

## CHAPTER TWO

### Miraculous Christianity and Grassroots Practice in the Republican Era

#### Introduction

This chapter explores the larger world of Chinese Christianity in which the True Jesus Church existed and argues that the miracle-centered interpretation of Christianity was not peculiar to the True Jesus Church but was in fact present within the mainstream of Christianity in the first half of the twentieth century. This argument further dispels the implication found within what I call the “continuity approach”: the tendency of existing scholarship on the True Jesus Church to argue that the True Jesus Church’s affinity to miraculous modes in the Chinese popular religious tradition historically set it apart from other, supposedly more orthodox, forms of Christianity.

The miraculous mode of Christianity was not isolated within the True Jesus Church. During the Republican era, it was a central feature of mainstream Chinese Christianity. This finding reinforces the notion that we must find alternate interpretations for Chinese Christian movements like the True Jesus Church that go beyond continuity with Chinese popular religion and socioeconomic deprivation as ways to explain certain facets of the history of Christianity in China, such as the existence of beliefs and practices like particularistic protection, healing, visions, exorcism, ecstatic worship, and glossolalia. The significance of this miraculous mode of Christianity, widespread throughout Chinese churches during the first half of the twentieth century, lies not just in the way in which Christians appealed to Biblical precedent while simultaneously

addressing the native religious environment, but also in the way in which believers' egalitarian perspective on access to divine power upset traditional ecclesiastical and gender hierarchies.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the theoretical problem that I believe underlies existing characterizations of miraculous Christianity as peripheral instead of mainstream. Then I will sketch the contours of the miraculous mode of Christianity, first within Western mission denominations and then within the Little Flock (小群), an independent church. Finally, I will demonstrate the disruptive power of the miraculous mode within Chinese Christianity by examining miraculous experience within the lives of women in the True Jesus Church and its Pentecostal predecessors.

*Problematic assumptions in characterizing mainstream and peripheral within Christianity in China*

As I argued in the Introduction, two of the “red flags” for continuity with Chinese popular religion and socioeconomic and political deprivation that other scholars have seen in the history of the True Jesus Church have been the church's “supernatural” practices of glossolalia and faith healing (said to resemble spirit possession and spirit healing) and early teachings about the impending apocalypse (said to resemble various sectarian movements in Chinese history that arose in times of socioeconomic or political anxiety). Up until recently, these two elements of supernatural practice and apocalyptic expectation have caused scholars to place the True Jesus Church and certain other Christian movements in the same category as Chinese popular religion and in an entirely

different category from Chinese Christian organizations, including mission denominations, with a liberal theology and a modernist engagement with social progress. For instance, Daniel Bays' 1995 article suggests that the True Jesus Church's Pentecostal emphasis on the Last Day, direct communion with God through the Holy Spirit, and "miracles, especially divine healing," were unique among Christian churches in their respective correspondence to similar themes within "Chinese sectarian religion." The article argues that these supernatural or miraculous elements appeared in Chinese Christianity only after the arrival of Pentecostal and "sectarian" [i.e. non-mainline denomination] Christian groups:

[N]one of these key themes was significantly present in nineteenth-century mission Christianity in China. The millenarianism was there in theoretical but usually muted form; the direct revelation and dramatic physical healings hardly at all. It was only in the early twentieth century that this set of new but authentically "Christian" themes appeared in China, originally brought by Pentecostal and other sectarian missionaries. When these currents did appear in China, plainly they were able to tap into corresponding themes of the long-existing Chinese popular heterodox religious syndrome. . . .

All this is to say that some Chinese certainly did join the True Jesus Church to become Christians, as other Chinese joined other churches to become Christians. But at the same time that they were adopting Christianity, True Jesus converts and other Pentecostals did so in a manner that satisfied some assumptions or inclinations that derived directly from the Chinese sectarian tradition, which remained strong in the early twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

This portrayal suggests that of all forms of Chinese Christianity in the early twentieth century, the only groups of Christians who shared supernatural assumptions and inclinations with groups within the Chinese popular religious tradition were Pentecostal groups such as the True Jesus Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Bays, "Indigenous Protestant churches in China, 1900-1937: A Pentecostal case study," in *Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity*, ed. Steven Kaplan (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 124-143. 139.

Representations of the other side of the coin, that is, the liberal, modernist type of Christianity in China, can be found in studies such as Ryan Dunch's compelling research on Fuzhou Protestants, which has shown that in Fuzhou around the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Christian adherence was often aligned with progressive civic values and a rational modern outlook, especially as it was transmitted over the generations. Dunch writes:

Literacy, education, and knowledge of the outside world tended to follow Protestant belief, particularly for second-generation and later Protestants in any given locale. As a result, Protestants became more educated and more inclined to claim a place in Chinese elite society, and the stress on supernatural experience gave way to an emphasis on the association of Christianity with science, rationalism, and progress.<sup>2</sup>

As an example, he contrasts the more supernatural worldview of Xu Bomei (許播美), an early Christian convert who in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century staged an Old Testament-style competition between the Christian God and the local deity in offering prayers for rain, with the more scientific approach of Xu Bomei's son, a Christian doctor who responded to requests for exorcism "not by prayer and fasting, as his father probably would have done, but by the more prosaic means of holding an ammonia-soaked cloth over the nose of the patient whenever the evil spirit manifested itself."<sup>3</sup> Dunch's well-researched study convincingly captures one mode of Chinese Christianity, a modern sort of Christianity that was influenced both by the programs of Western missionaries and the interests of a rising Chinese professional class.

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<sup>2</sup> Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 15. Dunch qualifies this observation, importantly, by saying, "That modern alignment was not an inevitable consequence of conversion, however, and we would be mistaken to equate conversion with detachment from Chinese society and entry into a westernized, missionary-dominated, or modernist cultural reality."

<sup>3</sup> Dunch, 9-15.

The problem with our current historical understanding of Christianity in China is that we have only these two characterizations: on the one hand, supernatural, millenarian, miraculous Christianity that looks like Chinese popular religion, and on the other hand, liberal, modernist Christianity. I believe that such a set of categorizations reveals the existence of the widespread assumption that liberal, modernist Christianity represented a norm or a standard of Christian orthodoxy. This assumption, even when not explicitly stated, manifests itself in various characterizations such as those I identified in the Introduction of the True Jesus Church and other Christian movements known to emphasize the supernatural as being continuous with Chinese popular religion, superstitious, or even heterodox.

Such characterizations seem to take for granted a view of Christian orthodoxy that is transcendent and highly rationalized through systematic theologies. Anthropologist Fenella Cannell suggests that the Western discipline of anthropology may itself have internalized some of these “orthodox” Christian theological positions (for example, a radical separation between body and spirit) in its own approach to studying Christianity, causing anthropologists to declare traditions that blur these distinctions as heterodox or un-Christian when in fact these “heterodox” positions are supported in numerous places throughout the Bible. Were scholars to confront these assumptions about what makes a religious movement “real Christianity,” Cannell suggests, “[w]e might instead come to see these not just as local ‘resistance,’ or as peripheral parts of ‘real Christianity’, but as alternative Christianities deeply rooted in the highly unstable syntheses which Christian orthodoxies themselves represent.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Fenella Cannell, “The Christianity of Anthropology,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11, no. 2 (2005): 352.

One of these “unstable syntheses” within Christian orthodoxy that becomes manifest in the examination of the history of Christianity in China is the inherent tension between the institutional structure of a Christian church, which depends on stability, hierarchy, and continuity over time, and the accounts of divine action in the text of the Bible, in which the supernatural logic of adhering to God’s will, whatever it is, often overturns such institutional conventions. Numerous Christian movements, past and present, have embraced the notion that the Holy Spirit is actively at work in the present just as it was in the recorded events of the Bible; and yet, church institutions that embrace such notions also formulate rules and conventions to control its potentially disruptive effects in the form of “orthodox” hermeneutic and theological formulations. As long as the Bible continues to be recognized as a sacred foundational text, however, this contradiction will still exist. As Cannell puts it, “even where particular Christian churches have, at given times and places, adopted certain theological positions as orthodox and policed them as such, the unorthodox position remains hanging in the air, readable between the lines in Scripture, and implied as the logical opposite of what is most insisted upon by the authorities.”<sup>5</sup>

This tension between Biblical and institutional Christianity has also been characterized, albeit with a slightly different emphasis, as a tension between fundamentalist and modernist forms of Christianity. Indeed, these modernist-fundamentalist tensions created much friction within Western denominations in China in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Describing the beginnings of this fundamentalist-

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<sup>5</sup> Fenella Cannell, ed., “Introduction” to *The Anthropology of Christianity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 8<sup>th</sup> page of introduction.

modernist split within Western missionary organizations in early 20<sup>th</sup> century China,

Daniel Bays has written:

[T]he mainstream (“liberal” or “modernist”) denominational mission establishment “remained firmly in control of the great majority of important institutions of the Sino-foreign Protestant community in China: the large urban church edifices; the schools and hospitals; the administrative positions interfacing with Chinese government and foreign consular authorities; and the influential monthly magazine, *The Chinese Recorder*. Yet their days were numbered. The fastest-growing mission groups in the first two decades of the century included the Southern Baptists, various evangelical Scandinavian groups, and especially the China Inland mission, holiness and “higher life” groups such as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Seventh-day Adventists, and a whole host (hundreds by the late 1910s) of independent missionaries, almost all of whom were fundamentalists (in the 1920s sense) and many of whom were Pentecostals.<sup>6</sup>

Here, Bays points out the division between modernist and fundamentalist forms of Christianity within Western mission denominations. In this chapter I will show how this division did not only exist between Western missionary denominations, but across the entire spectrum of Western and independent Chinese Christian churches. I will also show that even “modernist” denominations also contained “fundamentalist” elements, and that “holiness and higher life” groups also contained elements that were explicitly Pentecostal. In short, what I call the “Biblical” or miraculous form of Christianity existed to some degree or another within nearly all Chinese Christian churches, especially at the grassroots.

In fact, recent research such as Alvyn Austin’s 2007 study of the China Inland Mission and Lian Xi’s 2010 study of independent Christian movements, shows that during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the modern face of Christianity in China was just one side of the coin, a mode of Chinese Christianity that was closely tied to a

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel H. Bays, “Christian Revival in China, 1900-1937,” in *Modern Christian Revivals*, ed. Edith L. Blumhofer and Randall Balmer, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 161-179. 169.

certain urban and political infrastructure that did not exist everywhere.<sup>7</sup> Indeed the modern, disenchanting mode of Christianity may even prove to be not only not mainstream, but even somewhat anomalous as we continue to search beyond the Western missionary sources that initially fueled the study of Christianity in China and wade deeper into Chinese sources that describe Christian practice at the grassroots level. For instance, the recent work of Lian Xi, along with other scholars also mentioned in Chapter One like Chen-Yang Kao, Gotthard Oblau, and Deng Zhaoming who have astutely identified glossolalia, faith healing, and millenarianism with the Pentecostal Christian tradition and who have argued that Pentecostal practices are widespread throughout Christian churches in all parts of China, is an important development in revising our understanding of the nature of Christianity in China.<sup>8</sup>

This recent discussion of transnational Pentecostal influence, however, has not entirely solved the scholarly problem of capturing the character of Christian movements in China in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the first place, I believe that the term “Pentecostal” may be too narrow a term to accurately represent the range of beliefs and practices that these scholars discuss, including particularistic protection, healing, visions, exorcism, and glossolalia. While there is broad agreement that the single most distinguishing feature of Pentecostalism is “the central place ascribed to a transforming experience of God the Holy Spirit,” this emphasis on the Holy Spirit occurs within the distinctive context of a certain historical-theological worldview, certain internal religious or cultural features,

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<sup>7</sup> Alwyn Austin, *China's Millions: The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Gotthard Oblau, “Pentecostal by Default? Contemporary Christianity in China,” in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, eds. Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Baguio City, Philippines: Regnum Books International, 2005), 411-488. 411-412.

and certain organizational characteristics of Pentecostalism, which the *Encyclopedia of Pentecostals and Charismatic Christianity* defines as being comprised of the fundamental categories of classical Pentecostals, the Charismatic movement, and neocharismatics.<sup>9</sup>

For instance, classical Pentecostalism (such as that which fueled the Azusa Street Revival, the Apostolic Faith Church, the Hong Kong Pentecostal Mission, and the True Jesus Church) situates miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit such as healing, exorcism, and glossolalia within the specific context of a theology of premillennial dispensationalism. Premillennial dispensationalism divides human history into distinct eras (dispensations) in which God deals with humanity in different ways. The early Pentecostals at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century understood that the final dispensation of human-divine history before the Second Coming of Christ had begun with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Azusa Street and across the globe, a second Pentecost or “latter rain” that had been foretold by Biblical prophets and apostles and that was a sure sign that the Last Day was close at hand. Hence while Pentecostalism does indeed emphasize the Holy Spirit, it does so within a distinctive denominational, theological, or organizational context that sets it apart from the emphases on the Holy Spirit variously found in other forms of Christianity. This context may be too narrow to describe what is going on in accounts of the supernatural or miraculous within Chinese Christianity.

In the realm of Chinese Christianity, movements such as the True Jesus Church, the Apostolic Faith Church, and the Hong Kong Pentecostal Mission fit into the “Pentecostal” category by virtue of their self-identified genealogical ties with the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Pentecostal revival at Azusa Street, their “premillennial dispensationalist” teachings, and above all their emphasis on the personal experience of glossolalia as the

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<sup>9</sup> Encyclopedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, s.v. “Globalization of Pentecostalism.”

necessary and definitive evidence of salvation. Because of this emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person's daily life and worship, the beliefs and practices of these Chinese Pentecostal churches include particularistic protection, healing, visions, exorcism, and glossolalia.

However, these beliefs and practices can also be found within other Christian churches, both inside and outside of China, that acknowledge no historical connection to the early Pentecostal movement, that have no dispensationalist teachings related to the Holy Spirit or to "the last days," and that reject the doctrine of glossolalia as necessary for salvation. These beliefs and practices are not exclusive to the 20<sup>th</sup> century Pentecostal movement but in fact constitute a core motif within the Christian tradition dating back to the first century.<sup>10</sup> Not only is the categorization of "Pentecostal" to describe these supernatural or miraculous beliefs and practices not strictly precise, because "Pentecostal" refers to a specific denominational distinction or a specific set of theological positions, such a categorization may also serve to peripheralize or exoticize forms of Christianity that contain supernatural or miraculous beliefs and practices, when in fact such beliefs and practices may be considered central within the worldwide Christian tradition. For example, Deng Zhaoming has written, "That Pentecostalism casts such a spell over many free-lance evangelists in China is because it fits well with traditional Chinese popular religion, which also stresses the miraculous and the supernatural."<sup>11</sup> Deng's particular choice of words, referring to "casting a spell," seems

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<sup>10</sup> Encyclopedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, s.v. "Antecedents to Pentecostalism," lists numerous examples.

