

American Missionaries and the Nanking Massacre:  
A History of Humanitarians, Collaborators, and Evangelists

by

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### **Note on Transliterations**

Although *The Chicago Manual of Style* recommends the use of Pinyin, this thesis uses Wade-Giles because most primary sources use this older system. However, exceptions are made in two cases. First, Chinese words with other established transliterations in the historical canon are not converted into Wade-Giles. For example, Chiang Kai-shek will not be transliterated into Chiang Chieh-Shih (Wade-Giles) or Jiang Jieshi (Pinyin). Likewise, Ginling, a major setting for the events of this thesis, will be kept as is rather than be transliterated into Wade-Giles. Second, contemporary works in Chinese are cited in Pinyin so the reader may accurately search for these sources in databases.

## Introduction

Nanking remembers the events of December 1937 when a victorious Japanese army brutally sacked the capital city of Republican China. Monuments throughout the city preserve and shape the memory of the Nanking Massacre, including the “300,000” statue that reminds residents and visitors of the supposed number of victims. Memorials can be found at individual massacre sites as a constant reminder of Japanese atrocities. Memorials can also be found commemorating some of the Westerners who established the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone (IC) to protect 200,000 refugees. On the grounds of the old Ginling College, which is now the Nanking Normal University, there is a bust of Wilhelmina “Minnie” Vautrin. During the Massacre, Vautrin transformed Ginling into a refugee camp for 10,000 women and children.<sup>1</sup> Four Chinese characters, 金陵永生, meaning “Ginling Forever” are inscribed on her bust. The inscription is a suitable description of Vautrin’s life. In her twenty-one years as Ginling’s Dean of Education, Vautrin strived to make Ginling into the premier school for Chinese women. After Vautrin committed suicide in 1941, she was laid to rest at her birthplace of Secor, Illinois. The same Chinese characters from the Nanking bust are inscribed on Vautrin’s headstone. The headstone also provides another description of Vautrin’s life that is markedly absent on the Nanking bust: “American Missionary.” After graduating from college, Vautrin went to China in 1912 as a missionary with the Foreign Christian Missionary Society.<sup>2</sup> Her work as a Christian missionary eventually led her to Ginling College, a school funded by a conglomerate of American missions. Christianity was an important part of Vautrin’s life. During the Massacre, Vautrin’s faith served her and those she protected well: “Religion has become a

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<sup>1</sup> Wilhelmina Vautrin, diary, 18 September 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 10 and 11, Microfilm 62). Online version: <http://www.library.yale.edu/div/spc/Vautrin.pdf> (accessed 27 September 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Hu Hua-ling, *American Goddess at the Rape of Nanking: The Courage of Minnie Vautrin* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 14.

reality to many of us during these days of terror and destruction. Jesus becomes a friend who walks by your side as you go forward to meet a group of fierce men whose shining bayonets are marked with fresh stains of blood.”<sup>3</sup> Although Vautrin served for a quarter of a century as both educator and missionary, it seems strange that Nanking only remembers her for the former. I became curious at the omission on the bust, and this curiosity has led to my research on the American missionary experience in the Nanking Massacre.

Vautrin was not the only missionary who participated in relief efforts. During the Massacre, fourteen American missionaries from different denominations remained in Nanking to establish the IC. Eight laymen, including the German businessman John Rabe, also joined the IC. The missionaries composed the majority of relief workers in Nanking, but academic literature has largely and curiously neglected their contributions. Instead, historical studies have treated the IC as simply an organization of Westerners without identifying the significant missionary presence. It is worth examining the political and epistemological frameworks that have led to this curious omission.

In China, the situation is understandable because the American missionaries are caught in a strange position in contemporary Chinese historical memory. On one hand, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has a troubled relationship with Christianity and missionaries. If it acknowledges that Christian missionaries were capable of doing good, the CCP would essentially undermine its own suppression of Christianity. On the other hand, the missionaries' role in the Nanking Massacre forms an integral part of China's narrative of resistance against the Japanese invasion. The missionaries formed the IC, and this organization seemingly stood up against Japanese brutality. The IC's relief work serves as a useful foil to the Japanese atrocities.

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<sup>3</sup> Wilhelmina Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing: Diaries and Correspondence, 1937-1938*, ed. Lu Suping (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 148

As a result, public commemoration in China is selective. Missionaries like Vautrin are remembered as heroic *Westerners* who risked their lives during the Massacre. These Westerners are also remembered for their service as teachers or doctors but rarely as *missionaries*.

While the Chinese literature does not outright deny that American missionaries were part of the IC, it certainly does not make an effort to elucidate the missionary contribution. Like public memorials, the literature is selective. This typical selective memory can be found, for example, in Jing Shenghong's two-volume study of occupied Nanking. He carefully lists all the Westerners who served in the IC, but he labels only six of them as missionaries. These missionaries, such as John Magee and Wilson P. Mills, served as pastors, an indisputable religious role. Most missionaries in Nanking, however, served in roles with evangelical connections that are not necessarily apparent. For example, Miner Searle Bates was a history professor, and Robert Wilson served as a doctor. These missionaries were Social Gospellers. Although they were not full-time preachers, these missionaries were trying to create a Christian community in Nanking by providing social services. The pastors and the Social Gospellers worked in conjunction with each other. Yet, Jing does not mention these people were missionaries.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the missionary contribution becomes diluted in a group of Westerners with seemingly different professions. The missionary category is no longer coherent when six pastors were working alongside businessmen, doctors, nurses, professors, and tradesmen. The Westerner category is not only convenient, but it is considerably less stressful to deal with for Chinese historians whose academic freedom is limited.

Away from the watchful eye of the CCP, Western academics do not have the same excuse as their Chinese colleagues. Nonetheless, the Western literature has produced very little

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<sup>4</sup> Jing Shenghong, *Nanjing lunxian ba nian shi*, volume 2 (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2005), 1012-1013.

research about the missionary contribution in Nanking. There are some published collections of missionary primary sources, such as Zhang Kaiyuan's *Eyewitnesses to Massacre: American Missionaries Bear Witness to Japanese Atrocities in Nanjing* and Lu Suping's *Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing: Diaries and Correspondence, 1937-1938*. These collections are useful, but they are ultimately indicative of a systemic problem with Massacre literature in both China and the West. Massacre literature is narrowly focused on Japanese atrocities and the unending debate on the final death toll. Published collections of primary sources are rarely accompanied by historical analysis. Instead, these collections are meant to be *prima facie* evidence of Japanese wrongdoing. This state of affairs is understandable though unfortunate. Some Japanese, such as Takemoto Tadao and Ohara Yasuo, denied the Massacre as ever happened.<sup>5</sup> Others, Iris Chang in particular, have greatly exaggerated the scale of the Massacre.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, most narratives emphasize Japanese atrocities, and Mark Eykholt, in his critique on the state of the literature, observes: "There is little tolerance for Nanking Massacre research that does not focus on Japanese responsibility, and the intimidating environment scares away especially younger scholars who question some aspects of Massacre scholarship or who are interested in broader issues of the Massacre."<sup>7</sup> It is important to study the numerous atrocities committed by the Japanese, but these war crimes should not serve as the only epistemological framework for understanding every aspect of the Massacre. Broader issues have been simplified in order to focus on Japanese atrocities, and broadly categorizing the missionaries as charitable Westerners becomes an expedient way to ignore the nuances within the IC in order to create a moral foil to

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<sup>5</sup> Takemoto Tadao and Ohara Yasuo, *The Alleged "Nanking Massacre": Japan's Rebuttal to China's Forged Claims* (Tokyo: Meisei-sha, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: the Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Penguin, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Mark Eykholt, "Aggression, Victimization, and Chinese Historiography of the Nanjing Massacre," in *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 53.

the rapacious Japanese.

The missionaries in Nanking were all Westerners, but most Westerners in Nanking were not missionaries. When historians treat the IC as simply an organization of Westerners, they apply a broad label that assumes homogeneity. Even David Askew, who deviated from the usual topic of Japanese war crimes, was unable to escape this paradigm when he asserted: “Yet, a small group of Westerners chose not to return home. ... These Westerners would form the nucleus of the IC.”<sup>8</sup> Yet, organizations are composed of people with different backgrounds, interests, and relationships. It is necessary, then, for the historian to break an organization down to its different components in order to understand its actions. The American missionaries represented a major component of the IC who greatly influenced relief work throughout the Nanking Massacre. These missionaries had interests, particularly evangelical ones, that were different from other Westerners in the IC. Ultimately, it was the missionaries who served as the nucleus of relief efforts in Nanking.

Although my disaggregation methodology is different, I will be using the same sources most Massacre historians would have access to at the Yale Divinity Library, which has meticulously made many missionary records publicly available online through the Nanking Massacre Project. Yale has provided sources that date back to the early 1930s, but for the purposes of this thesis, I will begin my first chapter in August 1937 when local Nanking missionaries hosted Ronald Rees of the National Christian Council to strategize relief efforts. Generally, most histories of the Nanking Massacre emphasize the December 1937-February 1938 period when Japanese forces butchered the city’s population. By rewinding the analytical focus back to August 1937, I have discovered that the missionaries who formed the IC were part

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<sup>8</sup> David Askew, “Westerners in Occupied Nanking: December 1937 to February 1938,” in *The Nanking Atrocity 1937-1938: Complicating the Picture*, ed. Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 227.



of a network of friends and co-workers based out of Ginling College and the University of Nanking. In other words, these American missionaries were already members of a distinct social group before they became a component within the IC.

Invariably, my research returns to the three bloody months of the Nanking Massacre in the second chapter. When the missionaries are identified as an influential group within the IC, however, current understanding of the organization can no longer be invariable. I deviate from the general historiography in two regards. First, I am using primary sources from the missionaries to investigate what they *did* rather than what they *saw*. In other words, I will not be describing Japanese atrocities in great detail as is the norm. Readers can no doubt find other studies, such as the ones by Lu Suping, if they are interested in the various methods Japanese soldiers murdered civilians. Instead, my emphasis will be on how the missionaries actually dealt with the challenges of the Massacre. Second, I argue that the missionary network was a leadership component within the IC who guided the organization along a path of collaboration. Heeding Timothy Brook's advice in "Hesitating Before the Judgment of History," my goal is to understand how the IC tried to mitigate the damage caused by the Japanese rather than condemn collaboration as an absolute moral failing.<sup>9</sup> I will also be building upon Brook's work in *Collaboration* where he suggested that the IC's work in Nanking aided the Japanese occupation.<sup>10</sup> Unlike his primary focus on Chinese collaborators, I will examine how the missionaries and Rabe collaborated with the Japanese to protect the Safety Zone. I hope my analysis will offer nuanced perspectives towards both the IC and the controversial concept of collaboration.

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<sup>9</sup> Timothy Brook, "Hesitating Before the Judgment of History," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71, 1 (February 2012): 103-114.

<sup>10</sup> Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 131.

In the third chapter, I examine the relationship between evangelical interests and relief work. My insistence on treating the missionaries as a distinct component is crucial for identifying how relief efforts advanced not only humanitarian interests but also religious ones. The American missionaries were in China, after all, to convert people into Christians. This goal was unique to the missionary component within the IC. When refugees became dependent on Christian charity, these missionaries worked together to take advantage of evangelical opportunities. In particular, the American missionaries relied on relief efforts to change their historical image as agents of Western imperialism to friends of the Chinese people. At times, this chapter has proven difficult to write since the missionaries did not always provide exact details on their evangelical strategies. Thus, I have relied on searching for connections in places that do not seem obvious. For instance, Vautrin never expressly stated that the missionaries diverted limited resources from a relief project to support a major evangelical program during Easter. Instead, I discovered this by examining how resources were allocated to demonstrate the importance of evangelical work for the missionaries. While this method requires a certain degree of extrapolation, it is worth pursuing since the American missionaries have never been specifically examined in the Massacre literature as anything other than eyewitnesses to atrocities. The missionaries' evangelism, in particular, demonstrated that different events were occurring in Nanking despite the ever-present shadow of Japanese violence.

The missionary records are amongst the most invaluable sources about the Nanking Massacre, but historians have used them selectively. Historians have picked the personal writings of missionaries apart for evidence of Japanese atrocities while neglecting a wide range of experiences being recorded. I have written about the American missionaries not because I do not believe remembering the horrible events of December 1937 to February 1938 to be unimportant.

In fact, the atrocities are omnipresent in this thesis even though I chose not to describe them explicitly as many historians do. Instead, I have written about the missionaries in the hope that future research into the Nanking Massacre would no longer be structurally confined to the single aspect of Japanese culpability.

## I

### Friends in Nanking

After serving three months as the tireless Chairman of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone (IC), John Rabe left the ruined city on 23 February 1938 on the orders of his superiors at Siemens. Rabe's role in protecting 200,000 Chinese refugees against bloodthirsty Japanese soldiers who murdered and raped their way through the fallen city offended many officials in Berlin and Tokyo, and Siemens refused to let Rabe stay in Nanking any longer. Before he left China for Germany, Rabe made a brief stop in Shanghai to visit the local Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) where he met the families and friends of his IC associates. In a speech given over tiffin, Rabe praised his American missionary colleagues, who were still in Nanking, for forming the IC to provide relief for civilians:

I must tell you that Mr. Mills is the man—who originally had the idea of creating the Safety Zone. I can assure you the brains of our organization were to be found in Ping Tsang Hsiang No. 3. Thanks to the cleverness of my American friends Mr. Mills, Dr. Bates, Dr. Smythe, Mr. Fitch, Mr. Sone, Mr. Magee, Mr. Forster, and Mr. Riggs the Committee was put on its feet and thanks to their hard work ran as smoothly as could be expected under the dreadful circumstances we lived in.<sup>1</sup>

Rabe is a central figure in academic and popular discourses on the Nanking Massacre due to his status as the official leader of the IC. His membership in the Nazi Party while serving in a humanitarian organization is also a subject of interest. In comparison, the names he mentioned are not well known. Yet, Rabe not only praised these American missionaries, he also credited them for creating the IC. This revelation suggests the missionaries played a much larger role during the Nanking Massacre than is commonly assumed.

The speech indicates that the missionaries, who formed the IC, preceded Rabe's

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<sup>1</sup> John Rabe, speech at the Shanghai YMCA, 28 February 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 141, Folder 15). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0306.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0306.pdf) (accessed 25 January 2012).

involvement with the Safety Zone. Although the IC is an important part of Massacre literature, its origins remain vague. David Askew wrote one of the few studies specifically about the IC, and he correctly identifies Wilson P. Mills, a Presbyterian missionary, for coming up with the idea to form the Nanking Safety Zone.<sup>2</sup> Askew, however, does not push his investigation further. Instead, he merely indicates that the IC was formed by a group of Westerners on 22 November 1937 before proceeding with his analysis of IC activities during the Massacre.<sup>3</sup> Askew's study reflects the paradigm paralysis afflicting the historiography of the Nanking Massacre where everything is studied within the context of Japanese atrocities. The IC is relegated to the role of an eyewitness to war crimes. In essence, the Nanking Massacre has become isolated from the rest of history because historians only study the IC within the time period of December 1937-February 1938 when Japanese atrocities were at their worst.

In doing so, the American missionaries' crucial role in forming the IC has not been examined since they began their work in August 1937. Furthermore, some important yet basic questions have not been answered by the current epistemological framework. For instance, how did the IC prepare to protect and sustain 200,000 civilians for an indeterminate period of time with so little time beforehand to prepare? After all, the IC only had twenty-two Westerners amongst its ranks and was formed just three weeks prior to the fall of Nanking. As Pompey Magnus once learned, people cannot simply stomp their feet on the ground and expect good things to happen. Yet, that is exactly how the current literature deals with the IC—an organization that was somehow there. In order to understand how the IC came to be, it is necessary for the IC to become, as Kurt Vonnegut would say, unstuck in time.

By rewinding the focus back to August 1937, primary sources show that Nanking's

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<sup>2</sup> Askew, "Westerners in Occupied Nanking: December 1937 to February 1938," 227.

<sup>3</sup> Askew, 228.

American missionaries were absolutely vital to the creation of the IC. During the Massacre, these missionaries kept records of the event which Timothy Brook describes as “one of the surest bodies of evidence that Japanese misconduct was widespread.”<sup>4</sup> Historians have relied on these documents to examine the events between December 1937-February 1938, but the missionaries were also writing diaries, letters, and memos before the Japanese captured Nanking. By looking at these documents made prior to December 1937, one discovers a network of personal and professional relationships linking a select group of American missionaries, and this network was distinctive from other Western groups in Nanking. Motivated by religious convictions and linked by their relationships, the American missionaries organized the provision of relief for victims of the Japanese invasion through this network. In order to meet the increasingly difficult situation in Nanking, the American missionaries would later invite others, such as Rabe, into their network that would be remembered as the IC.

