

Missionary Marriage and Civil War: George Kelley and Eugenia Wan in China, 1935-1950

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After World War II, the Chinese Communist Party gained the advantage in the Chinese Civil War, and the religious intolerance and xenophobia espoused by the emerging communist regime caused Western Christian missionaries to permanently abandon the evangelical effort.<sup>1</sup> A number of career missionaries who evacuated the country in the postwar years struggled to sever their personal and professional ties with China and Chinese Christians. One such career missionary, George Maryland Kelley, experienced severe psychological trauma as political and social conditions pressured him to flee his home in Canton. Kelley, an American Pentecostal evangelist, had arrived in China in 1910 at age 22 and spent most of the next forty years there. After he buried his first wife, an American, in China in the 1920s, Kelley resolved to live and die in China. He committed himself wholly to evangelism and social good works, investing himself so deeply in China and Chinese culture that in 1935 he married a Chinese Christian preacher, Eugenia Wan. Together the couple preached the Gospel throughout China, counseling government officials, converting university students, and caring for victims of the Chinese Civil War. After a decade of joint evangelism, Kelley and Eugenia started a family. They adopted a Chinese infant girl in 1946, and then they had a son in 1948. Kelley's roots in China had grown ever deeper over the decades, but oppressive conditions for foreign missionaries and direct communist threats compelled him to plan to take his family to safety. However, Kelley's commitment to his orphanage and his congregation compelled him to remain as long as possible. So did his commitment to Eugenia, who wished to stay in China to pursue her own evangelical activities in a Chinese-run prayer conference. As Kelley clung to his mission in the fall of 1949, with the communist army poised to enter Canton, his deepening fear provoked a psychological breakdown that caused him to be hospitalized for six months. In the summer of 1950, Kelley had concluded that he could no longer remain in China; but when he finally fled the country, he

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<sup>1</sup> Creighton Lacy, "The Missionary Exodus from China." *Pacific Affairs* 28, no. 4 (Dec., 1955), 301-314. Alvin J. Austin, *Saving China: Canadian missionaries in the Middle Kingdom (1888-1959)*, (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 1986), 301-304.

took with him only his infant son, abandoning Eugenia and their adopted Chinese daughter to their fate in the new communist order.

Scholars from several disciplines have long been interested in the end of the Western missionary movement in China and have relied on extensive missionary archives to analyze subjects from theology to diplomatic history. While shedding light on these broad topics, however, missionaries' papers at times provide compelling accounts of the personal experiences of individuals who were swept up in the world-changing events of their day. George and Eugenia Kelley's papers present such a story, and this article interweaves the couple's individual and familial experiences with the major events of the tumultuous Chinese revolution, bringing to the forefront their individual and unique emotional and spiritual responses to the threat of communist suppression of Christians and Westerners. Relying heavily on previously unexamined letters written by Kelley and Eugenia between 1937 and 1955, this paper provides evidence of the depth of the personal relationships that some Western missionaries forged with Chinese Christians, and it presents a powerful and personal account of the trauma that career missionaries experienced as political conditions forced them to abandon their life in China. As the article traces Kelley and Eugenia's growth as evangelists, philanthropists, and partners, it reveals that differences in culture and gender can greatly influence two individuals' interpretations and applications of the same religion. For Kelley and Eugenia, their divergence in theology caused by their different backgrounds ultimately created an insurmountable barrier between them.

Besides using Kelley and Eugenia's story to develop a micro-history within in the broader context of the missionary movement in China, this paper also addresses the issue of indigenous Christianity in China, which has received far less treatment by historians. Contemporary scholars have argued that Chinese history and the history of Christianity have overlooked the existence and underestimated the significance of a Christian movement in China that was 'independent of foreign missions, autonomous in operations, and indigenous in ideas and leadership.'<sup>2</sup> Historian Daniel H. Bays has attributed this ignorance to the fact that most foreign organizations and missionaries from the time ignored the movement in their records and manuscripts, on which Western scholars have subsequently and almost wholly relied to reconstruct the Christian religious landscape of the pre-revolutionary era. In 2004, Lian Xi, a research historian from Hanover College, travelled to China to seek out Chinese documents relevant to Chinese Christian sects that emerged during the Republican Period (1912-1949). He discovered that the communists had collected most of the documents during the course of suppressing religion and that the information continued to be secret and guarded in closed archives. Furthermore, Lian wrote that most indigenous sectarian organizations that emerged in China did not maintain institutional records, thus

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel H. Bays, "The Growth of Independent Christianity in China, 1900-1937, in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. Ed. by Daniel H. Bays, (Stanford University Press: Stanford, California, 1999), 309-311.

contributing to their inadequate treatment in history.<sup>3</sup> Kelley and Eugenia's correspondence and publications, however, have preserved a rare, though patchy, English-language history of a fully indigenous Chinese church, the Spiritual Life Center, which Eugenia co-founded with two other Chinese Christian women in Toishan in 1948.

Lian's study has been one of the most thorough Western accounts of independent Chinese Christians to date. However, Lian's research still lacks essential information about indigenous Christianity because of the scarcity of relevant primary sources. Lian concluded that basic and critical questions about the movement remain to be adequately answered. He asked: "For example, what was the social and economic background of the majority of the members? How many committed members were found in each group? To what extent did participation in independent revivalism overlap with membership in mission churches?"<sup>4</sup> This paper in part addresses Lian's questions with respect to the Spiritual Life Center, and its predecessor, a Chinese Bible School in Canton. The account of these Chinese church groups is significant to the historiography of indigenous Christianity in China for three reasons. First, it presents new information on an important topic about which there are scant primary sources. Second, it provides support for Lian's contention that independent churches emerged and persisted because of an apocalyptic conviction instead of a resentment of foreign influence in the church. And finally, it provides a rare account of an independent Chinese church, which, among its most unique qualities, was established in South China, founded by women, and attended by mostly educated and wealthy persons.

The Chinese indigenous Christian movement is only one topic illuminated by a study of Kelley and Eugenia's experiences. As this paper traces their lives through the first half of the twentieth century, documenting their respective arrivals in China, their combined efforts to preach the Gospel, their theological divergence, and then their separation, it offers a new lens through which to view the sweeping changes of the mid-twentieth century in China and beyond.

### **George Maryland Kelley's Early History**

Kelley was born April 6, 1888 to a farming family in Kelly, NC.<sup>5</sup> He received very little formal education before becoming a Pentecostal preacher. Nothing is known about what led Kelley to become an

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<sup>3</sup> Lian Xi, "The Search for Chinese Christianity in the Republican Period (1912-1949)," *Modern Asian Studies* 38, no. 4 (2004), 891.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 891-892.

<sup>5</sup> John Simpson Kelley, interview by Mark W. Kelley, 1 March 2008, interview 1. Details about George Kelley's life prior to 1937 primarily come from an interview with his son, John. The bulk of Kelley's papers pertaining to China date from 1937-39 and 1947-1956. Kelley's father and mother were named George Memory Kelly, who was born in Kelly, NC, and Ada Jane Blizzard, who was born in Pender, NC. After arriving in China, Kelley changed his surname from "Kelly" to "Kelley." Apparently, another Rev. Kelly lived in Canton, and the postal service could not keep the two missionaries' mail separated. As a result, the men "drew straws" to see who would add an -e- to their last name.

evangelist and travel to China. However, in 1907, Kelley and his wife, Margaret Gaylor, left North Carolina for China. The young couple spent three years crossing the United States, participating in tent revivals to generate finances to pay for their trip. On some occasions, they spent more than a month at a single revival until they earned enough funds to move a little further west by train. Like many missionaries to China, Kelley and Margaret were not ordained ministers.<sup>6</sup> The couple had no formal religious training, so their knowledge of Christianity before arriving in China came from their interaction with other Pentecostal evangelists and their own interpretation of the Bible's message. In general, they believed that in order to be saved, an individual must repent their sins and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Kelley and Margaret reached San Francisco in 1910. After receiving an anonymous donation that Kelley considered a miracle, they purchased two steerage class berths aboard a steamship called the "China," which was bound for Hong Kong.<sup>7</sup> On November 5<sup>th</sup>, after one month and five days en route on the Pacific Ocean, Kelley, at 22 years of age, began his life and career in China.<sup>8</sup> He and Margaret chose to establish their mission in Canton, Kwangtung province, about one hundred miles west of Hong Kong. Canton was situated on the Pearl River, which was navigable to the sea, making the city a trading hub for South China. The port city had a significant Protestant and Catholic missionary population, and also a long history of Christianity in the province, extending back to 1808.

Upon arrival in Canton, Kelley and Margaret met a Chinese Pentecostal woman who invited them to "take charge of her little flock of about eight souls." The couple learned Cantonese so that they could preach the Gospel more effectively, but no other details about their missionary activities have been recorded in Kelley's papers. Early in their career, the couple started a family, having six sons in total but only four who survived to adulthood.<sup>9</sup> Margaret contracted smallpox and died in the late 1920's and Kelley buried her in a cemetery outside Canton, where her funeral was attended by a mass of Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries. Shortly after his wife's death, Kelley pulled his four living sons from British schools in Hong Kong and took them to America. Kelley left all four boys in Kenansville, NC in

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<sup>6</sup> Searle Bates, "Theology of American Missionaries in China 1900-1950," in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, edited by John K. Fairbank, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1974), 136-137.

<sup>7</sup> According to family oral history, upon arriving in San Francisco, Kelley and Margaret had given their last dollars for a night's stay in a hotel near the wharf. The couple lived only on the donations offered by those who supported their mission to China, and they trusted the Lord to provide all that they needed. Without money in San Francisco, they prayed in the hotel room that night that the Lord provide passage to China. The next morning, Kelley found an envelope that had been slipped under the door. The envelope did not contain a letter or bear any name, but its contents purchased two steerage class berths aboard a freight ship bound for Hong Kong.

