

Christian Women's Education in China in the Nineteenth and Early  
Twentieth Centuries



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There are two extreme interpretations of the Christian missions in China. On the one hand, some scholars criticized the Christian missions as being purely political by serving as the imperialist agents. Therefore, the missionaries were no different from diplomats and business people in exploiting China's weak status.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, some theologians and mission scholars are picking up the theme of indigenization in order to prove the Chinese acceptance of Christianity. Accordingly, the Christian missions were not imperialist imposition.<sup>2</sup> Despite their sharp differences, the debate has been focusing on political or cultural (religious) perspectives in the framework of international relations. It is time to examine the Christian missions in China from an angle that is more universal. The ongoing globalization demands some common themes to unite people worldwide. Such an approach requires us to study the missions by including some universal values such as the human rights. In spite of the political debate, did the Christian missions in China contribute to the improvement of human rights in China? Although the question is easy to ask, answers are difficult. In some ways, the missions led to the deterioration of people's life in China because the missions occupied Chinese land in order to construct the compounds and often forced the Chinese converts to abandon their heritage. In other ways, the missions provided humanitarian assistances in the forms of education, medical care, and social welfare and thereby improved the living conditions for many Chinese.

The issue of the Christian missions and human rights in China was best reflected in the area of women's education in China. Based upon the Confucian definition of women's domesticity, traditional Chinese society very much devalued the necessity for women to receive education. The Christian missions in China thus made a revolution by creating schools for Chinese girls. Such an effort led to a new social trend in which women's education became an integral part of the Chinese educational reform. Despite its

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<sup>1</sup> Paul A. Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1963); John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974); Paul A. Varg, *Missionaries, Chinese, and Diplomats: The American Protestant Missionary Movement in China, 1890-1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).

progressive advocacy for women's educational rights, Christian women's education continued to be socially conservative. Although the missions helped spread literacy among the Chinese women, the limitation of the missionaries by the ideological framework of Victorian womanhood made it difficult for educated Chinese women to break the established social boundaries. The dominant choice for many educated women was to become mothers, raise children, and do woman's work such as teaching and nursing.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning from the Han Dynasty, the Confucian emphasis on family was largely based upon the sacrifice of women. The Confucian process of creating a social order was also a gradual development to affirm the rule of patriarchy. Overall, Confucianism legitimized the patrilineal ancestral line, patriarchal family organization, and partrilocal community control. Its core concept of filial piety, with its emphasis on responsibility and submissiveness, gave overwhelming power to men and older generations over women and younger generations.<sup>4</sup> Along with the growing dominance of Confucianism in the Chinese society, women steadily lost their rights in all aspects of social life. The status of women was dehumanized to become equal to property. As a result, Chinese women could enjoy few opportunities to improve themselves. In the name of the family, Neo-Confucianism of the Song Dynasty went even further by advocating the ritual of widow chastity, the seclusion of women, and footbinding. As a result, women became the main victim of the Chinese Confucian system.

Education, particularly literary education, was one important area in which the Chinese women were deprived of their rights. In order to have virtuous women who would be willing to comply with the rigid restrictions, Confucianism promoted the concept that a woman of no talent was a woman of virtue. Education in traditional China was an act of moralization that should reinforce the basic family-oriented social institution. At the time, the existing social morality demanded women's domesticity and obedience. Hence, in

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Hayhoe, *China's Universities, 1895-1995: A Century of Cultural Conflict* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 12.

general, women had no need to receive literary education because their rightful position was at home taking care of parents and raising children. Illiteracy was therefore celebrated as a women's virtue. It was no wonder why the most immediate impression of the Christian missionaries was that the overwhelming number of the Chinese women could not read at all.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the general trend of providing no literary education for Chinese women, there were limited forms of cultural preparation to transfer the Chinese women from faithful daughters to wise mothers who would carry on the family traditions. The preface to the "bible" for Chinese women, *Nixiè* (Women's learning), claimed that "The way for the orderly management of the family begins with women."<sup>6</sup> It was therefore critical for girls to receive proper tutoring as they grew up. A main channel to teach *fudao* (how to be a good wife) to women was nonliterate education. Both in public and private occasions, women received vigorous oral instructions on correct behaviors including chastity and fidelity without being taught how to read and write. Apprenticeship for home chores such as cooking and sewing was also a key part of women's training.

