

# Catholic disaster relief in China (1840-1949). Based on the case of Hunan

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**Abstract:** Participating and holding public charity is a long tradition of the Catholic and a concrete embodiment of the Catholic active participation in social care. During the period from 1840 to 1949, the political structure, social class, and economic order of Chinese society underwent earth-shaking changes, and wars and turmoil were frequent. In this period of social turmoil, while preaching in China, Catholicism also adheres to religious concepts, actively practices the concept of charity, and participates in social charity services in many ways. Missionaries, who had come to China in modern times, had actively participated in various charitable undertakings in China with full religious enthusiasm, especially disaster and famine relief. At present, less attention has been paid to the research on disaster relief undertakings carried out by Catholic missionaries in China, especially the history of local religious disaster relief needs to be improved. The Catholic's disaster relief in China has always played an indelible role in disaster relief. And reflecting on and drawing on the historical experience is of great practical significance for the current disaster resistance and relief. Studying the disaster relief undertakings carried out by the Catholic Church in modern Hunan could further expand the research on disaster and relief in China and could contribute to similar research in other countries

**Keywords:** Catholic; missionaries; China; disaster relief.

## Introduction

The history of disaster relief is closely related to the political, economic, ideological, cultural, and social life of a region or country at that time. The cause of disaster relief not only has a huge and profound impact on the lives of millions of people, but also reveals many essential contents. In the Chinese context, the period from the Opium War in 1840 to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 is considered modern Chinese history, and the period after 1949 is considered contemporary Chinese history. Because the feudal society in Chinese society lasted about 3000 years. After the Opium War in 1840, China gradually transformed into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. It was not until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 that China embarked on the road to socialism. So, the

modern China used in this article also refers specifically to the history of China from 1840 to 1949. During the modern time of tremendous social changes, China established many wars and disasters, and Catholic missionaries and believers also involved in massive disaster relief in China. Catholicism spread widely in China, and foreign missionaries were able to take root in China for the sake of the gospel. In order to enter the hearts of Chinese believers and change the Chinese's hostile attitude towards "foreign religions", they studied Chinese, learned Chinese customs and people's feelings, wore Chinese clothes, and went into the poor and society. They practiced Catholic charity ideas, and carried out various charitable work in China, especially disaster famine relief. However, from the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949) to Chinese economic reform (1978), the Chinese government reformed the Catholic Church in China, expelled a large number of foreign missionaries, and restricted the actions of Chinese believers. In fact, it is also difficult to see foreign missionaries in China now.

Although religious forces have limitations in disaster relief, it cannot be ignored the role played by Catholic forces in disaster relief in China, which has alleviated the suffering of Chinese disaster victims to a certain extent and provided experience and reference for disaster relief. The research on the spread of Catholicism in China is more concerned with a politics perspective. Some researchers have a certain simplistic tendency in their rare descriptions of Catholic missionary work. For example, some commentators believe that Catholic missionary work in modern China is generally a politics without faith to speak of<sup>123</sup>, while others say that Catholic have abandoned the conquest of traditional religious consciousness<sup>45</sup>. In order to reflect the social history of modern Chinese Catholicism in China more completely, it is necessary to study the disaster relief undertakings of modern Catholicism in China. Therefore, this paper selects modern Hunan(湖南) Province as a case, focuses on the Catholic activities of disaster relief, medical donations, and military disaster relief in Hunan. It further considers the future development direction of religious forces in disaster relief through the study of regional religious disaster relief history and puts forward relevant suggestions.

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<sup>1</sup> Han Rongjun. "A Brief Discussion on Catholicism and Christianity During the Anti-Japanese War". *Journal of Jiangsu University of Science and Technology (Social Science Edition)* 04 (2008):15-19. [In Chinese]

<sup>2</sup> Su Quanyou & Zhang Chao. "Review and Reflection on the History of China's Church Cases in Modern Times". *Journal of Hunan Institute of Engineering (Social Science Edition)* 02 (2013): 42-51. [In Chinese]

<sup>3</sup> Zhao Shuhao. "On the economic plundering of the Catholic Church in the case of returning to the church in the late Qing Dynasty". *Journal of Liaocheng University (Social Sciences Edition)* 03 (2017):70-75. [In Chinese]

<sup>4</sup> Li Xiaodong. "From Cultural Integration to Cultural Circle Construction: The Development and Evolution of Modern Catholicism in China". *Yunnan Social Sciences*04 (2016): 134-139+188. [In Chinese]

