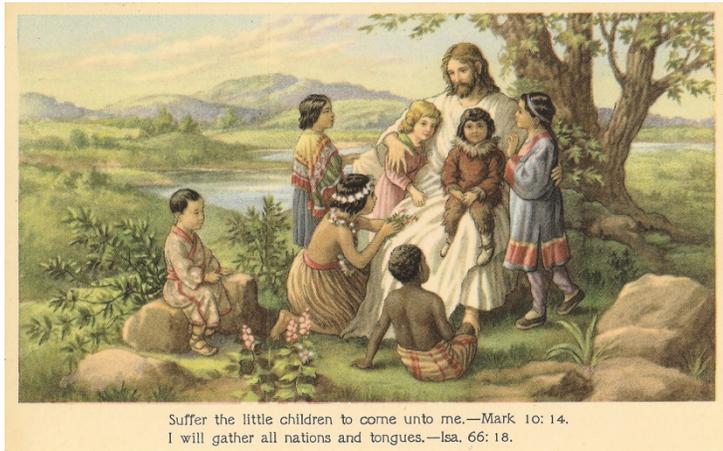# [Article] A New Jesus: Christ for Any Nation

DARYL R. IRELAND

Daryl R. Ireland is the Associate Director of the Center for Global Christianity and Mission and a Research Assistant Professor of World Christianity at Boston University.

In 1910, the world's sixth Sunday School Convention met in Washington, D.C. for six days to discuss "The Sunday-school and the Great Commission." On the opening day, almost ten thousand people jammed into the city's largest auditorium, which could seat only about half of them, and cheered President of the United States William Howard Taft as he acknowledged the remarkable spread of Sunday Schools around the world. The reality was visible not only in the hall, where delegates and guests from Brazil, Egypt, India, Japan, and a dozen other countries were assembled, but also in the statistical sheets. Every week, Taft marveled, 27.6 million people gathered worldwide for an "education [that] is absolutely necessary to secure moral uplift and religious spirit" (Taft 1910, 125).

Suffer the little children to come unto me.—Mark 10: 14.
I will gather all nations and tongues.—Isa. 66: 18.

O. A. Stemler, *Jesus and the Nations* (1910), courtesy of Sandy Brewer.

The global reality of Sunday schools prompted the conveners to promote a "new version of Christ" throughout the week, a Savior "who died to save the entire world" ("World-wide Sunday School Work" 1909, 415--16). To that end, the convention featured a missionary exposition that offered participants a chance to see and be inspired by a Jesus who redeemed all the people of the world. The thousands of viewers who filed through the National Rifles' Armory every day between 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. that week got a glimpse of all kinds of artifacts and curios from around the world—tokens that spoke of Jesus's capacity to embrace even the most "exotic" man, woman, and child. Visitors were also given an image of *Jesus and the Nations* from the Sunday School Times Company. The organization had commissioned O. A. Stemler to paint a picture that would capture the spirit of the Sunday School/Mission Convention: a new portrait of Christ that conveyed his love and concern for every child in the world (Brewer 2005, 109). This chapter will explore the transnational enchantment with this "new version of Christ," and how translations of it, first across the Atlantic and then the Pacific Ocean, allowed Jesus's presence and embrace to travel around the world and back.

The United Kingdom

One month after the Sunday School convention in Washington, D.C., hundreds of missionaries and dozens of Christians from around the world met in Edinburgh, Scotland. Basil Matthews observed the event as a reporter for the *Christian World* and was so inspired by the World Missionary Conference that he decided to change careers. Before the year was over, Matthews became the editorial secretary for the London Missionary Society (Goodall). Among other responsibilities, Matthews was tasked with overseeing *News from Afar*, the society's publication for children. Almost immediately, he tracked down Harold Copping, the British painter of beloved biblical scenes, and asked him if he could "gather up the missionary spirit of Christianity into a single picture that would appeal . . . to boys and girls" (Brewer, 108). Whether Matthews actually had a copy of Stemler's picture from one of the delegates who had traveled from Washington to Edinburgh or had just seen enough to describe it to Copping, the artist instantly grasped the appeal of Jesus "in the midst of a group of children of different races," and completed his own rendition, *Hope of the World,* in 1915.[1]

In keeping with his reputation for authenticity, Copping relied on photographs and clothes from various countries supplied by the London Missionary Society. He used the outfits and pictures sent by missionaries in the fields where the LMS was strongest. Materials from India, China, Africa, and Polynesia gave his efforts a kind of realism, even if they did not prevent anachronisms. The Chinese boy, for example, is painted with a queue—a hairstyle which by 1915 was seen as a humiliating reminder of the imperial past, a requirement of the emperor whom Chinese revolutionaries had deposed from his throne in 1911 (Godley 1994, 71).

