



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Chinese Identity and Christianity: Chen Duxiu and Chinese Salvation
Breton, Alizée

Citation

Breton, A. (2020). *Chinese Identity and Christianity: Chen Duxiu and Chinese Salvation*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [License to inclusion and publication of a Bachelor or Master Thesis, 2023](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3728810>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

CHINESE IDENTITY AND CHRISTIANITY: CHEN DUXIU AND CHINESE SALVATION

Alizée BRETON

S2290669 – a.m.a.y.breton@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Faculty of Humanities
MA Chinese Studies (120 EC)

November 2020

Supervisor and first reader:
Dr. Ethan Mark

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER 1 – PREPARING FOR THE GROUND ANALYSIS	6
1. Methodology and the choice of materials	6
2. Chen Duxiu: his life, main ideas and goal.....	7
CHAPTER 2 – CHINESE NATIONAL IDENTITY	9
1. May Fourth and the expression of Chinese nationalism.	11
2. Chinese Christianity and nationalist narratives	16
3. The thesis in the field	19
CHAPTER 3 – AN INTELLECTUAL INTEREST ON CHRISTIANITY: CHEN DUXIU	21
1. Christianity and the religious benefit.....	22
a. Christianity in China.....	24
b. Learning from Christianity.....	25
c. The personality of Jesus	26
2. Chen’s critique of the Church.....	28
a. A flawed doctrine	28
b. A criminal Church	30
CONCLUSION	32
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	35

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, a meeting between the People's Republic of China and Pope Francis shook the Christian world and stoked interest among diplomatic circles. On September 22, both parties signed an agreement concerning the appointment of bishops in China, allowing the Chinese government to have control over the nomination of the Chinese Catholic Church clergy (Guardian, 2018; Vaticannews, 2018). Such an agreement was seen as being historic, as it was the first official meeting of China with the Vatican since 1951. While it raised hope for a better understanding and a return to an official relationship with the Holy See, it also raised political concerns: will the Vatican have to break its relationship with the Republic of China (Taiwan) to be allowed to open an embassy in Beijing? With Beijing's policy of no external interference in religious matters, will the Vatican be autonomous in the management of the Chinese Church or will Beijing always have a say? (Kuo, 2017) Following the news, I couldn't help but wonder what are the interests of the Chinese Communist Party with Christianity? And when did Christianity first capture the interest of the CCP?

Christianity (understood here as Catholicism and Protestantism) is one of the five official religions of China. When looking at the last centuries, we can see relationships between the Church and the Chinese state have rarely been smooth. The implementation of Christianity through Jesuit missions in the mid-sixteenth century led to an exchange of knowledge and the slow development of a Chinese Christian Community. However, in 1724, following a diplomatic incident between French missions and the Emperor, Christianity was banished from China. It was only in the mid-nineteenth century that Christianity returned to visibility. With the treaties following the Opium Wars, the West enforced the return of Christianity in China, demanding the right to evangelize and the toleration of Chinese converts. Such a clause was easily arranged to appear in the treaties since missionaries played a central role as interpreters for the negotiations, being the only ones with sufficient knowledge of Chinese. Between the mid-nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the number of priests rose consequently, as did the number of Christians (Lutz, 1988; Goossaert and Palmer, 2011). However, anti-Christian feelings also grew among the Chinese population. Based on the suspicion of systematic abuse of the privileges of Christian protection by Chinese Christians, such feelings first appeared in the peasantry but were rapidly backed by the gentry, and in the case of the 1900 Boxer Revolution, by the Qing government (Lutz, 1988; Chang, 2013). During the Republican Era (1911-1949), Christianity was recognized as an official religion of China. Yet, it stayed under scrutiny in the debate of what was modern and "good" for China and what was too Western to be tolerated in Chinese society.

The Republican Era debate on Christianity is a window onto the Chinese nationality project and the conception of China in the world. Motivated by the end of the dynastic Era, the contact with the West, and the experience of the unequal treaties, Chinese intellectuals and the Chinese military seized nationalism as a way to unify the Chinese population, to “de-westernize” Chinese industries and institutions, and to create a new narrative of China (Fung, 2010). The May Fourth Movement was the climax of such a discussion. Initially motivated by anti-foreign and anti-Japanese sentiments, May Fourth was rapidly seen as a “Chinese Renaissance” by Chinese intellectuals. Through Westernisation and the analysis and re-organisation of Chinese national heritage, the aim was to create a new Chinese civilisation.

This urge to “save” China’s culture and civilization reminds us of Chatterjee’s definition of nationalism in colonized countries. According to him, anticolonial nationalism was first a cultural and societal transformation and later on a political tool against the imperial powers. It thereby divides social practices into two domains: the material domain, centered around Western science and technology; and the spiritual domain, bearing the ‘essential’ characteristics of cultural identity. This cultural body is nationalism’s sovereign territory, an essential feature of the Third World nationalism as it distinguished itself from the West (Chatterjee, 1995). While a national identity serves to unify a nation (Smith, 1991), it needs to strengthen characteristics such as language, historical memories, common culture and religion (Jones, 1997, p. 2000; Kunovich, 2006).

Although China was semi-colonized by not only one but a set of different countries, such a phenomenon could also be observed here. The Qing Dynasty emphasized the importance of learning from Westerners and sent students to study abroad (Wang, 1991; Chang, 2013). On the other hand, intellectuals were promoting cultural and religious reforms, proposing to rethink Confucianism and its place in the Chinese society (Wang, 1991; Goossaert and Palmer, 2011). Thus, the question of religion continued to be important in the Republican Era and the May Fourth Movement. Intellectuals and the different political parties condemned superstition but had always held a more moderate position on religion. Freedom of belief was also expressed in the 1912 Provisional Covenant Law of the Republic of China written by Sun Yat-sen. The latter was also a Christian and, outside his political life, was promoting equality among all religions (Lei, 2008). The first years of the Republican Era were also described by China scholars as a Christian Democracy, as an important number of Chinese Christians were present in the parliament (Goossaert and Palmer, 2011). However, Christian missionaries were still seen as imperialists, and all religions as standing in opposition to science and democracy. This motivated both the left-wing Kuomintang and anti-foreign intellectuals and students to promote anti-religion and anti-Christian campaigns from 1921 to 1923 (Chow, 1967; Duara, 1996; Dunch, 2002).

As observed by Lu and Gao (2018), there is a connection between China's national identity and religion. Like Buddhism and Confucianism, Christianity was indeed used by scholars, politicians and students to assess Chinese nationalism and better define its quest for national independence. The English-written scholarship have focused a lot on the opposition to Christianity that was present in the Republican China era, looking at Christianity from the Western missionaries' perspective. However, a new trend in the scholarship mainly led by Chinese scholars is to look at Christianity from a Chinese perspective. With it, we can see that while the anti-Christian feelings were strong, they were not omnipresent in the Chinese society. On the contrary, Christianity was well-welcome within some communities. Some scholars were heavily studying it with the hope of using it as a model within the Chinese society.

In his explanation of the religious policies in Chinese societies, Kuo hinted that the CCP's policies could find their roots back in the Republican Era's religious question (Kuo, 2017). Hence, keeping in mind contemporary questions regarding the CCP and its relationship with Christianity that I have introduced earlier, a look at Chen Duxiu, founder of the party and a heavily studied intellectual, might give us the beginning of an answer. Hence, this thesis will seek to answer the following questions:

How was Chinese identity defined by the Republican debate on Christianity?

How was it studied and seen by one of the May Fourth leaders and an important Chinese communist figure, Chen Duxiu?

I will argue that an analysis of Chen's writings regarding Christianity and religion reveal that Christianity did not simply occupy an oppositional position vis a vis Chinese nationalism, but rather a contradictory space: while Chen was opposed to the Church as an institution, he did find Jesus' teachings useful and needed for China to seek independence and self-salvation. Chen is generally described in scholarship as being a strong believer of what he called "Mr. Democracy" and "Mr. Science", however, he was also in the beginning of the 1920s promoting a "Mr. Religion" that he found compatible with his nationalist needs. Moreover, my research also shows that around the date of the creation of the CCP Chen was strongly encouraging Chinese people to study Christianity and adhere to its teachings. Hence, this thesis contributes to the idea that Christian Chinese were not the only one associating Christianity with nationality, non-Christian were also writing a Christian nationalist narrative. What we will add to the scholarship is that this was not only done within the Republican party who had public Christian figures, but also within the Communist party, even if it is often described as being anti-religion.

CHAPTER 1 – PREPARING FOR THE GROUND ANALYSIS

My research for this thesis started with an interest in the Republican Era and the political and cultural turn it represented: the end of a dynasty and the attempt to establish a Republic based on Western standards. During the first semester of my master, I followed a seminar on the modern state of China: it made me more curious about the religious question and how the nationalist government of Yuan Shikai established guidelines and classifications for Chinese religions and folk traditions. Being European and influenced by Judeo-Christian culture, I am sensitive to references about Christianity and thus decided to look at the subject in more depth. What my readings were convincing me of was that there was a relation between Christianity and Chinese nationalism: even if they were at first glance somewhat negative, Christianity was receiving reactions from the Chinese people and government.

I decided then to look at those reactions and determined what Christianity was bringing to the main discussion of the Republican Era. Hence, in this short section, I will present my methodology for this thesis and the challenges I encountered. I will also briefly present Chen Duxiu and his main ideas, and explain why I choose to look at the influence of Christianity on the Chinese national identity through his narrative.

1. Methodology and the choice of materials

Because I was looking at the Republican Era, it felt evident for me to focus on Chinese intellectuals. The end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries was indeed marked by intellectuals' contestation and discussion. Chinese intellectuals at that time did not hesitate to criticize the Chinese government and the semi-colonial status of China, and used newspapers and journals as a way to convey their ideas and bring the discussion to everyone.