The nature of American missionary work formed the connections of the Nanking network. After the 1911 Revolution, many American missionaries arrived in China as highly educated professionals. These missionaries offered not only the Gospel but also practical service, usually as teachers.<sup>5</sup> The non-evangelical work of American missionaries was partly a political consideration to counter the anti-foreign sentiment of ardent Chinese nationalists. Jane Hunter indicates that half of all American missionaries in China were not even “engaged in direct evangelism” when the Ch’ing dynasty collapsed. However, the missionaries’ practical service was not only a response to Chinese suspicious of foreigners. The Social Gospel exerted great

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy Brook, ed., *Documents on the Rape of Nanking* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 10.

influence on American missionary work in China.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the missionaries saw their social service as doctors, nurses, teachers, etc. to be part of their religious service. As Japanese bombs rained on Nanking, the spirit of the Social Gospel was alive in Vautrin's remark:

How I wish that all the missionaries who are well and strong and free to come back to Nanking were here now working with the Chinese pastors and other church workers. It is a time of great opportunity. As "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," so is helping the church to measure up to great emergencies strengthens the foundations of the church and makes a place for it in the community that is sure and lasting.<sup>7</sup>

The following is a list of the American missionaries who were part of the Nanking network.

Only four of these missionaries were full time ministers:

#### American Missionaries in the Nanking Massacre<sup>8</sup>

Missionary	Missionary Affiliation	Occupation
Bates, Miner Searle	United Christian Missionary Society	Professor of Chinese History
Bauer, Grace Louise	United Christian Missionary Society	Medical lab technician
Fitch, George A.	Young Men's Christian Association	Head of the Nanking YMCA
Forster, Ernest H.	American Church Mission	Minister
Magee, John G.	American Church Mission	Minister
McCallum, James H.	United Christian Missionary Society	Minister
Mills, Wilson Plumer	Presbyterian Foreign Mission Board	Minister
Riggs, Charles H.	American Board of Missions	Professor of Agricultural Engineering
Smythe, Lewis S.C.	United Christian Missionary Society	Professor of Sociology
Sone, Hubert	Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church	Professor of Theology
Trimmer, Clifford	Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church	Doctor
Vautrin, Wilhelmina	United Christian Missionary Society	Dean of Education
Wilson, Robert O.	University Hospital	Doctor/Surgeon

<sup>6</sup> Xi Lian, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 89.

<sup>7</sup> Vautrin, diary, 26 September 1937.

<sup>8</sup> This list is compiled with data from the Nanking Massacre Project hosted by the Yale Divinity Library at <http://www.library.yale.edu/div/Nanking/about.html> and cross-referenced with the research from Lu Suping's *They Were in Nanjing* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004) and Zhang Kaiyuan's *Eyewitness to Massacre* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001). Mary Twinem is excluded from the list because she gave up American for Chinese citizenship. Iva Hynds, an American nurse at the University Hospital, is also excluded because there are no records available to indicate a direct connection to any mission. It is highly probable—considering the University Hospital was a missionary hospital—that Hynds was a medical missionary. Given her day-to-day interactions with the American missionaries, Hynds can be considered a member of the network though.

From this list, Magee, Vautrin, and Wilson appear most frequently in studies of the Massacre, but no historian has actually emphasize their missionary status or connected them as part of a larger missionary network that initiated much of the relief work before, during, and after the Massacre.<sup>9</sup> For instance, Askew merely refers to the IC as “a curious mix of people.”<sup>10</sup> By identifying how these missionaries were interconnected, the development of relief work in Nanking can be traced, and the current assumption that a group of Westerners rallied around Rabe to form the IC and the Safety Zone will be proven incorrect.

Vautrin was an archetypical member of the network.<sup>11</sup> She assisted evangelical projects such as organizing prayer meetings, but her responsibilities as the Dean of Education for Ginling College took up much of her time. Due to the influence of the Social Gospel, Paul A. Varg observes “by the 1920s missionary schools were a central feature of the missionary effort with as much personnel and as great an investment as the more direct evangelical missionary work.”<sup>12</sup> Many of the network’s missionaries served in Nanking’s post-secondary institutions, and it was through this professional network that initially brought the missionaries of different denominations together. While the missionaries served different churches, many were also colleagues in education. Most of them worked either at Ginling College or the University of Nanking, which were funded by different American churches pooling their resources together.

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<sup>9</sup> Both academic and popular works mention these three missionaries due to specific contributions that are difficult to ignore. Magee is remembered for filming Japanese atrocities for use as evidence. Vautrin is known for protecting women and children at Ginling. Wilson is recognized as the only surgeon in Nanking during the Massacre.

<sup>10</sup> David Askew, “Westerners in Occupied Nanking: December 1937 to February 1938,” 227.

<sup>11</sup> Although Vautrin was not an archetypical woman of American society, her background and work was certainly representative of missionaries. Like many of her colleagues, she was university-educated. Vautrin had a Master’s in Education. As Hunter explains in *The Gospel of Gentility*, many highly educated women left the United States to serve as missionaries in China where “one’s work counts for more” (37). Missionary societies welcomed women like Vautrin who were essential to working with Chinese women. Some American missionary women served in positions of great responsibilities. In fact, Vautrin was the network’s highest-ranking academic as Ginling’s Dean of Education until Bates was promoted as Vice-President of the University of Nanking in 1938.

<sup>12</sup> Paul A. Varg, *Missionaries, Chinese, and Diplomats: The American Protestant Missionary Movement in China, 1890-1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 216.



For instance, Bates, Riggs, and Smythe were amongst the missionaries who taught at the University. At the University, the missionaries also introduced Wilson, a Nanking-born son of American Methodist missionaries, into their network. After graduating from Harvard Medical School, Wilson returned to his native home and worked at the University Hospital, which was often referred to as the Christian Hospital since American missions funded it.<sup>13</sup> During the Massacre, Wilson served as the sole surgeon for the Safety Zone. Preachers such as Magee and Mills would often perform services at these schools for the staff and students. The Ginling-University missionaries would form the nucleus of a social circle that would include others, such as Fitch who headed Nanking's YMCA. The social circle also included prominent Chinese Christians such as Wu Yi-fang, the President of Ginling.

Inevitably, friendships formed amidst this network of missionaries who worked together. The personal correspondence of the missionaries indicates that those who remained in Nanking during the Massacre were a close-knit group of friends. Bates, for instance, referred to his missionary compatriots as "the gang."<sup>14</sup> Zhang Kaiyuan, a former student of Bates, recalls "the Nanking gang" was a term these American missionaries used to refer to each other affectionately.<sup>15</sup> When Bates attended a conference in Japan, he kept in close touch with his gang of missionary friends in Nanking. On his way home, Bates wrote a letter on 23 September 1937 to his wife Lilliath Bates where he provided detailed updates on Bauer, Fitch, Magee, Mills, Riggs, Smythe, Vautrin, and Wilson. In particular, he expressed doubt over Vautrin's efforts to evacuate Ginling students to other schools due to Japanese bombing raids. He did add, however,

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<sup>13</sup> Some old China hands, like Vautrin, often refer to the hospital by an older name, the Drum Tower Hospital.

<sup>14</sup> Miner Searle Bates, letter to Lilliath Bates, 14 November 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 10: Box 1, Folder 7). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0028.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0028.pdf) (accessed 12 October 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Zhang Kaiyuan, ed., *Eyewitness to Massacre: American Missionaries Bear Witness to Japanese Atrocities in Nanjing* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), xxv.

his doubt was “not criticism, but expression of difficulties.”<sup>16</sup> That Bates was aware of what his friends were doing while travelling is one indication that the network was both a professional and personal one.

The Christian community in Nanking was not large, and the missionaries relied on each other for help, which further cemented the network. When Vautrin needed help to celebrate a depressing Founders’ Day at Ginling on 30 October 1937, Bates quickly volunteered to perform a comedy skit about the difficulty of finding a wife amongst the Ginling faculty.<sup>17</sup> Evidently, Vautrin decided to enlist her Christian friends to cheer her war-weary guests up at dinner, as Bates wryly told his wife: “Mary Chen, Blanche Wu and I were instructed to be funny.”<sup>18</sup> Friendships such as the one between Bates and Vautrin were important in developing the emotional bonds of the network. Later, these bonds of friendship would prove to be a deciding factor for some members of “the Nanking gang” to stay in the capital. Before the Japanese conquered Nanking, these friends often socialized at John Lossing Buck’s house where they chatted over tiffin or listened to news of the fighting on Buck’s radio.<sup>19</sup> When Japanese bombs fell on Nanking almost daily, the Buck house unsurprisingly became the de-facto headquarters of missionary relief work.

The missionary network actively participated in relief work soon after the Japanese invaded at Marco Polo Bridge on 7 July 1937. On 14 August 1937, Magee and Vautrin met with

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<sup>16</sup> Miner Searle Bates, letter to Lilliath Bates, 23 September 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 10: Box 1, Folder 6). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0025.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0025.pdf) (accessed 13 December 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Founders’ Day at Ginling College was an important event to the school’s alumnae, faculty, and students. It not only celebrated the founding of Ginling, but it also marked the beginning of higher education for women in China. The Japanese bombing raids obviously made celebrations in 1937 difficult.

<sup>18</sup> Miner Searle Bates, letter to Lilliath Bates, 5 November 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 10: Box 1, Folder 7). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0031.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0031.pdf) (accessed 10 January 2012).

<sup>19</sup> John Lossing Buck was a missionary and professor of agricultural economics at the University of Nanking. He was the former husband of Pearl S. Buck, the famed missionary and Nobel Laureate. Pearl S. Buck also taught at the University.

Ronald Rees from the National Christian Council in Shanghai "...to see what Christians can do in a situation like the present one. Are we to stand by hopelessly and see war come upon the Orient or is there something we can do—and if so, what?"<sup>20</sup> The war did not reach the city until the next day when the first Japanese planes bombed Nanking, but Vautrin's statement indicates the network believed it was a Christian duty to do good in times of war. Before the IC was formed, then, the American missionaries were collectively and proactively looking for ways to help.

The American Embassy, on the other hand, decided that the best thing for the missionaries to do was to leave Nanking, and it issued the first of many evacuation notices on 16 August 1937.<sup>21</sup> As the capital of China, Japanese airplanes bombed Nanking frequently. Japanese bombers invariably accompanied good weather, and Vautrin remarked sarcastically on an especially sunny day: "Sad to say we had a beautiful sunrise this morning and it looks as if the day is to be clear and lovely."<sup>22</sup> The residents of Nanking faced a long and precarious summer, and the American missionaries were well aware of the danger. By 3 September 1937, Wilson reported that every floor except the fourth was filled with patients at the University Hospital.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the danger and orders from the Embassy, religious convictions and bonds of friendship proved stronger reasons for staying in Nanking. Vautrin felt it was her moral duty as a Christian missionary to remain in Nanking. She also refused to leave her friend and Ginling colleague Wu Yi-fang. Vautrin rationalized: "There are times when we must obey God rather than man, or governments. I am helping to carry administrative duties that would fall on Dr. Wu

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<sup>20</sup> Vautrin, diary, 14 August 1937.

<sup>21</sup> Vautrin, diary, 16 August 1937.

<sup>22</sup> Vautrin, diary, 25 September 1937.

<sup>23</sup> Robert O. Wilson, letter, 3 September 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 11: Box 229, Folder 3875). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0012.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0012.pdf) (accessed 15 January 2012).

if I left.”<sup>24</sup> Vautrin stated these two reasons curtly, but the statement clearly demonstrates that her missionary responsibilities and her loyalty to a friend within the network were deciding factors in staying. Other missionaries in the network also remained in Nanking for similar reasons. Rees tried to persuade Bates, who was awaiting transportation in Shanghai after his conference in Japan, to work at the NCC instead. Buck already warned Bates about the dangerous situation in Nanking. In fact, Bates was unable to find any insurance company willing to renew his Nanking property insurance.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, Bates left the relative safety of Shanghai’s colonized International Settlement, and he later informed Vautrin that his place was in Nanking at the University with his co-workers.<sup>26</sup>

The American missionaries frequently raised the question of moral obligation in their writings when wondering if they should stay or not. It was undoubtedly an important question. After all, these men and women arrived in Nanking to serve God and the local people. If they left Nanking in its time of need, the entire missionary project would be a project in hypocrisy. Wilson did not feel it was wrong of others to leave *per se*, but he weighed staying in Nanking as a matter of moral imperative: “One can’t help feeling that leaving right now would be passing up an opportunity for service of the highest kind, not only medically, but morally as well, and that while one could not be blamed, at least a suspicion of the white feather would always remain to prick one’s conscience.”<sup>27</sup> Missionaries, Wilson feared, could be remembered as cowards. If they stayed, the missionaries could help the many refugees while advancing Christianity in Nanking immensely.

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<sup>24</sup> Vautrin, diary, 3 October 1937.

<sup>25</sup> Miner Searle Bates, letter to Lilliath Bates, 8 November 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 10: Box 1, Folder 7). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0030.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0030.pdf) (accessed 10 January 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Vautrin, diary, 25 September 1937.

<sup>27</sup> Robert O. Wilson, letter, 24 August 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 11: Box 229, Folder 3875). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0012.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0012.pdf) (accessed 15 January 2012).

Yet, it is important to remember many missionaries were not part of the close-knit network centered around the Ginling-University social circle. By the time Nanking fell in December, the only missionaries left were those who were part of the network. Thus, it is difficult to presume religious duty solely motivated all missionaries to face the dangers in Nanking. Otherwise, more missionaries—especially those outside the network—would have stayed in the city to assist in relief projects. Conversely, some missionaries left precisely because it was their duty as Christian missionaries. For instance, Catherine Sutherland, a Ginling faculty member, wanted to stay but had to leave to look after students being evacuated to different schools in China. Sutherland later took up duties at Wuchang.<sup>28</sup> Later, Wu would also leave—at Vautrin’s constant urging—to ensure the institutional survival of Ginling when the fall of Nanking became imminent.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, the network’s religious belief in the Social Gospel separated them from other Westerners in the city. The American missionary network was certainly not the only network of Westerners in Nanking. Western businessmen such as Rabe and Eduard Sperling constituted one major network. Some of them—especially the old China hands like Rabe—were sympathetic to the Chinese. He asked himself: “Under such circumstances, can I, may I, cut and run? I don’t think so. Anyone who has ever sat in a dugout and held a trembling Chinese child in each hand through the long hours of an air raid can understand what I feel.”<sup>30</sup> Some would stay and help the missionaries form the IC. Men like Rabe and Sperling who stayed, however, were exceptions within their own business network. Drawing on data collected in Askew’s investigation of exactly who stayed in Nanking, a total of sixteen Western laymen initially

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<sup>28</sup> Vautrin, diary, 3 October 1937.

<sup>29</sup> Vautrin, diary, 29 November 1937.

<sup>30</sup> John Rabe, *The Good Man of Nanking*, ed. Erwin Wickert, trans. John E. Woods (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 5.

volunteered to stay with the missionaries. Fourteen of these laymen were businessmen, and the remaining two were mechanics. However, half of them, all businessmen, would leave Nanking before the Japanese arrived—only eight laymen stayed.<sup>31</sup> As Zhang notes, the various companies ordered these businessmen to leave.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, none of the fourteen American missionaries left. In other words, the priorities of the two networks were quite different. Unlike the work of Siemens or Texaco, the Social Gospel work of Christian missions motivated the Americans to help the people of Nanking. Although his sympathies towards the Chinese certainly influenced his decision to remain in Nanking, Rabe's primary reason to stay was, in fact, less altruistic: "It wasn't because I love adventure that I returned here from the safety of Peitaiho, but primarily to protect my property and to represent Siemens' interests."<sup>33</sup> The American missionaries' religious sense of duty to serve, which was further reinforced by personal bonds of friendship, distinguished them amongst the Westerners who made up the IC. As other Westerners fled Nanking, members of the missionary network could count on each other to stay and help.

The stability of the American missionary network provided a tremendous advantage that allowed its members to draw upon close inter-personal connections to implement relief projects. At the University Hospital, Wilson was especially in need of help to assist the victims of Japanese air raids. Although the Nanking Decade (1927-1937) saw much improvement in municipal services, the capital still lacked an ambulance service in 1937. To help get the wounded to Wilson in a timely manner, Smythe formed an ambulance service using the private

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<sup>31</sup> David Askew, "The International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone: An Introduction." *Sino-Japanese Studies* 14 (April 2002): 17. <http://chinajapan.org/articles/14/14.03-23askew.pdf> (accessed 23 September 2011).

<sup>32</sup> Zhang, 450.

<sup>33</sup> Rabe, 4.

cars of missionaries.<sup>34</sup> After air raids, Vautrin and the Ginling staff, who volunteered at the hospital, would find Smythe frantically dispatching ambulances.<sup>35</sup> Even though Smythe (University of Nanking), Vautrin (Ginling), Wilson (University Hospital) were from different institutions, their personal relationships with one another allowed them to closely coordinate emergency medical services.