<sup>11</sup> Deng Zhaoming, "Indigenous Chinese Pentecostal Denominations," in Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, eds., *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, (Baguio City, Philippines: Regnum Books International, 2005), 437-466. 438.

to reinforce an unspoken distinction assumed to exist between orthodox religious beliefs to be found within mainstream Christianity on one hand and miraculous or superstitious beliefs to be found within Pentecostalism and Chinese popular religion on the other. Other recent scholarly arguments about Chinese Pentecostal movements as an expression of socioeconomic and political deprivation, which I discussed in the first chapter, similarly assume the peripheral nature of miraculous modes of Christianity: people who are attracted to miraculous or millenarian teachings such as those within the True Jesus Church and other Pentecostal movements represent a marginalized class of the “relatively deprived” who embrace the world of the miraculous and the supernatural because they have given up on the harsh, mundane realities of this world.<sup>12</sup> And yet the evidence shows that these miraculous modes were not peripheral, but mainstream, within Chinese Christianity. Furthermore, far from being symptomatic of an entirely otherworldly or renunciationist point of view (in the tradition of millenarian movements), most Chinese Christians’ engagement with miraculous modes occurred within the context of a worldview that was eminently practical and this-worldly.

Perhaps our secular academic context is to blame for shaping an assumption that dramatic miracle stories can only be the expressions of a certain religious, superstitious, or otherworldly state of mind that is entirely separated from mundane, natural reality, when in fact such clear distinctions between the realm of spiritual power and the realm of ordinary life did not exist in the minds of many Chinese Christians. Scholars’ tendency to rigorously define and assume the importance of such distinctions causes me to recall a rhetorical question once posed by an anthropologist of Christianity. This question

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<sup>12</sup> Deng, 438.

suggested an “apparent contradiction” that I thought was so obviously non-contradictory that it was completely superfluous in advancing the overall argument: why do millenarian Christians who say they believe that the end of the world is imminent go on making plans for Sunday dinner, or for marriage, or for long-term business investments? On paper this was indeed a great contradiction, an intriguing paradox that highlighted the stark inconsistency of practitioners’ stated millenarian belief with their everyday business as usual. But from the common-sense perspective of a Christian practitioner the answer to this question is simple and the many pages of intellectual discussion exploring both sides of the apparent contradiction look silly: Christ is coming any day, but no one knows exactly when. He may come before Sunday dinner, but then again he may not.<sup>13</sup> This answer is founded both on the doctrines of the Bible but also on the everyday priorities of living life, both of which are legitimate. Hence while scholarly studies of Christian believers may labor over explanations of how religious conservatives in Orange County, California could both embrace scientific modernity in the form of medical technology and reject it in the form of evolutionary theory, or how Seventh-Day Adventists in Madagascar see the Bible as the ultimate scientific textbook, these seeming contradictions are nonproblematic in the minds of religious believers with a multidimensional or multifocal view of truth and ultimate reality.<sup>14</sup>

Being aware of the largely mundane context for miraculous accounts of Christianity in China further weakens the deprivation argument that a certain class of

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<sup>13</sup> Joel Robbins, “Secrecy and the Sense of an Ending: Narrative, Time, and Everyday Millenarianism in Papua New Guinea and in Christian Fundamentalism.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, vol. 3 (2001): 525-551. I should explain that overall I found this article very insightful and useful; it was just this particular use of a rhetorical question that I thought reflected on us scholars as a class of paradox-loving-people in an amusing way.

<sup>14</sup> Lisa Girr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Keller, 273-294.

poor and desperate people were drawn to forms of Christianity that emphasized the miraculous (including millenarian Biblical prophecies) because this class of people felt that the world was so terrible, they had nothing to hope for but Apocalypse, the fall of worldly governments, and the reign of Christ. Actually, people turned to miraculous Christianity when they had a toothache, when their ailing family members were feverish and incontinent, and when their neighbors asked them for help. The miraculous mode of Christianity, which did indeed rely on Biblical passages of scripture for its fervent conviction that the signs of the Last Days were at hand, was also actively engaged in the concerns of the present day, and as long as Jesus tarried, it was in these present day concerns, and not millenarian movements, that miraculous Christianity most often expressed itself.<sup>15</sup> Thus while socioeconomic and political context clearly had an influence in shaping miraculous forms of Christianity in China, the deprivation argument cannot fully account for the popularity of such forms. In the discussion that follows below I will attempt to supplement our current understanding with a closer focus on the local, social context of miraculous Christianity.

*Miraculous Christianity: the Chinese mainstream*

Miraculous beliefs and practices were central to Chinese Christianity during the Republican era. I have decided to use the word “miraculous” as a general term for beliefs

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<sup>15</sup> Randall Nadeau, describing a spirit-writing session that he observed in Taiwan, noted that “the god spoke through the Heavenly Savant with a message of reconciliation after a divisive local election. The congregants who benefited from this revelation were urged to begin a process of communal healing, and to lead by example: by practicing virtue and avoiding voice, working hard, and maintaining harmonious relationships with their families. Though the means of expression were extraordinary, the message from these shamanic girls was explicitly domestic and communal.” Randall Nadeau, “Harmonizing Family and Cosmos: Shamanic Women in Chinese Religions,” in eds. Nancy A. Falk and Rita M. Gross, eds., *Unspoken Worlds: Women’s Religious Lives* (Wadsworth, 2001), 72.

and practices that might be variously called “supernatural,” “charismatic,” “magical,” “superstitious,” “indigenous,” and so on. I understand that words can be problematic, that it is difficult to find a term that is not entangled in some semantic, theological, historical, or theoretical web that takes its meaning beyond that which would be useful for this discussion.<sup>16</sup> Still, we ought to be able to recognize the limits of language while at the same time recognizing the function of words as tools that we can strategically employ to describe a situation at hand.<sup>17</sup> I therefore propose to focus my discussion on six specific beliefs or practices that reappear frequently throughout the sources: particularistic protection, healing, visions, exorcism, ecstatic worship, and glossolalia, and to refer to these practices by means of a descriptive category using what I think is the

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<sup>16</sup> A large body of scholarly literature representing numerous disciplines exists to discuss the relationship between “religion” and “magic,” between “religion” and “superstition,” or between these and other categorizations of religious or supernatural beliefs and practices. Keith Thomas’ important 1971 book *Religion and the Decline of Magic* argued that people in 17<sup>th</sup> century England resorted to magic (sometimes within the Church, sometimes without) in order to allay anxiety when other means were effective, and that the decline of magic in England by the end of the seventeenth century was due to the spread of an ideology of self-help, to the growth of urban living, and to the rise of science. Thomas’ book sparked numerous scholarly conversations via book reviews and articles; in one of these articles, Hildred Geertz criticized Thomas for not considering a semantic discussion of how the boundaries between “religion,” “magic,” and “science” shifted, and for using “magic” to mean “ineffective,” “superstitious”; Thomas responded that his project was not an attempt to universally capture the human condition, but to ethnographically describe practices within a culture, and that his descriptions were specific enough that people ought to have known what he meant by the terms “religion” and “magic.” In 1985, Michael P. Hornsby-Smith, Ramong M. Lee and Peter A. Reilly took a slightly different approach to these categorizations, critiquing the use of the term “common religion” to describe popular heterodox beliefs and practices, and proposing the alternative term “customary religion” to cover those beliefs and practices derived from “official religion” without being under its control. Their argument suggested that the beliefs and practices comprising customary religion are the project of formal religious socialization but are also subject to trivialization, conventionality, apathy, convenience and self-interest—hence, they are unstructured and heterodox. In 1993 Robert Scribner returned to the question of “the decline of magic” and the role of the Protestant Reformation in Europe by arguing that Protestantism, as well as Catholicism, involved “magical” practices at the popular level and that the Reformation did not necessarily lead to “disenchantment.” One example of a more recent study on this same topic is a philosophy article by Sami Pihlstrom that examines the possibility of setting a boundary between religion and “pseudo-religion” (or superstition) and concludes that the religion vs. pseudo-religion division can only be drawn within a religious framework. In the realm of China studies, a discussion of the term “magic” also appears in the influential article by Ann S. Anagnost, discussing the ways in which the state defines “feudal superstition” and how this category is subject to manipulation. Many other studies dealing with the topic of supernatural efficacy in religion in China exist, too many to name here.

<sup>17</sup> In Keith Thomas’ rebuttal to Hildred Geertz in 1975, he quotes Evans-Pritchard: “As Evans-Pritchard says, ‘terms are only labels which help us sort out facts of the same kind from facts which are different or in some respects different. If the labels do not prove helpful we can discard them. The facts will be the same without their labels.’ I claim no universality for a distinction between magic and religion, but I do suggest that in European history, at least, it is analytically useful to distinguish those religions which, like medieval Catholicism, credited their rituals with physical efficacy from those which, like eighteenth-century deism, did not.” Thomas, “An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, II,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6, no. 1 (Summer 1975): 96-97.

least technical and the most common-sense term possible, “miraculous.”<sup>18</sup> I have included within this “miraculous” categorization not only explicitly supernatural manifestations such as healed illness or heavenly apparitions, but also involuntary modes of expression attributed to the presence of the Holy Spirit, such as ecstatic worship in which participants may feel or express unusually intense emotions as they pray or confess sins.

Although “miraculous” is not entirely ideal in that in addition to miracles of physical efficacy it can be used to describe manifestations of divine power that are intangible or interior, such as a feeling that one’s sins have been “miraculously” cleansed, other alternatives such as “supernatural” tend to emphasize, perhaps too heavily, phenomena defying the physical laws of nature (excluding more emotional or personal phenomena such as dream-visions or religious weeping). “Miraculous” hence captures the affective nature of the religious phenomena that Christian believers report, perhaps better than the more technical scholarly term “charismatic.” Similarly, “*ling*” (efficacious or efficacy, powerful or power), a word used by scholars of Chinese popular religion to refer to a god’s ability to manifest power in the human world, does not connect with the internal texts and doctrines of Chinese Christianity as seamlessly as “miraculous.”<sup>19</sup> The accounts of Chinese Christians in the sources frequently set their narratives against the background of similar Biblical accounts, mutually reinforcing the significance and legitimacy of Christian experience past and present (as I have discussed in Chapter One, the text of the Bible was particularly significant within the Chinese

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<sup>18</sup> “Supernatural” is also close, but I think that “miraculous” more accurately captures the religious and specifically Biblical context of the supernatural occurrences described in the sources, especially as they would be characterized by believers themselves.

<sup>19</sup> The term “*ling*” is discussed thoroughly in Adam Yuet Chau’s *Miraculous Response*.

cultural context as an authoritative basis for defining Christian belief and practice). Thus, I will use “miraculous” as a label to refer to the set of beliefs and practices including particularistic protection, healing, visions, exorcism, ecstatic worship, and glossolalia. I recognize that a strict separation between what is meant by the words “belief” and “practice” is not always easy to maintain, since they can be intertwined, and so I will also use the term “miraculous mode” to indicate the larger nexus of belief and practice.

We must revise our current characterization of Christianity in China to recognize the presence of miraculous modes across the entire spectrum of Christian organizations, especially at the grassroots level, throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Within Western mission denominations, independent churches, and Pentecostal groups such as the True Jesus Church alike, Christian believers reported miraculous practices and experiences. This revised perspective undermines previous claims that what made a Pentecostal movement like the True Jesus Church distinctive and attractive was necessarily its “supernatural” practices as such, since healing and exorcism were already widespread within Chinese Christianity at the time of its founding. Instead, what may have set a Pentecostal movement like the True Jesus Church apart may have the extent to which it embraced and intensified already existing miraculous modes in its doctrines, practices, evangelical strategy, and organization.

Below, I will survey the landscape of miraculous modes within Chinese Christianity. First I will look at accounts of miraculous occurrences within mainstream denominational Christianity and use commonalities in these stories to show how the miraculous mode of Christianity could spread easily within the existing infrastructure of the Chinese religious environment. Second, I will focus on the presence of glossolalia, a

practice closely identified with 20<sup>th</sup> century Pentecostalism, within a Christian church that officially refuted Pentecostalism, a presence that shows not only the widespread influence of miraculous modes throughout Chinese Christianity, but also the internal Biblical-institutional tension within Christianity itself that can nurture such miraculous modes. Third, I will focus even more specifically on women within the True Jesus Church as a case study to show how the strength of miraculous modes at the grassroots level of Christianity could powerfully redistribute the balance of power, even within a conservative church such as the True Jesus Church in which a fundamentalist interpretation of gender roles supposedly strips women of power and influence.

### Part One: Miraculous Christianity within Mainstream Christian Denominations

Miraculous Christian beliefs and practices were widespread within mainstream Christian denominations during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This can be seen in numerous miraculous accounts in *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* (通問報), a weekly newspaper published in Shanghai (上海) by the Presbyterian Missions in China.<sup>20</sup> According to a 1907 book written to commemorate a century of Christian missionary work in China, Presbyterian missions claimed the highest number of baptized adherents in the country. With 52,258 communicants, they far outnumbered those claimed by other major categories of Western missionary societies including Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Methodists, “interdenominational” groups such as Bible Societies and the

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<sup>20</sup> *Tongwenbao* (通問報 The Chinese Christian Intelligencer) (Shanghai: The Presbyterian Missions in China), hereafter *CCI*.

YMCA, “unclassified” societies, and independent missionaries.<sup>21</sup> *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* first began publication in 1902 under the editorship of Reverend S.I. Woodbridge of the Southern Presbyterian Mission. The same 1907 book reported that the circulation of *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* was “said to be the largest of any religious weekly in China (3,700).”<sup>22</sup>

I researched *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* by sampling issues held by the Shanghai Library from 1906-1948. I started with the first issues in January 1906 and then continued to sample at intervals from early 1909, early 1919, early 1928 (1929 was missing from the holdings), and 1931, 1933, 1947 and 1948 (during the 1930s and 1940s issues were either printed or archived with decreasing frequency, reflecting the significant disruptions within Chinese society during these years). I found that accounts of miraculous beliefs and practices appear regularly throughout the entire run of *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer*. With every jump into a new interval, it usually took no more than a few pages or at most one or two weekly issues before I found miraculous material.

The contents of *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* change over the years to reflect the changing makeup and concerns of the Christian community in China, but draw from a sufficiently wide number of sources to represent the mainstream at that time. For instance, issues from the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century contain numerous biographical reports of foreign missionaries actively working in China at the time, or who have returned to their home countries. Issues from 1919 are notable compared to those of a

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<sup>21</sup> Donald MacGillivray, ed., *A Century of Protestant Missions in China (1807-1907): Being the Centenary Conference Historical Volume* (New York: American Tract Society; Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1907), 674.

<sup>22</sup> MacGillivray, 403.

decade earlier in their inclusion of science articles, such as “The Function of White Blood Cells,” as well as practical articles on topics such as how to make glue and the uses of broken glass.<sup>23</sup> They also include more articles on patriotism, such as how Christians must pray for the country, and mention of one of the early independent church organizations, the China Christian Youth Association.<sup>24</sup> Issues from 1928 include an article on “Christians and the Nationalist Revolution” and a transcript of one of Sun Yat-sen’s lectures to students, both reflecting the rise of the Republican government.<sup>25</sup> Contents from the last, more sparse cluster of 1930s and 1940s issues include the programming schedule for XLAK, the Shanghai Gospel Radio Station and parenting articles such as “The Three Things Not To Do After You Have Children.”<sup>26</sup>

Denominations represented in the numerous reports submitted by churches around China that take up a substantial proportion of the newspaper’s content, increasing as time goes on, include not only Presbyterian churches but also large denominational players such as the China Inland Mission, the Methodist Church, and the Jinling Theological Seminary (金陵神學院), as well as many local churches identified only by their place name. I also saw in 1919 a report about an Assemblies of God meeting, and in January 1936 a report submitted by Jiang John (蔣約翰), a prominent True Jesus Church leader, about the True Jesus Church’s recent “Spiritual Convocation” (靈恩會). However, a later article from November 1936 is highly critical of the True Jesus Church and its emphasis on glossolalia as a prerequisite to salvation. The fact that the newspaper initially gave a

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<sup>23</sup> *CCI*, April 1919 (#847), June 1919 (#856).