The existence of a few cases of literate women was for the purpose of satisfying the needs of the elite men. Throughout Chinese history, there were some well-known women writers and poets. Almost all of them were born into privileged families and married high level officials. The significant cultural achievements of these upper-class women reflected their respective social status. Another group of literary women was the courtesans who were in the entertainment service. Their profession often demanded them to become highly literate in order to please their guests who were often officials, writers, poets, and other highly literate men. Consequently, these women's talents were for a specific purpose that remained within the patriarchal social framework.

The historical legacy of a gendered society in China produced paradoxical results in education during the Qing Dynasty before the arrival of the Christian missionaries. On the one hand, education greatly expanded during the Qing era in response to the population growth and economic progress especially in the coastal regions. There was a surge in the construction of new school buildings throughout China. More than half of the

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<sup>5</sup> Dean, *The China Mission*, 22.

<sup>6</sup> The entire preface is translated in S. Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom* (New York: Schribners Sons, 1900), I:574-576.

Chinese children were receiving primary education. By 1800, thirty to forty percent of the Chinese men and two to ten percent of the Chinese women could engage in basic reading and writing.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Chinese women benefited little from the Qing's educational expansion. The overwhelming majority of the women, more than eighty percent of them, were completely illiterate. As always, Chinese schools wholly excluded girls and thereby women could not receive public and systematic education. Even for the small number of women who did receive private home-based education, it was very much in a gendered focus in which women learned to be subordinate, submissive, and domesticated.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, from the gender perspective, the assimilation of the Manchus into Chinese society, as reflected in the area of education, was also an affirmation for continuing denial of a basic human right, i.e. the educational right for most of the Chinese women.<sup>9</sup> As minority aliens ruling over the majority Chinese, the Manchus had to be conservative in order to maintain control. The overarching concern for social stability determined the outcome in which the Manchus followed the general Chinese trend of treating women as second class citizens. Although the Manchus were originally quite hostile to some of the Chinese practices such as women's footbinding, they gradually embraced Confucianism and women's domestication. Even Manchu women lost their past nomadic tradition to live openly and publicly with their men. As women once again retreated back to their home, the need for education was further diminished.<sup>10</sup>

It was amid Chinese women's continuing social inferiority that the West, especially the United States, began to send Christian missionaries to China at the turn of the nineteenth century. The first mission board to send missionaries to China was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions which was organized in 1810. In 1830, it sent out the first American missionary to China, Elijah C. Bridgman, a

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<sup>7</sup> Lu Hongji (Bernard Luk), *Zhongguo jinshi de jiaoyü fazhan* [Modern educational development in China] (Hong Kong: Huafeng shujü, 1983), 74-78; Evelyn S. Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), 140.

<sup>8</sup> Charlotte Furth, "Androgynous Males and Deficient Female: Biology and Gender Boundaries in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century China," *Late Imperial China* 9, no. 2 (December 1988): 1-25.

<sup>9</sup> Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053-1075.

<sup>10</sup> David Johnson, A.J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Tao Yüchuan, *Zhongguo jiaoyü shi bijiao yanjiü* [A comparative study of Chinese educational history] (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyü, 1985).

graduate of the Amherst College. In 1835, the first medical missionary, Peter Parker, a Yale graduate, arrived in China. In 1840, S. Wells Williams from upstate New York went to China whose future book, *The Middle Kingdom*, became the first systematic book to introduce China to American readers. Gradually, various Christian denominations, including the Baptists, the Methodists, and the Presbyterians, sent out their own missionaries to China. At the time, China presented a hope for the American missionaries to score a major victory of evangelization.<sup>11</sup>