Hence, having decided to look into Chinese intellectuals' positions on Christianity, I consulted the *Minguo shi qi qi kan quan wen shu ju ku* (1911-1949) database, which gave me access to two thousand periodicals published during the Republican Era. To narrow down my research, I decided to focus on the period around the 1919 May Fourth Movement, which is often seen as the intellectual movement of greatest importance within that era. By looking at the authors of various essays containing keywords such as "Christianity", "Chinese Christians", "Chinese Church", I realized that Chen Duxiu, a heavily studied communist figure of the May Fourth Movement, had authored articles not only containing these keywords, but displaying them in their titles. In a sense, the archives grabbed my attention to a detail, and I had to question it: *Why was Chen interested in Christianity?*

Most of the texts I selected came from Chen's cosmopolitan *New Youth*. Among the 60 articles in the database touching or evoking the subject of Christianity during May Fourth, Chen

had written 8 of them. Of these, I selected the texts with the strongest focus on Christianity. Moreover, taking inspiration from a recent reference by a Chinese scholar,¹ I have also selected one article written by Chen promoting not Christianity but religion as a whole, as it will be relevant to my argument. Finally, the last text comes from *Pioneer* and was written during the Anti-Christian campaigns. The selected articles,² in chronological order, are the following:

- ‘科学与基督教 (Science and Christianity)’, *新青年 (New Youth)*, 1918, Vol. 4, Issue 1, pp. 67–72.
- ‘朝鲜独立运动之感想, (Feeling about Korean Independent Movement)’, *Meizhou Pinglun*, March 1919
- ‘新文化运动是什么? (What is the New Culture Movement?)’, *新青年 (New Youth)*, 1920, Vol 7, Issue 5, pp. 1–6.
- ‘Christianity and the Chinese People.’, published in *新青年 (New Youth)* in April 1920, and published in the English-written journal *The Chinese Recorder (1912-1938)*, Jul 01 1920.
- ‘言论: 基督教与基督教会 (Christianity and the Church of Jesus)’, *先驱 (Pioneer)*, 1922, Issue 4

Those articles were all written during the May Fourth Movement. ‘Science and Christianity’ and ‘Christianity and the Church of Jesus’ were written respectively at the beginning and the end of the intellectual movement and by comparing them, we can see the evolution of Chen’s point of view on religion and Christianity. ‘Feeling about Korean Independent Movement’ stands out from the selection as it focuses on a foreign event. However, it was written in a period of hope for China sovereignty, following the end of First World War and the beginning of the Peace Conference of Paris and its content expresses those feelings as well as an interest in Christianity.

Before heading into my research and the analysis of the documents, it is essential to put Chen Duxiu back into his context. Having encountered his name in previous readings, I had a general understanding of his importance for his contemporaries as well as within the scholarship. But who was Chen Duxiu? And what were his main ideas and goals?

2. Chen Duxiu: his life, main ideas and goal

Founder of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921, Chen Duxiu is a well-known Chinese politician and intellectual of the Republican Era. Against the Imperial system and for a Chinese

¹ See Ding, 2018

² A challenging part of my research was then to understand these articles. Indeed, the use of Classical Chinese posed a difficulty as it is not commonly taught at a master level. Moreover, the scans were not properly digitized, which required me to manually look for passages mentioning Christianity. Another difficulty that added itself to the translation was the quality of those scans, making some characters unreadable. Hence the understanding of some sentences was a bit compromised and the context was used to grasp the main ideas.

Republic, Chen Duxiu started his revolutionary career in the early 1900s in Anhui province through a local journal. In contrast to Sun Yat-sen,³ who he had met in Japan, Chen Duxiu decided to be a critic of the system from the inside. With his nationalist cosmopolitan *New Youth*, he was a strong critic of the first Republican government of China and its president, Yuan Shikai (Lee, 1983). In 1917, Chen Duxiu went to Beijing and became the Dean of the School of Arts and Letters of Beijing University. Benefiting from this position, he developed *New Youth* and gained more readership among Beijing's students. (Chow, 1967; Lee, 1983). Because of *New Youth's* influence among his students, Chen Duxiu naturally became an intellectual leader of the time. Alongside Hu Shi (1891-1962) who was also a professor at Beijing University and a liberal intellectual, his position gave him an important exposure to the students' growing ideas and a place of choice to be part of the discussion that was May Fourth (Ding, 2018). He was later deemed as being one of May Fourth leaders and major voices (Chow, 1967; Lee, 1983; Duara, 1996; Paramore, 2020).

Chen is known for being a fervent advocate of democracy and science, two Western concepts that could bring national salvation to China. He elevated those two concepts as slogan of the May Fourth Movement, calling them "Mr. Democracy" and "Mr. Science". This interest in Western ideas made him reject a traditional Chinese way of life for the Western one, deemed more modern, more advanced. In the first issue of *New Youth* In 1915, Chen explained what distinguished the West and the East⁴. According to him, contrary to the Chinese civilization, Western Civilization had egalitarianism as its essence. In this same issue, Chen described socialism as being "a theory of social revolution succeeding political revolution; its aim is to eliminate all inequality and oppression."(Chen, 1915). For him then, Confucianism was wrong because it stood against egalitarianism (Chen, 1916). He postulated that Confucianism was too closely linked to the Chinese Imperial government, hence making itself incompatible with a "Republican system of independence, equality and freedom".⁵ By being anti-Confucian, Chen also launched an attack on the Chinese traditional family and society. With *New Youth*, he influenced the Beijing Youth to develop a society founded on an ethic that would benefit not only the society but also the individual, basing itself on his understanding of Europe (Lee, 1983; Paramore, 2020). While Chen Duxiu described Confucianism as being

³ Sun Yatsen was a prominent figure in the 1911 Chinese Revolution. He was also the one that drafted the Republican system of China as well as the Constitution. However, Sun had mostly worked abroad, giving conferences in the United Kingdom, the United States, France... to rally the Western power to the Chinese cause. When Yuan Shikai tried to change the constitution and re-establish a democracy in China, Sun did not run up against him at the presidency. He chose to form another government in Canton, hence dividing China (Myers, 2000).

⁴ The dichotomy between the West and the East was not particularly strong during the late nineteenth century, among radicals like Kang Youwei. Chen was the one setting the tone in the opposition of the Western culture to the Chinese culture, which will then dominate during the whole Republican period (Paramore, 2020).

⁵ From Chen Duxiu *Our people's most recent awakening* (1916), quoted in Lee, F. (1983) *Chen Duxiu, founder of the Chinese Communist Party*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press., p. 116-117

backward, he elevated liberalism and Western concepts as being progressive and as opening the political debate. However, the outcome of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and the negative impact of the First World War on Chinese intellectuals made Chen look for alternative ideas to the Western republican values. From 1919 to 1921, Chen explored socialism and Marxism. His interest was motivated by events taking place in neighboring countries, mainly Japan and Korea. In 1921, Chen settled on Communism as *the* solution to save China, and founded the Chinese Communist Party.

Being seen as a Westernizer, an anti-Confucian and a Marxist, it is only natural that Chen Duxiu also appeared as being anti-religion. However, Chen was known for his flexible ideas and opinions. According to Schwartz, Chen differed to the typical Chinese scholar of the time by not being locked in his tower working on one sole subject. Schwartz underlined that, to understand Chen's position, it is always important to put him back in his historical context, as his ideas evolved depending on political events happening around and in China (Schwartz, 1951). While I will argue that this was a common trait with May Fourth scholars, it is a trait particularly present within Chen publication. Indeed, Chen was influenced by events happening around him, like the 1911 Revolution, students' manifestations, the Paris Peace Treaty, Korea's and Vietnam's fight for independence... (Lee, 1983; Ding, 2018). The nationalist passion that animated those events led him to rapidly processed Western concepts and ideas to be able to then discuss them and see if they will fit China. Such a precipitation sometimes led him to misunderstand such concepts and foreign ideas (Schwartz, 1951; Lee, 1983; Paramore, 2020). However, his flexible ideas and his needs to quickly grasp theories were justified by his goal. Hence, while looking into Chen's opinion on Christianity, it is important to keep in mind that Chen was deploying all the theoretical tools he could to see the liberation of China from foreign Imperialism.

CHAPTER 2 – CHINESE NATIONAL IDENTITY

When one seeks to study the Chinese national identity, the first questions that ought to be asked are: What is nationalism? What is identity? And how were both experienced in China?

In his well-known work of the same title, Benedict Anderson defines nations as "imagined communities" that were created through a sense of having a common background, a common culture, a sense of belonging to a larger group (Anderson, 1985). In the context of imperialism, he qualifies nationalism as a political reaction towards a colonial system. For Chatterjee (1995), however it was at first a much more cultural and social transformation before appearing in the political battle against the imperial powers. According to his definition, colonized countries rejected

a purely Western model of the nation-state and turned themselves towards an anti-colonial nationalism, which claims its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society. While the colonized countries accepted Western science and technology, the cultural body was seen as nationalism's sovereign territory. This feature of the Third World nationalism helped colonized countries to necessarily distinguish themselves from the West. By claiming sovereignty in the cultural realm, nationalism is based on the characteristics of the people within the nation (Duara, 1998). It thus needs what Duara calls a “regime of authenticity” that produces a national essence and nationalism in the private and the public sphere. Nationalism was used to create independence and to allow the state to move forward from its colonial past. To do so, it was then necessary to create a strong “native culture” that would put itself in opposition with the West. In other words, ‘identity’ and ‘nationalism’ are intertwined: a national identity is needed to unify a nation and to differentiate it from another (Smith, 1991; Cooper, 2005).⁶ Nationalism was a weapon that colonies, including China, used to fight the Western domination and its monopoly on the definitions of what it is to be modern and what it is to be a nation.

Although China was semi-colonized by not only one but different countries, as in other colonized societies, modern Chinese resistance to colonialism was expressed in a nationalism that differentiated a native “spiritual domain” from a “material domain” centered around Western science and technology (Chatterjee, 1995). The Qing Dynasty emphasized the importance of learning from Westerners and sent students to study abroad (Wang, 1991; Chang, 2013). However, on the other hand, some intellectuals promoted cultural, social and religious reforms in an attempt to modernize the Chinese society by drawing from China’s own cultural and social backgrounds. The liberals Liang Qichao (1873-1929) and Hu Shi (1891-1962), for example, focused on redeeming the Chinese heritage and patrimonies by classifying Chinese literature. Conservatives like Xiong Shili (1885-1968) or Liang Shuming (1893-1988) developed a new intellectual Confucian movement, known as New Confucianism that was inspired by the neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties (Chow, 1967; Wang, 1991; Fung, 2010; Goossaert and Palmer, 2011).