<sup>24</sup> *CCI*, April 1919 (#847), July 1919 (#858, 20).

<sup>25</sup> *CCI*, January 1928 (#1279).

<sup>26</sup> *CCI*, December 1947 (#1811).

voice to, but then several months later refuted the True Jesus Church, suggests its role as a public forum in which diverse opinions could be aired but in which overall trends of opinion would eventually be manifest. All in all, *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* seems to have been a widely circulated newspaper in which the editor-controlled articles on religion and culture seem to be grounded in the newspaper's Presbyterian roots, but which also—in an ecumenical spirit characteristic of mission denominations during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century—printed a wide variety of reports submitted by local congregations of all stripes across China. Thus as a primary source *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* represents the “mainstream” of Chinese Christianity in the most ideal sense of the word: not simply a single narrow channel in the very center of the course, but the broad flow of currents and tributaries as they merge and move together along the stream of time.

Below, I will share accounts from my sampling from *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer*, with footnotes referencing similar stories in other mainstream Christian publications from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as the *Hankou Griffith Church Monthly* (漢口格非堂月刊) and *True Light* (真光), that demonstrate particularistic protection, healing, visions, exorcism, and ecstatic or emotionally charged worship.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Both the *Hankou Griffith Church Monthly* and *True Light* were published by denominational churches well established in the Christian community. The Hankou Griffith Church was named for Griffith John, an early and influential London Missionary Society missionary. The February 1941 (#166) issue of the Hankou Griffith Church Monthly features local advertisers such as an Wuchang photography company, Hanyang doctors, and also contains news from various local churches. It includes reports of the work of foreign missionaries or returned missionaries who send monetary contributions. *True Light*, a Baptist denominational publication based in Guangzhou (the Shanghai Library holds most issues from the 1920s) was a national paper edited first by Western missionaries and later by Chinese church leaders, including one Zhang Yijing. According to the description in the Shanghai Library, it contained biographical accounts of famous Christian leaders, church news, domestic and global news, scientific knowledge, women's skills, items of cultural interest, and novels (such as an excerpt from Tolstoy). The “modern” educational and cultural features of the newspaper coexisted alongside somewhat fundamentalist theological views expressed in doctrinal articles, such as a June 1924 article titled “Christ's Resurrection and Today's Christians,” which insisted that science was inadequate to prove or disprove the fact of Christ's resurrection, and another article from the same issue written by Ni Tuosheng (who would go on to be the famous leader of an independent and theologically conservative Chinese church, the Little Flock) defending the spiritual significance of every sentence in the Bible and warning against “advanced critical studies” or “new [liberal] theology.” *True Light*, June 15, 1924, 9-16 and 23-30. The main articles and features of *True Light* from this time period do not include much mention of miraculous Christianity in contemporary Chinese practice, but a couple of reports from local congregations do.

While I will make some attempt to relate them to each other throughout instead of just reeling off a list of stories, I will reserve most analysis for after I have told them all.

*Charismatic accounts in The Chinese Christian Intelligencer*

A miracle story can be found in the very first issue of *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* held by the Shanghai Library from January 1906, highlighting the protective power of prayer. It gives an account in which the shop of an umbrella maker surnamed Chen (陳) in the southeastern city of Wenzhou (溫州) was threatened by a terrible fire that was spreading due to gusting winds. In the face of fiery disaster, instead of rushing into the shop to retrieve all of his goods as his non-Christian neighbors urged him to do, Chen simply closed the door and prayed. “He calmly answered his neighbors, ‘You do not need to be worried for me. I am praying to the High Lord, and the Lord will surely protect me. It is not needful to raise a finger. The One who hears my prayer will always answer.’”<sup>28</sup> Despite the continuing urgings of his neighbors, Chen and his family members did nothing but fervently pray. The fire approached from the east, but upon reaching the shop, stopped, then suddenly turned first to the south, and then to the west. According to the account, Chen’s shop was surrounded on all sides by over 100 scorched shops, and only his umbrella shop was spared.<sup>29</sup> This article concluded with a commendation of Chen’s “unwavering faith” and a reference to the power promised in

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<sup>28</sup> *CCI*, December 26, 1905-January 24, 1906 (#183, 8).

<sup>29</sup> In the December 1940 issue (#165, 11) of the *Hankou Griffith Church Monthly*, a similar story appears. It is the published letter of a woman from Chongqing (重慶), telling how her brother’s dormitory was knocked over in a severe storm and how nearly everyone was killed. Only he and one other student survived, because, the woman surmises, of the protective prayer of the elders in her family.

the Bible to believers.<sup>30</sup> This Biblical reference is important because it takes prayer for the particularistic attention of a deity, which is something that also took place within Chinese popular religion, and sets it in the context of a unique Christian text, the Bible, and the authority of its claims about the power of the Christian God.

This message that there were many gods people might petition, but that Jesus was the only one worth petitioning, appears in another story from the first lunar month of 1909. It tells of a sixty-two year-old mother surnamed Zhang (張) living in Fengtian (奉天), Xi'an County (西安縣), and her eight year-old son, who had been sickly since he was very young and who was most recently afflicted with a lung disease that two years of medicine had been unable to cure. A woman surnamed Xie (謝) visited Zhang and urged her to convert to Christianity, assuring her, “if ordinary people petition the Lord, the Lord will grant it,” that “the Bodhisattva Guanyin is just a person long dead,” and that turning to Jesus would guarantee her peace.<sup>31</sup> After Xie’s departure, Zhang thought about her troubles and “wept like rain,” then dropped to her knees and prayed unceasingly until the evening.<sup>32</sup> That night, she had a dream in which she and her son were walking together along a small and narrow road that was crooked and hard to follow, when they saw in front of them a waterfall, and to their sides great rocks, with no way to go forward. Suddenly there was a bright path of light that descended in the air from heaven, leading them on. Upon awakening, Zhang meditated on her dream and knew that God had directed her to the great path of eternal life. She then began to pray, awakened her son

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<sup>30</sup> *CCI*, December 26, 1905-January 24, 1906 (#183, 8).

<sup>31</sup> *CCI*, January 22, 1909-February 19, 1901 (#335, 4).

<sup>32</sup> Another story involving a miraculous apparition (or in this case, audition) can be found in *True Light*. It was reported by the Haicang Christian Church (海滄基督教堂) in Xiamen (廈門), Fujian: the voice of Preacher Lin (林), a former church leader who had been dead for twenty years, was recognized and heard to be discoursing on Scripture during a meeting. *True Light*, August 15, 1924 (89-92).

and had him pray with her; thereafter her son's health was greatly improved and they became church-attending Christians.<sup>33</sup>

Three stories from 1919 featured assistance delivered by institutionally appointed religious leaders. A March 1919 issue includes a local report from Danyang (丹陽) in Jiangsu (江蘇) province telling the story of a Methodist named Zhang Junde (張君得) who was severely ill, beyond the help of medicine. His son came to the church with a letter to this effect, and Liu Weiyi (劉惟一), the pastor, immediately went to Zhang's home. Seeing that Zhang's illness was critical, the pastor "fervently pled to the Lord on Zhang's behalf, morning and night"; at Sunday services he led a congregational prayer on Zhang's behalf. Due to "the Lord's grace," within a number of days Zhang's sickness was cured.<sup>34</sup>

One July 1919 account, headlined "Jesus Drives Out Mute Devil," tells the story of Yu Dahong (于達洪), a farmer in the Jiangbei (江北) region who had become bedridden with illness in the previous year to the point where he had been mute for five months. Both doctors and local spirit mediums had attempted to heal him, with no results. He was forced to sell off portions of his land to support himself, but this money steadily dwindled. Then, upon hearing of Jesus, he asked a missionary to come to his house to pray for him. The missionary prayed for him three times, and Yu's illness immediately left him.<sup>35</sup> Thereafter Yu went to the local Tianhu Church (佃湖會堂),

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<sup>33</sup> *CCI*, January 22, 1909-February 19, 1901 (#335, 4).

<sup>34</sup> *CCI*, March 1919 (#844, 6).

<sup>35</sup> *The Hankou Griffith Church Monthly*, December 1940 (11), similarly tells the story of a man who was sick with a throat illness and who was unable to eat or drink for days. The Chinese doctor suggested acupuncture with magnetic needles; the Western doctor suggested surgery. Instead, the man and his wife prayed for "Spirit-healing," and he was

where the pastor Bai Xiusheng (白秀生) took a picture of him as proof “that Jesus saves people everywhere, working great miracles.”<sup>36</sup> Although there was nothing in the story of Yu Dahong that specifically mentioned an evil devil, the title of the article made a clear connection between this story and the Biblical miracle of Jesus, demonstrating the importance of the Bible as a reference text with ongoing validity.

Another story from this same month tells the story of a Mrs. Zhou (周氏婦) who was very moved when attending a fall meeting of the Assemblies of God in Taozhou (洮州), Gansu (甘肅), but who did not pursue further involvement because she feared her husband’s disapproval. Later, when she fell deathly ill, Zhou was visited by a female preacher who came to comfort and pray for her. During the preacher woman’s prayer, “the sick woman’s sweat flowed like rain, and her sickness was suddenly gone.”<sup>37</sup> After this, Zhou “repented, accepted immersion baptism, and became a Christian.”<sup>38</sup>

Miracle stories often occurred in the context of close family relationships. “A Dead Person Brought Back to Life,” was a headline in a February 1928 issue, describing an unusual event that occurred during a revival meeting in Zhejiang (浙江) province. During the course of the revival meeting, the account reads, Lou Jintao’s (樓金桃) eldest daughter became sick and died. Because of the importance of the meeting, Lou decided to wait until after the meeting had adjourned to clothe his daughter’s body in funeral clothes and enclose it in a coffin. He asked those present at the meeting to pray for his

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suddenly healed. Yet another story describes a man whose fourth daughter got sick. Medicine did not have an effect. Her condition worsened to the point where she ought to have gone to the hospital, but the hospital was far, and the road was bad, so he simply prayed and his daughter got better.

<sup>36</sup> *CCI*, July 1919 (#858, 7).

<sup>37</sup> *CCI*, July 1919 (#859, 3).

<sup>38</sup> *CCI*, July 1919 (#859, 3).

daughter. “When he returned home, his daughter had already come back from the dead. The villagers spread the tale as a miracle.”<sup>39</sup>

A March 1931 issue includes two articles titled “The Effectiveness of Prayer in Healing Sickness” and “A Father at Home Is Healed Through Prayer to the Lord.” The first tells the story of a devoted old Christian woman named Wang Leshan (王樂善) who was in charge of keeping the chapel in order in a rural village in Shandong (山東). One day the wife of a villager named Teng Guoxing (滕國興) fell ill. Doctors and spirit mediums alike could not improve her condition. Wang Leshan admonished Teng’s wife that if she believed in the Lord, she would be healed, but Teng the husband opposed this. Later, Teng’s wife’s entire body became swollen and it seemed that she would not survive. Her family sent for Wang Leshan at the chapel, imploring her to pray for Teng’s wife, and promising that if Teng’s wife were healed, the entire family would convert. Wang knelt in prayer for several days; the symptoms began to subside, and the swelling went down day by day. Before half a month had passed, the sickness was gone. Henceforth, the account notes, “The entire family kept the Sabbath rigorously.”<sup>40</sup> The second story is a first-person account of one Jian Tianjiang (簡天降), from Zhangzhou (漳州), Fujian. She was on a journey far from home when she got word from her family that her father had fallen ill with acute vomiting and diarrhea and that his condition was dire. She immediately set out for home, but could not continue when it became too dark to travel and had to lodge for the night. Throughout the night she prayed constantly,

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<sup>39</sup> CCI, February 1928 (#1282, 3). A similar story exists in *True Light*, telling of an elderly person in Guangdong who died; the person’s family was in the act of dressing with burial clothes and about to seal the coffin when prayer and “the Lord’s grace” combined to suddenly call the person back from the dead. *True Light*, August 15, 1924 (89-92).

<sup>40</sup> CCI, March 1931 (#1436, 6).

asking that her father's sickness be healed. When she returned to her home the next day she found that his sickness had been completely healed.<sup>41</sup>

Another article in the August 1933 issue is interesting in that one possible source of the afflicted person's problem is the absence of close family relationships. Titled "The Miracle of Jesus Exorcising a Devil," it tells the story of Mrs. Jiang Yan (蔣巖氏), a woman whose husband had died and whose son had become a Buddhist monk (in other words, she was alone). She became possessed by a demon and for three years would not permit anyone to enter her home in her rural village in Jiangsu. Those who tried to force their way in met with a great deal of trouble. Sometimes she would sing loudly, sometimes she would mutter to herself. She was like an idiot or a crazed person. Neither doctors nor spirit mediums had any effect. Afterward she heard the holy name of the Savior. She went to the local Shagang Jesus Church (沙崗耶穌堂) and worshipped the true God. A number of people from this church prayed for her, and the demon departed. "No one who heard of this did not glorify the Lord," the article concluded.<sup>42</sup>

The fact that Mrs. Yan Jiang, a woman with no family, was freed from her demon after a group of church members prayed for her, suggests the social nature of miraculous practices such as healing or exorcistic prayer. The significance of corporate expressions of Christian community becomes evident in a first-person account from the December 1947 issue, introducing Taishun (泰順), a city in the mountainous area of Zhejiang where Christian churches were established more than fifty years ago: "This year God has worked four great miracles in the Church; no one who hears of them does not

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<sup>41</sup> *CCI*, March 1931 (#1436, 6).

<sup>42</sup> *CCI*, August 1933 (#1550, 8).

acknowledge that our God [Shangdi] is a living god.”<sup>43</sup> In the first miracle, a nine year-old boy keeping sheep in the mountains was suddenly afflicted with a strange illness that gave him a fever and rendered him unconscious. When the author came to pray for him four days into this illness, the boy finally awoke and recovered. In the second miracle, a Christian man’s family member became seriously ill: incontinent, incapable of recognizing people, mumbling incoherently, with high fever, dry mouth, and black tongue. The author and others went into the mountains and prayed for the afflicted from dawn to dusk, and eventually the sick person was healed. In the third story, a Christian man believed for many years, but then his faith grew tepid. Then his wife became sick with an acute illness in her chest and stomach. No medicine would work. His mother-in-law, who was a pious believer, got him to convene a large gathering in which believers confessed sins and prayed. In the middle of the meeting, his wife was finally able to sleep. When she woke up, the sickness had left. The fourth story told the tale of how a Christian man’s wife, son, and daughter all became ill. Medicine was ineffectual. Then a fellow brother from the church went to the mountains to pray for them, morning until night. That day the illness subsided, and all were well.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to miraculous stories about healings, visions, and exorcisms, numerous accounts of revivals or preaching meetings in *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* describe ecstatic worship, characterizing intense expressions of emotion as an involuntary response to the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the involuntary, external nature of these experiences of the Holy Spirit that lead me to categorize ecstatic worship

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<sup>43</sup> *CCI*, December 1947 (#1811, 6).

