

Article

# Communism and the Rise of the Anti-Christian Movement in Republican China

Haiyan Zhu <sup>1,2,\*</sup> and Xiao Lin <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Center for Liberal Arts, Meiji Gakuin University, Yokohama 2448539, Japan

<sup>2</sup> Global Liberal Arts Program, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo 1838534, Japan

<sup>3</sup> School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, London WC1E 7HU, UK

\* Correspondence: zhuhu614@yahoo.co.jp

**Abstract:** Scholars have acknowledged that much of the early support for the anti-Christian movement in Shanghai and Beijing in 1922 came from radical individuals and organizations with ties to the Communists, anarchists, and the Guomindang left, but little attention has been given to the overlapping linkages between the Soviet-supported radical activists and the anti-Christian student groups in the Chinese historiography. This article fills this gap in the literature by highlighting the Communist-dominated Socialist Youth League in Shanghai as a key initiating force in managing the anti-Christian movement of early 1922. It shows how the Communists blended their anti-religious and anti-imperialist discourses with Leninist–Marxist ideology to win the hearts and minds of the Chinese youth.

**Keywords:** Chinese youth; anti-Christian movement; student’s groups; Chinese history



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## 1. The Historical Context

The Boxer Rebellion in 1900 represented the peak of late imperial anti-Christian agitation. In the subsequent years, there had been a sharp decline in xenophobic violence, and Christianity made remarkable evangelistic progress in China. However, after the 1920s, a vigorous anti-Christian movement was launched. In contrast to the Boxer Rebellion, which was driven by xenophobic sentiments among illiterate peasants, the goal of the 1920s campaign was to build a nation-state of urban intellectuals and students armed with modern Western ideas, such as communism and nationalism. The latter not only promoted a “nativist” version of Christianity but influenced China’s political thought, religious landscape, and foreign relations; the influence of this can be said to continue even today.<sup>1</sup> This is because the anti-Christian movement of the 1920s involved the newly established Chinese Communist Party at the time, and the prototype of its anti-Christian policies can be traced back to this period. This urban anti-Christian movement of the 1920s originated from an anti-Christian gathering held in Beijing in 1922 against the convening of the World’s Student Christian Federation Conference at Tsinghua University. The initiator was the Anti-Christian Student Federation in Shanghai, a subsidiary of the Shanghai Socialist Youth League (hereafter “Youth League”). Since then, historical studies have analyzed the participation of Chinese Communists through the Youth League, but researchers disagree as to why the Communists launched the anti-Christian campaign and what role they played. At present, the specific process of the movement and the main reasons why the anti-Christian movement spread from Shanghai to Beijing have not yet been thoroughly addressed in historical research.<sup>2</sup>

Scholars have acknowledged that much of the early support for the anti-Christian movement in 1922 came from radical individuals and organizations with ties to the Communists, anarchists, and the Guomindang left. However, declassification of the Soviet archives since the 1990s has thrown light on substantial Soviet influence. For example, Tao Feiya argues that, from the beginning, the Shanghai Youth League organized the Anti-Christian Student Federation, influenced by the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow and its political advisors in China. Therefore, the anti-Christian movement in 1922 was not a spontaneous protest organized by urban intellectuals and students; instead, it was initiated and led by the Communists under the leadership of the Far East Bureau of the Comintern and the Youth Communist International (or Youth Comintern) (Tao 2005a, p. 73). Tao posits that the hostile statements against the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) were initiated by the Second World Congress of the Youth Comintern in 1921 and the Far East Revolutionary Youth Congress in 1922. Unlike Tao, Hirotsada Ishikawa minimizes the leadership role of the Far East Revolutionary Youth Congress as the initiator of the anti-Christian campaign and traces the growth of anti-foreign and anti-religious sentiments to the endogenous awakening of the reorganized Socialist Youth League (Ishikawa 1995, p. 80).<sup>3</sup> I generally agree with Tao's view that both the Far East Revolutionary Youth Congress and the Congress of Peoples of the East, scheduled around the same time, had shaped the growth of anti-Christian agitation in China. The reason why Ishikawa downplays the Soviet Union's input has to do with the lack of concrete evidence about the institutional links between the Comintern and its subsidiaries in China. Ishikawa explains that, before the anti-Christian movement began in 1922, the Provisional Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the Provisional Central Committee of the Socialist Youth League in Shanghai failed to grasp the ideological links between Christianity and imperialism that were expressed in the Soviet-held gatherings. Following the same reasoning, Yang Tianhong points out that, even though several prominent Communists, such as Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, joined the anti-Christian movement, ordinary party members only accounted for a small portion of the anti-religious campaign on the ground. After all, the senior cadres' individual behavior hardly represented the whole organization unless everyone was instructed top down to follow the same agenda (Yang 2005, p. 249). By contrast, having studied Chinese Communist sources, Tao Feiya highlights the mobilizing efforts of the Communists through the Socialist Youth League. Tao writes, "It was precisely because of the organized promotion of the Chinese Communist Party that the trend of mobilizing hundreds of supporters to respond to a single call for collective action can be achieved in many cities across the country" (Tao 2005a, p. 73). Despite the different interpretations given by Ishikawa, Yang, and Tao, there is no doubt that the Communists led the anti-Christian campaign, albeit their anti-religious proclamations were as much shaped by Marxist-Leninist ideology as by the discourses of science and nationalism.

This article investigates the various mobilizing tactics undertaken by the Communist-dominated Socialist Youth League in the respective anti-Christian campaigns in Shanghai and Beijing in 1922. Based on such perspectives, this paper incorporates recent research findings on the history of the Chinese Communist Party, along with primary materials such as *Chen Bao* ("Morning Post") and *Minguo Ribao* ("Republican Daily News", Shanghai), as well as C.A. Darling's *China: A Record of 1921–1927*, adopting an evidence-based approach to develop its arguments. It begins with an account of the formation of the Anti-Christian Student Alliance in Shanghai in early 1922. Then, it focuses on the convergence of anti-capitalist and anti-Christian thought at the Far East National Congress and the Far East Revolutionary Youth Congress, held in Moscow in January–February 1922, where these ideological currents had been formalized and conveyed to the Chinese delegates before they returned to Shanghai to launch the anti-Christian movement. Subsequently, this

study shifts its analytical attention to the founding of the Anti-Religious Alliance in Beijing, where anti-religious sentiment provoked a stronger response from intellectuals and students than in Shanghai, and where the Communists played a crucial role. Finally, it analyzes the pragmatic motivation of the Communists to utilize the anti-Christian movement as part of their revolutionary mobilization. In particular, the mobilizers tapped into the May Fourth intellectuals' obsession with scientific spirit against religion to radicalize the youth and incorporate them into the revolutionary struggle. Only by investigating this motivation can we clarify the weaponization of the anti-Christian movement in 1922.

