Strong Protests After Vatican's Canonization Of China Martyrs

(ANS) On October 1, China's National Day, the Vatican canonized a group of China martyrs. The group of 120 new saints consisted of 87 Chinese Catholics and 33 foreign missionaries who had died for their faith, many of them during the so-called "Boxer Rebellion" in 1900. [The anti-foreign "Boxer Rebellion" is hailed as one of the earliest anti-imperialist uprisings of the Chinese people.] The Vatican's act encountered harsh opposition from official Chinese sides, mainly for its inclusion of foreign missionaries, but also because of the date chosen.

The Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry issued a note of strong protest against the Vatican's act of canonization. On behalf of the Chinese people, the government and the Chinese Catholic church, the ministry expressed "righteous indignation and strong protest" against the canonization of persons who had "participated in criminal activities." Some of those canonized had committed rape and torture and had directly contributed to colonial and imperialistic acts of invasion, the note alleged. Instead of expressing regret for these "unforgivable" crimes against the Chinese people, the Vatican even pronounced them saints. This move had hurt the basis for a normalization of relations between China and the Vatican and would have a strong negative impact on the normalization process, the document closed.

Bishop K.H. Ting expressed his indignation at the Vatican's act, underlining that the chosen date constituted a particular offense in the eyes of the Chinese people. He then turned to the Catholic church's doctrine of Papal infallibility. Despite the "numerous bad things done by the Vatican", the Catholic church continued to hold on to this doctrine, Bishop Ting criticized. He also critically mentioned the document "Dominus Iesus" recently published by the Vatican. In this document, the Catholic church rejected the notion of "sister churches," claiming to be the superior "mother church" of all other Christian churches. In the case of China, the Vatican
frequently intruded in China's internal church affairs, neglecting the fact that Chinese Christians were independent and self-governing. Some Chinese intellectuals now claimed that missionaries had also been involved in activities of cultural exchange. With such remarks, Bishop Ting explained, these intellectuals actually supported the Vatican. Religious leaders had to take this tendency seriously, the Bishop warned. Pointing out that Protestant and Catholic Christians shared a common history and the Bible, Bishop Ting concluded: "We Protestant Christians have all reason to support the patriotic reaction of Chinese Catholics."

"History is unforgettable" Luo Guanzong, chairman of the Three Self Patriotic Movement, titled his protest. Reiterating allegations of the missionaries' involvement in criminal activities, Luo called the canonization a "distortion of historical truth" and a "farce neglecting the sovereignty of the Chinese church." While all over the world churches and individuals had come to accept the historical truth of missionaries' involvement in colonialist, imperialistic acts, the Vatican continued to hold on to an outdated position. According to Luo, the canonization was only externally a religious act, but ultimately politically motivated. "To see the Vatican ... serve the reactionary policy of imperialism until today must make us take a clear look and raise our vigilance," Luo closed.

"We must stay vigilant," Dr. Wenzao Han, President of the China Christian Council, was equally convinced. In his note of protest, Han contrasted the Vatican's behavior with the attitude of Japanese churches, who had equally wronged China in the past. Unlike the Catholic church, the National Council of Christian Churches in Japan (NCCCCJ) had expressed its profound regret in numerous ways. "This is the behavior of friends", Han said. The way the Vatican acted was completely opposed to this, Han noted. He also dismissed the idea of the canonization as an act of erasing the Vatican's past offenses against China. The canonization, he stated, was not a way to "wipe out the Vatican's past wrongdoings with one stroke."

2000.11/12.2

Head Of National Religious Affairs Bureau Addresses CC/TSPM Plenum

(ANS) On the occasion of the Three Self Patriotic Movement's fiftieth anniversary, the national CC/TSPM committee held a plenary meeting in Beijing. Ye Xiaowen, head of the national Religious Affairs Bureau, used this occasion to address church representatives.

