by co-operating missions and mission boards, while the remaining one-third was to come from Chinese sources.⁵⁹² Once again, seeking financial and other support became the chief motive of the CCC in maintaining and enlarging co-operation with mission boards, with very little concern given to promoting the self-supporting capacity of the CCC:

In view of the large amount of church administration and promotional work which the CCC now carries on for the missions, and in view of the recognised importance of strengthening the life and work of the CCC to meet its unusual opportunities in Free China, the grant sought from the co-operating missions and boards is *not* large.⁵⁹³

On the other hand, this trend reflected a phenomenon that the availability of foreign financial subsidies was one of the key factors in impelling Chinese churches to sustain a fraternal church-mission relationship, and they tended to convince themselves that there was no incompatibility between a church being autonomous and self-propagating and receiving a subsidy. According to the CCC's records, on various occasions their leaders found financial subsidies from mission boards to be 'necessary.'⁵⁹⁴ The CCC, therefore, was a 'two-self' rather than a 'three-self' church.

As noted previously, the inter-war financial crisis of the mission boards was one

⁵⁹² SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CBMS 393, W. B. Djang and G. S. Bell to William Paton, 10 February 1942.

⁵⁹³ Ibid. Italics added.

⁵⁹⁴ SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, Cheng Ching-yi to P. J. MacLagan, 26 November 1928.

of the key factors behind the union between the CCC and a number of mission-affiliated churches. As the financial situation of the mission boards became more rigorous, especially during the time of the Great Depression and the Second World War, co-operating mission boards felt under pressure from the CCC's constant requests for funds. Sometimes an atmosphere of disapproval was apparent in the correspondence. A letter from Cocker Brown, the LMS China secretary, to the society's missionary Alex Baxter in 1941 indicated that:

It has a bad effect when Kepler puts these forward as projects of the Church and closer study shows that the financing of them is expected from the cooperating societies. That criticism has already reached me from two directions.⁵⁹⁵

Complaints were usually directed towards the actions of the General Assembly, and especially the items to which the General Assembly budget was allocated. For instance, actions of the Assembly, such as the employment of Cheng Jingyi as general secretary, which 'largely and unnecessarily' increased the office budget, the expenses involved in transferring the General Assembly headquarters from Shanghai to Beijing, and the contribution of \$3,500 to the publication fund of the 'Union Hymnal' without any proposal being made to co-operating mission boards in advance, were 'highly disapproved' of by the LMS due to financial concerns.⁵⁹⁶ The frequent financial appeals from the CCC caused the LMS to question the General Assembly's

⁵⁹⁵ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, C/13/41/40C, Cocker Brown to A. Baxter, 13 November 1941.

⁵⁹⁶ SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, A. R. Kepler to Douglas James, 10 February 1937.

capabilities in administration and programming,⁵⁹⁷ and some of the complaints even pointed to A. R. Kepler, who had particular responsibility for church-mission co-operation, concerning issues such as his over-optimism on matters of church-mission co-operation⁵⁹⁸ and poor management of the Assembly budget.⁵⁹⁹

Apart from indicating their own financial difficulties in their correspondence with the CCC, co-operating mission boards responded cautiously towards the direct requests from the General Council of the CCC for funds due to a number of concerns, as evidenced by these responses from the Presbyterian Church of England Mission [PCE] and LMS:

I think that the Council [General Council] has adopted *doubtful tactics* in passing the resolutions with which you are setting out [*sic*] the Europe and America... For one thing I do not think that the Council is representative enough to make such tremendous decisions. For another I do not think that the members gave adequate consideration to what they were doing.⁶⁰⁰ (PCE)
It is...difficult...to *get adequate information* to form any intelligent plans.⁶⁰¹ (LMS)

We are often being asked to make some contribution to the needs of the West...but every time we have got to the point of considering any particular contribution we have been faced with the fact that the actual conditions are *very little known* as far as we are concerned and that there is no concerted plan to meet the overwhelming needs of that situation.⁶⁰² (LMS)

In thinking over the matter of your Co-operating Council I find myself

⁵⁹⁷ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH35, Baxter, Memorandum on the Church of Christ in China 1939, 11 July 1939.

⁵⁹⁸ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, C/13/40/24, No. 260, A. Baxter to Rev. A. M. Chirgwin, 14 May 1940.

⁵⁹⁹ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, C/13/41/41, A. 1029, A. Baxter to Cocker Brown, 24 September 1941.

⁶⁰⁰ SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, Rev. Douglas James to A. R. Kepler, 28 May 1935. Italics added.

⁶⁰¹ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, C/13/39/14, Cocker Brown to Cheng Ching-yi, 6 June 1939. Italics added.

⁶⁰² SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, C/13/40/19, C. 0030, Cocker Brown to A. R. Kepler, 27 January 1940. Italics added.

somewhat *at a loss* through not knowing exactly the stage at which you are in China. We here, I imagine, are rather waiting on the Councils in China coming into operation.⁶⁰³ (LMS)

The ideal of direct communication between the General Assembly of the CCC and co-operating mission boards seemed to be the CCC's own wishful thinking. The development of mutual trust between the two parties perhaps needed more time and practice to foster. Co-operating mission boards appeared not to trust the judgements and decisions of the General Council of the CCC with regard to a number of nationwide programmes, and preferred to rely on their own mission agencies for information and recommendations, trusting those who fully understood their own strategies and policies and would certainly be more concerned about their own society's interests.

As the General Council suggested, methods of promoting direct co-operation included organising joint conferences between the two parties and establishing some sort of joint committee, providing a platform for direct discussion and negotiation. A number of joint conferences were organised either in China or abroad after 1929.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰³ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, C/13/41/32, C. 1053, Cocker Brown to A. R. Kepler, 2 April 1941. Italics added.

⁶⁰⁴ SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, Cheng Ching-yi to P. J. MacLagan, 26 November 1928; CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, C/13/39/10, No. 8593, A. R. Kepler to Cocker Brown, 14 February 1939; Actions taken at a Joint Conference of Dr. A. R. Kepler, Executive Secretary of the Church of Christ in China and the China Secretaries of the Corresponding Boards in North America, held at the Swarthmore Conference, June 15, 1939; PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, Cheng Ching-yi to P. J. MacLagan, 3 January 1935; SMA, U102-0-243-72/U102-0-236-171, Minutes of Second General Assembly, 51-2, 59; U102-0-127-84, Fan Dingjiu 范定九, 'Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui yu Xi Chaihui zhi Guanxi Wenti Xuyan 中華基督教會與西差會之關係問題緒言 (The Preface of the Issue of the Relationship between the CCC and Western Missions)', *Gongbao* 1, no. 7 (1929); U102-0-127-103, 'Zonghui Xuxing Weiyuanbu yu Hezuo ge Xuanjiaohui Lianxi Huiyi Chengxu Cao'an 總會續行委員部與合作各宣教會聯席會議程序草案 (Draft of the Procedure of the Joint Conference between the General Council of the CCC and Mission Boards)', *Gongbao* 1, no. 8, (1929).

In particular, Cheng Jingyi, and more often Kepler, representing the CCC, travelled abroad to confer with co-operating mission boards. Aiming to weaken the function of the intermediary organisations, such as mission councils or missionary agencies which the mission home boards accredited to China, the CCC intended to set up consultative councils in America (New York) and Britain (London), which would be composed of representatives from co-operating mission boards and serve as overseas agencies for consultation and joint recommendation to mission boards on matters of co-operative relationships and projects. It also proposed establishing a co-operative council in China, consisting of representatives from the General Council and each co-operating missionary society, and functioning under the General Council of the CCC.⁶⁰⁵ Nonetheless, as a matter of fact, the administrative procedures and the manner and degree of co-operation with the General Assembly varied from one missionary board and home church to another, which made the CCC's plan to some extent rather impractical. On many occasions Alex Baxter mentioned the difficulties of establishing this direct connection:

... in belonging to the Church of Christ the LMS is tied up with a number of other Missions who do not adopt the attitude of the China Committee towards overhead organisations.⁶⁰⁶

Where a Board is a Committee of a Church, that Church is a denomination

⁶⁰⁵ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, The General Assembly, the Church of Christ in China to the Missionary Societies: Cooperating with the Church of Christ in China, 1939; Actions taken at a Joint Conference of Kepler and the China Secretaries of the Corresponding Boards in North America, June 15, 1939; PCE, FMC, Series II, Box 13, Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Committee on Church and Mission Cooperation by Representatives of the General Council of the Church of Christ in China and Cooperating Missionary Societies, Shanghai, January 8 and 9, 1940.

⁶⁰⁶ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, C/13/37/1, X. 7005, filed under Yenching University, Extract from A. Baxter, 6 January 1936.

and therefore different from the Church of Christ in China. There is no church in the west comparable to the Church of Christ in China. It follows, therefore, that the kind of relationship sought is difficult.⁶⁰⁷

To Baxter, the only way to make the CCC's plan feasible was to form one united inter-denominational church among the co-operating missions, which was 'out of the question at present.'⁶⁰⁸ As long as denominations still existed, a unified co-operative scheme between the CCC and co-operating missions would never be truly workable. An extreme example of this was supplied by the British Baptist missions: even though a number of the BMS churches joined the CCC, neither the BMS board nor the Baptist World Alliance officially recognised the status of the CCC.⁶⁰⁹ The progress of the formation of the co-operative council was largely dependent on the attitudes and actions of co-operating missions. Kepler once made a complaint to the PCE that its Intermission Council had taken no action in this regard, which seriously delayed the progress of the establishment of the co-operating council.⁶¹⁰ Others, such as the Presbyterian Church in the US (South), expressed direct disapproval of the proposed council.⁶¹¹

When the CCC was formed, Kepler expressed the attitude of the General Assembly towards the relationships between the constituent churches of the CCC and their missionary societies. Although the fact that a church was an organic part of the

⁶⁰⁷ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH35, Baxter, Memorandum on the Church of Christ in China 1939, 11 July 1939.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, A. R. Kepler to Douglas James, 10 February 1937.