<sup>5</sup> Tan Qun. "Establishment and Breaking": A Study on the Image of Catholicism in China in the Late Ming Dynasty". *Journal of Changjiang Normal University*,03 (2021): 99-105. [In Chinese]

## 1. Society of Hunan from 1840 to 1949

### 1.1. Hunan, an introduction

Hunan Province is located in the centre of China and is crossed by the Yangtze River. Because of the largest river in the province, the Xiang River, flows through the whole territory and Hunan Province is referred to as "Xiang". The provincial capital of Hunan Province is stationed in Changsha City. Starting from the Spring and Autumn Warring States, Hunan was an important birthplace of Chu culture. Because of its mountainous land, few plains, and relatively scarce lake natural resources, Hunan people have been living in a cultural grey area, and their people are fierce and respectful of the culture and martial arts.

Because Hunan is located inland, mountainous and hilly, and the transportation is not very developed, missionaries are inconvenient to enter. And Hunan is deeply influenced by traditional Chinese culture, the sense of protecting the sacred and defending the tradition is strong, and foreign religions is inevitable to resist when local religions is affected by external shocks, such as the rise of the Xiang Army with "the spirit of loyalty and righteousness" and the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion. During the period from 1840 to 1949, China opened its eyes to the world, and experienced the Self-Strengthening Movement, the New Culture Movement, and the War of Resistance against Japan and the War of Liberation. In those important historical moments in China, Hunan emerged a large number of revolutionary heroes, cultural celebrities and soldiers. Hunan people can be found in the leadership of almost every important reform or revolutionary group in China, whether it is the Hundred Days' Reform, the League of the 1911 Revolution, and the early founding members of the Chinese Communist Party (especially the first PRC leader Mao Zedong).

From the perspective of social development, although Hunan has introduced advanced Western ideas and technologies, the development of culture, education, and the economy has been relatively slow development in that time. Hunan is still relatively backward, especially in many mountainous areas such as Xiangxi, Xinhua and Yongzhou. Hunan is connected to the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River Plain, to the lower part of the sea to Guangdong, and to the west to Yunnan-Sichuan, and its strategic location is incomparable. Therefore, the Hunan battlefield has become a contested place in wartime. It is precise because of this that various wars have occurred frequently in modern Hunan.

The modern development of Hunan is also a microcosm of China's modern development, and the modern China is also an era of interweaving war and revolution, and it is also an era of collision between Western civilization, thought and traditional Chinese culture and ideas. China's modern history, it is endlessly changing on the surface. But it is still dominated by a small-scale peasant economy in the depths of history, which has received oppression from many classes, and the broad masses of the people are facing a sad and miserable life. In order to seek national independence and the liberation of the people, the development of social

contradictions and people's struggles in modern China have emerged one after another.

## 1.2. The spread of Catholicism

Catholicism has been missionary to Hunan Province since the Ming Dynasty (17th century) in China, and during these more than 300 years, there were about 300 Catholic missionaries from 11 countries, including Portugal, the United States, Italy, and Hungary, and 600 from 8 countries including Italy, the United States, and Ireland. More nuns assisted in missionary work in Hunan<sup>6</sup>. They also trained a large number of excellent priests and nuns for Hunan. Although there have long been Catholic missionaries and nuns in Hunan, they have always been in an escrow state. However, it was not until 1856 that the Holy See divided Hunan Province into an independent diocese and sent Bishop Miguel Navarro (方來遠), O.F.M. to formally administer the diocese of Hunan Province. In 1879, the outskirts of Hunan were divided into two dioceses, north and south. The diocese of southern Hunan was composed of Bishop Ezechias Banci (南熙), O.F.M., an Italian national; The diocese of northern Hunan was administered by the Spanish Saturnino de La Torre Merino, O.E.S.A. Since the diocese of Hunan was divided into northern and southern dioceses, more and more missionaries came to Hunan to expand their missionary work that the number of believers increased and the missionary cause was further developed. Until 1949, the Catholic Church had a cathedral and 265 parishes in 76 cities and counties in Hunan Province, with a total of more than 50,000 believers<sup>7</sup>. There are three major foreign religious mission parishes in modern Hunan: Italian Franciscans, O.F.M.; Spanish Augustinians, O.E.S.A.; American Suffering Society, O.P. Among them, the earliest missionary in Hunan was the Italian Franciscan, and missionaries went to Changde, Xiangtan, Zhijiang and other places in Hunan around the 18th century. When the Hunan diocese was divided into two dioceses in the north and south in 1879, the Spanish Augustinians began to administer the northern diocese of Hunan. The American Tribulation Society did not enter Hunan until 1921 to preach and administer the diocese of Yuanling.