By late September, the missionaries began formalizing their on-going cooperation into a proper relief organization: the Nanking Christian War Relief Committee (NCWRC). The NCWRC was the forerunner of the IC where the missionaries established the mechanisms for humanitarian work that proved vital after December. Moreover, the missionaries gained valuable experience through the NCWRC in large-scale relief work without the support of the government. It seems the transition from *ad hoc* work as a network of colleagues and friends to the NCWRC was partly inspired by Rees in Shanghai and partly in response to the growing pressures of war. During the Mid-Autumn Festival, Rees delivered a stirring speech over radio calling Christian missions to work together. Vautrin noted the impact of Rees' speech: "I feel this broadcast is very helpful in that it encourages Christians to feel that they are part of a national movement that is trying to think unitedly. Rees is encouraging missionaries to work shoulder to shoulder with their Chinese colleagues these days...They are contemplating organizing a National Christian War Relief Committee."<sup>36</sup> It is difficult to ascertain how much leadership Rees' national organization gave to the missionaries in Nanking because the fierce fighting in Shanghai made written and wireless communication to the capital increasingly difficult. Nonetheless, his radio address indicates that the NCC was trying to encourage

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<sup>34</sup> Robert O. Wilson, letter, 25 September 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 11: Box 229, Folder 3875). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0014.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0014.pdf) (accessed 15 January 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Vautrin, diary, 22 September 1937.

<sup>36</sup> Vautrin, diary, 19 September 1937.

missionaries throughout China to take part in war relief.

The American missionaries also formed the NCWRC in order to expand relief projects. When the network first participated in relief efforts, it was limited to small projects such as volunteering as ambulance drivers or providing care packages to Chinese soldiers. However, the demands of relief work grew exponentially as refugees from the northern China and Shanghai battlefronts converged on Nanking. On 26 September 1937, the missionaries met to discuss two major problems: “1. What can the Christian churches of the city do to help meet the need of the refugees who are passing through the city at the rate of more than a thousand a day and also of the wounded civilians after each bombing? 2. What can be done to give the nations of the West a true picture of what is happening in China due to the aggression of the J. [Japanese] military?” In order to deal with first question, the American missionaries decided that a permanent organization, the NCWRC, should be created to facilitate cooperation between the network and the local Chinese Christians.<sup>37</sup> In essence, the American missionaries responded to Rees’ Mid-Autumn Festival call for the foreign missionary and the Chinese Christian “to work shoulder to shoulder.”<sup>38</sup> It also marked the beginning of the missionaries looking beyond their own network to support their goals; they would later do this again when transforming the NCWRC into the IC to include other foreign nationals. The American missionaries decided to establish temporary committees to work on immediate problems while Smythe, Wu, and Vautrin began organizing the NCWRC. The missionaries also created the Publicity Committee headed by Vautrin to raise Western awareness of the Japanese invasion.

In order to meet the increasing demands of the growing refugee population, the network needed to gain the support of Chinese Christians who could provide resources and volunteers.

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<sup>37</sup> Vautrin, diary, 26 September 1937.

<sup>38</sup> Vautrin, diary, 19 September 1937.



The NCWRC was formally incorporated on the anniversary of the 1911 Revolution, 10 October 1937. It may have been incidental, but the Double Tenth was a most auspicious day for the NCWRC to appeal to the wartime nationalism of Chinese Christians. In fact, the NCWRC began the day with a fundraiser to support University Hospital, which required \$8000 per month to operate.<sup>39</sup> The American missionaries also mobilized their congregations and recruited volunteers from their schools. At Ginling College, the NCWRC established a kitchen where Vautrin and the Chinese staff fed 600 wounded Chinese soldiers.<sup>40</sup>

The NCWRC became an increasingly important relief organization in Nanking because it had to step in to help whenever the government was unable to do so. That the NCWRC had to feed the Chinese soldiers at Ginling suggests that the Nationalist could not care for its own army. South of Nanking, the massive Battle of Shanghai was being fought. By its conclusion, China suffered at least 100,000 military casualties.<sup>41</sup> The Chinese army would evacuate many wounded men to Nanking, but it all but abandoned most of them at the docks and train stations. The wounded Chinese soldiers received no medical attention and, for all intents and purposes, were left to die. Although these wounded men were technically soldiers, the Nationalist government's utter indifference towards their plight essentially made them part of the refugee population. Vautrin's 21 November 1937 entry describes the situation vividly:

There was no doctors or nurses present and some of the men were in great agony.... Another man had his leg shot off up close to his hip and the wound had not been attended to for several days. The odor from the rotting flesh I can never, never forget. When I reached home I first washed my hands in Lysol solution, then with soap, but the odor still remained. Then I used cold cream and still later perfume but all day today I am still conscious of it.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Vautrin, diary, 10 October 1937. Vautrin did not specify the type of currency. As Zwia Lipkin indicates in *Useless to the State*, a variety of currency was in used in Nanking despite Nationalist efforts to standardize the currency (xix-xx).

<sup>40</sup> Vautrin, diary, 8 October 1937.

<sup>41</sup> William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 222.

<sup>42</sup> Vautrin, diary, 21 November 1937.

Thus, the NCWRC began providing medical services and shelter to the wounded soldiers since the Nationalist government did not. On 7 November 1937, the NCWRC appointed Forster, Magee, and a Chinese pastor named Chu to establish the Reception for Wounded Soldiers sub-committee to take care of casualties being dropped off at Nanking's Hsia Kwan docks.<sup>43</sup>

The Nationalist government was also unable to cope with civilian refugees in Nanking. Initially, the Nationalists tried to shelter the refugees, but government relief efforts were completely swamped by the end of August. Thus, the government adopted a policy of deporting the refugees from Nanking.<sup>44</sup> The NCWRC disagreed with the Nationalist policy of deportation, and Vautrin recorded the conclusion of one NCWRC meeting: "All agree that the refugee problem this winter will be a tremendous one and that it must be attacked on a national scale and that the purpose must be rehabilitation rather than merely pushing refugees from one city to another."<sup>45</sup> Although it could not oppose government policy, the NCWRC tried to alleviate the suffering. The missionaries realized, with cold weather approaching, that a major humanitarian crisis was in the making. Moreover, most of the refugees were destitute—even if the Nationalists deported them, the refugees would still need food and shelter that they could not afford. Aiding these refugees proved a difficult task, and the NCWRC appeared to be one of the few charities trying to help the refugees facing deportation. When the Nationalists decided to deport the refugees, they recruited different Chinese charities under an impressively titled umbrella organization, the Nanking-Hsia Kwan Temporary Committee of Representatives from All Walks of Life to Supply Relief to Refugees Who Crossed the Borders, to handle the deportations. While

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<sup>43</sup> Vautrin, diary, 7 November 1937. Wilson Plumer Mills, letter to Nina Mills, 3 March 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 141, Folder 14). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0305.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0305.pdf) (accessed 25 January 2012).

<sup>44</sup> Zvia Lipkin, *Useless to the State: "Social Problems" and Social Engineering in Nationalist Nanjing, 1927-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 80.

<sup>45</sup> Vautrin, diary, 17 October 1937.

the group provided temporary shelter, typically for one night, for the refugees, its goal was to expel them quickly. By 24 October 1937, it had deported 40,000 refugees.<sup>46</sup> The Temporary Committee's intention was not necessarily malicious; rather the lack of resources and government support left them with limited options. The missionary network faced similar problems when it tried to look after the refugees. The NCWRC had already asked Wu to look to Soong May-ling, China's first lady and a patron of Ginling, for help. Soong replied: "We are up to our necks fighting Japan and my part of the task strains every nerve and absorbs every minute of my time."<sup>47</sup> It was a tactful but clear refusal.

Instead, the network relied on the mass mobilization of Chinese Christians through the NCWRC to assist the refugees. During Sunday service at the Drum Tower Church, Vautrin appealed to the congregation to donate winter clothing and bedding to the refugees and wounded soldiers. The NCWRC also organized a weekly sewing group held at the Drum Tower Church to make padded garments for the refugees.<sup>48</sup> These measures offered some relief for the refugees, but a solution to house the refugees remained elusive. In fact, it is questionable whether or not the NCWRC could shelter the refugees even though it certainly wanted to. Housing the refugees at the largely empty Ginling and University campuses would seem an obvious solution. After all, Ginling and the University served as major refugee camps during the Massacre. Why was this not done earlier? The NCWRC's efforts provided, at best, temporary succor with clothing, food, and medical aid. Available primary sources offer no explanation, but it can be reasonably surmised that the NCWRC did not shelter the refugees because that would violate the Nationalist policy of deportation. Even though the NCWRC disagreed with the deportation policy, it was ultimately powerless against the state. Nonetheless, the NCWRC was able to establish a system

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<sup>46</sup> Lipkin, 80-81.

<sup>47</sup> Vautrin, diary, 2 October 1937.

<sup>48</sup> Vautrin, diary, 2 and 3 October 1937.

to produce and distribute emergency supplies by mobilizing the Chinese Christian population. It also provided medical aid essentially on its own. These relief activities would prove invaluable later—when the IC was formed, it did not start from scratch.

By late October, it was becoming obvious that the Battle of Shanghai, which began in August, was lost. Like their Chinese colleagues, the missionaries knew about the highly publicized last stand of the 524<sup>th</sup> Regiment, which sacrificed itself to cover the retreat of the Chinese army.<sup>49</sup> Ironically, the subsequent Japanese advance towards Nanking provided the solution to the refugee problem: it set into motion the creation of the Nanking Safety Zone by the American missionaries. The missionaries intended the Safety Zone to serve as a de-militarized, neutral area where residents could take shelter in the upcoming battle. The residents of Nanking were the Japanese army's next targets, and the Nationalist refugee deportation policy did not apply to them. Both the government and the NCWRC expected that urban combat—as witnessed in Shanghai—would displace many. As Zwia Lipkin points out, the residents were essentially refugees within their home city.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the missionaries undoubtedly expected that refugees from elsewhere would take advantage of the Safety Zone. The creation of the Safety Zone would help shelter both the refugees and residents.

The American missionary network, which was the driving force behind the initial relief work and the formation of the NCWRC, was also the driving force for creating the Safety Zone and the IC to administer it. In other words, the Safety Zone and the IC were not created by a group of assorted Westerners who suddenly joined forces under Rabe in late November as commonly assumed. In particular, Mills was the founder of the Nanking Safety Zone and the IC. He first became interested in establishing the Safety Zone by observing the work of a Jesuit

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<sup>49</sup> Vautrin, diary, 2 and 3 October 1937.

<sup>50</sup> Lipkin, 81.

missionary, Jacquinet de Besange, in Shanghai. During the Battle of Shanghai, the Jesuit missionary established the Jacquinet Safety Zone to provide a neutral, safe haven for refugees caught in the vicious city fighting. Mills felt Jacquinet's work was very effective, and he promptly got his network involved in establishing the Nanking Safety Zone.<sup>51</sup>

Mills announced the Safety Zone idea to his missionary network on 16 November 1937.<sup>52</sup> Bates, Mills, and Smythe were responsible for much of the groundwork to establish the Safety Zone.<sup>53</sup> Their first goal was to lobby for official approval for the Safety Zone. After all, the American missionaries were asking the Nationalists to hand over a part of Nanking as neutral ground that could otherwise be used as defensive positions. Indeed, anti-aircraft guns dotted the area that would be converted into the Safety Zone. Ginling, for instance, was right next to two anti-aircraft gun batteries.<sup>54</sup> Mills describes the various meetings the trio had with officials: "There were endless conferences and discussions with Chinese and foreign friends, with the Embassies, and with Chinese officials." Bates and Mills even held a conference with Nanking's mayor in a dugout during a bombing raid.<sup>55</sup> These meetings were crucial—without official approval, the missionaries were unable to really do anything about the Safety Zone. Fortunately, the Nationalist government eventually granted permission to the missionaries, and Chiang Kai-shek even donated \$100,000 to help them get started.<sup>56</sup>

The missionaries worked hard to gain Chinese approval for the Safety Zone, and they also began inviting other Westerners, especially German businessmen, into their Safety Zone project. Interestingly, the missionaries left little record about why they got other Westerners

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<sup>51</sup> Marcia R. Ristaino, *The Jacquinet Safety Zone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 83.

<sup>52</sup> Wilson Plumer Mills, letter to Nina Mills, 18 March 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 141, Folder 14). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0311.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0311.pdf) (accessed 25 January 2012).

<sup>53</sup> Mills, letter to Nina Mills, 3 March 1938.

<sup>54</sup> Vautrin, diary, 14 August 1938.

<sup>55</sup> Mills, letter to Nina Mills, 3 March 1938.

<sup>56</sup> Rabe, 45.

involved. In fact, most primary sources describing Safety Zone work between 16-22 November 1937 (i.e. when the Safety Zone was first proposed to the creation of the IC) were produced sometime after March 1938 when the Massacre had more or less concluded. The lack of sources during that week was likely due to how busy the missionaries were because they had to organize the Safety Zone, provide relief work, and continue their Publicity Committee activities. Mills, for instance, told his wife that the missionaries had to deal with “a host of practical tasks” for the Safety Zone.<sup>57</sup> Bates recorded that he was “utterly swamped in efforts to get an internationally sponsored safety zone for refugees.”<sup>58</sup> Moreover, postal services were cut off in Nanking, and there was less incentive for the missionaries to write or provide details in their letters. Bates, knowing his postcard could not be delivered to his wife Lilliath, scribbled: “Well and busy with various relief projects. No word from you received since late October.”<sup>59</sup>

Despite the lack of sources produced during that week, a reasonable explanation can be produced when examining the NCWRC’s activities in a seemingly unrelated project: the Publicity Committee. In order to establish a truly neutral Safety Zone, both the Chinese and the Japanese needed to recognize it. However, the missionaries were not on friendly terms with the Japanese. The American missionaries made up the entirety of the Publicity Committee, and their goal was to raise public awareness in the West about the Japanese invasion. Simply put, the network itself was not a neutral party. Its sympathies were firmly with China. Wilson describes the feeling: “Miss Hynds has ceased to be a pacifist and is heart and soul for the Chinese as we all are. The Lord's will be done but we can't help but hope and pray that all the progress that we

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<sup>57</sup> Mills, letter to Nina Mills, 3 March, 1938.

<sup>58</sup> Miner Searle Bates, letter to Lilliath Bates, 17 November (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 10: Box 1, Folder 7). Online version: <http://divdl.library.yale.edu/ydlchina/images/NMP0032.pdf> (accessed 12 October 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Miner Searle Bates, postcard to Lilliath Bates, 28 November 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 10: Box 1, Folder 7). Online version: <http://divdl.library.yale.edu/ydlchina/images/NMP0033.pdf> (accessed 15 January 2012).

can see about us will not be destroyed by a power that at least seems to be some sort of reincarnation of Lucifer himself.”<sup>60</sup> Throughout the network’s documents, a genuine sense of anger can be detected. The missionaries were watching China, a place they considered home, being destroyed by the Japanese. Fitch, who was born in China, later described his feelings: “...and then to watch the city you have come to love and the institutions to which you had planned to devote your best deliberately and systematically burned by fire—this is a hell I had never before envisaged.”<sup>61</sup> The Japanese were certainly aware of the network’s hostility towards them. After all, the Publicity Committee’s most publicized project was its radio station that made broadcasts condemning Japanese imperialism.<sup>62</sup> Finally, American-Japanese relations were at a low point when Franklin D. Roosevelt refused to enforce the Neutrality Acts and gave the Quarantine Speech in October 1937.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, American missionaries working in Japan complained bitterly that they were treated with suspicion, and the Japanese government was spying on them.<sup>64</sup> Clearly, American missionaries were not ideal candidates to ask for the Japanese government’s cooperation on the Nanking Safety Zone.

When the American missionaries invited other Westerners to help, it was a politically expedient decision to further the network’s Safety Zone project. On 22 November 1937, the missionaries met with these laymen volunteers to officially form the IC. Yet, the IC was not truly

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<sup>60</sup> Robert O. Wilson, letter, 17 August 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 11: Box 229, Folder 3875). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0012.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0012.pdf) (accessed 15 January 2012).

<sup>61</sup> George A. Fitch, *My Eighty Years in China* (Taipei: Mei Ya Publications, 1967), 431.

<sup>62</sup> Vautrin, diary, 30 September 1937.

<sup>63</sup> Roosevelt’s decision to not recognize the Japanese invasion as an act of war was a shrewd diplomatic move. By pretending that China and Japan were not at war (since Japan never officially declared war), the United States could ship weapons to whomever it pleased. The Neutrality Acts would have prevented the United States from selling weapons to nations at war. Since China lost most of its arms industry after the fall of Shanghai, Roosevelt’s decision effectively ensured China would not be defeated due to a lack of weapons. Varg indicates that American missionary lobbies wanted Roosevelt to go further: to embargo Japan but continue to supply China (261). In addition, Roosevelt’s famous Quarantine Speech of 1937 essentially marked the beginning of the end of American isolationism towards aggressor nations like Japan.