<sup>8</sup> George M. Kelley, "My Fortieth Anniversary," 5 November 1950.

<sup>9</sup> Kelley and Margaret's first two children died as infants from gastrointestinal disease. One son may have been delivered on the trans-Pacific voyage, or they both were born shortly upon arrival. One child's name was Morrison. The other's name is unknown, but both were buried in China. The Kelley's third son, George Maryland Kelley, Jr., was born in Macau. The following three were born in South China. Their names were Paul Waff, Hudson Taylor, and William Kerr.

the care of his wife's family, the Gaylors, and he then returned to Canton to continue his evangelical work.<sup>10</sup> Kelley eventually remarried in 1935. He wed a Chinese Christian minister named Eugenia Wan.

### **Eugenia Wan Kelley's Early History**

Eugenia Wan was born February 4, 1906, in a village fifty miles north of Canton.<sup>11</sup> Her family was wealthy, and Eugenia was one of three privileged girls in a village of four thousand to receive formal schooling. As a young student, Eugenia showed exceptional intelligence and distinguished herself in her oratorical ability and study of Confucian classics. In 1915, in the early years of the Chinese revolution, Eugenia's family relocated to Malaysia after surviving a violent attack by Chinese bandits who set fire to the family's home.

In 1924, Eugenia returned to mainland China for higher education at a university in Canton. By invitation from one of her teacher's, Eugenia attended a Christian revival meeting at the Kelleys' church in the city. Two years earlier in Singapore, Eugenia had encountered the Christian Gospel for the first time when she attended a lecture that had been advertised around campus as a discussion on "China's Greatest Need." The lecturer, who had come with the purpose of speaking about Christianity, first stoked the students' patriotic enthusiasm as he described the problems facing China and the need for solutions. However, Eugenia was revolted when the man proclaimed that "Faith in Jesus Christ resulting in a renewal of man was the only remedy for China's ills." Kelley wrote that Eugenia, who had been raised as a Buddhist, felt contempt and pity for the well educated speaker "who was so stupid as to believe this Foreign Devil Religion."<sup>12</sup>

Eugenia had rejected Christianity. In 1924, though, out of respect for her teacher, she attended the revival in Canton. The revival initially seized her curiosity when she witnessed the multitude of Chinese Christians that had gathered, but, Kelley wrote: "The Spirit then came upon her in true Pentecostal fashion, and she began to praise the Lord when she was seen to recline as if she was unable to resist the Spirit which was taking possession of her." Typical of a Pentecostal revival, trances, healing, and

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<sup>10</sup> Kelley's sons struggled with the move to North Carolina. All the boys had been born in China, so America was a foreign land. They were compelled to exchange the privileged lives of Westerners in China for the hard struggle of the American farmer during the Great Depression. The Gaylor family had only accepted custody of the boys because grandmother Gaylor owned the family farm. However, the boys' uncle, James Gaylor, managed it. He was a stern man who resented Kelley for dumping his sons on them during the difficult times of the Great Depression. James' wife and children lived on the farm, and the addition of four boys meant that his family might receive less if resources became scarce. As a result, James relentlessly worked the boys, especially the older two, George and Paul. George never forgave his father for subjecting them to their uncle's treatment. According to an oral account, he wrote a letter to his father which said something to the effect, "You save strangers in China while your family goes to hell in America." The second son, Paul, also resented his father but eventually forgave him. Paul kept frequent correspondence with his father in China, and the bulk of documents surviving pertaining to Kelley's missionary work in China are letters addressed to Paul.

<sup>11</sup> George M. Kelley, "An Interesting Chinese Girl," 16 August 1945. The details about Eugenia's childhood and adolescence come from this 14-page biography of Eugenia.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

speaking in tongues occurred regularly during Kelley's church meetings. Often individuals who experienced spiritual awakening had physical convulsions or fainted to the floor, incapacitated by their realizations. Less than a year after her spiritual rebirth, Eugenia left the university in Canton and enrolled at a Bible College in Nanking which had been founded by missionaries. Eugenia's decision caused her parents, who were Buddhists, to disown her.

After graduating Bible College in Nanking, Eugenia returned to Canton to live with the Kelleys.<sup>13</sup> In 1930, with two Chinese Christian women, she co-founded a Chinese Bible School (the precursor to the Spiritual Life Center). All three women had begun their religious careers in the Pentecostal church. According to Kelley, the women established the school as a place "where prayer might be offered and Bible studies pursued without the ordinary restrictions of a modern institution."<sup>14</sup> The school mixed Bible classes with spiritual revivals, and Kelley claimed that the organization was "unique in the annals of church work in South China." Straying from the traditional structure of a mission school, the Bible School accepted both male and female students without restrictions on age or class. The students used only the Bible as a textbook and no one ever graduated because students determined the duration of their education, which usually lasted between one and five years. The school charged no fees to students and made no payments to teachers. Finances in general, Kelley wrote, were "never mentioned in public or private – except to God." The school was funded by donations from members, many of whom were businessmen, artisans, teachers, nurses and doctors. Kelley also wrote about the school: "Christ was made the practical Head of this center and not merely a theoretical Leader; he therefore raised up a prophetess through whom he could speak to His people, and her messages were unerringly promulgated." Kelley did not describe the content of the prophecies, but he wrote that the prophecies caused the attendants to either tremble or rejoice, depending on "the character of the Lord's message."

Eugenia's personal experience of being disowned by her parents and her establishment of the Bible School highlight two important themes in the indigenization of Christianity in China. Buddhists often rejected Christianity because it forbade the worship of idols and demanded exclusive reverence to God. American missionaries in the nineteenth century held notable disdain for Buddhism and the Chinese cultural tradition of Confucianism, but they began moderating their level of contempt in the early twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> Missionaries realized that the Chinese religious tradition blended aspects and deities

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<sup>13</sup> Eugenia's occupational and household roles in the Kelleys' mission are not known, but she developed close relationships with the entire Kelley family.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Bates, "Theology," 151. For discussions of Buddhist reactions to Christianity, see Katie Murray, interview by Donald R. Lennon, 23 May 1973, interview O.H. 8, transcript, 3-5; and see Jenny Lind, Chinkiang, to Laura and Ruth, USA, 17 May 1948.

of popular religions like Buddhism and Taoism, in combination with Confucian philosophical wisdom.<sup>16</sup> Some missionaries acknowledged Christianity's resemblance to Buddhism, similarities between Moses and Confucius, and commonalities between the Bible and Chinese classics.<sup>17</sup> In the 1920's, Chinese Christians and missionaries began making concerted effort to transform Christianity into a religion that could be more easily understood and accepted by the Chinese, most notably through the creation of the National Christian Council (NCC).

The NCC, which was composed of domestic and foreign church bodies, operated "to promote the spirit of self-support, self-governance, and self-propagation and to unite the Christian believers."<sup>18</sup> Among many tasks, the council generated Chinese Christian literature and moved control of Christian evangelical and social service activities from mission bodies to Chinese churches. The NCC began molding Christianity into a Chinese religion, but the missionaries involved could only grant concessions to some aspects of the various popular religions and practices. They could not, for example, condone such practices as ancestor and idol worshipping or polygamy. However, often aspects other than theology caused Chinese to reject Christianity. China had a long history of anti-imperialist sentiments, and during the 1920s, foreign missionaries dealt with a surge in Chinese nationalism.<sup>19</sup> As a result, Chinese rejected Christianity on the basis that it was a foreign religion. Furthermore, nationalism caused Chinese Christians to rethink their relationship with the Western missionaries. During this period, a number of Chinese Protestants established native schools, churches and communities. These groups distanced themselves from missionaries and distinguished themselves from the Chinese Protestant population.

Lian Xi, who has provided one of the more thorough accounts of indigenous Christianity in China, describes this religious trend as a largely sectarian movement that witnessed a rise in individual evangelists and native churches.<sup>20</sup> The most significant and best documented indigenous sects that came about were the True Jesus Church (est. 1917), the Jesus Family (est. 1920s), and the Little Flock (est. late 1920s). These groups had commonalities that Lian argues characterized the indigenous Christian movement of the Republican period:

Although the movement consisted largely of disparate, often competing, groups, its diverse components shared many basic traces of mass eschatological religion: the vision of an impending catastrophic end of this world and the redemption of the spiritual elite who were privy to the Salvationist scheme, lay leadership combined with hierarchical organization, active proselytism,

<sup>16</sup> Emma Louise Benignus, "Current Religious Trends in China," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 15, No. 4. (Oct., 1947), 199-205.

<sup>17</sup> Bates, "Theology," 156-158.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of Chinese nationalism and conflict with Christianity, see Philip West, "Christianity and Nationalism: the career of Wu Lei-ch'uan at Yenching University," in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, edited by John K. Fairbank, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1974), 226.

<sup>20</sup> Individual evangelists were Chinese Christians who did not belong to a church but gained notoriety as travelling preachers. They are not covered in this article because they do not directly relate to Eugenia's experience in the indigenous church.

faith healing, and group support that issued from a range of potent practices varying from shared Pentecostal ecstasies and collective, public penance to communalism.<sup>21</sup>

Rising nationalism and xenophobia caused a part of Chinese Christians to resent foreign elements in the church. As a result, native churches emerged to distance Christianity from the stigma of foreign influence.<sup>22</sup> Lian notes that these sects were led by charismatic and educated evangelists and prophets who had begun their religious careers in mission churches. He asserts that the members of these sects were mostly North China farmers who sought support and security in a time of widespread banditry, famine, and rural hardship. However, he also believes that the sects attracted bankrupt merchants, wandering fortunetellers, opium addicts, and bandits. Lian writes that membership in general consisted of individuals “whose traditional familial and social network failed to sustain them and whose personal crises and powerlessness cried out for Pentecostal intervention and eschatological redemption.”<sup>23</sup> Civil and economic strife allowed these Christian sects to grow in membership, and the groups developed isolationist tendencies, segregating themselves from the Chinese Protestant community while also distancing themselves from foreigners.