Ye's opening remarks looked back on China's semi-colonial past. He reminded the audience of missionaries' involvement in it, producing a "tragic epoch of Christianity." The fate of Protestant Christianity in China changed only with the Communist liberation in 1949 and the ensuing launching of the Three Self Movement, Ye recounted. However, forces opposing the TSPM continued to exist both within China and abroad. They aimed at "westernizing" Chinese Christianity, Ye cautioned. He then mentioned Bishop Ting's recent warning against forgetting this foreign interference in Chinese Christian's affairs. Bishop Ting had rightly pointed out that in recent years, the focus had shifted towards an emphasis on the cultural exchange done by many missionaries, a focus that tended to neglect the imperialist notion of these encounters.
Ye then turned to the Vatican. In early 2000, the Vatican had expressed its deep regrets regarding its negative role in the colonization of North and Latin America, its involvement in medieval crusades and other instances. The Vatican's apologies, Ye noted, excluded one important country: China. Not only did the Vatican not express its regret regarding its role in China's past, but it even continued to offend China with the canonization of people who had harmed China. Ye called on the Chinese people and Chinese Christians to stand together against the Vatican's act.

He underlined the continuing necessity for the Three Self Patriotic Movement. Without the Three Self, Ye claimed, the Chinese church would not have its current brilliant prospects. He reiterated the meaning of the Three Self and praised the anniversary document produced by the national CC/TSPM committee.

Despite the achievements of the past fifty years, there were still numerous problems affecting Chinese Protestant Christianity, Ye conceded. He mentioned conservative currents of theology still popular with many Chinese Protestants. Such theological remnants of the past could impede social development and prove problematic for the adaptation to socialist society, Ye warned. Therefore, the ongoing movement for building theology was of great importance for Chinese Protestantism, Ye maintained. The criterion for its success was whether it promoted Protestantism's adaptation to socialist society. Ye expressed his hope for broad participation in the movement for building theology and promised the Party's encouragement and support.

2000.11/12.3

Seeking The Common Ground While Reserving The Differences

(ANS) In late August of this year, a Chinese delegation of representatives from the five officially recognized religions (Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholic and Protestant Christianity) participated in the World Millennium Peace Summit. In preparation of the summit, a conference was held in Beijing. On this occasion, Dr. Wenzao Han, President of the China Christian Council, delivered a speech that was subsequently reprinted in Tian Feng.

All over the world, religious believers strive for internal peace, a peace that is closely linked to external peace. And yet, in many regions of the world, religion continues to be the reason for bloodshed, Han pointed out in his introduction. Apart from praying for peace, what can we do to make God's teachings come true on earth?

Religious leaders play an extremely important role in instigating, changing or solving religious conflicts, Han underlined. Accordingly, every religious leader should have a pronounced feeling of vocation and responsibility towards world peace. Han admitted that the reasons for religious conflicts were multiple and could not be reduced to one single cause. However, this should not weaken, but rather strengthen religious leaders' commitment to peace.
A second important task to be fulfilled by religious leaders occupied the central part of Han's paper. For relations between different religions, all religious leaders ought to propagate "mutual respect and seeking the common ground while reserving the differences", Han pointed out. This was not only a matter of propagating an abstract idea: "We must make people accept this as a guiding principle for their actions."

Two thirds of all human beings are religious believers, Han continued. They not only are adherents of different religions, but often there also exist differences and possible lines of conflict within the same religion. We must understand the differences and prevent them from becoming possible sources of conflict. It would be a great contribution to world peace if the ideas of mutual respect and concentration on similarities, not differences, could really be implemented, Han was convinced. Religious believers come from many different backgrounds. Against this diversity, religious leaders must perform a unifying role. Religious leaders must disperse, not instigate hate, Han underlined.

Dr. Han then turned to Chinese tradition. Pointing out the value of harmony in Chinese culture, Han explained that China has a long tradition of peaceful co-existence between religions. Today, Chinese religious believers follow this tradition by cooperating closely in their efforts for world peace. But, Han returned to his former point, today's cooperation is not only due to age-old Chinese tradition, but also a result of the new slogan of "seeking the common ground."

The Chinese practice, Han continued, does not water down differences, but it trains believers for mutual respect of these differences. In the case of Christians, they are reminded of their free will given to them by God, a free will not to be imposed on others. Christians cannot force their opinions and beliefs onto others and expect them to behave the same way.

Finally, Han called on the media as important agents in today's world. Han asked them to act responsibly in providing unbiased information. Media should produce productive reports that would enhance mutual understanding.

2000.11/12.4

Basic Biblical Faith And Socialist Society Are Not In Conflict With One Another

(ANS) October's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, carries an interview with Li Jianhong, president of the Jiangsu Provincial TSPM committee.

