

DOCTORAL THESIS

Developing Ideal Individual Life and Reforming Society: Xu Dishan (許地山) and Mi Xingru (米星如)'s Christian-Themed Fictions

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Abstract

This study investigates the Christian thoughts and Christian-themed fictions of Xu Dishan and Mi Xingru during the 1920s and 1930s in China. The research utilizes primary sources such as essays, speech drafts, interviews, manuscripts, contemporaries' accounts, and fictional works to explore Xu and Mi's perspectives on the role of Christianity in modern China.

Chapter 1 traces the reflections of May Fourth and Christian intellectuals from the 1920s to the 1930s on the relationship between Christianity and modern China. Initially, both groups saw Christianity as valuable for individual development. However, as the social crisis deepened, societal reform became the central concern for most intellectuals. This shift led to controversy surrounding Christianity after the rise of party politics and the Anti-Christian Movement. In the 1930s, the challenge of war further influenced the reflections of both groups. Xu Dishan and Mi Xingru, prominent figures in the May Fourth Movement and Republican period respectively, shared the belief that Christianity could contribute to individual and societal transformation. They expressed these reflections through their fictional works, recognizing literature as a powerful tool for shaping reality.

Chapter 2 focuses on analyzing the contributions of previous research to the study of the Christian thought and literature of Xu Dishan and Mi Xingru. Simultaneously, this chapter aims to uncover the limitations of previous research and make advancements in this field. Additionally, this chapter introduces the research methodology employed in this study, namely historical investigation, which aims to reveal the influence of social movements on textual writing and how texts respond to societal issues.

Chapters 3 and 4 concentrate on Xu Dishan's Christian thoughts and fictions. The research aims to uncover Xu's contemplation of the relationship between Christianity and individual development in the early 1920s and his shift towards societal concerns as China's social conditions changed. The study also explores Xu's reflections on the relationship between Christianity and justice during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on Mi Xingru's Christian thoughts and literary creations from the early 1920s to the 1930s. It aims to reveal how Mi contemplated the relationship between Christianity and ideal individual life and societal reform through the lens of "the personality of Jesus Christ". Additionally, Mi's reflections on the role of Christianity in restoring justice amidst Japan's aggression are analyzed.

Chapter 7 compares Xu Dishan and Mi Xingru's differing interpretations of Christianity's role in developing ideal individual life and social reform. The study examines their attitudes towards individual development during the May Fourth Movement and their perspectives on whether Christianity should prioritize transforming rural or urban society. It also explores their views on Christianity's relationship with nationalism. By uncovering the factors that shaped their distinct understandings of the relationship between Christianity and modern China, the study aims to showcase the diverse range of Christian reflections among intellectuals in the Republican era. It also seeks to expand research in Chinese modern literature by exploring Christian-themed fictions authored by Xu and Mi.