Eugenia’s Bible School had some characteristics in common with the indigenous North China sects that Lian describes in that it had its roots in Pentecostalism and the leaders were evangelists and prophets of the semi-intellectual class. However, the school had distinctively unique qualities as well. First and foremost, the founders and leaders were women. The groups in the north that Lian describes were all founded by men. In addition, the Bible School did not adopt apocalyptic beliefs typical of sects in the north, probably because the urban Christians involved were not experiencing the combined results of banditry, oppression, poverty, and natural disaster that afflicted their countrymen to the north. Also strikingly dissimilar from most indigenous sects, the founders did not show antagonism towards the foreign mission or make an attempt to segregate their congregation from the Protestant community, though it was organizationally and financially independent of mission bodies. The school only mildly challenged missionary-led Christianity in that it abandoned the dogmatic and institutional restrictions of a traditional school and church structure, which the Chinese founders believed limited the ability to learn and worship. The school’s success was not apparently due to xenophobia, economic desperation, or oppression, but it was a reaction to the rigid structure of the missionary-led churches.

Kelley wrote that the success of the Bible School convinced Eugenia that she would have a world-wide ministry, but: “She could not have this vision fulfilled acting singly, so [she] felt led of the Lord to make that momentous choice which vitally affected her life and that of another: On September 23, 1935, at the time when she was only 31 years of age, she became my adorable wife.” Eugenia later wrote

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<sup>21</sup> Lian, 854-855.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 894.

about her and Kelley's motive to wed: "I would help him in any way possible for the advancement of God's kingdom upon earth as well as to show forth my duty in the home."<sup>24</sup> The American missionary and Chinese preacher joined in their effort to spread the Gospel.

After marrying, the couple travelled to Chenju, Shanghai where they converted and counseled Nationalist government officials, university undergraduates, and medical school students.<sup>25</sup> They contacted students at Chin-Nan University and Tung-Nan Medical College by having Bible classes, special chapel services, personal meetings in their home, and English language tutoring. Kelley wrote that on March 23, 1937, he and Eugenia were invited to preach to a group of twenty government officials which included Madame Chiang, wife of Chiang Kai-Shek. Kelley preached for an hour in Cantonese and Eugenia translated into Mandarin. The audience shook their hands in appreciation after hearing their message, and they knelt in prayer with the ministering couple at the close of the sermon. Kelley wrote about the encounter on June 3: "When I saw these very important people on their knees, I had the secret of China's signal forward movement during the last few years – they honor God, and he has promised that those who honor him, he will honor."<sup>26</sup> Kelley and Eugenia believed China's future under the Nationalist government to be promising, and their success in Chenju begat more opportunities for evangelism. The students that they converted arranged a tour for the couple through North China, including a campaign in July in Tsingtao, Shantung Province where a church had been built that had seating capacity for one thousand. Kelley wrote that the magnitude of the meeting was "no small affair," and that trains offered reduced rates for passengers traveling to attend the special meeting.<sup>27</sup> However, Kelley and Eugenia's activities in Shanghai would be abruptly halted in August. The couple narrowly escaped with their lives from the Battle of Shanghai at the commencement of the Second-Sino Japanese War. They returned to Canton in December, but they soon fell under Japanese occupation.

### **Canton and Japanese Occupation**

Early during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), the Japanese heavily bombed Canton and captured the city in 1938. Between the city's capture and October 1939, Kelley kept a journal in which he wrote irregularly about the events he witnessed in Canton under occupation. He most often described the suffering, lawlessness, and violence of the times. He wrote in May 1938 that "robberies

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<sup>24</sup> Eugenia Kelley, Canton, to Margaret Kelley, San Diego, 21 July 1954. Marriages among missionaries were not uncommon, especially among younger missionaries. Missionary papers indicate that occasionally some young American missionaries and doctors married Chinese Christians; however, substantially fewer reports indicate that American missionaries married Chinese ministers.

<sup>25</sup> George M. Kelley, Chenju, to Paul Kelley, San Diego, 3 June 1937.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Kelley's account of the scale of the meeting must be questioned here, but it certainly reflects his enthusiasm for the mission. No record has been found of a large meeting in Tsingsao, and possibly the meeting did not take place because of the intensifying conflict between Japan and China.

seem the order of the day.” The Japanese were under orders to spare the American missionaries, but Chinese bandits targeted Western missionaries and missionary compounds, most likely because missionaries tended to be relatively wealthy and had stores of food.

At the onset of occupation, many missionaries and church organization in Canton relocated to free territory in Western Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and Hunan provinces.<sup>28</sup> Kelley and Eugenia were among the missionaries who remained in Japanese-occupied Canton despite concerns for safety. They lived inside a gated compound with a number of Chinese Christian followers and servants. Volunteers from Kelley’s congregation guarded the wall at night to protect the property from bandits. The Japanese occasionally limited missionary activity during times of heightened violence or social uprising, but Kelley’s diary entries reveal that he held Tabernacle on a regular schedule. During the summer of 1939, Kelley increasingly focused his writing on topics relating to the cruelty of Imperial Japanese soldiers towards the Chinese and the suffering of the women and children under occupation.

Japanese invasion and occupation caused the dispersal of countless Chinese families.<sup>29</sup> In December 1937, before the Japanese had captured the city, Kelley discussed the fate of such families when describing desolated Canton in a letter to his son, Paul,

The houses that used to be the homes of happy families are now entirely deserted and only a few of the thousands of homes have any sign of life about them . . . Thousands are without food and the hard winter months just ahead can only invite more suffering. Some will not like to face it and will end their lives by throwing themselves headlong into the river or taking an overdose of opium. Homes are broken up, families separated, business blasted and the future dark, for millions in China today.<sup>30</sup>

The war separated family members through numerous circumstances. In some cases, men sent their wives and children to live in free territories while they remained at home to protect what property they could. The Japanese invasion killed many Chinese soldiers and men who remained in the cities, and tens of thousands of men who survived the battles starved to death during occupation.<sup>31</sup> The disproportionately high number of men who died in the course of Japanese occupation meant a dramatic increase in widows and orphans.<sup>32</sup> The suffering war orphans became the focus of Kelley’s missionary work. During occupation, he administered a soup kitchen to ease their hunger. After occupation, he founded an

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<sup>28</sup> Marion Dudley, Bennington, Vermont, to friends, 26 July 1943. According to Dudley, several universities and middle schools in Canton and much of the Canton YWCA constituency relocated to free territories in Western Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and Hunan.

<sup>29</sup> Marion Dudley, “China Scrapbook II (1943-1945),” 2.

<sup>30</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Paul Kelley, San Diego, 6 December 1937

<sup>31</sup> Marion Dudley, “China Scrapbook II,” 16-18.

<sup>32</sup> For one missionary’s discussion of family separation, see Marion Dudley’s “China Scrapbook II.” Dudley wrote practices of polygamy and concubinage also contributed to father’s abandoning children, as polygamous men often had to choose one family or concubine to support due to scarce resources, leaving other wives and children to face difficult times without a patriarch.

orphanage for boys, a responsibility which caused him tremendous stress during the transitional period of the postwar years.

After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941, American missionaries in occupied China either left or were interned and repatriated.<sup>33</sup> Kelley had returned to America in 1940 to care for his ailing father, but he reportedly returned to China in early 1941.<sup>34</sup> He was not interned, but his specific whereabouts and activities in China between 1942 and 1945 are unknown. Like many missionaries, Kelley and Eugenia probably fled to unoccupied territory in Western China, where they could continue their work for the duration of the war.

### **Canton after Occupation**

Following their surrender to the Allied powers in 1945, Japanese forces withdrew from China. Chinese refugees and missionaries returned to Canton to find the city devastated. In addition to the destruction caused by the bombing, the city buildings, parks, and other structures had been badly neglected during occupation.<sup>35</sup> The neighborhoods and people that refugees remembered were gone, and some individuals could hardly discern if they had returned to their home street because the appearance of the city had so dramatically changed. Most refugees who returned to Canton could not find homes, relatives, or sufficient work. As a result, tens of thousands of men, women, and children suffered from starvation and disease on the city's streets in 1945.<sup>36</sup>

Kelley and Eugenia accompanied a wave of Western missionaries who returned from abroad or formerly unoccupied territories.<sup>37</sup> Missionaries discovered that Japanese use of missionary hospitals, schools, and residences had left them in near ruin, and they found that the need for substantive aid among the people was greater than ever.<sup>38</sup> The Canton YWCA, which had been a nomadic organization during

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<sup>33</sup> Lawrence D. Kessler, *The Jiangyin Mission Station: An American Missionary Community in China, 1895-1951*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 69. "Mission Societies raise twenty millions," *The Christian Century*, 28 January 1942, 125. The Japanese deported 754 American missionaries from occupied areas and many American missionaries fled free China out of fear. Over 1,000 missionaries, though, remained in China, despite the treacherous times.