When speaking of the ongoing debate on Chinese identity and Chinese culture during the Republican period, one has to look at the May Fourth Movement, as it was the climax of such a conversation, and carrying it had strong consequences for China and the affirmation of

⁶ Cooper also differentiates two kind of identity: a strong identity and a weak one. While the weak one is flexible, the strong one is linked with the idea of sameness and collective identity. When talking about national identity, we often referred to the strong definition of identity, as to be part of a nation we need to identify to given conditions (language, geography, religion,...). (Cooper, 2005)

its identity. Chen Duxiu – the main focus of my study – was one of the leaders of this movement and it is therefore important to have a clear understanding of the different currents of thoughts in which his own ideas evolved. This is what I will attempt to do in the first section of the first section of this chapter by briefly retracing how English-written scholarship has looked at the May Fourth movement intellectual trends. As this thesis is also focusing on Christianity, in the second section, I will look at how Christianity was linked with nationalism in previous scholarship.

1. May Fourth and the expression of Chinese nationalism.

Chinese nationalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be seen as a mix of Anderson's and Chatterjee's definitions of nationalism. Both intellectuals and the state promoted a national renaissance without rejecting Western influence. This particular investment from both parts made Chinese nationalism simultaneously political and cultural. To be more precise, while Anderson described nationalism as being political and Chatterjee established that anti-imperialist nationalism was first cultural and then political, in China it was equally political and cultural from the start: political, as the aim of the Chinese elite and the Chinese people were to regain autonomous state institutions and cultural, because they sought a "moral regeneration of the community" (Fung, 2010, pp. 102–104).

The May Fourth Movement is a potent symbol of this politico-cultural nationalism in the scholarship. Initially motivated by anti-foreign and anti-Japanese sentiments, May Fourth was rapidly seen as a "Chinese Renaissance" by Chinese liberals of the time and commonly called a "Culture Revolution". Through Westernization and the analysis and re-organisation of Chinese national heritage, the goal was to create a new Chinese civilization (Chow, 1967).

May Fourth is often described as starting in May 1919 and fading with the anti-Christian campaigns (Lutz, 1988; Wang, 1991; Shambaugh and Kirby, 2000). However, Chow linked the origin of the intellectual debate with the death of the first Chinese President Yuan Shikai and the instability that followed with the warlord's era. With this new extended timeframe of the May Fourth Movement, Chow looked at the 1917 New Culture and New Literature Movements⁷ but also at the hope of independence that the Paris Peace Conference at the end of the First World War gave to Chinese students as well as their involvement and their demonstrations during the May Fourth Incident on May 4, 1919. According to Chow, by using vernacular

⁷ The New Culture movement included the New Literature movement, and they are often mentioned together. The New Culture Movement aspired to create a modern form of Chinese culture as freed from the bondage of Chinese feudalism and Western imperialism. The New Culture Movement started in the mid 1910s following the death of Yuan Shikai and disappeared in the mid 1920s. It was initiated by scholars who has studied abroad and were anti-traditionalist and anti-Confucian, like Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi.(Anderson, 1985)(Chow, 1967; Lee, 1983; Duara, 1996; Ni, 2011)

Chinese in their pamphlets and by promoting modernization for the survival of the nation, the students included their actions in the New Culture and New Literature Movements led by Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu. Moreover, the involvement of the students and their demonstrations are what allowed the May Fourth Movement to become more extensive. However, the demonstration of their indignation towards the warlords' policies and the aggressivity of Japan was not as important as were the consequences for the intellectual debate and the general public. Rapidly after the demonstration, the students organized themselves to win over the sympathy of the general public and the different classes of the population, spreading the intellectual discussion. I prefer Chow's timeframe of the May Fourth Movement not only because it includes the New Culture Movement, in which Chen Duxiu and his journal *New Youth* played an essential role; but also because the material that I had selected are part of this timeframe.

The May Fourth Movement thus became an "intellectual revolution" and a "large scale political, cultural movement." At the beginning, there was a certain unity among the intellectuals: all were aiming for the "creation of a new society and civilization through the re-evaluation of all Chinese traditions and the introduction of Western concepts" (Chow, 1967, p. 173), promoting science and democracy as the answer to save China. This interest in Western concepts and definitions finds its origins in the new intellectuals' background. Most of them had studied in Western countries or had been influenced by their encounter with Western power. Wang however points to the ambiguous use of the West against the West in the May Fourth Movement. By promoting Western Science and democracy against Western capitalist and imperialist exploitation, the intellectuals ultimately made the revival of Chinese tradition impossible (Wang, 1991).

The initial unified front of the intellectuals inevitably broke into different intellectual currents. In his concluding chapter of *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (1967), Chow gives each intellectual current a political label: the liberals, the communists, and the conservative nationalists and traditionalists. He sees the refusal of the liberals such as Hu Shi to participate in the political debate as being the cause behind the polarization of intellectual thoughts. The Kuomintang and the conservative nationalists gradually shifted position towards science and democracy by reducing their attacks on traditionalism and Confucianism; the communist intellectuals, on the other hand, stood strong on their anti-foreign, anti-traditionalist, and anti-religion position, bringing to its cause intellectuals from all currents. However, Chow highlights the fluidity and the complexity of the period with the example of Chen Duxiu as taking part both in liberal movements and communist campaigns during the May Fourth movement, before his definitive conversion to communism. Chen was known to be a fervent admirer of Western science and his Marxism was inspired by Russian and German doctrines (Schwartz, 1951; Lee, 1983). He was anti-foreign in the sense

that he wanted to protect China's identity, but he was not opposed to using Western philosophy to save China.

For Wang, most of the young intellectuals radicalized over the course of the movement. Intellectuals were rejecting Chinese values and Confucianism but also rejecting some Western values, deemed imperialistic. Instead, they were identifying China either with the liberalism of aggressive capitalist enterprise or Marxist-Leninist dictatorship.

In his essay "The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century" (Yu, 1994) agreeing with Wang, Ying-Shih Yu shows how radicalization was present in China. According to him, Chinese intellectuals were seeing every problem as being a sign that the traditional and Confucian system was failing. To legitimize modernization and westernization, members of the Chinese intellectual elite were moving from a strategy of reinterpretation of the Chinese classics and history, to the discovery of new elements in them to make them modern from the beginning (Chow, 1967; Fung, 2010). For example, the nationalist Kang Youwei (1858-1927) was pushing for a rupture with the Chinese culture of Confucianism during the 100-day reform (June 1898 to September 1898). However, he did so by reinterpreting Confucianism and introducing the idea that values of Protestantism were first developed within Confucianism. His disciple the progressivist Liang Qichao (1873-1929), in the 1915 Re-organization of the National Heritage Movement, had the same strategy of discovering Western concepts and values within Chinese classical texts, hence stripping those values of their foreign aspect (Chow, 1967; Wang, 1991; Myers, 2000). In short, scholars at first were implying that Western concepts were already present in Chinese antiquity and were therefore native. However, the May Fourth movement amplified this feeling of urgency of transforming China, and the need to compete with the West. This pushed many Chinese intellectuals to become more and more critical towards their culture and past, ultimately rejecting it altogether. Confucianism was therefore deemed as backward and anti-modern and New Culture Movement scholars like Hu Shi started calling for an "extreme Westernization" to rejuvenate China through science and fast modernization.

Contrary to Chow, Wang recognizes the dynamism of the liberal current in the politico-cultural debate, stating that alongside the communists, liberals were an influential group that also thrived during the May Fourth Movement (Wang, 1991, p. 240). However, Wang gives more importance to the communist intellectuals than liberals. In his theory of the "One Chinese Revolution", he links the republican and communist Cultural Revolution: according to him, the 1966-1976 Maoist Cultural Revolution was the continuation of the 1911 Revolution as well as the May Fourth Movement. His reasoning implies that the communist party played a major role in Chinese history prior to its creation (the communist party being created two years following the May Fourth Incident).

On this particular point, Chow and Wang disagree with each other. Indeed, the former expresses some reservations and refuses to give sole agency to the communist party in the early stages of the May Fourth Movement. He criticizes the tendency of scholars to be influenced by the Cold War atmosphere and reminds them to be critical of the Communist involvement during the Republican Era. For him, Kuomintang's nationalists and liberals were also a strong motor of the May Fourth movement and should not be forgotten. He also implied that the Communist party gained more place on the political scene because liberals were less present in political discussion. However, considering that Chow was writing in the middle of the Cold War Era, one can also wonder whether he was not himself influenced by the international events and therefore underestimated the Communist party's action and role in the May Fourth Movement. Wang was also writing his book at the end of the Cold War and it is highly possible that events prior to and of the year 1991 had influenced his work. For him, the dominance of the strong opposition of the nationalist intellectuals against the communists in the intellectual debate was a direct consequence of the May Fourth Incident and was what brought the May Fourth Movement to its end. By having the communist and the liberal forces rising during this period, other intellectual currents such as the conservative nationalists were quickly left behind. He further adds that the quest for Chinese identity has been in the communist agenda since the creation of the party in 1921. However, he argues that there was and still is a mosaic of ways of being Chinese rather than a list of conditions: "The Chineseness of China is whatever went on among Chinese so that there is nothing absolute about being Chinese" (Wang, 1991, p. 266). Such a remark slightly differs from Cooper's strong definition of 'identity' or Anderson's definition of 'nationalism' as the Chinese identity is no more based on conditions fixed by a political authority to be included in the nation. It reminds us however of Duara's definition of nationalism and Cooper's weak definition of identity: for Wang, the Chinese identity is based on people's characteristics and can be multiple. With this sentence, Wang implies that Chineseness is built on what the Chinese people discussed and/or believed in. While Communism was a strong intellectual current shaping the nationalist discourse, it was not the only one.

Edmund Fung's work contests Wang's who accentuates much more the "conversion" of Chinese intellectual to communism and emphasizes the Communist point of view during the Republican Era and May Fourth. In his work, Fung shows that Marxism was not the unique Chinese thought in Republican China and that solely focusing on Communism will be ignoring the republican intellectual dynamic (Fung, 2010). He argues that cultural conservatism - an intellectual orientation that has a positive attitude towards cultural heritage - was also present and raised as a response to May Fourth's radicalism.