## 2. The 11th Conference of the World's Student Christian Federation and the Establishment of the Anti-Christian Student Federation in Shanghai

The direct trigger of the anti-Christian movement was the 11th Conference of the World's Student Christian Federation (hereafter "WSCF") held at Tsinghua University in Beijing. The WSCF was an evangelical Christian student body, founded in 1895 by the famous American Christian leader John R. Mott to "1. connect Christian student groups worldwide; 2. investigate the religious situation of students all over the world; and 3. promote the following undertakings: First, lead students to believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior; second, improve students' spiritual life; and third, encourage students to serve and spread the Gospel of the Heavenly Kingdom everywhere" (Xie 1922, pp. 16–17).

In November 1896, under the leadership of John R. Mott, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was established in China, which soon joined the WSCF (Gu 1981, p. 431). The YMCA then developed rapidly in China. By 1922, the YMCA had 53,821 members, 197 students and 24,135 members in forty cities, with its headquarters in Shanghai (Xie 1924, p. 45). The WSCF initially planned to hold its 11th Conference in China in 1916, but the event was postponed due to the outbreak of the World War. This international conference was scheduled on 4–9 April 1922, and 146 foreign representatives from thirty-two countries, as well as more than 550 representatives from the host country China, signed up to attend. The overall theme was "Christ in World Reconstruction", covering six topics ranging from international affairs and the transformation of Christianity to social issues and student evangelism (*Republican Daily News*, 11 March 1922). With the end of WWI, the conference issued a proclamation, urging Christian students to work for peace: "We have an absolute responsibility, that is, to do our utmost to fight for the elimination of the root causes of war and to fight for the elimination of the use of war as a means of resolving international disputes". This clearly expressed the noble goal of seeking peace and resolving conflicts through advancing Christianity in the post-war era. However, once the news of the conference was reported in early February 1922, it was strongly opposed<sup>4</sup> by radical students in Shanghai. On February 26, students held the first preparatory meeting and organized the Anti-Christian Student Federation. On 4 March, at the second preparatory meeting, they formulated the organizational structure, and formed an executive committee (Zhang 1927, p. 53). That night, the executive committee decided to take radical action: "I. Issue a declaration to show attitude [against the WSCF]; II. Telegram students from across the country and urge them to unanimously oppose it; III. Release anti-Christian proclamations through pamphlets and distribute them nationwide to awaken the people" (*Guangdong qunbao*, 20 April 1922). On 9 March, the Federation published the *Declaration of the Anti-Christian Student Federation* and, next day, the *Telegram of Anti-Christian Student Federation* galvanized public opinion. On 20 March, they published an article in Shanghai's *Current Affairs News*, entitled "Why do we oppose the World's Student Christian Federation?"<sup>5</sup> This declaration moved beyond the late imperial tendency of antipforeignism to employ Marxist–Leninist ideology to criticize Christianity as part of the West's capitalistic exploitation:

As we know, all associations in modern society are capitalist social organizations. On the one hand there are the factory owners who reaped without having sown and on the other hand there are the proletarians who work without food. ... modern Christianity and the Christian Church are the demons who “helped the former to plunder the latter and supported the former to oppress the latter”.

We believe that such a cruel, oppressive, and miserable capitalist society is irrational and inhumane, we must create a new and different society. (*Morning Post*, 17 March 1922; [Chang 1927](#), pp. 187–88)

This organization, influenced deeply by communist ideology, advocated the overthrow of the “capitalist society” and the creation of a “new society”, emphasizing the exploitation and oppression that divided the propertied and propertyless classes. It is evident that the weapon of its criticism was communist thought. Based on this ideology, the “manifesto” declared that Christianity and Christian churches served as the “vanguard” of economic imperialism by capitalists in various countries invading China. It further accused the “World Student Christian Federation” (WSCF) of “humiliating Chinese youth, deceiving our people, and plundering our nation’s economy”, thereby calling for resistance (*Morning Post*, 17 March 1922; [Chang 1927](#), pp. 188–89). Thus, the “manifesto” was marked by strong communist undertones, and it is easy to infer the presence of communist forces behind it. Particularly, its labeling of the WSCF conference as a “thieves’ conference” evokes the criticisms directed at the Washington Conference by Moscow (a topic that will be addressed later).

In fact, the Anti-Christian Student Federation was supervised by the Provisional Central Committee of the Shanghai Youth League ([Ishikawa 1995](#), p. 79). Shortly after the publication of the anti-Christian declaration and telegram, on 15 March, the Shanghai Youth League published a pamphlet entitled “Anti-Christian Student Federation”, as the fourth issue of its periodical *Pioneer*<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, the Federation released more anti-Christian articles, including Chen Duxiu’s “Christianity and the Christian Church” and others, even though these intellectuals constructed their anti-religious critique under the liberal framework of science and democracy.

Why did the Shanghai Socialist Youth League set up the Anti-Christian Student Federation? The Socialist Youth League was organized by Yu Xiusong, Jin Jiahuang, and radicals in Shanghai in August 1920, and all Communists in Shanghai were members. Similar anarchist and socialist organizations emerged in Guangzhou, Beijing, Tianjin, and other places, but only the Socialist Youth League was known to display a radical socialist tendency, and it was composed of Marxists, anarchists, socialists, trade unionists, etc. Its diverse membership made it difficult to have a unifying voice on domestic and international affairs, and the Socialist Youth League ceased to function in May 1921 ([Research Office of the Central Committee of the Youth Movement of the Communist Youth League and Modern History Research Office of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 1985](#), pp. 88–89; [Ishikawa 2001](#), pp. 181, 190; [Miyoshi 2005](#), pp. 250–55). Later, under the intervention of the Communist International, the Socialist Youth League was re-established in November 1921 on the initiative of Zhang Tailei (Chunchun). In January 1922, Shi Cuntong was deported from Japan because of his involvement in communist activities. Upon his return to China, Shi temporarily presided the provisional central committee of the Shanghai Socialist Youth League and of the China Socialist Youth League. While Ishikawa argues that the news of the WSCF Conference in Beijing arrived at a time when the newly restructured Socialist Youth League was seeking an opportunity to gain public influence and followers ([Ishikawa 1995](#), pp. 79–80), it was the Soviet Union’s reaction that prompted the League to take on the WSCF.