<sup>34</sup> Kelley did not return to the United States during America's participation in World War II (1941-1945). He had returned to Magnolia, North Carolina during late 1940 to tend to his sick father. He remained with his father until he passed away sometime in 1941. Kelley's trip to America lasted the better part of year. Kelley participated in at least one major revival during his time in North Carolina, a two week meeting in Richlands, NC. When returning to China, he visited his brother, Hudson Kelley, in Indianapolis, where he also attended a revival.

<sup>35</sup> For missionary descriptions of the destruction in south China, see Marion Dudley, Kunming, to friends, 20 December 1945; and, T. Janet Surdame, Suining, to M. Louise Avett, United States, 29 October 1947.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce S. Greenawalt, "Missionary Intelligence from China: American Protestant reports, 1930-1950," (University of North Carolina: Chapel Hill, NC, thesis, microform, 1974), 271.

<sup>38</sup> Oi Ki Ling, *The Changing Role of the British Protestant Missionaries in China, 1945-1952*, (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1999), 59.

occupation, returned to the city and quickly established feeding stations which offered cooked rice and vegetables to seven thousand men, women and children who lined up on the street each morning.<sup>39</sup> Missionaries assumed much of the responsibility for rehabilitating China. The Chinese Nationalist government, the Kuomintang, had received monetary aid from America to rebuild the country, but the Chinese were responsible for making the necessary policy to carry out reforms.<sup>40</sup> The government largely struggled to execute social reforms throughout the countryside, but urban centers like Canton received relatively more assistance. Despite government action and the influx of missionaries and foreign aid, even the people in cities suffered well after occupation had ended. A medical missionary who surveyed the medical crisis in Canton in 1947 reported, “Diseases of malnutrition and of overcrowding have increased in dangerous proportion.”<sup>41</sup>

Missionaries claimed that a shortage of goods and spiraling inflation limited their ability to help refugees.<sup>42</sup> Coastal port cities like Canton fared significantly better than interior cities because ruined infrastructure hindered the transport of goods and personnel to landlocked areas.<sup>43</sup> Though having access to a greater abundance of goods, missionaries in Canton dealt with the high inflation which severely limited the buying power of the Chinese dollar. In construction and labor costs, an American dollar could only purchase about one-tenth of what it formerly could before the war.<sup>44</sup> Despite high construction costs, Kelley raised enough funds with the help of pastors in America to build an orphanage in Canton.<sup>45</sup> The mission complex that Kelley built included a dormitory for two dozen orphans, a small chapel, and a school for 175 children. According to the pamphlet Kelley arranged to be distributed in America, for ten

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<sup>39</sup> Marion Dudley, “Scrapbook II.”

<sup>40</sup> John F. Melby, *The Mandate of Heaven: Record of a Civil War, China 1945-1949*, (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 1968), 246-247. Melby, a Foreign Service officer in Chungking during the postwar years, wrote: “United States’ China Aid Program of 1948 proved essentially meaningless. It fed several million people who without it would have been hungrier than they were, and it allowed industry to continue longer than it would have, but to no real significance.”

<sup>41</sup> Ayers, Sanford Emmet, “Report on the State of the Medical Mission to the Southern Baptist Convention in China,” August 1947. In 1947, Dr. Ayers was sponsored by the SBC in China to survey the Baptist hospitals. Common diseases diagnosed among refugees were cholera, dysentery, malaria, tuberculosis, beriberi and blindness caused by vitamin deficiency. Ayers observed that most hospitals lacked sufficient medical supplies, which, when available for purchase, were expensive and difficult to transport. In Canton, however, Ayers reported that Leung Kwang Hospital “is the best equipped and operated of any of the Baptist Hospitals in China.” The hospital provided medicine and a clinic free of any charge, but Ayers said it could only help a small percentage of refugees.

<sup>42</sup> For missionary discussions about inflation hindering their ability to help refugees, see M. Louise Avette, Suining, to family, USA, 3 June 1944; and, M. Louise Avette, Nanking, to family, USA, 20 January 1946.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Varg, *Missionaries, Chinese, and Diplomats*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 1958, 291. For discussion on efforts to rebuild infrastructure in South China, see “Annual Hong Kong Report,” (Hong Kong Government, 1947), 105-118. After returning to Hong Kong in 1945, the British helped rebuild the Kowloon-Canton Railroad, clear the harbor of debris to facilitate shipping, and restore wire and postal communication between Canton and Hong Kong. For missionary discussion of the difficulty of transporting staff and goods to interior China, see Marion Dudley, Kunming, to friends, 20 December 1945; and Sophie Stephens Lanneau, Soochow, to Mr. and Mrs. McDaniel, Wake Forest, NC, 19 November 1948.

<sup>44</sup> For missionary discussions of construction costs, see M. Louise Avette, Nanking, to family, USA, 20 January 1946; and Ayers, “Medical Mission,” 4. Ayers reported in 1947 that in Hunan, a 10 x 12 room “of the regular Chinese style building” cost 12,000,000 Chinese dollars, roughly equivalent to \$1,000 US currency.

<sup>45</sup> George M. Kelley, “Helping the fatherless in China,” n.d. This pamphlet was intended for congregations in America. It offers eight reasons why a person should support Chinese war orphans.

dollars per month, roughly one million Chinese dollars, Kelley could feed, clean, and educate orphans up to the sixth grade. In addition, because of the high cost of cloth, Kelley had supporters purchase and send used Boy Scout uniforms so he could fully clothe the boys.<sup>46</sup> Orphans received two daily meals and eight hours of schooling per day, which incorporated Bible class, literature and mathematics lessons, and also applications of technical skills like carpentry.

Kelley did not divulge his reasons for opening an orphanage, but he had expressed considerable pity for suffering war orphans while living in Japanese-occupied Canton. Perhaps the suffering he witnessed had moved Kelley to establish an orphanage. However, he most certainly recognized a need when he returned to Canton because the city and surrounding suburbs were packed with starving and diseased orphans. Furthermore, Kelley's intentions were not solely based in social welfare. He boasted in the pamphlet that almost every orphan he accepted into his home became a Christian.

Eugenia helped Kelley build the orphanage, but she spent a significant amount of time tending to her Chinese Bible School, which neared its fifteenth year in operation. By and large, under Japanese occupation, independent indigenous Christian sects had been able to persist better than the missionary-led churches because of their low profile and fluidity.<sup>47</sup> Aspects of the foreign mission bodies could easily be identified because of the churches, hospitals, and compound residences. The visibility of the foreign mission undoubtedly made it an easy target for the Japanese as well as bandits, who either made use of the facilities or looted them. While Kelley's mission had been literally reduced to rubble, Eugenia's Bible School had expanded through occupation. By 1945, the Canton-based organization had branches in Toishan, Hong Kong, Macau, and Swatow.<sup>48</sup>

Several years after the missionaries and Nationalist government returned to Canton, Chinese refugees continued to suffer. One American Foreign Service officer visiting Canton wrote in February 1948 that Canton regularly endured riots and fires. However, by the summer of that year, the same observer indicated that the city appeared to be well restored. He wrote: "Canton is so very much like every Chinatown in the United States that it seems quite familiar . . . [the city] is the perfect picture of what most Americans imagine China to be like, with its five and six story buildings, endless multicolored banners, and narrow crowded streets."<sup>49</sup> Canton bustled with street peddlers, shoppers, and rickshaws. However, on the outskirts of the city, away from the epicenter of reconstruction and relief efforts, Chinese refugees continued to want and suffer. In September 1948, Kelley wrote that the only thing he could find

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<sup>46</sup> For missionary discussion of high cost of cloth and other goods, see M. Louise Avette, Suining, to family, USA, 3 June 1944. For examples of other missionaries who imported used clothing from America, see Jenny Lind, Kiukiang, China, to friends, USA, 26 April 1948; and Jenny Lind, Kiukiang, China, to Laura and Ruth, USA, 7 June 1948.

<sup>47</sup> Lian, 888.

<sup>48</sup> George M. Kelley, "An Interesting Girl in China," 14. No information about the nature of the branches has been obtained.

<sup>49</sup> Melby, 279-280.

plentiful in China was “hungry starving people.”<sup>50</sup> The escalating Chinese Civil War contributed to the abundance of orphans and the severity of their plight, and Kelley became increasingly consumed by his commitment to suffering children.

### **The Renewal of the Chinese Civil War**

The Chinese Civil War, which had begun in 1927, subsided during Japanese occupation but resumed during the postwar years. The Nationalists faltered to reclaim control of formerly occupied areas, giving communists the opportunity to gain positive momentum in the conflict.<sup>51</sup> In December 1947, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), led by CCP party leader Mao Zedong, took the offensive against the Kuomintang’s Nationalist Revolutionary Army (NRA). Mao proclaimed that the military counterattack marked “the turning point from growth to extinction for imperialist rule in China.”<sup>52</sup> Mao believed that a successful revolution depended on the support of the peasantry, so he called for drastic agricultural reforms, ordering the PLA to put into effect “the system of land to the tillers.”<sup>53</sup>

Although Kelley and Eugenia had remained in China throughout the Japanese invasion, the accelerating communist revolution in the countryside prompted Kelley to write to his son Paul in December 1947 that the renewed civil war would cause him and Eugenia to leave for America. Two events had dramatically changed the couple’s perspective. First, in October 1946, they took into their home a Chinese orphan girl, Lily, who had been left on their doorstep as a new born, and then, in mid-1947, Eugenia became pregnant with their first and only biological child.<sup>54</sup>

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1948, Eugenia gave birth to a son that she and Kelley named John Simpson.<sup>55</sup> Kelley, 60 years of age at the time, registered John with the US Consulate so that he would be a confirmed American. However, the couple was concerned for Lily because they had no way of adopting her. Kelley asked Paul to inquire about obtaining adoption papers for Lily. He instructed Paul to tell US government officials the truth about their situation: “We have nursed her and care for her day and night so that she has become to us as our own child. If we should have to leave China suddenly, a thing within the realm of a possibility, we would have to leave Lily, and that would break Eugenia’s heart.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, 20 September 1948.