 Asked for the situation of the movement for building theology two years after the groundbreaking "Ji'nan conference," Li started by explaining the importance of this movement both for the church and the Three Self. As Li pointed out, the strengthening of building theology constituted a deepening of the principles of Three Self. Mentioning the recent conflict caused by the Vatican's canonization of former China missionaries, Li pointed out how China's colonial past continued to affect China's present. Despite Chinese efforts in attaining a truly self-governing church, foreign interference had not completely ceased.
Li then responded to fears shared by some church workers who perceive the movement to be political and fear that building theology might distort Biblical truths. According to Li, the aim of building theology was just the opposite, namely the restoring of Biblical faith where contemporary interpretation had gone wrong. "I believe a real Biblical faith cannot come into conflict with socialism. On the contrary, problematic contradictions do not spring from the original meaning of the Bible."

Li continued to explain the process of initiating a debate on theology. The central task for building theology was theological research by pastors and other church workers. For this, church workers from the provincial and municipal level had to be motivated, who would continue to transfer the movement to other people. The focus would be on the younger and middle-aged generation of theological graduates.

For Chinese Christians, the past fifty years was a road of both difficult and beautiful experiences, Li continued. Above all, they had experienced God's love and the compatibility of love for God, the country, socialism and the party.

Li then turned to the example of a church worker who initially had serious doubts about the movement for building theology: "... on one hand, he saw that socialist society deserves our appreciation and that the Communist Party earns our confidence, but on the other hand he was hemmed by ideas like 'we must not love this world,' 'the world will perish,' 'we must not have contact and cooperate with unbelievers,' 'we must not listen to the Communist Party,' and 'we must not listen to people, but God.' After studying the importance and meaning of building theology in a meeting organized by the provincial CC/TSPM committee, this church worker was able to solve his internal conflicts and felt much relieved. Now, Li reported, he firmly supported the ideas of love for the socialist motherland and cooperation with the masses. Other church workers also commented positively on the movement, Li stated. They reported to pay much more attention to the social influence their sermons might have than before, when previously stimulation for the audience had been their only concern.

Finally, Li presented some of the plans for the time to come. The big shortcoming at the moment was the narrowness of theological knowledge in China, he noted. The greatest challenge therefore was to achieve a breakthrough in theory, to create something new that reflected special Chinese characteristics. To achieve this, a special project for Nanjing Seminary was intended, involving graduate students, Bishop K.H. Ting, seminary vice-president Chen Zemin and other prestigious theologians of the older generation. Within the course of two years, it was hoped to strengthen the practical relevance of theory in church life. Methods included self-study, lectures, papers and exams. Finally, writing groups were to be set up to promote the scholarly results achieved.

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Han Wenzao: Protection Of Environment Is Christian Duty

(ANS) The following article summarizes a speech given by Dr. Wenzao Han, President of the China Christian Council, on August 30, 2000. Han spoke on the occasion of the World Peace Millennium Council held in New York. The speech was reprinted in October's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council.

Numerous dangers threaten our living environment, Han began his speech. The earth's ozone layer and tropical rainforests are endangered, droughts, floods, desertification and pollution harm human beings and make their survival difficult. Protection of the environment is of global concern and has increasingly received attention in different forums. Environmental issues are now being discussed by the United Nations, governments, non-governmental organizations and also churches. The World Council of Churches (WCC) has participated in the global climate debate since 1988.

Han then turned to the role China's Protestant church plays in this context. In China, Han pointed out, rapid economic development constitutes a particularly great challenge for protection of the environment. China cannot "develop first, repair later," as Han put it. Instead, economic development and protection of the environment must go hand in hand. For Christians, protection of the environment takes on an additional dimension, constituting protection of divine creation, Han explained.

What do Chinese Protestant churches do to promote protection of the environment? The church tries to enhance the awareness of believers and propagates environmental protection. "We teach believers that one should start with himself. We teach them to begin with small steps and give witness through avoiding pollution and contributing to sustainable development," Han said.

Han also appealed to developed countries to think about their possible share instead of attributing the problem of pollution only to developing countries. Finally, Han called on his audience: "No matter our languages, colors, cultures and traditions are different, let's join in action and prayer."

"A Good Christian Is A Good Citizen"

(ANS) The following article was taken from November's edition of the Protestant church magazine Tian Feng. Author Li Jing from Jiangsu Province develops her argument why a good Chinese Christian must also be patriotic. While she does not put her article under the church's slogan of "A good Christian is a good citizen", her text fits the church's current efforts to promote this idea.