### 3. Spread of Anti-Capitalist and Anti-Christian Agendas from Moscow to China

In order to protest against the Washington Conference, which lasted from 12 November 1921 to 6 February 1922, the Comintern held the Far East National Congress<sup>7</sup> in Moscow from 21 January to 2 February 1922, one month before the establishment of the Anti-Christian Student Federation in Shanghai. Of the 148 attendants, 44 were from China, including representatives of the Chinese Communist Party, the Socialist Youth League, and the Guomindang.<sup>8</sup> Qu Qiubai and Li Zongwu, then reporters of the *Morning Post* in Moscow, and Bu Shiqi, Liu Shaoqi, Ren Bishi, and Xiao Jinguang, students of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (Kutewei) (hereafter the “Far East University”) attended as translators and clerical staff (Xiao 1987, p. 28). The Congress adopted a resolution on “The Outcome of the Washington Conference and the Situation in the Far East”. In the words of C.A. Darling, this was a resolution challenging the Western bourgeois fantasy of emancipating China and Korea, and the United States’ claim to be the post-war liberator of Asia that freed the oppressed nations from the shackles of foreign imperialism and showed the direction for future development (Darling 1981, p. 39).

At the same time of the Far East National Congress, the Far East Revolutionary Youth Congress was held from 30 January to 2 February, upon the calling of the Youth Communist International. Seventy representatives from China, Japan, Korea, and Mongolia attended, representing thirty youth organizations with a claimed membership of 140,000 in total (Murata 1979, p. 609). Twenty-seven participants from China took part (Darling 1981, p. 45).<sup>9</sup> The Far East Revolutionary Youth Congress deliberately criticized the YMCA as an agent that supported the global expansion of capitalism in a long statement, the excerpts of which are shown as follows:

#### 1. Declaration of the Far East Revolutionary Youth Congress

Various official organizations, such as the YMCA or the Boy Scout Corps, constantly try to draw you into their own ranks. They were obedient to you, loyal to the authorities and gentle in behavior. They want you to sell your souls and seduce you with shiny decorations. They want to pull you out of politics that can fundamentally solve your destiny.

#### 2. Outline of the General Task of the Far East Youth Movement

Revolutionary youth organizations should fight against reactionary youth organizations and political organizations and expose the hypocrisy of these bourgeois democratic agents and parties. By explaining the reactionary nature of such organizations to the masses, we can liberate the youngsters from their influence. For this reason, it was necessary to expose the Christian Youth League ... (Murata 1979, pp. 510, 515)

The Comintern identified the YMCA as a major rival in the battle for winning the hearts and minds of the youth in capitalist countries and criticized it as an obstacle for young people to participate in anti-colonial revolutions. Precisely using this revolutionary rhetoric by the Far East National Congress and the Far East Revolutionary Youth Congress, the Shanghai Socialist Youth League adopted the harshest antiforeign and antireligious language to launch its anti-Christian movement. Ishikawa minimizes the direct influence of these gatherings on the Chinese participants (Ishikawa 1995, p. 80) because he does not grasp the ideological discourse of the events. This study seeks to show how the anti-religious sentiment and revolutionary spirit of the congresses was clearly conveyed to the Chinese delegates before their return to Shanghai.

One key evidence was the Chinese media coverage at the time. In early February 1922, *The Republican Daily News* [*Minguo Ribao*] in Shanghai published two concise reports enti-



tled “The Shanghai News of the Moscow Congress” on 1 February and “The Moscow Far East Workers’ Congress” on 4 February. Beijing’s *Morning Post* also released “Moscow’s Far East National Congress” on 7–9 February, and “Moscow’s Far East National Congress Closing” on 17 February. The Far East National Congress was a gathering of revolutionary leaders, both Communist and Nationalist, from China, Japan, Korea, and Mongolia, and a diplomatic counterweight to the Washington naval conference that excluded the Soviet Union despite its obvious interests in East Asia. These reports conveyed the anti-Washington and anti-capitalist sentiment of the Soviet gatherings. Moreover, Luo Zhanglong, a student from Peking University, a Communist and one of the leaders of the Socialist Youth League, wrote an article entitled “The Far East National Congress in Moscow has opened” for the *Workers’ Weekly* (12 February 1922), a mouthpiece of the Beijing Communist Group (Luo 1984, p. 176). Luo strongly condemned the Washington Conference as a meeting of “several big capitalist countries” to discuss how to carve out their own spheres of influence in the Far East, especially China (Luo 1984, pp. 176–77).<sup>10</sup> Without mentioning the small scale of the congress, these reports extolled and popularized the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist ideas of the Comintern among the readers in Shanghai and Beijing.

In addition, some of the Soviet advisors and Chinese participants travelled from Moscow to Shanghai by rail on the eve of the founding of the Anti-Christian Student Federation. Darling’s memoir contains evidence about a rail trip that he and others took to China to attend the first national congress of the China Socialist Youth League in Shanghai on behalf of the Youth Communist International. Darling set off from Moscow after the closing ceremony of the Far East Congress in early February and took the Siberian Railway to Chita, capital of the short-lived Far Eastern Republic, where he applied for a visa at the Chinese Consulate, whereupon he took the Siberian Railway to Manzhouli Station on the Chinese border. After that, he was held up in a remote town near Manzhouli. After receiving the Chinese certificate issued by the Beijing government to White Russians entering China, he took the international carriage of the Middle East Railway to Harbin. He stayed in Harbin for five days to obtain an entry visa issued by the Jilin provincial authorities and finally arrived in Shanghai four days later (Darling 1981, pp. 48–56). Zhang Guotao spent about ten days on the same route to China (Zhang 1971, pp. 172–74, 204). While Darling took about twenty-two days to reach Shanghai from Moscow in early March, the Chinese delegates returned to China by the same route, and without visa complications, arriving in Shanghai by late February. Darling recalled meeting the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, who had mastered and prepared to propagate the ideological agenda and political resolution of the Far East National Congress (Darling 1981, p. 59). He wrote, “when I met with them several times later, I once talked about the YMCA, trying to convene students to organize a world congress in Beijing in April 1922”, and recalled that “the YMCA in China was a pro-American organization”. The Youth League “ought to expose the real pro-imperialist purpose of the YMCA” (Darling 1981, pp. 59–60).