<sup>64</sup> Varg, 265.

a new organization—it was essentially the NCWRC with Westerners outside the missionary network added to it. During this meeting, the IC selected Rabe to serve as its chairman. As a German national and member of the Nazi Party, Rabe was the best candidate to deal with Japanese officials. Moreover, Rabe's chairmanship would further lessen the impression that the IC was actually an unfriendly organization of American missionaries and Chinese Christians. Indeed, Rabe immediately made first contact with the Japanese regarding the Safety Zone subject right after the meeting. His telegram to the Japanese ambassador emphasized the international composition of the IC: "An international committee composed of nationals of Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, desires to suggest to the Chinese and Japanese authorities the establishment of a Safety Zone for Civilian Refugees in the unfortunate event of hostilities at or near Nanking."<sup>65</sup> Rabe wisely did not mention the missionaries to the Japanese.

The internationalization of relief work no doubt contributed to the burying of the American missionary network in current historiography, which at best treats the missionaries as just another group of eyewitnesses to Japanese atrocities. After all, the current literature emphasizes the events that transpired after Nanking fell on 13 December 1937. The IC thus features prominently in historical studies since it played an important role in protecting refugees and recording the atrocities. Yet, the creation of the IC depended on many months of work organized by a small group of American missionaries. The American missionary network, then, deserves credit for laying the foundations of the IC. However, the problem goes beyond properly recognizing the missionary contribution. The root of the problem lies in the narrow historiographical focus on the IC's activities from December 1937 to February 1938. This situation is understandable; historians gain direct access to records of Japanese atrocities by examining the IC during the Massacre. At the same time, this approach ignores the genealogy of

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<sup>65</sup> Rabe, 28.



relief work in Nanking. When this genealogy is ignored, historical understanding of the IC's actions during the Massacre effectively becomes limited because the history of the IC itself is unknown. Although historians have largely forgotten the American missionaries' formative role in the IC, Rabe did not. In his speech at the Shanghai YMCA in February 1938, he appropriately rewound his own memory to before December 1937 when the missionaries rallied other expatriates around them to form the IC. Rabe unsurprisingly recognized the network's contributions because he was well aware that the missionaries guided the course of relief work during the bloodiest months in Nanking.

## II

### Purgatory in Nanking

Just before Mayor Ma Ch'ao-chün fled Nanking with the Nationalist government on 7 December 1937, he requested the IC to assume complete responsibility as the city's civil administration. Although the Chinese army remained to defend the capital, the IC was the primary organization responsible for delivering relief—food, medical aid, shelter—to residents. The prominence of Rabe's diary in both academic and popular discourses cemented his reputation as the leader of relief work, and Rabe amusingly noted: "...I have in fact become something very [much] like an acting mayor. Enough to give you a fit Rabe!"<sup>1</sup> Although Vautrin acknowledged Rabe's contributions, she stressed that the missionaries played a major role in the IC: "The initiative for its formation came from a missionary, and the strong majority of its officers and members were from the missionary community..."<sup>2</sup>

Vautrin's claim reinforces my argument that the American missionaries played a much larger role in the IC than is commonly assumed, but it is unsurprising their work in the IC is largely unexplored. The missionaries, like their laymen colleagues, are nothing more than a medium for most historians to bring Japanese atrocities to light. The missionaries witnessed many atrocities, and they tried to intervene whenever possible. Consequently, historians and popular writers mine the missionary records for narratives of resistance and victimization. Such narratives portray members of the IC as uncompromising heroes who challenged the Japanese at every turn in order to protect the Chinese.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Timothy Brook indicates "the existing

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<sup>1</sup> Rabe, 54.

<sup>2</sup> Wilhelmina Vautrin, "In Nanking," in *Christians in Action: A Record of Work in War-time China*, ed. Ronald Rees (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1939), 34.

<sup>3</sup> Askew, "Westerners in Occupied Nanking: December 1937 to February 1938," 233.

history of the Japanese occupation of China is built around the ideal of resistance.”<sup>4</sup> The history of the IC is no exception. Iris Chang’s position, for instance, combines both the resistance and victimization narratives:

It is hard to talk about a bright spot in the horror that is the Rape of Nanking, but if one can, it is surely to shine a light on the actions of a small band of Americans and Europeans who risked their lives to defy the Japanese invaders and rescue hundreds of thousands of Chinese from almost certain extermination.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, the emphasis is not truly on the Westerners. Rather, stories of resistance allow the historian to emphasize Japanese atrocities. The greater the resistance against Japan, the more horrid the atrocities become. In Chang’s view, the IC’s resistance against Japan emphasized the “almost certain extermination” of the Chinese in Nanking. Resistance and victimization certainly occurred in Nanking, but they are not the only narratives that can be derived from the missionary records.

The records, in fact, suggest the American missionaries and their allies did not stay in Nanking in order “to defy the Japanese invaders.” As Brook points out, the IC was not in any position of power to “block the Japanese army from taking possession of Nanking or installing whatever sort of regime it pleased.”<sup>6</sup> Although members of the IC detested the Japanese invasion, their main goal was to minimize the loss of life and destruction of property in Nanking. This chapter examines the missionaries’ role in this endeavour, and my main arguments can be summarized as follows. First, the American missionaries and Rabe shared in the leadership of the IC, and both parties agreed saving lives took priority over continued resistance against the Japanese invasion. Second, the IC exercised a high degree of flexibility in order to do whatever was necessary to protect the Safety Zone. At times, the IC’s flexibility even aided the Japanese

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy Brook, *Collaboration*, 197.

<sup>5</sup> Chang, 106.

<sup>6</sup> Brook, 131.

occupation. In effect, this chapter departs from the moralized narratives of resistance and victimization in order to illustrate the many challenges the IC faced during the Massacre and the compromises its members were forced to make.

The first challenge to the Zone came from the Chinese rather than from the Japanese. As the IC began organizing refugee camps in the Zone, Chiang Kai-shek pressured his generals to defend Nanking, which was situated in an indefensible location. After much debating, General T'ang Sheng-chih proclaimed:

If, when the enemy is at our door, Nanking does not sacrifice one or two big generals, how can we account for ourselves before the soul of the National Father in heaven, *and how can we discharge our duties before the supreme commander?* I advocate defending Nanking to the end and fighting the enemy to the death.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the patriotic pitch, T'ang's statement was also a sycophantic appeal to Chiang, the supreme commander. General Li Tsung-jen, who was present during the meeting, explained that T'ang was a hitherto insignificant officer "...and was taking this opportunity to gain access to military power."<sup>8</sup> Chiang appointed T'ang as Nanking's garrison commander and ignored any advice to retreat. Under T'ang's command, Nanking would sacrifice 81,500 soldiers but not a single general.<sup>9</sup>

Despite Nationalist recognition of the Safety Zone, T'ang's actions threatened its existence as a demilitarized safe haven where civilians could take shelter during the upcoming battle. Upon taking command, T'ang proceeded to fortify the Safety Zone, which made up about an eighth of Nanking. On Sun Yat-sen Street by the University Hospital, Chinese soldiers busied themselves with barricading the area, and Wilson quickly realized that his "hospital formed one

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<sup>7</sup> Tong Te-kong and Li Tsung-jen, *The Memoirs of Li Tsung-jen* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), 327. Emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup> Tong and Li, 327.

<sup>9</sup> David Askew, "Defending Nanking: An Examination of the Capital Garrison Forces," *Sino-Japanese Studies* 15 (April 2003): 173, <http://www.chinajapan.org/articles/15/askew15.148-173.pdf> (accessed 23 September 2011).

border of the barricade.”<sup>10</sup> Although the Japanese did not recognize the Zone, they asked Jacquinet in Shanghai to inform the IC that Japan “...will endeavor to respect the district as far as consistent with military necessity.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, the Japanese were willing to limit combat operations in the Zone so long as it did not interfere with their invasion. The Chinese military presence precluded any chance of that, and Rabe complained to T’ang that he was violating the Nationalist promise to keep the Zone demilitarized. T’ang promised to withdraw his troops eventually, but instead Chinese troops kept fortifying the Safety Zone. As it turned out, T’ang established his command post inside the Safety Zone, which was probably the safest place in Nanking since the initial fighting would take place near the old city walls and the suburbs.<sup>12</sup> Rabe failed to persuade T’ang to leave the Zone despite repeated requests.

Mills, the missionary who suggested creating the Safety Zone back in November, tried to salvage the situation. In order to keep the Safety Zone neutral, Mills not only planned on ejecting the Chinese from the Zone, but he planned on ejecting them from Nanking entirely and handing the city over to the Japanese. Like the other missionaries, Mills believed resistance was ultimately futile, and he later told his wife: “It was perfectly clear from a variety reasons that the Chinese could not hold the city...”<sup>13</sup> Alongside Bates, Mills approached T’ang and proposed a three-day truce, administered by the IC, between the Chinese and Japanese armies. Mills suggested the Chinese army could retreat during the truce, and then the Japanese army could enter and take the city without a fight. The truce would be negotiated for the humanitarian

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<sup>10</sup> Brook, ed., *Documents on the Rape of Nanking*, 210.

<sup>11</sup> Rabe, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Rabe, 50.

<sup>13</sup> Wilson Plumer Mills, letter to Nina Mills, 24 January 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 141, Folder 12). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0295.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0295.pdf) (accessed 1 February 2012). Chiang’s officers knew from their professional expertise that Nanking was indefensible (Li, 327). The IC came to the same conclusion by observing the Chinese army, which was almost destroyed after the Battle of Shanghai. Rabe observed that many of the new conscripts arrived in Nanking wearing “ragged civvies” and “without any footwear” (Rabe, 22-23). It was obvious to observers that the soldiers were not in any condition to fight.

purpose of protecting civilians for the sake of T'ang's honour. T'ang would appear to abandon the capital city because he wanted to limit civilian casualties not because he was craven. T'ang agreed to Mills' truce proposal provided Chiang, who was in Hankow, gave his final approval.<sup>14</sup> T'ang was no doubt amiable to a solution that offered a way out of Nanking. After all, T'ang took command of the Nanking garrison for political gain, and he had little intention of dying for the Republic despite his grandiose rhetoric. Indeed, Li did not expect T'ang to die by his sword: "His promise to stay with the city, dead or alive, was surely questionable."<sup>15</sup>

Mills' proposal would allow Japan to capture Nanking without facing any resistance, and Rabe was not pleased. He believed abandoning resistance would hurt his personal reputation. Although Bates and Mills worked out the details of the truce, Rabe was responsible for communicating the proposal between the Chinese and Japanese. In his diary, Rabe explained his hesitation towards Mills' scheme:

...I wasn't very pleased with the idea from the start. ...General T'ang wanted to hide behind us, because he anticipated and feared severe censure from the generalissimo or the Foreign Ministry in Hankow. He wanted to put all responsibility on the committee, or perhaps its Chairman Rabe, and I didn't like that in the least!<sup>16</sup>

Rabe was well aware that Mills' proposal had severe political consequences for both the Chinese and the IC. The proposal meant China would abandon its own capital city without shedding Japanese blood, and Chiang could not accept that since his political legitimacy rested largely on his pledge to fight the Japanese.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, the IC could face criticism for aiding the Japanese in conquering Nanking, and Rabe would be the scapegoat since he was responsible for

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<sup>14</sup> Mills, letter to Nina Mills, 24 January 1938.

<sup>15</sup> Tong and Li, 327-328.

<sup>16</sup> Rabe, 63.

<sup>17</sup> Chiang's political concerns were even more serious after the Hsi-An Incident of 1936 when senior Chinese army officers forced him to concentrate his efforts in battling the Japanese rather than the Chinese Communists. Moreover, the Hsi-An Incident laid the foundations of the Nationalist-Communist alliance against Japan. Simply put, if Chiang failed to resist the Japanese strenuously, he would lose popular support to the Communists.

submitting the truce proposal. Despite his misgivings, Rabe dutifully boarded the USS *Panay*, an American warship evacuating Westerners, to borrow the only working wireless set left in Nanking that the IC had access to. Rabe did not explain in his diary why he ultimately agreed with Mills, but his telegram may suggest why both Mills and Rabe proceeded with the plan despite any personal reservations:

For the sake of 200,000 helpless civilians, the International Committee for the Safety Zone in Nanking respectfully proposes to the Chinese and Japanese authorities a truce of exactly three days to begin 3 P.M. of December 12th, or the earliest available hour thereafter...(Signed) Rabe, Chairman.<sup>18</sup>

Although it ultimately failed, the truce attempt demonstrated the IC prioritized saving lives over resistance against Japan. Mills did not want a Japanese invasion, but he did not want Nanking's residents to suffer needlessly either. Rabe was willing to accept censure by publicly supporting a plan to abandon Nanking. Their actions did not conform to what is expected in narratives of resistance, but both men placed saving lives ahead of their own misgivings and reputations. In the end, Chiang did not accept the plan even though the IC absolved him of responsibility by not mentioning his name in the proposal.<sup>19</sup> The Japanese simply ignored it. If the belligerents accepted Mills' proposal, some historians may have treated the IC's role in narratives of resistance with more nuance. Other historians, perhaps, may react with hostility.

After Chiang rejected the truce attempt, T'ang fled for his life on 12 December 1937 and decapitated his own army in the process. Although he gave the order to withdraw, T'ang did not stay to supervise the retreat, as was his duty. His order never reached the many units engaged in battle, and chaos ensued. At Kwang Hwa Men, Chinese troops resisted stubbornly and even

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<sup>18</sup> Wilson Plumer Mills, letter to Nina Mills, 31 January 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 141, Folder 12). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0296.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0296.pdf) (accessed 1 February 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Mills, letter to Nina Mills, 31 January 1938.

drove back six Japanese assaults not knowing a retreat was ordered.<sup>20</sup> At Hsia Kwan, the soldiers who should have known a retreat was ordered did not know. So-called battle encouragement units, whose function was similar to the Soviet's NKVD during the Great Patriotic War, mistakenly mowed down waves of "deserters."<sup>21</sup> Eventually, news of T'ang fleeing the city spread, and the army was routed. Amidst this chaos, many wounded Chinese soldiers were abandoned.

Although the IC wanted to keep the Safety Zone demilitarized, it did not want to leave the wounded soldiers to die. Unfortunately, the IC was hamstrung by its promise to remain neutral during the battle. In other words, the IC could not help without jeopardizing the Safety Zone. Rabe felt aiding the wounded soldiers "was contrary to our agreement" with the Japanese, but he nevertheless referred the Chinese to the missionaries when the garrison requested the IC to help the wounded soldiers.<sup>22</sup>

To deal with the medical emergency without breaking its commitment to neutrality, the IC formed the Nanking chapter of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The ICRC's work is a largely unexplored aspect of the Massacre, but its activities showed that the missionaries and Rabe exercised collaborative leadership over relief work in Nanking. Furthermore, the ICRC experience illustrated the difficult choices that the missionaries and Rabe had to make in order to provide relief in an occupied city. Like the various other relief projects they had carried out since August, the missionaries took the lead in creating the ICRC. Magee, who previously led the NCWRC's Reception for Wounded Soldiers, proposed the ICRC idea. In

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<sup>20</sup> Vautrin, diary, 12 December 1937.

<sup>21</sup> Yamamoto Masahiro, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000), 83. NKVD stands for *Narodnyy komissariat vnutrennikh del*, which was the Soviet agency responsible for preventing Red Army soldiers from retreating during the Nazi invasion.

<sup>22</sup> Rabe, 57.



the weeks prior to the Chinese request for help, Magee had already been considering the idea.<sup>23</sup> Unlike the IC, the ICRC was internationally recognized for its mandate to look after wounded soldiers and prisoners of war (POWs). Even though Japan did not ratify the agreement, any interference with ICRC work could turn world opinion against Japan. Therefore, the ICRC's mandate offered an exit out of the IC's neutrality dilemma. While the two organizations were composed of mostly the same people (after all, there were only twenty-two Westerners), the ICRC was officially separate from the IC. Similar to Mills' creation of the IC or Vautrin's Publicity Committee, Magee's idea demonstrated the American missionaries' usual creativity and leadership in solving relief work problems. It also reaffirmed the IC's commitment to saving lives whenever possible.

However, Rabe disagreed with Magee on how to proceed. Magee wanted to receive permission from ICRC headquarters in Geneva before starting the Nanking chapter, but it was difficult to send any word out of the city due to communication problems. When the various foreign embassies closed down, the IC only had occasional access to the *Panay*'s wireless set. Rabe advised Magee to form the ICRC in Nanking without Geneva's approval, and he became quite frustrated with Magee:

Rev. John Magee wants to open a European section of the Red Cross here, but even though he has the money—Colonel Huang gave him \$23,000—he's getting nowhere because he can't get an approval from the Red Cross, and without their consent he apparently doesn't dare move on the matter. What a shame! In his shoes, I wouldn't think twice. If you could do some good, why hesitate? Consent is sure to arrive in due course.<sup>24</sup>

However, consent never arrived. Historians of the Massacre have long treated the Nanking ICRC as a legitimate organization because they have neglected to examine the chronology of events. In an emergency meeting on 13 December 1937, the missionaries adopted Rabe's suggestion to

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<sup>23</sup> Rabe, 65.

