

The China Inland Mission and The Chinese Christian Student Movement in 1937-1956

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1. The Mission Strategy of Hudson Taylor and the Student Movement in China:

C.P. Fitzgerald, the author of *The Birth of Communist China*, observed that peasant uprisings played very significant roles in political change in Chinese history. Many of these peasant uprisings were associated with religion. He wrote:

There have been many great peasant risings. There were two in the first Empire, the Han, another at the end of the T'ang (Tang) Dynasty; the founder of the Ming was the leader of such a movement; another dethroned his descendants, and in the last century the T'ai P'ing (Taiping) rebellion conformed closely to the type. The Boxer movement at the beginning of the century was essentially similar. Now with one exception all these great risings, which swept across the empire, failed to overthrow the feeble and degenerate dynasties which they opposed. All were in the end defeated. They shook the throne, but could not overturn it. In each case the weakened dynasty a few years later succumbed to some military adventurer who had risen either in the ranks of rebellion or in the armies raised to suppress the rebels. This was the case with the Red Eyebrows and Yellow Turbans of the Han period, the rebellion of Huang Tsao (Huang chao zhi luan) in the T'ang (Tang); of Li Tze-ch'eng (Li Zi-cheng) at the end of the Ming; and of the T'ai P'ing (Taiping) Heavenly King in the sixties of the last century. Only one exception occurs, the great rebellion which drove the Mongols from the throne of China and founded the Ming dynasty.¹

According to Fitzgerald, the success of Ming Hung Wu (洪武 Hong Wu, 1328-1398), the founder of the Ming Dynasty, was due to his alliance with the intellectuals, i.e. the scholars. Peasants and intellectuals form the two pillars of Chinese society. The other peasant uprisings failed because they could not garner the support of the intellectuals. Throughout the course of Chinese history, all the founders of

¹ C. P. Fitzgerald, *The Birth of Communist China* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 26.

enduring regimes were careful to court the educated class, while at the same time relieving the worst distress of the peasantry and the common people. Despots who seized power without the backing of the educated class could not retain it. Foreign invaders, such as Mongols, who failed to obtain the support of the educated class, and relieve the peasants from distress and hunger proved unable to endure. The enduring characteristic of successful Chinese rebellion is that peasant uprisings must always be supported by Chinese intellectuals. Without securing the support of both pillars of Chinese society, no revolutionary movement could last long. This was true in Chinese politics, and equally true in church development.

1.1 Top Down or Bottom Up?

When European Christian missionaries first penetrated into western China, they found in the city of Xian, the capital city of the Tang Dynasty, a stele on which was recorded the rise and prosperity of the Nestorian Church in China during the seventh and eighth centuries. Many royal family members had been enrolled in the church; great ministers contributed to its finances and restored its shrines. However, it subsequently disappeared completely. Very little trace of Nestorian Christianity is to be found in China today, nor is there literary evidence of its previous existence, no tradition and no memory. Nestorian Christianity flourished during the Tang dynasty, but seemingly, vanished into thin air.

In the seventeenth century, the Jesuits came to China. Matteo Ricci was the first Jesuit missionary to successfully gain entry into China, arriving in Beijing in 1601. A scholar of great repute, Ricci was respected by many Chinese scholars. He adopted the policy of synthesis in trying to make Christianity acceptable to the Chinese. He believed that the performance of the rites in honor of Confucius was not idolatrous and that the Chinese term “tien” (天) or heaven was an appropriate term for the Christian God. Ricci attracted more than 2,000 converts into the Catholic Church in China. By 1670, there were 100,000 Catholics in eleven provinces in China. After the collapse of the Ming Dynasty, the new Qing regime more or less maintained the same policy towards the Jesuits. The emperor Kangxi (康熙 1654-1722) was charmed by the Jesuits’ attitude towards the Chinese people and culture. He even wrote an inscription in praise of Christianity using the term “tien” (天) for God. The so-called ‘rites controversy’ brought this promising beginning to an end.

When the Dominicans came to China, also in the seventeenth century, they were not happy with the Jesuit’s theological position. They regarded the Confucian rites as idolatrous. The matter was formally referred to the Pope. In 1715 the Pope ruled against the Jesuits and decreed that all such rites by Christians, and offerings on the graves of the dead must cease. He also forbade the use of the term “tien” (天) for God, with the penalty for disobedience being excommunication. Kangxi was furious with the decree. He ordered the banishment of all missionaries, and the destruction of Christian churches. When

his son Yongzheng (雍正 1678-1735), succeeded to the throne, he tightened control and made Christianity an illegal religion. Though the influence of the Jesuits continued to be felt despite their banishment, the great Jesuit attempt to establish the Christian church in China had, like that of its predecessor, failed.

Both the Nestorians and the Jesuits used the same top down mission strategy. They perceived in China, a resemblance to pagan Rome. Realizing that the emperor was the font of Confucian orthodoxy, they aimed first to convert the emperor and the royal family. They thought that if they converted the throne, making the emperor a Chinese Constantine, the whole empire would eventually be converted. This seemed, to them, the surest and swiftest road to success. Thus they put their emphasis on the royal family as well as the scholars, leaving the peasants and common people unaffected. When the emperor was hostile to them, it meant the end of their mission.

When Hudson Taylor started the CIM, he abandoned the 'top down' strategy, in favor of the 'bottom up' strategy. CIM's vision was that of going into the inland to win first the rural class of China. However, this focus on only one pillar (the peasants) of Chinese society at the expense of the other (the intellectuals) was equally problematic. The later change in strategy to include reaching out to students, particularly university students, in the 1940s, proved indispensable to the development of the Chinese church.

1.2 The Transformation of the Education System in China

Traditional Chinese education was based on legalist and Confucian ideals. The teachings of Confucius shaped the overall Chinese mindset for more than a thousand years. This traditional system was gradually replaced by a modern western education system at the turn of the twentieth century. The missionaries, as well as the reformists who studied at foreign institutions and returned to China to work as teachers, researchers and educationalists, played a large role in this transformation. This was especially true in the area of tertiary education.

The traditional Chinese school was called the *Sishu* (old-style Chinese school). It was usually privately funded, informal, ungraded and small-scaled. It was not taught by professionally trained teachers. There were the junior *Sishu* and senior *Sishu*. Junior *Sishu* was for children to learn basic reading and writing skills. Senior *Sishu* prepared youth to take the civil service examination which served to select suitable candidates to fill senior positions in the state bureaucracy. This was the only way to climb the social ladder in ancient China. My father, So Sum, was born at the turn of the 20th century. He received his education from a *Sishu*, and he himself subsequently taught in a *Sishu* for a number of years before migrating to South America. Many reformists blamed China's weaknesses on its traditional education system, with its narrowly-focused curriculum. The civil service examination focused only on the mastery of the Confucian classics and the ability to write the 'eight-legged' essays. They paid no

attention to science or to other subjects. In addition, the lack of public funding meant that schooling was limited to middle and upper class men. Females were not allowed to attend schools.

At the turn of the 20th century, the education system in China underwent a great transformation. In 1902, the Qing Government decreed the creation of a modern public school system for the first time in China's history. In 1904, the imperial civil service examination was abolished, bringing to an end the traditional education system. In 1905, the Ministry of Education was set up to lead education reform. At about the same time, many missionaries began to start their schools in the Western education system. After the Boxer Uprising, there was a general change in attitude towards Christianity. There was a new passion for modern education and the young flocked to the Christian schools. After the collapse of the Qing regime, the Republican government went on to further reform education in China. 'Saving the country through education' became the rallying cry of the Chinese social and political reformers. Besides the study of Confucian classics, many other western subjects were added to the curriculum. Educational opportunities were offered to both men and women. The traditional informal private *Sishu* began to be replaced by formal public schools. Most significant was the emergence of colleges and universities to train up future leaders for the country.

In 1889, the state established the Imperial University of Peking, the predecessor of Peking University, as the first modern national comprehensive university in China. Other early institutions for higher education in modern China included Beiyang University, established in 1895, the predecessor of today's Tianjin University, and Nanyang University established in 1896, the predecessor of today's Shanghai Jiaotong University. Both were founded by Shen Xuanhuai (盛宣懷 1844-1916), a Qing bureaucrat who actively advocated the use of Western technology. All followed Western institutional models. Western scholars were invited to head departments and to teach, using Western materials and teaching methods. After the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, the Republican regime further modernized China's higher education system. The basis of study moved from the classics to modern arts and sciences, and concepts of academic freedom were implemented.

Under the influence of Timothy Richard, many missions plunged into building and organizing not only schools but the educational system as well. The indemnity provided by the Qing Government after the Boxer Uprising allowed some missions to found schools and colleges for higher education. In 1914, there were 12,000 mission schools of all types (elementary and middle schools, and colleges) with a total student population of about 250,000. In 1934, as a result of the anti-Christian movement, the total number of mission schools was reduced to 6,593. There were sixteen Christian Universities (thirteen Protestant and three Catholic), three medical schools and seven seminaries in the 1930s.² Many of these

² Jessie Gregory Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), p.3.

Christian colleges were small. Hwa Nan Women's College, for instance, only had about 100 students. The largest was the University of Nanking with a student body of 1000 in 1937. The Christian colleges constituted about 15% of the total college student population of the country in the 1930s. Most were run and financed through the joint efforts of several missionary societies. A total of 24 missionary societies were involved in this effort, most of which were American denominational missions. Most graduates from these Christian colleges entered the teaching profession. About 30% of graduates remained to teach in the mission schools after graduation, 16% became pastors or evangelists, 12% became businessmen and 11% became medical doctors, dentists and nurses. Another interesting phenomenon observed in these Christian colleges was that a much higher percentage of female students were enrolled, as compared to non-mission colleges. In the 1930s, about 25% of Christian college students were female. Of all female college students in China, 30% of them were enrolled in Christian colleges. During the war years (1937-45), there was a much higher enrollment of students at both Christian and non-Christian colleges. In 1936-37, there were 6,668 students in all the Christian colleges, about 10,000 in 1944-45 and 12,751 in 1948-49.³

Educational reform was the catalyst for the modernization of China, and the students were a unique social group. Jeffrey N. Wasseastrom called it an elite social and political group.⁴ During the entire Republican era, this group played a major role in the politics of China. Student protests punctuated the history of modern China. At every stage of the national struggle, students were among the first to take to the streets - against the Great Power victimization of China at the Versailles Conference after World War I, against imperialist suppression of the workers' movement in the 1920s, against Japanese aggression and Guomindang weakness, and against civil war in the 1940s. In all these movements, it was the students who took to the streets in the name of 'saving the nation' (jiuguo 救國). They used their banners and slogans as weapons to fight the twin threats of imperialist aggression and domestic tyranny. Why were the students so powerful in shaping political change in China despite the fact that they comprised fewer than 0.01% of the total population? Wasseastrom observed that many of the college students in the Republican era were children of elitist parents: high officials, landlords and businessmen. They were freed from parental control as they moved to live in or near campuses. They were easily organized and mobilized. All had one thing in common. They viewed themselves as an elite group with both the right and the duty to speak out on political issues because they anticipated that in due course, the next generation of high officials would come from among their ranks. In fact, officials and ordinary people also viewed them as an elite group. Educated youth were regarded as the voice of the people. Common folk supplied them with food and money when they took to the streets to protest. That is why these students tended to think

³ Ibid., p.503.

⁴ Jeffrey N. Wasseastrom, *Student Protest in Twentieth Century China: the View from Shanghai* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1991), p.20.

in national terms rather than in terms of purely academic or campus-related issues. We can understand why both the Guomindang and the Communists tried their best to harness the support of the student groups.⁵ The missionaries, likewise, saw in the students, a golden opportunity to reach out to an influential subset of Chinese society. We shall explore this student movement in the following sections.

1.3 The Christian Student Movement in the War Period

The full-scale war between China and Japan triggered by the incident at the Marco Polo Bridge outside Beijing on July 7th 1937 led to eight years of disaster for China. The brutal and relentless invasion of China by Japan caused unparalleled suffering to the people of China. The destruction, sorrow, mental anguish, injury and death suffered by the Chinese cannot be over-estimated. The Church was not exempt from the suffering. This was especially so after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941, and the subsequent declaration of war between Japan and the US-led allies. Christians, like other Chinese citizens, were oppressed, and tortured; missionaries were put into internment camps. Paradoxically, this period was also a critical turning point in the development of the Church in China. The war years presented the Church with extraordinary and unprecedented opportunities. In occupied China, the departure of the missionaries meant that the indigenous leadership of local Chinese churches were suddenly faced with increased responsibilities. Meanwhile, in free China, CIM missionaries and indigenous preachers such as Calvin Chao (Zhao Junying 趙君影 1906-1996), worked among the migrant student population and brought forth the great student revival. This period also marked a significant change in the mission strategy of the CIM from a focus on the rural class to the intellectual class. After the outbreak of the war in 1937, there were few opportunities for large-scale revivalism in Japanese-controlled areas. In Western China, however, the influx of fifty million refugees, including tens of thousands of destitute, frustrated, and agitated students created new audiences for eschatological messages, as well as new messengers to continue to spread the word. One Chongqing newspaper likened these students to trucks rumbling recklessly ahead with no drivers on board. Lian Xi noted, “Many of the younger preachers in Nationalist-controlled hinterlands had student backgrounds and were cultivated by conservative (especially CIM) missionaries to work among the migrant student population.”⁶

This student revival, known as the Christian student movement had tremendous impact on the development of the Chinese Church. Philip Teng (滕近輝 1922-2013), a student leader, later to become one of the most outstanding Chinese church leaders in the twentieth century, commented that this movement ranked first among the seven ‘spiritual movements’ in Chinese church history for it produced

⁵ Ibid., p.23.

⁶ Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: the Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*, p.190.

many outstanding church leaders for modern China.⁷

2. The Beginning of the Christian Student Movement (1937-1943)

The outbreak of the student revival during the War Period was not accidental. The Japanese invasion set in motion the greatest migration of population in modern China. Many abandoned their homes and shops in threatened areas, carrying only a few possessions on the long trek to free China in the West in order to escape the terror of Japanese occupation. The initial trickle became a flood, and it was estimated that about 40 to 60 million people were involved in this retreat. These refugees suffered from shortages of food, clothing and shelter, and many succumbed to cholera and typhoid. Children were separated from their parents, younger members of the family from the old. In free China, refugees from the East found themselves rubbing shoulders with the more backward people in the West. The two groups found it a challenge to meet and mingle freely. Language difficulties were great for they spoke different dialects. The local people in the West were not ready for the “invasion” of the Easterners, and were very hostile toward these ‘down-river’ refugees.