⁶¹⁰ SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series II, Box 13, A. R. Kepler to Douglas James, 8 January 1941.

⁶¹¹ SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, Report of the Secretariat of the General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China, 1 October 1939 – 30 September 1940.

CCC and, at the same time, belonged to its own missionary society was against the fundamental principles of the organic union of the CCC, the General Assembly was convinced that such dual organic relationships were unavoidable during the transitional period of the Chinese church.⁶¹² However, such dual relationships started to affect the union scheme of the CCC during its evolution. The divergent principles and policies of the co-operating missions seriously hindered the complete unification of the CCC.

5.2. Cheng Jingyi's Role in the CCC

The formation of the CCC can be seen as a result of the trend in both the mainline churches and a number of missions towards Christian union in early twentieth-century China. As noted in Chapter 2, this trend was initially reflected and proclaimed to a broader audience by Cheng Jingyi during the 1910 Edinburgh Conference. Cheng subsequently played an important part in this trend after 1910 through his leadership and activities in the China Continuation Committee, the NCC and a series of national Christian movements. His conviction of the indigenous and ecumenical future of the Chinese church set the keynotes for this trend, and his participation in the church union movement accelerated the pace towards the formation of the CCC.

Although Cheng Jingyi was not directly involved in the preparation for the

⁶¹² SOAS, CBMS 393, Kepler, *Let us Unite*, 16-7.

actual formation of the CCC, the CCC bore certain ecumenical features which echoed Cheng's perspectives. To begin with, as previously noted, the name of 'Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui,' which was adopted for this united national church, was in response to the pleas of Chinese Christians, and was to a large extent the result of Cheng's advocacy during the 1910s.⁶¹³ As early as 1910, Cheng focussed his vision of the direction of the Chinese church on the establishment of an indigenous church with interdenominational characteristics, and ardently advocated this vision. The CCC was a fruit of this vision: a single Chinese church and not simply a combination of denominational communities and churches.

Secondly, the scheme of union of the CCC was along the lines of the ecumenical convictions of the mainline churches: to acknowledge and maintain the ecclesiastical tradition of each denomination while pursuing a common Christian expression. This was congruent with Cheng Jingyi's view that church union required the elimination of denominationalism, but not necessarily of denominations. During the second General Assembly in 1930, the CCC enunciated more detailed principles in seeking an organic union:

- 1) Denominational groups are...not...obliged to discard those distinctive teaching and practices which have been their treasured heritage in the past...
- 2) The recognition of each other's faith and order and ordinances as being mutually Christian and bearing the seal of God's approval and power.
- 3) The principle of *unity without uniformity*, demanding only such uniformity as is necessary for orderly administration, permitting such elasticity in administration and organisation as to permit experimentation and spontaneity

⁶¹³ See Chapter 3, 3.2. and 3.3.1.

on the part of our Chinese church, to discover ultimately a form of church organisation...By following this principle, the Church of Christ in China will...ultimately achieve a uniformity, but it will be a spontaneous, living uniformity of belief and organisation and worship, instead of being mechanical, lifeless and superimposed.⁶¹⁴

The principle of ‘unity without uniformity,’ or in other words, ‘unity in diversity’ was at the core of the mode of union of the CCC.⁶¹⁵ It allowed each denominational community to contribute to the union with its own ecclesiastical heritage. As early as 1918 Cheng Jingyi had already proclaimed this principle, by saying that:

Now unity does not mean uniformity... Union efforts to be of value must be, first of all, for the benefit of all parties concerned, that is for the whole body of the Christian Church, and they must allow full freedom of conscience to all who are parties to the union.⁶¹⁶

This principle formed an indispensable part of his ecumenical convictions. The best manifestation is Cheng’s reference to the motto of the Keswick Convention, ‘All One in Christ Jesus,’ a token of the spirit of interdenominational evangelism.

Thirdly, as one of the outstanding features of the mainline Chinese churches, a closely co-operative and fraternal church-mission relationship was a further goal of the CCC. Its scriptural basis was the universal Christian fellowship and unity that existed beyond the boundaries of denominations and nations, which Cheng Jingyi

⁶¹⁴ SMA, U102-0-243-72/U102-0-236-171, Minutes of Second General Assembly, 30-1. Italics added.

⁶¹⁵ Kepler summarised: ‘The form of government is an adventure in freedom of diversity of expression within the unity, recognising that variety in the operations of the Spirit is as essential to the true welfare of the Church as oneness of Spirit.’ See SOAS, CBMS 393, Kepler, *Let us Unite*, 13.

⁶¹⁶ C. Y. Cheng, ‘The Chinese Church of Today I,’ *The Chinese Recorder* 49, no. 10 (1918): 659-662.

had been ardently advocating throughout his lifetime. The universal nature of the Christian church, and the vision that a national Chinese church was an indispensable part of it, were once again stressed in his final work, ‘Shenme shi Yige Jianxiang de Jiaohui 什麼是一個健強的教會 (What Makes a Strong Church?)’.⁶¹⁷

Pragmatically, Cheng constantly iterated that the co-operation between churches and missions would render Chinese churches great assistance during their transitional period of development on the basis of the ‘church-centric’ principle. This assistance included not only their Christian experiences, but also their financial subsidies to a considerable number of Chinese churches. This view was shared by the leadership of the CCC in establishing the relationship with missions.

It should be noted that the formation of the CCC was directly related to A. R. Kepler, who was sent by the Presbyterian China Council to be responsible for the organisation of the General Assembly of the CCC after 1922.⁶¹⁸ According to Merwin, Kepler was ‘deeply committed to the course of church union and in particular to the proposal for a Church of Christ in China.’⁶¹⁹ In addition to daily office work and correspondence with co-operating missions, Kepler also put in print a number of articles and booklets to introduce and explain the CCC’s constitution,

⁶¹⁷ Cheng Jingyi, ‘Shenme shi Yige Jianxiang de Jiaohui 什麼是一個健強的教會 (What Makes a Strong Church),’ *Mingdeng Yuekan 明燈月刊 (The Light Monthly)*, no. 272 (1940): 5-6.

⁶¹⁸ Asher Raymond Kepler (1879-1942) went to China as a missionary of the Presbyterian Church in the USA in 1901. He served as general secretary of the Nantao Institute, Shanghai (1921-1924) and was organising secretary for the National Convention of Young People’s Societies of Christian Endeavour. Kepler was elected as general secretary of the CCC during the first General Assembly in 1927 until Cheng Jingyi assumed responsibility in 1934. Thereafter, until his death, he served as associate general secretary of the CCC. He also served as the director of the National Christian Service Council for Wounded Soldiers. See Merwin, *Adventure in Unity*, 53-4.

⁶¹⁹ Merwin, *Adventure in Unity*, 53.

polity and ecumenical strategies. Some of them were so sophisticated as to serve as the key to apprehending the CCC's goal, direction and vision, for example, the booklet, *Let us Unite, The Church of Christ in China, Church Unity in China and Church and Mission Cooperation* (1938). The depth of Kepler's commitment to the work of the CCC was expressed by the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the USA after his death in 1942:

From the beginning of his service, Dr. Kepler had a peculiar singleness of purpose – the upbuilding and strengthening of the church.⁶²⁰

It is therefore impossible to ignore Kepler's role in the CCC when attempting to explore Cheng Jingyi's. In fact, it is difficult to distinguish their respective levels of influence, as they shared similar opinions on church unity, and usually acted along the same direction. To a large extent, Kepler esteemed Cheng Jingyi's opinion and considered him to be a remarkable Christian leader.⁶²¹ In spite of his Presbyterian background, Kepler's own perspective on church union was rather extraordinary for a Protestant of his time. Indeed, he even took the Roman Catholic Church as a model to demonstrate the application of the idea of 'unity in diversity.' According to him, in the Catholic Church, there was, on the one hand, unity in the primacy of the Pope and the authority of the church tradition, and on the other, diversity in expression of

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 54.

⁶²¹ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, C/13/40/24, No. 9739, A. R. Kepler to Cocker Brown, 4 December 1939; PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 60A, A. R. Kepler to P. J. Maclagan, 18 November 1933.

the individual's Christian faith and life.⁶²² Additionally, Kepler's vision of Christian union seemed to be more advanced than any of his contemporaries, including Cheng Jingyi. He was convinced that the ultimate Christian union would be a union of the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches.⁶²³ Nevertheless, such an outlook was very unlikely to be appreciated and accepted by the majority of Protestant Christians of his time. The CCC was more likely to operate on the basis of the *common ground* shared by Cheng Jingyi, Kepler and other key leaders.