<sup>51</sup> For one discussion on the history of the Kuomintang’s strategic military failures in the postwar years, see Dean Acheson, “Letter of Transmittal, July 30, 1949” *United States Relation with China* (Washington, DC, Division of Publications, Department of State, 1949), iii-xviii.

<sup>52</sup> Mao Zedong, “The Present Situation and our Tasks,” 25 December 1947, in *The People's Republic of China: A Documentary History of Revolutionary Change*, edited by Mark Selden, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 170-171.

<sup>53</sup> For one discussion on Mao’s land reforms and reliance on the peasantry, see Ezra Vogel, *Canton under Communism*, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1969), 9-10.

<sup>54</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, 31 December 1947. George M. Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, 22 April 1948.

<sup>55</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, 22 April 1948.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

By the time of John's birth, cities in China had begun to show signs of social instability caused by the communist activity in the rural north. Riots and fires became regular occurrences in Canton and Shanghai. Throughout the remainder of the year, the CCP gained the support of the peasantry as the PLA forcefully dispossessed oppressive landlords and redistributed the land to the exploited tenant farmers.<sup>57</sup> The Kuomintang relied on the landlord class to rule the countryside. Most missionaries observed that the peasants welcomed the communists not because they supported their ideology, but because they sought relief from the high rents, heavy taxes, and widespread starvation that characterized life under Nationalist rule.<sup>58</sup> The government had earned a reputation for corruption and incompetence as it repeatedly failed to remedy the problems facing the people.<sup>59</sup> The CCP dubbed the Kuomintang the "running dogs of the imperialists," and decried the government's ties to Western capitalists as the source of China's problems. John Leighton Stuart, a former missionary and the last US ambassador to China (1946-1949), wrote that anti-imperialist and anti-American sentiments deepened during this time, "due chiefly to the belief that we were delaying the Communist party's overthrow of a rotten government."<sup>60</sup>

Missionaries debated the repercussions of communist takeover, and they considered what actions should be taken as communists approached their areas.<sup>61</sup> They received conflicting reports about conditions for Christians in rural areas which had been occupied by communists. Some missionaries found conditions tolerable while others found them impossible, and missionaries in Nationalist China could not arrive at any definitive conclusions about the nature of missionary life under communism.<sup>62</sup> Kelley too considered the implications of communist success, but in 1948 much of the communist activity was concentrated in rural North China and Manchuria. Enclaves of communist rebels terrorized people outside Canton, but the city did not experience the full force of the PLA until 1949.<sup>63</sup> Canton was a center of conservative thought and a political stronghold for the Kuomintang. Kelley unwaveringly supported Chiang Kai-Shek throughout his time in China, but many missionaries stopped supporting Chiang in 1948 because of the repression, corruption, and ineptness of his government.<sup>64</sup> Though missionaries largely

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<sup>57</sup> For one missionary discussion on violent land reform in China in 1948, see Olin F. Stockwell, interview (1973), in *China Missionaries Oral History Collection*, edited by Peake H. Cyrus and Arthur L. Rosenbaum, (Glen Rock, NJ: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1973), 32-34.

<sup>58</sup> Varg, 291-293. For additional discussions on Kuomintang's relationship with landlord class and the lack of moral support from the people, see "The Case of Chiang Kai-Shek," *The Christian Century*, 21 January 1948, lxxv, no. 3.

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion on the corruption in the Kuomintang and among Chiang's relatives employed in governmental agencies, see "Begin Housecleaning in Chinese Regime," *The Christian Century*, 22 October 1947, lxxiv, No 41.

<sup>60</sup> John Leighton Stuart, *Fifty Years in China*, (Random House: New York, 1954), 188-189.

<sup>61</sup> Varg, 296. For one discussion of communists not welcoming missionaries in 1947, see "Interchange China missionaries," *The Christian Century*, 31 December 1947, lxxv, no. 53. For discussions of missionaries debating the proper course of action in 1948, see Sophie Stephens Lanneau, Soochow, to the McDaniels, USA, 19 November 1948; and Sophie Stephens Lanneau, Soochow, to friends and family, USA, 25 November 1948;

<sup>62</sup> Varg, 303.

<sup>63</sup> For one discussion on Communist guerrilla activity around Canton, see Vogel, 34-36.

<sup>64</sup> For a thorough discussion of the Western perception of Chiang Kai-Shek, see "The Case of Chiang Kai-Shek," *The Christian Century*, 21 January 1948, lxxv, no. 3.

stopped supporting Chiang, they did not by default support his opposition, the communists. Missionaries knew little about communism and wondered about the CCP's intentions for the Christian mission in China.<sup>65</sup>

Despite communist successes in the north and the uncertain future of Christianity, in the summer of 1948, Kelley secured funding for the expansion of his mission. In September, he travelled to Ngau Pui Leng to register 14 boys for his orphanage, bringing the total number of orphans in his care to 35. He wrote to Paul that the trip caused him to realize afresh the suffering in China.<sup>66</sup> In examining applicants, Kelley encountered crying widows who beseeched him to accept their starving children. He met crippled and diseased orphans who begged to be taken into his care or pleaded for him to accept their defenseless siblings. Kelley wrote: "These cases haunt me day and night. I feel that I must do something about it – I can't leave these little eight and twelve year old children to starve while I live in comfort. I mean to give the remainder of my life to saving these war orphans."

In the same months that Kelley avowed his mission and planned to expand his orphanage to include a dormitory for girls and additional classrooms for 175 day students, he also initiated the required steps to obtain a US immigration visa for Eugenia. The US government required that Kelley demonstrate his ability to support his wife before considering her for a visa, so Kelley instructed his sons in America to send sworn affidavits which listed his property and assets in Kelly, NC.<sup>67</sup> All missionaries had to apply for exit permits well before leaving China, but Kelley's letters to his children in America did not indicate that he had begun the application process. Kelley remained in Canton as the year rolled over to 1949, but many Western missionaries had come to the consensus that communism would succeed and that the Christian mission in China would not be allowed to persist.<sup>68</sup>

Missionaries realized that conflicting reports from Christians under communist rule reflected a pattern in the communist approach to Christianity. According to one missionary at the time, communists treated Christianity in three successive phases: tolerance and freedom, toleration with control, and then outright opposition.<sup>69</sup> Missionaries had come to realize that the communists occasionally reduced persecution of Christians when it served their immediate needs, but they ultimately aimed to evict

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<sup>65</sup> Varg, 284, 293. 306. Katie Murray, interview, 26. Sophie Stephens Lanneau, Soochow, to Susie, Roy and Elaine, Wake Forest, NC, 11 December 1947.

<sup>66</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, 20 September 1948.

<sup>67</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, 20 September 1948. Kelley's assets in North Carolina included a twelve acre home in Kelly, Bladen County, NC. He also reported that he received \$3000.00 per year salary as minister under appointment of the Pentecostal United Church in St. Louis, MO.

<sup>68</sup> Dr. Thomas W. Ayers, "Crisis of Medical Missions in China," 18 January 1949, 1-4. "Some China Missions Closed." *New York Times* (New York), 25 November 1948.

<sup>69</sup> For one discussion of communist approach to Christianity, see Ayers, "Medical Crisis," 4. For one example of a missionary letters demonstrating the transition from tolerance to opposition, see M. Louise Avette, Nanking, to friends, USA, 6 June 1949; M. Louise Avette, Nanking, to friends, USA, 18 July 1949; M. Louise Avette, Nanking, to Sara, USA, 10 November 1949.

Christianity. Kelley had concluded as well that communist success meant an end to the Christian mission, and he soon endured increased pressure to leave the country when the Chinese Communists' liberation efforts shifted from a rural to an urban focus in early 1949.

As the communists transformed their war strategy, xenophobic sentiments surged in March when Mao proclaimed the people must “abolish all imperialist propaganda agencies in China.”<sup>70</sup> By June, the communists had crossed the Yangtze River into South China and had captured Nanking. Missionaries throughout South China knew they would soon be living under communism.<sup>71</sup> The communist stance against foreigners further intensified when Mao issued the ultimatum that “all Chinese without exception must lean either to the side of imperialism or to the side of socialism.”<sup>72</sup> Mao had decided that China must sever all contact with imperialism, a component of which, many Chinese recognized, happened to be the Christian mission. As a result, missionaries in urban areas endured increasing antagonism from sympathizers of the emerging regime.

Less than ten days after Mao demanded that the Chinese people must choose between socialism and imperialism, Kelley reported to his children in America that he had received two warnings from the American Consul to leave for safety if at all possible.<sup>73</sup> He also wrote that he had received a threatening letter from an anonymous source which recommended that he change his ways because the Communists would soon arrive. The threat, Kelley wrote, “reminded us that when the C. [Communists] did come they would have things out with us. But there is a higher power with us – so why fear?”<sup>74</sup> Many Westerners heeded the US Consulate's advice. However, as one US Foreign Service officer in Canton observed at the time, missionaries constituted the majority of Westerners who remained in China despite consular warnings.<sup>75</sup> In July, Kelley and Eugenia chose together to continue their work despite the danger. Eugenia, however, had spent the last six months at the Spiritual Life Center, a place to which she and a large group of Chinese Christians had withdrawn in 1948. After the couple elected to stay, Eugenia returned to her meeting and left Kelley to care for John and Lily without her.