Among the refugees were many college students. The Guomindang realized the importance of tertiary education, and they re-located many of the prestigious universities to the West during the War period. They also offered scholarships and loans to poor students, which was a reason why enrollment of college students doubled during the war period. Private colleges, both Catholic and Protestant, also re-located to free China during the war. The college students, like other refugees, were destitute and frustrated. The eschatological hope offered by the Christian faith appeared attractive to them. In addition, all these colleges were located within just a few cities in the West, notably Kunming, Chongqing, and Guiyang, instead of being scattered far apart as they had been in the East. Consequently, it was much easier for missionaries to reach out to the students as a group.

Calvin Chao wrote that in the winter of 1938, when he arrived in Kunming, he immediately started to witness to the students at the National Southwestern Associated University. At that time, Rev. and Mrs. Paul Contento of the CIM had already started some student ministries on campus. This was the first time Chao was involved in student work. He believed that in other parts of free China, many people were involved in such student ministries too.⁸ This marked the beginning of the Christian Student

⁷ Philip Teng (滕近輝), *Ershi Shiji Huaran Jiaohui Shengming Licheng de Huiqu – Wo Suo Jinli de Qi Da Shuling Yundong* 廿世紀華人教會生命發展歷程的回顧-我所經歷的七大屬靈運動. Christian Ministry Institute, accessed May 8, 2015, <http://www.hkcmi.edu/1999/10/>

⁸ Calvin Chao (Junying Zhao 趙君影), *Man Tan Wu Shi Nian Lai Zhongguo De Jiao Hui Yu Zheng Zhi* (漫談五十年來中國的教會與政治 *Fifty years of Chinese churches and politics*) (Taipei Shi: Zhonghua gui zhu xie hui, 1981), p. 16.

Movement, in which the missionaries of the CIM participated actively.

2.1 The Change in CIM Strategy

The strategy of the CIM had initially been to reach out to the peasants. In 1939, we see a distinct shift in emphasis. On January 2nd 1939, the CIM Council decided to include student work as one of her major focuses. In the minutes of the Council Meeting held in Shanghai, the CIM leadership outlined the goal, and the strategy of the student ministry. The strategic importance of a student ministry had already been recognized a few years prior. The Council believed that it was an effective way of training future church leaders. It also reported that some of the CIM missionaries had in fact already started their work among students in the West, with very positive results. They immediately suggested appointing certain gifted missionaries to work full-time in the student ministry. They also suggested reaching out to these students directly through bible studies at the homes of the missionaries, and through campus evangelism instead of through local churches.⁹ Houghton, the Director of the CIM wrote in his 1941 report that there were many opportunities presented to the CIM. Government universities welcomed them to teach English though they fully understood that the purpose of the CIM was to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁰ By April 1942, there were at least eight missionaries involved in student work: Mr. and Mrs. Liberty in Lanchow; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Contento in Chengku university center in Shenshi province; Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Lyall in Anshun and Mr. Gordon Aldis and Mr. Henry Guinness in the provinces of Szechwan and Honan respectively.

What caused the CIM leadership to change her mission strategy at that point? I believe we have to credit Houghton, and CIM missionaries such as Lyall, Contento and Adeney, who had the wisdom and courage to make such a shift despite much opposition. There were a number of factors affecting their decision. Houghton was clearly impressed by the work of the Contentos in Kunming. The Contento family used to work in North-West China. Owing to the state of disturbance and the impediments to travel, they were asked to proceed to Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan. There, they found opportunities for service among Chinese students. Paul Contento wrote in *China's Millions*:

Last August, we saw hundreds of students who were just released from their military training, wandering about the streets, with apparently nothing to do. We enquired more closely and found that their university would not open for two and half months.

⁹ Minutes of Council Meeting held in Shanghai, on Friday, January 2, 1939, at 9:30 a.m. "*China Inland Mission*", 1865-1951. From the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Pt. 3 Minutes and papers on the China Inland Mission.

¹⁰ Frank Houghton, *Attacking on all fronts: Part of the Story of China Inland Mission in 1941* (London: China Inland Mission, 1942), p.59.

Immediately we put up a notice that we were beginning English classes. Imagine our surprise when some thirty registered the first day! For this group we carried out a regular program of classes daily, from 1 to 4 p.m. and this included such subjects as ‘God’s plan of Salvation’, ‘the dispensation in the Bible’ and ‘the Gospel of Matthew’, etc. We also had many interesting discussions which were most illuminating as to what the students were thinking.¹¹

Mary Contento was one of the founding members of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship at Edinburgh University. Therefore, the Contentos followed the Inter-Varsity style, working within the college campus rather than in the local church. Within a short period of time, hundreds of students joined their classes. As more and more students were converted, they started the first Inter-Varsity Christian Student Fellowship in China, and a young medical student, Raymond Hsing who was a keen Christian, served as its first chairman. In 1939, Houghton visited the Contentos several times in Kunming and was impressed by the work there. From then on, he became very excited about the student ministry, ultimately resulting in the change of CIM mission strategy.¹²

Houghton called this period a new era.¹³ Numerous letters regarding the changing situation in China and the opportunities for outreach to students had already poured into the CIM headquarters in Shanghai. James Stark, for instance, wrote in September 1937:

As a result of enquiries, Mr. Arnold Lea finds that the number of students in the city of Chengdu, Szechwan, is estimated at 10,000 in the middle schools and more than twice that number in the high schools, roughly more than half of these from homes outside of the capital, whilst it is computed that in the Military Academy there are some 6,000. Retrenchment on the part of other missions, he reminds us, means for us a wider field of opportunity for work among students and young people. The need of the district and that of the city are, in his opinion, equally great ... Opportunities for making the Gospel known to pupils in government schools seem to multiply and, in some instances, present themselves in unusual ways ... Practically every day since the meetings ended students have come to sing, or read the Scriptures, and we have had fine opportunities to show them the way of

¹¹ P.A. Contento, “A Day of Opportunity” *China’s Millions* (September 1939): pp. 136-137.

¹² Paul Contento, Interview by Robert A. Shuster, 9 December 1992, Collection 472, T2a. Billy Graham Evangelical Archives, Wheaton, Illinois.

¹³ F. Houghton, “Laying Tracks for Advance,” *China’s Millions* (March 1936): p. 39.

salvation.¹⁴

Lyall was a key leader in this movement. He wrote from Kweiyang (Guiyang) that he was encouraged by the student work there. The attendance of students had grown and interest was keen. At the request of medical students and teachers, he held daily classes all through the month on English pronunciation, Bible reading, lectures on the history of Christianity and the life of Paul, classes on the parables, and classes for conversion and discussion. Some students saw him for personal talks and prayers. The Veterinary College students also invited him to hold weekly lectures. On his first visit, they had arranged a reception with tea and cakes in his honor, followed by a speech in English. Marcus Cheng also visited and addressed the students in Kweiyang.¹⁵

Joyce R.H. wrote from Chenkiang, Yunnan, “Our contacts with University students continue to give us cause for encouragement. Last Sunday five of them were baptized, four of them being members of our English Bible Class. Pastor Li from Kunming baptized them and I was asked to take the Communion service. The University Christian Fellowship asked me to address their Sunday morning service regularly once a month. The attendance was around 150-200.”¹⁶

A.L. Crockett wrote from Langchung, Szechwan in 1940:

With the coming of Fourth National Middle (High) School to Langchung, there has arrived a big opportunity for getting over the Gospel to them. Since December they have been coming around for English Bible classes and now we are having these classes every day of the week, in the mornings, Lloyd and I sharing the work between us. We get at least thirty each time, sometimes over forty, graded out in various classes - Higher, Middle (whose English is quite good). Their attitude to the Bible is very fine and I believe many of them are being drawn to the Lord these days. Yesterday I talked for over an hour to about thirty-three of them, and at the end they are waiting for more! Of course, it keeps us very busy, as not only is there teaching, but the contacts with them, the typing out of portions, and so on. I have rigged up a blackboard, and got long benches in the back, and it makes a fine classroom. The other day we had a tea party in the drawing room, with about forty present! There are 1,000 students in this school, made up of refugee students from all parts of China, so their Chinese is both varied and difficult! They have asked me to teach English in the school, but I don't think it would help in contacts much, as now

¹⁴ James Stark, “Our Shanghai Letter,” *China's Millions* (September 1937): p. 176.

¹⁵ Leslie Lyall, “The Chinese Student,” *China's Millions* (March-April 1942): pp. 20-21.

¹⁶ R.H.Joyce, “Winning Students for Christ,” *China's Millions* (April, 1940): p. 56-57.

we have all and more than we can properly manage.¹⁷

These were typical letters from CIM missionaries from different parts of free China which were received at CIM headquarters. N. Baker of the CIM summarized the situation commendably as follows:

The destruction or disablement in eastern and central China of nearly two-thirds of the Universities has had a noteworthy consequence. Thousands of University and College students have gathered in the provincial capital of Szechwan, Yunnan and Kweichow (Guizhou). Some months ago, a large number trekked several hundred miles from the central province of Hunan, and are at present continuing their studies in Chengdu ... You would be amazed to see what we are seeing these days. China's greatest University is now located here, and thousands of University students from all over China have come ... From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. we carry on Bible classes, and what a pleasure to teach these keenly alert, cultured young people.¹⁸

Many CIM missionaries, including Houghton, had very close relationships with the Inter-Varsity Fellowship both in Britain and America. Adeney, who was later seconded to the China Inter-Varsity Fellowship, was actively involved in the CICCUC (Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union) when he was a student at Cambridge, serving as Missionary Secretary. Adeney was also a key leader in the establishment of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in America from 1941 to 1945. Lyall too was actively involved in the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. In 1928, Lyall played a vital role in establishing the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (now UCCF), which had a powerful effect on Christianity in the universities and colleges in Britain and elsewhere. In fact, his experience in the student ministry in England had tremendous impact on his ministry among the university students in China especially in the post-war period. Mary Contento was a founding member of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship at the University of Edinburgh. Henry Guinness was likewise closely associated with the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. His relative, Howard Guinness founded the Canadian Inter-Varsity Fellowship, and his son Os Guinness, is a well-known apologist closely associated with the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. Houghton himself was a close friend of Stacy Woods, the founder of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship in the United States of America. It was Houghton who recommended Adeney to Woods to serve in the newly founded American Inter-Varsity Fellowship from 1941 to 1945. In fact, it was through the efforts of Houghton and the CIM missionaries

¹⁷ A.L. Crockett, "Winning Students for Christ," *China's Millions* (April 1940): p. 56.

¹⁸ N. Baker, "China's Resurgence in the West," *China's Millions* (February 1939): pp. 28-29.

that the China Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (CIVCF) was founded. With such close affiliations, the Inter-Varsity Fellowship undeniably played a crucial role in the shift of CIM missions focus to student work, in addition to its work with the the peasantry.

2.2 Opposition from Within and Without

This shift of mission strategy was not unopposed from within and without the CIM circle. In his interview with Robert Shuster, Contento admitted that there was opposition from fellow missionaries within the CIM family. He said, “I frankly confess to you that some of our fellow missionaries were very critical. We tried to enlist some of them to help us. “What? We didn’t come to teach English Bible. We came here to reach the millions and millions of Chinese, not just a few students.” You know, they said, “the Contentos are super-proud. They’re going to teach students. They are going to reach students, not common man.”¹⁹ This remark tells us that there were some CIM missionaries who insisted on adhering to the original strategy of outreach to the peasants only, and they were very critical of the shift of focus to include students.

Secondly, there was also opposition from the local churches. Shortly before his accidental death, W. G. Windsor, the CIM Superintendent of Kweichow (Guizhou), wrote an interesting article titled *East China Meets West China*. He observed that the more cultured ‘down-river’ refugees from the East did not mix easily with the less cultured local people of the West. The Easterners looked down upon their less privileged Western brothers, and the local Westerners were jealous of their more cultured and privileged Eastern brothers. They were bitter about the ‘cultural invasion’ of the Easterners. In the churches, the situation was even worse. When the economically poorer local Christians saw large numbers of well-dressed Christians from elsewhere ‘invading their church’, they felt offended for this made them feel out of place in their own church building. In fact, their culture, language and educational levels were so different that conflict between these two groups seemed inevitable.²⁰ We can imagine that it would have been a challenge for the newly converted University students to settle down in these local churches.

Leslie Lyall shared his own experience in Anshun, Guizhou in 1941. The local church at that time was in poor shape. The last deacon fell victim to opium-smoking and gave up attending church. The large church building stood empty and festooned with cobwebs. Some services were maintained in the hospital chapel, mainly for patients. Dr. Chen, a more mature local Christian, had to dissociate himself from the former congregation and start a family service in his own home. Dr. Chen invited Lyall to attend the family service and partnered with him to reach out to the residents in the city. They rented shop premises

¹⁹ Paul Contento, Interview by Robert A. Shuster, 9 December 1992, Collection 472, T2a. Billy Graham Evangelical Archives, Wheaton, Illinois.

²⁰ W.G. Windsor, “East China Meets West China,” *China’s Millions* (November-December 1941): p. 90.

near the center of the city, close to the ever popular theatre where crowds usually gathered. They cleaned up and decorated the premises with colorful gospel posters, and the open-fronted premises made a neat and attractive 'preaching chapel.' Every evening except on Saturdays and Sundays one or two Chinese Christians and Lyall used to preach in rotation to the passing crowds. Lyall wrote, "Over the years thousands heard the gospel, many fruitful contacts were made, numerous profitable private conversations with all sorts and conditions of men were held, quantities of Bible were sold, follow-up visits were made to the villages, and some found Christ and were baptized."²¹ As a result of their efforts, there was evidence of the resurrection of the church. They were able to recruit Newman Shih and Miss Chao as their pastors. By 1942, the prospects of the church seemed bright with increasing numbers attending. Just then, another denomination appointed a pastor to open a second church in the town; they attacked Lyall's church as being a church for foreigners and criticized Pastor Shih harshly. For the sake of keeping the peace between these two congregations, Shih took a leave of absence. This incident underscored the complexity of the situation and the difficulty of growing a local church at this critical time. In addition, most of the students were not interested in attending the local churches. Thus, Lyall had to work on two fronts. He started services and Bible classes on campuses and in hospitals for the Easterners. However, he also worked with local churches to reach out to the local Westerners. He wrote, "We knew well that, once the war ended, all the 'down-river' people from east China would return home. Since they could not, therefore, form a permanent nucleus of a local church, we began to give equal attention to reaching the local people."²²

When Lyall arrived at Anshun, he befriended the doctors and students of the prestigious army medical college and the army veterinary college. He started an English Bible class for them which became a main feature of his work. He lectured regularly on Christianity at the Veterinary College and taught English to a group of research students at the Medical College. Like the Contentos, Lyall carried out all these ministries on campuses and not through the local churches.