As members of the church, we live on Earth, we live in this world. If we are to fulfill our Christian duties of spreading the Gospel and witnessing, we need to have good relations with our environment, Li starts her article. She then gives Biblical
examples of patriotism: Jesus, Moses, David, Jeremiah and Daniel all loved their countries and fulfilled their patriotic duties, the author states. Accordingly, patriotism is the duty of every Chinese believer not only as a Chinese citizen, but also as a Christian believer. The church ought to reflect a witness of patriotism, Li underlines.

She then highlights the idea of testimony through service in society. Christians serve God not only through their prayers, but also through their acts of love for their neighbors. Jesus himself served those around him, Li reminds the readers. She attributes the growth of her own church in Xuzhou to this idea of social commitment. "We enjoy a good reputation among the local population and government", she points out.

Patriotism and love for the church go together, Li states in the final part of her article. Some people maintain that Christians, as children of heaven, ought not to be concerned with politics. For Li, however, this is an unacceptable thought. "How can we not be concerned about our country's future when we are part of it?" she asks. It is the state who provides Christians with a stable political situation which allows them to pray in peace, she reminds her readers.

In recent years, Chinese Christians participated in numerous patriotic activities. Li enumerates their celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the People's Republic, their celebrations for Hong Kong's and Macao's return to Chinese sovereignty, and Christian donations when severe floods hit China in 1998. "Let us all strive together for the building of our socialist motherland!" is Li's closing appeal to her readers.

2000.11/12.7

Beyond Our Dreams

On Monday, December 4, 2000, the Amity Printing Press in Nanjing celebrated the printing of the 25 millionth Bible. Faye Pearson, a guest professor at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, attended the celebrations for ANS.

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Dreams? Do you see what I see? Buses and cars arriving with excited guests and visitors at the Amity Printing Company. The Printing Company is located in a former rice paddy, approximately 40 minutes by car from downtown Nanjing. Some are representatives of the United Bible Societies (UBS) from the United States, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and England. Other visitors represent all three levels - national, provincial and local - of the Three Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council. Other guests are from the national and provincial Religious Affairs Bureau. There are also representatives from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and Presbyterian Church, USA. Local guests are from Amity Foundation, the Amity Christian Art Center, the Nanjing Theological Seminary, the Jiangsu Bible School as well as church leaders from Jiangsu and Nanjing churches.

Dreams? Listen! Why are they at the Amity Printing Company? They are here to celebrate the printing of 25 million copies of the Bible. What are they saying?

Dreams? Feel the thanksgiving in their voices and in their hearts as the ceremony opens. Dr. Jen-II Tsai, chairman of the Board of Directors of Amity Printing Company (APC) opens the meeting with praise to God for His guidance. Dr. Tsai says, "On December 25, 1987 the first Bible rolled
off the presses. Today we celebrate the printing of 25 million copies. We never dreamed that one day we would celebrate the printing of 25 million copies. We are here to thank God." This is what takes place for the next two hours.

Dr. Han Wenzaos, President of the Board of Directors for APC and President of the China Christian Council says in his opening remarks, "I visited Australia in 1989. I spoke to a large reception. I told the gathering that the one millionth Bible had rolled off the presses at the APC. The audience broke into an applause. I was so moved that I forgot what I was saying. However, there is one thing that I will never forget and that is my thanksgiving and praise to God for His faithful and love through these years."

"The purpose of the printing of Bibles is not to store them in warehouses but to distribute them across China," says Bao Jiayuan, Associate General Secretary of the China Christian Council. Rev. Bao reports that there are 70 distribution centers. They are located in every province, and in every municipality, and autonomous region in China, with the exception of Tibet. The Bible is printed in several languages: Han Chinese in both simplified and traditional script, bilingual English and Chinese, Braille, and in seven minority languages—Dai, Korean, Jingbo, Lahu, Yi, Miao and Yau. The Printing Company also prints Bible commentaries, Study Bibles, scriptural wall and desk calendars as well as pocket calendars. The Printing Company prints various sizes of the Bible – the large print Bible is very popular among senior citizens, and the small pocket Bible is popular among young people and college students.

