

## **An analysis of various opinions in *Christian series***

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**Abstract:** *Christian Series*, founded in 1943 and closed in 1950, was one of domestic influential Christian publications during the period of the anti-Japanese War. In addition to the Christian thought and doctrine, political, cultural, literal, biographic content are also involved in this periodical, which make it a discourse space where all kinds of opinion can openly and freely shuttle and intersect. In this regard, this paper tries to explore and interpret the complexity and paradox of this periodical starts from three angles, they are: "confronted opinions", "hidden opinions" and "public opinions".

**Keywords:** *Christian Series*; Wu Yaozong; opinions.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

With the outbreak of the anti-Japanese War, the Christian publishers sped up the movement of press's relocation to the western part of china, which promote the prosperity of *Wen Zi Shi Gong* in western china. Only in 1944, the total amount of printing goods printed from United Christian Press had reached to 1006186[1]. Since the war, the Protestant periodicals almost stopped publishing, but several kinds of journals published in western China still continue to issue, such as *Hope Monthly*, *Tian Biweekly*, *Nv Duo*, *Fu You Newspaper* and so on. Among this, *Christian Series* possess the largest amount of circulation and audience during this time.

According to Wu Yaozong, the editor in chief, *Christian Series* was primarily originated from *Omni Book* which is of prevalence in USA, and mainly concentrated on disseminating the content involving Christianity, spirituality and missionary[2]. Besides Christian content, literary translation, poetry creation, society debates were also contained. *Christian series* had gradually transformed in a force-field where opinions from varieties of backgrounds and religious communions were shuttling and intersecting, which shaped this text of periodical a tensional "church" in which potential narrative sounds and hidden text meanings constantly merged among this.

Obviously, whether in history context or contemporary context, this periodical has a crucial influence on the understanding of the spread of Christian in China, however, few scholars pay enough attention on it. Hence, it's necessary to grope for the profound meanings underneath this periodical. In order

to excavate and present the hidden complexity and paradox, this paper mainly analysis how diverse opinions confronting and combating among the texts of *Christian series* from the following three parts.

### **CONFRONTED OPINIONS**

As Wu Yaozong's saying, the founding purpose of *Christian series* is to spread the Christian doctrine and provide nourishment for the congregation even when "*Wen Zi Shi Gong*" hardly maintained in the background of the war. Consequently, it's easy to acknowledge that there are more than half of the content in series are closely related with Christian missionary. However, apart from these, there are some contents not only negate fundamentally to Christian doctrine, but doubt the existence of Christian. These contents, though, haven't fiercely indicate their position, but obscurely suggest that religion is a non-rational consequence of rebellious science, such as the article "*Rationality and Religion in conflict*" in issue 13 published in 1946.

In the second section of the article, Liang Shuming, the author, draws out the view that religion is contrary to reason: "Religion has a tendency to be contrary to reason, and the thing that more likely to determine the tendency is the standard of value (good or evil, good or bad luck, sin or fortune) of people' behavior which constantly constrained by religion. This standard of value is transcendent and undoubted, so reason is covered and uninspired.[2]" After that, the author further discussed the status and functions of religion, and clearly stated that "There is no suitable soil for the growth of religion in china." At last, the author pointed out "The root of Chinese culture is reason, religion has

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a tendency to be contrary to reason, so Chinese culture and religion are incompatible.[2]"

Throughout the whole article, Liang Shuming fundamentally disaffirmed the sufficiency of religion, however, Wu Yaozong, the editor in chief, quoted and included Wang Zhixin's article, "After reading 'Rationality and Religious in Conflict'", in order to refute Liang's point of view. At the beginning of this article, Wang argued that Liang's opinion was not only total cliché, but also unsuitable to his status and identity as a distinguished scholar:" It's hard to imagine that a scholar, who made great achievement in Indian cultural study, still held such a pedantic and inexplicable view for religion. He emphasized that religion would gradually extinct with the process of science, but in fact just repeated Westerners' saying that is obvious a stereotype.[2]" Then Wang started to refute Liang's from this following:" what is religion actually?"; "Is religion incompatible with science?"; "Does China have or haven't a religion?" Especially when explicitly explicated the second question, Wang quoted the description on "origins of species" and "origins of universe" from Darwin, Spencer and Huxley, and to point out that "There is a hypothesis in science and also a belief in this hypothesis, and how can we be so sensible when even cannot figure out whether it is knowable or not?[2]"According to this, Wang believed reason and religion were not in conflict.

These articles, "Rationality and Religion in conflict" and "After reading 'Rationality and Religious in Conflict'", could reflect two opinions between the authors on the surface of text. However, when deepening the text and investigating chief editor's behavior of removal and inclusion of articles, they could at least reflect four different opinions which are from Liang Shuming, Wang Zhixin, Wu Yao zong and the potential readers who haven't participated yet.