"Chinese Children," c. 1905, https://culturalcrosspollination.tumblr.com/post/8167364594, accessed November 23, 2021.
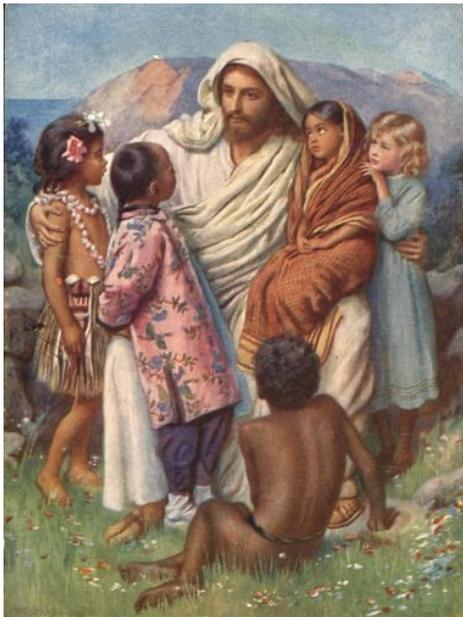
Despite its flaws and inaccuracies, here was a painting that captured the LMS's aim. Basil Matthews had wanted a picture that could speak to children about the importance of missions. He got more than he dreamed. *Hope of the World* was a commercial success. Sunday Schools around the United Kingdom picked it up and used it to promote missions, and young Sunday School scholars could earn their own copy to hang in their homes if they attended Sunday School regularly enough, memorized enough Scripture, or in some other way qualified to receive the prize. In that way, *Hope of the World* became the most common image of Jesus circulating in the United Kingdom in the first half of the twentieth century (Brewer 2005, 109). Millions of copies were produced, and they carried not only a message about Jesus, but also a mandate for missions.

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[1] In Brewer, quoting Basil Matthews, *The Chronicle* (1932): 139. The links between the two conventions were strong, as a comparison of the delegate lists shows. In addition to E. K. Warren, ed. *World-wide Sunday-school Work*, 616–17, see also *The History and Records of the Conference Together with Addresses Delivered at the Evening Meetings,* vol. 9 of the *World Missionary Conference, 1910* (Oliphant, Anderson, & Ferrier; and New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d. [1910]), 39–71.

As in Stemler's version, Copping's Jesus welcomes a variety of children. However, he made two important alterations in his translation of the original. First, he moved away from Stemler's picture that could hint of America's Manifest Destiny. The British picture refuses to seat Jesus in an expansive, virgin American landscape, where Indians, Hawaiians, Inuit, and the more recently arrived Asians on the West Coast encircle the Savior. [2] Instead, Copping inserted children from different continents around Christ. Second, he narrowed the focus. By cropping the picture, Copping managed to heighten the emotional intensity of his artwork. Gone is the sprawling frontier in which Jesus and the children are just a part. This is now a picture of Jesus hugging children. The Lord's arms, which extend almost the entire the width of the canvas, squeeze the kids together in an all-encompassing embrace. Copping's picture promises Jesus's love and tangible presence, which, for many children, made the print worth the price of Sunday School attendance or Bible memorization.

Harold Copping, *Hope of the World* (1915), courtesy of Sandy Brewer.

Even so, Copping's picture carried a second message. It was more subtle, but no less real. Children in the United Kingdom had a missionary task. A look at the eyes of the children is instructive on this point. All of them except one are gazing at Jesus. Unlike in Stemler's painting, the blonde girl, the stand-in for British kids, is looking at the other children. It is as if she is the co-host of this gathering, the daughter who is welcoming the others into the warmth of her father's love.