The Spiritual Life Center was founded by Eugenia and her two Chinese Pentecostal associates who had helped her establish the indigenous Bible School in Canton.<sup>76</sup> The Bible School had closed in

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<sup>70</sup> Mao Zedong, “Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China,” 5 March 1949, In *The People's Republic of China: A Documentary History of Revolutionary Change*, edited by Mark Selden, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 180.

<sup>71</sup> Greenawalt, 272-273.

<sup>72</sup> Mao Zedong, “In Commemoration of the Chinese Communist Party's Twenty-eighth Anniversary,” 30 June 1949, In *The People's Republic of China: A Documentary History of Revolutionary Change*, edited by Mark Selden. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 176.

<sup>73</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Margaret Kelley, 9 July 1949.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Melby, 287.

<sup>76</sup> George M. Kelley, “A Long Lived Chinese Prayer Conference has Lasted One Year and Eight Months,” circa 1950. This pamphlet provides details about the Spiritual Life Center, an entirely indigenous undertaking, which Eugenia attended in

mid-1948 for unknown reasons. The three founders relocated to Toishan, a village twenty-four hours by boat from Canton, where four Chinese Christian women, of whom three were doctors and the other a teacher, had invited them to come conduct their services in their home. After the services began, the owners consecrated their lives and property to God. Kelley wrote that two hundred and forty Chinese Christians convened at the place, and the three story double house became a site of a new indigenous Christian church.

Resembling the congregation of the Bible School, businessmen, doctors, nurses, and teachers were among those who attended. However, at the Spiritual Life Center, Chinese ministers constituted the majority of adults, and one third of the total company were young people. Kelley wrote that the people had come together at a place where they could “wait on God without fear of molestation from anyone.” Unlike the reasons for attending the Bible School, the adherents to the Spiritual Life Center had met for reasons relating to their strong dissatisfaction with the missionary-led church and the present state of Christianity in China. Kelley wrote that the people had come together for two reasons, one remote and one immediate,

The remote cause lies in a group conviction that modern Christianity has in its constituency too many rice bowl Christians . . . The immediate cause is God’s choosing of a Spirit-filled woman from their midst whom He can use to pour forth his message of the hour in didactic and prophetic form.

The Chinese Christians of the Spiritual Life Center had developed an aversion to the missionary-led church. Kelley wrote that the center expressed discontent with the materialism of Christianity in China, believing that a large number of Chinese affiliated with the religion for the tangible benefits.

Protestant missionaries had often voiced a similar concern about the reasons why some Chinese showed interest in Christianity. The social gospel, which encouraged missionaries to perform secular social services for the people, had become an overwhelming part of the twentieth century Christian mission.<sup>77</sup> In the postwar years, the missionary-led church relied heavily on substantive aid to reach potential converts because the suffering of the people was so severe that they absolutely required help. Desperate Chinese went to the missionary-led church to obtain material assistance. Missionaries could not easily distinguish between those who came to them with a genuine interest in God or a majority interest in the food and medicine that they could obtain. As a result, missionaries suspected that a large number of Chinese who converted to Christianity had done so for the material benefits.<sup>78</sup> Eugenia and her associates, however, attracted Chinese Christians with supposedly genuine belief in God who donated all that they

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1949 and 1950. It is important to mention that the description of the motives and principles of the Spiritual Life Center come from an outsider’s and a Westerner’s perspective, and the pamphlet is intended for a Western audience.

<sup>77</sup> Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, “An Unlikely Peace: American Missionaries and the Chinese Communists, 1948-1950,” *The Pacific Historical Review* 45, no. 1 (Feb., 1976), 100-101.

<sup>78</sup> See Morton H. Fried, “Reflections on Christianity in China,” *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 1 (Feb., 1987), 94-106.

had to a community purse. All the needs of the attendants were met by distributions from the common fund, which Kelley wrote allowed the participants, who he called “saints,” to set aside all worries except those related to fulfilling God’s plan for His church in China.

One of the two women who had helped Eugenia found the Bible School in 1931 was the prophetess of the “new Faith work” at the Spiritual Life Center.<sup>79</sup> She allegedly spoke God’s message ten times daily, and when not prophesying she educated the audience on how to fulfill the prophecies revealed. Unlike the Bible School, the Spiritual Life Center espoused the apocalyptic message that typified most indigenous Christian sects which formed and operated independently of missionary authority.<sup>80</sup> The prophetess proclaimed the imminent end of the world and promised otherworldly deliverance for the faithful adherents to the new church. The eschatology caused the members of the Spiritual Life Center to drastically isolate themselves from the Chinese Protestant community. Kelley wrote:

I am profoundly impressed with an explanation made by God’s appointed leader in this prayer meeting. She explained: ‘Just as Moses had to be taken away from his people and obscured from their view in a cloud on the mountain in order to have revealed to him God’s pattern to be used in building the Tabernacle, so have we been secluded here in this village that we may be shown God’s plan for His church.’<sup>81</sup>

Whether or not Kelley ever had the opportunity to visit the Spiritual Life Center is not known, but he had access to the developments of the indigenous church through Eugenia when she visited Canton or sent him a letter.<sup>82</sup> Though the members developed a Chinese version of Christianity outside the missionary-led church, Kelley supported their efforts to assume responsibility for propagating Christianity, especially during a time of uncertainty for missionaries.

While Eugenia carried on at the Spiritual Life Center, she was kept from her domestic responsibilities in Canton. Kelley managed the orphanage in Canton and cared for John and Lily with the help of servants. Christian activity in much of China had been curtailed by the communist inspired xenophobia that had significantly permeated the Christian population.<sup>83</sup> The National Christian Council (NCC), which represented domestic and foreign churches, had further ostracized missionaries as it distanced itself from the stigma of Western influence.<sup>84</sup> The NCC increasingly moved control of the

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<sup>79</sup> George M. Kelley, “A Long Lived Chinese Prayer Conference has Lasted One Year and Eight Months,” circa 1950.

<sup>80</sup> Lian, 855-856, 863.

<sup>81</sup> George M. Kelley, “A Long Lived Chinese Prayer Conference has Lasted One Year and Eight Months,” circa 1950.

<sup>82</sup> Though Kelley directly quotes “God’s appointed leader” of the Spiritual Life Center, it would be careless to assume that Kelley had visited the church or encountered the women because he wrote the pamphlet for a western audience and composed it in a dramatic, optimistic tone. Throughout the pamphlet, there is evidence that Kelley took some literary license for dramatic effect, and this quote might be one such instance.

<sup>83</sup> K. E. Priestly, “Chinese Communism and Christianity,” *Far Eastern Survey* 21, no. 2 (Jan. 30, 1952), 17-20.

<sup>84</sup> For evidence about the NCC’s distancing itself from missionaries, see National Christian Council in China, “First Message the Christians in China,” 1 March 1948; National Christian Council in China, “Second Message the Christians in China,” 10 November 1948, 7-8; National Christian Council in China, “The Christian Manifesto,” May 1949.

council from mission bodies to native churches, and missionaries felt increasingly useless and soon found they were an ‘embarrassment’ to Chinese Christians.<sup>85</sup> In May 1949, the NCC published “The Christian Manifesto,” which aimed to root out all imperialistic influences in the church, remove foreign personnel and financing from its operations, and cultivate a patriotic spirit among Christians. The manifesto aligned the NCC with the CCP’s Three Self Patriotic Movement, which likewise aimed to remove foreign influence and control from all aspects of Chinese life.<sup>86</sup> Despite the NCC’s estrangement from the foreigners, Kelley’s missionary activities in the early summer of 1949 appear to have continued relatively unhindered. However, pressure applied by communists intensified. On one summer night, Kelley supposedly overheard communist sympathizers “whisper” beneath his apartment window as they discussed details of a plot to kill him. Kelley remained through the summer months though some of his acquaintances left. Because of reduced missionary personnel in Canton, Kelley assumed the additional responsibility of six churches, a weekly radio program, and a Christian literature department, all of which he believed would collapse without his direct supervision.

In July 1949, the communists had moved to within 210 miles of Canton. Kelley wrote that refugees from communist-occupied areas flooded the city, and added: “The daily opportunities for dispensing charity cannot be counted.”<sup>87</sup> He described the residents and refugees in Canton as “jittery,” and “as sheep without a shepherd.” In a letter to Paul, he reflected on his decision to remain though danger neared. In reference to Jesus’ story of the hireling and the shepherd, Kelley wrote: “Shall we at the sound of danger run? If we should so do would we not be counted as hireling? A hireling is condemned as such when seeing the wolf come flees to seek safety for himself.”<sup>88</sup> Like many missionaries debating leaving China, Kelley wondered how he might be perceived by others or himself if he were to flee because of impending danger.<sup>89</sup> Kelley had persevered through nearly four decades of violence and turmoil in China which no doubt placed him in danger. He had remained in the country despite disease-ridden conditions that caused the death of his first wife and two sons, and he lasted through bombing raids on Shanghai and Canton. However, in 1949, he balanced two major responsibilities that pulled him in opposite directions. On the one hand, he had made a commitment to his mission in China, primarily the suffering war orphans. On the other, he had concerns for the safety and future of his family, especially his one year old son, John. Certainly, Kelley, being so intimately exposed to the plight of orphans, abhorred

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<sup>85</sup> John W. Masland, “Communism and Christianity in China,” *The Journal of Religion* 32, no. 3 (Jul., 1952), 198-206. Varg, 312.

<sup>86</sup> For discussion of the Three Self Movement and its relation to Christianity, see Vogel, 70.

<sup>87</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Margaret Kelley, 22 July 1949. George M. Kelley, Canton, to Margaret Kelley, San Diego, [August].

<sup>88</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Margaret Kelley, 9 July 1949. Kelley is referring to the story in Luke 17:19-31.