Regrettably, after the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949), China expelled a large number of Catholic missionaries, did not allow foreigners to carry out missionary activities in China, and even imprisoned believers. It was until 1979 that China began to carry out the Chinese economic reform, and China gradually allowed Catholics to carry out activities. This is also the case in Hunan Province.

Some scholars have also studied the history of Catholicism in modern Hunan. In modern times, Catholicism has not only created many things conducive to social development in Hunan. Rodríguez sorted out the historical development of the

<sup>6</sup> Hunan Provincial Local History Compilation Committee. *Hunan Provincial Chronicle Religious History*. China: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1999,357. [In Chinese]

<sup>7</sup> Hunan Provincial Local History Compilation Committee. *Hunan Provincial Chronicle Religious History*. China: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1999,358. [In Chinese]

Spanish Augustinian mission from 1879 to the establishment of a vicarage in Hunan at that time<sup>8</sup>. Carbonneau researched the missionary experiences of three American Catholic priests<sup>9</sup>, Walter Coveyou, Clement Seybold, and Godfrey Holbein in Xiangxi and the missionary stories of 17 American Catholic missionaries buried in Yuanling<sup>10</sup>. Luo Hua preliminarily discussed the dilemma of church missionary work in modern Hunan from both political and cultural aspects, based on newspapers in the Republic of China period<sup>11</sup>. Many scholars believe that the introduction of the modern church into Hunan was an invasion of foreign political culture<sup>12</sup><sup>13</sup>. Liu Fang studied the spread of the Catholic Church in Hunan and Hubei from the late Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty and the development of the area where Catholicism and Chinese society interacted<sup>14</sup>. Xiang Changshui studies the church's charitable relief to the battlefield, arguing that the social background of modern turmoil in Hunan is inseparable from the church's active actions in it<sup>15</sup>. However, he only discusses from a macro perspective (the entire Christian church, including Christianity and Catholicism), and pays less attention to the history of modern Catholic disaster relief in the Hunan battlefield.

### 1.3. The Hunan famine and its consequences

China is mainly an agricultural country, with its own self-sufficient small-scale peasant economy dominating. Although China has introduced many advanced Western technologies in modern times, its social productivity is still not high enough. The rulers of modern China did not pay enough attention to the citizens and ordinary people, and they put more experience on the struggle for power. Modern China is a country with frequent military and banditry disasters, and internal and foreign wars have never stopped. For ordinary farmers and citizens at the bottom, they are very difficult to face frequent disasters and wars. On the one hand, the shock wave of massive population growth has had a lasting impact on modern Chinese society; On the other hand, new conditions of the era are constantly giving birth to

<sup>8</sup> Isacio Rodríguez Rodríguez, "Estado Actual de Las Misiones Agustino-Espanolas." *Augustiniana* 6 (1956): 749–90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44992062>.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Edward Carbonneau, *Life, death, and memory: Three Passionists in Hunan, China and the shaping of an American mission perspective in the 1920s. (Volumes I and II)*. Georgetown University, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Carbonneau, "Resurrecting the Dead: Memorial Gravesites and Faith Stories of Twentieth-Century Catholic Missionaries and Laity in West Hunan, China." *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24, no. 3 (2006): 19–37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27671159>.

<sup>11</sup> Luo Hua, "Missionary Missionary of the Church in Modern Hunan". *Anhui Literature*, no. 07 (2016): 159-160. [In Chinese]

<sup>12</sup> Xiang Changshui, "How the City of Iron Gates was Forged: An Analysis of the Reasons for the Slow Spread of Christianity in Hunan in the Late Qing Dynasty". *Journal of Hunan Agricultural University (Social Science Edition)*, no. 05 (2006): 79-82. [In Chinese]

<sup>13</sup> Zhou Qiuguang, "Missionaries into Hunan and the anti-religious xenophobia of the people of Hunan". *Party History of Hunan*, no. 02 (1994). [In Chinese]

<sup>14</sup> Liu Fang. *The spread and development of Huguang Catholicism in the Ming and Qing dynasties*. China: China Social Sciences Press, 2018. [In Chinese]

<sup>15</sup> Xiang Changshui, "The Church's Charitable Relief to the Battlefield: A Case Study of the Hunan Region during the Republic of China". *Hunan First Normal Journal*, no. 02 (2006): 19-22. [In Chinese]

new displaced people, so that displaced "people are common in any rural deprivation" <sup>16</sup>. From 1912 to 1938, there were as many as 7 huge disasters in China. Also, there were 24 floods, 14 droughts, 10 earthquakes and 6 winds, 6 epidemics, 4 hail disasters, 2 hunger disasters, and 2 frost and snow disasters<sup>17</sup>.