Apart from the above, there were other difficulties encountered in the implementation of the student work in free China. The western provinces of China were very poor in those days. Guizhou was typical. A local proverb described it as, "no three miles flat, no three days without rain, and no three persons with an ounce of silver between them." Hilly, wet and poor. Many of these towns were centers of the opium trade. The fierce craving for the drug and runaway inflation drove many local people to crime. Pickpockets operated on almost every street. The police were incompetent and impotent. Hygiene conditions were poor, with appalling rat infestation. Lyall wrote, "Privation, poverty, severe and near-fatal illness, almost daily trials of faith and strong satanic opposition lay ahead. Anshun was to become for us a

²¹ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p. 75.

²² *Ibid.*, p.74.

furnace of affliction and a valley of weeping, but in the end a place of fruitfulness.”²³

2.3 The Christian Student Movement from 1937 to 1943

The CIM was not the only mission working among students in free China during this period. Ronald Hall of the Anglican Church, for example, appointed Zhao Zichen to start a Student Church called Wen Lin Tang near National South Western Associated University in Kunming in April 1939. During the War, Peking University, Tsinghua University and Nankai University merged into one institution called the National South Western Associated University. About 40 to 60 students from this university attended worship at Wen Lin Tang.²⁴ The Society of Friends Mission also appointed Calvin Chao to start a student church in 1939. Chao, however, moved to Guiyang in 1941.²⁵ As noted by Lian Xi, all these efforts were, however, eclipsed by the achievements of the CIM missionaries.²⁶ The reason is twofold. On the one hand, it had something to do with the theology. Lian Xi pointed out that the more conservative message of the CIM focusing on the hope of the salvation of Jesus was much more relevant and attractive to the desperate students, than the liberal message focusing on political reform. Additionally, the mission strategy of the CIM missionaries seemed more effective in reaching out to these students. The following reports from CIM missionaries help us grasp the strategy they employed.

Contento, stationed in Kunming in 1939, reported that there were English Bible classes daily for students from different universities; two in the morning from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., and two in the evening from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. On some evenings, they would add another session from 8:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. All were evangelistic Bible studies targeting non-Christians. On Saturday nights, there was a special class for Christian students where certain biblical subjects were studied in greater depth. Three times a week, Contento and his wife Mary were invited to teach English at three different universities. They were also able to hold Sunday services in English at these campuses. As more and more students became Christians, they organized the first Inter-Varsity Fellowship with Raymond Hsing, a devout and bright Christian medical student, as its first chairman. By 1939, the fellowship had grown to 120 members, larger than most of the churches at the time. Apart from college students, they ran a winter vacation school for about 400 high-school students. Other CIM missionaries such as the Harrisons were recruited to help. They also invited gifted Chinese speakers to bring the Gospel message to these students. Among them was Professor Yin of the National South Western Associated University who was a

²³ Ibid. p.72.

²⁴ Gilbert Baker, “A Student Church in Kunming” in *Chinese Recorder* 71/2 (1940) p.90-91.

²⁵ Yu, Ligong (于力工), *Ye Jin Tian Ming: Yu Ligong Kan Zhongguo Fu Yin Zhen Han* (夜盡天明: 于力工看中國福音震撼) (Taibei Shi: Yu Ligong: Zong Jing Xiao Hua Ren Jidu Jiao, 1988), p. 208.

²⁶ Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: the Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*, p.190.

consecrated Christian, a truly spiritual man and a powerful speaker. Yin spoke at student rallies and many were converted. One of the most interesting aspects of their work was the camp for university students. More than 70 university students gathered for a wonderful time together on the great mountains overlooking the lake in Kunming. There were morning and evening religious meetings as well as games and sports in the afternoon. Over 85% of the attendees were non-Christians. Many of these students became Christians at these camps.²⁷

The Contentos remained in Kunming for about a year. As the university campuses kept moving, first to Kunming, then to Guiyang and Anshun in Guizhou Province, and finally to Szechwan, Houghton appointed the Contentos to Hanzhong, south of Xian, which had a big student center. They taught at the Northwest University, opening their home as a student center for bible study, and formed Inter-Varsity Fellowship groups there. They witnessed a great revival among the students. There were eight Christian student groups in that district, in which there was one university, three colleges of university standard, and eleven high-schools. All these groups joined together to form the South Shensi Christian Students' Union. Paul Contento said in his interview with Shuster, "Revival broke out in the engineering college. It took me by surprise. Those guys really meant business, they were very serious. They believed that sin was sin, and you've got to get rid of it. So in the morning-prayer meeting held in an empty room of the school, one guy was holding a candle and another was reading the Scripture." In 1943, they had a summer conference. About two hundred students gathered at Wumenyen, thirty miles from Chengku. The theme was 'Life'. There was a spirit of unity, comradeship, and expectancy. Contento wrote:

Never in the history of Christian missions in China were students and educated classes so open to the Gospel. Thank God, evangelical forces are responding to the challenge of this opportunity. The CIM has a number of missionaries giving their attention to work amongst students and officials. The implications are tremendous. The evangelical church in China has suffered much because of the lack of trained leadership. God is answering the prayers of those who prayed, labored, and sacrificed that the Church of God might be established in China.²⁸

Mary Contento reported on the conversion experiences of some students. This report yields insight into the efficacy of the mission strategy adopted by CIM missionaries. The first case concerned a

²⁷ P.A. Contento, "A Day of Opportunity" *China's Millions* (September 1939): p. 136; Paul Contento, Interview by Robert A. Shuster, 9 December 1992, Collection 472, T2a. Billy Graham Evangelical Archives, Wheaton, Illinois.

²⁸ P.A. Contento, "Christian Students' Summer Conference" *China's Millions* (September-October 1944): p. 136; P.A. Contento, "Among Students at Chengku" *China's Millions* (Sept-Oct, 1942): p. 42.

young man, educated at a Christian school, who had never felt any urge to become a Christian. He attended her Bible class. The war, the fact that he had fled thousands of miles from home, and the unfamiliar conditions startled him out of his complacency. He recognized that he needed something more personal than merely the Christian atmosphere of home and school. In the Bible class, the Word of God came to him as a personal challenge. Falling sick, he took only his New Testament with him to the hospital. He searched the Scriptures and devoted himself to prayer. At the end of two days, he unreservedly gave himself to God. Having already a strong grounding in Christian truth, his spiritual life developed rapidly. Mary Contento wrote, "Cases like this have convinced us of the tremendous value of the right kind of Christian education in producing leaders for the Chinese Church, for it is such as he who makes the mature and steadiest Christians and are most suitable for pastoral and Bible teaching work."

The second story was different but more common in those days. The young man was the son of a doctor and professor in a medical college, who like many of the scientifically trained, was an atheist. He had been raised to think that science and religion were incompatible. The war broke out and the father died. Suddenly, the young man was a refugee fleeing with his university into the interior. The shock of his father's death showed him the inadequacy of his own philosophy of life. He started visiting churches and missions as he travelled, trying to find out what Christianity stood for. When his school settled in Kunming, he came to the Contentos with a group of his fellow-students to ask if they had time to teach them the Bible. The students asked many intellectual questions such as: "How can we know that there is a God? Is religion superstitious or is it reasonable? How can the death of Christ save us?" At the end of a couple of weeks these boys said, "This is the first reasonable explanation we have had of Christianity. Now we can become Christians because we know what to believe and what we believe." The boys invited their fellow-students to their baptism, and to a packed audience, each gave a reason for his faith.²⁹

Lyall reported that in Anshun he was invited to lecture regularly on Christianity at the Veterinary College. In addition, he was asked to teach English to a group of research students. Soon he was able to start Bible classes in both English and Chinese, at the Medical College as well as the Veterinary College. All of these classes produced a number of candidates for baptism. In early 1941, attendances at all Sunday services increased. In July, the first daily Vacation Bible School for forty to fifty children was held. This was followed by the start of a Sunday school which grew steadily over the years. He wrote, "I attended three days of council meetings of the China Inland Mission in Chongqing. It was thrilling to hear how, all over free China, God was at work in ways similar to those in Anshun: students were turning to Christ in their hundreds, new churches were being planted and old established ones revived."³⁰

John Lockhart also filed the following report about the Chinese student movement in other parts

²⁹ Mary Contento, "Conversion and After" *China's Millions* (September-October 1946): p. 35;

³⁰ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p. 86.

of free China: “Shortly before last Christmas the students’ Christian Fellowship decided on a week’s meetings for Bible study to be held before breakfast, this being the only time when they could fit it into the program. It is quite an inspiration to see so many with Bibles under their arms making their way towards the Fellowship Hall, in spite of the cold of the early morning and having to cut their breakfast short.” He shared the story of a Mr. Liu who had professed conversion. Mr. Liu was doing post-graduate work in the Biology Department. In the summer he spilled a quantity of acid over one of his hands, incapacitating him for several weeks. During this time of enforced rest, he decided to read through the Bible. He was attracted by the announcement about the English Bible classes and as his interest developed, he attended one or two of the Chinese services too. Just before Christmas he called at Lockhart’s home and almost his first words were “I want new life”. Afterwards, there was great change in his life. He was anxious to testify to others, and even considered the possibility of going into full-time Christian service.³¹

In fact, there were many similar reports from different CIM missionaries in free China during this period. These reports reflect the effectiveness of CIM strategies. Kwok Wai-Luen (郭偉聯) noted that almost all CIM missionaries adopted the Inter-Varsity Fellowship approach, emphasizing group Bible Studies. There were Bible Studies for seekers as well as believers. For seekers, the story of the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18 ff.), the story of Lazarus (John 11:1 ff.), the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1ff.) and the death of Jesus (Luke 23) were some of the popular Bible passages used.³² Discussion rather than direct preaching was the preferred format. This differed greatly from the traditional approach in many Chinese churches which relied heavily on direct pulpit preaching at revival meetings and rallies.³³ Intellectual questions raised by non-Christians were entertained instead of ignored. The CIM missionaries emphasized the reasonableness of the Christian faith, rather than resorting to mere emotional appeal. This approach worked well among the university students, and many of the brightest were attracted to these Bible study classes.

The term ‘English Bible Class’ is frequently mentioned in the above mentioned reports. This came about due to the great changes encountered during the war period. For a long time, missionary work in China had its greatest success among the common people, especially the peasantry. The traditional literati remained aloof, and the more modern scholars were fiercely opposed. However, during the war, a

³¹ John Lockhart, “Among Chinese Students” *China’s Millions* (January-February 1944): p. 6;

³² Paul Contento, Interview by Robert A. Shuster, 9 December 1992, Collection 472, T2a. Billy Graham Evangelical Archives, Wheaton, Illinois.

³³ Kwok Wai-Luen (郭偉聯), Kang Zhan Shi Qi de Xue Sheng Bu Dao Yuan Tong – Jian Lun She Hui Ji Jiao Hui Zhuan Bian 抗戰時期的學生佈道運 - 兼論社會及教會轉變, in *Baptism by Fire - the Chinese Church during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) 烈火中的洗禮：抗日戰爭時期的中國教會 (1937-1945)*, ed. Lee Kam-Keung (李金強) and Lau Yee-Cheung (劉義章) (Xianggang : China Alliance Press, 2001), p. 381.

remarkable change took place among the students and the upper classes in general; a spirit of enquiry and friendliness was manifest. The teaching of English in high schools and universities became widespread. The need for teaching staff was especially great in wartime. The missionaries, who were native English speakers, were welcomed to join faculties as English instructors. Students were willing and eager to join the English Bible classes. The CIM missionaries made full use of these opportunities to start English Bible classes and English church services to attract even more students.

Another important feature of the new mission strategy, patterned after the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, was that CIM ministries became campus-based rather than church-based. Almost all meetings were held on campuses or at the homes of missionaries. Christian fellowship groups or unions were formed outside church jurisdictions. The students themselves took charge of all administrative responsibilities while the missionaries merely served as advisors, counselors and teachers. All these Christian groups were autonomous and independent. This was a new trend in the history of the Chinese church and it turned out to be one of the most effective ways to survive political persecution.

Student conferences and retreats were common especially during the summer holidays. Many universities held their own summer conferences, but in 1945, the first inter-varsity conference was held in Chungking (Chongqing). One hundred and sixty-nine delegates from forty universities joined this conference under the leadership of Calvin Chao. This conference was a key event marking a new milestone in the history of the Chinese church.

Frank Harris summarized CIM's methodology in its work among students in *China's Millions 1949* concisely. He reported that at the time the CIM had nine or ten workers in full-time work among university students. Most taught full or part-time in a college, and lived among students. Some were invited to act as advisers of the CIVCF groups, to lead the English and Chinese Bible studies each week, and to help with campus evangelistic projects. They were able to contact students for Jesus Christ in a friendly atmosphere both day and night. Other CIM missionaries regularly led student Bible studies, either in class rooms or in their homes even though they did not engage in collegiate teaching. A number taught English conversation (sometimes even English Bible) in the High Schools, usually with permission being granted to organize an English Bible class as an extra curriculum activity. Many were invited to lecture in High Schools on subjects of their own choosing. Many students only wanted to learn English initially, but many came to accept Christ, and became linked with a Christian Union or church.³⁴

3. Calvin Chao and the Formation of the China Inter-Varsity Fellowship (1944-1946)

³⁴ Frank Harris, "Christian Unions in the Universities," *China's Millions* (March-April 1949): p. 15.