Referring to the actual responsibility for the operation of the CCC, Kepler carried more executive responsibility as general secretary during the first six years. Cheng Jingyi served as moderator of the CCC, as he concurrently held the position of secretary of the NCC and was fully engaged in the Five-Year Movement, a forward revival which he had initiated himself in 1929 and was carried out under the auspices of the NCC. Apart from the fact that Cheng was unable to spare his attention from the Five-Year Movement, Kepler's own capability and experience in the preparation of the formation of the CCC, his understanding and vision of the direction of the CCC, as well as his possible advantage as a foreign missionary in conducting negotiations with various foreign missions and denominations for co-operation and union, may have been the factors which led to his election as general secretary.

Cheng Jingyi took up the secretaryship of the CCC after its third General Assembly in 1934 and held this position until his death in Shanghai in November

⁶²² SOAS, CBMS 393, Kepler, *Let us Unite*, 24.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, 18.

1939. In fact, the intention to invite Cheng to assume the position of general secretary of the CCC had emerged as early as 1927-28 when the CCC came into being. A number of CCC members, especially Kepler, considered Cheng's election as general secretary to be only 'a matter of course.'⁶²⁴ Before the second General Assembly of the CCC in October and November 1930, Kepler had been desperately trying to persuade Cheng to take up the secretaryship. This resulted in a long-lasting dispute between the organisers of the CCC and the NCC regarding Cheng's concurrent positions, with a number of foreign missionaries, including even John Mott, becoming involved. Both sides seemed to highly value Cheng's capability for leadership, the effective contribution he would bring, and perhaps most significant, his reputation in Protestant circles, not only in China but also overseas. Due to the strong opposition of the NCC, especially from NCC secretary E. C. Lobenstine, as well as Cheng's commitment to the Five-Year Movement, a movement which seemed to be more effective under the auspices of the NCC due to its broader denominational components, the CCC re-elected Cheng as moderator at the second General Assembly. The purpose of this action was to preserve Cheng's connection with the CCC while he remained with the NCC, even though it was rather exceptional for a moderator to serve for two periods in the Presbyterian system.⁶²⁵

According to Cocker Brown's surmise, Cheng's personal choice would have been the

⁶²⁴ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, China Odds, Box 10, No. 3682, Cocker Brown to F. H. Hawkins, 2 March 1930.

⁶²⁵ SOAS, China Odds, Box 10, No. 3682, Cocker Brown to F. H. Hawkins, 2 March 1930; H. 0153, Hawkins to Brown, 11 March 1930; H. 0264, Hawkins to Brown, 4 April 1930; H. 0405, Hawkins to Brown, 21 May 1930.

secretaryship of the CCC, through which he would function as ‘a strong directive force’ rather than as ‘a figurehead’ in the NCC.⁶²⁶ This may explain the fact that he eventually resigned from the NCC and accepted the invitation of the CCC to be general secretary in 1934, when the Five-Year Movement had been ongoing for several years. Cheng’s attention was unswervingly given to the development of the Chinese church, even though his health was in a critical condition and there was a third alternative offered to him, a ‘much lighter job,’ namely, the chair of pastoral theology at Nanjing Theological Seminary.⁶²⁷

The dispute between the CCC and the NCC over Cheng’s participation reflected the fact that Cheng was highly respected by both the mainline Chinese churches and foreign missions. This was not only due to his prophetic vision of the future of the Chinese church and eloquent leadership, but also his firm Christian convictions and personality.⁶²⁸ According to Zhang Bohuai, Cheng was voted as one of the twelve most influential Chinese figures in all of China in 1922 by the Chinese readers of *Millard's Review of the Far East* 密勒氏評論報, an influential English-language review based in Shanghai.⁶²⁹ Such an influential figure may have served as the key

⁶²⁶ SOAS, China Odds, Box 10, No. 3682, Cocker Brown to F. H. Hawkins, 2 March 1930.

⁶²⁷ SOAS, China Odds, Box 10, F. H. Hawkins to Eliot Curwen, 27 December 1933.

⁶²⁸ SOAS, China Odds, Box 10, No. 3682, Chirgwin to Irene Moody, 2 June 1930; SMA, U102-0-72-127, Xu Baoqian 徐寶謙, ‘Dao Cheng Jingyi Mushi 悼誠靜怡牧師 (Mourn for Rev. Cheng Jingyi)’; Cui Xianxiang, ‘Chenggong zhi Sang yu Wode Huiyi 誠公之喪與我的回憶 (The Death of Mr. Cheng and My Recollection),’ *Gongbao* 11, no. 12 (1939): 8-10.

⁶²⁹ *Millard's Review of the Far East* (1917-1953), a weekly English-language review initiated by American journalist T. F. Millard in Shanghai and focussing on the readership of overseas Chinese, Chinese politicians and intellectuals. It also had a certain reputation in the United States and several European countries. It was renamed as *The Weekly Review of the Far East: Devoted to the Economic, Political and Social Development of China and Its Intercourse with other Nations* in June 1921, and as *The China Weekly Review* in June 1923. See SMA, U102-0-73-1, Zhang Bohuai, ‘Cheng Jingyi Mushi

to integrate each individual church of the CCC and to attract more Protestant communities to join. One example can be found in Cui Xianxiang 崔憲祥, Cheng's successor, who served as acting general secretary during the war until 1946, when he was officially appointed as general secretary. As Cui revealed, the only reason why he accepted the invitation of the CCC to become one of its executive secretaries and give up his position in the NCC was the esteem of Cheng's reputation in Protestant circles.⁶³⁰ More significantly, Cheng Jingyi served as the first Chinese general secretary of the CCC, which symbolically demonstrated the tenets of this national church.

Although there were a number of occasions when his work was interrupted by his critical health condition due to long-term overwork, Cheng still managed to render the CCC a great deal of help. For example, in a similar manner to Cheng's independent church in Beijing in 1915,⁶³¹ the CCC eventually registered with the national government under Cheng's secretaryship and became the first national church to be recognised by the Chinese central government. Although the resolution of registration was adopted during the first General Assembly in 1927, it was not until 1936, when Cheng raised the issue again, that the General Assembly was ready to apply to the government for registration. The CCC was eventually granted legal status by the central government in 1937.⁶³² Following the outbreak of the

Yijian Weiliao de Xinyuan "Zhonghua Gui Zhu" 誠靜怡牧師一件未了的心願“中華歸主” (“China for Christ” – Rev. Cheng Jingyi's Unfinished Desire), *Gongbao* 12, no. 1 (1940): 7.

⁶³⁰ SMA, U102-0-72-127, Cui, 'Chenggong (Mr. Cheng),' 9.

⁶³¹ See Chapter 3, 3.2.

⁶³² SMA, U102-0-73-13, Zhang Zhuling 張祝齡, 'Wo suo Renshi zhi Cheng Jingyi Boshi 我所認識

Anti-Christian Movement, and in particular the tide of agitation for the abolition of the ‘unequal treaties,’ the recognition by Cheng Jingyi and a number of Chinese Christians of the necessity of the church having legal and social status was greatly strengthened. The motives behind the registration were clear and simple: to break away from entanglement with the ‘unequal treaties’ and the impression of Christianity as a ‘foreign religion,’ and to realise church indigeneity under the protection of religious liberty from the government.⁶³³ For a considerable number of Chinese Christians, this was symbolic of the status of the CCC as both indigenous and national. Additionally, the launch of a number of evangelistic projects in the southwest borders in 1939 was also a result of Cheng’s leadership. These projects sustained Cheng’s vision of ‘China for Christ,’ in other words, the evangelisation of China, a vision which he sought to implement through his presidency of the Chinese Home Missionary Society after 1918. The projects continued during the Sino-Japanese War, although Cheng’s vision concerning the evangelisation of China remained largely unfulfilled. The erection of the Cheng Jingyi Memorial Church in Guiyang of Guizhou province after his death was proof of the recognition and appreciation of the CCC churches for Cheng’s initiation of, and contribution toward, these projects.⁶³⁴

While a number of missionaries complained about Kepler’s strong personality

之誠靜怡博士 (The Dr. Cheng Jingyi that I Know),’ *Gongbao* 12, no. 3 (1940): 6; U102-0-12-115, Disijie Zongyihui (Minutes of Fourth General Assembly), 224-238; U102-0-136-1, Cheng, ‘Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui (What is the CCC),’ 36.

⁶³³ SMA, U102-0-136-1, Cheng, ‘Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui (What is the CCC),’ 36.

⁶³⁴ SMA, U102-0-73-1, Qing Feng 青峯, ‘Zenyang Jinian Womende Lingxiu 怎樣紀念我們的領袖 (How do we commemorate our leader),’ *Gongbao* 12, no. 1 (1940): 3-4.

and even paternalism in their correspondence,⁶³⁵ there were no such words directed towards Cheng Jingyi. Cheng's reputation certainly gained the CCC a positive image while he held leadership. Nevertheless, it was perhaps owing to Kepler's strong determination that certain strategies of the CCC were able to be implemented, as Cheng was 'too good a man for secretaryship work.'⁶³⁶ To summarise, the establishment and early development of the CCC owed much to the leadership of both Cheng Jingyi and Kepler. Although it is almost impossible to distinguish each man's contribution, one thing is for certain: both Cheng Jingyi's ecumenical conviction and his actual leadership played an indispensable part in the evolution of the CCC.