Hunan is also a major agricultural province, but it also faces many famines. For example, in 1921, Hunan was reported drought in more than 50 counties in the province, and the harvest was at most one-third of previous years and at least one-fifth of previous years, especially in southwestern Hunan. "There are more than 500,000 victims, and more than 300,000 are hiding, such as Yuanling, Huitong, Lupu, Anhua and other places"<sup>18</sup>. In 1935, a catastrophic flood broke out in central Hunan, affecting about 23 counties. In 1946, when there was a severe famine in Hunan, "hungry people everywhere began to dig up grassroots and peel bark for food." After the roots and bark of the grass were dug up, they ate the 'Guanyin soil (觀音土, an ooze)' to satisfy their hunger"<sup>19</sup>. Starving people were everywhere, and even people who committed suicide due to hunger appeared.

The 1948 floods in Hunan exacerbated soaring rice prices and severe famine, and even riots. In addition, war is also a factor in social unrest. "The war in Hunan was terrible and prolonged. The upheaval and displacement of war increased deaths. The loss of population has died, already 577,752<sup>20</sup>. Xiangxi is also a famous bandit-producing area in China. "When the army is disbanded, the soldiers become bandits; The bandits are appeased, and they are also dignified Qiu Ba (a bad name of soldiers)"<sup>21</sup>. Soldiers, bandits, the army, and modern Hunan people were suffering.

There were various disasters in modern Hunan. That lead to a large number of peasants and citizens separated from material means of production, which causing political and social crises.

## 2. The role of Catholicism in the process of disaster relief in Hunan

### 2.1 Medical treatment and medicines donation

The Catholic Church has opened many church hospitals and clinics in Hunan, such as Changsha Catholic Church Hospital, Yuanling Catholic Church Hospital, Hengyang Benevolence Hospital, Xiangtan Catholic Church Hospital, etc. After maintaining normal operations, they also donated medicine to the local population.

<sup>16</sup> Zihua Chi, *Papers on Modern Chinese History*. China: Hefei University of Technology Press, 2015,58. [In Chinese]

<sup>17</sup> Zihua Chi, *Refugees in Modern China*. China: Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 1996,163. [In Chinese]

<sup>18</sup> Tan Zhongchi, *Changsha General History(Modern Volume)*. China : Hunan People's Publishing House, 2013,140. [In Chinese]

<sup>19</sup> Fu Guanqun, *The Grand View of Hunan Society*. China: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House, 2000,331. [In Chinese]

<sup>20</sup> Li, Hao, Yao, Bo, *The History of Anti-Japanese War*. China: Reconstruction and Medical Society,1948,318. [In Chinese]

<sup>21</sup> Zihua Chi, *The refugees Problem and Modern Society*. China: Hefei University of Technology Press, 2013,170. [In Chinese]

Hunan is located inland, and most people in modern times often lack hygiene knowledge, and epidemics are constantly prevalent. At that time, Catholic missionaries preached the need for public health and hygiene, provided free medical examinations for students in schools, and injected people with cowpox and antitoxin to prevent infectious diseases such as smallpox. These Catholic hospitals spread the modern hospital system and medical education and promoted the development of Western medicine and medicine in Hunan. Those catholic hospitals still exist in contemporary China, where they are integrated into modern Chinese hospitals and continue to exercise the spirit of religious charity to provide assistance to those who cannot afford necessary medical care.

In 1906, six Franciscan nuns of Italy came to Changsha to give medicine to the sick. In 1936, Bishop Gaudenzio Giacinto Stanchi(石道琦), O.F.M. Preparations were made for the construction of the Catholic Church Hospital, which was funded by the Church to purchase medical equipment and hire physicians<sup>22</sup>. They received charitable donations to keep the hospital running and treating patients. At the same time, they also established a nursing training school - Liwen Nursing School, recruiting young women to learn medical knowledge, and training a large number of excellent medical staff for the local area.