Until the early 1930s, Chinese church growth was mostly the result of large-scale revival meetings and rallies. Revival meetings (奮興佈道大會) became the traditional strategy for evangelism in China. Whenever missionaries wanted to reach out to un-churched people, they would organize revival meetings and popular revivalists would be invited to preach. Most revivalists preached emotional messages stressing the deadly power of sin, with little attention paid to intellectual questions such as the existence of God or the reliability of the Bible. A report in the *China Christian Year Book of 1932-1933* counted at least ten ‘national leaders’ of revivals who preached noisy, dramatic, sensational sermons, challenging people to repent in tears.³⁵

The strategy adopted by the CIM missionaries in free China was very different. They conducted Bible Study in small groups, and reasoned with the students about the credibility of the Christian faith. This approach suited university students, but its impact was more subtle and sporadic. The best approach combined both small group Bible studies/fellowship meetings and large-scale revival meetings. Small group Bible studies/fellowship meetings on campuses laid the groundwork, while large-scale revival meetings set the stage for making the decision to follow Christ. In the second stage of the development of the Christian student movement, we see yet another change in strategy. Calvin Chao, a gifted revivalist, began also to be involved in this student movement.

The historical development of the Christian student movement has not hitherto been thoroughly researched. This is likely due to the conflicting reports provided by different sources, and the complicated relationships between Calvin Chao, the CIM and the CNEC (China Native Evangelistic Crusade). However, with the publication of the private correspondence between Chao and Duncan McRoberts of CNEC, we are presented with a more accurate picture of the historical development of this movement up to this stage.³⁶

3.1 Calvin Chao, the CIM and the China Native Evangelistic Crusade

Calvin Chao was born in 1904 in Nanjing. His father was an opium addict and his mother died when he was only six years old. He and his sister were sent to a mission school operated by the Southern Presbyterian Mission at Yancheng in Jiangsu Province. He later entered Hangchow Christian College

³⁵ Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: the Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*, p.110.

³⁶ Kwok Wai-Luen (郭偉聯), Kang Zhan Shi Qi de Xue Sheng Bu Dao Yuan Tong – Jian Lun She Hui Ji Jiao Hui Zhuan Bian 抗戰時期的學生佈道運 - 兼論社會及教會轉變, in *Baptism by Fire - the Chinese Church during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) 烈火中的洗禮: 抗日戰爭時期的中國教會 (1937-1945)*, ed., pp. 382-823 Peter L. Lim’s Ph.D dissertation about Calvin Chao and the CNEC does give us some insight and information about this period, but his emphasis is about his leadership style rather than the student movement in this period.

(Zhijiang Daxue), was a promising student and a basketball star. He became attracted to liberal theology, and drifted away from his faith. Three months before his graduation, he fell ill with tuberculosis, forfeiting whatever youthful dreams he might have had. Three years later he dedicated himself to the service of God at a Bethel Band revival meeting led by Ji Zhiwan. By 1938, he was already recognized as an energetic young conservative speaker, proselytizing his way inland as he fled the war in the east.

He arrived in Kunming in the winter of 1938. While working in a church run by the Society of Friends, he wrote “After I have settled down in Kunming in 1938, I immediately started to witness to the students of the National Northwestern Associated University. At that time, Rev. and Mrs. Paul Contento of the CIM had already started their student ministry. This marked the beginning of my involvement in student work during the War period. I know that there were quite a number of people already involved in student work in free China.”³⁷ Calvin Chao was obviously not a pioneer in this student movement. As pointed out by Kwok Wai-Luen (郭偉聯), his strategy was very different from that of the CIM missionaries. Like other Chinese revivalists, his main strategy was to reach out to students through revival meetings with the church as his base. He did not go to the campuses to evangelize.³⁸

In 1941, he left the church at Kunming because of a lack of funding, and constant bombing by the Japanese. He moved to Guiyang, Guizhou to start a church at Fushui Lu (富水路) under the Southwestern Mission (formerly called Yunnan Friends Mission or Society of Friends). According to Moses Yu, they rented a house that could accommodate about 150 people. Within a short time, the church was already full. Most of the attendees were students from the universities and the medical college. Funding was still a problem and they lived very simply.

On June 19th 1943, Chao received a letter from a former CIM missionary named Duncan McRoberts, inviting him to work for the CNEC (China Native Evangelistic Crusade). McRoberts wrote, “Brother Chao, we do not know whether you are employed by any organization but sincerely trust that you are free to accept the responsibility of leadership of this work for your own needy land. We are praying that you may be free to accept this offer and head the work in China Native Evangelistic Crusade. (D. McRoberts, letter to C. Chao, June 19, 1943)

McRoberts revealed that in addition to Chao’s salary, the CNEC was also willing to pay Chao’s workers. He wrote:

³⁷ Calvin Chao (Junying Zhao 趙君影), *漫談五十年來中國的教會與政治 (Fifty Years of Chinese Churches and Politics)* (Taipei Shi : Zhonghua gui zhu xie hui, 1981), p. 16.

³⁸ Kwok Wai-Luen (郭偉聯), Kang Zhan Shi Qi de Xue Sheng Bu Dao Yuan Tong – Jian Lun She Hui Ji Jiao Hui Zhuan Bian 抗戰時期的學生佈道運 - 兼論社會及教會轉變, in *Baptism by Fire - the Chinese Church during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) 烈火中的洗禮：抗日戰爭時期的中國教會 (1937-1945)*, ed. Lee Kam-Keung (李金強) and Lau Yee-Cheung (劉義章) (Xianggang : China Alliance Press, 2001), p. 386.

Not knowing conditions or the cost of living we would suggest that your salary amount to \$150.00 gold (a Chinese term for American dollars) per month, that is, of course \$ 150.00 American money. Should this not be sufficient feel free to let us know. Over and above this we will pay your own home rent and all the traveling expenses including your food, etc. while traveling for the work. On the other hand we know you will be wise in regard to the money paid to Band Workers. Please keep in mind the fact that too high a wage to begin would create a great difficulty later on. Individuals here are paying \$20.00 per month for the support and expense of a band worker.³⁹

Chao received the letter on August 17th, 1943, and he sent a radiogram a few days later accepting the offer. What was this CNEC? McRoberts was a Scottish Presbyterian sent to China in 1933 by the CIM.⁴⁰ He was stationed in Jingdezhen in Jiangxi Province for several years. He later resigned from the CIM to join the Oriental Mission Society (OMS), an organization which emphasized the training of local pastors and evangelists. He was sent to Szechwan where he came to hear about Chao's ministry. While working with the OMS, he became convinced that training and sending natives with a passion for the souls of their own countrymen would be a more effective way forward in missions. His view was shared by Dr. N.A. Jepson in Seattle. Jepson was the Chairman of the Christian Business Men's Committee who called together a group of Christian businessmen to form the CNEC. Their main purpose was to fund a native leader to train local pastors and evangelists.

This move by Chao immediately drew the opposition of the CIM. In Chao's letter to McRoberts dated November 30th, 1943, he wrote:

Mr. Butler, the CIM superintendent of Kweichow (Guizhou) came to ask me my present relationship to my former work, the Southwestern Mission (formerly called Yunnan Friends Mission). He said that people want to know about that because they do not want to throw their lot with the Crusade if my relationships with my former missions not cut off clearly. As I told you in my first letter I have officially resigned but there is nobody to whom I can hand over the work and I cannot conscientiously give it up all at once ... I can sympathize with you about the little trouble that the two men from the CIM caused. I do not misinterpret the brethren on that mission here, but I do feel there is a little bit of jealousy against us. (C.

³⁹ Peter L. Lim, "Calvin Chao and his leadership of the China Native Evangelistic Crusade (C.N.E.C.) between 1943 and 1946: a narrative inquiry" (Ph.D diss, Gonzaga University, 2009), p. 70-71.

⁴⁰ Yu, Moses (于力工), *Ye Jin Tian Ming: Yu Ligong Kan Zhongguo Fu Yin Zhen Han* (夜盡天明: 于力工看中國福音震撼) (Taibei Shi: Yu Ligong: Zong Jing Xiao Hua Ren Jidu Jiao, 1988), p. 221.

Chao's letter to D. McRoberts, November 30th, 1943.)⁴¹

It appears that Butler of the CIM was concerned about the role that Chao played in the Church. On the one hand, Chao was paid by CNEC, but on the other hand, he was serving as a pastor of the church of the Southwestern Mission. Chao's answer to Mr. Butler was that he served the church as a deacon rather than a pastor, but that he had taken up the pastoral role temporarily while the church did not have a pastor. His interpretation of Butler's concern was that the CIM was jealous of his effectiveness in building up the church.

Another reason for the disharmony between Chao and the CIM had to do with the handling of personnel recruitment. Houghton of the CIM wrote in a letter on November 27th, 1943, expressing his concern about Chao's attempt to recruit Pastor Li Chi-An:

There is some danger that the formation of a new organization should draw together men who are already doing valuable work, and thus existing work might be weakened rather than strengthened. For instance, we are gravely concerned about the Pastor in the Independent CIM Church here in Chungking (Chongqing). The church has not prospered greatly during recent years, but since Mr. Li arrived there has been new life and new hope for the future. It will be a serious matter indeed if he is removed to Kweiyang (Guiyang) ... It has always been distress to me that it has not been possible for you to cooperate with the existing CIM Church in Kweiyang (Guiyang). Is there no possible (Sic) that believers who are one in faith and principle should be united rather than divided? ⁴²

To this, Chao replied that if Pastor Li, an experienced and gifted pastor, remained where he was, he would surely be a blessing to the church there. But as principal of a Bible School, in ten years' time he would be able to train tens and hundreds of pastors for the church at large. Chao attached Houghton's letter to McRoberts and mentioned that the CIM had proposed a division of the field in order to avoid further conflict. This meant that the CIM and the CNEC would divide the district parishes between them. Chao did not like this idea because he believed that the CIM would take the cities as their field and give the poorer fields to the CNEC.⁴³

These letters reveal real disharmony between the CIM and the newly formed CNEC. The

⁴¹ Peter L. Lim, "Calvin Chao and his leadership of the China Native Evangelism Crusade (C.N.E.C.) between 1943 and 1946: a narrative inquiry" (Ph.D diss, Gonzaga University, 2009), pp. 73-74.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 75-76.

⁴³ Ibid., p.76

situation was further aggravated by the arrival of Marcus Cheng, one of the most outstanding Chinese church leaders and theologians in China at the time. On January 15th, 1944, Chao wrote to McRoberts:

Marcus Cheng came to Kweiyang (Guiyang) after two years of hardships in Singapore which is occupied by the Japanese. He stayed with us here on the compound about ten days. I had several long talks with him. I heard a year before last you approached him once to join the Crusade when he was still in Singapore. Since he came back I asked him to join our work doing literary and extension work for us. I told him all about our mission, including both support and the opposition we had. At the same time, he got a letter from Houghton asking him to open a Bible School for the CIM or open his own Bible School with the CIM to support him. He is praying about the offers from Houghton and our offer.⁴⁴

Marcus Cheng decided to take up the CIM offer only a few days after Chao sent the letter to McRoberts.⁴⁵ From Chao's letter, we can see that Chao was unaware of the fact that McRoberts had in fact previously invited Cheng to lead the CNEC, not merely to join its ranks. According to Peter Lim, a newspaper clipping with a report written circa 1950 by Bill Rose actually said, "By sending a cable to India which was eventually carried into China by the Chinese underground, they contacted the second man on their list, Calvin Chao."⁴⁶ He was also wrong about the date of CIM's offer to Cheng. According to Houghton, the offer had been made as early as 1938. Cheng had had a bad experience at the Hunan Bible Institute, which caused him to delay acceptance of Houghton's offer until 1944.⁴⁷ Chao's accusation that Houghton had 'stolen' Marcus Cheng from the CNEC, made in his letter to McRoberts on May 20th, 1944 was totally groundless. In that letter he wrote, "As I told you Marcus Cheng nearly promised me to join us after he got to Chungking (Chongqing) and had a talk with Houghton he changed and started the plan for another school for the CIM."⁴⁸

Furthermore, during Cheng's stay with Chao, Cheng expressed some negative sentiments about the CNEC project that might have led to further misunderstanding between the CIM and Chao. Cheng was critical of the CNEC being entirely financed by American funds as he believed that this was cause for future conflict. Cheng was also critical of Chao's practice of taking in workers from other missions as this

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.78

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.79.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 79

⁴⁷ Frank Houghton, "The Chungking Theological Seminary to Open. D.C. in September," *China's Millions* (August 1942): p. 119.

⁴⁸ Peter L. Lim, "Calvin Chao and his leadership of the China Native Evangelistic Crusade (C.N.E.C.) between 1943 and 1946: a narrative inquiry" (Ph.D diss, Gonzaga University, 2009), p. 86.

could cause other missions to be dissatisfied with the CNEC. He also suggested to Chao to change the name of the mission. In his opinion, the word ‘native’ was degrading to the Chinese people, and the word ‘crusade’ was too militant and aggressive. He suggested using ‘national’ instead. However, Chao was defensive on these issues. He even blamed the CIM for spreading rumors and making false accusations against him.⁴⁹

Their correspondence revealed a typical example of the cultural differences between the Chinese and the British. Chao, being typically Chinese, was not overly concerned about boundary issues. To him, it was not a problem to accept the offer from CNEC while working as a pastor in a church run by the Southwestern Mission. Likewise, he later also saw no problem for him to head both the CNEC and the China Inter-Varsity Fellowship concurrently. The CIM leadership had a different view. They felt there was a distinct conflict of interest in these situations. That is the reason why Butler confronted Chao when he first took up the leadership role of the CNEC while working under the Southwestern Mission. Secondly, Chao had a tendency to take things personally. When Houghton raised the issue of his recruitment of Pastor Li away from the CIM church (another boundary issue), Chao interpreted it as a personal attack on his integrity. He charged the CIM leaders with jealousy against him and with opposing him on account of his success. When the CIM suggested dividing the field between the CIM and the CNEC in order to avoid further conflict, Chao assumed that the CIM would take all the good fields leaving the bad to the Crusade, and interpreted this as a conspiracy against himself. In fact, the leadership of the CIM was more concerned about ‘principles.’ Their conviction of ‘the principle of self-support’ and ‘the principle of faith mission’ directly contradicted the philosophy of the CNEC. Chao, being a typically pragmatic Chinese, did not take abstract principles seriously. He did whatever was expedient, regardless of whether or not it violated principles. This was reflected in the registration of CNEC. CNEC was registered as a ‘foreign missionary organization’ in China though its name was called ‘Chinese Native Evangelistic Crusade’. Chao rationalized that it was simply more expedient to register it as a foreign agency at the time.⁵⁰

To what extent did the views expressed in these letters truly reflect the mind of Chao? We have to bear in mind that these letters were private letters sent to his ‘boss,’ McRoberts. Knowing that McRoberts harbored grudges against the CIM leadership, it is possible that Chao might have thought that expressing negative sentiments against the CIM leadership would please his supervisor. However, I think this was unlikely. Moses Yu, Chao’s assistant, also echoed similar charges against the leadership of the CIM in his book *Yejin Tianming* (夜盡天明). In fact, Yu’s comments about the CIM leadership were even more negative than Chao’s comments in his letters to McRoberts. Yu wrote that the CIM leaders were jealous of

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.85.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 96-97.