Despite their enthusiasm and efforts, the Christian missionaries achieved very little success. The Chinese were reluctant to give up their polytheistic practices in order to be converted to monolithic Christianity. It was also difficult for them to abandon their traditional practices such as the ancestor worship by accepting an alien religion. By 1853, there were only 350 Chinese Protestants in the entire country.<sup>12</sup> The Christian work among the Chinese women proved next to impossible because the Chinese usually would not let their women participate in public activities. The biggest victory for the Christian missions was in the Taiping Rebellion. In 1853, the Southern Baptist missionary, Issachar J. Roberts, successfully converted Hong Xiūqūan who in the future used Christianity to organize his rebellion against the Qing Dynasty. Commercial interests, however, led the Western governments to be against the Taiping forces because the Taiping Kingdom wanted to stop the opium trade and limit trade of other goods as well. The failure of Taiping brought an end to the dream of a heavenly kingdom in China.<sup>13</sup>

In an effort to make a new breakthrough, the Christian missions transferred their attention to education. This time, the traditional Chinese emphasis on education provided an ideal opportunity for the missions to find a common ground. Although the missions had tried to create schools right after they began their endeavors in China, it was not until after the Opium War of 1840-1842 that there was a significant rise of the Christian schools. After the war, China was forced to open to the West. The unequal treaties

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<sup>11</sup> Suzanne Wilson Barnett and John King Fairbank, eds., *Christianity in China: Early Protestant Missionary Writing* (Cambridge, Mass.: Committee on American-East Asian Relations of the Department of History, Harvard University, 1985); Irwin T. Hyatt, *Our Ordered Lives Confess: Three Nineteenth-Century American Missionaries in East Shantung* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

<sup>12</sup> Gael Graham, *Gender, Culture, and Christianity: American Protestant Mission Schools in China, 1880-1930* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 11.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).

guaranteed a special status of the Christian schools. The growing contacts with the West also made it easy for some Chinese parents to send their children, both boys and girls, to the Christian schools. As a result, missions of different denominations created schools of different levels.

In particular, many women missionaries brought their educational tradition from America to China. Almost all the women missionaries were college graduates. They wanted to conduct mission work among the Chinese women and felt that educational work would be the most effective channel. They also noticed the enormous influence of the mother in the Chinese family. The women missionaries thus argued that the conversion of Chinese women was the best way to evangelize more Chinese because the Chinese Christian mothers would help bring up generations of future Chinese Christians. It was therefore under the strong advocacy of the women missionaries that the Christian missions, such as the China Inland Mission, devoted tremendous resources to educating Chinese women.<sup>14</sup>

Led by the women missionaries, there was a steady rise of Christian schools for Chinese girls. Pre-dating the Opium War, Henrietta Shuck, a Baptist woman missionary, created the first school for Chinese girls in Macao in 1836. After the Opium War, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions opened a girls' school in Guangzhou in 1846. The Northern Baptists set up their girls' school in Hong Kong in 1851. The Presbyterians organized their first girls' boarding school in Fuzhou in 1859.<sup>15</sup> The number of the girls' schools rose dramatically over the time. In 1860, there were twelve Protestant women's schools. By 1877 there were thirty-eight such schools.<sup>16</sup> Student enrollment steadily increased in all the Christian girls' schools. In 1860, there were 196 Chinese girls attending the Christian schools. In 1869, there were 556. The enrollment for subsequent years was: 1877, 1,307; 1896, 6,798; 1907, 9,929; 1910, 16,190; 1915, 45,168; and 1916, 50,173.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Geraldine Guinness, *The Story of the CIM* (London: Morgan and Scott, CIM, 1900), II:384-387.

<sup>15</sup> Gael Graham, *Gender, Culture, and Christianity*, 20.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Anderson, *Protestant Mission Schools for Girls in South China 1887 to the Japanese Invasion* (Mobile, Ala.: Heiter-Starke Printing Co., 1943), 62, 303; Ida Belle Lewis, *The Education of Girls in China* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1919), 24.

<sup>17</sup> Valerie Griffiths, *The Ministry of Women in the China Inland Mission and the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1920-1990* (Th.M. Thesis, Regent College, Vancouver, 1995), 19; Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, 273.