<sup>44</sup> *CCI*, December 1947 (#1811, 6).

as “miraculous”—without the divine presence of the Spirit, the stories suggest, these dramatic displays of emotion would not occur. One early 1906 account of a revival in Shandong reports that the audience engaged in hours-long sessions of kneeling prayer and confession of sins: “there were those who wept, those who prayed repeatedly . . . Men and women, young and old, no one thought to be tired . . . Truly, all felt the Holy Spirit pouring out, filling their hearts with comfort and liveliness.”<sup>45</sup> Another story from the same year and month described a revival in Fuzhou (福州), Fujian, in which “the hall was filled with weeping and prayers being repeated over and over again . . . One youth prayed, confessing his sins in a loud voice, fervently pleading for grace, praying unceasingly. Then there were two people who prayed together in sorrowful voices. In a few moments the sound of mournful pleading and weeping prayer filled the hall like the roar of thunder, like the splitting of mountains.”<sup>46</sup> A 1909 report of a revival in Hangzhou (杭州) reported that in the packed hall, nearly everyone expressed repentance for their sins, “some crying and confessing their sins, others weeping as they prayed, and still others quietly shedding tears in the dark. If it were not the Holy Spirit that had descended, how else could this have come to pass?”<sup>47</sup> A 1919 article reporting on a revival meeting of the China Inland Mission in Yuwu (余吾), Shanxi, also describes the descent of the Holy Spirit.<sup>48</sup> Another 1919 account of a three-day revival meeting jointly presided over by a pastor from the China Christian Church (中華基督教會) and a pastor from the Jinling Theological Seminary (金陵神學院) describes an emotional audience in

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<sup>45</sup> *CCI*, January 25, 1906-February 22, 1906 (#186, 3).

<sup>46</sup> *CCI*, January 25, 1906-February 22, 1906 (#187, 4).

<sup>47</sup> *CCI*, January 22, 1909-February 19, 1909 (#336, 7).

<sup>48</sup> *CCI*, April 1919 (#845).

which people wept for the Church and wept for their families, so that “the mournful sound filled the hall and shook the eardrums, in a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>49</sup> A 1928 description of a revival in Wuyi (武義), Zhejiang, claims that after a few individuals wept and confessed their sins, all in attendance were deeply moved and joined in the expressions of repentance, earnestly praying in such a moving scene that “pen and ink cannot describe it.”<sup>50</sup> In a 1931 report, a Baptist revival and preaching meeting held in Shanghai began with the sermon titled “The Power of the Holy Spirit Works Miracles” and included another sermon titled “At The Last Day, Jesus’ Second Coming, Believers Will Be Called, and the Evil One and Unbelievers Will Be Judged.”<sup>51</sup> “Every time they listened to a sermon,” the report read, “there was no one who was not filled with the Spirit.”<sup>52</sup>

Sometimes reports of revival meetings in *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* included healing stories. A December 1947 issue gives an account of a meeting of the China Jesus Independent Church (中國耶穌教自立會) in Lianghu (梁湖), Zhejiang, during which a number of people with illnesses were healed. In the same issue, an account of the annual revival meeting of a branch of the Zhouxiang Church (周巷堂會) in Zhejiang also records, “the Holy Spirit was poured out tremendously” and that many

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<sup>49</sup> *CCI*, July 1919 (#859).

<sup>50</sup> *CCI*, February 1928 (#1282).

<sup>51</sup> A letter published in the December 1940 (#165) *Hankou Griffith Church Monthly* (page 11) was written by a woman who has evidently been exposed to Pentecostalism. She writes, “Hallelujah, praise the Father,” and reports that she has been filled with the Spirit to the point of tears. She expresses her hope that Hankou can receive the work of the Spirit, and that soon the old churches will turn into “churches that are completely spiritual, full of life and power,” making allusions to the Lord’s fullness of glory in the Last Days.

<sup>52</sup> *CCI*, 1931.3. #1437.

hundreds of sick men and women were anointed with oil and prayed over.<sup>53</sup> In addition to these accounts from *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer*, detailed studies of Christian revivals by Daniel Bays in 1989 and most recently by Lian Xi in 2010 confirm the widespread nature of ecstatic worship within Chinese Christianity, including involuntary emotional expression and miraculous healings at revival meetings.<sup>54</sup>

*Efficacy, sociality, and storytelling: miraculous Christianity and the native religious environment*

These stories, which as I have said represent only a minuscule sampling of the many miraculous accounts printed in *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* and other denominational Christian publications, tend to follow a fixed pattern. Many of the elements of the stories are the same (e.g., the direness of the predicament, the ineffectuality of human ingenuity, Western science, or Chinese popular religion, the weeping prayers, etc.), and the outcome is predictable. However, in each case the subject is a different individual, a person who feels the weight of significant troubles that are subsequently lifted through the beliefs and practices of the miraculous mode of Christianity.

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<sup>53</sup> CCI, 1947.12. #1811.

<sup>54</sup> Bays, "Christian revival"; Lian, *Redeemed*. In "Christian revival," Bays also argues that another widespread effect of the newer wave of Christian missionary organizations was an increase in revivalism in the fundamentalist/evangelical sector of Chinese Christianity in the 1920s and 1930s. Bays' article details one well-known example, the Shandong revival from 1930 to 1932. During this time, large numbers of Southern Baptists and other Western missionaries and Chinese believers from other denominations were "born again" for the first time and were in some cases even baptized by the Holy Spirit at large, emotionally charged revival meetings that included various phenomena such as "people being hurled to the ground unable to rise," "holy laughter and praise," "the Holy Spirit moving as an audible wind," people uttering involuntary sounds during prayer, and miraculous healings. Lian Xi's *Redeemed* also discusses the Shandong revival and goes into great depth on the career of the widely renowned and sometimes controversial revivalist Song Shangjie, "John Sung," during the 1930s. Sung's revival meetings reached a similar ecstatic emotional tenor and emphasized miracles of physical healing.

Certainly miraculous experience is not limited to believers in the Christian tradition, but is a widespread feature of religiosity in general. This miraculous mode of Christianity, while relying on Biblical precedents and Biblical logic for its substantiation, was a medium through which Chinese Christians could relate their faith to their native religious environment and, through its proven efficacy, justify it.

Three points help to explain how the grammar of this miraculous mode of Christianity was comprehensible within the Chinese religious context even though its message was different. The first is that in these stories, pure efficacy is accepted as a legitimate basis for conversion to Christianity (such as in the case of the Teng family that promised to become Christian if Teng's wife was healed) without any requirement for creedal agreement or theological education. Seeing and believing evidence of the power of the Christian God is portrayed as sufficient to define one's Christianity. Efficacy (whether or not a deity is considered to be efficacious, or *ling* 靈) is also a key criterion for the spread of Chinese popular religious cults.<sup>55</sup> Hence the miraculous mode of Christianity enabled believers to justify their religious participation in a larger social context.

Secondly, these miraculous stories fit comfortably within the Chinese religious environment is that, as with local village religion, engagement in miraculous Christianity was often a community matter.<sup>56</sup> Nearly all of the miracle stories begin with the identification of a place name. As the story unfolds, either a Christian neighbor comes by to testify, or a local preacher is called in, or a pastor gathers the congregation in prayer, or

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<sup>55</sup> See Adam Yuet Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Thomas DuBois, *The Sacred Village: Social Change and Religious Life in Rural North China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance, DuBois, *The Sacred Village*.

members of the church community themselves convene a prayer meeting for the sick person or take to the mountains to pray for the sick person. The frequent necessity of having others within the local community intervene on the afflicted's behalf creates a web of ministration and reciprocation that binds people together, reinforcing existing ties and creating new ones if such ties are lacking. The story about the widow with no family who becomes possessed by an evil spirit that is only driven out when the church community prays for her similarly suggests the significance of social ties as an element and even an end of miraculous Christian practice.

Thirdly, what makes the miraculous Christian stories compatible with the Chinese religious environment is the fact that they are stories, easily transmitted from person to person. These stories are easy to relate and to remember, with a narrative arc that bends toward the inevitably faith-promoting conclusion. One scholar studying miraculous Christian accounts has suggested that the process of storytelling itself turns "what happened" into "a miracle" that can only be interpreted in terms of God's divine intervention in human affairs.<sup>57</sup> The patient did not simply recover of his own accord, but was miraculously healed; the revival attendee did not simply become emotional, but was touched by the Holy Spirit. The telling of the miracle story reifies it in two ways: it cements in the mind of the teller the religious meanings implied in the narrative, and it broadcasts the story to others within the community of believers, who variously interpret and incorporate it into their own religious understanding. The act of relating the story can itself carry great value as a form of generating spiritual authority or legitimacy.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> See Andrew Singleton, "'Your Faith Has Made You Well': The Role of Storytelling in the Experience of Miraculous Healing," *Review of Religious Research* 43, no. 2 (Dec 2001): 121-138.

<sup>58</sup> See Elaine Lawless' discussion of Pentecostal women's testimonies, *God's Peculiar People: Women's Voices and Folk Tradition Within a Pentecostal Church* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988). Harvey Cox also makes

These miraculous accounts are particularly conducive to person-to-person transmission at the grassroots level. The subject (the efficacy of divine intervention in helping to address the concerns of the ordinary world) is extraordinary but relevant and therefore highly newsworthy in a way that a more “spiritual” tale of personal redemption from sin is not; the story often takes place in a familiar geographical and social context with multiple actors who may even be personally known to the storyteller or the audience, enhancing its relevance and reputability. The stories themselves highlight the importance of these community networks of neighbors and kin in spreading first Christian experiences and then conversion. In the various accounts of miraculous conversion, most people did not first become interested in Christianity when they attended the sermon of a missionary preaching repentance, but when a circumstance such as illness arose within their family and one of their friends or relatives suggested that they turn to Jesus.<sup>59</sup>

Significantly, these person-to-person reports of efficacy also provide a key means for the spread of local Chinese popular religious cults, both during the Republican era and in the present. The key role of this supernatural efficacy, or more precisely communication about supernatural efficacy, in shaping the survival of religious movements in China has been demonstrated by a recent anthropological study.<sup>60</sup>

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similar observations in his discussion of women’s testimony stories (*Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995, 123-138).

<sup>59</sup> To verify this overall impression, I did a tally of all the accounts of miraculous conversion in the 1926, 1927, 1928, and 1929 issues of the Holy Spirit Times, and of all the accounts that mentioned the initial catalyst for investigation, there were twice as many instances of being led to the church through friends, relatives, or its local reputation as there were of being led to the church through formal proselytizing institutions such as missionaries, the Holy Spirit Times, or True Jesus Church revival meetings.

<sup>60</sup> See Chau.

Historian Thomas DuBois' study of village religion from the Republican era to the present in rural north China has shown that the reputation of *xiangtou* (香頭 spirit healers) is spread by word of mouth through friends and relatives of former clients.<sup>61</sup> As with the Christian miracle stories, efficacy is the key to the popularity or legitimacy of a particular healing practice or deity cult. Sociologist Fan Lizhu writes, "To the ordinary people, a deep understanding of religious doctrines and myths is not really necessary. What is most important to them is whether the gods they are praying to are *ling*, have efficacious divine power; are they able to respond effectively to prayers and petitions?"<sup>62</sup> She also points out that within folk healing, in contrast to strictly "medical" approaches, the moral and social context for a malady is also considered significant; this moral and social context for physical infirmity is paralleled in Christian healing stories.<sup>63</sup> As with the Christian miracle stories, within the Chinese religious environment the significance of the religious cult is framed in a context to which ordinary people can easily relate. DuBois writes that miracle stories about spirit healers "are retold in such a way as to maintain personal significance to the listener, most significantly by grounding them in a commonly understood set of cultural referents or geography. In the case of *xiangtou* and tales of healing, the localization of knowledge reflects the immediacy and mutability of the sacred, and the central importance that issues of sickness and health have in the minds of villagers."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> DuBois, 82.

<sup>62</sup> Fan Lizhu, "The Cult of the Silkworm Mother as a Core of Local Community Religion in a North China Village," *The China Quarterly*, no. 174 (June 2003): 359-372. 63.

<sup>63</sup> Fan, 62.

<sup>64</sup> DuBois, 85.

Although miraculous Christianity was able to play by the rules of the Chinese religious market, it was not simply another form of Chinese popular religion that substituted Jesus for other popular deities such as Guandi, Mazu (馬祖), or the Unborn Eternal Mother (無生老母), even at the grassroots level.<sup>65</sup> For instance, although existing studies of Chinese Christianity, including studies of the True Jesus Church, have compared the practice of “being filled with the Holy Spirit,” resulting in ecstatic, involuntary expressions including weeping and glossolalia, with shamanic possession in Chinese popular religion, in actuality these practices have important differences. In the first place, the Christian believers rejected the popular belief in a pantheon of traditional Chinese deities and believed that their miraculous experience of the divine was the manifestation of a single deity who was the sole legitimate source of supernatural and spiritual authority. Secondly, while spirit mediums of Chinese popular religion often claimed that they were unwillingly or unwittingly dragged into their profession by virtue of having been born with certain qualities that made them especially susceptible to the will of the deity that they served, believers in the miraculous mode of Christianity did not see their access to God as being involuntary in this sense. It was through their own worship or “asking” that they received the Holy Spirit, and had they not asked they would not have received (as opposed to women spirit mediums who often claim that they were the victim of numerous unsettling episodes in which the deity who had chosen them as a

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<sup>65</sup> One proposed model for popular Chinese religion imagines three mountains representing Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism that merge at the lowest levels (the foothills and base, representing lay or grassroots practice) but become increasingly diverged and distinct at the higher levels (the peaks, representing advanced institutional hierarchies). Even at the lowest levels, I do not think that miraculous Christianity would have enough in common with popular Chinese religion to form the base of a fourth mountain that is only differentiated into Christianity at the higher levels. This model was first introduced in Erik Zürcher, “Buddhist influence on early Taoism: A survey of scriptural evidence,” *T'oung Pao* 66: 84-147, and discussed critically in Peter Gregory and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, eds., “Religious and Historical Landscape,” in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993).

vessel tried to get their attention before finally resigning themselves to their fates).<sup>66</sup> A third and related point is that in Chinese popular religion, the ability to communicate with the divine occurs only in certain rare individuals who are born with the necessary gifts and cannot be taught or transmitted to ordinary people, while in miraculous Christianity, in theory nearly every person with the proper state of mind and moral qualifications can be filled with the Holy Spirit.<sup>67</sup> Within the True Jesus Church, in fact, this belief that the Holy Spirit's power is available to everyone is so fundamental that being filled with the Holy Spirit, as evidenced by glossolalia, is seen as a requirement for salvation that will certainly be fulfilled through diligent "asking." Furthermore, in Chinese popular religion, interaction with the world of the divine is the responsibility of the small number of religious specialists who are born with the necessary gifts. Within the miraculous mode of Christianity, by contrast, lay believers could access divine power through prayer without having to be church functionaries. In this sense the spiritual power available to believers within the miraculous mode of Christianity was more flexible than that within Chinese popular religion, especially in that responsibility for efficacy could also be shared with peers in the community and did not always rest on the individual. This

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<sup>66</sup> Fan, 58-59, states that the spirit medium in question originally had no intention of being a medium, said she was too poor to believe in god, then one night had a dream in which people with costumes and weapons said, "We have looked for you for many years, now finally we have got you," and pulled her body outside. In Nadeau, 72, his spirit medium interviewee, a young girl, says that she didn't want to be a medium, after which her father explains that the gods have compelled her to serve in this function. DuBois, 81, says that two village fox spirit healers named Chen and Xu "were anxious to emphasize that they were originally skeptical of xiangtou and certainly had no desire to become one themselves—or, in Xu's own words, "Aya! Witches and sorcerers, doesn't it sound terrible!" In both [Chen's and Xu's] cases, the individual was made to believe through an extraordinary event involving both a fox spirit, who for some reason took a special interest in that person, and a practicing xiangtou, who interpreted these signs . . . in both cases an otherwise unwilling or uninterested person was clearly chosen by the fox spirit to act as xiangtou."