Whether or not children in the United Kingdom grasped the missionary mandate of the painting, adults understood the lesson. They worked this picture into Sunday School curricula with clear instructions: "It is not intended that 'The Hope of the World' picture shall be shown until four separate Talks and Stories have been given about the different children in the picture" (Brewer 2005, 112, quoting Archibald and Nevill 1916, 2). Notice, four talks about four children, because the fifth child—the girl in the blue dress—needed no introduction. The goal was to help children in the United Kingdom understand their role in inviting everyone into Jesus's loving embrace.

When these four "Talks and Stories" reached their climax on the fifth Sunday, the lesson was historical. The Bible verses selected told the story of how Jesus blessed the children who were bought to him (Matthew 19:13–29 and parallels). The image itself, however, was clearly not from the first century. It was eschatological: an image of God's promised future when Jesus would return

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[2] Stemler's painting can be read in two ways. It can be a viewed as the children of the world, or as the children of the American empire. No doubt the twin possibilities appealed to the conveners of the Sunday-school convention, who had a twofold aim: "to give a Sunday-school vision to the missionary world and a missionary vision to the Sunday-school world." In his translation of the image for audiences in the United Kingdom, Copping eliminated such ambiguity. R. E. Diffendorfer, "The Sunday-School and Missionary Exposition," in *World-wide Sunday-school Work,* 549.

to earth. In *News from Afar*, junior readers were told that "the artist painted that picture because he thought that <u>some day</u> all the children of the world would come to know and love [Jesus] . . . and be friends with one another. <u>Some day</u> we know the picture will come true" (Brewer 2005, 112, quoting Walker 1915, 97–102).

The futuristic orientation of *Hope of the World* is confirmed by Jesus's bodily presence. When Copping wanted to depict the Lord as he is experienced now—a real but invisible presence— he painted Christ very differently. In 1916, for example, Copping produced *A Medical Missionary Attending a Sick African.* In that picture, Jesus is ethereal, almost ghostly. Why? Because Jesus has ascended into heaven and is no longer physically present on earth. Until he returns, he is now made manifest through someone like the missionary doctor. Only in Copping's historical or eschatological paintings does Jesus appear as a solid, warm-blooded man.

Harold Copping, *A Medical Missionary Attending a Sick African* (1916). Welcome Collection: https://wellcomecollection.org/works/zy2k3j6q, accessed November 23, 2021.

Copping's painting reminds viewers that at his physical return, Jesus will gather people "from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Revelation 7:9). He uses *Hope of the World* to give children a glimpse of eschatological internationalism. It was a poignant message in 1915. The Great War had begun to separate not only children from their fathers but also one nation from another. *Hope of the World* promised that such a situation would not last. Missions, the picture suggested, could beat swords into plough shares, because missionary outreach could bring the nations of the world around Jesus in worldwide friendship.

What began as Stemler's new Jesus for the nations had evolved. Christ now had a helper. Copping and the LMS translated Stemler's original picture so that a nuance was introduced. Missions—specifically, British missions—were now emphasized alongside Jesus, and they were portrayed as the force that could mend the rifts of war and aid in bringing heaven to earth.

The United States of America

The extraordinary success of Copping's *Hope of the World* prompted some enterprising Christians in the United States to revisit the original. They used Copping's modifications to redesign Stemler's *Jesus and the Nations*. Their new version, too, zoomed in on Jesus and the children within his embrace. The retranslation required the removal of the Asian child, who had been the

O. A. Stemler, *Jesus and the Nations* (1910), and cropped version (1916), courtesy of Sandy Brewer.

most distant from Jesus, but that loss was offset by a gain in emotional intensity. The warmth and love of Jesus became far more evident, and the new picture highlighted the theme of internationalism just as the United States drifted toward war.

The changes to Stemler's original in 1916 may have increased sales, but it also made Stemler's work susceptible to the same criticisms that beset Copping's painting. First, critics of the wildly popular *Hope of the World* found it artistically insubstantial. Sunday School scholars were being indulged with a saccharine Jesus. Was Christianity now only promoting sentimentality? Second, there was widespread concern about the depiction of the African child. He alone sat on the ground out of the reach of Jesus. The painting suggested a racial hierarchy, which, if true, would

L: Harold Copping, *Hope of the World* (1910), courtesy of Sandy Brewer

R: O. A. Stemler, *Jesus and the Nations* [cropped] (1916), courtesy of Sandy Brewer.

undermine the very message of unity and equality that the print was trying to convey.[3] Finally, putting children on Jesus's lap made the King of kings look entirely too effeminate. Both *Jesus and the Nations* and *Hope of the World* were stumbling blocks to those who were trying to vivify a vigorous, modern, and muscular Lord (Brewer 2005, 114–115). Yet cry as protesters might, sales on both sides of the Atlantic proved that general audiences were enthralled by the "new version of Christ," and he soon began to appear in other places around the globe as well.