### 3.2. Relief for disasters and the weak

In modern China, the level of social and economic development is relatively low, social turmoil is unstable, the social security system and social relief awareness are lagging behind. Refugees are usually the result of crop failures, high taxes, and banditry, among other reasons. There used to be abandonment or infanticide in China. For financial reasons, some people cannot afford to raise children. Or some people didn't want girls and would abandon or kill the child<sup>23</sup>. But most of the government's limited financial and material resources are invested in internal and external wars, making it extremely limited in pre-disaster prevention, post-disaster relief efforts and follow-up reconstruction, which cannot guarantee the basic living and production needs of the disaster victims, resulting in the exile and riots of the vast number of disaster victims, and making disaster relief work even worse. The Catholic Church in Hunan actively participated in disaster relief activities, organized disaster relief work in times of disaster, and helped people in need of emergency relief.

Missionaries and their auxiliaries baptized dying children and rescued those their parents would kill<sup>24</sup>. In 1858, Bishop Navarro set up a Foundling in Hengyang to take in abandoned babies, orphans, and orphaned girls. He also set up a school to

<sup>22</sup> Hunan Provincial Local History Compilation Committee. *Hunan Provincial Chronicle Religious History*. China: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1999,377. [In Chinese]

<sup>23</sup> King, Michelle T. *Between birth and death: Female infanticide in nineteenth-century China*. Stanford University Press, 2014,52.

<sup>24</sup> Gary Tiedemann, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume Two: 1800-Present*. Brill, 2009,428.

teach these orphans and young children free of charge. The Catholic Infantry Hospital, which adopts abandoned babies and provides them with food and lodging, also has craft workshops and Bible study classes. Bishop Pellegrino Luigi Mondaini (翁德明), O.F.M. and six Italian nuns established a nursery in Changsha in 1906. Later, due to war and cholera, the nursery had many migrations, the survival rate of orphan girls was low, and foreign nuns also contracted the disease and died. The Zhenxin Orphanage in Changsha received donations from the Catholic Church of the United States. The orphanage not only nurtures orphans and rescues the needy, but also teaches them Catholic doctrine and useful job skills <sup>25</sup>.

Bishop Mondaini has also set up a home for the elderly, adopting elderly people who is homeless, at most more than 60 people. In addition, there is the Qiyang Foundling Hall, founded in 1915, Changde Foundling Hall founded in 1931, Yuanling Foundling Hall founded in 1937, and Xiangtan Foundling Hall opened in 1938. These foundries and homes for the elderly eased the pressure of government relief at that time and played a certain role in solving the problem of abandoned babies in the society at that time. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, these relief sites were taken over by the people's government. From September 15, 1939, the Xiangyin Catholic Church Refugee Institute was opened on January 3. On the first day, a total of 285 refugees were accommodated. By January 1940, there were 111 refugees killed<sup>26</sup>. Archbishop Secondino Petronio Lacchio(藍澤民) presided over the opening of the Pingjiang Porridge Factory, which distributes free porridge to victims once a day <sup>27</sup>. In 1941, during the Second Battle of Changsha, Archbishop Lacchio led the Catholic Church in an effort to help the victims, saving 8,000 refugees in the first week. " He also feared that the Japanese invaders stormed the refugee camp. He patrolled all night, keeping his eyes open, and their spirit of hard work was truly admirable"<sup>28</sup>. In the face of severe floods, Changde Catholics stepped forward and vigorously assisted the Hunan Provincial Flood Relief Association. They were commended by the government for helping to distribute winter clothing and food, and for actively helping refugees evacuate to safety<sup>29</sup>.

At the same time, the Catholic Church has opened a large number of church schools in various parts of Hunan, such as Changde, Lixian and Yuanling, such as Changsha Liwen Middle School, Anhua Catholic Church Primary School, Hengyang Renai Middle School, etc. These religious schools cover primary and secondary

<sup>25</sup> Tan Zhongchi, *Changsha General History(Modern Volume)*. China : Hunan People's Publishing House, 2013,930. [In Chinese]

<sup>26</sup> Hunan Provincial Archives. "Correspondence between Pingjiang and Xiangyin Catholics and the county government to handle the Refugee Porridge Factory." *Hunan Provincial Government*,1939, Entire Volume 5, Catalog 6, File 68. [In Chinese]

<sup>27</sup> Hunan Provincial Archives. "Letter from Archbishop Lacchio to Pingjiang County Government." *Hunan Provincial Government*,1939, Entire Volume 5, Catalog 6, File 68. [In Chinese]

<sup>28</sup> Hunan Provincial Archives. "Archbishop Lacchio 's Letter to Pingjiang County Government." *Hunan Provincial Government*,1941, Entire Volume 5, Catalog 6, File 68. [In Chinese]

<sup>29</sup> He Jian, *Report of Hunan Fire and Water Relief Federation* China: Hunan Fire and Water Relief Association.,1936. [In Chinese]

schools, both for the children of religious believers and for children of poor families, and for orphans to attend school free of charge. That schools provided opportunities for orphans and poor children at that time and provided educational material and financial assistance to poor areas and poor students in Hunan Province, which improved their ability to survive by helping them complete the relevant stages of schooling. Also, these schools have survived to this day and have been integrated into the contemporary Hunan education system, promoting the development of education in Hunan.