Both Chow and Wang observe the return to the theme of Chinese values and Confucianism in the Kuomintang's positions. According to the two scholars, the Republican government was not in agreement with the May Fourth Movement. Like Sun Yat-sen who was sympathetic to the students and the new intellectuals, Chiang Kaishek was impressed by the students' movement and by the nationalist and patriotic feelings they conveyed. However, by 1927, he disagreed with the aspect of the New Culture Movement in 1927: he accused liberals and communists of having no respect for the Chinese civilization and of undermining the Chinese national self-confidence. He also condemned modernization based on the Western example that was for him not replying to the Chinese needs. Finally, he diverted from the definition of science and democracy by seeing in them organization and discipline, contained by morals (Chow, 1967; Wang, 1991). The Chinese revolution led by Sun's successors turned away from the revolutionary ideas and turned to Chinese ideologies and traditions in the search for national legitimacy (Wang, 1991). Distancing themselves from the New Thought⁸ intellectuals, the Kuomintang promoted a new culture based on Confucianism and Chinese values. But where Wang and Chow characterize the conservatives as being anti-modernization, Fung argues the contrary.

According to him, conservative intellectuals were not traditionalists, they were committed to modernization and promulgating modernity for the people and for saving China, but instead of going towards Westernization, they were promoting 'Easternization' (*dongfanghua* 东方化). In the words of Liang Shuming in *Eastern and Western cultures and their philosophies* (1921, quoted in Fung, 2010), Easternization was seen as a way to remain Asian while making some necessary changes based on Western guidelines.⁹ In this explanation, we can find back Chatterjee's definition of nationalism: China was claiming sovereignty in the culture realm but was not however fully rejecting Western concepts and technology. Conservative intellectuals were also aiming to fight the dominance of the Western civilization by elevating and refining Chinese culture. They believed that China had much to offer to the West in cultural exchanges and that Confucianism could be as much a world culture as democracy and science. In this sense, conservatives were not looking simply to preserve Chinese culture and values, but they were searching for a new way to look at them. They were also contesting the idea of cultural superiority. Easternization did not have a goal to surpass the influence of Western culture (which as long as the West had control of Chinese institutions and a technological superiority could not be thought as possible) but to be equal with it. They did not refute the influence of the West on China, but they were also asking for reciprocity.

⁸ This is another appellation of the New Culture Movement, used by Fung and Wang. However, as Chen Duxiu favored the term New Culture Movement, I have used it more in this paper.

⁹ The dichotomy East-West is a consequence of the anti-imperialist nationalism (Prakash, 2009): while China seeks for national independence and modernization to compete with the West, it also inspired itself from Western concepts.

Fung shows us that the mainstream thought of the Republican Era and more particularly of the May Fourth Movement was an interactive and always-evolving debate over a broadly shared commitment, that expressed itself through different intellectual and political currents: liberalism, communism, and cultural conservatism. Although the means were different, there was a continuity in the desire to modernize China. Indeed, intellectuals had been discussing social reforms in China and advocating science, industrialization and a need to learn Western knowledge since the late nineteenth century.

2. Chinese Christianity and nationalist narratives

Another continuity in the debate between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries is the religious question. In a recent study, David Palmer and Vincent Goossaert show how the religious question was closely linked to nationalism and to the Republican intellectuals. According to the authors, “destroying the religion of the old regime and inventing a new place for religion in the nation-state were important components of all the modernization projects that reshaped China as it moved from Empire to Republic, warlordism to nationalism” (Goossaert and Palmer, 2011, p. 43). Indeed, we can observe in the late Qing dynasty, and notably during the 1898 reforms, a transformation in the domain of religion. As seen with Wang, the possibility of reorganizing Confucianism into a religion inspired on Western terminology, categories and structures was discussed within the Qing government and in the 1910's Yuan ShiKai government (Lee, 1983; Wang, 1991; Myers, 2000; Goossaert and Palmer, 2011).

Thus, the question of Confucianism as a national religion made the religious question an ambiguous subject in the May Fourth Movement. As the Chinese intellectuals' first priority was to reduce folklore traditions and superstitious acts, they at first held a moderate position on religions. Moreover, the freedom of belief was expressed in the Provisional Covenant Law of the Republic of China, granting religions as being in accordance with the Republican Era. But increasing anti-imperialist and anti-traditionalist sentiments motivated both the left-wing Kuomintang and anti-foreign intellectuals and students to promote anti-religion and anti-Christian campaigns from 1921 to 1923 (Chow, 1967; Duara, 1996; Dunch, 2002).

As stated by Dunch, studies on Christianity in China often focus on the role of Christian missions in modern Chinese history. However, when scholars look at the reaction of China towards Christianity, usually this is limited to the study of the anti-Christian movements at the end of the May Fourth Movement, as is the case with Duara and Lutz among others. Recent historiography has started to look at Chinese Christians, offering a new narrative of Christianity but still studying it in a missionary approach (Dunch, 2002). Moreover, the current difficulty of accessing Chinese archives limits the scope of Chinese Christianity studies and leaves a lot of questions unanswered (Xi, 2004).

Christianity was introduced in China during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by European missionaries. Its relationship with the Chinese government was a rocky one. In 1724, Christianity was banned, and evangelism deemed illegal. After the first Opium War in the mid-nineteenth century, the Western powers demanded the right to preach Christianity and the guarantee of toleration and protection of Chinese converts (Lutz, 1988). While this right allowed the number of Christian priests and Christian converts to grow in China, it also aroused anti-Christian movements such as the Boxer Revolution (Lutz, 1988; Duara, 1996). Such campaigns gained importance among Chinese intellectuals with the rise of nationalism and anti-imperialist feelings: during the twentieth century and particularly during May Fourth Movement, missionaries were gradually regarded as imperialistic and as more treacherous than the other symbols of Western domination, namely merchants and the military (Chow, 1967; Lutz, 1988; Bays, 1996; Duara, 1996).

The 1921-1923 campaigns are described by Lutz (1988) as an attack on missionaries, Christian theology and the Christian church. She includes those events in a broader timeline, from 1917 to 1927, indicating that the anti-Christian movements were part of the May Fourth Movement and were going beyond.¹⁰ They were not only led by local groups but also by the state and the intellectuals and mainly happened in urban areas. While Chow groups together intellectuals and the Kuomintang as actors of the 1921-1923 campaigns, Duara identifies a specific group promoting anti-Christian sentiments: the scientific Enlightenment group (*Qiming Xuezhe* 启明学者), whose members declared popular religion as backward and superstitious. By trying to abolish Christianity from China, they also aimed to “remake” the Chinese in a way that would serve the transformation of China into a modern state. They were also aiming to distinguish themselves from the West and from what was non-scientific. Hence, being anti-Christian meant being anti-imperialist and, in a way, it also meant being nationalist (Duara, 1996). Indeed, by associating religion with imperialism, radical intellectuals heightened the contradiction between China and the imperial powers. In this way, Christianity played a role in the creation of Chinese identity, even if it was through the expression of anti-Christian sentiments.

Lutz also observes that the non-participation of Christian Chinese scholars and students in the May Fourth Movement as well as in the intellectual turmoil on the autonomy of China amplified anti-Christian feelings. While students from state universities were deeply engaged in the Cultural Revolution, missionary schools penalized students who participated in political activities instead of studying. The prohibition on participating in political activities was seen as unpatriotic and as an attempt to denationalize Chinese Christian (Lutz, 1988, p. 53).

¹⁰ Here, she differs from Chow who places the Anti-Christian campaigns in 1920-1922 (Chow, 1967). I will favor Chow's timeframe as it serves more my research.

Moreover, the idea that Christians and missionaries refused to take part in the debate on Christianity in China deceived Chinese intellectuals. It created the impression that Chinese could not discuss or adapt the Bible and the Christian church to Chinese needs (Lutz, 1988, pp. 74–77, 82).

Lutz's and Duara's analysis of Christianity in China is one possible narrative. However, it can be confronted. Christianity was more than the mimic of a Western model by locals or a deceitful tool of imperialism. Chinese Christians were involved in the May Fourth Movement and were notably present in the May Fourth Incident. Moreover, the essays in *Christianity in China* edited by Daniel Bays (1996) as well as Goossaert and Palmer's work (2011) show how Christianity was an authentic religious movement. Both works put under the spotlight Chinese Christians rather than missionaries.

Goossaert and Palmer (2011, pp. 68–73) recall how in the 1910's, the prospect of a Christian Democracy was worrying Chinese conservatives. Although he sought not to let his faith influence his political decisions, Sun Yat-sen was a Christian, as were other Chinese politicians and members of parliament (Liu, 2008; Goossaert and Palmer, 2011). In the 1920s, however, the Christian presence became less important in power as, with the rule of warlords, the military were put at the center. But Christianity was already part of Chinese life and Christian communities were included in society (Bays, 1996). Despite some trivial disputes surrounding the participation in certain public events by the Christian communities, Chinese Christians were generally not excluded from public life in rural communities. Moreover, Christianity played a distinctive role in regard to ethnic communities. Themselves outsiders in the Chinese society, these communities found in this "foreign" religion a way to reinforce their identity.

Christianity was therefore beginning to have a politico-social impact on China, by entering Chinese homes and local communities, as well as by influencing education, ethnic identity, and gender roles. In making such inroads, Chinese Christianity was evolving and adapting itself to the needs of Chinese society. While missionary institutions failed to reduce the influence of the West and be more independent, Chinese churches were emerging outside of their influence. By creating indigenous and autonomous churches, the Chinese Christian community was taking its distance from Western dominance, and hence, taking part in Chinese nationalism (Bays, 1996; Xi, 2004). Lian Xi explains how independent Protestant evangelists and Chinese Christian leaders benefitted from popular resentment against the imperialist presence in China. He describes how popular Christianity in the twentieth century principally found its leadership among the lower strata of intellectuals, what he calls "semi-intellectuals" who sought to save China through Christianity. With this goal in mind, they reshaped protestant Christianity into a popular native faith and "brought Christianity home to the Chinese" (Xi, 2004,

p. 856). But because the anti-Christian campaigns were mainly urban and the main Chinese independent churches were at first developing in the countryside, such evolution and sinicization of Christianity was not immediately seen by Chinese intellectuals.

The New Culture Movement's critique on Christianity also challenged Christian leaders to adapt their faith. To not be seen as an obstacle to nation formation, Christianity was forced to seek legitimacy in rationalism, socialism, and nationalism. In order to do so, both Christian and non-Christian scholars and writers desacralized and demythologized Jesus and rewrote him as a humanitarian (Ni, 2011).