Chao's success, that the CNEC's ministry threatened the existence of the CIM, and that CIM leaders were afraid all its missionaries would lose their jobs once the CNEC established itself in the same area.⁵¹ Obviously, Yu's negative view of the CIM was likely also a result of Chao's influence.

Despite the tense relationship between the CIM and Chao, however, it is remarkable that these two parties could labor together within the Christian student movement, which was to impact the entire Chinese church for many years to come.

3.2 The Formation of the China Inter-Varsity Fellowship

In April 1944, Calvin Chao traveled to Chongqing. On the way, he injured his leg in an automobile accident. While recuperating from his injury at the home of Mr. Ernest Yin, two important things happened. First, he preached at a revival meeting at The Holy Light School, which was a new venture in Christian education in China initiated by Yin. Yin and his wife were devout Christians. Yin was also one of Dr. H.H. Kung's (孔祥熙) right hand men at the Ministry of Finance. In 1943, he wrote about his school project in *China's Millions*: about this school project. He wrote:

Under the Lord's guidance, I take pleasure to tell you something of the Holy Light School and how it came to be. Between the year 1932 and 1933, while I was living in Kaifeng, Honan, I became acquainted with Rev. James Taylor of the Free Methodist Mission, grandson of Rev. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission. He was one of the most godly man and faithful servants of our Lord that I have ever known. From him (who graduated from that school) I learned about the China Inland Mission School for missionaries' children in Chefoo. If I remember correctly, he told me about ninety percent of the children were converted before they graduated. This wonderful ministry among children moved me deeply, and I thought surely our Lord could do the same for Chinese children, especially for those whose parents are Christians. Though we are used to having Christian schools and colleges, any true child of God will agree with me that most of them have gone into apostasy. Modernism has got its sway. So during these ten years, I have been praying unceasingly that if it be the Lord's will, a school of sound faith may be established.⁵²

On April 14th, 1940, Yin and his wife together with a Christian friend put away a very small amount of money in the bank to see it increase, just like the ten pounds sterling that Hudson Taylor put in

⁵¹ Yu, Ligong (于力工), *Ye Jin Tian Ming: Yu Ligong Kan Zhongguo Fu Yin Zhen Han* (夜盡天明: 于力工看中國福音震撼) (Taibei Shi: Yu Ligong: Zong Jing Xiao Hua Ren Jidu Jiao, 1988), p. 289.

⁵² Ernest Yin, "The Holy Light School," *China's Millions* (January-February 1943): p. 6.

the bank for the CIM. In November 1941, the CIM at Chungking (Chongqing) handed over a sum of \$205,000 from the sale of a property in Kansu to the Chinese Government for educational purposes. The property in question had originally been a gift from the government to the CIM for a specific educational purpose which was later abandoned. Rev. J.R. Sinton wrote to Minister Kung, suggesting that this sum be allocated for the Holy Light School, and the government willingly handed over this sum accordingly.⁵³

From Yin's article, we understand that Yin greatly respected and appreciated the work of the CIM. According to the letter written by Chao to McRoberts dated April 25th, 1944, Yin was aware of the conflict between Chao and the CIM.⁵⁴ He was a logical mediator to bring about reconciliation between these two parties. He did two things. First, he invited Chao to preach at the Holy Light School in the hope that Chao would show himself a gifted preacher to the parents of the students at the school, most of whom were high officials in the central government. Chao reported this event in his letter to McRoberts on April 25th, 1944. He claimed that many children were moved and wept for their sins, and that this was the first spiritual revival in the school since its opening a year and a half previously. He was then invited to preach to the adults in the evening; many parents present were also touched by his message and were converted. As a result of these meetings, Chao established himself as a gifted revivalist and subsequently, many universities, including those under the care of the CIM missionaries, invited him to speak on their campuses. He became one of the most popular speakers at the time.

Second, Yin arranged a special meeting between Chao and high-ranking government officials at his home including Chu Ching-Lung, the Dean of the National Central University, General Chang Tze-Chung, the Minister of the Political Department of the National Military Commission, Chung Ching-Yu, the Director of the Tax Bureau in the Ministry of Finance and unexpectedly, Mr. Arnold Lea of the CIM as well as Watchman Nee. The main purpose of this special meeting was to discuss the future direction of the CNEC. As a result of this meeting, an advisory board was formed with most of the attendees as board members of the CNEC with the exception of Arnold Lea and Watchmen Nee. Yin also advised Chao that they should raise money in China so as not to depend solely on contributions from abroad lest people should criticize CNEC as a foreign agency rather than a native agency.

Such meetings enabled Chao to realize that the CNEC could not survive without the support of other missions and local leaders. Thus, instead of the CNEC establishing its own Bible School, Chao collaborated with Chia Yuming (賈玉銘 1880-1964), an outstanding theologian and one of the founders of the North China Theological Seminary, and Martin A. Hopkins, a missionary from the Southern Presbyterian Mission, to form the Spiritual Training Seminary. In his letter to McRoberts dated May 20th,

⁵³ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵⁴ Peter L. Lim, "Calvin Chao and his leadership of the China Native Evangelism Crusade (C.N.E.C.) between 1943 and 1946: a narrative inquiry" (Ph.D diss, Gonzaga University, 2009), p. 84.

1944, Chao wrote: “By cooperation we have connections with a group of church leaders and laymen who believe in native leadership. Dr. Chia with his reputation and spirituality attracts a lot of Christians to follow him and his students are all over the country. Through him we can reach a lot of churches. In cooperating we gain a footing in Chungking (Chongqing) which is a place we must have to work in touch with the high officials.”⁵⁵

Chao then moved the CNEC headquarters to Chongqing and began to work with other organizations including the CIM. In the following two years (1944-1946), we find reports showing cooperation between Chao and some of the CIM missionaries who had been working among students. The following are some of the examples. Henry Guinness, an outstanding CIM missionary, reported from Chungking (Chongqing):

One of the most remarkable features of the work here in West China is a definite awakening of spiritual interest amongst students. That this awakening is not limited to any one place, and that it appears to be almost independent of human agency, seems abundantly evident. The other day I accompanied Pastor Calvin Chao to the Central University of Sha Ping Pa. Over Christmas Pastor Chao had held a special evangelistic campaign at the center, borrowing the large university hall for the meetings and advertising well. The Holy Spirit was present in power convicting of sin and many wept out their confessions as they found their way to the cross.⁵⁶

A reporter from a secular paper who was present, made it the subject of an editorial the following day: “Many have criticized this movement. I am not in a position to say whether it is true or false, right or wrong, but the fact is: students wept, they were moved. China needs spiritual life. High educational attainment without high moral standards will lead to failure. Education should not be divorced from religion.”⁵⁷

Moses Yu corroborated Guinness’s report though he did not mention the presence and involvement of the CIM missionaries.⁵⁸

Eric Liberty of the CIM reported that they had invited a Miss Yuen, Chao’s co-worker, to speak to the students in Lanchow. Liberty wrote, “We thanked God that Miss Yuen was able to come and give the addresses to these young people. A winsome and attractive character, a well-grounded and experienced

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.116.

⁵⁶ Henry Guinness, “Revival in University,” *China’s Millions* (March-April 1946): pp. 10-11.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.11.

⁵⁸ Moses Yu (于力工), *Ye Jin Tian Ming: Yu Ligong Kan Zhongguo Fu Yin Zhen Han* (夜盡天明: 于力工看中國福音震撼), (Taibei Shi: Yu Ligong: Zong Jing Xiao Hua Ren Jidu Jiao, 1988), pp. 267-269.

Christian ...”⁵⁹ Clara F. Ayton also reported from Wuwei, Kansu, “In April, the church invited Miss Yuen to come for a month and give assistance. She began to hold special meetings, and of course we invited the students to come. A few came and enjoyed her messages, but still nothing happened. Night after night Miss Yuen spoke in our crowded chapel ...”⁶⁰

The campus of Futan University was located in Pehpei, on the banks of the Kialing River, a few hours’ journey from Chungking (Chongqing). Lyall reported on the revival at Futan University and at other universities in the vicinity. Of this first wave of revival among students, Lyall reported that an eager crowd of men and women, seated on the steps, listened to the address from Rev. Marcus Cheng, on Christ in the heart as Lord and King. There was a solemn hush in the dusk as a number stood to signify their willingness to accept Christ for the first time. This summer conference for students was a new venture. Students from the National Physical Training Institute, the Kiangsu Medical College, and Futan University were present. The Chancellor of Futan University did an unprecedented thing in opening the doors of the University for a Conference of a religious nature, and honored the gathering by speaking at the opening. He commented, “The immediate results from this Conference may not prove to be the greatest ones. A work has been begun which, by God’s grace, will grow ... Many eyes had been opened for the first time to the meaning of real Christianity.”⁶¹ Moses Yu also wrote about this revival in detail in his book *Ye Jin Tianming* (夜盡天明).⁶² According to Yu, one of the speakers was Calvin Chao and through his preaching, many students confessed their sins and came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The most significant report was that filed by Contento on the Chinese Students Conference held in Chungking (Chongqing) in the summer of 1945 which led to the formation of the China Inter-Varsity Fellowship. According to Contento, one hundred and sixty-nine delegates from forty universities (more than two-thirds of China’s total number of universities) attended a ten-day conference in Chungking (Chongqing). This was the first general meeting on record of China’s evangelical university students. The conference was held in the buildings of a lovely high-school campus on the wooded hills south of the city. That such a conference could be held in spite of the almost insurmountable problem of transportation, and the astronomical cost of living because of inflation, showed that God was the author of the plan and the Great Provider for its every need. Contento wrote:

⁵⁹ Eric Liberty, “The Word in Power among Student,” *China’s Millions* (May-June 1944): p. 20.

⁶⁰ Clara F Ayton, “Harvest in the Student Field,” *China’s Millions* (November-December 1944): p. 46.

⁶¹ Leslie Lyall, “On the University Steps,” *China’s Millions* (May-June 1945): p.18-19.

⁶² Moses Yu (于力工), *Ye Jin Tian Ming: Yu Ligong Kan Zhongguo Fu Yin Zhen Han* (夜盡天明: 于力工看中國福音震撼), (Taibei Shi: Yu Ligong: Zong Jing Xiao Hua Ren Jidu Jiao, 1988), p. 256-263.

The closing scenes of the conference will long thrill the memories of everyone present. The sunrise meeting began with a call for surrender to Christ and dedication for full-time Christian service. Twenty-one students went forward, some obviously very moved. These had heard the call of the Lord of the harvest and had responded. At the same time eighty others put up their hands indicating that they were ready to respond the moment they heard the Lord's call. The Convenor of the conference was Calvin Chao, one of China's foremost evangelical leaders. Mr. Chao has been greatly used of God in conferences among university students. This conference was no exception.⁶³

According to the same report, Contento claimed that the closing testimony was a moving indication of how God had been working. Delegates from thirty-one universities signed the covenant, at the heart of which was the statement of faith. The covenant provided for the statement of faith to always remain unchanged, although the constitution might be amended by a two-thirds vote in favour. A Standing Committee of seven members was elected. These were chosen from seven different universities. An Advisory Board was also chosen, consisting of five outstanding Chinese Christian leaders and two foreigners, all actively engaged in student work. Calvin Chao was elected as Acting Executive Secretary, Mr. Chang Hsing-Sung, Secretary, and Dr. Martin Hopkins, as Hon. Treasurer.

It is unclear how the students decided to join the international Inter-Varsity Fellowship. According to Moses Yu, it was Hopkins' idea. Hopkins knew Stacy Woods, the General Secretary of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship in the USA, and strongly recommended that the students should join this international evangelical fellowship group. Paul Contento, however, claimed it was through him that they were connected with the Inter-Varsity Fellowships in both Britain and the USA. Contento said, during an interview with Shuster, that the committee authorized him to make connection between China Inter-Varsity and both British Inter-Varsity and the American Inter-Varsity, and that it was he who cabled the British and the Americans. Stacy Woods, a friend of Contento's, the head of the American IVCF, then took China IVCF under its wing.⁶⁴

Contento's version appears more reliable because Yu had reported that there were no CIM missionaries present at the conference, which was obviously untrue.⁶⁵ The above reports indicate that a compromise of some kind had been reached between Chao and the CIM. Chao realized that he did need

⁶³ Paul Contento, "Chinese Students in Conference," *China's Millions* (September-October 1945): pp. 34-35.

⁶⁴ Paul Contento, Interview by Robert A. Shuster, 9 December 1992, Collection 472, T2a. Billy Graham Evangelical Archives, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁶⁵ Moses Yu (于力工), *Ye Jin Tian Ming: Yu Ligong Kan Zhongguo Fu Yin Zhen Han* (夜盡天明: 于力工看中國福音震撼) (Taibei Shi: Yu Ligong: Zong Jing Xiao Hua Ren Jidu Jiao, 1988), p. 275.

the support of other mission groups and local churches. Consistent with his principle of ‘expediency,’ Chao was likely willing to work with the CIM in the student ministry for the CIM had already been actively involved in it for some time. Adeney recognized that it was Chao who had asked Houghton to invite him (Adeney) to join in the work of the CIVCF.⁶⁶

It is interesting to note, however, that in Chao’s planning reports to the CNEC, student work was not on the agenda. His involvement in student work was rarely mentioned in his correspondence with McRoberts, the only exception being a letter dated April 4th, 1945, in which he wrote:

I have another conference in mind. That is a College Student conference. This will cost a lot of money because the students these days are too poor to pay for their food. I think we need one thousand five hundred dollars gold (a Chinese term for American dollars) for this conference. It is very expensive. But it will be worthwhile to get one hundred college students from all parts of China for ten days of devotion. If we want native evangelists we must have candidates. We can only have candidates from among students. To me, this is the most fundamental work to build up a constituency of Chinese leadership. I am going to send a cable to you to ask if that sum of money can be raised at that time.⁶⁷

Moses Yu confirmed funding for the conference by CNEC.⁶⁸ Although funds were provided, McRoberts was in fact unhappy with Chao’s involvement in the student work especially under the umbrella of CIVCF. This would eventually result in tension between Chao and the CNEC.