Compare to Liang's and Wang's opinions, Wu's and readers' opinions remain unnoticeable. In fact, for Wu, the process of his editing has already stated his point of view. The article," Rationality and Religion in Conflict", seems a rigorous denial to the essence of this publication, but the affirmation of rationalism that the article explains just implies Wu's religious claims, therefore, the act of collecting means the statement of editor's opinion that "Christianity and materialism could be in harmony". Wu used to interpret the feasibility and possibility of this opinion in an article named "Christianity and Materialism: Confessions from a Christian", he believed "Christianity and materialism are not in mutual conflict, but in mutual complementation.[2]"To support his opinion further, he reiterate in an article named "Faith in God and materialism": "Faith in God and materialism can merely be contrary. As the same to materialism, devout faith holds that the universe is objectively existing,

knowable, and can be positively experienced as a scientific method.[2]"Standing in this position, he refused to follow blindly and disenchant the dogmata of Christianity. Obviously, his rational opinion to Christian and Liang's is consistent in dealing with religion, so it's not difficult to clarify why Wu Yaozong collect such fierce article in periodical.

Besides, in these articles, readers' opinions are not involved, however, their positions are literarily saved. When Wu neutrally collected two controversial articles, he implied, encouraged and required readers to participate and make a judgment. In such way, despite of absence, readers were reminded us their presence.

In a word, four opinions in articles constitute a dialogue which are based on four kinds of individual cognitions, identities and backgrounds, through this, that the implicit communications among inter subjectivities happened.

#### HIDDEN OPINIONS

Based on Wayne Clayson Booth's narrative theory, in addition to narrator, all of narrative texts have a implied author who is a kind of personality or consciousness reflected in the final form of narrative texts. It is implied author that intentionally or unintentionally inject their own ideology, values and aesthetic taste into texts which alter its formation. In *Christian series*, this kind of literary phenomenon occurs frequently. For instance, Zhang Shizhang's article "the relationship between Christian and socialism" can wholly present this state of affair. Zhang, a pioneer of "Doctrine of Jesus", combined Christianity and socialism. On the one hand, he enthusiastically believed in God, on the other hand, actively involved in the revolutionary struggle and social reform in order to build a new China. At the meantime, However, Zhang Shizhang's theory lacked corresponding market: for the nonbelievers, natural science, democracy and the idea of progress had wined support among the people; for the believers, the doctrine emphasized the spirit of revolutionary and secular value, which is contrary to Christian Moderatism and concept of afterlife. Therefore, almost no church came forward to support Zhang, and then, he announced his resignation from the church.

As a believer who disaffirmed himself from the church, Zhang must have his article in accordance with the requirements of *Christian series*, which means his article cannot be out of the acceptance range of editors. At the same time, in order to make "Doctrine of Jesus" spread, the article cannot be excessively compromising to the periodical also. This paradox forces Zhang to hide himself in texts and to express opinions through implied author.

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Firstly, in order to make readers fully understand the concept of “Doctrine of Jesus”, the implied author emasculates the corresponding concept of socialism and extracts the core concept, like “humanity”, “equal opportunity” and “each takes what he needs”. Besides, implied author uses the intertextuality between Christian and socialism to interpret the concept of socialism. As in the first section, implied author annotates the political words frequently appeared with *Bible*. For example, “discomfit imperialism” is from *Gospel of Matthew* chapter 4 section 8 to 10 and chapter 16 section 26:

“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” .....From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”.....Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.”

Secondly, in addition to misread *Bible*, implied author also interpret out of context to confirm the rationality and legitimacy of socialism. In order to corroborate that modern socialist maintain respect attitude to Christian, implied author quotes a banquet toast from “*An Anthology of Socialist*” written by Vander Velde, like “Christ is the ancestor of socialism,” “Christ's kingdom is manifested” or “living Christ”. For another instance, In order to prove that the utopian socialist Saint Simon’s believe in God, implied author quotes the concept of “*New Christianity*”: “the organization of New Christian will enable all kinds of system, no matter from the secular world or spiritual world, suitable for this principle that human should treat each other as brothers and sisters[5].” But in fact, Saint Simon's religious views are complicated, he indeed did put forward to some concept, like “Reviving Christianity, Making it young”, but also criticized Christian that infringe the rights of the poor. Therefore, it may not be able to prove that Saint Simon's faith in god only from quoting several words.

Through above two methods, implied author establishes his viewpoint, and through the method “rotated opinion”, this viewpoint is persistently strengthened. In this article, opinions are repeatedly emphasizing and deepening. At the beginning of text, implied author declares that “the New and Old Testament are the basis of the theory of Christian society, and also the truth that the socialist cannot deny.”In the following sections, he repeats his declaration and reiterates that “Christian is not an obstacle that prevents the movement of socialism, but is a medium that promotes the movement.[2]” At the last of the text, the opinions that Christian is the source of socialism and the vanguard of social movement are raised again.

Through the analysis above, we can figure out that the implied author is seemingly non-existent, but in fact hiding underneath the text and circuitously expressing the opinion through a variety of methods successfully. This obscure expression is actually a reductive manifestation of ideology of Zhang Shizhang’s.