3. The thesis in the field

Nationalism in China during the Republican Era was a complex phenomenon. As seen in the first part of this chapter, the events of the beginning of the twentieth century led to an important discussion of modernization among Chinese intellectuals. The main goal of the May Fourth Movement was for China to regain her sovereignty and to distinguish herself from the West as well as from Japan. To do so, intellectuals and politicians worked on the blueprints of a new Chinese identity (Chow, 1967; Wang, 1991; Yu, 1994; Fung, 2010). Although nationalism in China was present in the cultural and political realm, the Western scholarship has mostly looked into the intellectual and political discourse, following Anderson's definition. However, both Fung and Chow illustrate that political nationalism and cultural nationalism are one during the May Fourth Movement and should not be dissociated. During this period, the key concepts were science and democracy. Chinese culture as well as Chinese modernization were evaluated through them (Chow, 1967; Fung, 2002).

While Chow looks at how the different intellectual currents composing May Fourth interacted with each other and involved in the modernization debates, Fung and Wang each focus on one of the intellectual groups. They also differ in their approach. Wang mainly looks at the May Fourth Movement by opposing communists and liberals against one another, with a strong emphasis on the former. Although he studies an intellectual current that finds affinities within the Kuomintang, Fung is looking at nationalist discourse through the opposition of modernity and tradition, the West and the East. Both approaches give us different insights into the Chinese intellectuals' narrative of China.

The link between nationality and Christianity is however largely lacking within the main English-written scholarship. Chow (1967) and Lutz (1988) help us have a better understanding of the background of anti-Christian campaigns while Duara (1996) gives us a political analysis. However, those authors do not analyze how Christianity identifies itself with the movement and the general discussion occurring in China. In the same way, Fung (1991) and Wang (2010) do not include Christianity within Chinese nationalism. Recent studies are aiming to reverse this

tendency. Bays and al. (1996) show how Christianity was well included in Chinese society and was an authentically Chinese religion. Lian Xi (2004) completes Bay's essay by describing in detail the of the indigenous churches in China and by showing how they were freeing themselves from Western influence. Lastly, the May Fourth Movement also challenged Christianity to adapt itself by taking part in the nationalist discourse. As Lian Xi argues in his article, "nationalism did run in the blood of the indigenous, sectarian movement, even though it was generally unacknowledged or even disavowed by evangelists" (Xi, 2004, p. 892).

What this analysis of the literature shows is that even though Chinese nationalism studies cover a broad spectrum of Chinese intellectual discussion, they seem to be putting aside the religion question and associating Christianity only with the anti-Christian movements. However, Christianity had some socio-political effects on Chinese society, and was also part of the discussion.

This thesis seeks to contribute to developments in recent scholarship by emphasizing the relation of Chinese nationalism with religion by focusing on this aspect of the thought of Chen Duxiu—an intellectual hitherto associated with the promotion of science and democracy, which he called “Mr Science” and “Mr Democracy”. While his biographers overlooked his interest in Christianity, it is precisely observing Chen’s train of thought on Christianity that can move us towards an answer to our main questions: *How was Chinese identity defined by the Republican debate on Christianity? How was it studied and seen by one of the May Fourth leaders and an important Chinese communist figure, Chen Duxiu?*

CHAPTER 3 – AN INTELLECTUAL INTEREST ON CHRISTIANITY: CHEN DUXIU

During the May Fourth movement, Christianity, like many other religions, was put under scrutiny. “Science and philosophy” were the watchwords of the 1917 New Culture Movement and this naturally put religions and superstition in a hot spot. A spirit of anti-religion started to spread within intellectual circles and their readers. However, New Thought intellectuals judged religions in terms of their utility to the modernization agenda and mainly focused on destroying superstition and folk beliefs (Chow, 1967, p. 320). Because there were no strong organized religions in China, intellectuals did not concentrate their attacks on religion. Instead, they showed a strong opposition to Confucianism as a state religion, a position that was easily spread with the cosmopolitan *New Youth* founded in 1915 by Chen Duxiu. Readers of the cosmopolitan started to criticize the choice of leading an iconoclastic campaign instead of an anti-religion one.¹¹ Many saw the spread of Christianity as a danger for China and wrote to *New Youth* in hope to see an attack on Western Religion. However, they were presented with a moderate answer (Liu, 1918):

"The reason we have not attacked Western religions is because the poison spread in China by Western religions has not been as great as that spread by Confucianism, and so, comparatively speaking, we can postpone that discussion."

Considering Chen Duxiu's involvement in the creation of the cosmopolitan, it is only natural to assume that he shared such a position. It is known that while he invited other Beijing University teachers and intellectuals to join his journal as editors and writers, only the articles approved by Chen himself were published (Chow, 1967; Lee, 1983). Hence, it is reasonable to infer that deciding an attack on Christianity was not necessary in 1918 could have been suggested by Chen.

As seen in the second chapter, with May Fourth and the rise of nationalism in China, Chinese Christians were creating a Christian nationalist narrative, putting the Western religion at the service of China. Indeed, to react towards the strong rise of anti-religion and anti-Christian feelings, Chinese Christian community sought its survival in the project of cultural triumph and national revival promoted by the New Culture Movement. As noted in that

¹¹ In 1919, New Youth intellectuals were more inclined to attack generally accepted beliefs and traditions, arguing that superstitions were more dangerous than religion and were then their first concern. The principal aim of the New Culture Movement was to see the triumph of culture over religion, but they first preferred to fight Confucianism and its superstition, deeply rooted in the Chinese society before attacking Christianity. (Chow, 1967; Lee, 1983; Yu, 1994; Ni, 2011)

discussion, in his overview of Chinese Christian New Churches, Lian Xi contended that educated leaders of Chinese communities, or “semi-intellectuals”, were attracted to Christianity and saw in it a way to save China (Xi, 2004). However, he omitted that recognized intellectuals were also looking for answers within Christianity. Chen was one of them. As he was a prominent communist figure of the Republican Era and an influential member of the New Culture Movement, such an interest in Christian teachings can be surprising. However, the articles selected indicate that between 1919 and 1922, Chen saw Christian teachings as being *the* solution to China’s problems, but he quickly joined the anti-Christian campaigns in his criticism of the Christian Church.

1. Christianity and the religious benefit

Motivated to reach national unification, self-salvation and independence, but also to save what he called the Chinese essence, Chen was a strong nationalist open to Western ideas if they could serve his objective better.¹² As Christianity gained more Chinese believers at in the 1900s, Chen was aware of Christianity and defined it as “the Western religion”, “the Roman religion” or “the European religion”. In 1918, he published an article called “Science and Christianity” in *New Youth*, in which he confronted Christianity and his beloved “Mr. Science”. There was little analysis of Christianity, just an observation of how it interacted with science in the past, leading to the conclusion that the spiritual doctrine and sciences were not complementary. Such an observation was in line with the New Culture Movement’s aim of seeing Chinese culture triumph over religion. However, the 1919 March First Movement for Korean independence¹³ made Chen changed his point of view on Christianity and see it as a social motor. The incidents occurring in Korea shook Chinese society: intellectuals and students closely followed the events and the different international reports, sharing their feelings and support with the Korean population (Li, 2019). Chen Duxiu was also very vocal in his support to the Korean cause. On March 22, in the weekly *Meizhou Pinglun*, he expressed his satisfaction to see a neighboring country fight against Japanese imperialism and seek national independence (Chen, 1919). Schwartz and Lee define this article as being the

¹² Following the Republican Era nationalist trend (see Chapter 2), Chen’s Nationalism can be seen as a mix between Anderson and Chatterjee’s definitions of the concept. As Anderson defined nationalism, Chen sought the unification of China and its establishment as a nation-state, with fixed barriers and national culture (Anderson, 1985). However, being a man of letters, he emphasized the importance of saving the Chinese culture – or the “Chinese essence” - to save China from imperialism. (Chatterjee, 1995).

¹³ The March First Movement is a series of demonstration for Korean independence, against Japan’s imperialism. It started on the 1st March 1919 in Seoul before spreading around Korea. Initiated by Korean cultural and religious leaders, this movement had consequent political effects, namely the draft of the Korean Declaration of Independence and the creation of the Provisional Korean Government in Shanghai. Although the movement failed to bring national independence, it did enhance anti-Japanese feelings and national unity. See [Britannica.com](https://www.britannica.com) and the Korean National Museum.

moment when Chen Duxiu started to be interested in Christian socialism (Lee, 1983, p. 144). However, in most of the text, Chen did not express any interest in Christianity. On the contrary, he offered a pacifist and naïve observation of the events, and formulated his hopes to see the Japanese government's response be as non-military as were the protesters. It is only in the last two sentences that the term "Christian" was used (Chen, 1919):

“Students and Christians participated in the Independence Movement in Korea this time. Therefore, we are more aware of the universal necessity of education, and we dare not despise Christianity from now on. But why are the current students and Christians in China so lifeless? »

Chen Duxiu's curiosity was awoken. In these lines, Chen expressed his admiration for Korean Christians and deplored that the Chinese Christians do not show the same sacrificial spirit for the salvation of the nation. However, such criticism was also linked to his criticism of the Chinese students' inactivity, which he had observed earlier in his article. Hence, this brief reference to Christianity comes as a minor point of Chen's observation of the Korean Movement, and while it did indicate an interest in Christians, it was not a full analysis of their actions.

Following the inspiring Korean Movement and the deceitful Paris Peace Conference¹⁴, Beijing students took the streets of Beijing, encouraged by their teachers, to express their anti-Japanese and anti-Imperialist feelings (Chow, 1967). During these actions, Chen Duxiu was arrested in June 1919 under the suspicion of placing a bomb in one of Beijing's malls (Ding, 2018). He was put in jail from June 1919 to September 1919, provoking outrage among Beijing intellectual circles. According to Hu Shi, during his time in prison, Chen did not have access to any books or newspapers, but only to an English Bible. He spent his time studying the Four Gospels and when he came out of prison in September, he had a more moderate opinion on Christianity.¹⁵ Following this, Chen published two articles in *New Youth* promoting religion and Christianity: 'Christianity and the Chinese People,' which was published in February 1920 and translated into English in July 1920; and 'What is the New Culture Movement,' published in April 1920. While both articles aimed to change the Chinese general point of view on religion, 'Christianity and the Chinese' also focuses on the religious benefit that Christianity had to offer to the Chinese society.