<sup>24</sup> Rabe, 58.

form the ICRC without permission and appointed Magee as chairman once the Chinese defense collapsed. By then, it was nearly impossible for the IC to receive any word from the outside world because the *Panay* left on 11 December 1937 with the only wireless set they had access to. Daniel Palmieri, a Historical Research Officer for the ICRC at Geneva, confirms the IC formed the Nanking ICRC without permission:

...Reverend John Gillespie Magee was not an official ICRC representative in Nanking when the city was captured by the Imperial Japanese Army. ... In fact, given the refusal of the Japanese authorities, no ICRC delegate from Geneva was present during the occupation of the city by the Japanese forces. Attempts to visit Nanking in February 1938 are recorded but the Japanese authorities delayed these negotiations.<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless, Magee's insistence that he needed Geneva's blessing is understandable. The ICRC's world prestige and legal status—which the IC lacked—would provide more protection for the wounded soldiers when the Japanese arrived.

While Rabe felt doing good was more important than observing a legal technicality, the technicality of Geneva's recognition meant life or death to the wounded soldiers and their caretakers. When Magee visited several makeshift military hospitals immediately after the meeting, he found the medical staff preparing to leave the patients. Magee implored the doctors and nurses to stay: "I told them that the International Red Cross Committee would take them over if they would stay and work for the wounded soldiers there."<sup>26</sup> Magee knowingly promised the Chinese staff the ICRC's protection that, in truth, he could not promise. Magee's gambit, which was encouraged by Rabe, placed the staff at risk should the Japanese realized the Nanking ICRC was unauthorized by Geneva. Despite his initial opposition to forming the ICRC without

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<sup>25</sup> Daniel Palmieri (Historical Research Officer, ICRC Library and Public Archives Unit), e-mail to author, 2 February 2012.

<sup>26</sup> John Magee, letter to Faith Blackhouse Magee, 15 December 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 262, Folder 2). Online version: <http://divdl.library.yale.edu/ydlchina/images/NMP0334.pdf> (accessed 12 January 1938).

permission, Magee had limited choices when the situation was urgent and the need for medical personnel was dire. Magee's decision to lie to the doctors and nurses was a calculated risk to save the lives of hundreds of wounded soldiers.

Throughout the ICRC process, Rabe never asserted his authority as the IC's Chairman over the missionaries regardless of his disagreement with Magee. Rather, the IC's decision to form the ICRC without Geneva's permission was achieved through consensus between the missionaries and Rabe. Throughout his tenure as Chairman, Rabe tried to achieve consensus whenever possible. For example, when the missionaries later opposed his proposal to change the IC's name to the International Relief Committee, Rabe backed down. He explained: "And of course I accede to the majority, for we must remain absolutely united."<sup>27</sup> Rabe realized it was more productive for the IC to include the missionary majority—the most experienced relief workers—in the decision-making process. In the end, the American missionaries and Rabe's shared leadership of the IC worked well because both parties shared a common interest: they all wanted to save as many people in Nanking as possible. Mills told his wife Nina:

...I speak the simple truth when I say there has not been a single rift between us, but always one thought—how to get the job done, how to meet the situation. ...we have now become warm friends.<sup>28</sup>

Under this spirit, the missionaries and Rabe formed the Nanking ICRC. Magee had to bluff the Japanese about the legitimacy of his organization, and Rabe's letter of introduction vouching for the Nanking ICRC no doubt helped.<sup>29</sup> Askew, however, dismisses the Nanking

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<sup>27</sup> Rabe, 128.

<sup>28</sup> Wilson Plumer Mills, letter to Nina Mills, 22 January 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 141, Folder 12). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/lydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0295.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/lydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0295.pdf) (accessed 7 January 2012).

<sup>29</sup> See Rabe's letter to the Japanese Embassy on 14 December 1937 in Brook's *Documents on the Rape of Nanking*, 2-3.

ICRC as significantly less important than the IC.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the Nanking ICRC is largely a blank spot in the current literature. Yet, the Nanking ICRC managed to save the lives of many wounded soldiers who, without its intervention, would have died. Magee remarked:

...a foreigner had been to these hospitals and had claimed that they were being run under the auspices of the International Red Cross, which made it impossible, or at least difficult for him [Japanese officer] to do other than protect them.<sup>31</sup>

Magee also noted: “The women have not been molested which is remarkable and shows that the Japanese army people can control their men when they want to.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, Askew’s assertion clearly does not consider the ICRC hospitals offered protection that could not be found elsewhere in Nanking, including the Safety Zone. Magee described the scene outside the ICRC hospitals:

The horror of the last week is beyond anything I have ever experienced. I never dreamed that the Japanese soldiers were such savages. It has been a week of murder and rape...They not only killed every prisoner they could find but also a vast number of ordinary citizens of all ages. Many of them were shot down like the hunting of rabbits in the streets.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, the IC inadvertently aided the Japanese’s murderous path in Nanking in order to protect the Safety Zone. Since the Zone was formed, the IC’s overriding concern was to keep it neutral, which led to them proposing the truce and forming the ICRC. When the Chinese defense collapsed, many soldiers disguised themselves as civilians and sought asylum in the Safety Zone because they could not escape Nanking. At Ginling, staff frantically burned discarded Chinese uniforms to prevent the Japanese from finding out soldiers were hiding in the

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<sup>30</sup> Askew, “The International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone: An Introduction,” 13. In a sense, Magee not only successfully bluffed the Japanese, but he also bluffed many historians into accepting his ICRC as legitimate.

<sup>31</sup> John Magee, letter to Faith Blackhouse Magee, 11 January 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 262, Folder 2). Online version: <http://divdl.library.yale.edu/ydlchina/images/NMP0334.pdf> (accessed 12 January 1938).

<sup>32</sup> Magee, letter to Faith Blackhouse Magee, 11 January 1938.

<sup>33</sup> John Magee, letter to Faith Blackhouse Magee, 19 December 1937 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 262, Folder 2). Online version: <http://divdl.library.yale.edu/ydlchina/images/NMP0334.pdf> (accessed 12 January 1938).

Zone.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the IC feared some soldiers would continue to resist the Japanese. In either case, the presence of Chinese soldiers in the Safety Zone meant the Japanese could ignore it as a neutral haven for civilians. Rabe described the situation:

If it had come to a battle here in the streets bordering the Zone, fleeing Chinese soldiers would no doubt have retreated into the Safety Zone, which would have been shelled by the Japanese and perhaps even totally destroyed because it was not demilitarized.<sup>35</sup>

To prevent this, the IC rounded up Chinese soldiers for the Japanese. When Nanking fell, Fitch, R.R. Hatz, Rabe, and Eduard Sperling patrolled the areas around the Zone to persuade the Chinese soldiers to surrender. Rabe noted that some Chinese soldiers wanted to keep fighting: “Some of them don’t want to obey the call to throw down their weapons...”<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, the men were able to convince 1,000 Chinese soldiers on 13 December 1937 to give up the fight. The IC held the POWs at the Ministry of Justice building for the Japanese, and the IC forever regretted this action.<sup>37</sup> Charles Riggs, a missionary and professor at the University, broke down in tears when he informed Fitch on 16 December 1937 that the Japanese had executed all the POWs. Riggs, who was guarding the building, was unable to stop the Japanese. When he protested, the Japanese beat him up.<sup>38</sup> For Riggs, it was the first of many beatings he would receive when trying to prevent Japanese atrocities.

The IC not only unwittingly sent these soldiers to their deaths, but it also aided the Japanese occupation of Nanking. When the IC convinced the Chinese soldiers to surrender, it removed a group that was capable of armed resistance against the Japanese invaders. In effect, the Japanese did not have to pacify Nanking against pockets of resistance or individual guerilla

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<sup>34</sup> Vautrin, diary, 14 December 1937.

<sup>35</sup> Rabe, 67.

<sup>36</sup> Rabe, 66.

<sup>37</sup> Rabe, 68.

<sup>38</sup> Fitch, 440.

actions during the transition of power. Brook aptly observes that the IC “in fact eased the transition from Nationalist to Japanese rule” in Nanking.<sup>39</sup> While Japanese troops committed many atrocities in the Safety Zone against the defenseless, no battle ever took place in the area. The IC, then, accomplished its goal to demilitarize the Safety Zone though certainly not in the way it had hoped for. By preventing the belligerents from fighting for control over the Zone, the IC hoped to prevent collateral damage to the civilian population while ensuring relief efforts continued without disruption. Japanese soldiers quickly quashed the IC’s hope for a relatively peaceful transition of power when they began killing and raping the Zone’s refugees.

Regardless, the IC did not expect the Japanese to butcher the POWs. Wilson explained: “If anyone had mentioned to us on December 12 that the entry of the Japanese would be a signal for a reign of terror almost beyond description then we would have laughed at their fears.”<sup>40</sup> When Rabe was rounding up the POWs, he thought: “...if they abandoned their arms and all resistance to the Japanese, we thought the Japanese would give them merciful treatment.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, there was little reason for the IC to expect the Japanese to massacre the POWs. As Yamamoto Masahiro indicates, the Japanese army tried not “to tarnish their own image in the eyes of foreign missionaries” in previous wars.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the Japanese dropped leaflets into the city promising they “...shall harm neither innocent civilians nor Chinese military personnel who manifest no hostility.”<sup>43</sup> The IC’s inadvertent complicity in the death of Chinese POWs certainly challenges contemporary narratives of resistance, but the IC acted with good intentions. Fitch was well aware of his role in their deaths, and he wrote about the guilt he felt after he saw

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<sup>39</sup> Brook, *Collaboration*, 131.

<sup>40</sup> Brook, ed., *Documents on the Rape of Nanking*, 253.

<sup>41</sup> Brook, ed., 5.

<sup>42</sup> Yamamoto, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Higashinakano Shudo, *The Nanking Massacre: Fact versus Fiction, a Historian’s Quest for Truth* (Tokyo: Sekai Shuppan, 2005). Online version: <http://www.ne.jp/asahi/unko/tamezou/nankin/fiction/> (accessed 5 January 2012). As Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi notes, Higashinakano is a Massacre denier. However, his citation of the leaflet is credible—the problem only arises when he claims the Japanese lived up to the leaflet’s promise.

another column of POWs awaiting execution:

Were those four lads from Canton who had trudged all the way from the south and yesterday had reluctantly given me their arms among them, I wondered; or that tall, strapping sergeant from the north whose disillusioned eyes, as he made the fatal decision, still haunt me? How foolish I had been to tell them the Japanese would spare their lives!<sup>44</sup>

The mass execution of POWs in December 1937 only signaled the beginning of a Massacre that continued until February 1938. Many monographs, such as Hu Hua-ling's *American Goddess* or Yin Jijun's 1937, *Nanjing da jiuyuan*, emphasize how IC members physically intervened when they saw Japanese soldiers about to kill or rape someone. These actions were brave and worthy of recognition, but they formed only a small part of the IC's efforts to stop the Japanese atrocities. Indeed, twenty-two Westerners could not do very much to constantly guard 200,000 refugees against Japanese marauders. Moreover, the American missionaries had to place themselves at risk when they tried to protect the refugees. For example, when Reverend James McCallum tried to stop Japanese soldiers from breaking into a nurses' dormitory at the Hospital, a soldier slashed his neck with a bayonet.<sup>45</sup> Clearly, the Japanese soldiers cared little for McCallum's status as a citizen from a neutral country. Although McCallum survived, his brush with the Japanese was only one of the many incidents where the Japanese threatened or attacked the missionaries. Such incidents make stirring tales of resistance while emphasizing Japanese atrocities. However, these tales do not explain how the IC tried to make safer plans to protect the Safety Zone efficiently.

The IC realized it had little choice but to work with the Japanese in order to gain their cooperation in stopping the atrocities. Rabe took the lead in dealing with the Japanese authorities since he was a member of the Nazi Party. First, Rabe promised the Japanese that the IC would

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<sup>44</sup> Fitch, 439.

<sup>45</sup> Brook, ed., 243.

not interfere with the Japanese occupation. In a letter to the Japanese Embassy, he explained:

Vis-à-vis your Japanese authorities we are not claiming any political status whatever. ...when your Army victoriously arrived in the city on Monday noon, December 13, we were the only administrative authority carrying on in the city. Of course, that authority did not extend outside of the Safety Zone itself, and involved no rights of sovereignty within the Zone.<sup>46</sup>

In addition, Rabe asked the Japanese to control their soldiers, but he simultaneously pledged the IC's assistance in the Japanese occupation of Nanking: "All that we are asking in our protests is that you restore order among your troops and get the normal life of the city going as soon as possible. In the latter process we are glad to cooperate in any way we can."<sup>47</sup> Rabe's statements indicate that he preferred to cooperate rather than to antagonize the Japanese. It was a necessary move on Rabe's part because the people of the Safety Zone could suffer if the IC challenged the Japanese's rule of Nanking.

Rabe also emphasized pragmatic reasons to the Japanese for stopping the Massacre, and he tried to demonstrate the correlation between ending the on-going atrocities and ensuring the long-term prosperity of the Japanese occupation. For example, Rabe explained to the Japanese that they were basically killing off the city's work force:

If the panic continues, not only will our housing problem become more serious but the food problem and the question of finding workers will seriously increase. This morning one of your representatives, Mr. K. Kikuchi, was at our office asking for workers for the electric light plant. We had to reply that we could not even get our workers out to do anything.<sup>48</sup>

In his many letters to the Japanese Embassy, Rabe would also advise the Japanese on how to occupy the city. While ostensibly meant to help the Japanese, these suggestions, such as re-establishing the police and fire departments, were generally aimed at benefitting the Safety

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<sup>46</sup> Brook, ed., 12.

<sup>47</sup> Brook, ed., 15.

<sup>48</sup> Brook, ed., 20.



Zone.<sup>49</sup>

Ultimately, Rabe had to tread lightly and adopt a deferential attitude because the IC did not have the power to resist the Japanese occupiers. After the fall of Nanking, the Japanese locked down the city, and there were no foreign diplomats present. The IC was alone. Amidst the slaughter, the Japanese Embassy invited the missionaries and Rabe for dinner on 16 January 1938. Rabe made a toast praising the consular staff:

You, the gentlemen of the Japanese Embassy, have patiently heard our requests and complaints, and there were many, and have always lent us a willing ear. You have also, to the extent that you could, done your best to help us. And for this much-appreciated help, I would like, in the name of the International Committee, to hereby express my thanks.<sup>50</sup>

Rabe knew the toast he gave was sycophantic, but his goal was to gain the cooperation of the consular staff who served as the middleman between the IC and the Japanese military. He explained: “I am aware that I spoke a little against my conscience, but I thought it useful for our cause and followed the Jesuit principle: ‘The end justify the means.’”<sup>51</sup> Privately, Rabe was angry with the Japanese, and he hoped “a goodly number of Japanese who have committed atrocities here were to commit *hara-kiri*.”<sup>52</sup>

Despite his best efforts, it is highly questionable whether Rabe succeeded in mitigating the Japanese atrocities through his dealings. When he visited the Japanese Embassy, Wilson realized that the Embassy “has no control over the military.”<sup>53</sup> Fitch noted the consular staff met the IC “with suave Japanese courtesy but actually the officials there are powerless.”<sup>54</sup> While the Japanese Embassy was ineffective, it would be unfair to label them unresponsive. To help the IC

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<sup>49</sup> Brook, ed., 15.

<sup>50</sup> Rabe, 133.

<sup>51</sup> Rabe, 133.

<sup>52</sup> Rabe, 150. *Hara-kiri* is slang for *seppuku* (ritual disembowelment).

<sup>53</sup> Brook, ed., 217.

<sup>54</sup> Zhang, ed., 54.

prevent rapes at Ginling College, the consular staff arranged for military police to guard the campus. The plan backfired, however, when the military policemen took part in the rapes.<sup>55</sup> The Embassy also supplied the IC with Japanese posters to mark off foreign property. These posters proved quite useless because the soldiers ignored them.<sup>56</sup> Although it was unsuccessful, the Embassy tried to cooperate with the IC. The consular staff may have been appalled by their countrymen's atrocities, but Rabe's diplomacy was likely a factor that facilitated the Embassy's assistance, however ineffective it was. If Rabe adopted a defiant rather than cooperative attitude, the Embassy would be less inclined to oppose the military, which was a dangerous thing to do in Japanese politics of the 1930s.<sup>57</sup> Since the Embassy's assistance turned out to be limited, the American missionaries had to deal with the ongoing Japanese atrocities. Rabe also intervened personally against Japanese troops, and he described his routine: "...when I arrive and hold my swastika armband under their noses, they leave."<sup>58</sup> Unlike Rabe, the American missionaries did not have the luxury of flashing the swastika, and, as the McCallum incident demonstrated, it was dangerous for them to deal with the Japanese.