The Republic of China

By 1926, Christians in China were eager for a new depiction of Christ. They had been an embattled minority since the anti-Christian movement erupted in 1922. That year, the China Continuation Committee—an outgrowth of the World Missionary Conference of 1910—printed a statistical atlas that revealed how many thousands of Christian education institutions dotted the Chinese landscape (Stauffer 1922, 403–28). The schools became focal points of protest as reformers and revolutionaries attacked them for purposefully retarding China's modernization. Whereas

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[3] Several forces may have combined so that some Christians began to ask questions about racial equality. In the United States, the country remembered the fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1913, and in 1917 the NAACP organized its first major civil rights demonstration of the twentieth century, drawing ten thousand African Americans to participate. Their silent vigil protested unequal treatment. Meanwhile, missionaries such as Edwin Smith were beginning to speak out about the dignity of their African colleagues and challenging Western assumptions of racial superiority. Although these factors may have prompted questions about the treatment of the black child in the painting, no similar concern was expressed about the whiteness of Jesus. Apparently, viewers in the United Kingdom and the United States took that for granted.

education should clean students' minds with the fresh winds of science, Christian schools were accused of clouding them with "superstitious inanities" like the virgin birth and resurrection (Ka-che Yip 1980). Moreover, the book carried a title that was deaf to China's rising nationalism. *The Christian Occupation of China* said exactly what critics had long suspected: Christianity was just a thin veil to disguise imperial interests and annexation. It was as if the mask had slipped, and the so-called benevolence of medical, agricultural, and educational missions were finally revealed for what they were: cultural imperialism.

Bertha and Frank Ohlinger, "Girl in Orphanage," Fujian, China, c. 1897, Yale Divinity Library Photographs, New Haven, CT.

Chinese Christians were denounced for becoming beholden to foreign powers. They were the "running dogs" of the imperialists, trapped by their allegiance to a Lord who, according to the few pictures that circulated of Jesus in China, was neither Chinese nor even interested in China.[4] How could this foreigner do anything to save the nation? To follow him appeared foolish to some, downright treasonous to others. Nationalists summed up their withering critique of Chinese Christians with an old aphorism: "One more Christian, one less Chinese" (Bays 2012, 245–46).

During the anti-Christian movement, that well-worn saying took on an especially sinister tone. China had dissolved from one republic into competing warlord states. In that atmosphere, to be accused of following Jesus was more than a charge of cultural betrayal; it was an attack on a person's patriotism and citizenship. Those seeking to rebuild and reunite China saw every Christian added to the church as a cruel subtraction from an already weakened state. They argued the nation could not endure such treachery. Conversions were draining the very lifeblood out of China.

Christian responses to the attacks varied. Some doubled down on their defense of Christianity, while others abandoned the faith altogether. Most, though, looked for ways to distinguish Christ from Christianity (Wang, forthcoming). Jesus became the focal point. He was defensible: an honorable person whom even the strongest opponents of cultural imperialism, such as Chen Duxiu, the cofounder of the Chinese Communist Party, could venerate (Chen Duxiu 2005, 1208–14). Christianity, on the other hand, was disposable. It became associated with Western culture, including unnecessary political and denominational accretions, which many dismissed as having little or nothing to do with faith in Jesus himself.

In so saying, Christians in China were joining a chorus of voices that had been growing since the First World War. Edwin Smith worried that if belief in Christ required an African to embrace

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[4] Despite the enormous volume of Christian prints produced in China, few included pictures of Jesus Christ. See Daryl R. Ireland and David Li, "Lift High the Cross: The Visual Message of Popular Chinese Christianity," *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, forthcoming.