5.3.The Legacy of the CCC

The 1935 conference on church unity among the CHSKH, the CCC and other churches and denominations gave the CCC much confidence to hope for a further union in China. The CCC believed that this conference could be compared with the church union movement in south India regarding the matter of union with episcopal churches,⁶³⁷ and therefore studied and published in Chinese the scheme of union of

⁶³⁵ SOAS, China Odds, Box 10, H. 0356, F. H. Hawkins to Cocker Brown, 2 May 1930; No. 3682, Cocker Brown to F. H. Hawkins, 2 March 1930; PCE, FMC, Series I, Box 107A, W. B. Djang to H. R. Williamson, My Visit to the Yunnan Mission Field, 31 March to 22 April 1943; CWM, 1941-1950, CH34, C/13/41/41, A. 1029, A. Baxter to Cocker Brown, 24 September 1941.

⁶³⁶ SOAS, China Odds, Box 10, F. H. Hawkins to Eliot Curwen, 3 January 1933.

⁶³⁷ The Church of South India was eventually formed in 1947, a union of the southern provinces of the Anglican Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon, the Methodist Church of South India and the South Indian United Church, which was established in 1908 and consisted of churches from

the Church of South India [CSI] for the reference of Chinese churches. *Zonghui*

Gongbao also devoted several issues to serialising the scheme of union of the CSI.⁶³⁸

Perhaps one of the most distinctive differences between the CCC and the CSI was their contrasting church polities. The CSI adopted a primarily episcopal polity, and on this basis alone united both episcopal and non-episcopal churches. As early as 1919, the Anglican Church in South India and the South Indian United Church [SIUC] agreed that the Lambeth Quadrilateral could be a satisfactory basis for church union during the Tranquebar Conference, based upon the common ground of the historic episcopate (essential for the Anglicans) and of the spiritual equality of all members of the two churches (essential for the SIUC). The four principles were: 1) the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as containing all things necessary to salvation; 2) the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed; 3) the two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself – Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and 4) the Historic Episcopate, locally adapted.⁶³⁹ While the first three articles were fully accepted, the acceptance of the historic episcopate was always problematic for non-episcopal churches. After negotiations among the Anglicans, the Methodists and the SIUC, it was agreed that all ministers who were already ordained in any of the uniting churches would be received as ministers of the United Church, but that all new

Presbyterian, Congregational and Reformed traditions. Since the CCC had been eagerly promoting union with the Anglicans and Methodists in China, they found the case of the Church of South India relevant.

⁶³⁸ SMA, U102-0-128-70, 'Nan Yindu Jiaohui de Heyi Jihua 南印度教會的合一計劃 (The Scheme of Union of the CSI),' *Gongbao* 8, no. 1 (1936).

⁶³⁹ Bengt Sundkler, *Church of South India: The Movement towards Union, 1900-1947* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), 101-2.

ordinations would be by episcopal laying on of hands.⁶⁴⁰ A scheme of union was published in 1929 and went through six revisions from 1929 to 1947. The CSI emphasised uniformity in ministry, organisation and sacraments, which was the sign of a strong Anglican influence. All the uniting churches accepted the historic episcopate in a constitutional form as part of their basis of union, even though the organisation of the CSI also conserved Presbyterian elements by operating the same four grades of councils as did the CCC: local church, district association, synod and the General Assembly.

In contrast, the organisation of the CCC was mainly based on the Presbyterian system, though it also combined some Congregational elements. As noted before, ‘unity in diversity’ was the principle of the union scheme of the CCC. A number of CCC leaders, such as Kepler, held a strong conviction of the feasibility of this mode of church union. In a similar manner to the NCC, the CCC attempted to forge a union by avoiding ecclesiastical schism among different denominational communities. The principles that individual churches would enjoy adequate freedom in their own affairs and that each denominational community would not be asked to discard their ecclesiastical heritage when joining the CCC made the pre-requirements for church union much lower than those of the CSI. As a result, the CCC enjoyed advantages in forming a visible union and attracting individual churches and groups of various denominations to join without touching the hot issues of faith and order.

It should be noted that the principle of ‘unity in diversity’ embodied elements of

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., 162-5.

traditional Chinese philosophy and values, such as the idea of ‘He’er Butong 和而不同,⁶⁴¹ to seek a harmonious relationship without sacrificing difference. As part of Confucian ethics, the idea of ‘He’er Butong’ advocated the virtue of recognising and respecting individual diversity while building a harmonious relationship. This idea may be contrasted with some approaches to church union and harmony within the Three-Self Patriotic Movement [TSPM] in the contemporary Chinese church, which seek to achieve unity through uniformity. In a recent article in *Studies in World Christianity*, Kung Lap-yan has criticised contemporary Chinese theology, and the thought of Bishop K. H. Ting in particular, for pursuing an ideal of a harmonious society that allows insufficient scope for diversity and justice:

The Christian concept of love can be reduced to a mere expression of Yihe Weigui if it does not promote freedom and justice...Ting’s Trinitarian thought emphasises the unity more than the diversity within the Trinity. The distinct identity of each person of the Triune God is less emphasised.⁶⁴²

The emphasis on unity rather than diversity within the Trinity is closely related to the socio-political context in communist China. The original objective of the

⁶⁴¹ ‘He’er Butong’ originally comes from the phrase ‘Junzi He’er Butong, Xiaoren Tong’er Buhe 君子和而不同, 小人同而不和’ in *Lun Yu 論語 (Confucian Analects)*. James Legge translated it as ‘the superior man is affable, but not adulatory; the mean man is adulatory, but not affable.’ He interpreted the word ‘tong 同’ as ‘agreeing with – flattering.’ See James Legge, *The Chinese Classics with a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes, Vol. I, Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, and The Doctrine of the Mean* (London: Trübner, 1861), 137; Roger Ames interpreted it as ‘exemplary persons seek harmony not sameness; petty persons, then, are the opposite.’ See Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 168-9.

⁶⁴² Lap Yan Kung, ‘The Trinity, the Church, and China’s Harmonious Society: A Politics of Persuasion.’ *Studies in World Christianity* 17, no. 3 (2011): 237-57, Accessed December 2011, doi:10.3366/swc.2011.0027.

TSPM was to promote anti-imperialism and patriotism in Chinese Protestant churches in 1954, before it switched to taking over and centralising the duties of superintendence over denominations in 1958, as political campaigns intensified.⁶⁴³ The purpose of the formation of the China Christian Council in 1980 was to take charge of all ecclesiastical affairs of denominations, under the circumstances that the Chinese government prohibited the re-establishment of denominations in order to prevent their foreign connections from being restored. The unification of the forms of worship, ministry and church administration was therefore applied.⁶⁴⁴

Contrarily, when the CCC advocated church union, much attention was given to preserving diversity within unity. When Wen Nandou 文南斗 translated Kepler's work, *Let us Unite, The Church of Christ in China, Church Unity in China and Church and Mission Cooperation*, into Chinese in 1948, he commented in the postscript that the idea of 'unity in diversity' reflected a democratic approach to unity:

A united church should be a church which preserves the freedom of individual's thinking and expression under a common faith. It is on the one hand unified, and on the other democratic.⁶⁴⁵

Meanwhile, this vision of church union was also shaped by the missionary

⁶⁴³ Ying Fuk-tsang, 'Mainland China,' in *Christianities in Asia*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 156-8.

⁶⁴⁴ The government document 'Regulations on the Protestant Churches in China' was announced officially by the China Christian Council and TSPM in 1996 to set standards for the forms of worship, ministry and church administration of the Chinese Protestant churches. See Ying, 'Mainland China,' 158-9.

⁶⁴⁵ Wen, *He Er Wei Yi (Let us Unite)*, 23-4.

presence in China. One of the direct factors behind the two different approaches of the CSI and the CCC was that the dominant British, and in particular English, colonial influence in India provided the Anglican tradition with an equally dominant role in Indian Christianity. Anglican communicants in South India accounted for about two-thirds of the membership of the CSI.⁶⁴⁶ In China, on the other hand, the proportion of American missions in the Protestant mission force had been increasing steadily since 1900. According to Latourette, in 1905 forty-five per cent of the Protestant missionaries were from Britain and thirty-five per cent from America; in 1922 the corresponding percentages were eighteen per cent and fifty-one per cent.⁶⁴⁷ This brought much greater diversity to Protestant missions in China in terms of denominations, missionary approaches and theology. Against such a background, the principle of ‘unity in diversity’ seemed to be more practical in forming a church union in China. A series of interdenominational evangelical movements in early twentieth-century China, and also in the West, were in fact along these lines. As shown in the previous section, ‘All One in Christ Jesus,’ the motto of the Keswick Convention, reflected the spirit of interdenominational evangelicalism and played a significant role in shaping Cheng Jingyi’s ecumenical perspectives.

The principle of ‘unity in diversity’ embodied in the CCC had a varied historical and cultural background. However, its feasibility could only be tested by history.

Owing to the different approaches towards union, the attitude of the CCC towards

⁶⁴⁶ SMA, U102-0-128-70, ‘Nan Yindu (CSI),’ 14. The number of communicants of the Anglican churches was 132,000, the Methodist churches 26,000 and the SIUC 54,000.