Thus, the missionaries had to cooperate with the Japanese as well in order to mitigate the damage done to the Safety Zone. On 24 December 1937, a ranking Japanese officer arrived at Ginling College to ask for Vautrin's help in opening a brothel. The officer reasoned if the Japanese army could open a brothel, the soldiers would no longer need to rape civilians. Vautrin agreed to the plan on the condition that the Japanese did not pick "innocent and decent women" to be prostitutes.<sup>59</sup> The Japanese were able to comply with Vautrin's request, and they asked

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<sup>55</sup> Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing*, 114.

<sup>56</sup> Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing*, 113.

<sup>57</sup> The February 26<sup>th</sup> Incident of 1936 was no doubt fresh in the memories of the consular staff and all Japanese politicians.

<sup>58</sup> Rabe, 69.

<sup>59</sup> Vautrin, diary, 24 December 1937.

Jimmy Wang, a collaborator, to identify prostitutes. Wang, who had ties to the Nanking underworld, identified twenty-one prostitutes.<sup>60</sup> Rabe claimed the prostitutes went with Wang willingly, but Rabe was not present during the event.<sup>61</sup> Vautrin usually kept meticulous details in her diary, but she surprisingly had little to say about what happened that day. Consequently, it is a matter of speculation if these prostitutes went with Wang voluntarily.

Regardless, Vautrin consented to the plan because she realized that the missionaries could not protect Ginling College, which was a refugee camp for 10,000 women and children. Earlier, on 17 December 1937, Vautrin and her colleagues were utterly powerless to stop a group of Japanese soldiers who ran amok at Ginling. The Japanese soldiers did not care if the missionaries were neutral foreigners, and one of them slapped Vautrin in the face.<sup>62</sup> When Fitch, Mills, and Lewis Smythe arrived to help, the soldiers shoved them into a car and ordered them to leave Ginling.<sup>63</sup> The Japanese soldiers not only ignored the American flag that showed Ginling was foreign property, but they even tried to steal it.<sup>64</sup> In light of this overwhelming demonstration of Japanese brutality and power, Vautrin and the missionaries no doubt realized that their mere presence was not enough to protect the refugees. It is reasonable, then, to surmise that the events of 17 December 1937 influenced Vautrin's decision to cooperate with the Japanese search for prostitutes.<sup>65</sup>

The incident also revealed that different parties, including some Japanese, cooperated to minimize the violence towards women at Ginling by finding or, perhaps, sacrificing the

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<sup>60</sup> Vautrin, diary, 24 December 1937.

<sup>61</sup> Rabe, 99.

<sup>62</sup> Vautrin, diary, 17 December 1937.

<sup>63</sup> Fitch, 441.

<sup>64</sup> Vautrin, diary, 17 December 1937. Vautrin brought the flag with consular approval (see her 20 September 1937 diary entry) to show that Ginling was under American protection. The Japanese soldiers discarded the flag because, at twenty-seven feet long, it proved too cumbersome to carry off.

<sup>65</sup> Vautrin's complicity has proven problematic in narratives of resistance. Chang tacitly acknowledges Vautrin's decision was made "under pressure" and an isolated incident (Chang, 134). Hu's biography of Vautrin simply ignores the entire incident despite several primary sources, including Vautrin's, mentioning it.

prostitutes—Vautrin was certainly not the only person involved. On 21 December 1937, Smythe, a missionary serving as Rabe's secretary, wrote a letter to the Japanese Embassy urging them to help. He explained that women who were being raped were "the wives of pastors, YMCA workers, college instructors, and others who have always lived a self-respecting life."<sup>66</sup> Smythe experienced the violent events on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and his letter was essentially a plea for Japanese cooperation in ending the violence. He concluded by stating: "Trusting your military authorities will take prompt and strict action, I am respectfully yours, Lewis S.C. Smythe."<sup>67</sup> Without access to Japanese archives, it is difficult to ascertain whether Smythe's letter prompted the Japanese search for prostitutes to replace "self-respecting" women. Yet, the Japanese actions remarkably complied with both Smythe's and Vautrin's concern for "decent" women. Unlike the usual rabble that harassed Ginling, a ranking Japanese officer handled the situation with the assistance of a collaborator who could identify the prostitutes. While available documents do not provide a name, Vautrin indicated the officer was from the division level.<sup>68</sup> Even though he asked for a hundred, the officer left with only twenty-one prostitutes since Wang could only identify that many. The Japanese authorities' motivation to cooperate is not entirely clear, but it was certainly in their interests to rein in their soldiers' violence so that normal economic activities could resume in Nanking. At Ginling, Japanese and missionary goals coincided for different reasons, and the two parties entered into a mutually beneficial agreement.

Rapes continued at Ginling, and it is difficult to determine whether Vautrin's agreement with the Japanese officer actually reduced the violence. When she sent a letter out in January 1938, Vautrin described the guilt she felt by quoting the Episcopal Prayer Book: "That which I would do I do not, and that which I would not do, I do, and there is no goodness in me." Vautrin

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<sup>66</sup> Brook, ed., 44-45.

<sup>67</sup> Brook, ed., 45.

<sup>68</sup> Vautrin, diary, 17 December 1937.

felt the line described her “condition and state of mind so accurately I cannot refrain from quoting it.”<sup>69</sup> Although she did not explain why she felt such weight of guilt, it is reasonable to assume that Vautrin felt her morals were compromised by the events on 24 December 1937. As observers noted, Vautrin took great pride in turning Ginling College as a safe haven for women. Rabe, ever observant, felt something was wrong with Vautrin since the Japanese prostitution search:

...something terrible has happened to our Minnie. She believes in her girls and guards them the way a hen guards her chicks. During the period when Japanese outrages were at their worst, I have seen her with my own eyes leading a procession of 400 female refugees through the Zone on their way to her college camp.<sup>70</sup>

It could not have been easy for Vautrin to hand over twenty-one women to the Japanese, but she did so to protect the 9,979 other people at Ginling. Vautrin’s decision made her a collaborator but histories of the Massacre do not remember her as one. It is easier to celebrate Vautrin’s bravery while forgetting her cooperation with the Japanese because collaboration carries a heavy stigma. Collaboration is a word with moral connotations that leave little room in between. The burden of collaboration may have contributed to the deterioration of Vautrin’s mental health. Just before she committed suicide in 1941, Vautrin explained: “I cannot forgive myself—so I do not ask you to forgive.”<sup>71</sup> Vautrin’s statement does not indicate precisely what she did that could not be forgiven, but it serves as an apt description on the moralization of collaboration as an unforgivable act. Brook suggests “every culture tags collaboration as a moral failure.”<sup>72</sup> Societies can be quick to judge those who collaborated with the enemy because the word collaborator automatically invokes names such as Philippe Pétain, Vidkun Quisling, or

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<sup>69</sup> Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, 108.

<sup>70</sup> Rabe, 99.

<sup>71</sup> Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing: Diaries and Correspondence*, xxvii.

<sup>72</sup> Brook, *Collaboration*, 4.

Wang Ching-wei. Yet, Ginling survivors refer to Vautrin as “the Goddess of Mercy.”<sup>73</sup> When collaboration is automatically synonymous with treason, it can be difficult to reconcile how the Goddess of Mercy was also a collaborator. It is useful, then, to practice Brook’s suggestion of hesitating before reflexively making moral judgments about collaborators.<sup>74</sup> Vautrin’s example indicates it is more productive to consider collaboration as an act that encompasses a wide range of individuals with different motivations. Avarice and cowardliness were not the only reasons to collaborate. At Ginling, Vautrin made a difficult compromise to protect as many refugees as possible.

Vautrin was not alone in making such difficult decisions or feeling such guilt. The missionaries played a major role alongside Rabe to solve the Safety Zone’s problems. Since Mills first proposed the plan to remove T’ang’s army from Nanking, the IC recognized that its actions aided the Japanese. The American missionaries and Rabe chose to cooperate rather than oppose the Japanese in order to mitigate the sack of Nanking. Isolated from the outside world and powerless to resist the Japanese, the IC had to exercise a tremendous amount of flexibility in a variety of difficult situations. At times, it meant the IC needed to ignore the rules, which it did during the ICRC process. At other times, the IC’s flexibility made them reluctant collaborators. When narratives of resistance ignore the IC’s cooperation with the Japanese, historical understanding of relief work during the Nanking Massacre becomes skewed. Such narratives properly recognize the missionaries for their bravery when confronting bloodthirsty soldiers. Yet, it was collaboration that allowed the missionaries and Rabe to abate some of the horrors of Japanese rule. Collaboration also required an unrecognized courage from the participants.

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<sup>73</sup> Hu, xv.

<sup>74</sup> Timothy Brook, “Hesitating Before the Judgment of History,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71, 1 (February 2012): 103.

### III

#### **Evangelists in Nanking**

Relief work did not suddenly end when Rabe departed Nanking, but histories of the Massacre tend to end by the time he left on 23 February 1938.<sup>1</sup> Once Rabe left, the American missionaries resumed control of relief efforts that they initiated back in August 1937. The missionaries reconstituted the IC as the International Relief Committee (IRC), a name which was “more in conformity” for a relief agency.<sup>2</sup> The IRC, chaired by Mills, was more than a relief group though—it was also a missionary organization. The Nanking Massacre resulted in conditions favourable to evangelical work because refugees were reliant on the American missionaries for charity and protection, and the missionaries took full advantage of these conditions. Ernest Forster, an Episcopalian missionary, astutely described Nanking’s evangelical situation: “Truly the fields are ripe unto the harvest.”<sup>3</sup>

Evangelical work was an important aspect of the IRC, but missionary interests were intertwined with relief efforts since the Americans formed the Nanking Christian War Relief Committee (NCWRC) on 10 October 1937. Since the missionary origins of relief work in

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<sup>1</sup> Rabe, 193-194. Siemens ordered Rabe to leave on 1 December 1937, but Rabe did not receive the telegram until February 1938 due to the breakdown of communications in Nanking during the battle. Rabe wrote in his diary that he would have left had he received the telegram earlier because he was a “well-disciplined company man.”

<sup>2</sup> Brook, ed., 166. As mentioned in Chapter II, the American missionaries initially opposed Rabe’s advice to reform the IC as the IRC for fear the Japanese would not recognize the new organization. Available primary sources do not indicate why the missionaries finally agreed, but the IRC was most likely formed due to political considerations. The old IC—the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone—served as an administrative body in Nanking. In essence, its existence undermined the authority of the Japanese and puppet Chinese administrations. The IRC, as Rabe noted, reflected a proper name for a benign relief agency. The decision to replace the IC with the IRC seems to be a concession made to the Japanese in order to ensure relief work would continue for the long-term in Nanking.

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Forster and Clarissa Forster, letter to friends, 16 March 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 263, Folder 8). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0349.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0349.pdf) (accessed 15 February 2012).

Nanking are largely unknown, the evangelical aspect of the relief work has been overlooked.<sup>4</sup> Hero-worshipping is another obstacle to understanding the missionaries, and some historians have elevated the Westerners of Nanking to a sacrosanct position. Heroes and heroines do not collaborate with the invader, and paragons are altruistic.<sup>5</sup> Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking*, for instance, makes no mention of missionary self-interests or their collaboration with the Japanese. In fact, it is surprising historians have not investigated evangelical interests in the Nanking Massacre despite the ignominious reputation of Christian missionaries as harbingers of colonialism and cultural aggression. Any suggestion of missionary self-interests may destabilize the established narrative of heroic Westerners selflessly protecting Chinese refugees. Even humanitarian organizations are not without their own agendas, and it is necessary to identify their goals in order to understand their actions. In the case of the American missionaries, they did not go to China expecting to protect civilians from, as Rabe described, the "cruelty, brutality, and bestiality" of an invading army.<sup>6</sup> Instead, they were in China to convert people.

While identifying missionary interests during the Nanking Massacre is important, it is also difficult due to the nature of available sources. Missionary records are extensive, but they tend to focus on Japanese brutality and the responding relief projects more than anything else. The missionaries were well aware that their first-hand accounts of the Massacre would be important for posterity, and Fitch wrote:

Yet it is a story which I feel must be told, even if it is seen by only a few. I cannot rest until I have told it, and perhaps fortunately, I am one of a very few who are in a position to tell it. It is not complete—only a small part of the whole; and God alone knows when it will be finished.<sup>7</sup>

The missionary records have proven invaluable in light of woeful attempts to deny the Massacre.

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter I for the creation of the NCWRC and IC by the American missionaries.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter II for missionary and IC collaboration with the Japanese.

<sup>6</sup> Rabe, 148.

<sup>7</sup> Fitch, 430.



However, the American missionaries did not always explain how their relief efforts were directly advancing their evangelical interests. While the missionaries frequently mentioned that the Massacre presented evangelical opportunities, they rarely explained how they took advantage of these opportunities. It is up to the historian, then, to extrapolate beyond what is strictly available in the primary sources. Despite this extrapolation, the missionaries' desire to convert refugees in Nanking was clear. Numerous references, such as Forster's hope to "harvest" Nanking for Christians, attest to this.

In order to understand how relief efforts in Nanking promoted missionary interests, this chapter examines the American missionaries not only within the context of the Massacre but also within the context of missionary work in China. Important events rarely occur in isolation from the historical context, and the Nanking Massacre is not an exception despite much of the current literature treating it as a singular event.<sup>8</sup> Missionaries have preached their foreign beliefs in Nanking long before the Japanese invasion, and many Chinese understandably viewed these missionaries with suspicion ever since they arrived *en masse* after the Opium Wars.<sup>9</sup> The Japanese destruction of Nanking, however, created a blank slate for the missionaries to redefine themselves as protectors and providers. Through their relief efforts in the NCWRC, the IC, and the IRC, the American missionaries were able to further their evangelical interests by transforming the foreignness of Christianity to a religion that served the Chinese in a time of greatest duress.

When narratives emphasize the selflessness of the missionaries during the Massacre, it

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<sup>8</sup> This situation, like many other problems with Massacre literature, is a result of the fixation on Japanese atrocities and body counts. Iris Chang, the exemplar of this approach, emphasized that the Nanking Massacre was a unique event in history: "Using numbers killed alone, the Rape of Nanking surpasses much of the worst barbarism of the ages" (5). Using the highly questionable 300,000 casualty figure, Chang further stresses the distinctiveness of the Massacre by arguing that the Holocaust took place over a matter of years whereas the Massacre took place over the span of weeks.

<sup>9</sup> Varg, 5.

can be easy to forget that the missionaries and the Chinese had an uneasy relationship, especially in Nanking. As the War of Resistance continued, the American missionaries became concerned that nationalistic Chinese would attack Christian converts and missionaries in Nanking. Vautrin, who strongly believed the missionaries should remain in Nanking under most circumstances, conceded that “when we should endanger the lives of our Chinese co-workers by staying, then it seems to me we should leave quickly.”<sup>10</sup> Wolf Schenke, a German reporter, recognized the risk the missionaries took in staying in Nanking because he felt the war would reignite deep seeded anti-foreign sentiments: “Each was aware that his remaining behind was a matter of life or death. ... Had not the troops of the Kuomintang [Nationalists] under Chiang Kai-shek murdered foreigners and raped foreign women upon their arrival in Nanking in 1927?”<sup>11</sup> The Nanking Decade was ended in 1937 by Japanese violence, but it began in 1927 with an act of Chinese violence. The American missionaries were familiar with the events of the 1927 Nanking Incident when the Northern Expedition, which was launched by the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek to reunite China, devolved into a massive anti-foreign pogrom when the city fell. As the missionaries fled the city under the cover of American warships shelling the city, Chinese soldiers killed John E. Williams, a prolific missionary and the Vice President of the University of Nanking.<sup>12</sup>

Although they returned to Nanking after 1927, the American missionaries recognized that many Chinese did not trust them or those who converted. The missionary Pearl S. Buck, a University faculty member and later Nobel Laureate, understood the anti-missionary sentiments when she famously called on her colleagues to question their purpose in China: “Has his life

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<sup>10</sup> Vautrin, diary, 18 September 1937.

<sup>11</sup> Wolf Schenke, “Nanking’s Final Days” quoted in Rabe, 30.