<sup>67</sup> Fan, 63, states: "This divine power is not available to other people in the community. So, for more than 20 years, Mrs. Wu has been the only one with this particular function. When I asked her whether she had disciples and whether she intended to teach others her skill, she replied: 'No. It is impossible for common people to learn it. One needs the help of the gods.' Even her daughter and daughter-in-law cannot obtain this power." DuBois, 81, similarly points out that the xiangtou "did not learn an art, but rather simply channeled and refined forces (*ling*) that already existed within him or her." Hence access to this form of communication or communion with the gods is highly exclusive and very different from praying to receive the Holy Spirit, which every person is believed to be able to accomplish through diligence and moral sincerity.

flexibility between the individual and corporate modes of wielding divine power seems to be somewhat less common in Chinese popular religion.

Hence, although miraculous Christianity was not the same thing as Chinese popular religion, at the local level it existed within the same cultural setting and to a certain extent played by the same rules. I am inclined to think that in China as a whole, local, informal networks substantiating and spreading claims of miraculous efficacy may have also provided the major conduit for the spread of Christianity and that the more systematized, formal efforts of Western and Chinese church leaders through doctrinal sermons and moral education may have even been somewhat peripheral. This is not to say that those who converted to Christianity were only concerned with efficacy and never understood doctrines or theology, but that for most, the miraculous experience facilitated by peers at the grassroots level opened the door for doctrinal conviction under the tutelage of ecclesiastical authorities.

Such a concept of the center of gravity for evangelization and conversion may shift our view of power relations between ecclesiastical authorities and lay believers, especially in light of the ongoing struggle to characterize Western political and cultural influence in China during an age of imperialism, and to characterize gender relations during an age in which women occupied one of the lowest rungs on the social ladder. It is true that the top-level leaders of Christian denominations during the Republican era were either Westerners, or men, or both. At the same time, the evidence above suggests that informal face-to-face interaction and communication about Christianity held the real key to whether or not a Christian movement prospered or withered in China. Power was located not just in those who occupied the highest ranks of ecclesiastical hierarchies, but

also in those at the grassroots level who legitimized it through their willingness to testify to or participate in its efficacy.

### Part Two: Pentecostal Glossolalia within Non-Pentecostal Christian Churches

Sampled accounts of particularistic protection, healing, visions, exorcism, and ecstatic worship in *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* do not mention glossolalia. This is perhaps because glossolalia as a practice, although acknowledged as a spiritual gift by some within the denominations that emphasized miraculous modes of Christianity, was closely identified with the Pentecostal doctrine of glossolalia as necessary evidence of having been baptized by the Holy Spirit and thus receiving salvation, a doctrine which was rejected by the churches of the Chinese Christian establishment. However, evidence exists to demonstrate that despite this official wariness about the practice of glossolalia and the religious beliefs surrounding it, glossolalia and related Pentecostal attitudes toward the Holy Spirit did exist at the grassroots level within even those Christian churches whose institutional leadership considered Pentecostalism heretical. These instances of glossolalia within non-Pentecostal churches testify not only to the wide range of miraculous modes within Chinese Christianity, but also to the Biblical-institutional internal tensions that helped to foster them from within.

*Pentecostal expectations within The Little Flock, a major Chinese independent church*

Accounts of glossolalia and related Pentecostal attitudes toward the Holy Spirit appear in *The Christian* (基督徒報), a quarterly paper published in Shanghai by the Christian Assembly (基督徒聚會所, 基督徒聚會處), a major independent denomination commonly known as the “Little Flock” (小群). The Shanghai Library holds issues of *The Christian* from 1922-1940.<sup>68</sup> While the Little Flock, headed by a man called Ni Tuosheng (倪托聲) or “Watchman Nee,” could not strictly be considered as representative of the mainstream of Chinese Christianity because of its self-imposed separation from other denominations, it does represent an important sector of independent churches. Among the major independent churches, the numerical strength and religious influence of the Little Flock across China was perhaps second only to the True Jesus Church. Like many independent churches, including the True Jesus Church, the Little Flock emphasized the Bible as the authoritative and definitive basis for Christian belief and practice. At the same time, in its doctrinal teachings the Little Flock was much closer to the mainstream Christian establishment than the True Jesus Church. In the 1920s, *The Christian*’s front cover and table of contents were printed in English in order to be more accessible to Western missionaries, and even in the 1930s, the main doctrinal articles are clearly written by someone with seminary training in English and theological languages such as Greek. *The Christian*’s own definition of heterodoxy extended to exclusivist groups such as the True Jesus Church. In April 1927 it declared that the True Jesus Church was “even more wrong than the Seventh-Day Adventists.”<sup>69</sup> Another example of *The Christian*’s “establishment” perspective can be seen in another article

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<sup>68</sup> *Jidutubao* (The Christian), hereafter *The Christian*. There are gaps in the holdings of both these sources at the Shanghai Library. Some are obviously due to the disruptions of the war years, although other gaps are unexplained.

<sup>69</sup> *The Christian*, April 1927, 186-187.

from the same issue, responding to a reader's question: "There are too many restrictions, and all sorts of rites, all of which seem to excessively follow human notions. Should we just work unfettered, and not join any church?"<sup>70</sup> In reply, the article acknowledges that there are many points in the Christianity of each church that "do not conform to the Bible." But, it continues, one of the dangers of "questioning" the Christianity of established church institutions is that those who do this tend to drift off into "heresies such as the True Jesus Church."<sup>71</sup>

Based on other evaluations of the True Jesus Church in a 1927 issue of *The Christian*, what made the True Jesus Church so heretical was chiefly its view of the Holy Spirit as something that every Christian had to receive—often in a miraculous fashion—in order to gain assurance of salvation. Quoting Ephesians 1:13-14, the article explained that every believer received the Holy Spirit when he or she first came to believe in the Gospel, and thereafter the Holy Spirit never departed. Hence, the article reasoned, "Christians have no need to go off receiving a Holy Spirit that they don't yet have, but should follow the Holy Spirit that they already have. As for supernatural things, they can come from God, but they can also come from Satan."<sup>72</sup> And yet although the Little Flock officially distanced itself from this Pentecostal emphasis on seeking the Holy Spirit and receiving it through miraculous manifestation, some accounts in *The Christian* reveal an interesting disjuncture between official institutional interpretations of the Biblical Pentecost and lay believers' charismatic experiences involving glossolalia, uncontrolled

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<sup>70</sup> *The Christian*, April 1927, 187.

<sup>71</sup> *The Christian*, April 1927, 187.

<sup>72</sup> *The Christian*, April 1927, 186.

shaking, and other approaches to the Holy Spirit characteristic of Pentecostal denominations like the True Jesus Church.

These published conversations on the manifestations of the Holy Spirit can be found in the 1936 issues of *The Christian*. They begin with a major article translated from a foreign paper in the January-February issue, titled “Restoration,” with the subtitle “In the Last Days We Can Hope to See Again the Grace of Pentecost,” and accompanied by three scriptures commonly used by Pentecostals:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. (Acts 2:17)

Wait until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. (Isaiah 32:15)

In the time of the latter rain, you will ask for rain from Jehovah who sends lightning, and he will send a latter rain for men. (Zechariah 10:1, “original language”)

These passages have a special significance in Pentecostal denominations. The second chapter of Acts, of course, contains the account of glossolalia among Jesus’ apostles at the feast of Pentecost, and verse 17 is a quote by the apostle Peter from the Book of Joel, declaring the fulfillment of a prophecy (which prophecy Pentecostals say is also fulfilled by the outpouring of the Spirit beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century). The passage from Isaiah refers to an outpouring of the Holy Spirit resulting in lushness and fertility where once there was desolation and barrenness. The scripture from the book of Zechariah, apparently translated by the magazine editors from the original language, repeatedly brings up the term “latter rain,” widely interpreted by Pentecostals’ dispensationalist teachings to signify the second outpouring of the Holy Spirit after the

initial outpouring among the early apostles at Pentecost. “We can look forward in faith to this day of restoration,” reads the article. “We are in the last days . . . Soon the Lord will work power in the church that has not been seen since Pentecost.”<sup>73</sup> The editors’ sympathy to these discussion of a future Pentecostal outpouring, even though they simultaneously condemned Chinese Pentecostal movements such as the True Jesus Church, shows once again the fundamental resonance of Pentecostal ideas and practices for Chinese Christians, which ideas and practices after all appear at key points throughout the Bible and which emphasize the validity of miraculous Christianity.

The testimony printed in the same issue as this doctrinal article on “Restoration” breaks from previous testimonies’ focus on healing miracles and instead details the spiritual quest of Li Hanying (李罕盈), a Christian who was impressed by hearing a scripture read in church: “Seek the Lord and his power, and continually seek his face.”<sup>74</sup> From this time on, he continually asked God for an outpouring of the Spirit (he used the same phrase that the True Jesus Church used, “asking for the Spirit” (求聖靈). One night when he was asking for the Spirit, God showed him a sin that he needed to candidly confess and acknowledge. As he was in the process of writing a letter to acknowledge his misdoing, “the Lord used his Spirit to fill me, to cause me to be full of joy and happiness, as if I were in heaven.”<sup>75</sup> Later he had another experience that occurred while he was at work teaching school. All of a sudden he was so happy that his eyes filled with tears and he laughed out loud, mystifying the students. He stopped only when the school

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<sup>73</sup> *The Christian*, January-February 1936, 10.

<sup>74</sup> 1 Chronicles 16:11.

<sup>75</sup> *The Christian*, January-February 1936, 54-59.

bell rang.<sup>76</sup> Clearly, this publication of a testimony of seeking the Holy Spirit and eventually being overcome by the Holy Spirit's power was meant to affirm the doctrinal article asserting that the last days were at hand. Presumably, however, the editors' article imagined a "true" Pentecost that until then would have only been imitated by "heretical" sects like the True Jesus Church; Li's ecstatic experience of tears and laughter are closer to the emotionally intense worship reported in *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* and further from the glossolalia and shaking of the True Jesus Church.

However, the Pentecost article and Li's testimony serve as a departure point for an enthusiastic and escalated reader response that trends more toward the practices of the True Jesus Church. The March-June 1936 issue publishes the account of Guan Yuneng (关于能), which introduces an actual account of glossolalia. Guan was interested in the question of "being filled with power" through the Holy Spirit; he attended revivals and prayed diligently in pursuit of this quest.<sup>77</sup> One day in church, as he was praying, he reported that he suddenly felt "a great feeling of sweetness growing inside me."<sup>78</sup> After the meeting, he stayed behind and prayed and was filled with such happiness that he wanted to remain "all night without sleeping."<sup>79</sup> As he continued to pray, "the words also changed, so that the heart understood but the mouth did not understand what it was saying."<sup>80</sup> After this, he went home. In a later experience, in a Sunday meeting, he stood up and praised God. Once again his voice changed, and his body shook uncontrollably.

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<sup>76</sup> *The Christian*, January-February 1936, 54-59.

<sup>77</sup> *The Christian*, March-June 1936, 183-186.

<sup>78</sup> *The Christian*, March-June 1936, 183-186.

<sup>79</sup> *The Christian*, March-June 1936, 183-186.

<sup>80</sup> *The Christian*, March-June 1936, 183-186.

His testimony ends as many Pentecostal testimonies do, with the phrase “Aliluya, Amen.”<sup>81</sup>

A second testimony written by Lin Baisheng (林白生) published in the July-October 1936 issue first tells of Lin’s healing of both sins and two long-standing illnesses, and then records that ever since Lin heard a fellow Christian brother say that one should seek the “infilling of the Spirit,” he began to seek it. In this process he remembered his old sins, and as he was writing a letter to acknowledge them, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. “The Spirit poured into me five or six times, sometimes in private, sometimes at church, during the day, and at night (in dreams),” read the account. “I felt uncommon power when in the Spirit. Before I was dry, now I am moist and fertile.”<sup>82</sup> Although this account does not explicitly mention glossolalia, the emphasis on the believer’s spiritual inadequacy before the infilling of the Holy Spirit and spiritual richness after this infilling parallels the absolute necessity (not just the fortunate opportunity) of personally receiving the Holy Spirit that is central to Pentecostal teaching.

After the publication of these two additional testimonies, one on glossolalia and the other on dire spiritual lack only remedied by being filled with the Holy Spirit, the testimony published in the next November-December 1936 issue is very different. It returns abruptly to a narrative of medical healing that was not submitted by a Chinese lay believer but that was translated from a Canadian woman’s letter, published in an English paper. In this issue, three editor-authored articles discussing some aspect of “being filled

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<sup>81</sup> *The Christian*, March-June 1936, 183-186.

<sup>82</sup> *The Christian*, July-October 1936, 305-306.

with the Spirit” demarcate a space of acceptable Spirit-related practice that seems to exclude the three readers’ testimonies recently published. One article says that the meaning of “being filled with the Spirit” is not manifestations such as glossolalia, spirit-songs, or an indication of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Instead, “being filled with the Spirit” simply means that God’s Spirit has a place in believers’ hearts. Another article discusses the “expressions” (表現) of being filled with the Spirit, which are a holy life, a “victorious life,” a life evidencing the “fruits of the Holy Spirit” as listed in the fifth chapter of Galatians (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, etc.). These manifestations of the Holy Spirit are decidedly milder and more chronic than the dramatic and episodic manifestations described in previous issues. The third article describes “the path to being filled with the Holy Spirit,” which does not involve the direct Pentecostal process of “asking for the Holy Spirit” and then “receiving the Holy Spirit,” but rather general moral and spiritual cultivation.<sup>83</sup>

### *The Biblical-institutional tension within Christianity*

Although the readers’ testimonies were selected by the editors for publication, the difference in these testimonies’ tone and emphasis regarding the Holy Spirit indicates a gap between lay believers’ and ecclesiastical institutions’ perceptions of the legitimate range of miraculous Christian beliefs and practices. As shown by the juxtaposition of editors’ Biblically referenced articles with lay believers’ testimonies, this gap originates in part from the tensions along the Biblical-institutional spectrum of modes of

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<sup>83</sup> *The Christian*, November-December 1936, 397, 403, 405.