⁶⁴⁷ Latourette, *History of Christian Missions*, 768.

creeds was markedly dissimilar from that of the CSI. While the CSI valued the role of the historical creeds, the CCC's attitude was that: 1) in order to achieve a maximal degree of church unity, the bond of union only sought to express the 'modicum of doctrine which all must hold in common if historic Christianity is to be conserved,' and 2) the CCC acknowledged and appreciated the historical value of creeds; however, it preferred to formulate an expression of Christian faith in print in accordance with Chinese Christians' own convictions.⁶⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the decade following the formation of the CCC failed to see the birth of a formal Chinese Christian creed. Instead, the CCC adopted the *Message* of the 1928 Jerusalem Meeting as the expression of Christian faith at its second General Assembly in 1930.⁶⁴⁹ Merwin considered this to be 'typical' of the Chinese church, 'which tended to be pragmatic and activist rather than philosophical.'⁶⁵⁰ It should be noted that both Cheng Jingyi and A. R. Kepler shared this pragmatic frame of mind. 'Unity in diversity' may have been an appropriate summation of the ideals of the CCC on church union. However, in the long term, the aspiration to formulate a creed which was based on Chinese Christians' convictions was founded on an illusion. The more numerous the denominational groups which joined the CCC, the more difficult and

⁶⁴⁸ SMA, U102-0-8-6, Cheng Jingyi, 'Sannianlai de Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui Quanguo Zonghui 三年來的中華基督教會全國總會 (The Past Three Years of the General Assembly of the CCC),' Zonghui Di'erjie Changhui Jiniance 總會第二屆常會紀念冊 (The Memorandum of the Second General Assembly of the CCC), 5-11; U102-0-72-49, Cheng Jingyi, 'Yu Gonglihui Youren Tan Jiaru Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui de Jidian Yidian 與公理會友人談加入中華基督教會的幾個疑點 (Discussion with the North China Gonglihui regarding Several Queries),' *Gongbao* 10, no. 9 (1938): 4-6; SOAS, CBMS 393, Kepler, *Let us Unite*, 21-4.

⁶⁴⁹ SMA, U102-0-243-72/U102-0-236-171, Minutes of Second General Assembly, 31-2.

⁶⁵⁰ Merwin, *Adventure in Unity*, 66.

complex it was for those pro- and anti-creedal bodies to agree on a common expression of faith and put it in print as a new creed. The CCC in fact never developed from a federation into a fully functional church, due to its lack of doctrinal and ecclesiastical coherence. Merwin has hypothesized that the necessary theological discussion would have taken place if the CCC had developed into maturity.⁶⁵¹ However, before such a hot doctrinal debate could occur, the severe national crisis in China during the years of the Japanese occupation had impeded the development of the Chinese church, as well as the CCC's search for a creed. A number of synods were overwhelmed by crucial practical problems of programme and survival, and there was little evidence of doctrinal debate or disagreement.⁶⁵²

Even before the Japanese invasion, the doctrinal basis of union of the CCC failed to gain the support of a number of denominational groups. For example, Huabei Gonglihui (the North China Congregational Union) of the ABCFM did not join the CCC, which they judged to be 'too conservative.'⁶⁵³ The Council of Huabei Gonglihui stated several conditions for uniting with the CCC, which were based on Congregational traditions, for example: the right of private judgement should not be overruled by any organisation, the right of individual congregations to full authority on matters of faith and conduct of church workers should not be interfered with, and the fundamental authority of church members should be central in the

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 66.

⁶⁵² Ibid., 202.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 64.

organisation.⁶⁵⁴ A number of negotiations between the CCC and Gonglihui took place, in particular a long series of talks between Cheng Jingyi and several key members of Gonglihui in 1937 on the issues of creedal statement, church polity and organisation, and church-mission relationships.⁶⁵⁵ However, Huabei Gonglihui never joined the CCC, due to the incompatibility of the CCC with Congregational principles.

On the other hand, the CCC faced the accusation of being too liberal. As with the NCC, the CCC kept its theological basis of church union minimal, for the sake of gaining a maximal range of union. This certainly caused uneasiness among a number of conservative denominational groups, mainly Presbyterians. Albert B. Dodd of the Presbyterian Church in the USA commented on the doctrinal basis of union that the CCC ‘declined to acknowledge the doctrine of the Trinity in that doctrinal statement.’ Henry Woods of the Presbyterian Church in the US and the North Jiangsu Mission even criticised the CCC as a ‘false unity’ and a ‘theological jelly fish,’ which not only spread modernism, but also spoiled Presbyterian traditions.⁶⁵⁶ A number of conservative Presbyterian missions and churches stayed out of the CCC, including the Presbyterian churches in Shandong and Jiangsu, the Canadian Presbyterian Mission in Manchuria and the Christian Reformed Mission. In November 1929, the above missions and churches met at the North China Theological Seminary in

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., 64.

⁶⁵⁵ SMA, U102-0-72-49, Cheng, ‘Gonglihui (North China Gonglihui),’ 4-6.

⁶⁵⁶ Kevin Xiyi Yao, *The Fundamentalist Movement among Protestant Missionaries in China, 1920-1937* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003), 214-5.

Tengxian, Shandong, and organised the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Christ in China. The General Assembly included eighty congregations, eighty-eight pastors and 17,766 communicants, and the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Longer and Shorter Catechisms were adopted as their doctrinal standards.⁶⁵⁷ As Kevin Yao has commented, the formation of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Christ in China revealed the dual intentions of many fundamentalists: to preserve a common orthodox faith and to protect their own denominational traditions, both of which they feared were threatened by the church unity movement in China.⁶⁵⁸ What the CCC had lost was not only the approval of certain denominations, but more specifically the support of theological conservatives, due to the theological stance of the CCC.

As the previous chapter has concluded, denominationalism was not the primary obstacle facing the church unity movement of the mainline Protestant churches in China following the 1920s. To a certain extent, denominationalism had been restrained, owing to the increasing co-operation and union along both denominational and interdenominational lines. What gave the union movement a heavy blow was the incompatibility of combining liberalism and fundamentalism in both missions and Chinese churches in the increasingly polarised theological atmosphere of the inter-war period. The formation of the League of Christian Churches at the North China Theological Seminary in November 1929 was a

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., 215.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., 216.

demonstration of the fundamentalists' version of Christian union. In addition to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Christ in China, there were also delegates from the Northern and Southern Presbyterians, Southern Baptists, American Lutheran Mission, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Bethel Mission and the CIM Church Council of Henan province participating in the formation of the League.⁶⁵⁹ The creed, which was of a conservative doctrinal character, included the affirmation :

We believe that the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments are all inspired by the Holy Spirit, and so are our only infallible rule of faith and practice.⁶⁶⁰

By 1932, the membership of the League had reached about 75,000, of which the CIM constituted the largest section, and the Presbyterians the second.⁶⁶¹ As a fundamentalist version of Christian union, it demonstrated that the mode and direction of interdenominational union created by the CCC was not the only option for church unity in China.

5.4.Conclusion

In a similar manner to the CSI, the CCC came into being due to the desire of national

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., 216.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., 217.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 218.

Christians for a united national church. This desire was expressed by both Chinese and Indian delegates during the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, was put into action during the following two or three decades, and was eventually realised in both mission fields. To build a united national church required two-fold conditions: capable national leadership and a vision which surpassed denominational barriers. This could only have been achieved by native Christians, as they fostered a growing national consciousness, especially in the early twentieth century, and did not bear the same historical burden of denominational loyalty as their western missionary fellows. The case of the CCC exhibits how the vision of a united national church could be put into practice and become a reality in China. It was an approach to church construction in China adopted by a considerable number of Chinese Protestant intellectuals and elites. They desired a single organic church, which on the one hand was national and indigenous, and on the other could fulfil the scriptural command for Christian unity in both China and the universal church. By establishing such a church, they attempted to realise the evangelisation of the Chinese nation. The birth and growth of the CCC demonstrated their sense of national identity and socio-political consciousness. More significantly, it demonstrated their vision of the Chinese church becoming a part of the universal Church, which was a broader vision than that of other contemporary native indigenous Chinese churches and sects, as well as that of the TSPM churches. The practical approach to these ends was a different one from that of South India. The idea of 'unity in diversity' was rooted in the Chinese context

and Chinese principles of psychology and ethics, as well as in the state of the general Protestant enterprise in early twentieth-century China. It therefore enriched the world ecumenical movement as a part of the Chinese religious experience.

If the CCC had been given more time to develop and to experiment with its mode of Christian unity, posterity might have obtained a clearer picture of the feasibility of the CCC, but history did not provide the CCC with such opportunity. Obstacles came from both ecclesiastical and theological perspectives. The principles of church union tended to be insufficient to enlarge the union of the CCC a step further. The state of the CCC before 1940 showed that the ideal of the CCC had only been partially realised, among significant numbers of Presbyterians and Congregationalists and a small number of Baptists and Methodists, who by theological inclination were either moderate evangelicals or liberals. In the long term, with the divergence between conservatives and liberalists becoming acute, the CCC's ideal of 'unity in diversity' was very unlikely to be realised. It should be noted that the emergence of Chinese independent churches and sects in the early twentieth century, such as the True Jesus Church and the Little Flock, further deepened the existing division in Chinese Protestantism, as they adopted divergent approaches towards church growth from that of the CCC and generally held a strong spirit of separatism by maintaining their own features and identities.⁶⁶² According to an

⁶⁶² See Daniel H. Bays, 'The Growth of Independent Christianity in China, 1900-1937,' in *Christianity in China: From Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 307-16; Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 99-104; Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire, The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); and R. G. Tiedemann, 'Comity Agreements

account in 1944, the CCC showed a tendency to evolve into a denomination or one church among many in China.⁶⁶³ In addition, the actual practice of the idea of ‘unity in diversity’ made the CCC a federation, in which the uniting churches retained their own doctrinal convictions and forms of worship, sacraments, baptismal practice and ministry, rather than an organic union. Reality was considerably removed from the aims of the CCC organisers. Reports of both foreign missions and the CCC revealed that the belief in a united national church was limited to a small number of Christians, both Chinese and foreign, and the consciousness of a national church had not yet fully developed within the CCC, which was obliged to fight against a strong sense of local loyalty in China.⁶⁶⁴ Certainly the lack of unity in China as a nation state, caused by the warlord regime and perpetual domestic and international war and strife, worsened the situation. The union of the CCC in general was superficial, and was difficult to deepen. Furthermore, the case of the CCC, especially its church-mission relationships, disclosed the predicament of the mainline Chinese churches under the missionary presence in China. The CCC attempted to take part in the universal Protestant Church through co-operation with churches overseas, standing on its own feet and with a broader vision of Christian unity. Nonetheless, the missionary presence in China, and the co-operation between the two, was to some extent a hindrance to the progress of the formation of an independent and united church. On

and Sheep Stealers: The Elusive Search for Christian Unity among Protestants in China,’ *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 36, no. 1 (2012): 3-8.