<sup>89</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Margaret Kelley, San Diego, [August]. For discussions about missionaries being considered cowards by Chinese Christians, see Ayers, “Medical Crisis 1949,” 2-4; and Sophie Stephens Lanneau, to friends and family, USA, 1 December 1948.

the thought of what might become of his son if something were to happen to him. Kelley continued his work and Eugenia still attended the revival in Toishan, but Kelley's concerns about departure began to plague him.

On August 20, 1949, the US Consulate in Canton closed and most US government personnel withdrew to Hong Kong.<sup>90</sup> The Kuomintang had recently relocated the national capital from Nanking to Canton because the communists had captured Nanking, and some observers believed the government had decided it would make its last stand on the mainland in Canton.<sup>91</sup> Kelley heard reports that sixty Baptist missionaries had evacuated South China. One missionary who stayed called on Kelley and told him that he and his family would remain in Canton whatever the outcome might be. Kelley wrote that the man's decision reflected his own sentiments, and he again alluded to Jesus' account of the hireling,

The Bible speaks of the "hireling" who sees danger and runs away, and tells us that he is not a shepherd. He flees because he is a hireling! A hireling was . . . one whose service was of a short duration, and consequently one who cared little about the quality of work which he accomplished. Not so with the shepherd whose duty was to care for the flock under any and all conditions and see that they were protected from the destroyer of the flock. We hope if it is the Lord's will that we can stay on so long as the Gospel can be preached.<sup>92</sup>

Eugenia was still attending the Spiritual Life Center in August while Kelley supervised their two children and forty orphans, among other responsibilities. Despite the proximity of the PLA, blatant communist threats, and the pressures of added responsibility, Kelley claimed to carry out his daily tasks "as if the world was at peace and every nation loved its neighbor." He did not plan to remain indefinitely in China, yet he planned to remain as long as his work could be continued. The predicament Kelley faced required that he make a decision as to when to leave China. He had already decided that he would indeed leave when he believed the time had come, but he vacillated in determining when the presence and threat of communism had become so overwhelming that he must take his family to safety. Kelley labored to be the fearless and faithful shepherd as the wolf approached the flock. His work continued, but a fear for his own and his family's safety brooded within the calm character he portrayed in his letters.

The autumn of 1949 brought significant changes for China and for Kelley. The CCP established the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Just days before the communists captured Canton on October 15<sup>th</sup>, Kelley collapsed and was sent for medical care in Hong Kong. Eugenia, who temporarily left the Spiritual Life Center to care for her husband, later recalled that Kelley's doctors said "he was in the grip of fear, that he denied it, and did not want anyone to mention it." Looking back on this incident in 1954, Eugenia unsympathetically described Kelley's condition in a letter to Kelley's daughter-in-law, Margaret,

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<sup>90</sup> Rankin, Canton, to Department of State, 20 August 1949, *FRUS VIII China* (1949): 1320-1321.

<sup>91</sup> Melby, 280.

<sup>92</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, 29 August 1949.

His nerves were shattered over a certain matter. In the matter of finance, preaching, and the meeting of friends etc. he was as sane as any man, but whenever the thing which he feared was mentioned, there was reaction. His nerves were greatly affected, his thinking became absurd, obstinately biased and unreasonable – totally in the grip of fear.<sup>93</sup>

The summer before being hospitalized, Kelley discussed fear in several letters that he sent to his children in America, but he never indicated that he had any himself. In fact, Kelley had claimed just the opposite. In a letter earlier that year, he asserted that he should have no fear of harm from communists because “the higher power” was with him, and that he had no fear of dying because he believed in “the consciousness of the soul after death.”<sup>94</sup> Kelley associated fear only with the Chinese who he described as “jittery” and “as sheep without a shepherd.” He claimed that unlike them he conducted his daily tasks as if external conditions had no effect on him.<sup>95</sup> Taking into account Kelley’s diagnosis after hospitalization, it appears likely that Kelley’s denial caused him to project his fear onto others when informing his children about the situation in China. Neither Kelley nor Eugenia ever named “the thing which he feared.” However, it certainly related to the threat of communism and the danger it posed his family. As well, it provided the most compelling reason for him to evacuate China.

In April 1950, Kelley’s nerves calmed enough that he took charge of a church in Hong Kong.<sup>96</sup> He had been hospitalized for six months, but he had still not been fully cured of his fear. The family returned briefly to Canton where they celebrated John’s second birthday, and Kelley shipped the personal belongings he collected there to California, a fact which indicates that he had already decided to return shortly to America.<sup>97</sup> Kelley chose not to remain in Canton. He required a change of environment to help ease his troubled mind, and he moved John and Lily to Hong Kong where he continued to supervise one church. The fate of the orphanage in Canton is unknown, but it had been removed from Kelley’s responsibility upon his hospitalization. Kelley wrote that his concerned friends and associates thought he should leave the country. They promised airfare for him and John, but they could not do so for Eugenia and Lily. Through the summer of 1950, Kelley negotiated plans for departure from China for his family. In the meantime, Eugenia had returned to the Spiritual Life Center. Kelley wrote that the revival being held there had set a record for length of days, running for one year and eight months.

The Spiritual Life Center thrived through 1950. Conversely, the Western Christian mission as a whole had suffered a significant loss of support throughout the year. The right to religious freedom promised in the CCP’s *Common Program* was never realized in the sense that missionaries understood

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<sup>93</sup> Eugenia Kelley, Canton, to Margaret Kelley, San Diego, 3 September 1954.

<sup>94</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Margaret Kelley, 9 July 1949.

<sup>95</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Margaret Kelley, San Diego, [August].

<sup>96</sup> Eugenia Kelley, Canton, to Margaret Kelley, San Diego, 3 September 1954.

<sup>97</sup> George M. Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley and Joyce, San Diego, 12 April 1950.

freedom of religion.<sup>98</sup> The CCP had successfully discredited and marginalized missionaries through anti-foreign propaganda, which sometimes involved accusations of espionage, humiliating public trials, and occasional imprisonment. The National Christian Council had fully aligned with the PRC and it encouraged Christians to employ their skills to benefit the socialist mission of the new regime. Chinese Christian leaders declared the church would be re-examined and shorn of the “undesirable elements” of Western culture.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, they declared that the missionary movement had failed because it could not offer practical solutions to remedy the problems facing China. Nationalism and xenophobia had continued to swell, especially after China entered the Korean War in October.

The number of missionaries who had been trickling out of the country since 1947 increased throughout 1950.<sup>100</sup> In November, Kelley had decided the time had come to leave China and he finalized his trip itinerary. That month marked Kelley’s fortieth year in China, and he published a letter to commemorate the anniversary. In the letter, Kelley concluded: “During these forty years of missionary endeavor the only black spot in our sunshine has been the shadow of ourselves.”<sup>101</sup> On December 15<sup>th</sup>, Kelley and John boarded a Pan American Airways flight bound for San Francisco, but they left behind Eugenia and Lily under communist rule.<sup>102</sup> By the end of the year, all of mainland China was under communist control, and by April 1951, all but a negligible few of the remaining Protestant missionaries evacuated China.<sup>103</sup>

## The Separation

Kelley and Eugenia’s accounts of their family’s split differed significantly. Kelley felt abandoned when Eugenia returned to the Spiritual Life Center in the summer of 1950. He believed that she had forsaken her duty in the home and had become consumed by her eschatology. In 1955, Kelley wrote that Eugenia, at the time of their separation, had believed that the apocalypse neared, and she had “the religious conviction that she has a special mission on earth.”<sup>104</sup> According to Kelley, Eugenia thought that upon the apocalypse “She will be sent to all parts of the earth and that in making these tours she will not

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<sup>98</sup> The *Common Program* was a body of articles passed by the CCP in September 1949 which reserved rights for Chinese citizens as well as foreigners; Article 1, Section 5 provided for religious freedom. For one discussion of the Western Christian mission’s loss of support, see Francis P. Jones, “The Christian Church in Communist China,” *Far Eastern Survey* 24, no. 12 (Dec., 1955), 184-188. For discussions on the religious intolerance of the CCP and the treatment of missionaries, see Lucy Jen Huang, “The Role of Religion in Communist Chinese Society,” *Asian Survey* 11, no. 7 (Jul., 1971), 693-708; and see John W. Masland, “Communism and Christianity in China,” *The Journal of Religion* 32, no. 3 (Jul., 1952), 198-206.

<sup>99</sup> National Christian Council in China, “Third Message the Christians in China.” 10 December 1949. “Message from Chinese Christians to Mission Boards Abroad.” December 1949.

<sup>100</sup> M. Searle Bates, “Churches and Christians in China, 1950-1967: Fragments of Understanding,” *Pacific Affairs* 41, no. 2 (Summer, 1968), 203-204. According to Bates, the postwar Western Protestant missionary population peaked in 1947 at 3200.

<sup>101</sup> George M. Kelley, “My Fortieth Anniversary,” 5 November 1950.

<sup>102</sup> George M. Kelley, Hong Kong, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, San Diego, 10 December 1950.

<sup>103</sup> Austin, 304-305; Melby, 295.