Who did Darling meet in Shanghai? He mentioned seven people, including Chen Duxiu, Zhang Tailei, and Liu Renjing, members of the Central Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party and the Organizational Department of the National Congress of the Socialist Youth League of China. Even though Darling referred to “Qu Qiubai” as an interpreter at the Far East National Congress (Darling 1981, p. 59), Qu was hospitalized in Moscow at that time and did not return to Shanghai.<sup>11</sup> It was speculated that Yu Xiusong and Liu Shaoqi, students at the Far East University, had returned to China in early 1922, but there was no definite evidence.<sup>12</sup> Zhang Tailei, who participated in the preparation for the Far East National Congress, might also be one of the participants to come back to give a report to the national congress of the China Socialist Youth League because Zhang later accompanied Darling to southern China and served as an interpreter to Marin, the Comintern

representative (Luo 1955, p. 186). With no further archival information, it is impossible to list which returnees spoke at the China Socialist League's congress, but it seems certain that Liang Pengwan, Deng Pei, and a few attendees who had returned to Shanghai at this time, were amongst them.<sup>13</sup> Liang Pengwan, a member of the Tangshan Socialist Youth League, had returned in February and worked in the Secretariat of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (Ni 2006, p. 637).

On the other hand, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party paid close attention to the instructions and resolutions of the China Socialist Youth League. Li Ding (Likin, the plenipotentiary representative of the Far East Secretariat in China) replaced Wladimir Abramowitsch Neumann (the representative of the Far East Secretariat of the Comintern Executive Committee, In China, he used the surname Nicolsky.) to take charge of Shanghai's revolutionary work, stating that, after the delegates left, both the Central Committee of the Korean Communist Party and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party were waiting for further instructions or resolutions (First Research Department of the Party History Research Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1997, pp. 82, 88). Evidently, the Far East National Congress in Moscow and the China Socialist Youth League's congress in Shanghai gave rise to the anti-Christian movement initiated by the Socialist Youth League. Therefore, the establishment of the Anti-Christian Student Federation in Shanghai by the Provisional Central Committee of the Socialist Youth League was not a coincidence but should rather be understood as part of the League's purposeful policy of promoting the Comintern's anti-imperialist agenda in East Asia and of incorporating newly formed radical groups into the Communist camp. Even though the Shanghai Anti-Christian Student Federation aroused much suspicion because of its proposition to put Communism first, it worked closely with the Anti-Religious Alliance in Beijing to garner nationwide attention as "start capital".

#### 4. Founding the "Anti-Religious Alliance" in Beijing and Advancing the Anti-Christian Movement in Shanghai

The anti-Christian sentiment in Shanghai soon spread to Beijing. On 11 March 1922, the Anti-Religious Alliance was formed in Beijing, composed of students from Peking University, which on 17 March denounced religion as "anti-progressive" and declared Christianity a "poison to the Chinese":

We vowed to wipe out the religious poison for human society... human beings are the outcome of evolution, while religion proclaims that "Man and all things were made in heaven ('everything was created in Heaven' according to the classic by Song Huizong *Notes of Genyue*) preordained in divine creation". Human beings are free and equal, while religion insists to lay thoughts in shackles, destroy individual personality and worship idols. Human beings are balanced and peaceful, while religion incites sectarian hatred and causes war, while deceiving people under the mask of fraternity. Human beings can work for their livelihoods while being kind, while religion lures people into believing in heaven and hellfire, by means of an inhumane authoritarian morality... Strange religion and scientific truth are incompatible. Hateful religion is completely contrary to humanitarianism. Compared with other countries, China is a pure country without religion, but in recent decades, Christianity and others have spread in China day by day ... their most hateful poison was to stir up young students with all their strength ... through the YMCA, as the Christian preparatory school and training center. (*Morning Post*, 21 and 22 March, 1922)

Beneath these criticisms was a recognition that Christian mission schools and welfare agencies had established a strong institutional presence in China, catering to the ma-

terial and spiritual needs of urban youth. Seeing religion as incompatible with science, truth, and humanitarianism, and fearing that Christianity corrupted the young Chinese minds, the Anti-Religious Alliance did not follow in the footsteps of the Anti-Christian Student Federation in Shanghai to advocate Communism. Instead, the Beijing group drew on the May Fourth discourse of science to oppose religion.<sup>14</sup> Despite the rhetorical difference, the Beijing groups' organizational capability was impressive as it telegraphed other anti-religious leagues across China, with the signatures of 79 intellectuals, students, and workers such as Xiao Zisheng (Yu), Li Dazhao (Shouchang) and Li Shiceng (Zhang 1927, pp. 31–32). Most of the signatories were Communists, headed by Li Dazhao, who presided over the northern branch of the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>15</sup>

The call for action immediately aroused strong repercussions. In Beijing, no fewer than nine colleges and universities, including Peking University, private schools, and the Russian Law School of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organized their own student alliances that claimed to be anti-religious or anti-Christian; civic organizations such as the Young China Society and the Chinese Psychological Society also issued public statements supporting the alliance.<sup>16</sup> In addition, academic celebrities, such as Cai Yuanpei, Wang Xinggong, Wu Yu and other professors, expressed their willingness to join the cause, and joined fellow intellectuals like Wang Zhaoming, Hu Hanmin, Zhang Puquan, and Chen Duxiu serving in the Soviet-supported Guangdong military government led by Sun Yat-sen (*Morning Post*, 28 March 1922). On 28 March, the "Articles of Association" drafted by Luo Zhanglong and Li Mogeng, (i.e., Mei Geng, a major in German at Peking University and a Communist), was published. At the temporary board meeting, more than thirty people, including Wang Zhaoming and Cai Yuanpei, were recommended as executive officers of the Alliance (*Morning Post*, 19 June 1922). In this way, the anti-Christian movement in Beijing suddenly gained a widespread support among intellectuals and students nationwide and appeared to have won the media battle against the Church. Ten provinces, including Guangdong, Fujian, Hunan, Hubei, Zhili, Shanxi, Jiangxi, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Sichuan, established similar student-run anti-religious organizations, and newspapers everywhere were full of anti-religious and anti-Christian remarks. From March to May 1922, nearly fifty student groups telegraphed their proclamations to *Morning Post* and *The Republican Daily News*.