The CIM leadership, on the other hand, saw in Chao a very gifted preacher. His messages were extremely relevant to the college students at the time. He was an ideal partner in reaching out to college students especially when the student ministry was under the umbrella of the international IVF. Houghton showed his appreciation for Chao in a letter to McRoberts dated August 12th, 1946:

We have a true appreciation of much of the work of the Crusade and believe that Mr. Calvin Chao is one of China’s foremost Christian leaders. This does not mean that we necessarily approve all that the Crusade is doing, for obviously if we had thought that its methods were those best adopted for the spread of the Gospel and the building of Christ’s

⁶⁶ David Howard Adeney, Interview by Paul A. Erickson, November 14, 1988, Collection 393, T3. Billy Graham Evangelical Archives, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁶⁷ Peter L. Lim, “Calvin Chao and his leadership of the China Native Evangelism Crusade (C.N.E.C.) between 1943 and 1946: a narrative inquiry” (Ph.D diss, Gonzaga University, 2009), p. 141.

⁶⁸ Moses Yu (于力工), *Ye Jin Tian Ming: Yu Ligong Kan Zhongguo Fu Yin Zhen Han* (夜盡天明: 于力工看中國福音震撼), (Taibei Shi: Yu Ligong: Zong Jing Xiao Hua Ren Jidu Jiao, 1988), p. 280.

church in China, we should ourselves have adopted them long time ago.⁶⁹

Houghton was also humble enough to ask McRoberts for forgiveness “for past trouble they made at home” and assured him of 100% confidence and backing for CNEC in the days ahead. Unfortunately, this partnership did not last long because of the unexpected political changes after the war.

4. Calvin Chao, David Adeney and the China Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (1946-1951)

The war with Japan ended with the Japanese surrender on September 2nd, 1945. The thousands of students who had fled occupied China prepared to retrace their steps back to the east. The universities also began the process of relocating. The Inter-Varsity staff would inevitably have to follow. But before the great trek eastward became a reality, the CIVCF decided to hold a series of evangelistic campaigns among students in Chengdu where two great universities—Sichuan University and West China University were located. Large numbers of students responded to Calvin Chao’s message with confession of sin. In 1946, the CIVCF moved its headquarters to Nanjing and continued to flourish tremendously. During this period, a number of developments undoubtedly affected the course of the student movement.

4.1 The Resignation of Calvin Chao from CNEC

As the war reached its end stages, the relationship between Chao and the CNEC became increasingly tense. Chao resigned from the CNEC on December 31st, 1946 and began to work exclusively with the CIVCF. There were a number of intrinsic problems in Chao’s relationship with CNEC making such an end somewhat inevitable.

Chao and the Seattle Board members hardly knew one another. McRoberts, the liaison between these two parties, often acted like Chao’s boss. He wrote to Dr. Jepson in August 20th, 1946, “A proposition or request presented in China means nothing until it is confirmed or rather decided upon by the Home Board in Seattle.”⁷⁰ In other words, expectations were different on opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean. Chao expected the CNEC to be supportive of self-governing and self-proselytizing local national workers even if they could not be self-supporting. CNEC headquarters in Seattle expected Chao to submit to the decisions of the Seattle Board. McRoberts complained that Chao was too independent.⁷¹ Chao’s

⁶⁹ Peter L. Lim, “Calvin Chao and his leadership of the China Native Evangelism Crusade (C.N.E.C.) between 1943 and 1946: a narrative inquiry” (Ph.D diss, Gonzaga University, 2009), pp. 175-176

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 177.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 178.

leadership of the CNEC became increasingly hampered by Seattle's growing distrust after the war. This affected Chao and his family so much that he felt resignation from the CNEC was the only solution. In fact, this problem was to recur. Chao rejoined the CNEC in 1950 and resigned again in 1956 for largely the same reasons.⁷²

Chao and McRoberts disagreed on many issues. McRoberts was not pleased with Chao's hiring of female workers. In a letter of March 1st, 1944, he advised Chao to hire as many male workers as possible. He was also unhappy with Chao's plan of working together with Chia in the running of the Bible School. He wrote to Dr. Jepson on March 11th, 1946. "I have just received the letter from China, and it just increases the more my desire to get out there to be with Calvin ... In the light of Dr. Chia's "set ways" and clear aim to co-operate with us only if he has the controlling hand ... I very definitely feel that we can trust God and plan to have our own Bible Seminary and Bible School in Nanking."⁷³ They also disagreed over Chao's title. While Chao called himself "General Secretary in China", McRoberts suggested that he should use the title "Field Director" implying that he was only the director of the mission field, not the director of the organization CNEC.⁷⁴

Cultural differences played a significant role in this conflict. McRoberts commented on Chao's "Oriental mind" in his letter to Dr. Jepson dated August 20th, 1946. Chao was unconcerned about 'boundary issues,' concurrently taking up positions as head of CNEC and CIVCF without considering the obvious conflict of interest involved. McRoberts was very unhappy over this matter. On his part, McRoberts insensitively used the word 'native' in the title of the organization. Chao had raised this issue, but McRoberts insisted on its use without considering the offense to the Chinese.

McRoberts often ignored Chao's pleas for funds for the ministry and the salaries of their workers. Chao had to telegram repeatedly urging McRoberts or Seattle headquarters to send money immediately. McRoberts gave the excuse that he was very busy and had to look after so much at home. Chao was frustrated with his irresponsible attitude.⁷⁵

4.2 David Adeney and the China Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship

David Adeney was a CIM missionary seconded to CIVCF in 1946. He studied theology at Cambridge, attended the CIM training school in London for a year, and sailed for China in 1934. There, he was involved in church planting in central China until Pearl Harbor (1941). This was followed by joint

⁷² Ibid., p. 206.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 174.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 90.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 137.

appointments to both the CIM and the Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) in the United States and England, until the end of World War II made return to China possible again. He worked with Chao in the CIVCF as his assistant until 1951.

Though the CIVCF lasted only six years (1946-1951), its impact was great. Adeney rightly concluded that the rise of the Christian witness in Chinese universities and the subsequent struggles of the Chinese students formed an integral part of the story of the church in China during the last three decades. He said, "If we can understand what lies behind their story - the thinking in the minds of the Christian students, the strategy of the communist leaders - we shall be in a better position to prepare for the crisis through which the church in both Asia and the West may be required to pass in the days just ahead."⁷⁶

In January, 1946, Adeney flew over the 'hump' from India to Chungking (Chongqing) to take part in the remarkable spiritual movement among thousands of university students who were crowded into make-shift quarters in that wartime capital. The students came to attend the first winter conference. Under the leadership of Calvin Chao, the spirit of revival spread from college to college, and many came to the saving knowledge of Christ. In between the main meetings, small groups gathered for Bible study and prayers, and Christian fellowships in the universities of west China increased in numbers daily. In the months that followed, the team, consisting of Adeney, Moses Yu and John Chang, under the leadership of Calvin Chao, traveled to Kunming, Kweiyang (Guiyang) and Chengdu to take part in the missions and conferences there. There was widespread revival on all these university campuses.⁷⁷

In the spring of 1946, Adeney went to Beijing to attend a prayer conference and afterwards to participate in another evangelistic mission. The speaker was Wang Mingdao. Before the week was over, many of these brightest of China's young people had become followers of Christ. Adeney remained in Beijing for three months and became good friends with Wang Mingdao. He then moved to Nanjing, the headquarters of the CIVCF and served under the leadership of Calvin Chao, the General Secretary of the CIVCF. As Adeney travelled through many different university campuses, he was surprised to see so many new Christian groups being formed. Revival had broken out among these Christian students. He wrote:

I will always remember visiting one large war-time university which was temporarily housed in the country. Revival had broken out among the Christians. We heard it before we arrived. Even the boatmen of the little ferry boat over the river in front of the town knew that something had happened because students came and gave them money to make up for the times when they had

⁷⁶ David. H. Adeney, *China; Christian Students Face the Revolution* (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter-varsity Press, 1973), pp. 15-16.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

used forged tickets. The teaching staff knew that lives had been changed because students had confessed cheating in examinations, and one student had even acknowledged that he was using a fake name, for he had entered the university by taking the high school certificate which belonged to a friend.⁷⁸

A year later, after the students had returned to east, Adeney visited another university where some Christians were seeking to start a new group. The principal recognized Adeney. He (the principal) was not a Christian and he remarked that he was not even interested in nominal Christianity. But, he said, if the students who wanted to start a Christian fellowship were like the ones he had met in west China, he would give them his full support.⁷⁹

Adeney's main responsibility was to visit these campuses to help them start their fellowship groups, and to teach and disciple them. Carolyn Armitage described it thus, "Listening, talking, teaching, preaching, answering doubts, problem solving, praying, and managing in all kinds of conditions were all a part of David's forays into scattered student enclaves."⁸⁰ This is an apt description of Adeney's ministry in those days. He and two other China Inter-Varsity staff worked closely with the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of the Central University in Nanjing. He also travelled through other parts of the country to help to establish Christian student groups. Throughout 1947, he travelled widely, visiting many of the newly formed groups. He recalled that one evening he arrived late at night at a government medical college. The students had returned from the west following the Japanese occupation to find that their buildings were all broken down and furniture was practically non-existent. They met in a broken-down Japanese fort. It was cold, and damp, but there was fervor in the prayers of those young Christians. A year later the numbers had greatly increased, and the morning-prayer meeting was held on the flat roof of one of the buildings. In 1949, just before the communists took control of their city, the Christian students built a small chapel so that they might have a place to meet even if refused permission to use college premises.⁸¹

Apart from Adeney, many other CIM missionaries were also actively involved in student work in China during this period. Mary Contento was stationed at Sian. She taught English in the university at Sian. Her home, a professor's quarters, was the center of Christian Fellowship activities at the university, and students were in and out all day long. Henry Guinness was stationed in Kaifeng where the University of Honan (Henan) was located. The Inter-Varsity Fellowship was formed in 1945 following the model of

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.22

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

⁸⁰ Carolyn Armitage, *Reaching for the Goal: The Life Story of David Adeney: Ordinary Man, Extraordinary Mission*, p. 111.

⁸¹ David. H. Adeney, *China; Christian Students Face the Revolution*, p. 24.

the Chongqing Inter-Varsity Fellowship. Each member of the group pledged himself to daily Bible study and prayer, weekly attendance at some fixed place of worship, attendance also at their weekly school fellowship meeting and to a determined effort to witness for Christ and lead others to Him.⁸² The most influential group was the one in Beijing where Lyall served with Wang Mingdao. We shall deal with this Beijing Christian Fellowship group separately in the next section.

The climax of this movement was the CIVCF conference held on “Purple Mountain” outside Nanjing in 1947. Lyall reported that it was the greatest conference of evangelical students ever to be held in China. There were several hundred delegates from 100 universities and colleges all over China. The majority were aflame with their first love of Christ. Others had been converted during the war and were considered “veterans,” while some had attended only one previous evangelical student conference, that held in Chongqing in 1943. Many CIM missionaries went from all over China, joyfully sharing the thrilling news of what God was doing in the student world. At the opening ceremony, each fellowship group introduced itself and sang a song. Every morning, groups met for Bible study and prayer under experienced leaders. The speakers - Calvin Chao, David Yang, Andrew Gih, Chia Yuming and several foreigners, including Frank Houghton - were dynamic. Madame Chiang Kai-shek visited the conference to bring a message of welcome from the President. All were fully aware of the gravity of the national situation, and as these young people sought God for His blessing, both for themselves as individuals and for the nation as a whole, the spiritual temperature rose daily. Lyall wrote, “Those were tremendous days, the like of which would never be repeated, though forty years later the memory lives on.”⁸³ Adeney also wrote, “Only eternity will reveal how much that summer conference and the earlier conference meant to the students, and how much those students were to endure for the commitments they made there.”⁸⁴

5. Leslie Lyall and the Beijing Christian Student Group

The Beijing Christian Student Group was one of the most important Christian groups in the history of the Chinese church. Wang Yi, a popular house church leader in China, wrote that this Christian Student Group was the only group which had the courage to oppose the Communist Government’s persecution of Wang Mingdao in 1955. He also claimed that the present house church movement actually

⁸² Henry Guinness, “Students Fellowship in Kaifeng,” *China’s Millions* (July- August 1948): p. 38.

⁸³ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p. 98.

⁸⁴ Carolyn Armitage, *Reaching for the Goal: The Life Story of David Adeney: Ordinary Man, Extraordinary Mission*, p. 116.

originated from this student movement in Beijing.⁸⁵ Leung Ka-Lun (梁家麟) wrote that the members of this group were not ordinary citizens of China, but the cream of the country's crop. The majority were the elite of the most prestigious universities. Many went on to become outstanding scientists, engineers and medical doctors. They suffered greatly for their Christian faith, and their testimonies have inspired thousands of believers since 1951.⁸⁶ However, since the Beijing Christian Student Group was not an established institution, there was no spokesman, and no official record of their activities and organization. We can only rely on the writings of Lyall and others to reconstruct the story of this important student movement.

5.1 The Origin of the Beijing Christian Student Group

The formation of the Beijing Christian Student Group was closely related to the Christian student movement in free China during the war. However, this group was neither a part of the CIVCF, nor was it related to any foreign mission or local Chinese church. Its leader Peter Zhang (張錫煥) emphasized that this was a 'meeting group' rather than an organization.⁸⁷ Lyall and Wang Mingdao served as unofficial advisors. The group met weekly at Lyall's home, and most group members attended Wang's church.

Uniquely, this group was started and led by the students themselves. In Beijing, Lyall was invited to hold bible classes in 4 universities and some 15 colleges. These classes necessitated long, almost daily journeys by bicycle through the summer heat and the equally intense cold of winter. Christian students in the various colleges who had so recently returned to their own campuses had not yet met one another, and when Lyall told the groups about the others, they asked, "Where can we get together?" "Well, we are now living in the east city," he replied. "How about coming to see us?" When a group of students arrived at his home, they were astounded by God's amazing provision and promptly adopted the place as their headquarters. They held monthly gatherings in the guest hall at eight o'clock on Sunday mornings before church. It was a small beginning. One member of the Yenching Bible class called Zhang Xihuan (張錫煥, Peter Zhang) was obviously a born leader, and he soon took control. When numbers at this monthly meeting grew, they made it a weekly event. The students, poor though they were, contributed to buy the simple benches needed for increased seating.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Wang Yi (王怡), *Shu Ling Fu Xing Yu Shi Su Yua - Dui Zhong Guo Jia Ting Jiao Hui De Ping Jia* (屬靈復興與世俗化--對中國家庭教會的評價) *Zhongguo Yu Fu Yin Shuang Yue Kan* 91 (2012): pp.5-6.