Christianity. The problem with appealing to the Bible, such as *The Christian's* reference to verses from Acts 2 describing early Christians' glossolalia at Pentecost linked to a Spirit-filled time of prophecy, visions, and dreams, is that the passage does in fact describe glossolalia, prophecy, visions, and dreams. Despite the hermeneutic potential for a more rational or modernist interpretation, it can be read and interpreted at face value. These more literal interpretations of the Bible were clearly the inspiration behind the reader responses evidenced in the two issues of *The Christian* that followed. A desire to correct these interpretations to be less "Pentecostal" and more in line with the established institutional theology is clearly behind the three doctrinal articles on proper modes of Spirit-infilling published in response.

Here we might note that this Biblical-institutional tension is especially problematic within Chinese independent churches such as the Little Flock, which tended to emphasize strict Biblical adherence. On the one hand, Biblical adherence was liberating for independent Chinese Christian churches because it provided an authoritative basis for defining Christianity that was free of Western theological or cultural traditions. On the other hand, Biblical adherence was also liberating for individual believers within independent Chinese Christian churches because it provided an authoritative basis for defining Christianity that is potentially free of all institutional hierarchies or interpretations. Miracle stories and accounts of worship in *The Christian* exhibit this emphasis on the particular power of the text of the Bible, and sometimes, as above, show a tension between the theologically and linguistically sophisticated discourses of the editors and the more "unprocessed" expressions of miraculous Christianity in lay believers' testimonies.

Hence, in addition to pointing out the widespread nature of miraculous modes of Christianity in China, I also want to show that miraculous Christianity was present in varying degrees. The modern, progressive, rational treaty port Christians of Dunch's study would be near one end of a spectrum and the Biblically adhering, miracle-working, tongues-speaking Christians of the True Jesus Church would be near (although not quite at the extreme end of) the other end of the spectrum. Churches represented by the testimonials in *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* and *The Christian* somewhere in between. Such a spectrum also existed within denominations and individual churches. The seminary-educated leaders at the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy might hold rationalist theological views while the vast majority of lay members at the grassroots might hold more literalist views. This sort of a division is suggested by the title of Lian Xi's 2010 book, *Popular Christianity*, which highlights numerous examples of miraculous modes within Chinese Christianity. Indeed this same sort of division exists within the state-sanctioned Protestant church in China today. Although this idea of a bipolar spectrum is of limited use only, conceptualizing these possible axes of alignment adds an important dimension to our understanding of miraculous Christianity and the organic ways in which it arose within Chinese Christian movements via certain miraculous themes within the Biblical text itself.

*Pentecostalism within the Christian and Mission Alliance, a Western mission denomination*

Another example of the wide range of miraculous Christian modes including glossolalia within non-Pentecostal churches in China is the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA). The C&MA was formed in 1887 as a missionary society but eventually grew into a denomination. It was part of a new wave of mission organizations whose presence in China was increasingly felt in the first two decades of the twentieth century and whose theological orientation fell on the fundamentalist side of the fundamentalist-modernist split. Part of the wave of newer mission organizations emphasizing revivalism and spiritual regeneration in China in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the C&MA was in fact heavily influenced by the same Holiness movement that eventually gave birth to Pentecostalism. Although it was not officially a Pentecostal organization, in the early years of the Pentecostal movement internal divisions arose over the issue of tongues. The C&MA officially rejected the doctrine of tongues as an indication of salvation in 1919. It did, however, recognize glossolalia as one of many gifts of the Holy Spirit. It also recognized many aspects of miraculous Christianity, such as healing, as valid. In 1905, C&MA founder A.B. Simpson exhorted Christians to pray to God for “a signal manifestation of God’s presence and supernatural power, by stretching forth Thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done in the name of Thy holy child, Jesus.”<sup>84</sup> At the C&MA General Council for China in 1907, there were several cases of tongue speaking and “other extraordinary spiritual manifestations.”<sup>85</sup>

The unpublished autobiographical manuscript of William Wallace Simpson (W.W. Simpson, no relation to A.B. Simpson), *Contending for the Faith*, contains

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<sup>84</sup> Michael D. Wilson, "Contending for Tongues: W.W. Simpson's Pentecostal Experience in Northwest China," in *Pneuma* 29 (2007) 281-298. 293.

<sup>85</sup> Wilson, 293.

accounts of such experience organizationally and geographically removed from but contemporaneous with the emergence of Pentecostal centers in Hong Kong and north China. W.W. Simpson first arrived in China in 1892 as a missionary of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), working with his partner William Christie in Taozhou (洮州), Gansu, eventually establishing five mission stations in Northwest China and counting more than fifty Han and Tibetan converts by 1908.

In January 1908, W.W. Simpson records, he, eight Western missionaries, and forty Han and Tibetan converts were gathered for an annual convention in Minzhou (岷州), Gansu. An afternoon meeting of Bible study centered on the sixth chapter of Romans ended with an invitation to the altar for the purpose of being born again. Simpson recorded that all knelt at the altar, many weeping, when suddenly “the tone of voice of one of our humble Chinese brethren changed.”<sup>86</sup> Simpson saw the man, “Mr. Yong,” whom he described as a poor, illiterate farmer who worked as the Simpson family cook, begin to shake violently until he fell prostrate, “as if crucified.”<sup>87</sup> The man began to speak in an unintelligible tongue:

For nearly an hour he lay prostrate speaking in a loud voice. I was dumbfounded, pacing the aisle thinking, “Lord, what does this mean?” Suddenly he cried out “ETERNITY IS NIGH” in purest emphatic English. I knew him well; had baptized him three years before; and knew it was utterly impossible for him to speak English.”<sup>88</sup>

After this marvelous utterance, the man then struggled to his knees and spoke first in the local Chinese dialect, and then in Mandarin, and then in “the most elegant poetry in

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<sup>86</sup> Wilson, 293.

<sup>87</sup> The Chinese characters for Mr. Yong’s name are not included in Wilson’s article, nor, presumably, in Simpson’s manuscript that was used as the major source for the article.

<sup>88</sup> Wilson, 285. Emphasis in Simpson’s text.

Chinese classical style.” He then “called the Western missionaries to him, and in a long prophetic message, told them how to carry on their work, who should lead, and what the results would be.”<sup>89</sup> Some months later, Simpson records, Mr. Yong convened three days of meetings, “in the spirit” nearly the whole time, speaking in tongues, interpreting, and prophesying. On the last day he announced that God would provide a sign to prove the truth of the Gospel. He called on the blind to come forward, and a Christian woman who was completely blind in one eye and who had only limited vision in the other regained perfect and lasting vision. “As a result of the miracle,” Simpson wrote, “many came to the faith and later were filled with the Spirit.”<sup>90</sup>

In the weeks after Mr. Yong’s initial utterance in January 1908, during which other Chinese congregants also engaged in glossolalia, Simpson began receiving magazines describing the spread of the Pentecostal movement, including one containing an article by Azusa Street veteran Alfred Garr and describing Alfred’s and his wife Lillian’s experiences at Azusa and in Calcutta, India. He became convinced that glossolalia was the sole evidence of Spirit baptism and sought it diligently until receiving Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues at a missionary meeting in Taozhou in May 1912. After his own experience with glossolalia, Simpson traveled around northwest China, leading meetings designed to move Chinese Christians to receive Spirit baptism and speak in tongues. After a short period of time, Pentecostalism was so widespread in Gansu that the C&MA Mission Board in New York knew that “the work in Gansu had become largely Pentecostal,” to the point that the board asked William Christie, who was

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<sup>89</sup> Wilson, 285.

<sup>90</sup> Wilson, 287.

chair of the C&MA executive committee for the region, if now only tongue-speaking missionaries should be sent to Gansu.<sup>91</sup>

The issue of tongues would prove to be a divisive issue within the C&MA, both in China and abroad, eventually leading to W.W. Simpson's split with the C&MA and subsequent affiliation with the fledgling Pentecostal denomination, Assemblies of God, in 1915. I will not delve into the details of this split here, but the widespread internal discussion of the issue of glossolalia within an officially non-Pentecostal mission organization shows the great range and influence of miraculous modes of Christianity in the early decades of the twentieth century.

*Miraculous Christianity and the efficacy of Pentecostal publications*

The fact that W.W. Simpson began his own search for Spirit baptism in 1908 at his Christian & Missionary Alliance mission station in Gansu after reading two articles in early Pentecostal newspapers, and the fact that Bernt Berntsen was motivated to cross the Pacific ocean from China to Seattle and then journey on to Los Angeles simply after reading a Pentecostal magazine, suggests the effectiveness of Pentecostal publications to Christians of a certain persuasion. These were Christians whose individual position along the Biblical-institutional spectrum caused them to not only embrace miraculous Christianity but also to be receptive to extending the logic of literal Biblical hermeneutics to stressing the central role of these miraculous modes in defining authentic Christianity. In the first section of this chapter we have already seen how easily miraculous Christian

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<sup>91</sup> Wilson, 288.

accounts were encapsulated within both written accounts and word-of-mouth transmissions. Here we might point to the widespread nature of Pentecostal publications within China during the Republican Era, combined with the decentralized structure of Pentecostalism as a movement, to explain why Pentecostal groups like the True Jesus Church, although they did not introduce miraculous modes to Chinese Christianity, may have spread heightened expectations of such modes through their emphasis on spiritual gifts and through efficient (published) proselytizing efforts that took advantage of the “narratability” of miraculous Christian experiences.<sup>92</sup>

The extensive use of publications in the spread of Pentecostal churches in China suggests that Pentecostalism is a form of miraculous Christianity that is especially conducive to transmission through print. This is because it does not depend on a hierarchical chain of ecclesial authority, or in a particular sort of physical sacred space, or even necessarily in a systematic theological creed, but on a personal religious experience, namely the experience of Spirit baptism as manifested by speaking in tongues. When received by Chinese Christians who already accepted the religious authority of the Bible and who were prepared to extend this Biblical interpretation to its fullest extent, Pentecostal publications were able to transmit not only ideas, but actual religious

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<sup>92</sup> Deng Zhaoming makes a similar point. He says that the True Jesus Church and Jesus Family emerged because they were “indigenous” (and could capitalize on anti-western sentiment) and because American Pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity “provided a form of Christian religious expression that was loose enough to allow for the emergence of such a church. What was especially significant about these two foreign religious movements was their stress on the leadership of the Holy Spirit and the resulting de-emphasis on educated (read western educated) ordained clergy. One need only experience the power of the Holy Spirit and then he or she was free to evangelize and start a movement. The result of this combination of Chinese patriotism with imported free-form Christianity was the first serious attempt at creating “Three-Self” churches in China.” (Deng, 439-440). A study by Abbebe Kileyesus on Pentecostal movements in Africa (Eritrea) similarly demonstrates that Pentecostal churches fiercely criticize established denominational churches for “compromising true Christianity” and that their success lies in the effectiveness of their organization: “finding their authority in their ability to publicize and disseminate power spiritual messages efficiently and attractively, manifesting powers of organization heretofore unknown to the longstanding Christian denominations, and assembling record-breaking crowds at their well-planned revivals . . .” (84). Abbebe Kileyesus, “Cosmologies in Collision: Pentecostal Conversion and Christian Cults in Asmara,” *African Studies Review* 49, no. 1 (April 2006), 75-92.

experience (or a prescription through which an ordinary person could obtain this sort of experience).

As I have argued in the previous chapter, an appeal to Biblical logic and precedent was especially effective in justifying Pentecostal beliefs and practices in China, because of the relative weight ascribed to classical texts and the accessibility of the Bible as a source of Christian authority. This Biblically based Christianity emphasized with particular acumen by Pentecostal groups such as the True Jesus Church was a simpler, do-it-yourself, and easily defensible alternative to opening the educational and political can of worms that was the Western Christian theological and cultural tradition. Furthermore, frequent appeals to teaching and precedents found in the text of the Bible—Pentecostal articles are crammed full of scriptural references—ensured that these claims would not go unexplored by conscientious Christian readers.

How widely distributed were early Pentecostal publications, and what was their impact? This is a difficult question to answer because of the relatively sparse sources from this time period, but we can get some sense of the publications' distribution and an idea of how they could shape the religious experiences and expectations of those who read them. Returning to the two early publications discussed in Chapter One, *Pentecostal Truth* and *Popular Gospel Truth*, it seems that their circulation expanded rapidly within a relatively short period of time. By 1915, *Pentecostal Truth* was being printed in 8,000 copies and distributed nationally throughout China. It seems that by this time that Mok Lai Chi's organization in Hong Kong was very well established and funded, which was probably largely due to its English-language outreach to Western Pentecostals. In the September 1915 issue of *Pentecostal Truth*, Mok encourages Pentecostal missionaries in

China who did not receive regular support from any assembly at home to write to the paper with reports of their progress and needs.<sup>93</sup> The April 1917 issue mentioned that Mok's organization operated two girls' schools, suggesting a significant level of institutional support.<sup>94</sup>

*Popular Gospel Truth* seems to have been a somewhat smaller-scale operation. A note from Berntsen in the September 1915 issue says that the paper is mailed to 1000+ addresses and that of these, about 300 people had written back in appreciation.<sup>95</sup> In November 1915 Berntsen apologized that he was unable to reply to the large volume of incoming letters that he received.<sup>96</sup> Various reports from local congregations record numbers of converts at large meetings, such as a 1914 report of 200 being baptized at a meeting in Datong (大同), Shanxi province, or a 1918 report that over 300 people in Yuanshi County, Shandong province, had received the Spirit.<sup>97</sup> Although the organizational reach of Berntsen's Apostolic Faith church seems to have been on a much smaller scale, numerically and institutionally, than Mok Lai Chi's Pentecostal Mission in Hong Kong, the publication *Popular Gospel Truth* itself seems to have been for some an effective vehicle for transmitting not only Pentecostal ideas, but even experiences. According to Berntsen, readers often wrote *Popular Gospel Truth* to say that after reading the newspaper they had received the baptism of the Spirit for the first time. Some readers even testified that after sending a piece of cloth to the offices of *Popular*

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<sup>93</sup> *PT*, March 1915, 4.

<sup>94</sup> *PT*, April 1917, 4.

<sup>95</sup> *PGT*, September 1915.

<sup>96</sup> *PGT*, November 1915.

<sup>97</sup> *PGT*, October 1914, March 1918.