¹⁴ Chinese students and intellectuals were profoundly moved by American President Nixon's declaration of the universal principles, which promoted the right of national self-determination and independence for every nation. However, such hopes were crushed with the Paris Peace Conference. Indeed, Western powers did not step up for the Korean nation independence nor the Chinese one, they also agreed in giving the German concession of the Chinese province of Shandong to Japan. This was perceived as a great disappointment towards Western principles and motivated even more Chinese to fight for their independence (Li, 2019).

¹⁵ Hu Shi, "The Anti-violent Disinfection Force Left by the Chinese Renaissance Movement in the Past Forty Years: The Historical Significance of the Chinese Communist Party's Liquidation of Hu Shi's Thought" (1955), included in "Hu Shi Manuscripts" Episode 9 (Part 2), Taipei: Hu Shi Memorial Hall, 1970, Pages 505-509, quoted by Ding, 2018.

a. *Christianity in China*

For Chen Duxiu, Christianity could not be ignored in China or reduced to being foreign and, hence, harmful to China like it has been mainly seen since the 1860 Treaty. According to him, Chinese people needed to stop looking at Christianity as a cult and to understand how Christianity as evolved in China and why it attracted so many Chinese (Chen, 1920b). Indeed, the increasing numbers of Christian converts and domestic missionaries in China should point out that Christianity was growing within the Chinese society and could not be seen as foreign anymore. In 1912, the majority of the officials in Guangdong Province were Christians (Goossaert and Palmer, 2011; Ding, 2018). The number of Christians was of 37,287 in 1889, reached 85,000 in 1900, and increased to 366,524 in 1920, which strengthened the social influence of Christianity (Lutz, 1988; Goossaert and Palmer, 2011; Ding, 2018).

Hence, Chen recommended that Chinese intellectuals should study Christianity and understand why it was gaining believers among the Chinese population. Before exposing his interest in Christianity, he first recalled the conflict between Christianity and China and analyzed the reasons it was based on. According to him, there were religious and non-religious questions. The main ones that are worth noticing are the following (Chen, 1920b):

- Reasons within religion: (1) Because Christians were protected since the Treaty of 1842, there were more named Christians than true believers;¹⁶ (2) the New Testament recorded that people who interacted with Jesus were poor people, at the bottom of the social pyramid, which was not well accepted by the official Chinese; (3) Christianity conflicted with the Chinese ancestor worship and idol worship
- Reasons outside religion: (1) Christianity was seen as a tool of aggression against China by the West, which caused Chinese resentment; (2) because China had a tradition of respecting what was Chinese and rejecting what was foreign, Christianity brought conflicts between cultural and educational officials and believers; (3) the priests protected by the treaty intervened in local legal disputes, which brought conflicts between state and religion.¹⁷

While the conflict was mainly thought as being political because of how Christianity had been imposed by imperialist powers, Chen also emphasized how it was also due to discrepancies between Christianity and Chinese culture, xenophobia and people's speculation (Chen, 1920a; Ding, 2018). By trying to understand Christianity, Chen believed that the main problem in the conflict was mainly coming from that Chinese did not try to understand Christianity and rejected it straight away as it was different from their traditional beliefs and religions.

¹⁶ See also the introduction of Lutz, 1988 and the chapter 'The campaign against religion' of Duara, 1996

¹⁷ See *ibid.*

b. Learning from Christianity

At the beginning of the May Fourth Movement, with the 1917 New Culture Movement intellectuals, Chen Duxiu promoted science and philosophy as important elements of the new culture. In doing so, New Culture intellectuals also strongly opposed to all forms of religion, judging such Chinese but also foreign beliefs as being backward (Chow, 1967). However, in 1920, Chen came back to the New Culture Movement's goal and analyzed it with fresh eyes in his article 'What is the New Culture Movement?'. Drawing from Western philosophers such as Bergson, James, and Russel, and his own definition of culture, Chen advanced the idea that religion is inherent to culture and needed in a society. If the New Culture Movement is about creating a 'new' culture, it has to keep the same components of the 'old' culture and improve them (Chen, 1920c):

“Religion occupies a large part of the old culture, and naturally the new culture cannot be without religion. (...) This is because there is a need for religion in society that it is useless for us to oppose it. To meet this need, only by promoting a better religion as a substitute of the bad religion will be beneficial.”.

It is important to note that Chen did not imply to improve Chinese religions to make them better fitting the evolving Chinese society. He clearly suggested that the 'old' religion had to be changed with a new one. Having already established that Chen was anti-Confucian and promoting Christianity a few months before the publication of this article, Ding came to the conclusion that here Chen was, not only promoting the benefit of religion, but the benefit of Christianity (Ding, 2018).

Chen also presented the idea that religion is essential for the well-being of society. In “Christianity and the Chinese People”, he advanced the idea that religion (here, religion as Christianity) in Europe is what distinguished European countries from China. For him, Western civilizations were founded on beauty and religious emotion, which is purer than the ethical morality promoted by the Chinese culture (Chen, 1920b):

"The lack of beauty and religious sentiment in the source of Chinese culture is one of the reasons why Chinese society is insensitive or even degenerate."

While science is an essential part of a culture, knowledge is not stimulating enough (Chen, 1920c). Religion has a better capacity to make people stronger, nobler and more reactive, it urges them to act. Religion is then at the “origin of human activities” (Chen, 1920b, 1920c). China needs religion to guide the emotions of Chinese people, to make them act and show

enterprising spirit, to break their indifference and laziness.¹⁸ Hence, the interest of Chen was to take advantage of Christianity to make up for the shortcomings of Chinese people “with the benefit obtained through the religion” and motivate them to fight for the independence of China (Chen, 1920a). Just as he was impressed by the Korean Christians, he was hoping that Christianity would make Chinese people more concerned about the future of China.

c. The personality of Jesus

Chen believed that the Western civilization was dynamic and the home of progress because of the influence of the Christian religion. In “Christianity and the Chinese People”, he proposed the adoption of the Christian education for all Chinese based upon the life and the teaching of Jesus. Indeed, Chen was a fervent admirer of Jesus Christ and he encouraged Chinese people to embrace his personality (Chen, 1920a):

“We should try to cultivate the lofty and majestic character of Jesus and imbue our very blood with his warm sympathetic spirit. In this way, we shall be saved from the pit of chilly indifference, darkness and filth, into which we have fallen.”

While Chen was determined that studying Jesus’ personality would bring the Chinese people up, he looked at it from a rationalist and humanist perspective. Indeed, in his study of Jesus, Chen rejected Christian theology and its rituals: rather, Jesus’ “wonderful” personality was what needed to be studied.¹⁹ Chen had been a critic of the Confucian idol worship, yet in this article, he introduced Jesus as a moral model and a behavior example, a model for the nation.

Chen pointed out three types of spirits that emerged from studying Jesus’ personality that needed to be looked at: the “spirit of sacrifice”, the “spirit of forgiveness” and “the spirit of equal fraternity”. To better explain and define these three spirits, he quoted verses of the Four Gospels.

The “spirit of sacrifice” was based on the sacrifice of Jesus for sinners and on his disciples’ sacrifice of their lives for the Lord. Chen, here, referred to the metaphor of the bread from the Last Supper, where Jesus declared that people eating bread and drinking wine were eating and drinking his blood and flesh. By doing this, they were sharing the way of Jesus’ life and were then offered eternal life. Chen, here, highlighted the ways and benefits of following Jesus. (John 6:51, 55-56; Matt 10:37-38, 16:25).

¹⁸ Chen was not the only Chinese intellectual characterizing Chinese people as lazy and indifferent. This was a common criticism of the time, from communist, nationalist and liberal intellectuals such as Hu Shi, Liang Qichao, Zhang Junmai. See Wang, 1991; Fung, 2010.

¹⁹ Chen here is using Matthew’s Gospel to justify his approach: “Here, however, I tell you, there is something greater than the temple” (Matthew 12,6). From this, he concluded that what Jesus has to offer is greater than what the Church can say.

The “spirit of forgiveness” was taken from the forgiveness of sins, the disciples’ repentance, the love for neighbors and the prayers for the enemy related in the Four Gospels (Matthew 5:39-40, 43-45, 6:14, 9:13; Luke 7:47, 15: 7, 10, 24: 47). By being accepted as the children of God, the disciples are motivated to live with goodness and forgive others’ sins.

Finally, the “spirit of equal fraternity” was about Jesus caring for the poor, the sinners and the non-believers. It also talked about the disciples loving one another. (Matthew 11:5, 19:19, 21, 24, 22:37-40; Luke 15:1-7, 20:3—4; John 13:34). Those gospels enlighten how one should love another as they love themselves and should give to the poor. Because people, being rich or poor, influential or not, are created in the image of the Father and then by respecting and loving the other, one is actually respecting God who made man.

By his choice of scriptures, Chen Duxiu rooted the ethical lessons in Jesus’ redemption by death, in the Father’s forgiveness and in the concept that man was created in the image of God. For Chen, the personality and emotions embodied in Jesus are the fundamental Christian teachings. Those teachings could not be refuted by science and because of this, they were the only doctrine acceptable. Ding noted that the Christian teachings described by Chen are no different from the humanist ethical values, making them more acceptable (Ding, 2018). Such a parallel is quite ironic as humanism is a European artistic and philosophical movement that appeared at the end of the eighteenth century to contest Christianity and its god and to give back to men agency. Humanist philosophers were putting faith in men and with his analysis of Christianity, Chen was almost doing the same, however, he did not fully reject religion. In “What is the New Culture Movement?”, he assured that religion is needed in society, but it had to be chosen or shaped to go in accordance with modern concepts and science. Hence, he selected an interpretation of a religion that is acceptable from his scientific point of view but also from his socio-political perspective. Indeed, in the last part of “Christianity and the Chinese People”, Chen made a parallel between Christianity and Communism, saying that both gave importance to the poor (Chen, 1920b):

"They attack communism as 'the greatest of evil of the future', and 'the doctrine of chaos'. They have forgotten that Christianity is the Good News of the poor, and Jesus is the friend of the poor".

We know that in 1920, Chen was already looking at communism and at socialist communities developing themselves in Japan or South Korea (Lee, 1983; Fung, 2002). While he was not yet fully “converted”, we can wonder if, here, Chen was not trying to imply that Communism and Christianity, stripped of its superstitions, could go side by side.