Faced with such a hostile situation, foreign-language newspapers headed by the *North China Daily News* (31 March 1922), regarded the anti-Christian movement as a "second Boxer insurrection", and five liberal professors from Peking University, including Zhou Zuoren, called for the respect of religious freedom. Zhou was critical of the accusations against religion, both real and imagined, and emphasized the "absolute freedom" of belief. In response, on 1 April 1922, the Anti-Religious Alliance condemned the criticisms of China's foreign press as one-sided and blamed the WSCF for violating religious freedom by propagating Christianity against other faiths. The Alliance also published the "Declaration of Anti-Religious People", written by Wang Xinggong, Li Dazhao, Xiao Zi-sheng, and others, solemnly stating the legitimate reasons for opposing religion in a modern age (*Morning Post*, 4 April 1922). Since then, the focus of media attention turned into a debate over "religious freedom", in which Zhou Zuoren and Chen Duxiu, whose liberal convictions somehow trumped his Communist leaning, defended this universal ideal against Liang Qichao, anti-religious Communists and socialists, as well as anti-imperialist Christian intellectuals.

Despite the anti-religious rhetoric in the Chinese intellectual sphere, the 11th WSCF conference was held at Tsinghua University in Beijing on 4 April 1922, as scheduled, and ended successfully on 9 April. In the afternoon of 9 April, the Anti-Religious Alliance held its first public meeting at Peking University. More than one thousand people attended,



and the meeting was presided over by Xiao Zisheng, who became a communist in France and was critical of religion. President Cai Yuanpei, professors Li Dazhao, Li Shiceng, Wu Yu, psychologist Zhang Yaoxiang, and others gave speeches. Cai Yuanpei discussed religion from the perspective of freedom of belief and criticized the conversion of underage students in mission schools. In *Independence of Education* (March 1922), Cai called for the separation of education and religion: "(I) Universities didn't have to set up the faculty of divinity, but could offer religious history and comparative religions in the department of philosophy; (II) in all schools, there should not be courses to publicize doctrinal teachings, and no prayer was mandatory; (III) people who preach a religious creed need not take part in education". Responding to Zhou Zuoren's call for religious freedom, Cai emphasized the legitimacy of the anti-Christian movement and thought that "while religious belief was free, anti-religious belief was also free", so there was no need to worry about anti-religious movements professing anti-religious beliefs (*Morning Post*, 10 April 1922).

To publicize the "harmful effects" of Christianity, the Anti-Religious Alliance also published *China's Perniciousness of Religion Map in China (by Province)* (Luo 1984, p. 96). In June 1922, with the support of Shao Piaoping, a newspaper owner, the first book series of *Anti-Religious Theory* was published (Anti-Religious Alliance 1922). Among them, there were thirty-one anti-Christian articles by thirteen authors, including Xiao Zisheng, Luo Zhanglong, Cai Yuanpei, Li Dazhao, and Li Shiceng. On June 18, the alliance also held the first board meeting. Over twenty people participated, and eight people, including Xiao Zisheng, Li Shiceng, Zhang Yaoxiang, and Wei Yu, were elected as standing directors. Among them, Zhu Wushan, Li Dazhao, Fan Hongsjie, and Miao Boying (the only female) were communists. The board meeting suggested ways to promote the cause, such as holding a national meeting of anti-religious groups, issuing a monthly magazine, and holding regular speeches (*Morning Post*, 19 June 1922). But none of these suggestions materialized in the end, and the antireligious fervor gradually died down.

How did the anti-Christian movement in Shanghai spread to Beijing? Yang Tianhong confirms Jessie G. Lutz's view that Jin Jiafeng, who was active in socialist and anarchist circles in Shanghai and Beijing, formed an important liaison between the two sides (Yang 2005, p. 109). Jin was one of the founders of the Shanghai Socialist Youth League and was involved in the Chinese Communist Party and the Revolutionary Youth League. All the telegrams of the Anti-Religious Alliance were sent to him, but the movement spread to Beijing, not so much because of these personal contacts, but because of the instructions of the temporary central Committee of the Youth League. The reason for this was Darling's statement that in order to lead the Anti-Christian movement of the Beijing Youth League, the temporary Central Committee of the Youth League was to send Zhang Tailei to Beijing and to hold anti-imperialist demonstrations in the streets of Beijing and in the auditorium during the meeting (Darling 1981, p. 64).<sup>17</sup> Darling was familiar with the propaganda work in Shanghai at that time, so this testimony appears credible. Luo Zhanglong also left a passage in his memoirs suggesting that Zhang Tailei was sent to the embassy, and "the CCP Central Committee attached great importance to this" (Luo 1984, p. 97). Although it was uncertain when Zhang Tailei would be sent to Beijing, considering the frequent correspondence between the Provisional Central Committee of the Socialist Youth League and its subsidiaries around the country, I think the most appropriate way was for the Beijing Socialist Youth League (and the Peking University Marxist Theory Research Association) to take action under the auspices of the Shanghai leadership, and to form an alliance together with anti-religious intellectuals and students such as Li Shiceng and Xiao Zisheng.<sup>18</sup> Undoubtedly, the basis of cooperation between the two groups was the anti-religious thought which had emerged since the May Fourth New Culture Movement.

In this regard, Ishikawa fails to highlight a clear pattern of organizational relations between the Anti-Christian Student Federation and the Anti-Religious Alliance, but he stresses that the latter was influenced by Chinese radicals and students returning from France. Li Shiceng served as the secretary of the Sino–French Educational Association, and Xiao Zisheng, who opposed religion, cooperated with Cai Yuanpei and Li Shiceng to form a large-scale movement. The Peking University Marxist Theory Research Association and the Beijing Socialist Youth League, headed by Luo Zhanglong, made the most positive response to this (Ishikawa 1995, pp. 73–74, 77). However, this is not consistent with Luo’s recollections. Luo would comment later on the anti-Christian movement when reviewing the seminar on Marxist theory. “When we set up an anti-religious alliance, I invited Cai Yuanpei to participate, and he agreed”. While preparing to publish *Anti-Religious Theory*, Xiao came back from France. “He [Xiao] not only told me that he would join our anti-religious alliance, but also invited Li Shiceng and Wang Zhaoming to participate” (Luo 1990, p. 206). This further proves that interpersonal networks were key to rallying support among anti-religious and pro-Communist intellectuals.