⁸⁶ Leung Ka-Lun (梁家麟), *Tamen Shi Wei Le Xin Yang: Beijing Jidutu Xue Sheng Hui yu Zonghua Jidutu Bu Dao Hui* (他們是為了信仰: 北京基督徒學生會與中華基督徒佈道會) (Xianggang: Jian Dao Shen Xue Yuan, 2001), p. 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.46.

⁸⁸ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p. 96.

Initially, they met for fellowship and prayer. The students learned the power of prayer during this critical time when the whole nation was under the threat of civil war. Lyall wrote:

The beginning of the recent movement of the Spirit among the students of China has brought with it the promise of a new and vigorous leadership in the not too distant future. That this leadership is already coming to the fore is seen in the launching of the China Prayer Movement, initiated by a recent Yenching University graduate with the support of over a hundred Christian students from twenty universities, colleges and high schools in Peking ... Students and young people throughout China feel frustrated and helpless in the face of conditions which give no hope of improvement. This feeling finds its expression among students in open discontent with the existing regime, strong leftist or communist sympathies, strikes, demonstrations, and riots. These dissipated energies have now, in the case of Christian students, been re-directed into a channel of prayer. These young people believe in the power of prayer, and are confident that civil war can be ended and the whole land opened again to the gospel by God alone, in answer to prayer.⁸⁹

This group was not only concerned with their own spiritual growth, but also with the well-being of the whole nation. They were not indifferent to the political chaos of the time and the suffering of the people, but they chose to bring all these needs to God rather than to demonstrate in the streets.

5.2 The Relationship between the CIVCF (China Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship) and the Beijing Christian Student Group:

The Beijing Christian Student Group was not affiliated to the CIVCF. There were several reasons for this. According to Leung Ka-Lun, Peter Zhang was much influenced by Watchman Nee's ecclesiological viewpoint. He did not believe in any institutionalized organization. He considered the Beijing Christian Student Group merely as a meeting group, not an organization. Therefore, unlike many other student groups who were members of the CIVCF, the Beijing Christian Student Group did not have a membership list, or a covenant, or any formal structure. It was just a gathering for evangelical students in Beijing. Some might be members of the Fellowship at their own university, and others had no association with any other university group.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Leslie T. Lyall, "A China Prayer Movement," *China's Millions* (January-February 1949): pp. 2-3.

⁹⁰ Leung Ka-Lun (梁家麟), *Tamen Shi Wei Le Xin Yang: Beijing Jidutu Xue Sheng Hui yu Zonghua Jidutu Bu Dao Hui 他們是為了信仰: 北京基督徒學生會與中華基督徒佈道會* (Xianggang: Jian Dao Shen Xue Yuan, 2001), p. 47.

In my view, the main reason for this was the difference between the political atmosphere in Beijing and Nanjing. The communists were much more active in Beijing than Nanjing, which had been the capital of the Guomindang. Students in Beijing were generally more sympathetic towards the Communists. They did not feel comfortable with the political stance of Calvin Chao who seemed more pro-Guomindang. This independence on the part of the Beijing Christian Student Group proved strategic, enabling the group to survive and thrive under the leadership of the students after the “sudden death” of the CIVCF in 1951.

According to the diary of Wang Mingdao, in August 1948, Calvin Chao spoke at the Beijing Retreat of the Beijing Christian Student Group. He persuaded the student leaders to join the CIVCF, but failed. There was a heated argument. Wang did not want to be involved in the conflict between the CIVCF and the Beijing Christian Student Group. He did not elaborate on the details of this conflict and we do not know exactly what happened afterwards.⁹¹

Though there were no formal ties between these two groups, it did not mean that there was no cooperation and mutual support. Lyall mentioned that at the 1947 National Conference held in Nanjing, the Beijing Christian Student Group sent four delegates, two men and two women.⁹² The CIVCF also sent a staff worker Wu Mujia (吳慕迦) as their advisor.⁹³ Adeney and Calvin Chao often came to Beijing to speak to this student group, but it was the CIM missionaries who were most involved. Lyall and Beatrice Sutherland (who taught at the Beijing Normal University) served as their advisors. Of all the CIM missionaries, Lyall was the most active in this group. His home was their meeting place; he taught them the bible, provided pastoral counseling for needy students, and shelter for the refugee students. Wang Mingdao and his wife were also actively involved with this group. On the whole, however, these advisors only assisted, and the student leaders were the ones actually in charge. Among the student leaders, the most outstanding were Zhang Xihuan (張錫煥), Huang Daoan (黃道安), Zhang Muhua (張慕華), Wang Baoan (王寶恩), Wang Changxin (王長新), Liu Minru (陸敏如), Xu Guangdao (許光導), Gao Shuzhen (高述真), Li Meichen (李美晨), Tong Yijiang (童以強), Zhu Yongshu (朱永淑), Liu Xiujin (劉秀瑾), Dong Jinzeng (董金增), Du Wenbin (杜文彬), Cao Lianpu (曹聯璞) and Yang Anxi (楊安溪).

5.3 The Activities of the Beijing Christian Student Group

The students met at Lyall's home every Sunday for prayers, Bible Study and fellowship. These

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 50.

⁹² Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p. 98.

⁹³ Leung Ka-Lun (梁家麟), *Tamen Shi Wei Le Xin Yang: Beijing Jidutu Xue Sheng Hui yu Zonghua Jidutu Bu Dao Hui 他們是為了信仰: 北京基督徒學生會與中華基督徒佈道會* (Xianggang: Jian Dao Shen Xue Yuan, 2001), p. 24.

activities were mostly led by the students themselves. After the summer of 1950, Lyall was forced to leave Beijing and the students began to meet at the Union Church, previously owned by foreign missionaries. According to the diary of Wang Mingdao, there were about 200 attendees at their meetings and Wang took on a more active role after Lyall's departure. One of the highlights of their activities was the half-yearly retreat. The first retreat was held in the summer of 1947. From then on they held two retreats every year, one in the summer and another in the winter. This arrangement lasted till January 1955. There was a total of 17 retreats in the history of this group.

According to Lyall's report, the Peking committee held frequent meetings to plan their own conference to be held at an orphanage adjoining the grounds of the Summer Palace. The preparatory organization was excellent and on August 16th 1947, trucks transported 120 students to the site. Seeing that the students were so desperately poor, the organizers had agreed to make no charge for board. Whatever cash was placed in the free-will offering box on any one day would be used to buy provisions for the following day - a practice which apparently left no one hungry. The speakers were David Yang and Wang Mingdao, the latter preaching daily on sin and the former on the glory of Christ. Deep conviction was manifested and as individuals repented, they experienced the joy of forgiveness. One husky physical training student, during a relatively unemotional meeting, suddenly began sobbing, and a counselor took him aside and led him to Christ. Many were clearly converted, while those already Christians re-committed themselves more fully. The student leaders had no patience with superficial profession; baptism and church membership alone, in their eyes, counted for nothing. The sole criterion was "Has he life?" meaning new life from God, the "life of God in the soul of man" resulting from the new birth of the Spirit. Lyall wrote:

The tide of spiritual blessing rose daily, and the final testimony meeting brought the conference to a mighty climax. We had witnessed and experienced a moving of the Spirit - a true reviving - as God had answered prayer beyond all our expectations. The trucks carrying the students back to their campuses, drove along Chang An Street ... singing joyful songs of praise to God; and Peking, which has always been the spearhead of student revolution in China, had never seen or heard the like before.⁹⁴

They held their second retreat in the winter of 1947 at Lyall's home. Peter Zhang and Lyall were the main speakers, and Wang Mingdao spoke once or twice. Lyall wrote that as the number of attendees increased to more than a hundred, the blessings of God also increased. In between sessions, every room in

⁹⁴ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, pp. 98-99.

the house, including Lyall's bedroom, was full of praying groups. These young people knew something of what to expect under Communist rule and had a consuming desire to know God in such a way that their faith would not fail. The long and heart-warming final testimony meeting showed that God had been present in power.⁹⁵ It was during this second conference that Wang Shaowu (王紹武), a medical student at Beijing University and an outstanding future leader, was converted.

The third conference, held in the summer of 1948, was even more memorable. At that time Nationalist China faced military collapse, but the students decided to go ahead with plans for the conference, once again to be held at the old imperial stables-turned-orphanage behind the Summer Palace. Everyone except the main speakers (Calvin Chao and Wang Mingdao) slept on the hard ground. During the conference, Wang celebrated his wedding anniversary, testifying to twenty years of married happiness in the service of God. Lyall wrote that this conference was marked by a deep spiritual hunger for the Word of God, the students having progressed from the immature and emotional stage of earlier days to greater maturity. Everyone sensed the urgency to know God more fully, and the prophetic words "From now on our work will be the work of prayer" were often repeated. The young people well knew that under Communism the freedom to witness and evangelize which they had hitherto enjoyed would be severely curtailed if not entirely denied them and that prayer would be the only activity impossible to restrict. Time was running out, but strong foundations had been laid for the future.⁹⁶

This was the last conference that Lyall attended. He left Beijing in December 1948, but the Beijing Christian Student Group pressed on. It continued its witness to the Word of God and the power of the Gospel for another six years, long after Beijing had again become the capital city of China. The group did not disband until 1955 at the time when Wang Mingdao was arrested, and against which they made a strong protest.

Apart from the above activities, the Beijing Christian Student Group was also actively involved in relief and mission work, serving the many refugee students fleeing the civil war in Manchuria. They lacked adequate food and clothing in the bitter cold of the Beijing winter. Lyall and the students opened a soup kitchen at his home which became popular with the hungry refugees. The group visited hospitals to comfort students who had been shot by the police during demonstrations. They also sent out their first missionary, a graduate doctor who responded to a call to go to the north-west of the country. There he joined the staff of the Borden Memorial Hospital in Lanzhou, Gansu, which was operated by the CIM. They also staged a city-wide evangelistic campaign and invited Andrew Gih ((Ji Zhiwen 計志文) to be the speaker. Hundreds responded to the call and were converted.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.101.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp.104-105.

Lyall himself prepared the students to face the imminent suffering by teaching them the message of 1 Peter chapter four verses 12 and 13. “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.” Many who had listened to these expositions were much comforted during their prolonged sufferings and able thus to survive. Finally, they were also able to start another Christian Student Group similar in philosophy in Tianjin under the guidance of a CIM missionary Asta Nelsen, a local pastor Xu Hongdao (徐弘道) and student leaders Jiang Lihan (姜利漢) and Chen Mingtao (陳明韜), these latter two were members of Wang Mingdao’s church and students of Tianjin University.

6. The “Sudden Death” of the Christian Student Movement

The Christian student movement at this critical time faced two major challenges. First was the issue of the modernist biblical interpretation raised by the Student Christian Movement (SCM), another Christian student group with more liberal views about the Christian faith. The SCM regarded the members of the CIVCF and the Beijing Christian Student Group as being too narrow-minded and unscientific. They questioned the authority of the Bible and emphasized instead, the moral teachings of the Christian faith. Second was the issue of communism. The students found themselves living in two worlds: the world of Christian fellowship and the world of communist propaganda. Immediately after the War, many missionaries were optimistic that the Guomindang would be able to unify the country within a short period of time. Lyall was one of the few who held the opposite view that the communists would prevail in the civil war. That is why he was so adamant about preparing the students for imminent suffering. By 1948, it was obvious that the Nationalist government faced military collapse. During this period, the evangelical students suffered at the hands of both the Nationalists, who suspected that some of the Christian students were actually communists, as well as the communists, who accused them of being the running dogs of the imperialists. How did the students face these challenges?

6.1 Christian Students Faced the Revolution

While the witness of the evangelical students was being built up on almost all the main universities and colleges, the national economic and political situation was fast deteriorating. Runaway inflation and the subsequent devaluation of the currency caused great suffering. Student strikes and demonstrations erupted on almost all university campuses in protest against government incompetence. Communist propaganda was found everywhere on the campuses. Christian students were forced to face

the issue of whether they should become involved in political movements as a corporate group. On the one hand, student organizations were often objects of suspicion to the Nationalists, and some CIVCF staff were arrested and imprisoned. Adeney wrote:

Naturally these large gatherings of Christian students also drew criticism from the nationalists. During the latter part of nationalist rule all student activities were looked upon with suspicion. It was incomprehensible that so many students should gather together at conferences simply to study the Bible and partake of fellowship and prayer ... the nationalists feared that it was providing cover for communist workers ... During the weeks that preceded the communist victory in Shanghai, hundreds of students (including Christian students) were arrested under suspicion of being in league with the communists. Many were executed.⁹⁷

On the other hand, these same evangelical students were also denounced by the communists who charged them with being reactionary, a hindrance to the progress of the revolution and running dogs of the imperialists. They were truly hard-pressed on both sides and it was very difficult for these students to survive in such a climate.

The CIVCF faced an even greater challenge. Calvin Chao's close ties with Guomindang high officials made the communists more suspicious of the CIVCF, even after Chao's departure in 1949. The CIVCF realized that if Christian fellowship meetings became a forum for political discussion, it could hinder them from bearing testimony to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, many members of the Fellowship did own different political viewpoints and stands. It would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to side with any one political party. Moreover, active participation in politics would likely involve them in methods of protest that would be contradictory to their faith. Involvement in politics would also have been time consuming, taking away from energy previously devoted to evangelism. However, they could not be indifferent to the great needs in society or to the issues of their day because the whole nation suffered under terrible inflation, corruption, oppression and an uncertain future. Failure to show concern, or unwillingness to stand up against social injustice would be unworthy of their Christian calling. The position of the CIVCF was clearly delineated by Adeney who wrote that Christian students were bound to proclaim the Word of the Lord against injustice and oppression, for the servants of God in every generation were called to 'love righteousness and hate iniquity.' At the same time, they were also obligated to stand steadfast for the truth of the gospel and be absolutely uncompromising in their

⁹⁷ David. H. Adeney, *China; Christian Students Face the Revolution*, p. 31.

refusal to participate in any action which would betray their Christian faith. But while group activities were limited to the witness on campus, individual members were actively involved in the relief of suffering, helping refugees who had fled from the war zones. The CIVCF continued to emphasize the need for a radical change of heart which was only possible when the spirit of God was allowed to enter a person's life. The insistence upon the spiritual ministry of Inter-Varsity made infiltration by political agents extremely difficult. Adeney commented, "A communist agitator might become prominent in a social discussion group, but in meeting for prayer, testimony and Bible study he was likely to feel like a fish out of water."⁹⁸

By 1948, it was obvious that China would soon be under communist rule. Many Christians had questions regarding the relevance of the Christian faith in the new society. Christians were constantly taunted with the charge that Christianity was the opiate of the masses, was unrealistic and unscientific. Christian students spent long hours discussing how to answer these charges among themselves because these questions could not be ignored. They needed to find answers that would satisfy their own consciences and at the same time enable them to be apologists for the faith. Wu Yongquan (吳永泉), the editorial secretary of the CIVCF, felt that something concrete must be done to help the Christian students who were struggling with all these questions. In early 1950, he finished writing a book entitled *Questions Concerning the Faith* (信仰問題). In the first six months, 60,000 copies were printed. Unfortunately, this book was soon banned by the government, and the author arrested and imprisoned. Wu could have escaped China earlier, but he chose to remain and suffer with the people of God.⁹⁹ Many found this book very helpful as preparation for weathering the coming storm.