### 3.3. War Relief

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were many bandits and military disturbances in Hunan, which greatly affected the missionary activities of missionaries. Missionaries had to deal with military and social uncertainties<sup>30</sup>. In 1937, after the outbreak of China's War of Resistance Against Japan, not only a large number of refugees from Hunan itself, but also refugees from other places also poured into Hunan. The government has set up a number of refugee shelters in Changsha for emergency relief, and the Catholic Church has been entrusted by international relief organizations to set up refugee adoption centers in places such as Changsha, Hengyang, Yuanling and other places where the diocese are located. In order to practice the noble spiritual pursuit and uphold the Catholic belief in universal salvation, missionaries and believers of Catholic Church have worked tirelessly to rescue people in war.

The Changsha Diocesan Refugee Institute was founded during the first Japanese bombing of Changsha, when Japanese bombers killed and injured more than 1,000 residents. The Catholic Church vacated its school premises as refugee shelters to take in and treat refugees. The following year, Chen Jinru, director of the Hunan Salt Office (who is also a Catholic), decided to cooperate a refugee center in Bishop Stanchi in the Diocese of Changsha, with managers on both sides, with the refugees' food expenses subsidized by the government and other expenses covered by the church. By this time, the refugee camp had accommodated more than 3,000 people. At the time of the "Changsha fire", the number of refugees adopted by the refugee soared to more than 10,000<sup>31</sup>. Bishop Stanchi traveled to supervise refugee camps and settle refugees, and eventually died of overwork in Changsha in 1939. At the same time, the Changsha Catholic Church Refugee Institute also has a refugee branch in Liuyang Catholic Church. The Changsha Catholic Church Hospital also established the Changsha War Protection Regiment, which undertook some relief activities during the war, and the hospital undertook the task of receiving and treating the wounded and sick who had retreated from the front. Such as

<sup>30</sup> Robert Carbonneau, "The Passionists in China, 1921-1929: An Essay in Mission Experience." *The Catholic Historical Review* 66, no. 3 (1980): 392–416. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25020864>.

<sup>31</sup> Hunan Provincial Local History Compilation Committee. *Hunan Provincial Chronicle Religious History*. China: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1999, 384. [In Chinese]

undertaking the treatment of seriously wounded and sick soldiers of the Red Cross<sup>32</sup>.

During the China's War of Resistance Against Japan, Yuanling also had 4 refugee camps, which were supervised by Bishop Cutbert Martin O'Gara(歐克蘭). In total, more than 3,000 people have been adopted in the refugee institution. There are also refugee hospitals to provide medical donations to refugees and church primary schools to provide education for refugee children. The refugees run by the Hengyang Church have adopted a large number of homeless women and children. Everyday porridge and meal are prepared by the church. Refugees can also do odd jobs to earn an income. After the outbreak of China's all-out war of resistance, a large number of refugees migrated south, passing through the Zhijiang River. The Catholic Church once set up a refugee shelter in Zhijiang, which accommodated refugees from Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi and other places<sup>33</sup>.

It cannot be ignored that during the missionary process of Catholicism in Hunan, the Catholic Church also encountered extreme resistance from the people. Some missionaries spied on local intelligence, oppressed the people, and even triggered anti-church behaviors such as "Religious Conflicts in Hengzhou(衡州教案)" and "Religious Conflicts in Chenzhou(郴州教案)"<sup>34</sup>. Although the purpose of the Hunan Catholic Church in carrying out various medical, charity, and disaster relief activities is to open up the missionary situation in Hunan.<sup>35</sup> But it is undeniable that the Catholic charity in Hunan has made up for the lack of the government's disaster relief and has had an important impact on the development of Hunan's charity and social services.