To resume, Chen’s interest in the personality of Jesus is not singular. In the wake of May Fourth, many were rewriting the story of Jesus in a way that was deemed suitable for China,

and creating around his personality a nationalist narrative (Ni, 2011). While Ni mostly referred to Chinese author writing novels or short poems, he excluded to his study the intellectuals' use of the "Western religion". Indeed, Chen was quick to promote the "Christianity to save the country" as a way to oppose Japan's imperialism. His voice joined those of Chinese Christians, and he developed a nationalist narrative where Jesus came to save the entire humanity, to teach everyone to love the neighbor as themselves, to love their enemy and pray for their persecutor. However, Chen's appreciation of Christianity was mainly utilitarian. On one hand, he picked from the Bible elements that would help him save China from Imperialism and encourage Chinese to study those precise gospels. On the other hand, Chen blamed the Church for spreading false beliefs and superstitions and opposing themselves to modernity and science.

2. Chen's critique of the Church

Chen noted the influence of Christianity over European civilization and encouraged Chinese people to study Jesus's personality. However, he was still influenced by the events and intellectual tendencies occurring around China. At the end of May Fourth, anti-religion and anti-Christian feelings grew stronger, leading to the 1920-22 Anti-Christian Campaigns. Despite his admiration for Jesus, Chen did not pose as the defender of Christianity, and instead came up with a moderate critique (Chen, 1922):

"When we criticize the Christian church, we should distinguish between Christianity (Christian teachings) and the Christian church."

In keeping with his 1920-articles 'Christianity and the Chinese People' and 'What is the New Culture Movement?', Chen did not change his point of view on the relevant teachings that can be found in Christianity. However, he did not hesitate to attack the rest of the doctrine and the Church, as well as the countries that propagated it.

a. A flawed doctrine

For Chen Duxiu, the Christian doctrine, while offering engaging ethical lessons, is full of shortcomings. Being drawn to scientific thinking, one of the first critiques that Chen made of Christianity was that its doctrine is filled with myths and tales, with no scientific grounds to base them on (Chen, 1922). A recurrent example he used is the birth of Jesus (Chen, 1918, 1922):

"the history of Jesus' life, such as the birth, miracle, and resurrection, has no historical and scientific evidence that we truly believe" (Chen, 1922)

By trying to demystify it, Chen linked the idea of an out-of-wedlock child being recognized as the son of God as something often seen in other religions or civilizations, making the Christian

myth less unique. Developing his argument, he suggested that Mary would have encountered a Greek soldier before her marriage to Joseph and that Jesus was the child of such an encounter (Chen, 1918). However, Chen recognized that the reality of the birth of Jesus does not alter the Christian values and argued that it might even strengthen them. Christianity is still the “religion of love” (Chen, 1918):

“The birth of Christ was regarded as a major event by the Roman Church; the belief in miracles that originated from this event was its strongest weapon; it stood against the modern world outlook. In the sense of objective historiography, it is necessary for us to recognize this issue. However, the ethical value of pure primitive Christianity, that is, the “religion of love,” has a noble power in the history of civilization; it is not related to the mythical doctrine.”

Chen also noted that Christianity was based on an omnipotent and a benevolent God. Yet, Chen Duxiu expressed his doubt concerning this statement as both omnipotence and benevolence of God should not be contrary. Referring to the idea that man was made in the image of God, Chen Duxiu wondered who was responsible for the dramatic events of his time. If men were made at the image of God, then their actions were also reflecting God’s actions. Could we then blame mankind for the evil done? (Chen, 1922):

“Mankind is innocent, sins lie with the creator. From this we can see that God is either ‘not all good’ or ‘not all powerful’” (1922).

Chen also accused the Church of failing to implement the value of fraternity and sacrifice in the European society, a value that Chen had put forward in 1920 as a national model of personality for China. According to him, if Christianity is about fraternity and sacrifice, how can one explain the aggression of European Christian states through imperialist capitalism? In such a context, the Christian ideal of loving his neighbor and enemy is not possible: one can’t love everyone and sacrifice oneself blindly (Chen, 1922).

Hence, if in 1920 Chen Duxiu was encouraging Chinese people to study Christianity, in 1922 he was more critic of its doctrine. I believed that the rise of the anti-Christian campaigns influenced him to look more in depth into the Christian doctrine so that he could better defend his position. Chen Duxiu pointed out that while Christianity was Western, it was nonetheless full of superstitions and lies. However, he believed that all of those shortcomings were easily exposed with the progress of society, and Christianity’s doctrine could then be revised in accordance with Science and modernity to better serve society. For Chen, attacking the shortcomings of the Christian doctrine was of no use as they only existed because of the “ignorant society”. What the anti-Christian campaigns should attack was the Christian

institutions that filled the doctrine with such superstitions and submitted its followers to ignorance.

b. A criminal Church

Chen Duxiu expressed how it was important to dissociate the Christian teachings from the Christian Church. As we have noted above, Chen recognized that the Christian doctrine was composed of myths and superstitions, two things that intellectuals and students of the New Culture and May Fourth Movements were strongly opposed too. However, in his article "Christianity and the Christian Church" (1922), Chen tried to remind that rather than attacking the religion and its believer, the anti-Christian and anti-religion campaigns should attack the institutions that allowed the spread of such lies.

Therefore, Chen Duxiu was a strong critic of the Christian Church and the Vatican. According to him, their crimes were "piled up like a mountain" (Chen, 1922). One of the crimes he blamed the Vatican for was its control on the European society, controlling its knowledge and letting it be ignorant. With its Christian myths, the Church was making it impossible for an objective history to exist, but it was also keeping at bay any scientific progress (Chen, 1918). He accused the Church of using its position to influence and oppress the thought of the European societies, condemning people promoting social progress like Copernicus or people who were being dissident to the doctrine taught by the Church: "We can't forget the men and women that were burnt under the name of 'Faith'" (Chen, 1922). Chen was amazed to see how much control the Church had and was worried that the Church still had that control. Indeed, if the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had been the scene of scientific, social and political progress in Europe, Chen also recalled that the Vatican did not see this with a keen eye:

"In November 1864, the Pope issued a notice declaring the crime of modern civilizations and modern thoughts. In the summary of the appendix to this general report, all the modern scientific truths, philosophical principles, and rational theorems were listed as being evil"

Hence, the conflict between science and religion and the means deployed by the Vatican to see the Christian beliefs triumph over scientific progress was at the heart of Chen's critique. However, he recognized the different efforts made to fight the Vatican dictates. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century seemed to be promising in his eyes but he deplored that it didn't go as far as it could have. Protestantism was still full of superstitions and rituals as protestants "blindly believe[d] in the Holy Book" (Chen, 1918).

Chen also denounced the political aspect of the Church: for him, what was wrong with Christianity was how it was used to fulfill political and mercantile goals (Chen, 1920b). And this was the reason why Christianity was seen as being evil in China. While Christianity should

save the Chinese society from Imperialism, the Christian missions were also taking part in the unequal treaties, subjecting China to the foreign powers (Chen, 1922):

“All Christian nations oppress the weak and weak nations in the same way. The Church not only does not help the weak and weak nations to protest, but also guides the government’s colonial policy.”

In 1920, Chen had defined Christianity as a religion that encourages people to love your neighbor and respect men as one respects God. However, two years later, he agreed with other nationalist intellectuals that the Christian church was pushing capitalism in China and only attending for the rich countries (Chen, 1918, 1922).²⁰ Chen accused the Christian Church of stripping Christianity of its own meaning, and of preferring the value of money to the value of love, that they should be promoting. Moreover, Chen noticed that Christian schools opened in China lured Chinese people with the promise of a good education and a wealthy future but were just making them more ignorant, by simply teaching them Christianity and their national language, but no science (Chen, 1922).²¹ Such feelings were similar to the ones of the Anti-Christian Campaigns sympathizers. By 1922, many intellectuals saw Christianity as a tool of imperialism, keeping the Chinese ignorant to steal more easily from China (Chow, 1967; Lutz, 1988; Duara, 1996; Goossaert and Palmer, 2011; Lu and Gao, 2018). And Chen Duxiu, albeit a more moderate position, was with them.

Hence, Chen Duxiu had a rather utilitarian view on Christianity. Seeing the Christian doctrine as useful for the national salvation of China, he was prompt to encourage its study and to elevate it as a “new” religion for China. However, the anti-Christian campaigns made him come back to Christianity and be more critic of it. Chen did so by dissociating the Christian teachings from the Christian church. For him, the doctrine had to be improved if it was to be used to help China to awake its population and make it more invested in the society. Chen Duxiu believed that the real problem of Christianity was the Christian institutions represented by the Vatican and they should be the target of the anti-Christian campaigns. Chen was therefore for a Chinese Christianity, stripped of superstitions and of the Church’s influence.

²⁰ This is also a general impression during May Fourth. Christianity was often linked to imperialism and missionaries were seen as a weapon to dominate Chinese people, alongside merchants and military. Chinese were accusing Christianity of trying to keep Chinese people in ignorance to make better profits (Chow, 1967; Duara, 1996; Li, 2019).

²¹ See also Goossaert and Palmer’s analysis on the Christian schools: Chinese were accusing such schools of “westernizing” its students and keeping them from having any nationalist feelings.

CONCLUSION

In June 1921, a year after the establishment of the Shanghai “Marxism Research Society”, Chen founded the Chinese Communist Party, accepting the help of the USSR. With the development of his political actions, Chen eventually gave up on Christianity and “converted himself to communism”.²² However, overlooking Chen’s interest in Christianity would be wrong. Chen Duxiu did criticize the Church and the missionary activities like other intellectuals and the Chinese population. Yet, he was a fervent admirer of Jesus’ personality and did consider the conversion of China to Christianity. Such an apparent contradiction was based on Chen’s orientalist understanding of Christianity as at the origin of Western culture’s strength and progress. He believed that Christianity could give to China what it was lacking and turn it into a strong nation. Then, *How was Chinese identity defined by the Republican debate on Christianity? How was it studied and seen by one of the May Fourth leaders and an important Chinese communist figure, Chen Duxiu?*

Chen’s interest in Christianity was closely linked to his quest of national salvation. Like many Chinese intellectuals, Chen observed and commented on the events of the Korean March First Independent Movement. He was impressed by the participations of Korean Christians in national politics, and their spirit of sacrifice for the sake of national independence. For him, March First linked Christianity and the pursuit of national independence. These events gave Chen a positive impression of Christianity, and made him consider Christianity as a national salvation plan.