It was not an easy task for the missionaries to recruit the Chinese girls into their schools. They had to make many concessions in order to overcome the social barriers imposed by the Chinese tradition and culture. Chinese women had been living in the status of seclusion. Confucian rituals forbade Chinese women from being seen in the public or being contact with people outside their immediate family members. Contacts between Chinese women and foreigners were unthinkable.<sup>18</sup> For a few Chinese women who had received education, they did it at their home. Sending girls to public schools was totally against the established Chinese social rules. Letting them go through the Western education was equal to a rebellion against the Chinese tradition.

In order to attract the Chinese girls into the Christian schools, the missionaries had to make some concessions. The immediate compromise was in the area of school facilities. First of all, throughout the nineteenth century, all the girls' schools were boarding schools so that the girl students would live and study inside the school compounds during the entire time when they were receiving education. In this way, the girls did not have to be exposed to the public by walking on the street or being seen by strangers. Second, for a long time, these girls' schools remained to be exclusive institutions for women, further eliminating any unnecessary contacts between the girl students and men. Third, most of the missionary teachers were women missionaries, ensuring that the Chinese girls could maintain their feministic nature while being educated. All these measures were to make Chinese parents comfortable to send their daughters to the Christian schools.<sup>19</sup>

The Christian girls' schools also took some additional steps to broaden their appeal to the Chinese families. They included Confucian classical teaching in their curriculum. In particular, the Christian schools fully embraced the Chinese expectations for women to be domesticated, submissive, and loyal. Especially in the beginning stage, such traditional Chinese values became the manifested goal of the Christian schools that made it possible for them to build a common ground with the Chinese families. Further increasing their acceptance by the Chinese, the Christian girls' schools decided to admit students from both Christian and non-Christian families. The missionaries highlighted their educational

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<sup>18</sup> Lei Liangbo, Chen Yangfeng, and Xiong Xianju, *Zhongguo nüzi jiaoyüshi* [A history of women's education in China] (Wuhan: Wuhan chubanshe, 1993), 161.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret E. Burton, *The Education of Women in China* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1911), 34-51

purpose in their recruitment of potential students, thus enabling them to lessen their negative image of imposing Christianity. Finally, the Christian schools offered financial aid to poor Chinese families to send their daughters to school. In a society where women were considered worthless for women to be educated, the help from the missions was crucial in the Chinese families' decision to let their girls be educated.<sup>20</sup>

From the beginning, the Christian girls' schools represented a new way of teaching in China. The curriculum included Confucian classics and Chinese brush writing. On the other hand, reflecting their religious nature, Christian doctrine, worship, and fellowship were an important part of the daily routine. The most distinguished focus of the Christian schools was their emphasis on the "Three R's" (reading, writing, and arithmetic) which was directly imported from the American educational system. The Christian schools often used English as the teaching language for all the subjects other than the Chinese literature. Pedagogically speaking, the Christian schools tried to move away from the traditional Chinese memorization and recitation. Instead, they paid a close attention to understanding and explanation. Overall, the Christian schools started something entirely new for not only Chinese girls but also Chinese education.<sup>21</sup>

The Christian girls' schools promoted an educational as well as a social revolution. Chinese girls were becoming literate in both Chinese and English. They learned much knowledge that was at the time new in China and came to know the Western world. Some of them were even converted into Christianity. When the Christian women's colleges, such as the Hwa Nan College and the Ginlin College,<sup>22</sup> were established in the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese women started to receive higher education as well. The expanded education led the Chinese women to examine critically many of the Chinese traditions concerning women. At home, they began to demand equal treatment to what their brothers had received.<sup>23</sup> The most obvious social evil for women was footbinding. Since the twelfth century, young Chinese girls were forced to bind their feet in order to

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<sup>20</sup> Ellsworth C. Carlson, *The Foochow Missionaries, 1847-1880* (Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1974), 128-129; Carl T. Smith, "The Protestant Church and the Improvement of Women's Status in 19<sup>th</sup> Century China," *Ching Feng* 20 (1977): 109-110.

<sup>21</sup> Graham, *Gender, Culture, and Christianity*, 14.

<sup>22</sup> L. Ethel Wallace, *Hwa nan College: The Women's College of South China* (New York: United Board for Christian Higher Education in China, 1956).