Why were the anti-Christian campaigns in Beijing and Shanghai so different in nature, when both were initiated by the Communists? Jessie G. Lutz was concerned about the different modes of anti-religious expression in the two cities. Although political pragmatism began to rise, Beijing was still the proud center of the New Culture Movement. For intellectuals there, criticizing religion was the basis for rejecting old traditions and seeking new ideas, while Shanghai, with its foreign concessions, was the center of China’s capitalist development and the stage for radical activism. This cultural setting meant that many nationalists quickly transformed themselves into revolutionary activists, and the anti-Christian movement marked the first step toward joining the Soviet-led anti-capitalist revolution (Lutz 1988, pp. 60–61).

What happened to the anti-Christian movement in Shanghai? It ushered in a new development. On 1 April 1922, the Shanghai Comrades’ Association (*Morning Post*, 6 April 1922) telegraphed the *Morning Post*, indicating its “determination to march forward together with all anti-religious comrades in Beijing”. Subsequently, the students of Fudan University set up an anti-religious alliance, in support of its counterpart in Beijing (*Morning Post*, 11 April 1922; *Guangdong qunbao*, 13 April 1922). Prominent intellectuals, such as Zuo Shunsheng, Zhang Wentian, Shao Lizhi, Shen Xuanlu (Ding Yi), and Shen Yanbing (Mao Dun), wrote articles and gave speeches in support of the movement. Their opinions mainly refuted Zhou Zuoren’s “declaration of advocating religious freedom” in Beijing. The fiercest refutation was Shen Xuanlu’s “Imploring anti-religious believers to oppose the anti-Christian movement”. Shen Xuanlu, one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party and, alongside Dai Jitao, editor of the Shanghai-based *Weekly Review*, wrote that “the weak were comforted by deceptive assurances, while the strong used religion as a lethal weapon”. Religious superstition was perceived as a trap for the proletariat to be misguided by the bourgeoisie, and Shen’s article specifically blamed and ridiculed Zhou Zuoren and five other liberals (*Awakening*, 11 April 1922).<sup>19</sup> Not only students and intellectuals, but workers sympathized with the Anti-Religious Alliance. This was the case with Zhu Zehe, Huang Miaohai, and general “opinions of the industrial workers on anti-religious alliances”. They sent a telegram to the Alliance, saying that “capitalists were good at fooling workers with religion, fraternity and equality, and intimidation of heaven and hell”. To achieve the goal of “sanctifying workers”, the spell of religion had to be broken (*Republican Daily News*, 13 April 1922).<sup>20</sup>

With the anti-Christian atmosphere penetrating all walks of urban life, the Anti-Christian Student Federation carried out its activities publicly. On 2 April 1922, just before the WSCF conference, the Anti-Christian Student Federation held a meeting<sup>21</sup> at Shang-

hai Pudong Middle School to discuss the means of opposition. Shi Cuntong, head of the Youth League, served as the host. Zuo Shunsheng, editor of the *Young China Monthly*, who worked for the Zhonghua Book Company at that time, renowned zoologist Chen Jianshan, Cai Hesun, and Xia Sijin, temporary secretary of the Communist Party in Shanghai, spoke at the conference (*Guangdong qunbao*, 19 and 20 April 1922).<sup>22</sup> The contents of their speeches varied. Chen Jianshan refuted Christian creation as a myth, stating that soul and body can be separated by evolution. Xia Sijin politicized the debate by accusing missionaries to act as spies.<sup>23</sup> Four or five hundred people attended the conference (*Morning Post*, 4 April 1922).<sup>24</sup> In addition, on 21 April, Chen Duxiu, the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, distanced himself from Zhou Zuoren and rebuked his earlier sympathetic view on religion as expressed in “Christianity and the Chinese People”, published in *New Youth* (1 February 1920). Chen denounced Christianity as redundant and anti-scientific in a lecture delivered at Shanghai’s Jiaotong University. Chen downplayed moral virtues, such as fraternity, love, and sacrifice, as unique characteristics of Christianity, and dismissed the doctrinal teachings of sin and atonement as insignificant in the modern world. According to Chen, in the Middle Ages, Catholicism had been evil, but during the Reformation, Protestantism emerged as a counterforce. Nonetheless, Protestant Christianity used the method of “people fishing” to “lead astray foolish men and women and young people without roots”, depriving them of the true meaning of life. In addition, Christianity had aligned itself with the capitalist system. In the anti-capitalist struggle, Christianity could not be spared (*Awakening*, 25 April 1922). Chen Duxiu’s intellectual shift from liberalism to Marxism had to do with his embrace of Marxist anti-capitalist ideology.<sup>25</sup>

Combined with this propaganda, the Anti-Christian Student Federation in Shanghai also tried to expand from the narrow basis of the Student Alliance into a larger alliance that encompassed all sectors critical of the Christian missionary institutions and Chinese churches. On 20 April 1922, the Anti-Christian Student Federation called for like-minded comrades to join its cause to awaken the nation. Its centralized action differed from the loose organization of the anti-religious alliance in Beijing.

To sum up, in April 1922, the anti-Christian movement in Shanghai reached its peak during the vigorous promotion of the Beijing Anti-Religious Alliance. Against this background, the Youth Alliance also expanded. However, as in Beijing, the movement gradually subsided when the WSCF conference had ended, and all students returned home for their summer vacations. The next storm waves against the Church came in the Educational Rights campaign and the Northern Expedition. Responding to political and ideological accusations, the Chinese Baptists in Guangzhou put Zhang Yijing in charge of the *Zhenguang Yuebao* (*True Light Monthly*), a magazine that published polemics in defence of the faith, although its influence was largely confined to Christian circles.

## 5. The National Congress of the China Socialist Youth League and the Anti-Christian Bill

When the anti-Christian movement was in full swing, the first national congress of the China Socialist Youth League was held in Guangzhou on 5–10 May 1922. Twenty-five delegates represented fifteen regional branches with a claimed membership of five thousand members, keen to profess their anti-Christian, antiforeign, and antireligious views (*Reporter* 1922, p. 117). Their “Resolution on the Relationship between the Socialist Youth League in China and Various Organizations in China” proclaimed:

- (1) It cannot be concealed that the YMCA served as a talisman of capitalism and a vanguard of imperialism. The YMCA lured Chinese youths to American capitalism through Western education, popular entertainment, and other activities in China. It assigned a department to train apprentices for American banks and

stores, publicizing the goodwill of the United States, and expanding the Chinese market for the benefit of American capitalists. The convergence of the YMCA and China's old forces was shown in the collusion with Chinese bureaucrats. Therefore, it was necessary to publicize and expose the sins of the YMCA through the oral and printed media, so as to prevent young people from being deceived or infected...