## PUBLIC OPINIONS

Public discourse space derived from Habermas's “Public Sphere”. Habermas believes that Public Sphere is a special field in our social life where is open to all common people, besides People can get together and think rationally to reach an agreement, which then impacts on social activities[3].From this point of view, we can draw a conclusion that “Public Discourse Space” is an interactive platform from which citizens can freely gather together and make speeches equally. Therefore, Public Discourse Space is a field where citizens and individuals can use their own discourse power to freely express views, disseminate information and promote communication. This space has the characteristics of freedom, democracy and equality. When in the discussion of the modern Chinese intellectuals, Leo Ou fan Lee held the view that “the so-called 'public', does not necessarily refer to 'citizens', but to Liang Qichao's views, especially the views so-called 'Qun' and 'Xinmin ', which have an impact when they implement newspaper”.

Here we borrow Habermas's concept of “Public Sphere” and Leo Ou fan Lee's definition of “Public” is actually to prove that the column opened in *Christian Series* is not only a platform for the exchange of views, but also a public discourse space where Christians and other readers can freely and equally give a speech. Indeed, in the column of this periodical, a lot of authors take state, politics and war into consideration, and at meantime, they also express the anxiety to the prospects of church and religious environment, such as the column “The Fate of Christian and China” issued in 1943.

In march 10, 1943, Chiang Kaishek put forward to a viewpoint that “To resist foreign aggression we must first get rid of the enemy within[4]”. Around this declaration, *Christian Series* opened a column called “The Fate of Christian and China”, in which 4 articles are included, these articles are: “The declaration of National Christian Council Expansion Conference”; “Christian’s Contribution on the Present Stage of China”; “Does the intellectual class need Jesus?”; “Christian and Politics”. Four articles interpret from three aspects respectively, they are:” Country after wartime”; “The role of Christian in wartime”; “The function of Christian on politics”.

In the article “The Declaration of National Christian Council Expansion Conference” , the author

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indirectly expressed his dissatisfaction to Chiang Kaishek's policy, deemed that Chiang not only violated the spirit of Jesus, but also destructed the "Three People's Principles": "We show our the deep dissatisfaction and anxiety of present situation of Christian. didn't convey the spirit of Jesus in countless places, on the contrary, it re-crucified Jesus Imperceptibly. In this regard, we couldn't help but feel repentant and sorrowful. However, we're in recognition of the eternal truth that Jesus made the sacrifice and salvation on the Cross for redeeming love, we, then, are inspired, delighted and willing to abandon everything that we enjoyed in secular life and follow his footsteps. Hence, we take an oath that we would like to push forward consistently for the world's truth and righteousness and nation's independence and democracy.[2]"

What come not singly but in pairs is, in the article "Christian and Politics", Shen Zigao, the author, also put forward the views about Chiang's policy: "In the embryonic period, any party are minority, because of sacrifice and contribution they made for the innovation of contemporary politics and society, the minority finally grow into majority. After then, they become arrogant and autocratic as a special class which can discriminate other burgeoning and minor party.[2]" Then, he questioned one-party dictatorship:"For the sake of the real interests of the majority party itself, they should take care of those people with different opinions. To the overall situation of national stability and progress, the majority party should adopt the dissents and retain the talents.[2]"

The authors mentioned above used religious ideas to question Chiang's policy and called for national solidarity and unity against foreign aggression. In the column of *Christian series*, there are several similar discussions which are always penetrating and unconstrained. The content and style of the discussions broke the religious category, making the column become a kind of "Public Discourse Space". As Ke Lezhi argued that "In China, what we can see is the greatest political forces conflict in our time: Fascism, communism and democracy. However, Christians in the western world still pay attention on the question that how to share Christian Beatitudes to Chinese people which they have already concerned for several centuries.[6]" Obviously, the appearance of this column in *Christian Series* sufficiently answered Ke's concerns.

## RESULTS

During the war of resistance against Japan, *Christian series*, founded in Western China, bearing the burden for news dissemination, thoughts spreading and manna instilling. As a chief editor of this periodical, Wu Yaozong wasn't constrained by Christian content, conversely, varieties of religiously unrelated content, including currency comments, scientific knowledge and

political debate, are appreciated. Various opinions, like "confronted opinions", "hidden opinions" and "public opinions", are shuttling and intersecting in this periodical, which made it complicated, peculiar and paradoxical, and also made it one of the most important Christian magazines of the time.

## DISCUSSION

Through the analysis above, we can clearly see that, in this periodical, the authors didn't express in a direct, but a twisted and complicated way, to state out their opinions. Because of the strong personality and ideology showed in these opinions, *Christian series* itself has therefore diversified characteristics, like singular, paradoxical and intricate.

However, it is necessary to point out that this conclusion can only reflect one aspect of the periodical. Because of the specific topic, this paper doesn't discuss the other issues, like printing, layout, communication and sales, which are considered as a kind of subtext according to the perspective of cultural studies. Even so, to some extent, the appearance of this paper could correct the mistake that people's long-term ignorance to *Christian series*.

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