"Christianity as it stands," then "in addition to the pure essence of our religion, he should also take over what it has absorbed from its European environment" (Smith 1927, 263). J. N. Farquar added:

> When we say that Christianity is the Crown of Hinduism, we do not mean Christianity as it is lived in any nation, nor Christianity as it is defined and elaborated in detail in the creed, preaching, ritual, liturgy, and discipline of any single church, but Christianity as it springs living and creative from Christ Himself. (1913, 58)

Jesus did not need all the accoutrements of Western civilization. John H. Ritson, General Secretary for the British and Foreign Bible Society, believed the same principles applied to Bible translation. The gospel was not captive to any one language, culture, or race. "To the white the Bible 'thinks white'; to the yellow it thinks 'yellow'; and to the black it thinks 'black.'" Western nations have no special claim on God. "Jesus Christ is supra-national," Ritson insisted, "but every nation sees Him with a national face" (1922, 398–99).
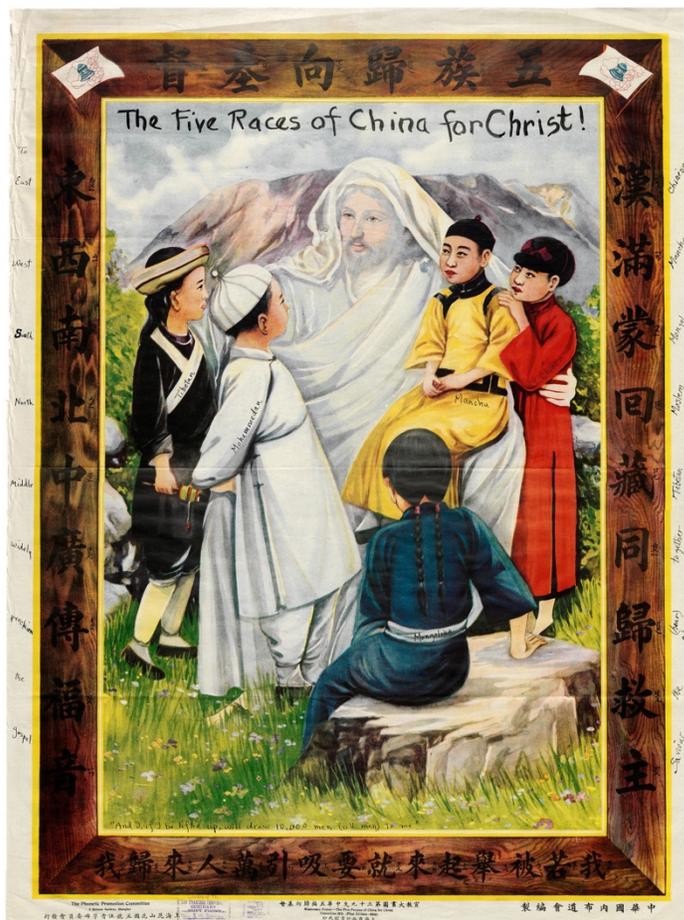

Phonetic Promotion Committee, *Zhuyin zimu* [Phonetic Characters], 1919, Special Collections, Missionary Ephemera Collection RG221, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, CT.

The Phonetic Promotion Committee of China did not engage in Bible translation as much as transliteration, but it was early in applying these missiological ideas. Established in 1919 to encourage the use of the national government's new phonetic symbols, the Phonetic Promotion Committee had worked to accelerate literacy in

Rolland A. Welch, Closing Slide for Missionary Lecture, c. 1923, Yale Divinity School Photographs, New Haven, CT.

China. It standardized the government's new phonetic system, worked out typographical arrangements for printing the new symbols, created posters to be used for teaching the new script, and rather quickly managed to publish the entire New Testament using the phonetic schema. Peter Chuan was the Committee's secretary. He had graduated from Hartford Seminary in the United States before moving to France to work with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) during World War I, teaching Chinese soldiers, sent to work in the trenches, how to read and write so they could communicate with home. He was assisted in the Phonetic Committee by the likes of E. G. Tewksbury, the head of the China Sunday School Union, and Cheng Jingyi [C. Y. Ch'eng], whom London Missionary Society–founded churches in China had financed to attend the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh.[5]

Whether it was through Cheng's connection to the LMS, Tewksbury's network in the Sunday School movement, or some third channel, such as the lantern slides of China missionary Rolland A. Welch, the Phonetic Promotion Committee was familiar with *Hope of the World*. However, they

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[5] Missionary Research Library (MRL) 6: Phonetic Promotion Committee Records, Finding Aid, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

did not commission a reproduction of the famous print but a new translation. They wanted a picture of Jesus that could speak meaningfully to the masses amid the anti-Christian rhetoric and urgent nationalism of 1926.[6]