⁶⁶³ SOAS, CWM, 1941-1950, CH35, The General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China, Newsletter, No. 4, October 1944.

⁶⁶⁴ SOAS, PCE, FMC, Series II, Box 13, The Church of Christ in China, 1948.

the one hand, too much dependence on financial subsidies from missions became an obstacle to the implementation of genuine independence of the CCC. The CCC could never claim to be a three-self church in a real sense. This continually provided other indigenous or native Chinese churches and sects, which relied solely on their own financial support, with grounds to accuse the insufficiency of indigeneity of the mainline churches. On the other hand, some of the co-operating missions still held strong ties with the churches they planted. Their denominational nature and different approaches towards union hampered the growth of the consciousness of being a national church within the CCC and the formation of a unified national scheme. The CCC's goal of organic union was never realised before the Chinese church was forced to pursue uniformity under Communist control.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

A Chinese Indigenous Approach to Church Unity

As noted in Chapter 1, there is an absence in the scholarly study of the mainline Chinese churches of any in-depth examination of the trend towards interdenominational co-operation and church union in early twentieth-century China. One of the reasons may be the judgement that the mode of the Chinese church represented by the CCC was a western one, and the church unity movement in China primarily a western missionary activity. For example, in his book *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China's United Front*, Philip Wickeri considers the Christianity represented by the CCC as 'often related ecumenically, but lacking national roots.' To him, the ecumenical movement in China failed to engage in sufficient depth with the national consciousness which emerged during the twentieth century.⁶⁶⁵ In a similar manner, Lian Xi argues that what Cheng Jingyi and his generation of mainline Protestant leaders ardently advocated was merely a 'missionary vision of a native church safely within the limits of mainline Western Protestantism.'⁶⁶⁶ Moreover, the ecumenical movement as a whole has been described by John Kent as 'a logical consequence of

⁶⁶⁵ Philip Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China's United Front* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 40, 216-7.

⁶⁶⁶ Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire, The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 40-1.

seeing missionary expansion as a means of recovering Christianity's influence on Western society itself.' In Kent's view, the ecumenical movement was infected by a kind of 'Christian imperialism.'⁶⁶⁷ Ironically, this impression of the 'Christian imperialism' of the missions had found a wide audience in China long before Kent's interpretation, and had overshadowed the mainline Protestant churches ever since the mid-nineteenth century. All of the above assessments label the ecumenical movement in China as being suffused with western characteristics, and as a result, the study of this issue seems unable to stimulate widespread enthusiasm in academia due to the perceived 'danger' of a 'western-centric' orientation. Nonetheless, through its examination of the formation of Cheng's ecumenical convictions and the progress of the church unity movement in China, this thesis concludes that the above interpretation does not do justice to the efforts of the mainline churches towards the establishment of a united indigenous church in early twentieth-century China. The thesis argues that their approaches to church unity were grounded in a vision of ecumenism that was more than a simple reflection of western missionary perspectives: it was shaped by distinctively Chinese concerns.

Our analysis of the formation of Cheng Jingyi's ecumenical convictions suggests that the quest of mainline Chinese Christians for church union shifted from a western vision of ecumenism, which was driven to a large extent by western ecclesiastical preoccupations, to an indigenous form, which was shaped by the strong desire for the

⁶⁶⁷ John Kent, *The Unacceptable Face: The Modern Church in the Eyes of the Historian* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 178.

establishment of a native church in China. It is true, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, that Cheng's original ecumenical vision bore many of the characteristics of a western form of ecumenism. In a similar manner to many Chinese Christian elites of his time, western education and western Christian convictions played an influential role in Cheng Jingyi's early life. The forging of his ecumenical convictions was directly related to his experience in Britain, where he gained exposure to an interdenominational and international environment. His convictions were further reinforced by the trend towards a broader Protestant federation in China among a number of missions, a trend which was, to a large extent, the 'outgrowth of the missionary movement.'⁶⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the process through which Cheng was educated to become a 'qualified' native assistant to missionaries also witnessed the maturing of his Chinese identity and Chinese viewpoints. Cheng's awareness of the shortcomings of the Christian churches in China due to their western affinities and the indigenous demand for church independence among Chinese Christians deepened following his youthful experiences during the Boxer Uprising. In addition, he witnessed a series of church independence movements during the early years of the twentieth century which were impelled by the growing Chinese national consciousness and the rise of Chinese Christian leadership. Cheng gradually evolved from being a native assistant working under the umbrella of western missions into a

⁶⁶⁸ Kenneth Scott Latourette, 'Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council,' in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, eds. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (London: SPCK, 1954), 353.

Chinese pastor, with his own independent opinions on church construction. His Chinese experience added depth and breadth to his original outlook regarding church unity. Prior to the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, he had already claimed the need for a united Chinese church on an interdenominational basis. Cheng's ecumenical vision was endorsed by a considerable range of Chinese Christian leaders of his time, including Yu Rizhang, Wang Zhengting, Xu Shengyan, Zhang Boling and Cui Xianxiang. Church unity, to them, was an integral aspect of the establishment and development of the Chinese indigenous Church. This ecumenical vision was shaped by the desire for church independence from western control and western denominationalism. The Chinese church and the Chinese context became its centre. Although it was endorsed by a small number of western missionaries, this vision was a Chinese indigenous quest for an ecumenical expression of Christianity in China. Additionally, it echoed a vision that arose out of the concern of Asian Christians imbued with national and social consciousness for Christian unity, as manifested during the 1910 Conference. This vision contained a dimension that did not exist in the western ecumenical movement, where a predominantly evangelistic rationale was the force driving co-operation among various denominations.

As demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 4, in order to fulfil this ecumenical vision, the mainline churches had to begin pragmatically with the formation and operation of several national Christian organisations on a federal pattern, such as the China

Continuation Committee and the NCC. They could not ignore the western missionary and denominational presence in China, and they found that federal unions were more realistic than a single organic church at that stage for the nationwide co-ordination of not only Chinese churches and groups, but also western denominations and missions. Concurrent with the enlargement of federal unions, there was a consistent emphasis on the 'church-centric' principle and the essential unity of all Chinese Christians without the division of denominationalism, which paved the way for the formation of a united national church in the future. It was not until 1927, however, when the General Assembly of the CCC was formed, that the goal of a united national church which Cheng Jingyi and mainline Chinese Christians pursued, was partially realised.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the CCC reflected a Chinese indigenous religious perspective on church construction and Christian unity. This was apparent in two particular respects. First, it was owing to the insistence of Chinese Christians that the name 'Zhonghua Jidu Jiaohui' was adopted, and that the CCC was formed along lines designed to lead to an organic national church rather than merely a federation of denominations, which missionaries preferred. In reality, however, the CCC was constrained by the extent of both ecclesiastical and theological divergence within Protestantism in China, especially among western missionaries, and as a result could not progress beyond a federation. This interpretation differs from Latourette's view that the movements towards church union in China largely took the form of co-operation due to the Chinese predilection for practicality, whilst the CCC, as an

organic union, 'owed more in its pioneering stages to missionaries than to Chinese.'⁶⁶⁹ In contrast to the ecumenical movement in Africa, however, which was advocated by missionaries from an 'external' position,⁶⁷⁰ Chinese Christians played a decisive role in the formation of the CCC. Second, the CCC followed the principle of 'unity in diversity' in order to maximise the scope of Christian union in China. As noted in Chapter 5, this principle was consistent with the Chinese pragmatic principles of psychology and the idea of 'He'er Butong' in Confucian ethics. Both Latourette and Merwin argue that the Chinese are generally practical and not 'church-conscious,' with the result that their theology was not developed enough to solve the problems of faith and order. The principle of 'unity in diversity', therefore, fitted well in the Chinese context. These judgments may underestimate the capacity of the Chinese church for theological reflection. There may, however, be considerable truth in the suggestion that the pragmatic quest for church union, to a large number of mainline Chinese Christians, was attractive precisely because of its symbolic independence from western denominationalism, more than because of ecclesiastical or theological convictions on ecumenism. In this regard, this thesis demonstrates that the vision of a united Chinese church was a Chinese indigenous reflection of ecumenism, driven by national consciousness of the need for church independence and unity in China. The ecumenical movement in China had its own national roots, which enabled it to distinguish itself from becoming simply an

⁶⁶⁹ Latourette, 'Ecumenical Bearings,' 386-7; Wallace C. Merwin, *Adventure in Unity, The Church of Christ in China* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 66.