<sup>23</sup> Charlotte L. Beahan, *The Women's Movement and Nationalism in Late Ch'ing China* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1976), 45.

cripple the bones inside to prevent them from growing. Small “lotus feet” constituted the prerequisite for good marriages. The missionaries were the first to call for the end of this terribly inhuman practice. Many Chinese intellectuals also voiced their opposition to footbinding. The initial sporadic criticisms developed into a big movement with the founding of the first anti-footbinding society in Shanghai in 1894.<sup>24</sup> Eventually, the practice of footbinding for women gradually became out of fashion in the first half of the twentieth century.

From education to social progress, Christian women’s education greatly improved human rights for Chinese women. Many Chinese girls, especially those from the poor families, had the opportunity to receive modern education, a fundamental right for any human being. Christian girls’ schools helped change the traditional Chinese concept: “the best womanhood is an illiterate womanhood.”<sup>25</sup> Instead, the new womanhood called for education, equality, and abolition of outdated social practices such as footbinding.<sup>26</sup> Christian women’s education pioneered the social trend to give education to Chinese women. More than a simple focus on women’s education, the leadership role of the Christian girls’ schools opened up a new chapter in Chinese educational history in introducing to China Western teaching contents and methods.

Despite the achievements made by the Christian girls’ schools in improving the educational rights for the Chinese women, they were not as successful in breaking the gender divisions that had been limiting women’s social participation. Restricted by their own limitations, the missionaries failed to lead the Chinese women to play a larger role in transforming the Chinese society. The human rights advocacy of the Christian women’s education remained to be a one-sided concern exclusively for women that was unable to produce a general appeal to men. This was why, eventually, the Chinese people, both men and women, found the common attraction in communism: for a moment, this new doctrine seemed to offer a shared solution to problems of both genders.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis, *The Education of Girls in China*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Alison R. Drucker, “The Influence of Western Women in the Anti-Footbinding Movement, 1840-1911,” in Richard W. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen, eds., *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship* (New York: Philo Press, 1981).

<sup>27</sup> Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

The most serious social shortcoming of the missionaries was their conscious or subconscious belief in the Victorian womanhood that prevented them from becoming social revolutionaries. Most of the American women missionaries stayed within their traditional boundaries: receiving education, becoming wives, having children, and doing God's work. They went to China to spread their religious and cultural influences. Although the mission movement started in New England, more than half of the women missionaries were from the rural Midwest where more conservative social values dominated. Most of these rural Midwest women were influenced by the traditional concept of "good wife and wise mother."<sup>28</sup> Their own lifestyle determined their limitations in their political approach. After all, they were not revolutionaries.

A fundamental flaw of the early Christian women's education was that it was centered on producing educated but still domesticated women for Chinese families. The stated goal of the Christian girls' schools was to make Chinese girls literate and obedient. By the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Chinese families actually welcomed educating women and viewed a woman's literacy as a prerequisite for a good marriage. So the educational efforts of the Christian girls' schools did not conflict the changing attitude of the Chinese society. This was why the Chinese families were willing to send their daughters to the Christian girls' schools. Nonetheless, in order to recruit students, the Christian girls' schools tried hard to make concessions to meet the demands of the Chinese families. Seclusion of the Chinese girls and the study of Chinese classics were part of the compromise.<sup>29</sup> Although these conciliatory measures gradually won the Chinese recognition of the Christian women's education, they contributed little to link the educated Chinese girls with the fast changing and increasingly politicized Chinese society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

There were certainly a few exceptions in which the female missionaries set up new examples of women's independence. Most of these exceptions were single female missionaries who never got married. Two Southern Baptist women missionaries, Lottie Moon and Sophie Lanneau, exemplified the struggle of these women for their

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<sup>28</sup> Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, 28.

<sup>29</sup> M. Melvin, "The Curricula of Five Representative Mission Schools for Girls in China," *Woman's Work in the Far East*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (May 1900): 5-16.

independent missionary career and life.<sup>30</sup> Lottie Moon in late nineteenth century Shandong and Sophie Lanneau in early twentieth century Suzhou conducted their own educational missions. They encouraged Chinese female students to use education to find their own paths. Education was not meant to please future husbands. Instead, it was for the purpose to prepare women for their independent participation in society. It was no wonder both Lottie Moon and Sophie Lanneau never got married. Under their influence, some Chinese female students followed their footsteps by becoming teachers. In Suzhou, a Chinese female student eventually succeeded in becoming the principal of the school that Lanneau had created. In this case, the Christian women's education did lead many Chinese women to take part in social leadership.