Therefore, the Phonetic Promotion Committee did not produce a Jesus for the nations, but a Jesus for *the* nation. More specifically, their "new version of Christ" was for the Republic of China. The choices the unnamed artist made in repackaging Copping's picture make that obvious. First, Sun Zhongshan [Sun Yat-sen], the revolutionary and ideologue behind China's Revolution of 1911, which toppled the Qing dynasty, argued that in order to survive, China needed to tie its races together. He may have initially despised the Qing dynasty and its Manchu rulers, but his virulent hatred for the Manchu minority was replaced by pragmatic expediency after the revolution. In the Republic of China, politicians could not afford to pit Manchus against Han Chinese. In fact, China's five races—Manchus, Tibetans, Mongols, Hui, and the Han—needed to join together to create one modern nation state:

The Phonetic Promotion Committee, The Five Peoples of Christ for China, 1926, San Francisco Theological Seminary, Special Collections, San Anselmo, CA (BV3415).

in spite of four hundred million people gathered together in one China, we are in fact but a sheet of loose sand. We are the poorest and weakest state in the world, occupying the lowest position in international affairs; the rest of mankind is the carving knife and the serving dish, while we are the fish and meat. . . . If we do not earnestly promote nationalism and weld together our four hundred millions into a strong nation, we face a tragedy—the loss of our country and the destruction of our race. (Sun Yat-sen 1927, 12)

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[6] Missionary Research Library (MRL) 6: Phonetic Promotion Committee Records, series 1, box 2, folder 8, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Flag of the Republic of China, 1912–1928, Wikimedia commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_China_(1912,_3-2).svg, accessed November 23, 2021.

Sun therefore promoted racial harmony and symbolized national unity in the Republic of China's new flag. Red was to represent the Han, yellow the Manchu, blue the Mongolian, white the Hui, and black the Tibetans: five races, one nation. That color scheme and racial identity got mapped perfectly onto the figures in *The Five Peoples of China for Christ*. The political messaging also explains one of the other minor adjustments. The Mongolian girl reclines rather comfortably on a rock, elevated from the African child's original position on the ground. It is a small change, but an honest effort to avoid degrading any one group in the picture while keeping Jesus visible.

One of the biggest changes in the Chinese poster is the portrait of Jesus himself. He is not the solid, warm-blooded Christ of history, nor the eschatological Christ who is physically present with us at his return. Instead, the artist chose to paint Jesus as Copping did when he wanted to capture Jesus's real but invisible presence with us here and now. The ethereal image may appear white, and therefore foreign, but for those who had eyes to see it (or a knowledge of Copping's oeuvre), the artist was trying to communicate a very different message. This is not a Caucasian Jesus, an African Jesus, or even a Chinese Jesus. This is a resurrected and ascended Lord—a supra-national Jesus, who may not be visibly present at the moment but is nonetheless drawing the Republic of China together at this moment. He is the adult, or tutor, who—in the political language of the time—is raising the nation to political maturity.[7] This is obviously not a picture of some yet-to-come internationalism. *The Five Peoples of China for Christ* is a portrait of Chinese nationalism, now.

Despite the shifts in messaging between *Hope of the World* and *The Five Peoples of China for Christ,* there was at least one important similarity. Both posters were meant to promote missions. The Phonetic Promotion Committee described the print as one of its "Missionary Posters." But who, in the Chinese poster, is the missionary? In some ways it's hard to tell, for the artist lacked the technical talent of Copping. The emotional content of the original is lost, as Jesus's eyes and the eyes of the children all seem to look past one another. However, the mountain in the background, the placement of the children, and the lighting all clearly suggest that the artist was doing their best to imitate the arrangement of original. In that case, the co-hosting child—the missionary of the group—would be the boy in red. He is not British, of course, but Han Chinese. The Han formed the largest ethnic group in China and, among those pictured, had the highest number of Christians, so they were portrayed as the group responsible to reach the others. In reality, though, the Han were not the most Christian group in China. The Lahu or the Miao in southwestern China, for