The Beijing Christian Student Group experienced a similar fate under the communists. Because of their separation from the CIVCF, they faced less harsh treatment from the Government in the early years of communist rule. However, their close ties with Wang Mingdao and their strong protest against his imprisonment in 1955, resulted in many of the student leaders being labeled members of Wang's reactionary group and imprisoned as a result. This included Qi Hongguang (祁洪光) who was arrested in July 1955 and released in 1979, Shi Shenghua (石昇華), a medical student from Beijing University, Wang Shaowu (王紹武), the chairman of the Beijing Christian Student Group, Wu Yizun (吳以遵), the vice-chairman and Liu Xiujin (劉秀瑾), the chairperson from the previous year. All were arrested together with Wang Mingdao in August 1955.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp.77-83.

¹⁰⁰ Leung Ka-Lun (梁家麟), *Tamen Shi Wei Le Xin Yang: Beijing Jiaodutu Xuesheng Hui yu Zonghua Jidutu Bu Dao Hui* (他們是為了信仰: 北京基督徒學生會與中華基督徒佈道會) (Xianggang: Jian Dao Shen Xue Yuan, 2001), pp. 133-134.

Not all students of the Beijing Christian Student Group were supportive of Wang's stance towards the new government. Tong Yiqiang (童以強) and Yang Anxi (楊安溪) were particularly critical of Wang's political viewpoint. Tong Yiqiang (童以強) was a student at Yenching University, a gifted leader and a disciple of Wang; he felt that Wang failed to understand the struggles of the intellectuals; Tong tended to take a softer stance towards the new Government. According to Wang, Tong tried unsuccessfully to convince him (Wang) to change his position by joining the Three-Self Church movement.¹⁰¹ Yang Anxi was the son of David Yang (Yang Shaotang) and a medical student at Union Medical School. Likely influenced by his father, Yang Anxi believed that Christians should be more supportive of the new government. Previously, while Wang had opposed Christians fighting in the Korean War, Yang believed that it was his Christian responsibility to defend his country. Yang adopted a much softer stance towards the Three-Self church than Wang did.¹⁰² By 1953, however, as the Communist Government adopted an increasingly harsh policy towards Christianity, both Tong and Yang began to appreciate Wang's uncompromising stance. Both suffered greatly at the hands of the communists. Tong was imprisoned for seventeen years and served as a pastor of a Three-Self Church after his release. Yang was also imprisoned and suffered a great deal during the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰³

6.2 The End of the Christian Student Movement

A new situation emerged in the spring of 1949 as a result of the crushing defeat of the Nationalist Government. As pointed out by Oi Ki Ling, the Chinese Communists had learned from the Russian experience that a policy of repression did not succeed in killing religious faith among the Russian people. Coercive measures were ineffective and even harmful, resulting in widespread dissatisfaction, if not open resistance, to the regime.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, in the early phase of communist rule, the nation was still unstable both politically and economically. The new government needed the support of all its people, and had no wish to create martyrs in the Christian church. Thus, religious freedom was granted in the Constitution and widely proclaimed. Eighteen months after the communist victory the general feeling among Christians was thankfulness that so large a measure of freedom had been allowed to the church. In fact, at this time, there were more opportunities to spread the gospel than had been anticipated.

However, in smaller cities and in the countryside, local cadres, with their materialistic and anti-imperialistic training, did not fully understand the official policy regarding the granting of religious

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.88.

¹⁰² Ibid., p.90.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.91.

¹⁰⁴ Oi Ki Ling, *The Changing Role of the British Protestant Missionaries in China, 1945-1952*, p.109.

freedom. Throughout their training, they had been taught that religion was the opiate of the people and they tended to be harsh towards Christians. Although freedom of religion was permitted in the Constitution, so was the right to engage in anti-religious propaganda. Moreover, tolerance of the Christian faith was by no means equivalent to tolerance of foreign missionaries in China. Even though the majority of missionaries were not involved in any form of political activity, yet in the eyes of the communists they were imperialists who opposed the revolution. The Communist Government was astute in dealing with the foreign missionaries. Instead of expelling the missionaries directly, it put pressure on the Chinese church to ask the missionaries to leave as they were no longer welcome in China and their presence was an embarrassment to the church.

Several factors contributed to the “sudden death” of the student movement. The Communists set a higher standard for “political correctness” among university students. Older people might have been allowed the freedom to attend religious services, but university students were expected to renounce all superstitious beliefs. Intense indoctrination put a lot of pressure on the Christian students. Students were forced to attend small study groups, the object of which was to tear down the wrong ideas and attitudes of the past. The first step toward bringing about such a change was self-criticism. Not only did the student have to criticize himself, but he also had to be willing to be criticized by other members of the same group. Every member had to expose every area of his/her life to the view of his/her group members. Since religion was regarded as reactionary, Christians often became targets of criticism. Accusations were made against them. Many Christian students were unable to withstand the stress and gave up their faith.

The government forbade any religious activity outside the designated churches. Religious meetings were banned on campuses. Initially, they were still able to meet at the CIVCF houses, but from 1951 onwards they were no longer able to do so. Many students valued the fellowship so much that they were prepared to meet in small groups secretly. Large numbers were caught and sent to prison or labor camps.

The General Secretary of the CIVCF, Calvin Chao, left China without resigning from his position as head of the CIVCF. Instead, he established the CIVCF Headquarters in Hong Kong in November of 1948. He claimed that the entire student movement had been infiltrated by the communists, and that only he could direct the CIVCF effectively away from communist restriction. In doing so, he actually gave up any possibility of leading the CIVCF effectively. In fact, he put the students, particularly the leaders and staff workers, at great risk. In his absence, Adeney took up the leadership role. The students were very angry with Chao’s irresponsible move and asked Adeney to write to ask him to resign. Adeney said in his interview with Erickson, “I had a very, very difficult task of being asked to write to him and to suggest that if he did not feel he could come back to China, that it was inadvisable for him to remain as the

General Secretary, as it was too embarrassing for the students in China.”¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, Chao took it personally and interpreted this request as a personal attack by Adeney and Houghton. In his interview with Shuster, Paul Contento, a close friend of Chao’s, quoted Chao on Adeney as follows, “He has a way of gradually putting himself into the middle of the picture and then he gradually makes everybody fade away.” In the same interview, Contento also claimed that he had received a letter from Chao accusing the CIM of forcing him to resign on the pretext that he was receiving money from the CNEC and at the same time serving as General Secretary of CIVCF.¹⁰⁶ Leung Ka-Luen observed, “It was impossible for Calvin Chao to lead the student movement by remote control from Hong Kong. Running away without resigning from the position of the head of the CIVCF, he actually did a great damage to the entire student movement especially in such a critical time.”¹⁰⁷

The eventual departure of Adeney, Lyall and other CIM missionaries added another blow to the student movement. In mid-1950, the CIM realized that their presence only embarrassed the Chinese Christians. If the Chinese Christians were to survive under Communist rule, they had to stand on their own. Reluctantly, the missionaries prepared to leave. Adeney left in 1950, and Lyall in 1951. In May 1951, the outbreak of the Korean War aggravated the situation further. In June 1951, the chief staff worker of CIVCF, Xu Chaochen (徐超塵) was arrested along with many other staff workers. At the same time, the CIVCF was disbanded by the Government. The Beijing Christian Student Group, not being part of the CIVCF, survived for four more years. After Lyall’s departure, Wang Mingdao filled the vacuum he left behind. When Wang was arrested in July 1955, many of the student leaders were arrested and imprisoned along with him. The Beijing Christian Student Group came to an end.

6.3 The Impact of the Christian Student Movement

“I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” This is an oft-quoted saying of Jesus.¹⁰⁸ It aptly describes the impact of the Christian Student Movement in China. It is true that it lasted less than a decade, and that by the 1960s, it appeared that almost the entire movement had been wiped out. In actual fact, the movement only entered a period of “hibernation,” with a great blossoming later to come. We shall explore this in the

¹⁰⁵ David Howard Adeney, Interview by Paul A. Erickson, November 14, 1988, Collection 393, T3. Billy Graham Evangelical Archives, Wheaton, Illinois.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Contento, Interview by Robert A. Shuster, 9 December 1992, Collection 472, T2a. Billy Graham Evangelical Archives, Wheaton, Illinois.

¹⁰⁷ Leung Ka-Lun (梁家麟), *Ta Men Shi Wei Le Xin Yang: Beijing Jidu Tu Xue Sheng Hui yu Zonghua Jidu Tu Bu Dao Hui (他們是為了信仰: 北京基督徒學生會與中華基督徒佈道會)* (Xianggang: Jian Dao Shen Xue Yuan, 2001), p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ The Gospel of John 12:24 *in the Bible* (NIV)

final chapter. Meanwhile, we can briefly describe the impact of the movement as follows.

As pointed out by Wang Yi, this Christian student movement was a main factor for the rise and development of the house church movement in China in the following decades.¹⁰⁹ Lyall also wrote about the impact of this student movement saying, “The Christian students graduated and were posted all over China. They created small oases of spiritual life amidst the desert of Marxism. That which had happened so spontaneously in Beijing was duplicated in almost every university in China. It is plain to see how the post-war student revival was a part of the divine preparation of a new generation of leaders so desperately needed by the rapidly growing Chinese Church in the 1980s. The oases had endured, multiplied, and reached a time of blossoming.”¹¹⁰

Chang Yuming, whom Lyall named ‘Henry’ in his book *God Reigns in China*, was a case in point. Chang was an active member of the Beijing Student Group while still in high school in Beijing. As a frequent guest in Lyall’s home, he had contact with Lyall even after Lyall’s departure. Chang went on to study medicine at Henan Medical College in Kaifeng, where he also joined a house church known as Uncle Ren’s Inn. A year later he was arrested as a counter-revolutionary, and so began his lengthy service as a prisoner-physician. His book *Sowing Seeds of Faith* told the true story of the survival of a house church in Kaifeng. After his release, he led numerous house churches in his province.¹¹¹ In fact, he was but one of the many members of the original Beijing Christian Student Group who dispersed throughout China and continued to serve wherever they were. In one of his letters to Lyall, he reported a reunion in Beijing of some members of the Beijing and Tientsin Christian fellowships: “While I was in Beijing we had very good fellowship in the Lord. All of us were members of the Christian student body of Beijing and Tientsin. Most of us had suffered during the past long difficult period, but now have been rehabilitated and are chief engineers or associate professors in universities. We prayed together and encouraged one another in the Lord’s word.”¹¹²

Lyall also wrote about a medical student who had found Christ through his bible class in college, and who became a senior doctor in a region where he ministered to over 1000 Christians. When Lyall was in that region in the 1940s, there were about 200 believers at that time. Many of these students migrated to the North West and brought with them the Gospel of Jesus. One of the outstanding student leaders of this movement was Bian Yunbo (邊雲波) a member of the Beijing Christian Student Group, who served

¹⁰⁹ Wang Yi (王怡), “Shu Ling Fu Xing Yu Shi Su Yua - Dui Zhong Guo Jia Ting Jiao Hui De Ping Jia (屬靈復興與世俗化--對中國家庭教會的評價),” *Zhongguo Yu Fu Yin Shuang Yue Kan* 91 (2012): p.6.

¹¹⁰ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p. 107.

¹¹¹ Youming Zhang and Greene Lee, *Sowing Seeds of Faith: the Story of a House Church in China* (Enumclaw, WA: Pleasant Word, 2004), p. 12.

¹¹² Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p.108

in Yunnan for many years.¹¹³

The impact of the Christian student movement was not just confined to Mainland China. Zha Yijuan (查逸鋸), a member of the Beijing Group, moved to Taiwan and founded the Taiwan Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (Xiayuan Tuanqi 校園團契). Philip Teng, one of the student leaders in the West during the war, served as the senior pastor of the North Point Alliance Church, one of the mega-churches in Hong Kong, and as the first President of the China Graduate School of Theology. Adeney served among the students in Hong Kong in the 1960s and started the Hong Kong Fellowship of Evangelical Students (HKFES). There was a student revival in Hong Kong in the 1960s and many of the current church leaders in Hong Kong were members of the HKFES.¹¹⁴ The list includes Stephen Lee (李思敬), the current President of the China Graduate School of Theology; Leung Ka-luen (梁家麟), the President of the Alliance Seminary; Patrick So (蘇穎智), the Senior Pastor of Yan Fook Church, the largest church in Hong Kong with 10,000 attendees every Sunday; Chow Wing-kin (周永健), a former President of the China Graduate School of Theology; Wan Wai-yiu (溫偉耀) and Lam Wing-hung (林榮洪), both outstanding theologians in the Chinese church; Siu Sau-wah (蕭壽華), current Senior Pastor of the North Point Alliance Church, among others. Many of the students from the Beijing Christian Student Group emigrated to the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and England, and started hundreds of bible study groups on university campuses and Chinese churches there. In short, we can say that the impact of the student movement in China spread far and wide. Lyall indeed played a very significant role in this Christian student movement for he not only provided us with valuable historical information, but was also an active participant throughout the development of the entire movement.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 108.

¹¹⁴ Chan Hay Him (陳喜謙), *Zai Zhe Xie Nian Jian (在這些年間 In Those Years)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement Ltd. 2015), p.160-172