### 3. Thinking about the participation of religious forces in disaster relief

#### 3.1 The participation of religious forces in disaster relief is an expression of faith

Looking at the history of modern Catholic disaster relief in Hunan, it can be seen that Catholicism and charity are very closely related. Catholics provide disaster relief as a form of social charity and are part of their religious practice. Religion provides a profound foundation of faith for disaster relief and strengthens their enthusiasm to participate in charity. In turn, participation in charity enables religions to implement social care. Missionaries adopted many orphans. Their disaster relief activities of going deep into the disaster areas and personally providing relief to the poor people in distress can most directly demonstrate the Catholic spirit of philanthropy. Not only does it provide missionaries with access to

<sup>32</sup> Liu Lei, *Battlefield Red Cross: Chinese Red Cross Ambulance Corps's Anti-Japanese War Record*. China:Guizhou People's Publishing House,2009,201. [In Chinese]

<sup>33</sup> Yang Xiuchun & Peng Lishan. "The Brief Discussion on Zhijiang Anti-Japanese War Culture". *Journal of Huaihua University*,no. 2017(03),27-30. [In Chinese]

<sup>34</sup> Liu Yangyang, "Modern Hunan gentry and anti-religious actions". *Quest*, no.03 (1992):111-116. [In Chinese]

<sup>35</sup> Riika-Leena Juntunen, *Borrowed Place: Mission Stations and Local Adaption in Early Twentieth-Century Hunan*. Brill, 2015.

the target audience, but it is more affordable than empty preaching, making it easier to impress the listener, to be accepted, to gain favour and trust. Their disaster relief in China not only highly embodies the philanthropy of God's religion, but also greatly helps the spread of the gospel in China. The opportunity for Catholic missionaries to participate in disaster relief also reached a certain level of emotional exchange with Chinese, showing a spirit of benevolence and charity. This is based on an inner belief, a responsible, non-utilitarian charitable activity. It helps people rebuild hope in times of adversity, which is a great spiritual resource and life force. Especially for the modern Chinese people who have suffered disasters and left their hometowns, especially when the government's rescue is delayed and lonely, the construction of this religious and spiritual home has shown its valuable intrinsic value. At present, the spiritual connotation of this culture of religious charity should be inherited and carried forward and strengthen dialogue between beliefs.

### **3.2. Catholic disaster relief practices contribute to the development of social philanthropy**

In traditional Chinese society, relief for the famine was often borne by the state and the family. In modern times, due to the continuous decline of Chinese society, the corruption of the government's disaster relief system and the shortage of family financial resources, the disaster relief function of the two has weakened, and it is necessary to mobilize the strength of other social organizations to participate in social disaster relief. The emergence and active action of religious forces such as churches can help the development of social philanthropy in China. Catholic activities such as disaster compassion for orphans and widows have played a great role in social assistance. First, it broadens the channels and speed of fund-raising for disaster alleviates the pressure on society caused by disasters. Second, non-governmental religious forces can also play a role that cannot be ignored in social philanthropy. Catholicism is active in China in the fields of famine relief, medical care, education, poverty field care, and has played a social role in helping the needy. Third, the practice of Catholic disaster relief has introduced advanced Western philanthropic thinking and disaster relief methods to China, which is conducive to the development of China's charitable relief undertakings. Catholic charity is a brand-new, unofficial, non-clan form of charitable relief in Chinese history, and is the germ of the organization, popularization, and non-governmental organization of philanthropy in modern China. It has helped transform China's traditional concept of "emphasizing education over education" to "attaching equal importance to education". Fourth, Catholic disaster relief is itself an international cultural exchange, as well as a dialogue and interaction between Eastern and Western civilizations. Catholic missionaries came to China to preach after a lot of hardships and made great efforts to introduce advanced philanthropy culture into China. The Catholic Institute has cultivated various types of religious charitable organizations, most of which adopt Westernized organizational structure, system construction

and capital operation mode, reflecting the integrated development of Chinese and foreign charity cultures. Not only China, but all countries in the world could develop the role of religious forces in disaster relief and help people live better.

### 3.3 Give full play to the cooperative relationship between government and religious forces in disaster relief

It should properly handle the cooperative relationship between religious forces and the government in the process of disaster relief, realize the differentiated functions of government functions and religious forces, and give play to the synergistic role of the two, so as to make disaster relief more efficient and resource allocation more reasonable. Since the government holds and possesses abundant economic and social resources, the restoration and construction of various hardware facilities after disasters are inseparable from the government's leading role<sup>36</sup>. But no matter how powerful the government is, there are places that cannot be reached. China is a country with a bureaucratic system as the core, and the Chinese government's system and organizational structure are relatively hierarchical, sometimes presenting a social control model with political supremacy. Even in the event of a disaster, the government's participation in relief must go through layers of approval, and the affected people may not be able to receive timely assistance. This often delays disaster relief.