Bishop H. K. Ting, honorary President of the China Christian Council says, "What a happy occasion that we celebrate the printing of 25 million copies of the Bible today. I am thankful for the United Bible Societies that are our partners in this ministry and I am also thankful that the Bible is no longer a 'foreign book' in China. Many intellectuals, the university community and high school faculties and students are buying and seriously reading the Bible." He goes on to say that some overseas newspapers are reporting that APC was not really printing Bibles and that the so-called Bibles printed at APC have only 64 books instead of 66 because the Chinese Bible does not have Daniel and Revelation. Bishop Ting says, "Don't you know, that Chinese Christians would tell us if one book, one chapter, one verse of the Bible was left out because they read their Bibles so very carefully."

Dr. Fergue MacDonald, General Secretary of the United Bible Societies, reminds the participants of the power of the Bible. "It is a book for living before it is a book of theology. It is a book for people before it is a book for theologians. It is a life-changing book. It is a book, if it is read, believed, and practiced which will change society and make the world a better place in which to live."

Deputy Chief of the National Foreign Affairs Department of the Religious Affairs Bureau Guo Wei tells the audience that the printing of the 25 million copies of the Bible is evidence that the government takes its religious freedom policy seriously. She went on to say, "In the last twenty years the Bible is the second bestseller in the nation second only to Deng Xiaoping's collections."

Feel the participants' excitement, thanksgiving and anticipation—Bibles, hymnals and other Christian literature will be in the churches' shops and booths on Christmas Eve. Anyone, believer or non-believer, church attender or non-attender, is free to purchase a Bible without being questioned or having to register.

Dreams? Bibles, hymnals, and other Christian literature will be sold across the nation at this Christmas season and throughout 2001, from the plains of Inner Mongolia, to the snow fields of Heilongjiang in the north, to the southern mountains in Yunnan Province, to the interior tourist city of Xi'an in Shaanxi Province, from the port cities of Shandong Province in the east to the desert of Xinjiang Province in the west.

The one millionth copy came off the press on September 26, 1989. The China Church celebrated the printing of five million on February 26, 1993, and on December 4, 2000, they celebrated the printing of 25 million. By Friday afternoon, December 1, 2000, at closing time the Amity Printing Company had printed 25,609,259 Bibles.

The church leaders and their UBS partners leave the celebration conscious of the challenges as they move into the 21st century, but: Listen! It is the sound of presses. The presses are printing Bibles. God's promise to
the church is, “My word that goes out of my mouth shall not return to me empty.”

As guests and church leaders leave the Printing Company grounds they left behind three flags waving in the air—the flag of the People’s Republic of China, the United Bible Society’s flag and Amity Printing Company’s flag. Beyond our Dreams! Bibles are being printed in China. They are genuine! His Word rings out, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." "Beyond our Dreams" filled the air and glory and honor was given to God.

2000.11/12.8

The Fine Line Between Superstition and Tradition

Planting the Gospel in an overwhelmingly non-Christian environment constitutes a very special challenge. Many people come to believe in the Christian message lacking the most basic notions about its contents. "After believing for 10 years in Jesus Christ, many people still cannot tell you who he really is or was", one pastor complains. But it is not only the lack of Biblical or theological knowledge that causes problems. On a much more basic level, new converts and their families struggle with Christian doctrine. ANS editor Katrin Fiedler reports.

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In the countryside, many new believers come from a folk religious background. Their everyday life was filled with rituals and practices aimed at ensuring good luck and fortune. Adopting Christianity with virtually no background, many of them find it difficult to strip off the customs that used to guide their everyday lives. For example, in many areas in the countryside, peasants hang mirrors in front of their houses to ward off evil spirits. The importance of these mirrors is so embedded in people's minds that some new Christian believers actually fall ill after removing their mirrors.

Pastor Ma, a pastor in the rural town of Tunxi, Anhui province, tells me the story of a former witch in her congregation. The woman was a kind of witch specializing in "zhao hun", the calling back of souls (e.g. of people lying in a coma). Part of the job was divination done with a wooden stick stirred around in a pot of rice. After turning towards the Christian faith, the former witch attended catechism classes in order to be baptized. However, on the day of her baptism, she arrived late and in a state of confusion told Ma that she had done rice divination again. Ma had to postpone her baptism.

In other cases, old practices turn out to be only "tinted" with Christian color. Rev. Ma recalls an incident where a family asked her to come over and pray with them for a sick family member. When the person finally recovered, the family, wanting to thank Ma for her successful prayers, sent her a chicken.