(2) The reason why anti-religious groups oppose all religions is that religion shackle the mind and align with the old forces in history. Opposing religion serves to emancipate young people's minds in order to help them march on the road of revolution. Therefore, we need to exert our strength to assist these anti-Christian and antireligious groups and organize our youth league comrades to form 'cells', which should each try its best to dominate and lead activities from within. (Reporter 1922, p. 128; China Department of the Japanese Institute of International Studies 1970, pp. 115–16)

Furthermore, it paid attention to the mission schools, stipulating in the *Resolution on Education* that students inside the mission schools were "treated unfairly and oppressed" and "for the benefit of anti-Christian youths, the Socialist Youth League should help them implement equal treatment in the mission schools" (Reporter 1922, p. 127).<sup>26</sup> The Socialist Youth League advocated the use of infiltration to co-opt and control the Anti-Religious Alliance, as well as student unions within mission schools.

These resolutions clearly reflected the ideas of the Far East Revolutionary Youth Congress. While confining its operation to the anti-Christian movement, most key actors in Shanghai, such as Zhang Guotao, Darling, Yu Xiusong, and Wang Zhenyi (Zhong Yi), attended the two Comintern's congresses in Moscow. They were well informed of the revolutionary spirit and agendas of the time and rallied the support of prominent intellectuals and activists such as Chen Duxiu, Shi Cuntong, Cai Hesen, Jin Jiafeng, Tan Pingshan, Chen Gongbo, and Zhang Tailei. These interpersonal networks facilitated the transmission of Moscow's anti-Christian agenda among Chinese followers and the Socialist Youth League. Qu Qiubai posited the idea of "cultural aggression" in *Various Ways of Imperialist Aggression against China* in July 1923, and the Chinese Communist Party framed the anti-Christian campaign under the slogan of opposing imperialist cultural aggression (Tao 2005b, p. 106).

So, what did the Comintern and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party think of the anti-Christian movement in 1922? In a report to the Far East Branch of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (20 May 1922), Li Ding reasoned:

The basic element of the anti-Christian movement was the national protest movement against foreigners... driving a youth who are politically immature but have nationalist sentiments into the movement. The second factor was... that it constituted a campaign against Christian missionaries, ... agents of foreign capitalists, ... an anti-capitalist protest... Thirdly, non-activists began to advocate the rejection of Christianity and took part in the anti-Christian movement. Finally, pure anti-religious intellectual atheist groups now also joined forces with the anti-Christian movement. When the movement was in full swing, they put it into the tracks of the scientific anti-religious movement. (First Research Department of the Party History Research Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1997, p. 91)

In other words, the purpose of the Communists' tactics was to arouse the "national protest movement" to rally young people to revolutionary action under the anti-imperialist banner. Finally, as expressed by Li Ding, the movement turned into a "scientific anti-

religious movement” and helped the Communists achieve the expected goal. According to Darling, the Socialist Youth League not only experienced the political baptism of popular struggle in the movement but grew in its membership from about two thousand in early 1922 to more than three thousand, and established organizations in seventeen cities (Darling 1981, pp. 58, 63). It is undeniable that the Socialist Youth League provided a useful cover for the Chinese Communist Party to recruit many students through anti-Christian and anti-religious activism in various cities, achieving great success in youth mobilization.<sup>27</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

This article has highlighted the symbiotic relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and the anti-Christian movements in Shanghai and Beijing in 1922. The Shanghai Socialist Youth League was primarily inspired by the anti-capitalist and anti-Christian thought of the Far East National Congress and the Far East Revolutionary Youth Congress held in Moscow against the Washington Conference. When the League organized the anti-Christian movement in 1922, it strove to rally the anti-religious youth against what was perceived as the political reactionaries.

Why did this movement spread across China? First, the widespread disappointment with the Paris Peace Conference and the Washington Conference caused great dissatisfaction among the Chinese public. The outcome of the Paris Peace Conference, which ended WWI, shocked the Chinese. Despite China’s contributions to the war efforts of the West, the Treaty of Versailles handed sovereignty over German-leased territories in Shandong to Japan. This development led to the May Fourth Movement in 1919 and created a favorable environment for the rise of China’s Communist revolution. In other words, the Communist-initiated anti-Christian movement in 1922 was a backlash against these conferences. Another contributing factor was the anti-religious trend of the New Culture Movement, forging a grand alliance of Beijing intellectuals gathered under an anti-religious banner and gaining the sympathy of students and young intellectuals. Even though the anti-Christian movement in 1922 was ignited by geopolitical factors, it still embodied certain enlightenment ideals of the New Culture Movement. However, because the movement was initiated by the Communists, this enlightenment gradually tilted in more radical directions. The anti-imperialist and anti-Christian thought formulated by the China Socialist Youth League, which had originated in Moscow, gradually penetrated the Guomindang Left through the theory of “cultural aggression” in 1923 and helped shape the cooperation between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party in 1924–1925. This marked an ideological turn to radicalism in the national revolution, reinforcing the anti-religious and anti-foreign elements in China’s state-building process.