As a religious force, Catholicism can not only provide certain social relief to society, but also touch the field of disaster relief beyond the government's power. Catholicism can bring spiritual inspiration to the affected people, help the affected people to get out of the shadow of the disaster and adapt to future life faster, which is also a humanistic care that the government cannot provide. In modern times, Catholics have carried out a lot of disaster relief not only in Hunan, China, but also around the world, and they have done a lot of things in poverty alleviation, helping students and the disabled, and providing disaster relief, and have achieved great results.

In fact, not only did the Catholic Church carry out many disaster relief activities in Hunan, but the Protestant missions were also active in Hunan during this period, and they also carried out many disaster relief activities in Hunan. For example, during the Anti-Japanese War, the Changsha YMCA did a lot of work in evacuating refugees, relief after the Changsha fire, relief of exiled students, and helping women<sup>37</sup>. Or the Yale Foreign Missionary Society (Yale-China Association)

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<sup>36</sup> Li Xiaojing, "An Analysis of Agricultural Disasters in the Period of the Republic of China (ROC) and Disaster Famine Relief by Civil Forces". *Rural Economy and Technology*, no.08 (2021): 308-310. [In Chinese]

<sup>37</sup> See Li Ling, "Changsha YMCA's Refuge Relief Work During the Anti-Japanese War." *Chuanshan Academic Journal*, no. 03(2005):90-92. [In Chinese]; Hudson, James J. "The Early War of Resistance and the Changsha YMCA, 1937-41." *Journal of Chinese Military History* 6, no. 1 (2017): 90-113, and Gregersen, Malin. "Protecting people in protected places: Gender, perceptions of protection, and the

established the Hsiang-Ya (Xingya) hospital, medical school, and nursing school in Hunan, and participated in many local disaster relief and academic exchange activities<sup>38</sup>. Catholicism and Protestantism supported disaster relief in Hunan society at that time. In a sense, the two religions interacted at the public level. Whether it is Catholicism or Protestantism, both can become a public welfare religious disaster relief force in society. Therefore, it is necessary to unite various religious forces to contribute to disaster relief and charity activities together.

In contemporary times, social governments can cultivate, expand and improve local religious disaster relief organizations, develop emergency volunteer services, and encourage religious forces to participate in disaster relief enthusiasm. Encourage and guide religious forces to carry out social charity. In addition, efforts should be made to draw on the formation and management model of the world's religious charitable organizations. It is necessary to increase the professional training of religious disaster relief forces during non-disaster times and strengthen the cultivation of social service systems such as organizational establishment, project operation, fund-raising, and professional skills. The government could give corresponding financial and policy support to some organized and large-scale religious rescue organizations, and cultivate their own hematopoietic ability, guide the development of social services in religious circles in the direction of standardization, specialization, and socialization, and improve the level of disaster relief. In the current course of social and economic development, the government should be prepared for danger in times of peace, take precautions, improve the supervision mechanism for disaster relief, and establish and improve a social security system that is compatible with economic and social development. For civil forces, not only Catholicism, but also other religious forces could give full play to their own advantages, such as flexibility and timeliness and play a greater role in social charity such as disaster relief.

## Conclusions

Disaster relief is a very important aspect of social life. For China, modern times are an era of the impact of old and new ideas, with constant military incidents, repeated natural disasters, displacement of people, and serious social problems throughout the country. In modern times, Catholic missionaries have provided disaster relief in Hunan, China, benefiting countless working people. Although the antagonism and estrangement of culture and tradition, coupled with China's later whipping for political needs, many Chinese equate modern missionaries with "imperialist cultural aggression." However, it should take a comprehensive view of the disaster famine relief undertakings of modern Catholics in China, and not ignore

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Scandinavian women of YWCA Changsha, China, 1917–1927." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 40, no. 3 (2015): 382-404.

<sup>38</sup> Nancy E. Chapman and Jessica C. Plumb. *The Yale-China Association: A Centennial History*. Chinese University Press, 2001.

their positive religious role of fraternity and charity. It is undeniable that the Catholic Church's disaster relief work is an important part of the entire disaster relief work in modern Hunan. In addition to evangelism, they carried out many charitable activities, organizing church groups to carry out social service activities through the establishment of charity schools, charity hospitals, and refugee centres. The priests involved in disaster relief have written an extremely brilliant page in the history of China's famine relief. The love and human solidarity shown by Catholic missionaries in disaster relief are unquestionable and worthy of respect.

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