The traditional Chinese religions - Buddhism, Daoism, religious Confucianism and folk religions - are rather syncretistic in nature and can incorporate elements of one another without difficulty. In fact, on the folk-religious level the boundaries between them are rather blurred. This syncretistic background makes it particularly difficult for Christian
converts to overcome their old beliefs and habits. Besides, giving up established practices after becoming a Christian is not only difficult for many of the converts themselves, but may also encounter strong resistance from their relatives. What can be done if all family members except for one Christian demand a mirror over their home's entrance?

While some Christians find it extremely hard to give up their old folk religious practices and beliefs, others will become overly zealous in their drive to get rid of any superstitious traditions. The dragon, a lucky symbol in China but incorporate of evil in the Bible, is one case in point. Many Christians will feel profoundly disturbed by the image of a dragon on tea cups, bed quilts and other items, an attitude that easily causes family quarrels. "We tell believers that they do not have to throw away items bearing the dragon, but if somebody feels utterly uncomfortable with them, let these things be removed," one pastor explains. "Sometimes, I also have to remind believers that they must not tear down superstitious decorations in other people's homes during their evangelization efforts."

Finally, according to the experiences of one rural pastor, folk religious ideas may cause painful trouble to persons susceptible to evil spirits. "Originally, I did not believe stories about persons possessed by evil spirits," the pastor recalls. "But I have seen cases where people obviously did not suffer from a mental disorder, but from irregular frightful fits of some other kind. And they reacted very positively to prayers, calming down when they heard persons praying for them."

Apart from folk religious ideas interfering with their new Christian identity, many rural Christians have difficulties in understanding basic Christian concepts. For example, it is not uncommon for rural Christians to refuse medical treatment. Knowing about the importance of faith and having come to believe in Christ after a faith healing experience, they think they must not seek medical assistance when sick. And once during a visit of mine to a rural congregation, the local pastor was approached by a believer who inquired if it was a temptation by the devil when he was hungry.

While believers in many Chinese congregations thus reveal a certain need of proper religious instruction, they also display a real hunger for Bible classes. Virtually all Protestant churches run Bible classes, youth meetings and the like, and usually a high percentage of believers will not only attend Sunday service, but take part in these activities.

Thank you!
A big thank you to all our readers who answered our survey! Apologies to all those of you who had trouble answering via e-mail and finally fell back on ordinary "snail mail". The number of replies was itself overwhelming and a sign of your commitment to ANS. We are still in the process of "digesting" your inspiring comments and suggestions, and hope to make some corresponding amendments in the future.
An Open Letter To Brothers and Sisters in Christ Throughout China

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

First of all, we greet you in the name of Christ!

As together, with all the people of China we approach the new century filled with vigor and high spirits, Chinese Protestants welcome the 50th anniversary of the Three Self Patriotic Movement. This is both an important and joyful occasion for us. We praise and glorify God who has led us on the road of Three Self and patriotism and continues to help us today. At the same time, we happily share our heartfelt joy with all those in our country who believe in the Lord and are members of the Body of Christ.

The path of trials and hardships the Three Self Patriotic Movement has trod over the past fifty years has also been constantly watched over by the Lord. A road never devoid of blessings, a road of both pillars of clouds and fire. Moreover, for Chinese Protestants, it has been a road on which the Chinese church has cast off the control of Western missionary societies; a road which has led to the attainment of full independence and autonomy; a difficult road of striving for the Chinese church's selfhood. Following this course, Chinese Protestants have constantly increased their national self-respect, come to identify themselves with their motherland and the Chinese people, worked diligently to adapt to socialist society and to witness for Christ.

Today, as we cross the threshold to the new century and look back, it is not difficult to discover that in the past half century, Chinese Protestantism has been immersed in God's grace while following the motherland in its steps towards maturity. From "A Way in Which the Chinese Christianity Works for New China's Construction" ("Three Self Manifesto") in which Chinese Protestants declared their distinctive political stance, to the propagation of the Three Self for running the church well; from the removing of imperialist forces from within Chinese Protestantism to the strengthening of building theology; the way of the Three Self Patriotic Movement in the past fifty years indeed makes it very clear that from its beginning, it was intended as a way to run the church well. It was both a movement of love for country and church, and it has not only a political meaning, but also an important spiritual dimension. It has received God's greatest blessings, and has become God's instrument for building the Chinese church. It is a movement increasingly understood, respected and supported by people.