*Gospel Truth* to be blessed by the publishers and returned in the mail, people afflicted with illnesses had been healed when the cloth was placed on their heads and prayer was said.<sup>98</sup>

As for the publications of the True Jesus Church, by all accounts they were widely distributed and served a major function in the early spread of the church throughout China. Many of the published articles in the second and third issues of *Correction of the Church in All Nations*, which began to be printed in 1919, were in fact letters from Christians throughout China who had read an earlier issue of *Correction of the Church in All Nations* and who were writing to express admiration and interest in the teachings of the True Jesus Church. This was the beginning of a common pattern for the spread of the church nationwide, whereby a local church leader would read a True Jesus Church publication and write requesting that a True Jesus Church preacher be sent to explain the church's teachings. There were many True Jesus Church publications, many of them distributed directly to other Christian organizations via mass mailings or in-person outside church worship services. The publication statistics in the *30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Publication* list twenty-one total magazines and newspapers printed between 1919 and 1938 (including major publications distributed by national church headquarters in Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing (南京) such as *Correction of the Church in All Nations* and the *Holy Spirit Times*, but also smaller newspapers produced in regional strongholds of the True Jesus Church such as Changsha [長沙], Hunan, and Putian [莆田], Fujian).<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *PGT*, February 1916, March 1918.

<sup>99</sup> *30<sup>th</sup>*, F11.

The main official publication of the True Jesus Church, the *Holy Spirit Times* (聖靈報), was published monthly and distributed nationally as the True Jesus Church's official periodical from August 1926 until at least January 1951.<sup>100</sup> The first issue, published in Nanjing, contains a combination of national church news ("Reflections on the True Jesus Church's National Theology Convention," etc.), religious teachings ("The True Jesus Church is the Only Path to Salvation," "Christ's Holy Spirit is Necessary for Changing a Person's Heart," "Essentials for Receiving the Holy Spirit," "Signs of the Last Days," etc.), reports from local churches, and testimonies ("From Doubt to Faith"). Doctrinal issues most frequently raised in the *Holy Spirit Times* had to do with the True Jesus Church's views on the necessity of receiving Spirit baptism as evidenced by glossolalia in order to be saved, the various ways in which only the True Jesus Church conformed to the standard set for Christian practice in the Bible, and the proper procedures for the efficacious execution of practices such as Sabbath worship (must be observed on Saturday), the Lord's supper (grape juice, not wine, must be used), and baptism (by immersion in "great water").

By the accounts of numerous member testimonies, the *Holy Spirit Times* and other True Jesus Church literature were very effective proselytizing tools. Numerous conversion stories of people who were originally members of other Christian churches

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<sup>100</sup> The January 1951 issue is the last issue held by the True Jesus Church archives in Taiwan; the December 1950 issue is the last issue held by the Shanghai Municipal Archives. From 1926 to mid-1930, the *Holy Spirit Times* was the official organ of the southern faction of the True Jesus Church led by Zhang Barnabas, though claiming to be the official organ of the entire church. After Zhang's excommunication and the church's reunification in 1930, the *Holy Spirit Times* was the official organ for the church nationwide, though Zhang Barnabas regrouped congregations loyal to him under the name "China True Jesus Church" (中華真耶穌教會 *Zhonghua zhen yesu jiaohui*) and published another widely distributed newspaper, *Trumpet* (*Jiaohao* 角號), that was very similar in organization and content to the *Holy Spirit Times*, so similar that it could feasibly be used alongside the *Holy Spirit Times* as a primary source for True Jesus Church doctrine and practice during the Republican era. The schism in the church seems to have been almost entirely based on personality differences and competing claims to foundership, but doctrines and practices were largely unchanged.

relate first becoming interested in the church by reading the *Holy Spirit Times*' report that "the Holy Spirit is personally at work within the True Jesus Church," or by reading a True Jesus Church pamphlet and carefully checking all of the references to Biblical verses listed therein.<sup>101</sup> As in the case of *Popular Gospel Truth*, some people reported that upon reading about "asking for the Spirit" in the *Holy Spirit Times*, they began an intense personal pursuit of the Holy Spirit which finally culminated with receiving it and joining the True Jesus Church. In 1929 one Zhang Ningfa (張寧法) reported that the day he first saw a copy of the *Holy Spirit Times*, "the more I read it, the happier I got. I read until midnight."<sup>102</sup> Another testimony from the same issue described a Chen Timon (陳提門) from Hunan who, upon reading the *Holy Spirit Times*, began to "ask for the Spirit."<sup>103</sup> So intense was his desire that he fasted for ten days with the goal of receiving the Holy Spirit, but with no success. Later he heard that Zhang Lingsheng (張靈生), the True Jesus Church leader, was holding a revival meeting in Beijing and that all those who attended were practically guaranteed to receive the Spirit. He sold his clothes and household utensils to fund his trip to Beijing, but was disappointed when he noticed that some of the hymns and sermons at the meeting struck him as flawed, and felt that there had been no outpouring of the Spirit. He expressed his disappointment to Zhang Lingsheng, who then knelt with him and laid hands on his head, whereupon Chen suddenly received the Spirit, spoke in tongues, and went on to become, as his Biblical name Timon suggests (提門 Timen, from Acts 6:5), a stalwart member of the True Jesus

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<sup>101</sup> *Holy Spirit Times* (聖靈報 *Shengling Bao*), printed in Shanghai and Nanjing by the True Jesus Church, hereafter *HST*, October 15, 1926 testimony, September 15, 1926, testimony.

<sup>102</sup> *HST*, September 15, 1926, testimony; January 20, 1929, 17, testimony of Zhang Ningfa.

<sup>103</sup> *HST*, January 15, 1929, testimony of Chen Timon, 20.

Church.<sup>104</sup> To some Christians who already accepted the authority of the Bible and yearned for a degree of spiritual intensity that was greater than what they already experienced in the denominational churches, the *Holy Spirit Times* and other True Jesus Church literature delivered a welcome message.

Above I have already pointed out one common trope that tends to occur throughout accounts of miraculous Christianity, an emphasis on the failure of all other methods of help such as Western medicine, Chinese medicine, Buddha, and popular traditional deities (“idols”).<sup>105</sup> In True Jesus Church testimonies, this emphasis of failure often extends to other Christian denominations’ attempts at healing. For example, one story in the 1927 *Holy Spirit Times* described a woman whose husband had been a Methodist deacon for over twenty years, but who went to two Methodist-established hospitals (and who presumably was also the recipient of Methodist prayer) without seeing any improvement before turning to the True Jesus Church and receiving relief.<sup>106</sup> A similar story appears in the testimony of Guo Luke (郭路加) and his wife (郭伉儷) in the November 1950 *Holy Spirit Times*, in which the couple were Presbyterians who worked as administrators in a Western medicine hospital, but who developed severe illnesses that could not be healed with medicine or Presbyterian prayers, to the point where in desperation they accepted True Jesus Church baptism and were miraculously healed.<sup>107</sup>

The *Holy Spirit Times* was not just a proselytizing tool, but also a church organ dedicated to reinforcing a sense of church unity and to renewing the faith of those who

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<sup>104</sup> *HST*, January 15, 1929, testimony of Chen Timon, 20.

<sup>105</sup> *HST*, November 15, 1926, such as in the report of Zhou Daoyi from Anhui which says that Yang Hu Shi (a woman) was sick, with no help from medicine, Buddha, or idols.

<sup>106</sup> *HST*, December 20, 1927, 17.

<sup>107</sup> *HST*, November 15, 1950, 23.

had already converted. Most issues of the *Holy Spirit Times* contained one to three testimonies submitted by church members from China, Taiwan, or overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. As already seen above, these member-submitted testimonies frequently reported miraculous occurrences such as speaking in tongues, visions, healing, suddenly overcoming opium addiction, exorcism, or avoidance of certain disaster. Probably people tended to submit testimonies of particularly unusual experiences, which were further screened by editors looking for the most dramatic displays of the power of the Holy Spirit that would validate the True Jesus Church's exclusivist claims. Framing these, however, were moral or theological narratives that were also grounded in the intimate, familiar circumstances of the individual's everyday life. A few testimonies dealt solely with "spiritual" matters such as receiving forgiveness for one's sins, or successfully exhorting family members to convert.

Sources outside the church, such as the three Republican era Christian magazines held by the Shanghai Library, confirm the widespread nature of these True Jesus Church publications and the church's aggressive proselytizing within Christian communities across China. One early mention of the church appears in the April 1927 issue of *The Christian*. In this issue, an article criticizing the True Jesus Church was framed in question-and-answer format, addressing the question: "Recently in China there has arisen the True Jesus Church . . . I read the *Holy Spirit Times* . . ." <sup>108</sup> This query suggests that church publications such as the *Holy Spirit Times* were at the vanguard of the church's spread throughout China.

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<sup>108</sup> *The Christian*, April 1927, 186-187.

A March 1929 article by Zhang Yijing (張亦鏡), the editor of *True Light*, a Baptist denominational paper published in Canton (廣州), acknowledged the rise of the True Jesus Church in the past several years, including a recent incident in 1928 in which a congregation in Henan (河南) province was “stolen” by Zhang Barnabas.<sup>109</sup> *The Chinese Christian Intelligencer* also contains an article in January 1936 acknowledging that the publications of the True Jesus Church are widespread.

All in all, it seems that Pentecostal churches including the True Jesus Church made effective use of publication-based outreach. The reason why these publications may have been so effective may be that the widespread nature of miraculous modes throughout the entire Chinese Christian community in the early twentieth century provided a broad base to which a new and resourceful Pentecostal group such as the True Jesus Church could fruitfully make its case. It presented itself as a church that fully embraced and even intensified these miraculous modes of Christianity by virtue of its emphasis on close adherence to the text of the Bible, the essential reality of the work of the Holy Spirit, and its exclusivist position as the only church within which the efficacious power of God was fully deployed. It made a targeted appeal to those Chinese Christians whose personal position along the Biblical-institutional spectrum caused them to seek miraculous modes of Christianity. Precisely because they did not have to make any “new” claims, but simply had to appeal to already-existing miraculous beliefs and inclinations, the teachings of the True Jesus Church could be spread with relative ease through print and word-of-mouth transmission.

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<sup>109</sup> *True Light*, March 21, 1929, 16-21.

Part Three: Women and Power in the True Jesus Church—A Case Study in Miraculous Christianity

In this last section of the chapter I will examine at a closer level of detail one of the ways in which the miraculous mode of Christianity threatened to upset traditional hierarchies, including ecclesiastical and gender hierarchies. I will focus primarily on accounts of women in the True Jesus Church but will also set these accounts against the background of other women's religious experiences recorded in *Pentecostal Truth* and *Popular Gospel Truth*.<sup>110</sup>

Examining the workings of miraculous Christianity may help us to revise our understanding of the balance of power within Chinese Christian communities. As discussed in the section above, the prevalence of miraculous modes within many if not most Christian communities in China ensured that power was never entirely concentrated in institutional hierarchies, even in the very early days when Western missionaries occupied most of the higher ecclesiastical positions. Lay believers at the grassroots also exercised real spiritual power, both through their individual access to miraculous practices such as healing, and also through the community of believers from which the reputation of a particular church, denomination, or religious leader was generated.

The specific case of Pentecostal women within the True Jesus Church during the Republican era shows how the existence of miraculous Christianity at the level of grassroots practice could act as a counterweight to the formal hierarchical distribution of

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<sup>110</sup> In researching this section, I searched all copies of *Pentecostal Truth* and *Popular Gospel Truth* for accounts of women's miraculous experiences and read through all of the testimonies of church members in mainland China in the *Holy Spirit Times* from its inaugural issue in 1926 to the end of 1928, and from the beginning of 1947 (when it resumed publication after a long pause from 1937 to 1946 on account of the Sino-Japanese war) to the last available issues in 1951, also looking specifically for accounts involving women.

power. Accounts recording women healing, exorcising, or assuming leadership within the True Jesus Church community are especially significant in the dual context of Pentecostal Christianity's theologically and socially conservative approach to gender, and the overwhelmingly patriarchal norms of Chinese society. I argue that these accounts of women's exercise of miraculous Christianity within the True Jesus Church can shed light on the ongoing debate in studies of women and religion on why so many women appear to be content within patriarchal forms of religion.

*The problem of women and patriarchal religious traditions*

Numerous studies, including studies of Pentecostal women, have set out to explain women's participation in and even contentment with patriarchal Christian traditions.<sup>111</sup> Over time, the framework of "oppression versus liberation" has been replaced with what Marie Griffith, a historian of women's religious movements, calls "richer and more complicated frameworks for interpreting female religious activity and women's power within organizational bounds."<sup>112</sup> Some have argued that women

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<sup>111</sup> See, for example, the article by Elizabeth Ozorak in which she acknowledges higher rates of women's religious participation and asks, "Why do women disproportionately participate in an institution that systematically devalues them?" Her answer is that women perceive inequality but cope with it by "cognitive restructuring"; women are willing to cope with inequality in part because it is peripheral to their faith experience. Elizabeth Weiss Ozorak, "The Power, but not the Glory: How Women Empower Themselves Through Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35, no. 1 (Mar 1996): 17-29. In a similar vein, and speaking specifically about Pentecostal women, Harvey Cox also "Why would these women want to be Pentecostals, let alone Pentecostal preachers? Why would they want to become part of a religious movement which still, at least formally, insists that the man must be "the head of the woman" at home, and also in the church (unless God makes exceptions)? Why are women drawn in such lopsided numbers to Pentecostalism?" His conclusion dovetails with that of Elizabeth Brusco, which is that "[f]or women, the Pentecostal message provided the best way they could see to effect a genuine change in their family relations, to get their men to forgo some of the macho posturing the popular culture encourages, and to reorder the priorities on how the limited family income was spent." (Cox 136-137; Elizabeth Brusco, *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Columbia* (University of Texas Press, 2010).

<sup>112</sup> R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

trapped within patriarchal religious traditions find innovative ways to subvert male domination.<sup>113</sup> Others have suggested that social or cultural benefits, such as being involved in a caring community, or having a stable nuclear family, form the core of the positive meaning that women derive from their religious participation, while the formal exclusion of women from ecclesiastical hierarchies is a peripheral issue.<sup>114</sup> Still others show that in some contexts, especially those outside North America, patriarchal religions' approach to gender roles may actually be seen as relatively progressive or liberating for women, either in contrast to established gender traditions that are even more conservative, or through their emphasis on high standards of moral behavior for men.<sup>115</sup> Referring to Pentecostal women in China, Chen-Yang Kao has argued that Pentecostal Christianity was attractive to women because it gave them the new opportunity to worship a clean, high god whereas traditional Chinese popular religion had relegated them to the pacification of polluting spirits and ghosts.<sup>116</sup> The overall trend in recent

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<sup>113</sup> Most of the work on Pentecostalism and women is contemporary and focuses on women in societies that are very different from Republican era China. On the question of how women negotiate Pentecostal patriarchy in particular, Elaine Lawless has argued that Pentecostal American women employ various strategies, such as the performance of personal testimonies, that allow them to temporarily circumvent or find a "respite" from the male domination of the Pentecostal community (Elaine J. Lawless, "Rescripting Their Lives and Narratives: Spiritual Life Stories of Pentecostal Preachers," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 7, no. 1 (1991): 53-71; "Shouting for the Lord: the Power of Women's Speech in the Pentecostal Religious Service," *Journal of American Folklore* 96, no. 382 (1983): 434-459.

<sup>114</sup> See Ozorak; also Sally K. Gallagher, Christian Smith, "Symbolic Traditionalism and Pragmatic Egalitarianism: Contemporary Evangelicals, Families, and Gender," *Gender and Society* 13, no.2 (April 1999): 211-233.