<sup>104</sup> George M. Kelley, Whiteville, North Carolina, to Paul and Margaret, 6 December 1955.

travel by ordinary means . . . she will go as did Enoch, as translation through the sky.” Kelley had contributed to Eugenia’s conversion to Christianity and her growth as a minister. At this point in their relationship, Eugenia’s Christian theology had transformed so radically that Kelley could no longer concur with her beliefs. She committed herself to the Spiritual Life Center, and Kelley could not follow her into the entirely indigenous church. Eugenia’s efforts to develop and acquire a truly Chinese Christianity, though Kelley originally praised her group’s efforts, ultimately established a cultural and theological barrier between them that Kelley perceived to be insurmountable. Eugenia’s decision to return to the revival instead of remain with her family led Kelley to believe she acted selfishly and negligently, and he therefore left China without her.<sup>105</sup>

On the other hand, Eugenia asserted that Kelley never gave her the opportunity to finally decide whether she would stay in China or go with him. In 1954, she wrote to Margaret that her husband suddenly and secretly abandoned her and Lily after she returned to the Spiritual Life Center.<sup>106</sup> Eugenia claimed that Kelley permitted her to return to the meeting because he was sympathetic to the effort of the Chinese Christians. In light of his original compliance, she believed that Kelley’s ailment might have caused him to flee, acting rashly in a fit of paranoia. In 1954, Eugenia still participated in the spiritual retreat outside Canton, and she justified to Margaret her decision to return to the meeting in the summer before Kelley left. She wrote: “If it had not been for God’s will I would never have allowed my dear husband and little Johnny to go back alone.”<sup>107</sup> Eugenia later explained in a letter that she had felt compelled to return to the meeting: “When I saw that the churches everywhere were becoming cold and worldly and getting further away from the Lord, my heart ached and longed for more power, more Holy Ghost power to revive the churches and to save more souls.”<sup>108</sup> Kelley and Eugenia had decided a year earlier that they would stay in China as long as Christian work could be continued. In November 1950, Kelley had decided that he could no longer carry on his work, due in part to his fear but mostly due to the fact that the PRC had generally restricted the activities of all foreign missionaries. Conversely, having gravitated towards the indigenous movement and away from the mission bodies, Eugenia was able to continue her work.

The Spiritual Life Center did not subscribe to the tenets of the NCC, which promoted the socialist cause, nor did it belong to the foreign mission which the PRC targeted for eviction. After nearly all foreign missionaries left in April 1951, the burden of propagating Christianity under communism fell on the Chinese, whether they were ready to assume the responsibility or not. The Spiritual Life Center

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<sup>105</sup> Whether Kelley had ever secured Eugenia the necessary documentation to leave China is not definitely known. Since both Kelley and Eugenia discuss Eugenia’s refusal to depart, it seems that she had the opportunity. No letter ever mentioned the outcome of Kelley’s attempts to adopt Lily.

<sup>106</sup> Eugenia Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, San Diego, 3 September 1954.

<sup>107</sup> Eugenia Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, San Diego, 17 April 1951.

<sup>108</sup> Eugenia Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, San Diego, 21 July 1954.

persisted as late as 1954, when Eugenia last sent a letter to Margaret in which she indicated that she still attended what she called “the prayer meeting.” However, in the 1950s, the PRC began suppressing visible signs of religion. From 1950-1952, the communists temporarily closed most rural churches, claiming that they could potentially serve as gathering places for conspirators against the revolution. However, few of the churches ever reopened.<sup>109</sup> Independent indigenous Christian bodies that did not join the Three-Self Patriotic Movement were labeled counterrevolutionary and their members were arrested.<sup>110</sup> Some independent Chinese churches, like the True Jesus Church, relocated to Taiwan where they thrived, while others became part of the underground Christian church movement in communist China.<sup>111</sup> Lian argued that evidence emerged by the end of the twentieth century that some of these underground churches survived decades of communist rule, but the Spiritual Life Center apparently faded into nonexistence sometime in the late 1950s.

### **Life after Separation**

Prior to 1955, Eugenia exchanged letters most often with Margaret Kelley in San Diego, but she also sent letters to her husband in Whiteville, NC.<sup>112</sup> Eugenia claimed that she had received guaranteed slips of delivery that her letters had reached Kelley but that he rarely wrote back. Kelley’s son, John, recalled in an interview that his father sent letters to Eugenia more often than her letters indicated. He said that his father made him write to his mother throughout his childhood.<sup>113</sup> Eugenia acknowledged that she occasionally received letters and money, but she also indicated in 1954 that Kelley had sent a letter in John’s name which said he was poor and could send nothing. The content and frequency of the letters did not satisfy Eugenia, so she wrote to Margaret for news of her husband and son. She often wrote of Kelley’s alleged neglect: “God has given us a little son Johnnie . . . For a father seeing such a precious son, how can he forget his mother?”<sup>114</sup> Eugenia’s letters expressed unmistakable incredulity at her husband’s behavior. She claimed that she had never witnessed Kelley treat friends or strangers as he treated her, because “he is a Christian gentleman, and also a faithful loving pastor.”<sup>115</sup> Eugenia expressed disappointment that circumstances kept her from her husband and son, and she optimistically wrote about the possibility of a future reunion. She wrote that after Kelley left with John, she had planned to remain in

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<sup>109</sup> M. Searle Bates, “Churches and Christians,” 199-202.

<sup>110</sup> Lian, 889.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 886.

<sup>112</sup> No correspondence between Kelley and Eugenia are known to have survived.

<sup>113</sup> Kelley’s son, John, admitted that his memory of his father was not completely clear. He also acknowledges that his account of his father and mother’s story are biased because his understanding of the situation is derived entirely from his father’s story. Until reading Kelley’s papers, John had never known that his father had been hospitalized. He only learned in adulthood that his father had developed a fear of communism.

<sup>114</sup> Eugenia Kelley, Canton, to Paul and Margaret Kelley, San Diego, 3 September 1954.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

China for an additional year and then join them in America. However, she wrote that eventually circumstances changed and she could not leave the country, though she never specified her binding situation.

Though Eugenia sent several letters to America, few facts have surfaced about her and Lily's experience after the missionaries left China. Like most under communist rule, Eugenia and Lily lived meager lives, especially relative to the privileged life they enjoyed as the family of a Western missionary. Eugenia's letter dated 1954 indicated that she and Lily lived in Toishan. Eugenia wrote that Lily attended school, but she did not divulge anything about her own activities as a preacher at the Spiritual Life Center. A letter that Kelley wrote in 1955 indicated that Eugenia still maintained the eschatology she developed before they were separated. Kelley wrote that six years had no effect on Eugenia: "She still holds to her peculiar faith with no concern for her lonely husband and motherless child." Eugenia remained convinced that the end of times neared, and she continued to carry out the mission that she believed God had commanded her to undertake: continued proselytizing in China.

Kelley resumed his preaching career when he and John moved to Whiteville, NC. He became a Methodist minister. Even in rural North Carolina, Kelley did not overcome the fear that he developed in China. He battled paranoia for several years. According to his son, Kelley had deep suspicions about the trucks that passed on the dirt road adjacent to the house, believing that the drivers were communists who plotted to kill him.<sup>116</sup> Kelley raised John alone until 1955, when he remarried at 67 years of age. John recalled that his father so quickly remarried because he thought his son needed a mother to be raised properly. After getting engaged, Kelley sent a letter to Eugenia in which he released her from her wedding vows. He wrote to Paul: "It's my opinion that she will look upon this as God's will. I have not (pathetic as the story may seem) put away my wife . . . I have been separated from her by Providence, political conditions, and religious beliefs, so we have no alternative but to remarry."<sup>117</sup> Kelley concluded the letter saying that he would continue to financially support Eugenia and "the little orphan girl there."

Kelley's refusal to use Lily's name represents a dramatic shift in his sentiments towards the Chinese child who had been left on his and Eugenia's doorstep in 1946. In letters that he had written in China, Kelley presented a very loving disposition towards Lily. In describing her to Paul in 1948, Kelley wrote: "Lily is a darling, as plump and lovely as any little American girl her age. She has fine skin and the loveliest eyes you ever saw, as black as coal and as sparkling as a diamond." Kelley had written that they considered her as dear as a naturally born daughter, but by 1955, he had distanced himself from China and his ties there. Given that he had spent forty years in China, buried his first wife and two children there,

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<sup>116</sup> John heard of his father's early behavior in America from his half brother, Bill Kelley. John was too young to recognize his father's peculiar behavior.

<sup>117</sup> George M. Kelley, Whiteville, NC, to Paul and Margaret Kelley and Joyce, San Diego, 6 December 1955.

and been married to Eugenia for twenty years, it is remarkable that Kelley could have disconnected himself from China so quickly. However, he seems to have done just that. Kelley kept regular correspondence with Paul and Margaret until his death in 1975, but he never mentioned Eugenia or Lily again in his letters after he informed Paul that he had released Eugenia from her vows.

Examined over two decades, the story of George Kelley and Eugenia Wan offers a powerful example of the traumatic personal struggles that accompanied the end of the Western missionary movement in China in the midst of a violent civil war and Communist revolution. Yet this is more than just a story of personal struggle, for the complexity of the couple's relationship in many ways symbolizes the broader processes at work in the history of Christianity in revolutionary China. Kelley and Eugenia's experience in China provides a case study for recognizing the close ties developed between Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries and also for comparing and contrasting the reactions of Chinese Christians and American missionaries to communist oppression. Eugenia, like an estimated 200,000 Chinese Christians of the independent movement, resorted to an apocalyptic outlook on the world and labored to complete as much evangelical work as she could before the end came. Conversely, Kelley, like the thousands of Western missionaries, acknowledged that the end of the Christian mission in China had come and abandoned the effort. Their differing reactions show that cultural roots and gender can play a role in a person's interpretation of the same religion. Most importantly, the couple's account provides a rare glimpse of a relationship between an indigenous Chinese church and the foreign mission. Kelley's records of Eugenia and the Spiritual Life Center contribute primary sources to a category of Chinese Christians that has for the most part been undocumented in history, helping scholars further understand the nature and impact of indigenous Christianity in China.

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