Indeed, the words "Three Self" do not appear in the Bible. However, the Bible prepares the ground for the principles of the "Three Self". Every time Paul went to a place to establish a church, he appointed elders and other co-workers in order to have them independently administer their own church. The churches of Jerusalem
and Antioch never became the "mother churches" of other churches. In Paul's letters, we both find the thought of being different members of one body, the church ecumenical, and the words about "local churches" and "the Lord's church in the place of so-and-so", expressions which clearly underscore the local nature of the church.

"Three Self" is neither faith nor doctrine. Rather, it directs us towards running the church well. For running the church well we must follow and implement the Three Self principles until we run the church well. "Three Self" does not at all mean xenophobia or self-isolation. Rather, we develop relations with the church ecumenical as equal members of one body, who mutually respect one another and contribute to it. This is also in line with the biblical teaching "In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord." (Eph. 2:21)

The greatest success of the Three Self Patriotic Movement is that Chinese Christianity is no longer a tool of imperialism. It has also changed people's impression of Christianity and enabled a church formerly divided into numerous denominations that conducted battles with one another, to now worship together and enter a "post-denominational era". Following the "Cultural Revolution," all efforts aimed at running the church well would have been impossible without the Three Self Patriotic Movement - assisting the government to implement the policy of religious freedom, regaining church property, re-opening churches and meeting points, printing Bibles, publishing devotional materials, re-opening of seminaries and Bible schools, etc.

Here, we would like to speak a few words to those brothers and sisters who until now have only limited contact with the Three Self Patriotic Movement. Although between us all kinds of misunderstandings might exist, we all believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord, and all of us live together in the big family of our motherland. If we are willing to be patriotic and law-abiding and build the Chinese church well, we have no reason not to unite. Therefore, we greatly look forward to establishing relationships with you in the body of Christ, to love, respect and serve one another in Christ, so that the Chinese church will glorify God in even brighter ways.

Brothers and sisters, the achievements of the Three Self are great, but the task of the Three Self is not yet completed. The road for the heavy duty of running the church well is long. Confronted with the changing situation both in China and abroad, we constantly adhere to the "Four Musts" of "independence and autonomy; love for country and church; promotion of unity and implementing the Three Goods (from self-administration to good administration, self-support to good support, self-propagation to good propagation)." We strive together to enable God's Gospel to prosper. Moreover, we want Jesus' heavenly life to be lived out in our earthly lives. We also want to inculcate into the conscious behavior of every Christian the idea that "A good Christian is a good citizen," and make the church into a golden lamp stand that brightens the world, gives glory to God and serves the people.

Paul says: "...I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings." (1 Cor. 9: 22-23). This is a kind of voluntary "adaptation" made by Paul in the context of his time for spreading the Gospel. Today, as we seek to witness for Christ in a socialist
society, we must equally identify ourselves with the people. Only if it continues to adjust and adapt itself, will Christianity be able to develop and let its great vitality shine through.

For two thousand years Christian theological thinking has been adjusted and built without ceasing. Theological reflection does not clash with or change basic faith, but provides us with fairer, more reasonable interpretations of Christian theology which in turn help us to even better develop believers' spiritual lives. The mission of the church consists of not only spreading the Gospel, but also doing pastoral work, to make sure the ones already in the flock "get out for grazing" and can really raise their spiritual quality. If we compare the increase in the number of believers to an increase in the "weight" in the body of Christ, the building of theology resembles the intellectual growth of the same body. Both "knowledge" and "body weight" have to increase together, if we want to earn the love of God and people!

Brothers and sisters, God has entrusted to us the heavy task of building the church in New China. Although we all are very weak, we only need look to Christ, the pioneer and perfector of our faith, trusting in the faith, knowledge and power he has given to us, and a church full of glory will forever stand like a tower in our vast country!

Emmanuel!