However, Chen’s understanding of Christianity was rooted in the perspective of humanism and pragmatism. In 1920, Chen established that religion is inherent to culture. If the New Culture Movement had the pretension to replace the old Chinese culture with a new one, it should not oppose religion but look for a replacement of Confucianism. This change of opinion from Chen was based on the understanding that with religion, it is possible to better motivate people and make them active withing the society. While science and knowledge help to understand the world around us, religion is behind every man’s activities. Chen’s aim was to liberate China from the foreign presence and make its gain a strong position on the international scene. He hoped that religion could complete science and unify the Chinese to his cause.

Chen’s interest in Christianity was thus utilitarian. If the new culture needed to be composed of a religion, it was better to choose a religion that would fit the national need. While

²² Such expression is often used among English-written scholars, emphasizing the attention that Chen gave to the Marxist doctrine and its involvement with the CCP, which was a change when looking at Chen’s always-changeable ideas. see Duara, Chow, Lee and Lutz.

in 1920 Chen deplored that the Chinese were not studying enough Christianity, he only needed a few months to read the Bible and to see in the Western religion the solution for China's problems: this shows that Chen was lacking patience. His understanding of Christianity is incomplete and utilitarian. In 'Christianity and the Chinese People', his main paper on why Christianity should be built as a Chinese organized religion, he only looked at the New Testament and the life of Jesus. Chen based his argument on three Christian spirits that he has drawn from the Bible and analyzed: the "spirit of sacrifice", the "spirit of forgiveness" and the "spirit of fraternity". He hoped that if the Chinese studied these spirits, they would be more unified and more concerned about the fate of the Chinese nation.

However, Chen rejected the rest of the Christian doctrine and its institutions. In 1922, he declared that one should distinguish the Christian teachings from the Christian Church. Yet, he once again only considered the life of Jesus and the ethical lessons he drew from it as being those teachings. He criticized the rest of the doctrine for being "full of shortcomings" and proposed to re-modernize Christianity through science to address them. Moreover, he joined the anti-Christians campaigns by proclaiming that the Church was not to be trusted because of its "past brutality and present degeneration".

Chen created a nationalist narrative of Christianity to bend it to his aims. To put it differently, it is what Chen sought that determined what he found. Despite his criticism of the Church, he admired the personality of Jesus and tried to turn him into a national model. However, in 1922, Chen surrendered to the common tendency regarding Christianity and decided to see Christian teachings and the Church as one. We can still feel in the last text studied that he was not fully in accordance with his contemporaries (Chen, 1922):

"I always think that Christianity and the Christian church should be observed separately, but my friend Mr. Dai Jitao²³ insists that there is no Christianity outside the Christian church."

Chen truly believed that the new Chinese identity was in need of a strong religious doctrine that would unify the Chinese population. However, he rejected the Confucian doctrine and found in Christianity a partially acceptable one. Indeed, for Chen; Christianity needed to be amended and corrected by science and other modern concepts in order to raise it as the new Chinese religion. However, for Christianity to reach such a new form, the Christian church needed to be left out. In 1922, Chen was not tender towards the Christian church, that he accused of purposely keeping its followers in ignorance to better have control over them. But he noted that despite its lack of scientific truth and its shortcomings, the Christian doctrine was

²³ Dai Jitao was a politician and a member of Sun's government. He is also known for being the English translator of Sun Yatsen.

still centered on values that made it “the religion of love”. While it is said that communist intellectuals were mainly anti-religion, Chen had not only seen a use of Christianity for his nationalist plans, but also a link between communism and Christianity, as it was also “the Good News of the poor” (Chen, 1920b).

This analysis of Chen Duxiu’s approach of Christianity, of his admiration of the Christian doctrine and its rejection of the Christian Church can make us look at the actual CCP religious policy from a different angle. We could wonder if Chen Duxiu’s moderate opinion on Christianity influenced the actual position of the religion in modern China: one in which the Christian doctrine is accepted but the Church still needs to negotiate with the state.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, B. (1985) *Imagined communities : reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Repr. London: Verso.

Bays, D. (ed.) (1996) *Christianity in China : from the eighteenth century to the present*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press.

Chang, J. (2013) *Empress dowager Cixi : the concubine who launched modern China*. New York: Knopf.

Chatterjee, P. (1995) "Whose Imagined Community," in *The Nation and its fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. New Delhi, OUP, pp. 3–13.

Chen, D. (1915) '法兰西人与近世文明 (The French and Modern civilization)', *新青年 (New Youth)*, 1(1).

Chen, D. (1916) '宪法与孔教 (The Constitution et Confucianism)', *新青年 (New Youth)*, 2(3), pp. 1–5.

Chen, D. (1918) '科学与基督教 (Science and Christianity)', *新青年 (New Youth)*, 4(1), pp. 67–72.

Chen, D. (1919) '朝鲜独立运动之感想, (Feeling about Korean Independent Movement)', *Meizhou Pinglun*, (March).

Chen, D. (1920a) 'Christianity and the Chinese People.', *The Chinese Recorder (1912-1938)*, (Jul 01), p. 453.

Chen, D. (1920b) '基督教于中国人 (Christianity and the Chinese People)', *新青年 (New Youth)*, 7(3), pp. 15–22.

Chen, D. (1920c) '新文化运动是什么? (What is the New Culture Movement?)', *新青年 (New Youth)*, 7(5), pp. 1–6.

Chen, D. (1922) '言论: 基督教与基督教会 (Christianity and the Church of Jesus)', *先驱 (Pionner)*, (4).

Chow, T. (1967) *The May fourth movement : intellectual revolution in modern China*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press (Stanford paperbacks ; 62).

Cooper, F. (2005) *Colonialism in question: Theory, knowledge, history, Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley: University of California Press. doi: 10.11144/javeriana.mys18-37.cqtk.

Ding, Z. (丁祖潘) (2018) '救国视野下的耶稣形象：试论五四时期陈独秀对基督教的态度变化 (The Image of Jesus from the Perspective of National Salvation: on the Change of Chen Duxiu's Attitude Towards Christianity during the May Fourth Movement)', *世*

代 (*Generation*), (5). Available at: <https://www.kosmoschina.org/救国视野下的耶稣形象 / 丁祖潘/#more-2051>.

Duara, P. (1996) *Rescuing history from the nation questioning narratives of modern China*. Pbk. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Duara, P. (1998) 'The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China', *History and theory*. Blackwell Publishers, 37(3), pp. 287–308.

Dunch, R. (2002) 'Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity', *History and Theory*. Boston, USA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 41(3), pp. 301–325.

Fung, E. S. K. (2002) 'Socialism, Capitalism, and Democracy in Republican China: The Political Thought of Zhang Dongsun', *Modern China*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 28(4), pp. 399–431.

Fung, E. S. K. (2010) *The intellectual foundations of Chinese modernity cultural and political thought in the Republican era*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Goossaert, V. and Palmer, D. (2011) *The religious question in modern China*. Chicago, Ill., [etc.]: The University of Chicago Press.

Guardian, T. (2018) *Vatican signs historic deal with China – but critics denounce sellout*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/22/vatican-pope-francis-agreement-with-china-nominating-bishops> (Accessed: 20 November 2019).

Jones, F. L. (1997) 'Ethnic diversity and national identity', *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 33(3), pp. 285–305. doi: 10.1177/144078339703300302.

Kunovich, R. M. (2006) 'An Exploration of the Salience of Christianity for National Identity in Europe', *Sociological Perspectives*, 49(4), pp. 435–460. doi: 10.1525/sop.2006.49.4.435.

Kuo, C. T. (2017) *Religion and Nationalism in Chinese Societies*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. Available at: <http://www.oapen.org/download/?type=document&docid=645373>.

Lee, F. (1983) *Chen Duxiu, founder of the Chinese Communist Party*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Li, G. (2019) 'The neighbor as mirror: Representations of the Korean March First Movement in modern Chinese discourses of nationalism', *Chinese Studies in History: The May Fourth Movement of 1919: A Centennial Anniversary*. Routledge, 52(3–4), pp. 256–276. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00094633.2019.1654801>.

Liu, F. (1918) 'Reply to "Wang Ching-hsuan"', *新青年 (New Youth)*, 4(3).

Liu, L. 刘磊 (2008) '孙中山的宗教情结 - Sun Yat - sen ' s Religious Complex', *忻州师范学院学报*, 24(6), pp. 77–79.

Lu, J. and Gao, Q. (2018) 'Contesting Chineseness: An Examination of Religion and National Identity in Mainland China', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 57(2), pp. 318–340.

Lutz, J. G. (1988) *Chinese politics and christian missions : the anti-christian movements of 1920-28*. Notre Dame, Ind., U.S.A: Cross Cultural Publications, Cross Roads Books (The church and the world ; vol. 3).

Myers, R. H. (2000) 'The Chinese State during the Republican Era', in *The Modern Chinese State*, pp. 42–72.

Ni, Z. (2011) 'Rewriting Jesus in Republican China: Religion, literature, and cultural nationalism', *Journal of Religion*, 91(2), pp. 223–252. doi: 10.1086/658109.

Paramore, K. (2020) 'Liberalism, Cultural Particularism, and the Rule of Law In Modern East Asia: The Anti-Confucian Essentialisms of Chen Duxiu and Fukuzawa Yukichi Compared', *Modern intellectual history*, 17(2), pp. 527–542.

Prakash, G. (2009) 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography', *Comparative studies in society and history*. Cambridge University Press (CUP), 32(2), pp. 383–408.

Schwartz, B. (1951) 'Ch'ên Tu-Hsiu and the Acceptance of the Modern West', *Journal of the History of Ideas*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 12(1), pp. 61–74. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2707537>.

Shambaugh, D. and Kirby, W. (2000) *The modern Chinese state*. New York: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge modern China series).

Smith, A. D. (1991) *National identity*. London [etc.]: Penguin.

Vaticannews (2018) *Provisional Agreement between Holy See and China*. Available at: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2018-09/china-holy-see-agreement-appointment-bishops.html>.

Wang, G. (1991) *The Chineseness of China : selected essays*. Hong Kong [etc.]: Oxford University Press.

Xi, L. (2004) 'The search for Chinese Christianity in the republican period (1912-1949)', *Modern Asian Studies*. CAMBRIDGE UNIV PRESS, 38, pp. 851–898.

Yu, Y. (1994) "'The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century'", in Tu, W. M. (ed.) *China in transformation*. Cambridge, Mass. [etc.]: Harvard University Press, pp. 125–150.