⁶⁷⁰ Kent, *Unacceptable Face*, 214-5.

extension of western missionary activity. This did not, however, mean that theological motivations were entirely lacking, as the following section will explain.

The Theological Motivations of Church Unity

Driven by national consciousness of the imperatives for church independence and unity, the church unity movement in China resembled those in other Asian contexts, especially in South India. John Kent has argued that there was a disjunction between the western form of ecumenism and the Indian one. According to him, Indian ecumenism was essentially a by-product of nationalism, in which political implications mattered much more than issues of theology.⁶⁷¹ Questions might be raised by this assumption: was this also the case in China, and is it adequate to explain and interpret the efforts of mainline Chinese Christians towards the construction of a united indigenous church from political and sociological aspects alone?

Cheng Jingyi's case demonstrates that some Chinese Christian leaders exhibited a genuine belief in the biblical commandment to Christian unity, in the universal nature of Christian fellowship and in the importance of expressing Christian union in forms that transcended the boundaries of denominations and nations. This belief was shared by a number of Chinese Christian leaders, including Liu Tingfang and Wen Nandou, and formed the foundational theological motivation behind the church unity

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., 207-9.

movement in China and the formation of the CCC. National consciousness and the socio-political environment did indeed play a considerable role in the course of the establishment of a united indigenous church in China. Nonetheless, its ultimate end, in the minds of Cheng Jingyi and several other Chinese Christian leaders, was to evangelise China and the Chinese nation, and not merely to realise a political sense of independence. This is proven by the fact that Cheng constantly endeavoured to keep Chinese churches and Chinese Christian movements from falling prey to the spirit of Chinese nationalism. Additionally, the ideal of ‘unity in diversity,’ although it fitted well with the pragmatic principles of psychology of the Chinese, also echoed the motto of the Keswick Convention, ‘All One in Christ Jesus,’ as a reflection of the spirit of interdenominational evangelicalism in the West. From this angle, the church unity movement in China was not an altogether different movement from that in the West. Kent’s judgements on Indian ecumenism cannot be neatly transplanted into the Chinese arena. Meanwhile, these theological convictions should not be simply seen as the marks of western Christianity on Chinese churches. A considerable number of Chinese Christians had embraced and absorbed these convictions, and in this regard, their demands for church unity can be seen as a natural step in the process of the growth of the Chinese church towards maturity. The emerging churches in Asia bore certain features that reflected the global character of Christianity as a world religion and not mere national sentiment. Furthermore, the theological convictions behind the church unity movement in China echo David Thompson’s insistence that theological

motivations have been at least as important as pragmatic necessity in driving the search for Christian unity.⁶⁷² The desire for a united national church in early twentieth-century China should not be solely explicated with reference to socio-political motivations. It requires a more comprehensive interpretation.

The Paradox of ‘Three-Self’ and Christian Co-operation and Union

An indispensable dimension of the theological motivation behind the church unity movement which this thesis discusses was the conviction that Christian unity surpassed national boundaries. As demonstrated, Cheng believed a wider Christian association to be both consistent with the biblical truth of universal Christian unity and pragmatically beneficial to Chinese churches. He therefore put a large amount of effort into ardently advocating these principles throughout his lifetime, in order to maintain a stable relationship between Chinese churches and missions and avoid a narrow nationalistic approach to church construction in China, especially when anti-foreign and anti-Christian sentiments overwhelmed the country and the church independence movements were in full swing. It should be noted, however, that Cheng’s ideal of international Christian unity was not merely a pragmatic device to seek the sympathy and protection of western missions through fraternal relationships.

⁶⁷² David M. Thompson, ‘The unity of the church in twentieth-century England: pleasing dream or common calling?’ in *Unity and Diversity in the Church, Studies in Church History, Vol. 32*, ed. R. N. Swanson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 530-1.

Its pre-requisite was the 'church-centric' principle, on which the Chinese church took part in the universal Protestant church through co-operation with western churches and missions, standing on its own feet and not being subject to them. To Cheng, the two principles of church independence on the one hand and co-operation with missions and overseas churches on the other were not in opposition. After its launch, the CCC sought not only domestic Christian unity, but also international Christian co-operation, and attempted to realise the ideal of being 'all one in Christ Jesus.' In this light, this thesis draws scholarly attention to a neglected aspect of the church unity movement within the mainline churches, namely, that this movement reflected a broader model of ecclesiology than that exhibited either by the majority of the independent Chinese Protestant groups, among which there was a general anti-foreign attitude, or by the Chinese church under the control of TSPM during the 1950s, which severed its ties with foreign missions under pressure from the communist authorities. This aspect has long been unheeded in both the Chinese church and academia, due to the failure of the mainline churches to realise their ideal of self-reliance.

The noble intentions of the mainline churches to achieve a genuinely indigenous united Chinese church, however, were overshadowed by their pragmatic need for co-operation to seek foreign subsidies and personnel support. The reality was that a large number of mainline Chinese churches were unable to achieve the goal of self-support during this period. As a result, a co-operative relationship between

Chinese churches and missions was valued primarily because of the actual benefit derived from foreign subsidies. Based on the experience of his own church in moving towards independence from the LMS, and his understanding of what church indigeneity was, even Cheng Jingyi welcomed foreign assistance, as long as the church was self-governing and self-propagating. Nevertheless, this approach tended to diminish the consciousness of self-reliance within the mainline churches. Not only was the NCC largely financed by western missions, but even the CCC itself, which claimed to be an independent national church with a goal of achieving 'three-self' status. In fact, the CCC maintained and enlarged its co-operation with missions for the sake of seeking financial and personnel sustentation. Too much dependence on financial subsidies from western missions became a serious obstacle to the implementation of genuine independence of the CCC. The CCC never achieved the goal of 'three-self,' and was only ever a 'two-self' church. The gap between the ideal of Christian union and the actual reliance on foreign subsidies resulted in a paradox for the mainline churches which professed commitment to achieving 'three-self' status yet were unable to implement the third self. This further provided grounds for indigenous or native Chinese churches and sects, which relied solely on their own financial support, to accuse them of insufficient indigeneity and too great a dependence on the western presence. *The Christian Manifesto*, which was signed by at least 400,000 Chinese Protestants in May 1950, advanced criticism of this kind, noting that only limited progress had been made towards the long-established goal

within the Chinese church of attaining the three selves. The *Manifesto* required ‘all Christian churches and organisations in China’ to oppose imperialism and to realise the goal of self-reliance ‘within the shortest possible time.’⁶⁷³ Owing to the call of the *Manifesto*, the CCC was obliged to drop an earlier plan which aimed to achieve self-support within five years, and hastened to realise immediate financial independence from the West.⁶⁷⁴

This was the paradox for the CCC: how to realise their goal of ‘three-self’ and yet maintain co-operation with missions. However, does this paradox imply that these two goals were incompatible? In other words, was the approach of the mainline churches to church construction in China inevitably a dead end? As a matter of fact, there were several independent churches in Beijing which joined the CCC, and a number of local churches of the CCC, especially in Huabei, Shaanxi and Minnan synods, were ‘three-self’ churches. Zhang Hua’s study of the Chinese independent churches shows that a large number of independent churches which were planted by missions but gained independence and severed their ties eventually joined the mainline churches, such as the CCC, or re-united with the missions from which they separated during the 1930s. Even the Chinese Jesus Independent Church, the model of the Chinese independent churches, adjusted its relationship with missions several times between 1911 and 1933, after it gained independence.⁶⁷⁵ To explore the

⁶⁷³ Victor E. W. Hayward, *Christians and China* (Belfast: Christian Journals Ltd., 1974), 49-52.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 51-2.

⁶⁷⁵ Zhang Hua 張化, ‘Zhongguo Yesujiao Zilihui Shuping 中國耶穌教自立會述評 (A Study of the Chinese Jesus Independent Church).’ *Shi Lin 史林 (Historical Review)*, no. 1 (1998): 57-66.

motivations behind such moves would constitute an entirely different topic of research suitable for another occasion, and is not the focal point of this thesis. What their moves may indicate, however, is that the church-mission co-operation and the failure of the realisation of the goal of ‘three-self’ should not necessarily be seen as a matter of cause and effect; the mainline churches could have determined the scale of co-operation, drawing a distinction between the maintenance of close fraternal relationships and the continuance of financial subsidies. The ideal of the Chinese church standing on its own feet as an equal partner in a universal Christian union could only be truly realised if the Chinese church was willing and able to stand on its own feet to sustain all its affairs.

Cheng Jingyi and the Church Unity Movement

This thesis has discussed the church unity movement, illustrated by Cheng Jingyi’s life. One of its aims has been to clarify a number of evaluations of Cheng which have appeared in modern scholarship. Firstly, it has set out to answer the question raised in Chapter 1: Was Cheng Jingyi’s role in a number of major Christian institutions, as Lian Xi implies, merely that of a puppet under missionaries’ control, or, as Jonathan Chao comments, did it signal the ‘end of a missionary era?’⁶⁷⁶ This thesis has argued that, on the one hand, Cheng was certainly not a puppet under missionaries’ control.

⁶⁷⁶ Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 35-6, 40-1, 58-9; China Graduate School of Theology, Jonathan T’ien-en Chao, ‘The Indigenization of Protestant Christianity in Modern China as Seen through the Life and Work of Cheng Ching-yi (1881-1939),’ Partial Draft, 1978, 139.