Plenum Of The Sixth Three Self Patriotic Movement Committee
Fourth China Christian Council

September 23, 2000

ANS Documentation: 2000.11/12.10

Chinese Three Self Patriotic Committee
China Christian Council

Declaration against the Vatican's history-distorting act of canonizing so-called "saints"

It is reported that the Vatican has announced, after long planning, to publicly canonize some Chinese and foreign missionaries and Christian believers on October 1, 2000. These Christians were punished for numerous wrongdoings during the Chinese people's justified battle against imperialist invasion. The Vatican's plan constitutes a provocative act that seriously neglects the Chinese church's sovereignty and hurts the feelings of the Chinese people, and is absolutely unacceptable for all Chinese, including all patriotic Christians. The Chinese people, who are fed up with imperialist bullying and humiliations, still have fresh memories of the sinister ways with which imperialism exploited Protestantism and Catholicism to

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invade China. We cannot forget numerous offenses committed by missionaries who relied on the privileges granted by the Unequal Treaties: they trafficked opium with an attitude of imperialists, played the tyrant, bullied officials, oppressed the people and stole money. The Vatican should deeply regret these historical, shameful wrongdoings against the Chinese people. In the Vatican, however, there are some people who not only do not think of regret, but even reverse the truth by appointing "feudal saints," thus deceiving the world. Their aim is to continue with their plot of reversing in the name of religion, the historical verdict that imperialism exploited religion to invade our country. The Chinese people can absolutely not agree to this. We strongly support the Chinese Catholic clergy and laity in their solemn declaration to protect national interests and national self-respect. We firmly stand by their side to oppose the Vatican in its perverse, history-distorting fact of canonizing "feudal saints."

September 27, 2000

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Three Self Patriotic Movement, the China Christian Council and the National TSPM Committee issued a statement titled "Love Country, Love The Church, And March To The New Century With One Heart". English translations of this document are available from the Amity Hong Kong office. Please direct your orders to the Amity News Service.

2000.11/12.11

NEWSBRIEFS

Anniversary: Churches and seminaries all over China continued with their celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Three Self Patriotic Movement.

Shandong Provincial CC/TSPM committee organized an art exhibition to commemorate the founding of the TSPM. From August 10 until mid-September, the exhibition toured Qingdao and other northeastern cities. The art exhibit featured nearly 100 Christian art works produced by pastors, lay workers and Christian artists.

In Shanghai, students and staff of East China Seminary listened to lectures delivered by seminary president Su Deci and Vice President Xu Minghan. On September 28, pastoral workers from all over Shanghai gathered for a celebration. Speakers included Ye Xiaowen, director of the national Religious Affairs Bureau, and Cao Shengjie, a vice president of the China Christian Council.

In Hunan, the provincial CC/TSPM committee organized a conference on the subject of building theology to commemorate the Three Self anniversary. Twenty eight participants from all over the province joined the meeting on August 9 and 10.

Another conference in commemoration of the Three Self Movement was held in Weifang, Shandong Province. The one-day conference was attended by one hundred participants from local churches, the local Religious Affairs Bureau and United Front.
Protest: Fierce Chinese protests by national church and government representatives against the Vatican's canonization of 120 China martyrs were matched by similar reactions from local church bodies. The provincial CC/TSPM committee of Qinghai province, CC/TSPM committees from cities in Henan and Jiangsu and Shandong Seminary all expressed their protest against the Vatican's move.

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Lay Training: A one-week training course for lay workers was held in An district, Sichuan province, from July 31 to August 6, 2000. 40 students heard lectures on the following topics: "How to withstand Satan," church administration, Catechism, general education, religious laws, church music, an introduction to the Bible, and patriotic Three Self education.

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Anniversary: At the CCC/TSPM plenary meeting held on the fiftieth anniversary of the TSPM, one of the speakers was Wang Chaoguo, director of the national United Front Department. After mentioning the aims and achievements of the TSPM, Wang pointed out four central tasks to be undertaken in the future: The Chinese Protestant church must continue to strive for Three Self in all areas of church life. It must not only strengthen the building of theology, but also the building of the church itself. And finally, the study of world religions must be intensified to promote understanding of world religions, protect socialism and raise the image of China abroad.

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International Exchange: China hosted a meeting of the World Council Of Churches' Asia and Pacific Regional Groups from November 11-16, 2000. The meeting focused on the impact of globalization on Asian countries and the role churches play in this process. China was represented by Dr. Wenzao Han, President of The China Christian Council, Bishop K.H. Ting, and Li Enlin, an assistant general secretary of the Amity Foundation. A joint communiqué issued at the meeting can be accessed on the worldwide web at: http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/00/asia-pacific.html

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