<sup>115</sup> Salvatore Cucchiari's study of Pentecostalism in Sicily suggests that Pentecostalism actually provides a more ambiguous form of patriarchy than Catholicism, the dominant religion. Salvatore Cucchiari, "Between shame and sanctification: patriarchy and its transformation in Sicilian Pentecostalism," in *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 4 (November 1990): 687-707. See also Elizabeth Brusco's work on machismo.

<sup>116</sup> Chen-Yang Kao has argued that the Cultural Revolution created a decentralized, feminized religious sphere that gave women new choices for religious involvement. He further hypothesizes that women embraced the practices of "Pentecostalism" (by which I think we could more precisely say "miraculous Christianity") in large numbers because healing and exorcism helped them with their duties of misfortune management, which misfortune was particularly acute during this time. Altogether, he argues that the large number of women freed to choose non-traditional religions in the breakdown of village religion in the Cultural Revolution, combined with women's particular affinity for Pentecostal methods of misfortune management, explains the prevalence of miraculous practices such as healing and exorcism within Chinese Christianity to this day. I agree that the Cultural Revolution certainly "cleared the playing field" at the level of ecclesiastical hierarchies, which were male-dominated, and that Pentecostal Christianity was

work on women and religion is to give weight to women's everyday religious practice instead of simply focusing on the formal codes and structures of patriarchal power.<sup>117</sup> I think that this recent emphasis on the significance of practice is helpful in approaching the experience of women Pentecostals in China.

My observations of the women in the True Jesus Church, who in the dual context of conservative Pentecostal theology and conservative Chinese gender norms had very little formal power, suggest another possible answer to the question of why women participate disproportionately in patriarchal religious traditions. I think that the miraculous modes of Christianity, which can be found not only within Pentecostalism but also within other Christian movements, give women access to divine power that may be a more real, tangible, and meaningful form of power than formal power within an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Furthermore, the conservative theological interpretations that limit women's religious authority in some ways can also legitimize other significant forms of authority.

To illustrate this perspective, below I will discuss examples from the historical records of Pentecostal women, first briefly noting a variety of women's recorded

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useful to Chinese women in managing misfortune. However, I think that the chronological boundaries suggested by Kao can be reexamined. For instance, my sources on the True Jesus Church show that women in the Republican era already participated in Pentecostal Christianity and were hardly excluded from the everyday activities and local organization of Pentecostal churches. I also think that while the Cultural Revolution was certainly a terrible period of time for many people, "misfortune" in abundance also existed in the preceding several decades of famine, flood, civil war, foreign invasion, and other conditions very difficult to bear. Surely the threshold for triggering the usefulness of miraculous Christian practices such as healing and exorcism for Chinese women could have been reached long before the 1960s, and indeed this chapter has shown that miraculous practices have been part of Christianity in China since at least the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and probably earlier. Chen-Yang Kao, "The Cultural Revolution and the Emergence of Pentecostal-style Protestantism in China," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 24, no. 2 (May 2009): 171-188.

<sup>117</sup> For example, a 2004 chapter by Amy Hollywood suggests that we pay more attention to religious practice because the ability to turn religious practice and ritual into feminine performance and religious belief into androgynous salvation mitigates androcentric doctrines. Amy Hollywood, "Practice, Belief, and Feminist Philosophy of Religion," in Pamela Su Anderson and Beverley Clack, eds., *Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004), 225-240.

experiences within the publications of the Hong Kong Pentecostal Mission and Berntsen's Apostolic Faith Church, and then focusing on women's exercise of miraculous Christianity in informal and formal capacities within the True Jesus Church. I should preface this discussion by acknowledging that historians of women and religion face a challenging situation in that in the case of many religious traditions dominated by male leaders, including the True Jesus Church, official institutional records often contain little mention of female leaders or of women's religious activities or experiences.<sup>118</sup> Even the 1947 "Recorded Survey of Extraordinary Miracles and Wonders in the True Jesus Church," with its detailed charts listing the name, sex, and age of the person involved, the number of years they had been sick, the name and conditions of the illness, the place and date of healing, and the aftermath of their healing, and the name of the healer, is not in actuality a comprehensive or even representative account of the miracles experienced by people in the church. Rather the chart seems to be intended to impress the reader with a wide range of healings that had been performed by various prominent True Jesus Church leaders (always male) whose spiritual gifts were responsible for the healing.<sup>119</sup> I have found most of the material for this section from local reports and believers' individual testimonies submitted to the *Holy Spirit Times*. However, the testimonies in the *Holy Spirit Times* list the everyday experiences of laypeople, including many women.

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<sup>118</sup> For example, in the nine annual national meetings bringing together each time on average five to seven regional representatives from across China held between 1930 and 1946 (there was a large gap for the war years of 1938-1945), only twice, in 1931 and 1934, was a woman representative certainly in attendance (in 1946 one of the nine delegates may have also been a woman, but I cannot be sure from the characters used for the name). In 1931 and 1934 the woman representative was Chen Maria of Fuzhou. 30<sup>th</sup>, E1-E5.

<sup>119</sup> 30<sup>th</sup>, N25.

*Women and miraculous Christianity in Pentecostal Truth and Popular Gospel Truth*

Numerous miraculous accounts exist to record the experiences of women in Pentecostal organizations that predated the True Jesus Church. In April 1917, *Pentecostal Truth* published the visions of Hu Zhiying (胡志英), a woman who saw a shining cross, and Yuan Lizhen (袁勵貞), a woman who saw an angel.<sup>120</sup> In a report written by Zhang Zhirui (張之瑞, who defected from Berntsen's Apostolic Faith Church to Wei's True Jesus Church within a few years of the report), one woman who had received the Spirit subsequently had the power to detect others' secret sins and personality flaws. The wife of Zhang Lingsheng (張靈生, the same Lingsheng who eventually defected from Berntsen's church to the True Jesus Church) was reported to have prayed and felt her spirit go to heaven, where she saw a tall man wearing white clothes. Another Pentecostal woman who was being abused by her husband on account of her belief had a vision in which a voice told her not to mourn because Jesus would come in three years.<sup>121</sup> At an Apostolic Faith Spiritual Gifts Meeting in Shandong, one woman saw a shining white cross in the air, and another woman had an unusual instance of glossolalia in which she spoke first in Mandarin, and then in a classical Chinese poetic form, which was followed by prophecy about the impending judgment; another report from the Apostolic Faith Spiritual Gifts Meeting in Shandong a year later described a forty-seven year-old woman who was overcome with the power of the Holy Spirit to the

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<sup>120</sup> *PT*, April 1917, 3.

<sup>121</sup> *PGT*, September 1915.

point that she was convulsed with laughter for over an hour, while another woman who was the leader of young girls within the church received the Spirit and fell to the ground involuntarily.<sup>122</sup>

*Women's informal exercise of spiritual power through Spirit infilling and prayer*

Women's exercise of spiritual power within True Jesus Church occurred in three ways. In the first place, the various manifestations of being "filled with the Holy Spirit" gave women a sense of divine power that enabled them to perform special feats, such as speaking in tongues or prophesying to large groups of people who accepted their words as oracles from God.

The second way in which women could exercise spiritual power was by acting as healers in the context of the view that all believers could access God's power through prayer. Within the Pentecostal tradition, this egalitarian view of access to divine power was articulated in terms of Biblicism and the doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, although, as I have already mentioned above, this view of the power of ordinary believers' prayer within the Christian tradition is far from being limited to Pentecostalism. Examples of such experiences include the story of a fifty-four year-old woman in Hunan (湖南) who prayed for a healing miracle for her grandson's bad leg. Because her faith was weak, the report read, his leg was sometimes good and sometimes bad, and so requested the prayer of other members on behalf of the woman and her

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<sup>122</sup> PGT, November 1916, 5; January 1917, 7.

grandson.<sup>123</sup> In a story from late 1950, a thirty-seven year old woman named Zhong Chunzhi (仲春芝) was healed of various ailments with the aid of a woman, Dorcas Ma (馬多加), who helped Zhong Chunzhi “ask for the Spirit” (upon receiving the Holy Spirit, she was healed).<sup>124</sup>

Healing and exorcism were not the only ways in which women within the True Jesus Church exercised spiritual gifts, power, and influence. A *Holy Spirit Times* article reporting on the church in Ji'an (吉安), Jiangxi (江西) province, notes an instance in which a Deaconess Hou (候女執事) was overcome with the Spirit, shaking and speaking in tongues.<sup>125</sup> Another story from the *Holy Spirit Times* in early 1949 relates the experience of a Hong Cornelius (洪哥尼流), who in a time of need remembered and applied counsel given to him by a Deaconess Chen (陳女執事), which was that any member of the church could work miracles through prayer.<sup>126</sup>

### *Women's formal exercise of spiritual power as church functionaries*

These mentions of “deaconesses” bring us to the third way which women in the True Jesus Church exercised spiritual power: in the official church positions of “preacher” (傳道) and “deaconess” (女執事) within the church hierarchy. As far as I understand based on the current True Jesus Church ecclesiastical system and the

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<sup>123</sup> *HST*, April 20, 1927.

<sup>124</sup> *HST*, November 15, 1950, 23.

<sup>125</sup> *HST*, November 20, 1927, 15.

<sup>126</sup> *HST*, February 15, 1949, 14.

Republican era records, since the institutions of the church were stabilized in the mid-1920s, the chief church offices are preacher (male and female, today most often married couples), deacon (male and female, usually individuals), and elder (male only).

Preachers travel from place to place, and do not officially occupy positions within the administrative hierarchy of a local church unit, as deacons and elders do. Most women preachers are married to preacher husbands, so the couple can travel as one unit.

Deacons and deaconesses give sermons and participate at church rites such as baptism, footwashing, “asking for the Spirit,” and in spiritual ministrations such as healing, exorcism, and so on. Elders occupy the highest position of authority within the church as the main speakers at church meetings and the main officiants at church rites.

The position of elder is not open to women. One key reason for this distinction in women’s access to spiritual hierarchy that was given to me by contemporary church leaders, who are my only source for any sort of explanation on this question, is the fact that while the term “deaconess” (女執事 female-deacon) is used in the Bible, there is no mention in the Bible of female elders. Ironically, the verse in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, which holds the key to women’s wielding of ecclesiastical authority in the True Jesus Church, occurs in the context of a larger passage containing other verses in which women’s credentials to spiritual authority are seriously circumscribed. To get a sense of this context, I include the passage in its entirety below, highlighting in bold the two key sections mentioned above:

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion. **Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then**

**Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.**

The saying is sure: If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for gain; they must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then if they prove themselves blameless let them serve as deacons. **The women [in the Chinese translation, "deaconesses"] likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things.**<sup>127</sup>

Hence the Biblical literalism of the True Jesus Church accepted scriptural statements of women's inferiority to men in the ecclesiastical and even spiritual hierarchy. At the same time, it relied on these scriptural statements to acknowledge a position of authority for women within these hierarchies. Scholars have usually analyzed Biblical literalism as an entirely reactionary influence restricting women from equal religious participation, but in the case of the True Jesus Church, from very early on in the Republican era and continuing into the present, this Biblical literalism has also been responsible for the presence of women within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, fulfilling administrative responsibilities as well as officiating in church rites and spiritual ministrations.

One early account of a True Jesus Church woman healing in an official ecclesiastical capacity, told by local leader Zhou Daoyi (周道一), reports that a married woman from Anhui (安徽), Mrs. Yang Hu (楊胡氏), was afflicted with sickness until a

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<sup>127</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:8-15, RSV.

“deaconess from the Yu family” (余家女執事) came, laid hands on her head, and healed her.<sup>128</sup> Another account by leader Cao Guangjie (曹光潔) related the story of a sick person who was healed by a deaconess.<sup>129</sup> A testimony of 1948 reported that a woman named Mrs. Lou (婁氏) was healed by Deaconess Chen (陳女執事) and Deaconess Wu (吳女執事).<sup>130</sup> In 1950 another account testified that when a Mrs. Xiao (肖氏) contracted leprosy, “Liu Ai” (劉愛)—who may have been Wei Paul’s wife and if so was a deaconess and prominent leader within the church—and another person went to pray for Mrs. Xiao, whereupon she was immediately healed.<sup>131</sup> One especially dramatic account from 1948 tells of a Mama Zhao (趙娘娘) who suddenly collapsed while packing sticky rice for the Dragon Boat Festival and who appeared dead for three hours while funeral clothes and a coffin were being prepared, only to be called back to life by two female True Jesus Church preachers, Chen Maria (陳瑪利亞) and Shi Meiyong (施美英), who came to her house to pray for her.<sup>132</sup> In all these cases women within the True Jesus Church did not simply play the role of hysterical victims of possession or sickness in need of spiritual or physical healing, but were also wielders of spiritual power with clear authority to heal.

That women could informally and formally engage in the legitimate exercise of such power within the patriarchal structure of the True Jesus Church shows that formal,

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<sup>128</sup> *HST*, November 15, 1926, 11.

<sup>129</sup> *HST*, February 15, 1927, 16.

<sup>130</sup> *HST*, December 15, 1948, 14.

<sup>131</sup> *HST*, November 15, 1950, 23.

<sup>132</sup> *HST*, January 15, 1948, 15.

structural power like ecclesiastical office is just one form of power. Religious traditions that scholars see as generally suppressive of women's power along the lines of hierarchical authority may actually grant women more power in terms of the ability to enact the miraculous. What is a more meaningful measure of spiritual power—to be able to be sermonize to a congregation every Sunday, or to be able to raise someone from the dead?

### Conclusion

The success of a Pentecostal movement like the True Jesus Church was due not to its “supernatural” or “miraculous” modes, which as I have shown were already widespread throughout Chinese Christianity at the time of its founding, but to its effective self-representation as the one church in China and indeed the world that extended the Biblical logic of miraculous Christianity to its fullest extent.

The abundance of stories of particularistic protection, healing, visions, exorcism, ecstatic worship, and glossolalia within denominational, independent, and Pentecostal publications from the Republican era demonstrate the centrality of miraculous modes within Chinese Christianity. Miraculous Christianity's conduciveness to transmission along existing conduits within the Chinese religious environment may help to explain its widespread influence, which persists in the present. In searching for the origins of miraculous Christianity in China we must not only consider possible explanations such as continuity and deprivation, but also the important fact that miraculous modes are deeply embedded within the worldwide Christian tradition itself. Hence it should be no surprise

that these organic Christian manifestations were to be found within Chinese Christianity at the grassroots.

Because of the widespread nature of miraculous modes within Christianity and especially Chinese Christianity, the evangelizing literature of the True Jesus Church and other Pentecostal groups could be remarkably effective in its appeal to the fundamental Biblical assumptions shaping these modes. Indeed, the strength of miraculous modes of Christianity at the level of grassroots practice exerted a balancing influence within Christian organizations in which leaders at the top were subject to lay evaluations of their efficacy as religious functionaries and in which ordinary believers were widely believed to be capable of calling on God to enact great supernatural feats. The significance of such an egalitarian approach to access to divine power can be clearly seen in the case study of women in the True Jesus Church. For these women, a literal interpretation of the Bible dictated submission within a patriarchal order, but also legitimized their position as potent spiritual functionaries within their community.