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[7] The viewers of the Chinese posters were seldom children. The Phonetic Promotion Committee records speak of adults, primarily women, as the targets of their materials. These women would have been visualizing common political rhetoric in the early twentieth century. China needed to undergo a period of tutelage before it was ready for democracy. Jesus, the poster dares to suggest, provides that interim help. MRL 6: Phonetic Promotion Committee Records, series 1, box 1, folders 1–2, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

example, had experienced large-scale conversions in the early twentieth century, and numerous villages had converted *en masse* (Covell 1995). They were the Chinese ethnic groups that had the highest percentage of Christians and would therefore have been most analogous to the "Christianized" European girl in the original. But neither the Miao nor the Lahu even appear in this poster, for in actuality this poster was never intended to represent China's most Christian ethnic groups reaching out to the least. It was, rather, designed to show that Jesus—not some nationalistic ideology—was the one holding the politically defined races of the modern Chinese nation-state together.

The apologetic dimension of this poster, the argument that Jesus is on the side of Chinese nationalism, ultimately overwhelms all the other messages embedded in the Phonetic Promotion Committee's poster. Perhaps most interesting is the way in which the strong patriotic agenda complicates the stated missionary aim. Why, for example, does the Tibetan girl on the far left still carry her Buddhist prayer wheel? Does she still spin it and recite her mantra, even though she has now turned to Christ? In 1926, no member of the Phonetic Promotion Committee was considering dual religious-belonging. The best explanation is that the prayer wheel was put into the picture because it helped identify the Tibetan race. Unfortunately, the racial marker was also a symbol of Buddhism and therefore makes the poster's stated aim of conversion confusing. The matter is only compounded by the Hui child in white. In China, the Hui are not actually a different ethnic group but a specific religious group; the Hui are Muslims (Mullaney 2011, 18–41).[8] When Christians accepted the state's conflation of religion and race, it produced a thorny problem. What were the Hui when they converted to Christ? The artist didn't answer that question. In fact, they never had to.

For in the end, the Phonetic Promotion Committee did not strive to produce a new Jesus who could embrace the whole world. Instead, it generated a Christ who could deflect China's anti-Christian rhetoric, promote Jesus as the nation's hope for national unification, and inspire a new generation of Christian nationalists. Its political message in 1926 was far more poignant and powerful than any religious coding it sought to instill. Here was a new Jesus for the Chinese masses: a Savior who aided the patriot's push to unify a fragmented country; a Lord dedicated to saving the viewer's own nation (Reilly 2021).

The United States of America, Again

The new version of Christ appeared in the United States in 1910, was later appropriated for the British in 1915, and then repackaged for Americans in 1916. They were each different, but united by a common theme: internationalism. Perhaps like the best of artworks, they captured something that was inchoate at the time but would become obvious shortly thereafter. In 1918, Woodrow

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[8] The classification of the Hui has been an important political topic in modern China and they have been assigned different designations. However, it was the Communists who tried to capitalize on their underrepresentation in the Republic of China that pushed to see them as a different people group, whereas prior to that they were seen as a religious minority, but part of the ethnic majority.

Wilson's Fourteen Points for ending the Great War and preventing another required equality among nations and international cooperation. Christian missionaries, meanwhile, turned their attention to "World Friendship" in the 1920s, and they saw the Church, which existed then in almost every country, as the more comprehensive League of Nations (Robert 2002). *Jesus and the Nations* and *Hope of the World* gave American and British Sunday school students an easy-to-understand image of the internationalist impulse that was about to shift the political and ecclesial landscape.

In China, however, the artist eschewed internationalism. Jesus was already over-identified with foreign interests. Instead, *Jesus and the Five Peoples of China* translated the British and American posters, so that they delivered a powerful nationalistic message. In the Chinese rendition, Christ is virtually encircled by the Republic of China's flag. It may have seemed out of sync at the time, but again the new translation broke new ground and was an important precursor to what followed. For in the 1930s, Fascists in Italy, Germany, and Japan began to withdraw from the League of Nations, and they discarded internationalist rhetoric. Nationalistic propaganda proved far more effective in mobilizing the masses. As other nations prepared for or were drawn into World War II, they found themselves turning to the same.