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## Notes

- 1 This article is the abbreviated English version of the Japanese essay, [Zhu \(2016\)](#), published by the Japan Association for Asian Political and Economic Studies. The translation incorporates some modifications and additions based on the reviewers' comments, but the fundamental perspective and content remain unchanged. For a critical account of the scholarly literature, see [Zhu \(2018\)](#), pp. 135–56; <https://www.ritsumeai.ac.jp/acd/re/ssrc/result/memoirs/kiyou36/36-06.pdf> (accessed on 10 July 2024).
- 2 Representative studies include [Yip \(1980\)](#), [Gu \(1981\)](#), [Cha \(1993\)](#), [Ishikawa \(1995\)](#), [Yang \(2005\)](#) and [Tao \(2005a\)](#).
- 3 Ishikawa states that the anti-Christian movement in 1922 opposed Christianity's religious "faith" and sought to establish a belief in "science". This study argues that the beliefs in Marxism as "scientific socialism" and Christianity were fundamentally similar, a clarification essential to understanding the complexity of the Chinese Revolution.
- 4 To promote the 11th Conference of the WSCF, the YMCA's official publication, *Association Progress* (Shanghai), published its February 1922 issue as the "World Student Christian Federation Edition". This special issue attracted the attention of young students ([Chang 1923](#), p. 459). On the other hand, starting in mid-February, major newspapers such as *The Republican Daily News* and other prominent local papers reported on the conference in a favorable manner.
- 5 There were fourteen articles in this booklet, nine of which are reproduced from the fourth issue of *Pioneer* ([Zhang 1927](#), p. 355).
- 6 *Pioneer Magazine* (founded on 15 January 1922) was originally published by the Beijing Socialist Youth League, but it was proscribed by the Beijing government. Since the 4th issue, it was published by the Shanghai Provisional Central Bureau, with Shi Cuntong as the editor ([Research Office of the Writings of Karl Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, Compilation Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1959](#), pp. 12–13; [Wang et al. 1990](#), p. 233).
- 7 This article uses the term "Far East National Congress", which was initially set for Irkutsk but moved to Moscow in January 1922 and closed in Petrograd [COMINTERN 1970](#), pp. 3, 7).
- 8 Among the delegates were fifteen Communist Party and eleven Youth League members [COMINTERN 1970](#), p. 204). Yang Kuisong identified thirty-four of the thirty-nine voting delegates, including prominent members such as Deng Pei, Wang Jinmei, and Zhang Guotao. Three of the remaining five are likely Ren Bishi, Liang Baitai, and Yu Xiusong ([Yang 1994](#), pp. 269–84).
- 9 The list of participants was unknown, but Communist Party members and Youth League members who attended the "Far East National Congress" would have taken part. Darling also gave a report on the youth movement at this conference ([Darling 1981](#), pp. 46–47).
- 10 Although the expressions were different, its content was like that reported in Shanghai's *Republican Daily News*. The northern delegation attending the conference promised to report on the work of the group, and Ke Qingshi, one of the representatives, wrote several long reports regarding the excursion ([Luo 1984](#), p. 176).
- 11 Despite being hospitalized, Qu attended the Far East National Congress, but his condition worsened afterward ([Zhou 1992](#), pp. 72–75, 82; [Zhang 1971](#), pp. 195–96). Zhang Guotao also mentioned Qu's illness in his memoirs ([Zhang 1971](#), pp. 195–96).
- 12 Darlin is also said to have drafted the Youth League's program and regulations in Shantou while on his way to Guangzhou, along with "Qu Qiubai" and Zhang Tailei. Based on this account, some recent scholars, such as Li Yongchun and Bao Hongbo [Li and Bao \(2012\)](#), have argued that the "Qu Qiubai" who collaborated with Darlin in drafting the League's program was actually Cai Hesun. However, as Cai Hesun did not speak Russian, it is unlikely that he was the "Qu Qiubai" who acted as an interpreter in Shanghai, leaving this claim subject to doubt.
- 13 The names of the two men are confirmed by means of the list of signatures in an open telegram circulated by the Beijing Anti-Religious Federation on 17 March 1922.
- 14 For the formation and content of this anti-religious trend, please refer to [Zhu \(2010\)](#).
- 15 Twenty-eight people, including Deng Zhongxie (Zhongxia), Ruan Yongzhao, Miao Boying, Xu Xinkai, Jin Jiafeng, Li Dazhao, Fan Hongjie, Liu Renjing, Mao Hengren, Luo Aojie (Zhang Long), Yang Renqi, Zhu Wushan, Wu Ruming, Li Meigeng, Wang Zheng, He Mengxiong, Li Jun, Huang Rikui, Fan Tiren, Song Tianfang, He Shu (Shu), Wang Fusheng, You Tianyang, Liang Pengwan, Deng Pei, Li Zhenying, Yang Zhongjian, and Ruan Zhang, were Communists. Most of them were members of the Peking University Marxist Theory Research Association, an organization founded by Li Dazhao and others in 1920 under the leadership of the Communist Party. Its members, including workers and trade unionists, proliferated from Beijing and Tianjin to Taiyuan and other northern cities. In 1922, the organization had 150 members ([Luo 1984](#), pp. 62–67; [Ni 2006](#), pp. 145–46).
- 16 The Gongjin Society was founded by Shaanxi youths who studied in Beijing. Its leaders, Li Zizhou and Liu Tianzhang, were members of the Peking University Marxist Theory Research Association. It published *Workers' Weekly* to rally workers' support in July 1921.
- 17 Jessie G. Lutz described how the Anti-Christian Federation in Beijing urged the students at Tsinghua University to protest against the misuse of a public university for the WSCF conference ([Lutz 1987](#), p. 209).

- 18 Zhang Guotao wrote that the Anti-Christian Student Federation was organized by the Beijing Socialist Youth League's Committee, which is incorrect. His memoirs indicated that he left Moscow in late February and arrived in Shanghai around 20 March, when the centre of the anti-Christian campaign had shifted to Beijing.
- 19 After this article was published in *Awakening*, Zhang Yijing, editor of the Baptist-run *Zhenguang Yuebao* [*True Light Monthly*] in Guangzhou asserted that, judging from its content and writing style, the "telegram" of the "Anti-Christian Student Federation" in Shanghai must have been written by Shen Xuanlu (Zhang 1927, p. 190).
- 20 They were probably the Chinese workers sent to the Western Front of the First World War by the Beijing government. Some of the returning workers played a key role in the May Fourth protests.
- 21 The meeting was originally scheduled to be held at Yuxian High School, Aiwenyi Road in the British Concession, but it was temporarily changed to the Pudong Middle School due to police intervention (*Morning Post*, 4 April 1922).
- 22 Yang Tianhong identifies the speakers as Zuo Shunsheng and Chen Jianshan (Yang 2005, p. 130).
- 23 He himself opposed religion because religion went against science and failed to soothe human suffering.
- 24 On 19 April 1922, *Guangdong Qunbao* estimated the number of participants at over 1000.
- 25 One reviewer mentioned Ya-pei Kuo's stimulating work, Kuo (2020, pp. 135–54). Kuo adopts a conceptual historical approach to analyze Chen Duxiu's understanding of "religion". Nonetheless, Kuo relies primarily on secondary literature and fails to consider the primary sources and the latest Asian research on Chen Duxiu.
- 26 The "unequal treatment and oppression" refers to Wang Zhaoming's behavior of forcing anti-religious students to attend mandatory worship and charging them high tuition fees (*Republican Daily News*, 15 April 1922).
- 27 Guangdong's anti-Christian movement was initially divided into anti-Christian and anti-religious camps. With the mediation of Tan Pingshan, the two factions formed a province-wide anti-religious alliance in Guangzhou, and members of the Socialist Youth League occupied its executive positions.

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