<sup>12</sup> *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*, s.v. “John Elias Williams,” accessed 23 March 2012, <http://www.bdcconline.net/en/stories/w/williams-john-elias.php>.

been a mistake? Is the thing which he has lived really a subtle form of imperialism? It is this which shakes him, the possible immorality of the missionary idea.”<sup>13</sup> The self-doubt described by Buck was certainly present in Vautrin’s mind whenever she looked at Ginling College’s American flag, a constant reminder of the missionary institution’s own imperialist complicity: “I thought what a power for peace and righteousness that flag and the nation it represents could be if through all the years all our national motives and actions were completely devoid of selfishness and greed.”<sup>14</sup> As the capital city braced itself against Japanese imperialism, the missionaries themselves were a living reminder of Western imperialism. It was under this context that the American missionaries began their relief projects.

The Japanese invasion gave the American missionaries an opportunity to improve their suspect public image in Nanking. The growing humanitarian crisis served as a major impetus to organize relief work under the NCWRC, but the missionaries were also aware that the NCWRC’s relief work could improve the relationships between the missions and the Chinese. Vautrin saw the relief efforts as an “investment”:

Our greatest investments are in friendly relationships and in cooperation with the members of a young church—to leave at the time when we are most needed seems to me to be missing one of the greatest opportunities for service which comes to us.<sup>15</sup>

The desire to cultivate amicable relationships with the Chinese affected how relief work was carried out by the NCWRC. In nearly all of the NCWRC’s activities, the American missionaries actively involved Chinese volunteers—mainly by mobilizing their congregations—in relief projects operating out of missionary institutions. The Drum Tower Church became a hotbed of

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<sup>13</sup> Pearl S. Buck, “Is There a Place for the Foreign Missionary?” *The Christian Recorder* 58, 2 (February 1927): 102, <http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=5093> (accessed 25 November 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Vautrin, diary, 20 September 1937.

<sup>15</sup> Vautrin, diary, 18 September 1937.

activity where volunteers knitted bedding and clothing for the needy.<sup>16</sup> At Hsia Kwan where Magee established the Reception for Wounded Soldiers, the NCWRC recruited student volunteers from the University to provide medical aid.<sup>17</sup> By working alongside the Chinese against the Japanese, the missionaries demonstrated that their missions were on the Chinese side of the war. Fitch, for example, stated: “I shall always be glad that I threw in my lot with them [the Chinese].”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, a Chinese professor, Y.G. Chen, officially headed the NCWRC. Although the American missionaries ran the organization behind the screen, Chen’s chairmanship of the NCWRC strengthened the impression that relief work was both a missionary and Chinese endeavour. The American missionaries unsurprisingly mobilized the Chinese because they were implementing the indigenization strategy adopted by many missionary organizations in China.<sup>19</sup> In the indigenization strategy, missionaries spread Christianity by allowing greater Chinese participation and leadership of the churches. Missionaries adopted the strategy partly in response to the protests of Chinese pastors who desired greater autonomy but also in response to “accusations of their implication in Western imperialism.”<sup>20</sup> The American missionaries applied this familiar strategy to their relief efforts by inviting Chinese participation and leadership in the NCWRC.

The missionaries also used the NCWRC’s relief work to portray the missions as responsible community leaders in Nanking society. Vautrin felt that the Japanese attack on Nanking was actually “a wonderful time for Christian leaders to serve the Church and lead the

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<sup>16</sup> Vautrin, diary, 2-3 October 1937.

<sup>17</sup> Vautrin, diary, 20 November 1937.

<sup>18</sup> Fitch, 452.

<sup>19</sup> Douglas R. Reynolds, “Christian Mission Schools and Japan’s To-A Dobun Shoin: Comparisons and Legacies,” in *Education, Culture, and Identity in Twentieth-Century China*, ed. Glen Peterson, Ruth Hayhoe, Lu Yongling (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 85-86.

<sup>20</sup> Xi, 15.

members in all kinds of worthy enterprises for the relief of civilians.”<sup>21</sup> Due to the inability of the Nationalist government to respond to the humanitarian crisis that unfolded as refugees poured into the capital city, the American missionaries were able to assume leadership roles in Nanking while greatly improving how the residents viewed the missions.<sup>22</sup> For instance, the missionaries’ efforts to aid wounded soldiers at Hsia Kwan were contrasted by the Nationalists’ inaction to care for China’s own defenders. The missionaries’ preeminent position in providing relief did not go unnoticed by the Chinese much to Vautrin’s satisfaction. A teacher, whose school was destroyed in Japanese air raids, told Vautrin that Ginling’s “spirit and persistence” was greater than the government’s. Another refugee told Vautrin that the University Hospital displayed a greater “spirit of loyalty and willingness to sacrifice” than government hospitals. Vautrin was pleased to hear the positive feedback because she believed that Christians should always stand out amongst the non-Christians. She even compared the American missionaries to their ancient forerunners: “It should be said of us as it was said of those first century Christians that we can out-live and out-die those who have never named the Name.”<sup>23</sup> By actively filling the gaps in relief needs, the American missionaries were gradually gaining the confidence of the Chinese through the NCWRC’s leadership role in providing humanitarian aid.

The American missionaries also banded together as the NCWRC in order to protect missionary interests. Although many Nationalist elites, including Chiang and the powerful Soong clan, were Christians, the government nonetheless treated foreign missionaries with suspicion. The Nationalists particularly worried about mission schools being subversive institutions, and they worked actively to undermine missionary control of these schools. Some Nationalist

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<sup>21</sup> Vautrin, diary, 9 October 1937.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter I for details on how the Nationalist government was utterly overwhelmed by the demands of relief work.

<sup>23</sup> Vautrin, diary, 31 October 1937.

measures included mandating Chinese leadership of faculties and ensuring religious classes were strictly voluntarily.<sup>24</sup> In Nanking, many missionary institutions were schools. On 18 August 1937, the Nationalist government demanded the Presbyterian Church to turn over Ming Deh Girls School for use as a hospital. The Nationalists were able to commandeer the school before other missionaries found out what happened. After a general meeting, the missionaries decided that they needed to meet and create a united front in order to “act more or less alike in meeting such requests.”<sup>25</sup> Although this incident alone did not lead to the creation of the NCWRC, the missionaries saw the need to present a united front when dealing with the Nationalists. The formation of the NCWRC provided the missionaries with that united front. Interestingly, there are no primary sources available to suggest the government took Ming Deh to purposely undermine the missionaries—it was possible that the government actually needed the building for use as a hospital. Nonetheless, the missionaries reacted defensively to what they perceived as a threat to missionary autonomy. Although they were using relief work to advance church interests, the American missionaries were also concerned that some relief work, such as the conversion of missionary schools to government hospitals, threatened their interests.

While missionary interests influenced the NCWRC, it would be overly cynical to assume that advancing Christianity in Nanking was the only reason for the American missionaries to provide relief. As detailed in Chapter I, the American missionaries remained in Nanking at great personal risk to initiate relief work for different reasons, such as a genuine sense of humanitarianism or loyalty to friends in the city. Evangelical motivations and other reasons were not mutually exclusive as evidenced by Bates’ decision to help out in Nanking because “the

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<sup>24</sup> Ryan Dunch, “Mission Schools and Modernity: The Anglo-Chinese College, Fuzhou,” in *Education, Culture, and Identity in Twentieth-Century China*, ed. Glen Peterson, Ruth Hayhoe, Lu Yongling (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 124.

<sup>25</sup> Vautrin, diary, 18 August 1937.

numbers and plight of refugees are very hard on sensitive people.” At the same time, he was excited for “plenty of special missionary work” during the crisis.<sup>26</sup> Rather than adopt an either-or scenario where the missionaries were opportunistic evangelists or altruistic humanitarians, it is more appropriate to examine how different interests influenced relief work in Nanking. In the NCWRC, evangelical interests definitely shaped relief work as the American missionaries tried to improve public perception of Christianity in China while protecting church interests.

The Japanese sack of Nanking posed the greatest threat to missionary interests. As Chinese Christians fled when the fall of Nanking became imminent by December 1937, the future of Christianity in Nanking became more precarious. One church reported losing 80% of its congregation to the mass exodus by September 1937.<sup>27</sup> Japanese atrocities during the Massacre led to the death of many remaining Chinese Christians and the destruction of church properties. The pressures of protecting and providing for 200,000 refugees also made it difficult for the missionaries to evangelize in any direct manner. Vautrin later reported that the humanitarian crisis was so severe that the missionaries had no time to provide any public religious service until 17 January 1938.<sup>28</sup> During the final days of the Massacre, Forster informed the head of the Episcopalian diocese in China, Bishop William Payne Roberts: “We shall have to start pretty much from the bottom again, I am afraid.”<sup>29</sup>

The work to rebuild a place for Christianity in Nanking began, in fact, during the Massacre because the IC’s relief work presented many opportunities for the missionaries to gain the confidence of the refugees. Most refugees had no one else to turn to for help—the IC was the

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<sup>26</sup> Bates, letter to Lilliath Bates, 14 November 1937.

<sup>27</sup> Vautrin, diary, 27 September 1937.

<sup>28</sup> Vautrin, “In Nanking,” 36-37.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Forster, letter to William Payne Roberts, 10 February 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 263, Folder 8). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0346.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0346.pdf) (accessed 12 March 2012).

only organization in Nanking that had the willingness and some ability to protect and provide for the refugees. Forster followed up his assessment for Roberts by explaining: “There is tremendous opportunity before us, however, and we can be confident that God will grant us the wisdom to know how to deal with it.”<sup>30</sup> Bates also reached the same conclusion in an IC report after observing the refugee camps: “In such camps the situation and personnel were such as to give favorable opportunities for Christian service of all types...”<sup>31</sup> The situation was not unique to Nanking either—missionary societies throughout China saw the wartime crisis as an opportunity to spread Christianity and to practice the Social Gospel despite the difficulties they faced.<sup>32</sup>

Japanese atrocities also inadvertently aided the evangelical cause because missionaries believed the human tragedy of the Massacre made people receptive to Christian teachings. The missionaries certainly did not pray for a massacre to happen, but Vautrin believed that “suffering, sorrow, life short of all but the absolute necessities, had made hearts tender and had prepared them to understand the suffering of God in Christ for the sins of humankind.”<sup>33</sup> Forster’s observation was less tender and clearly pragmatic: “So you see God has not lessened our opportunities. I believe there will still be a rich harvest over this trouble and sorrow.” Forster even specifically reached out to people who lost loved ones. In one instance, Forster noticed a man mourning by a casket, and the missionary tried to “comfort him and ask him to turn to the

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<sup>30</sup> Forster, letter to William Payne Roberts, 10 February 1938.

<sup>31</sup> Miner Searle Bates, “Preliminary Report on Christian Work in Nanking—Winter 1938,” (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 10: Box 90, Folder 719). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0121.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0121.pdf) (accessed 12 March 2012).

<sup>32</sup> “The Challenge of Unusual Times,” in *The Chinese Recorder* 69, 1 (January 1938): 2, [www.china.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/collections/docsearchresults.aspx?documentid=1155&searchmode=true&previous=0](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/collections/docsearchresults.aspx?documentid=1155&searchmode=true&previous=0) (accessed 25 March 2012). Interestingly, *The Chinese Recorder*, a major missionary periodical, popularized the Western understanding of 危机 (crisis) as a combination between the characters “danger” (危) and “opportunity” (机) when it used the characters as a literary device to emphasize the need for missionaries to take advantage of the wartime situation. Benjamin Zimmer, an American linguist, identified this article as the first recorded example where 危机 was defined in this way. Various scholars now challenge this definition as a misinterpretation of 机. See Zimmer’s article “Crisis = Danger + Opportunity: The Plot Thickens” at <http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languageblog/archives/004343.html> (accessed 25 March 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Vautrin, “In Nanking,” 38.



Lord Jesus for comfort.” Unfortunately for Forster, a band of marauding Japanese soldiers chased the two off.<sup>34</sup> Considering the sheer scale of the Massacre, the missionaries no doubt met and offered Christian comfort to other mourners.

However, the missionaries’ highest priority was running the IC because the refugees desperately needed help. While humanitarian concerns mattered to the missionaries, they also realized that their missions would greatly benefit from the IC’s relief efforts. Once the Massacre was over, the missionaries knew the refugees would be indebted to Christians who not only provided food, medicine, and shelter, but also at times risked their lives to protect people from Japanese depravations. In a National Christian Council (NCC) article, Vautrin believed Chinese gratitude justified the costs incurred by the missionaries during the Massacre:

...the service rendered through the shelter offered to the homeless and destitute and terror-stricken during these months of intense danger is worth all they have cost the churches of the West. Walls and woodwork are scarred, paint has been rubbed away by countless feet, locks and hinges are broken and missing, but deep gratitude to the Christian Church of the West exists in the hearts of many who found shelter in the Safety Zone and the mission institutions.<sup>35</sup>

Once the worst excesses of the Massacre were over, the American missionaries hoped to convert Chinese gratitude into interest in Christianity. According to Bates, people responded positively: “Great numbers have expressed their gratitude for Christian aid, and the response to limited programs of religious work has been remarkable.”<sup>36</sup> However, relevant primary sources from the refugees are unavailable, and impressions of gratitude are based solely on missionary perspectives. It was possible that the refugees participated in religious programs not out of gratitude, but rather, out of necessity. In at least one instance, Vautrin expressed concern to a

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<sup>34</sup> Ernest Forster, letter, 25 January 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 263, Folder 8). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0355.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0355.pdf) (accessed 12 March 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Vautrin, “In Nanking,” 35.

<sup>36</sup> Bates, “Preliminary Report on Christian Work in Nanking—Winter 1938.”

Chinese pastor that “personal safety and becoming Christians become confused” for some people attending religious services.<sup>37</sup>

Regardless, many refugees responded to religious programs offered at the various IC refugee camps. As the Massacre began to slow down, the missionaries began using these camps as centers of evangelism—many refugee camps were already on mission properties. The missionaries held Bible classes at the various camps, and Bates reported that about 1000 refugees attended them daily. Bates felt even more refugees would attend the classes if the missionaries had larger buildings, but he nonetheless felt “never have the buildings been more useful than in these recent months.”<sup>38</sup> At Ginling, evangelical work began on 17 January 1938 when Vautrin began distributing 200 tickets per day for refugees to attend religious meetings that took place five days per week.<sup>39</sup> A week later, missionaries at the University began evangelical meetings as well.<sup>40</sup> Although the missionaries organized the meetings, they continued the indigenization strategy by having Chinese evangelists minister much of the actual preaching in both places.<sup>41</sup> This not only allowed the missionaries to naturalize the evangelical process, but it allowed them to concentrate on providing relief work at camps. The refugee camps provided them with a large audience who had nowhere else to go. Forster and Magee noted the importance of the refugee camps to their evangelical objectives:

Never has there been such friendliness towards the Christian Church on the part of the people of Nanking as at present. Tens of thousands of them were protected on Mission property or in other buildings in the Safety Zone which was

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<sup>37</sup> Jin Feng, *The Making of a Family Saga: Ginling College* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 178.

<sup>38</sup> Bates, “Preliminary Report on Christian Work in Nanking—Winter 1938.”

<sup>39</sup> Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing*, 126.

<sup>40</sup> Ernest Forster, letter, 25 January 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 263, Folder 8). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0355.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0355.pdf) (accessed 12 March 2012).

<sup>41</sup> For example, Vautrin's friend Lo Hsien-djen actively preached at Ginling's meetings (Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanking*, 148) and Forster noted that a Chinese pastor was responsible for the evangelical meetings at the University (see Forster and Magee, “Nanking”).

established by a group of foreigners—missionaries and a few business people—during and after the fall of the city, and now many of the churches are reaping the benefit.<sup>42</sup>

By the time the IRC was formed in February 1938, the American missionaries began to reap the benefits of their relief work in the NCWRC and IC. For example, the Episcopalians admitted thirty-six Catechumens on 1 May 1938, which Forster described was “the largest number we have had at any time.”<sup>43</sup> In particular, the missionaries felt that their public image, long tarnished by Western imperialism, has improved greatly amongst Nanking’s residents. Vautrin saw a direct connection between the many months of Christian relief work and the newfound respect for the missionaries:

Needless to say there is deep appreciation of the fact that Christian workers and missionaries were the main reliance of people in the hardest experience of their lives. The prejudices and indifference of the past decade seems to have been largely wiped away and there seems to be a longing for those things that religion alone can give.<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, Vautrin’s statement indicated that much of missionaries’ success in transforming their image depended on their being “the main reliance of people.” In other words, the missionaries depended on providing relief after the Massacre to ensure the continued success of their missions. The devastation of Nanking ensured the missionaries still had plenty of relief work to do, and the missionaries pressed the NCC to send more missionaries to help. Bates explained that “the special call for relief services of different sorts...is most pressing” while

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<sup>42</sup> Ernest Forster and John Magee, “Nanking” (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 263, Folder 8). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0351.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0351.pdf) (accessed 12 March 2012).

<sup>43</sup> Ernest Forster, letter to Clarissa Forster, 6 May 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 8: Box 263, Folder 8). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0350.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0350.pdf) (accessed 12 March 2012). Forster also noted that he borrowed the ambulance from the University Hospital to ferry the Catechumens to St. Paul’s Church so Japanese soldiers would not pick off the refugees.