Another serious limitation of Christian women's education was its concentration on the social professions that were especially reserved for women. Most of the women missionaries were working in the three areas: education, medicine, and evangelism.<sup>31</sup> When the movement for vocational education started in 1918, teaching and nursing became the two professions naturally assigned to women. The Christian women's education generally complied with the gender division set by the society.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the Christian girls' schools often restricted their students from participating in social activities not suitable for women such as politics and military. Although the Christian women's education began a major social reform in giving education to Chinese women in the nineteenth century, its efforts to align itself with the old Chinese family traditions led the Christian women's education to lose its revolutionary zeal in the twentieth century. The Christian girls' schools became a symbol of effort to uphold the outdated gender division in society.

It was the Chinese nationalism in the twentieth century that demanded the students in the Christian girls' schools to join the Chinese society more actively. China in the twentieth century witnessed dramatic social and political events including the Republican Revolution (1911), the Nationalist Revolution (1926-1927), the Sino-Japanese War

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<sup>30</sup> Irwin T. Hyatt, *Our Ordered Lives Confess: Three Nineteenth-Century American Missionaries in East Shantung* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 67-133; Li Li, *Mission in Suzhou: Sophie Lanneau and Wei Ling Girl's Academy, 1907-1950* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> Jane, Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, 15.

(1937-1945), the civil war (1946-1949), and the Communist triumph (1949). As the country became more and more radicalized towards ultra nationalism, the students of the Christian schools received severe public criticism for not being part of China's national struggle. For example, even the girls at Shanghai McTyeire School acknowledged: "We were very isolated. For heavens sake! We didn't know anything about our country. It is a very sad case that we, somehow, got the kind of perception or the kind of attitude of looking down on Chinese culture."<sup>33</sup> Chinese nationalism directly challenged Christian education by arguing that education should serve not only individual liberation, but also, or more importantly, the national salvation and progress. Education should be in service of China's revolutionary goal. Students were to become revolutionary soldiers. In particular, the girls of the Christian schools could not escape from their responsibility to contribute to the social transformation in twentieth-century China. Christian women's education in China represented a half-way revolution in the liberation of Chinese women. On the one hand, it did start a massive social movement to promote women's literacy and working rights. On the other hand, it fell behind China's rapid political development that demanded women's participation. In essence, Christian women's education was not able to produce a smooth relationship between women's individual liberation from the suppression of the family and Confucian tradition and China's national struggle against Western imperialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When the individual and national directions were in conflict, Christian women's education chose to maintain its individual agenda by refusing to join the public political campaign. In the eyes of the Chinese revolutionaries, Christian education for both women and men became part of the enemy. The development of Christian women's education in China made it easier to understand why Christianity lost its battle to Nationalism and Communism in China. A social reform to improve women's human rights would not survive by itself alone in a highly politicized country such as China where the national cause came first.<sup>34</sup> Chinese

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<sup>32</sup> Milton T. Stauffer, ed., *The Christian Occupation of China* (Shanghai: China Continuation Committee, 1922), 402.

<sup>33</sup> Heidi A. Ross, "'Cradle of Female Talent': The McTyeire Home and School for Girls, 1892-1937," in Daniel Bays, *Christianity in China*, 224.

<sup>34</sup> Jessie Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-1928* (Notre Dame, Ind., Cross-Cultural Publications, 1988); Bob Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter: China and Christianity* (London: Collins, 1988); Ka-che, Yip, *Religion, Nationalism and Chinese Students: The Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-1927* (Bellingham: Western Washington University, 1980).

nationalism demanded unified actions so that “every action is like the rhythm of a machine, every move is like soldiers marching in step.”<sup>35</sup> Christian women education gradually fell out of the line of Chinese revolution.

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<sup>35</sup> Cited in Sally Borthwick, *Education and Social Change in China: The Beginnings of the Modern Era* (Sanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), 154.