In the 1940s, for example, a new image of Jesus appeared in the United States. The poster is not a direct translation of *The Five Peoples of China for Christ*, but the messaging is strikingly similar. This is Jesus for the United States. The nationalistic symbols make it impossible to see it otherwise.
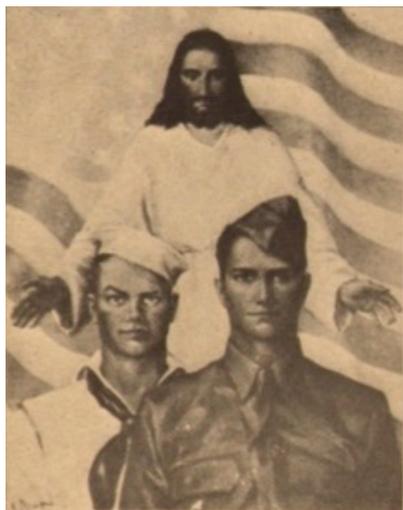
The Blessing Redeemer, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 22 (June 1, 1944): 11.

The colors of the soldiers' clothes do not just hint at the American flag; the Stars and Stripes actually dominate the entire picture. The flag, in fact, is larger than Christ himself. Nonetheless, Jesus's presence is still very important, and he is shown to be with American soldiers right now. He is not welcoming them at his return or upon their death and entry into heaven. The Lord sends these boys out, not unlike missionaries, with a task to save the world today. His arms, like in all the cropped versions of the new Christ, extend almost the entire width of the canvas. But the Lord is not embracing the world or a fragmented nation; his arms encircle young American soldiers with his divine protection. Although there is no evidence that this unnamed artist was aware of *The Five Peoples of China for Christ*, he or she did reproduce the theme of that poster and translated its ardent nationalism for a new audience. Christ had gone from the United States to China and come back with a different word for Americans.

One Image: Multiple Meanings

In the early twentieth century, Christians called for a new image of Christ. They were given a Jesus who embraced the entire world. That picture was potent and had the remarkable ability to cross national boundaries; when artists reproduced it, however, they didn't slavishly copy previous versions. They always provided a visual translation. It is tempting to see what happened as a process of corruption. One might regret that the posters devolved from high-minded internationalism to nationalism to militaristic jingoism in only one generation. Alternatively, one might bemoan the influence of the market on the Christian message. Printers manufactured pictures they thought would sell, adjusting the imagery to fit the tastes of their audiences, whether in the United States, the United Kingdom, or China. The commercialization of Jesus in the first half of the twentieth century can be told as a series of losses. On the other hand, one might herald the subtle shifts in each print as evidence of success. Christ is continuously contemporary because he is repeatedly portrayed in news way that address the needs of the moment. This interpretation celebrates the diversity in the posters and sees the changes as nothing but gain—gifts to the world of a fuller and richer picture of Jesus. Yet both narratives are unsatisfying and feel overwrought. For this new image of Christ is about more than the linear rise or fall of Christian art. It is also about the power, translatability, and limitations of visual tropes.

The new face of Jesus proved incredibly resilient. It persisted across space and time. Despite crossing national and cultural boundaries, this highly relational image, which is visually centered in Christ, remained recognizable: Jesus's arms still gather children together. That visual substructure remained, even when the poster communicated different, and sometimes even contradictory, messages.

Translating visual tropes allows for a kind of flexibility that is foreign to textual translations. One image can be translated so it supports nationalism and internationalism. Even so, visual translations have limits. The final picture of America's armed forces squeezed between Jesus' outstretched arms, for example, has obvious parallels with the previous posters. Yet it breaks with the unifying trope in very important ways. Instead of welcoming these youths in, Jesus now sends them out. The emotional intimacy is severed. It had to be that way. To paint the branches of the American military service gathered within Christ's arms, lovingly gazing at their Savior like the children do in the other posters, cannot produce the intended outcome. Such an image would not express the need for obedience and service to God and country. Therefore, the artist had to violate the foundational trope and, in so doing, showed there are constraints to visual translation. The final American poster was no longer a translation, but an imitation. It mimicked the nationalism

of the Chinese poster, but by altering the visual trope it did not reproduce the "new Christ," but created "another Christ" altogether.

Such departures may be inevitable, but the consistency of the "new Christ" across multiple countries in the first half of the twentieth century is remarkable. Jesus was incredibly translatable. A strong central trope kept him recognizable, while subsidiary elements allowed him to communicate very different things to people in the United States, the United Kingdom, and China. In the end, artists did not just create a new Jesus for the nations; visual translations proved that he could be Christ for any nation.

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