<sup>44</sup> Vautrin, “In Nanking,” 41.

adding that “we wish to take advantage of any opportunities.”<sup>45</sup> Vautrin also emphasized that the relief work offered opportunities for evangelism that “have never been greater” because “the Church has stood through everything and the spirit of Christ has been seen and felt by many. The dispersion of families and the upheaval of normal family life has weakened, and in many cases removed, the barrier which family custom and tradition erected against the acceptance of Christianity.”<sup>46</sup> Similar to the NCWRC and IC, the IRC realized that relief work was crucial to its evangelical objectives, and it tried to increase the missionary presence to take advantage of the continued need to aid the refugees. However, the Japanese authorities were unwilling to let too many foreigners in the city, and the IRC had to ask retired Chinese pastors and laymen to assist.<sup>47</sup>

Although more missionaries would have helped with relief work, the IRC particularly needed them to meet the much-expanded programs of evangelism. As relative calm returned to Nanking, evangelical work became increasingly prominent at the refugee camps, and the missionaries held more Bible classes for the refugees. Forster and Magee, for instance, took care of orphans and children who were separated from their parents during the chaos. Under their care, they also gave Bible lessons to the children. The Episcopal church reported that many of these children eventually became Catechumens; sometimes, the parents also joined the church when they were successfully reunited with their children.<sup>48</sup>

Although the missionaries were all advancing evangelical goals through the IRC, Forster and Magee of the Episcopal church appeared most aggressive in this pursuit. While there are

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<sup>45</sup> Miner Searle Bates, letter to the National Christian Council, 3 March 1938 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 10: Box 4, Folder 63). Online version: [http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl\\_china\\_webapp\\_images/NMP0086.pdf](http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/ydl_china_webapp_images/NMP0086.pdf) (accessed 12 March 2012).

<sup>46</sup> Vautrin, “In Nanking,” 38-39.

<sup>47</sup> Bates, “Preliminary Report on Christian Work in Nanking—Winter 1938.”

<sup>48</sup> Forster and Magee, “Nanking.”

not enough primary sources to conclusively prove that a major interdenominational struggle took place in the IRC, the available sources do suggest that the spirit of cooperation between the missionaries in the dark days of the NCWRC and the IC began to flounder in the competition for converts. Forster and Magee's efforts to convert people specifically for the Episcopalian church did not go unnoticed by others. At a joint missionary conference, Vautrin, a Disciple of Christ, noted: "Episcopalians had five men and three women evangelistic workers present. A fine showing compared with other Missions."<sup>49</sup> The strong Episcopalian presence, understandably, caused others to be uncomfortable as Protestant missionary work in China, by 1938, tended to be increasingly interdenominational. The move towards interdenominational Chinese Protestantism began in 1910 when the Manchu founder of the Church of Christ in China (CCC), Ch'eng Ching-Yi, famously told the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh: "Your denominationalism does not interest Chinese Christians."<sup>50</sup> For example, Ginling College did not belong to a single denomination. Instead, the Disciples of Christ and various Methodist and Presbyterian denominations built and funded Ginling.<sup>51</sup> The question of an interdenominational Chinese church remained divisive amongst missionaries. Bates, for instance, carefully worded a proposal to the NCC to avoid accusations of denominationalism: "You will appreciate that this sort of communication is an effort to help the common Christian interest, not to dictate or to discriminate..."<sup>52</sup>

Vautrin tried to limit Episcopalian influence by replacing Episcopalian pastors at Ginling. She informed Forster that she needed no more than one of his evangelists. Forster replied: "We are very glad that our workers could have been of such major assistances in the religious work in

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<sup>49</sup> Vautrin, diary, 25 February 1938.

<sup>50</sup> Timothy Brook, "Christianity Under the Japanese Occupation," in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 319.

<sup>51</sup> Hu, 20.

<sup>52</sup> Bates, letter to the National Christian Council, 3 March 1938.

this refugee camp, and think it is right that these other pastors who have now returned to the city should share in the fruits of this labour.”<sup>53</sup> Despite his gracious response, it seems Forster was aware of the denominational tensions that contributed to Vautrin’s decision. Although she essentially kicked out most of the Episcopalians, Vautrin was secretly desperate for more evangelical workers to keep up with expanded Bible classes, and she wrote in her diary: “If only we had more teachers!”<sup>54</sup> Cooperation between the missionaries in the NCWRC, IC, and IRC was essential to providing relief on a large scale, and whether or not denominational interests greatly affected this relief work is a matter of further research should sources become available. The disagreement over denominationalism, however, does demonstrate that converting people into Christians—whether for a single denomination or for an interdenominational Christianity—was a priority for the missionaries who carried out the relief work.

Evangelical work and relief work remained intertwined as the IRC continued to operate the refugee camps. However, religious work eventually became a higher priority than relief work as the IRC embarked on a major evangelical project to celebrate Easter at Ginling. Prior to the war, Ginling College operated the Homecraft School, which was a vocational school for the city’s poor women.<sup>55</sup> The Homecraft School was shut down during the Massacre, but Vautrin began making plans on 29 January 1938 to reopen it. The need to teach women vocations to support themselves was great because the Japanese killed many men, who were the primary wage earners. In her letters appealing for donations, Vautrin explained: “If her husband returns there is no problem, if not let her enter industrial or homecraft school, which we hope to conduct at Ginling from March 1 to June 30.”<sup>56</sup> The IRC, however, would not reopen the Homecraft

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<sup>53</sup> Forster and Magee, “Nanking.”

<sup>54</sup> Vautrin, diary, 21 February 1938.

<sup>55</sup> Vautrin, diary, 20-22 June 1937.

<sup>56</sup> Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing*, 152-153.

School until after Easter.

The IRC was unable to support both its Easter plans and the Homecraft School simultaneously, and it diverted personnel to support the Easter celebrations. Although Easter was not until 17 April 1938, the IRC began preparations on 11 March 1938 for a weeklong celebration of Easter. Under Vautrin's guidance, the IRC initiated a large-scale evangelical project to teach refugees about the life of Jesus Christ. The evangelical classes also taught the refugees hymns and psalms so they could participate in the Easter event, which would culminate in a pageant performed by the refugees.<sup>57</sup> In order to maximize refugee participation, the IRC greatly increased the number of evangelical meetings and organized people into classes depending on their level of education. However, the IRC was hard pressed to accommodate the number of meetings even though all the missionaries were assisting in the project, and Vautrin wrote: "Lack of teachers and classrooms are our biggest problems."<sup>58</sup> The IRC had to provide twenty-three classes to accommodate people with varying levels of education, including illiterates.<sup>59</sup> Although the scale of the project was challenging, the IRC recognized the evangelical opportunities. In a letter to friends, Ernest and Clarissa Forster felt the size of project "will give you some idea of the opportunities before us for the spread of the Gospel."<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately for the Homecraft School, it was competing with the Easter project for the same limited resources: teachers and classroom space. The demands on relief were still great, and the IRC continued to provide immediate relief, such as food and shelter. However, the IRC realized that the missionaries had finally gained the trust of many Chinese, and it could not pass on an opportunity to evangelize through the Easter celebrations.

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<sup>57</sup> Vautrin, diary, 11 March 1938.

<sup>58</sup> Vautrin, diary, 11 March 1938.

<sup>59</sup> Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing*, 199.

<sup>60</sup> Ernest and Clarissa Forster, letter to friends, 16 March 1938.

Thus, the IRC converted any available space at Ginling into classrooms for the project.<sup>61</sup> Although the missionary records do not explicitly state they diverted teachers away from the Homecraft School, Vautrin's diary indicated that former Homecraft School teachers were working on the Easter project instead. Vautrin particularly singled out Hsueh Yu-ling, who headed the Homecraft School prior to fall of Nanking, as being "a great help" in the evangelical classes.<sup>62</sup> In addition, it was unlikely that the Homecraft School did not reopen due to a lack of funds since the IRC provided cash loans to refugees. The IRC, however, did approve of reopening the Homecraft School eventually.<sup>63</sup> Due to the IRC's decision to support the Easter project with its resources, the celebrations proved highly successful. Vautrin felt it was a "joyous but very busy day." The missionaries brought refugees from other camps to visit Ginling, and close to 1,000 people attended the Easter pageant.<sup>64</sup> Before the Nanking Massacre, the missionaries simply could not expect that many Chinese to turn up at an evangelical event.

Although the missionaries curtailed the Homecraft School, the success of the Easter event ultimately relied on the gradual growth of missionary influence since the NCWRC was formed. The Japanese, who claimed to be liberating China from Westerners, ironically did much to advance the cause of Christianity in Nanking when their atrocities made the refugees dependent on Christian charity. The relief efforts of the NCWRC, IC, and IRC enabled the missionaries to redefine themselves as friends who stood by the Chinese in a time of great need. However, like Fitch's description of his narrative to the Nanking Massacre, this chapter is "only a small part of the whole; and God alone knows when it will be finished."<sup>65</sup> By connecting relief work in Nanking to the larger context of missionary history in China, this chapter yielded some insight

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<sup>61</sup> Vautrin, diary, 11 March 1938.

<sup>62</sup> Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing*, 150.

<sup>63</sup> Vautrin, diary, 6 February 1938.

<sup>64</sup> Vautrin, diary, 17 April 1938.

<sup>65</sup> Fitch, 430.



on how the American missionaries pursued evangelical objectives during the Massacre. However, this chapter does not include the perspectives of the Chinese refugees. The missionary sources were, at times, difficult to interpret since the missionaries did not always fully explain their evangelical interests. The refugees, on the other hand, have left very few sources. Although various projects, such as Honda Katsuichi's *The Nanjing Massacre*, have collected oral histories from the survivors, they tend to focus exclusively on the Japanese atrocities. There are clearly limitations to this chapter's analysis, but it hopefully represents the beginning of more research into evangelical work during the Nanking Massacre. Although laymen such as Rabe participated, relief efforts in Nanking ultimately revolved around American missionaries who, by the nature of their profession, were interested in finding Christian converts. Relief work enabled these missionaries to pursue evangelical interests, and evangelical interests consistently influenced relief work. The success of the IRC's Easter celebrations indicated that the missionaries were able to improve their historical image on some level. This success may explain why Chinese literature on the Massacre rarely acknowledges that most of the Westerners in Nanking were actually missionaries. After all, missionaries who proved foreign Christians were willing to stand by the Chinese in an extreme calamity challenges contemporary China's repression of Christianity as, in the words of Mao Tse-tung, a "policy of cultural aggression...carried out through missionary work."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Reynolds, 82.

## Conclusion

The American missionaries continued to provide relief in Nanking once the Massacre was over. In addition to the many residents displaced by the Japanese, refugees from the countryside tried to survive in the old capital of Republican China. Three years after the Massacre, at least 54,144 people were still reliant on the IRC for rice. The situation showed little signs of improvement, and the IRC made the difficult decision of not extending aid to newly arrived refugees due to limited resources.<sup>1</sup> Despite the difficulties, the American missionaries remained in Nanking to both aid and preach until the Japanese expelled them after the attack on Pearl Harbour. The missionaries' work in Nanking, then, stretched over a period of four years, but historical memory of these men and women is confined to a three-month period when the IC dealt with the Massacre. This memory is not only confined temporally, but it is also limited by only remembering the IC as a group of Westerners rather than missionaries.

In the beginning of this thesis, I explained the importance of separating the IC into its individual components. Prior to this disaggregation, Rabe has received the most attention for leading the IC. His contributions were important, but his participation in relief efforts was ultimately as brief as the IC's. Amongst the IC's components, the American missionaries stood out the most as the ones who experienced every stage of relief work in Nanking—before, during, and after the Massacre. This experience makes them an ideal group to examine the provision of relief. Furthermore, their contributions are largely unrecognized, and it is important to acknowledge that the American missionaries alleviated suffering during a terrible period in

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<sup>1</sup> "Nanking International Relief Committee—Summary Program," 25 September 1940 (Yale Divinity Library Special Collections, RG 10: Box 102, Folder 870). Online version: <http://divdl.library.yale.edu/ydlchina/images/NMP0254.pdf> (accessed 8 April 2012).

Nanking's history. However, this thesis is not simply an exercise in "giving credit where credit is due." By making the missionaries as my analytical focus, I have demonstrated how humanitarianism, collaboration, and evangelism crossed paths during relief efforts in Nanking.

This thesis not only disaggregates the IC's individual components, but also revisits broader issues concerning the Nanking Massacre. As horrendous as the event was, other things happened during the Massacre besides Japanese atrocities. Historians, then, have a responsibility to examine every facet of the event. Unfortunately, advances in Massacre scholarship have largely been stymied by the tunnel-vision approach towards Japanese war crimes. It is important to remember Japanese atrocities in Nanking, but it should not be done at the expense of other subjects. The IC's prominent position in Massacre literature is due to its activities from December 1937 to February 1938. In other words, historians have typically studied the IC as an organization whose experience was confined to the Massacre. On the contrary, by adopting a genealogical approach towards studying the IC, I have demonstrated that the IC was only one of the several relief organizations created by the American missionaries. As a distinct group within the IC, the missionaries were part of relief efforts that began in August 1937 and continued beyond February 1938. My thesis also challenges the narratives of resistance embodied by the IC. Questioning resistance narratives in Chinese history can be sensitive, especially in the case of the IC since it serves as moral foil against Japanese violence. However, powerless people were often forced to make difficult decisions to accommodate the occupiers. In Nanking, the IC was no exception, and the missionaries had to compromise their own morals to protect as many people as possible. Finally, this thesis reminds the reader that even humanitarians have their own interests. In the case of the American missionaries, they were interested in converting people to Christianity. The Nanking Massacre, then, is no longer a straightforward tale of resistance versus

collaboration or victimization versus mass murder. These all took place of course, but they occurred in a setting where people like the missionaries had a wide range of experiences that cannot be neatly summed up in such dichotomies. The Nanking Massacre offers different avenues of historical inquiry other than research into Japanese atrocities.

Although the Westerners who composed the IC are now remembered as heroes and heroines, they were also victims of the Nanking Massacre. Upon his return to Germany, the Gestapo arrested Rabe for his speeches condemning the Japanese sack of Nanking. Only through the intervention of high-ranking Siemens officials was Rabe released. Siemens then sent Rabe to Afghanistan in a low profile assignment, and he would never regain the professional status he once enjoyed. After witnessing yet another atrocity—the vengeful sack of Berlin by the Red Army—Rabe died a penniless man. In order to protect his family, Rabe hid his diaries and attached a note to them stating: “Should its publication, which for obvious reasons has at present been prohibited, ever seem appropriate, that should be done only by permission of the German government.”<sup>2</sup>

Many missionaries were also traumatized by the horror they witnessed. Fitch was the first missionary to leave Nanking in order to smuggle out rolls of films taken by Magee that documented Japanese atrocities. In order to hide the films from Japanese soldiers, Fitch sewed the evidence into the lining of his greatcoat.<sup>3</sup> Once he escaped from China, Fitch actively spread news of the Massacre through public speeches. During these speeches, Fitch often blacked out and temporarily lost his memory. Medical examinations did not find anything physically wrong with Fitch. Instead, Fitch realized that “the terrible memories of those Nanking days” were the

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<sup>2</sup> Rabe, xvii.

<sup>3</sup> Fitch, 105.

cause.<sup>4</sup> Wilson's health also deteriorated greatly after the Massacre. As the city's only surgeon, Wilson personally dealt with the victims of Japanese violence. He eventually suffered a nervous breakdown and left for the United States on furlough. He never returned to his hometown of Nanking. For the rest of his life, Wilson suffered from nightmares of the Massacre.<sup>5</sup> Vautrin also suffered a nervous breakdown. For her remaining years, Vautrin received psychiatric treatment in the United States. Despite the support of her missionary friends and her faith in Christianity, Vautrin committed suicide on 14 May 1941.

Iris Chang refers to Japanese denials of the Massacre as a "second rape" of Nanking.<sup>6</sup> Although I am weary of such hyperbolic language, Chang's basic premise is understandable—when historical events are forgotten, the historical actors become, in a sense, victims of poor historiography. The American missionaries, then, are such victims of a highly politicized historiography about the Nanking Massacre. Although the current literature has largely forgotten about the American missionaries, Vautrin did not forget why she was in Nanking even in the final moments of her life. In Vautrin's suicide note, she wrote:

I have deeply loved and respected the cause of missions and Ginling College. Had I ten perfect lives I would dedicate them all to this cause of Kingdom building—but alas! I have failed and injured the cause with the one life which has been mine. My remorse and regret are deep and genuine.

May those of you who have dedicated your strength to this great work, be given the vision and strength and courage to go forward—and be faithful to the end.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Fitch, 108-109.

<sup>5</sup> Chang, 186.

<sup>6</sup> Chang, 199.

<sup>7</sup> Vautrin, *Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing*, xxviii.

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