Cheng's life demonstrates that although the LMS intended to train him to be a native helper, he grew into a capable church leader with his own independent judgement and perspectives on the future of the Chinese church. His advocacy of a united indigenous church in China went well beyond the missionaries' vision of a Chinese church. His rise to church leadership accelerated the pace towards independence of his church in Beijing from the LMS. It was owing to his efforts, and the efforts of his generation of Chinese Protestant leaders, that the CCC, as a united Chinese church, eventually came into being. In particular, the CCC's registration with the central government was to a certain extent the result of his outlook, as was its evangelistic work in West China and the launch of a series of Christian movements. Cheng's growth into a capable church leader was representative of a number of mainline Protestant leaders, including Meng Jizeng, Gao Chengzhai and Xu Shengyan. It was due to the maturity of these Chinese Christians in church leadership that Chinese churches were able to claim their autonomy and build a Chinese church in accordance with their own convictions. Although a number of their churches were mission-related, this does not necessarily imply that they were under the missions' control or that their vision of a Chinese church could not surpass that of missions.

On the other hand, Cheng's leadership, although it was remarkable in shaping the Chinese trend towards the goal of a single national church on an interdenominational pattern, did not in itself promise the 'end of a missionary era.' Although the growing prominence of Cheng and his generation of Chinese

Protestants in church leadership greatly encouraged and impelled the growth of the ‘selfhood’ of Chinese churches, the majority of mainline Chinese churches had not achieved self-reliance, and foreign subsidies and personnel still played an important part in their maintenance during this period. There was always a gulf between the policy-making of church leaders and the actual implementation by the laity. To the mainline churches, this made the missionary presence in early twentieth-century China unavoidable, and something which could not be neglected. Additionally, a number of Chinese church leaders shared Cheng’s attitude towards church-mission relationships and the pragmatic acceptance of continuing external dependence on foreign subsidies. The case of the CCC indicated that Cheng and other mainline leaders did not always correctly grasp and react to the needs of the time, as the dependence on missionary funds became a hindrance rather than a boost to the development of the Chinese church. As for Cheng Jingyi himself, he indeed showed a degree of exceptionality in leadership. His own convictions on universal Christian unity were strengthened by his close connection with the LMS during his early life, especially his affinitive relationships with George Owen and the Curwens, as well as his overseas experience in an international evangelistic environment. With his moderate and mild temperament, Cheng sometimes displayed a romantic and idealistic attitude towards the ideal of Christian union and the church-mission relationship. Even A. R. Kepler, although himself a foreign missionary in the CCC leadership, displayed stronger determination in policy-making and implementation

than did Cheng when negotiating with missions. As F. H. Hawkins of the LMS once commented, Cheng was ‘too good a man for secretaryship work.’⁶⁷⁷ Cheng’s own characteristics and style in Christian leadership may have become a source for misinterpretation and criticism. An example can be found in Lian Xi’s observation: ‘Whatever resentment he [Cheng Jingyi] had felt against foreign dominance of the Chinese church would have softened in the face of moves missionaries had made since 1907 to put the Chinese, himself in particular, in the position of leadership.’⁶⁷⁸ In fact, Cheng’s personal interests lay much more in the work of Christian literature.⁶⁷⁹

A further aim of this thesis has been to draw scholarly attention to Cheng’s status in the contradiction between liberals and conservatives in the early twentieth century. As the North Jiangsu Mission delegates to the 1922 National Christian Conference observed, Cheng was not, in their view, a liberal.⁶⁸⁰ This judgement is convincing as it represented the opinions of a group usually regarded as fundamentalists. Kevin Xiyi Yao notes the existence of ‘moderates’ or ‘mild fundamentalists’ in the conflicts between liberals and conservatives. This group of conservatives, according to Yao, ‘could agree with the fundamentalists on such issues as the authority of the Bible and supernatural Christology and regretted the rise of modernism,’ but did not join the

⁶⁷⁷ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, China Odds, Box 10, F. H. Hawkins to Eliot Curwen, 3 January 1933.

⁶⁷⁸ Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 58-9.

⁶⁷⁹ SOAS Library, Archives & Special Collections, CWM, LMS, North China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 18, 1912-3, No. 824, Meech, Peking, 2 and 5 February 1912.

⁶⁸⁰ Delegates of the Mission to the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions, 13 September 1922, Bridges Papers, PHS, Montreat, NC, in Kevin Xiyi Yao, *The Fundamentalist Movement among Protestant Missionaries in China, 1920-1937* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003), 206.

anti-modernist campaign for the sake of Christian unity within missionary community.⁶⁸¹ Cheng was certainly not a fundamentalist, and he did not seem to fit in the group of ‘moderates’ either, as he was inclined to be sympathetic to the liberal approach to social reform through Christian faith. Cheng bore certain characteristics of a number of Chinese Christian intellectuals who had strong national and social consciousness to link Christianity and the concept of ‘national salvation.’ At the same time, he displayed the characteristic features of an evangelist, by consistently emphasising the spiritual life of the church and the evangelisation of China, not only in words, but also in action. The ultimate goal of his initiation of the Chinese Home Missionary Society, the China for Christ Movement, the Five-Year Movement and even the promotion of a united indigenous church, was to evangelise the Chinese nation. Cheng’s status indicates that Chinese Protestantism in this period cannot be simply reduced to an opposition between fundamentalists and liberals. There were at least a few, like Cheng Jingyi, in the middle. The polarisation between the two extremes has, however, resulted in this group becoming almost invisible to both modern Christian circles and academia. In Cheng’s case, due to his leadership in several major Christian organisations which have been considered to be theologically liberal and not to be evangelism-oriented, this status has tended to be neglected. Furthermore, the evangelism-centric dimension of Cheng’s life has not been well noted either by contemporary Chinese Christians or by scholars. Only Liu Jiafeng shows a certain awareness of Cheng’s emphasis on the spiritual growth of the

⁶⁸¹ Yao, *Fundamentalist Movement*, 281-4.

Chinese church.⁶⁸² Cheng has never been listed together with other Chinese evangelists, such as Ding Limei and Song Shangjie.⁶⁸³ As demonstrated in this thesis, Cheng's understanding of Christianity was not only based on doctrinal knowledge, but also on the Chinese context; and he not only emphasised individual salvation but also embraced a wider social dimension. Yet he never lost sight of the goal of the evangelisation of China and his concern for the spiritual life of the individual and the Protestant community. This dimension of Cheng's life certainly deserves more credit and scholarly attention.

Further Studies of the Church Unity Movement in China

Historical treatments of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century have paid much less attention to the CCC than they have done to the CSI. One of the reasons may be that the CCC ceased to exist after 1949, whilst the CSI has endured to the present day. Written history usually privileges the survivors over the extinct, the winners over the losers. Nonetheless, as shown in this thesis, the CCC encompassed a greater denominational range than the CSI, and took a shorter time to be brought into existence. When it was formed, the CCC contained twelve synods which were scattered throughout China, fifty-one district associations, 585 organised churches,

⁶⁸² Liu Jiafeng, 'Cheng Jingyi (1881-1939) yu Zhongguo Jiaohui Bensehua Yundong 誠靜怡 (1881-1939) 與中國教會本色化運動 (Cheng Jingyi (1881-1939) and The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement),' Post-doctoral diss., Sun Yatsen University, 2004, 79, 110.

⁶⁸³ Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 40-1.

2,035 preaching places, 333 ordained pastors, 2,072 evangelistic workers and 120,175 communicants, which was reported to be approximately one third of the number of Protestant communicants in China.⁶⁸⁴ As the largest Protestant church in China at that time, co-operating with fourteen missions, its size and strength could not be ignored in Chinese Christian circles during that period.⁶⁸⁵ The CCC achieved a certain degree of real unity in several synods, such as those in Guangdong and Minnan. Additionally, it operated its own evangelistic work in West China, which according to Stephen Neill, was a sign of 'reality in the life of a united Church.'⁶⁸⁶

This thesis has maintained that the church unity movement in early twentieth-century China, and the resultant CCC, reflected a Chinese approach to ecumenism. It differed from the western form of ecumenism and demonstrated a quest for national church construction in China. Yet it was not solely an outgrowth of the socio-political preoccupation in China, and shared similar theological motivations with that behind the ecumenical movement of the West. Although this thesis has confined its scope to the efforts of a large number of mainline Protestant churches to move towards Christian union, seen in a broader perspective, the various approaches towards either denominational or interdenominational union of different Chinese Protestant churches, whether mainline mission-related or independent,

⁶⁸⁴ SMA, U102-0-236-233, Digest of Important Actions of the First General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China, St. Mary's Hall, Shanghai, 1-11 October 1927, 7.

⁶⁸⁵ Comparative membership figures in 1938: the CCC – 130,000; the CHSKH – 73,000; Methodist Churches – 51,000; Lutheran Churches – 39,000. See Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 213-4.

⁶⁸⁶ Stephen Charles Neill, 'Plans of Union and Reunion, 1910-1948,' in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, eds. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (London: SPCK, 1954), 460.

whether liberal or conservative, reflected the fact that church unity had become a general trend in the evolution of Protestantism in China. As an indispensable part of the history of Chinese Christianity during the twentieth century, and as a Chinese case study in the evolution of Christianity when it encounters the local context of particular mission fields, the church unity movement in China is worthy of further and deeper study.

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